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

# TIKKUN

**CURRENT DEBATES:**

A critique of Abba Eban on the West Bank. Eban responds.

Roiphe and Goldenberg on Intermarriage

Divine Providence vs. Human Autonomy Hartman and Landes.

A QUARTERLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY VOLUME 2 NUMBER 1 $5.00



**Michael Lerner**
*Listen, Democrats! – – A Paradigm for Liberals*

**Peter Edelman**
*An Economic Strategy*

**Stuart Eizenstat**
*Uniting North and South*

**Special Feature:**
**RETHINKING THE HOLOCAUST**
Eleanora Lev on Taking Her Daughter to Auschwitz; Adi Ophir on the Sanctification of the Holocaust (with a response by Richard Rubenstein); David Biale on the Mythology of Powerlessness; Dan Diner on German Historical Revisionism, and articles by Idith Zertal, Arthur Waskow and Zalman Schachter.

**Michael Wallace**
*Reagan and History*

**Esther Cameron**
*On Paul Celan*

**Galia Golan**
*Women in Israel*

**Peter Gabel**
*On Bank Tellers*

**PLUS**

*Alan Freeman on Comparable Worth; Paul Mendes-Flohr on Franz Rosenzweig; Reviews by Baruch Hochman, Louis Beres & Jo Milgrom; Fiction by Lynne Sharon Schwartz; Poetry by Peter Sacks.*

## Written in Pencil in the Sealed Railway-Car

here in this carload
i am eve
with abel my son
if you see my other son
cain son of man
tell him that i

DAN PAGIS
*(translated by Stephen Mitchell)*



# TIKKUN

A QUARTERLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY VOLUME 2 NUMBER 1

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Cover: Anthony Dubovsky בני אדם
B'nei Adam (Children of Adam)
oil on canvas, 10" × 16", 1981-82

Photograph by Ben Blackwell

Anthony Dubovsky's paintings often involve stories from Torah and images of Jewish life in Eastern Europe. He teaches at the University of California, Berkeley.

The drawings in this issue are by the same artist.

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# Letters

## On Tikkun

To the Editor:

Brilliant second issue, Judith Plaskow and Anne Roiphe are wonderful, Mitchell is a nutcracker, Amichai and Pagis, two priceless poets, beside some of the most penetrating intellectuals around. You have the best magazine of "politics, culture, and society" in America.

I have been waiting for *Tikkun* for years, and it has arrived.

Vincent Ferrini
Gloucester, Massachusetts

To the Editor:

As a United Methodist layperson I am writing to express my appreciation for the first issue of *Tikkun*. I found it exciting, thoughtful and of broad appeal. I also appreciate the opportunity, which I have sought for some time, to gain insight from the Jewish tradition. That tradition from its world history has a great deal to say to us about politics, culture and society which we need to hear. Thank you for the alternative to *Commentary*.

My only regret is that future issues will be shorter and only published quarterly in the first year. Keep up the good work.

John E. Stumbo
Topeka, Kansas

To the Editor:

Congratulations on the birth of *Tikkun*. I am also pleased that you announced the quarterly as a counter to *Commentary*. For too long, *Commentary* has been misperceived as the authoritative voice of Jewish political thought which, even as a non-Jew, I knew to be untrue, but it has carried the cachet of dispassionate social analysis long after it became the narrow instrument of doctrinaire neo-conservatism.

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I wish you good health and a long life.

Ben H. Bagdikian
Berkeley, California

## On Soviet Jewry

To the Editor:

Your article, "Let Our People Go," is a perceptive analysis of the situation regarding Soviet Jewry. It is especially helpful that you examine in some considerable detail the various elements of the political spectrum involved in the struggle for Soviet Jewish emigration....

Your analysis seems to suggest that the issue before us, the fate of two million Soviet Jews, transcends political ideology and touches upon all members of the Jewish and non-Jewish community. Such an effort should encompass far more than one's liberal, conservative, Republican or Democrat view. The issue of Soviet Jewry should serve as a focal point to channel the energy of all persons who espouse the cause of human rights.

Pamela B. Cohen
National President,
Union of Councils For Soviet Jews
Washington, D.C.

## On Lasch

To the Editor:

I noted with great interest the exchange between Lasch, Lichtman and Rubin over the state of the Left, all the more so because I stand in Lasch's shoes myself on the general and overarching question of left wing ideology. I think I was the only New Left leader of the 1960s to take an explicit Left-Right position (doubtless a reflection of my upbringing in the Ohio of Senator Robert Taft). On the other hand, I know for a fact that a belief in the logic of a Midwestern conservative critique of the Vietnam War motivated a great many of the mid-60s anti-war activists. In the numerous speeches I made against the war as a president of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) as well as in my 1967 book (with Richard Shaull) *Containment and Change*, I argued that the New Left and the Old Right were alike (a) in rejecting welfare-state solutions to social problems, (b) in rejecting militarism and imperialism in foreign policy, and (c) in espousing a Constitutional decision-making process based on democratic consideration of the individual. Moreover, as those with a working knowledge of the founding documents of the New Left can attest, the movement was critical of trade unionism and ambivalent about socialism.

This openness to the philosophical Right is an important part of what made the New Left *new*, rather than simply the Left of a particular moment. It saw itself as coming from within the American tradition to defend it rather than from outside to overturn it. It rooted itself in American history. It claimed the support of enlightened American patriotism.

Granted, there were many forces and "tendencies" operating within and around the New Left of the 1960s. But the loss or current quiescence of the Left-Right or (as I like to call it) the "radical center" perspective seems to me to have dried up the creativity of a formerly fecund movement.

Carl Oglesby
Cambridge, Massachusetts

## On Vietnam

To the Editor:

In his article, "The Lesson of the Vietnam War," Harold Jacobs attempts to justify the historic role of the anti-Vietnam War movement using the same points of reference used by the movement itself in its heyday. In this effort, Jacobs really indicates how little he himself has learned from history. He shows no appreciation for historic irony, whereby good may result in evil and evil motives in good results. For instance, The Argentine junta's adventures in the Falklands led to its fall and the discrediting of the Argentine military.

Jacobs' very title reveals his obtuseness, since it suggests that a single lesson may be learned from a set of historical events which are in and of themselves ambiguous. Both he and the critics of the anti-war movement fail to address the Janus-faced nature of Marxist-Leninist revolutions. The letter correctly points to the fact that all such regimes have been dictatorial and repressive. It is also a fact, as Jacobs points out with regard to Vietnam, that all Communist revolutions (except when imposed from above) have from their onset faced counter-revolution allied with foreign powers. So we are faced with a chicken-egg problem. Jacobs sees the repression as a result of the defensiveness of such regimes, while anti-Communists would argue that Marxism-Leninism is inherently totalitarian and repressive. They would further argue that liberal rhetoric by Marxist-Leninists is merely a tactic, in order to attract a larger following, rather than the true face of such movements. Despite the relevance of such arguments to the Nicaraguan situation, which is the immediate occasion for Jacobs' lesson, he does not address this point at all.

In his blanket attack on U.S. interventionism in Southeast Asia and Central America, Jacobs fails to apply his arguments to Vietnam's own "Vietnam" in Kampuchea. He does not appreciate the ambiguities and ironies of that action, which could be justified in terms of Pol Pot's atrocities, but which also show the equally expansive imperialist longings of Vietnam itself.

While not trying to justify current Vietnamese reality Jacobs still maintains a simplistic view of morality.

Walter P. Zenner
Albany, New York

*Harold Jacobs responds:*

Absent from Walter P. Zenner's critique of my article are any substantive ethical claims of his own. We instead are offered an ahistorical philosophical stance rooted in an appreciation of "historical irony." But merely recognizing that "good may result from evil and evil motives in good results" provides no ethical guidelines for holding either individuals or nation states responsible for the policies they seek to implement and the instruments they utilize. Unanticipated consequences may often be a by-product of acting or not acting in the world, but anticipated consequences, direct extensions of conscious intent and action, constitute a far more reasonable and compelling foundation for making ethical judgments.

The merit of America's action in Vietnam is not established by its public

relations rhetoric and manipulations, but by the well-documented record of its actual ends and means as contained, for example, in *The Pentagon Papers*. American actions were unjust because the war constituted a planned act of aggression; American means were barbarous because the largely indiscriminate and extraordinarily destructive firepower employed inevitably had to result in vast numbers of noncombatant deaths and casualties. In short, by Nuremberg standards, American military intervention in Vietnam was criminal and cannot be justified in the name of democratic values by counterposing Marxist-Leninist repression to United States sponsored tyranny.

In an attempt to find ambiguities in the multiple lessons that might be drawn from the Vietnam experience, Zenner misses the central lesson of the American effort, namely, that it was morally wrong and will forever be morally wrong. It is no more "simplistic" to make that claim than to hold forever in disrepute the crimes (however they differ from those of the United States in Vietnam) committed by the Nazis against humanity. Zenner is free to apply my arguments to other military interventions, including Vietnam's in Cambodia, the Soviet Union's in Afghanistan, and Israel's in Lebanon. To do so, of course, he will have to see more in these events than "historical irony." He, in fact, will have to exercise his ethical sensibility, something he thus far seems reluctant to do.

To the Editor:

Eli Wiesel has stated that not to remember the victims of concentration camps is to "betray them again." Harold Jacobs, by stirring our memory in his succinct article "The Lesson of the Vietnam War" (*Tikkun*, Vol. 1, No. 1) gives hope that the people of Vietnam, too, will not be betrayed.

Yet, we also must be aware that our current policy of not recognizing Vietnam continues not only the destruction of the 4000-year-old culture of Vietnam, but our own interests as well. A normalization of relations would help Vietnam maintain its independence, facilitate the search for missing American servicemen, foster closer ties with their homeland of those Vietnamese in our country who wish to do so (perhaps someday even my six-year-old Vietnamese grandson), and help relieve the suffering of the people of the South whom we once believed needed our undivided attention and now really do.

Walter Robinson
Round Rock, Arizona

## On The Nicaragua Debate

To the Editor:

The editors state in "The Nicaragua Debate" (*Tikkun*, Vol. 1, No. 2) that there is an "absence of systematic presentation of both sides of the Nicaraguan issue." Yes, both sides are missing, but it is not, as the editors say, because the liberals hear one side of the issue and the conservatives another. It is that all sides, as well as the uncommitted, usually hear only the point of view of the relatively conservative mass media and the far right wing views of the Reagan Administration. Debate becomes framed around questions such as "How bad are the Sandinistas?" and "Should the U.S. invade Nicaragua?" The point that *Tikkun* missed is that there is another side to the issue which even liberals often omit, that of the Sandinista's. *Tikkun*'s editors state that they want to "provide an opportunity for our readership to hear all sides to the debate to develop a comprehensive and intelligent understanding of the issues." However, they print views supporting intervention and conditionally opposing intervention but not the views of the people who would suffer from this intervention.

*Tikkun* could better serve its readers by helping reshape "The Nicaragua Debate" into a truly liberal debate of how we, as U.S. Jews, can most effectively work to stop the war against Nicaragua. Discussion should include ways of protest that are most relevant to the 1980s, and the relative successes and failures of actions such as demonstrations, lobbying, teach-ins, visits to Nicaragua, etc. Further, we must ask why, after citizen protests stopped the U.S. war on the Vietnamese people, can the U.S. get away with its war on the Nicaraguan people? Why is U.S. policy so often better understood in Europe and the Third World than by our own citizens? What critical role can Jews play in this issue?

The Contras have been shown, time and time again, to be murderers, torturers, kidnappers, and rapists. Must we legitimize them by printing the views of their supporters? Wouldn't a discussion of why their views prevail in the Reagan Administration be of more use?

The question for us is not whether we like or dislike the Sandinistas. Regardless of our opinions, they are the legitimate representatives of the Nicaraguan people. This is affirmed by the Sandinista's landslide victory in recent elections noted as democratic by numerous international observers.

Our questions become those which ask how do we ensure that our government lives up to its own laws and international laws, and ends its intervention against Nicaragua, and how do we make our government less militaristic and more responsive to human needs. These are the questions that progressive-minded people need to ask in order to compliment intellectual discussion with political activism.

Paul Tick
New Jewish Agenda
Chairperson, Task Force on
Central America
New York, New York

## On Angry Harvest

To the Editors:

Because of the generally high intellectual level to which *Tikkun* aspires, we were surprised to read Elisa New's off-the-mark review of Agnieszka Holland's film *Angry Harvest*.

Holland's brilliant film in which a Catholic farmer hides a Jewish woman in Nazi-occupied Poland is about how power relations between men and women are amplified and ultimately depraved by the sordid conditions of wartime. It is a sophisticated yet compassionate statement about human frailty and contradictions, about our conflicting desires and pent-up frustrations. Above all it is an anti-war film which underscores the irrationality of all violence.

New makes an interesting point, informed by a poetic sensibility, about *Angry Harvest*'s "borders" as metaphors for nation, class, sexuality, and religion, through which characters constantly oscillate. But she strays with her superficial treatment of "the im-

aginative structure of Polish society." A cogent discussion of historical relations between Poles and Jews might have been more illuminating. New is not versed on this subject and statements like "... such passion is characteristically Polish" do not help her readers.

New misses the point in her analysis of the ambivalent character Leon, who first hides Rosa out of compassion, then dominates and brutalizes her out of less noble instincts. After Rosa's suicide in Leon's cellar, he is neither "redeemed" nor has he "found grace" as New suggests. To say that the moral order is restored by his gift of money to Rubin's daughter is like saying that reparations bring back the dead. New seems to miss the irony intended by Holland's conclusion in which Rubin's daughter, unaware of Leon's corruptions and sins, actually praises Leon as a saint for helping her escape the Nazis. In this muted scene Holland makes a strong statement about the difficulty in attributing a clear moral position to anybody's actions taken in the context of war. It is a profoundly important point to make one generation after the war because of the tendency we all have to make judgments with the benefit of hindsight about the vanquished, the victims, and even those we call "survivors."

New's most disturbing statements are made in her description of Rosa as a "victim," "hysterically under stress," and finally her statement that "lacking certain emotional reserves, she is a woman not made for deprivation!" These comments seem to indicate a callous disregard for the conditions in which Rosa must live, and miss the very point she alluded to earlier, that there is a commonality in the oppression of women and of Jews. In broader terms, there is a relationship between the sexualization of the Jewish woman (a trademark of anti-Semitic stereotyping as Lanzmann also notes in *Shoah*), and the feminization of oppressed peoples. This relation has been explored through metaphor in several recent European films such as the Austrian release *Kieselsteine* (*Pebbles*) with which Ms. Holland may be familiar.

To the extent that Holland explores Rosa's character as a "victim," she delves deeper into the meaning of the term "survivor," because as Jews forty years after the war, we all must choose to identify one way or the other. The implications for this identification—on a personal as well as national level—are again profound.

Deborah Kaufman
Director, Jewish Film Festival
Berkeley, California

*Elisa New responds:*

For Deborah Kaufman, *Angry Harvest* is chiefly about how "power relations between men and women are amplified and ultimately depraved by the sordid conditions of wartime." She sees it, "above all" as "an anti-war film which underscores the irrationality of all violence." My review, on the other hand, admired *Angry Harvest* as a film about the Holocaust that allows us to see its characters in all their ambiguity, full face and unflattened. What distinguishes Rosa and Leon is that they are individuals, rather than types—the Jew, the Pole—acted upon by a war which "depraves" them in deterministic fashion. Kaufman's objection to my characterization of Rosa comes down to a refusal to allow a "frailty" she is more than willing to see in Leon, whose "corruption and sins" she is predisposed to condemn. Kaufman and I agree, and my review makes amply clear, that Leon's exploitation of Rosa's situation exposes the larger structures of domination that make women and Jews similarly abject. Yet, the "irony" of the film does not flow so unsparingly against Leon as Kaufman claims. If by helping Rubin's daughter Leon does not make "reparation" for the extermination of Jews in his town, he does show a strenuous human decency and a will to overcome the evils that ally him with the forces of brutality. By lecturing that Leon's money cannot "bring back the dead," Kaufman implies that Leon is to be equated with the killers of the Jews. Leon may be infected with the anti-Semitism and sexual tyranny rampant in his society, but as Rosa's protector and a man who makes new life possible for Rubin's daughter and Dan, he earns his place among those who struggle for moral order and against sin.

It is finally Kaufman's distress at my use of the word victim—and her preference for the term "survivor"—that illuminates the real difference between our views of *Angry Harvest*. She is of course right to stress the communal importance of transcending the lachrymose historical view of Jew-as-victim. Yet to insist on swathing the dead in the term "survivors" seems to me dangerous mystification, a kind of reduction that ignores those human beings like Rosa who do not fit the mold. What we lost to Hitler, and what *Angry Harvest* vivifies, is a generation of human beings like ourselves, some strong, some not, some who survived and some who did not. Holland's film eloquently represents people making choices not only in response to "conditions," or the "context of war," or even for our edification, but out of the depths of themselves.

## On Waskow and the Nukes

To the Editor:

I am curious as to how Arthur Waskow (in his article, "Transarmament 2000," *Tikkun*, Vol. 1, No. 1) would apply his categorical condemnation of nuclear weaponry to the Middle East.

While one can debate whether or not the Soviet Union poses a threat to the territorial integrity of the United States, both Syria and Iraq clearly do threaten the State of Israel. Israel has most likely either already constructed nuclear weapons or developed the capacity to do so. Should Israel, at some future point, not be able to defend its territory through conventional arms it would presumably threaten to use these weapons to insure its survival.

Would Waskow urge Israeli scientists to refuse unilaterally to work on their nation's nuclear weapons program and demand that it be abandoned? Or would he first insist that all those nations with whom Israel is legally at war agree to do likewise?

Given Waskow's particular animus toward strategic as opposed to conventional weaponry, was Israel then justified in bombing Iraq's nuclear reactor and should it respond in a similar manner if an analogous situation arises? And if not, how does Waskow propose that we prevent the spread of nuclear weaponry to Israel's sworn enemies?

It is all very well to oppose the deployment of nuclear weapons when you believe that your nation's existence

is not threatened by a more powerful adversary. But what if it is? And need I add that the hostility of Iraq and Syria to the existence of the State of Israel has nothing whatsoever to do with Israel's treatment of the Palestinians?

David Vogel
Berkeley, California

*Arthur Waskow responds:*

Mr. Vogel seems to think I was counseling unilateral nuclear disarmament. If so, he hardly read my article. To remove nuclear weapons from all national armories by the year 2000 means *all*. Not the American arsenal alone, nor the Soviet arsenal alone, nor the Israeli arsenal alone, nor the potential Iraqi, Libyan, or Palestinian arsenals alone. *ALL*. With adequate verification and inspection.

To *get* to zero for everyone (a goal that both Reagan and Gorbachev affirmed at Reykjavik, but did not turn into a path of action), it is entirely feasible to take steps of *partial* reduction without waiting for the other side—in order to push and pull the other side into matching such partial steps and negotiating others. Leo Szilard (*olev ha-shalom*) said in 1962 that for the U.S. a true deterrent would be two missiles apiece on forty Polaris submarines—that's all, all other nuclear weapons could be scrapped—no matter what the Soviets might have. Ditto for them. Instead, the U.S. now has about 12,000 "strategic" warheads—each a portable Auschwitz—and about another 12,000 "tactical" ones—many equal to the Hiroshima bomb. The Soviets have similar amounts. Either of us, or both of us, could reduce our arsenals to something like the Szilard levels without endangering deterrence, and the U.S. would possibly then be in a *better* place to change Soviet behavior.

In regard to Israel: both Likkud and Labor governments have said over and over that Israel would like there to be a nuclear weapons-free zone in the Middle East. Why should Israel, at this moment the only nuclear-capable state in the region, not be satisfied with the status quo? Because Israeli governments know that the status quo will not last forever. If we do not shift direction toward world disarmament, a Middle East government or organization hostile to Israel will someday build, beg, borrow, or steal H-bombs. When that day comes, Israel will be in great peril, regardless of whether or not it has its own H-bombs. For one bomb could, *chas v' chalila*, destroy the entire state. And Israel's own possession of weapons for deterrence will not work very well if Israel is not sure from whom the attack might come or against whom it would retaliate.

Mr. Vogel's assumption that Israel is inferior in conventional weapons to such states as Syria or Iraq and would need to use nuclear weapons to respond to a conventional attack is rendered questionable by the results of the Lebanon invasion and by independent judgments of strategic analysts who calculate that Israel is militarily the fourth strongest state in the world. There is strong evidence that so long as the peace treaty with Egypt is preserved, Israel will be militarily more than equal to any combination of other Arab states. So Israel's need for nuclear forces to deter or defeat "conventional" attack is probably not as high as Mr. Vogel assumes.

But I do not call for Israel to renounce actual or potential nuclear weapons unilaterally. I *do* think that it is vital for Israeli policy to pursue both the creation of a nuclear weapons-free zone in the Middle East and worldwide nuclear disarmament.

One question that the Jewish community might put to itself is how best to assist Israel in achieving such a government's own desire. Certainly we could all breathe easier if Tel Aviv and Jerusalem were safe from nuclear attack.

## On Nuclear Madness Triumphs

To the Editor:

The polemic entitled "Nuclear Madness Triumphs Again," which appears as an editorial in Volume 1, Number 2 of *Tikkun*, warrants a response. The piece not only repeats all the old shibboleths about the evil Pentagon and the reasonable Russians, but it reaches the conclusion that those who are concerned about defending this country must be "insane."

No, dear editor, those who worry seriously about defending the United States against an imperialist power armed with a massive force of nuclear missiles and the most powerful conventional forces on earth are not insane. It is hardly madness to try to find a better way to assure Western security than living under the threat of instant annihilatioon by over 10,000 Soviet strategic warheads.

For the first time there is a real hope that we can move beyond Mutual Assured Destruction to a system that can protect this country and our allies against the most deadly of weapons, the intercontinental ballistic missile with thermonuclear warheads. If our generation does nothing else, *this* is worth doing.

Your concern about war, or at least the possibility of death and destruction, through technological error, is well-justified. It is one of the reasons we need our own strategic defenses (as the Soviets have theirs around Moscow) against at least an accidental launch or a limited launch by a madman.

Today, components of the Strategic Defense Initiative are technologically feasible and deployable in less than a decade. Some are especially appropriate for defense against tactical ballistic missiles, which is why Israel and our principal NATO allies are now supporting SDI enthusiastically. But most important, U.S. strategic defenses would enhance deterrence. By making an attack less likely to succeed, an attack is less likely to occur.

Concerning your comment that no serious scientist thinks that defenses could be developed that would knock out enough incoming missiles to prevent destruction of large sections of the U.S. population, it is important to remember that the main goal of SDI is deterrence. Any level of defense deters somewhat, and highly effective defense deters considerably.

On December 15, 1986, Dr. Fredercik Seitz, President emeritus of Rockefeller University and Past President of the National Academy of Sciences, together with four eminent colleagues, issued a preliminary report on the deployment of missile defenses in the 1990s. This report by top scientists describes a three-layered missile defense using kinetic energy weapons and known technology, which could be deployed beginning in seven years. The report claims it would be "well above

99 percent" effective if the decoy discrimination problem in the mid-course layer can be solved. Even without solving that problem, the proposed defenses would have "an effectiveness of 90 percent or more." That is 90 percent better than what we have now, which is zero protection against ballistic missiles.

Finally, your editorial repeats the plaintive hope of years past for "security through nuclear disarmament," disregarding Soviet violations of the SALT and ABM agreements, and the massive buildup of offensive nuclear power that the Soviets undertook in the 1970s under those "arms control" agreements, and in the face of significant U.S. restraint. We must rely in the future on our own defenses, rather than agreements the other side fails to honor.

James T. Hackett
National Security Editor
The Heritage Foundation

To the Editor:

"Nuclear Madness Triumphs Again" (Vol. 1, No. 2) cites several excellent reasons for opposing the Strategic Defense Initiative. But the most important reason is this: SDI and all the debate over it diverts attention from the most pressing goal of our time: negotiating total, omnilateral nuclear disarmament.

For most of the nuclear era, administrations held that any exchange of nuclear weapons on any scale would be tantamount to Armageddon. The Carter Administration began advancing the idea that a "limited" nuclear war was not only feasible, but could be "won." Now the Reagan Administration makes an even more dangerous case: we don't have to worry about any nuclear exchange because Star Wars will protect us.

As the failure of the Iceland Summit proves, SDI is not a bargaining chip for nuclear arms limitation: it is the most significant impediment to nuclear disarmament. As the debate over SDI absorbs more and more energy, the goal of nuclear disarmament recedes farther and farther into the background. The survival of humanity requires that total disarmament be the first priority. SDI and other diversions must be abandoned.

W.S. Weiss
Summit, New Jersey



# Publisher's Page

Our Editorial Board suggested last fall, and we agreed, that it would be a good idea to have a selection of several articles representing different points of view about one important contemporary concern in each succeeding issue of *Tikkun*. This special focus, which would take up about one quarter of the magazine, would allow readers to look at the concern from several vantage points. It would also act as a collective reference point—over a period of time we could reflect back upon that cluster of articles, refine the existing ideas, disagree with them and come up with more creative and useful alternatives.

Having made the decision to have a special focus in each magazine, we set about creating the issue you have in hand. In our enthusiasm for this idea, we decided to have two foci instead of one: the Renewal of the Democratic Party and Rethinking the Holocaust. We chose the Democratic Party, because the country has just come through the November elections with a strong Democratic showing and because the Iran scandal appears to be undermining the Reagan administration's credibility. We think that it is crucial to immediately start talking about how the Democrats could respond to the swing in the nation's mood by rethinking their goals, developing a more sensitive understanding of the American people and mobilizing themselves for effective action.

Likewise, we chose the Holocaust as a focus because of our realization that it is an enormously troublesome and important issue that is not going away as time goes by. Reagan's trip to Bitburg and the current revisionist debate in Europe seem to have made more apparent the need to pay attention to the Holocaust. Also, right wing forces within the Jewish world have shown us how the Holocaust can be used to justify oppressive policies. As an indication of the unsettledness of the issue, over half of the unsolicited manuscripts coming into our office are connected in some way with the Holocaust. People are struggling to make sense of what the Holocaust was, what it means for us today, what lessons we can learn from it for the future, and how it plays itself out in our individual lives and our collective consciousness.

We are extremely pleased that *Tikkun* is becoming a place for interesting and intelligent debate. As you can see in the Current Debate section, articles appearing in these pages are generating serious dialogue. Our hope is that this kind of discussion will help readers sort through their thinking about the issues raised and that over time we will together develop creative and different ways of making our world a better place for all its inhabitants.

Because of our desire to include enough material about the Democratic Party and the Holocaust to insure a variety of perspectives on each subject, this issue is longer than preceding issues. Our next issue, the fourth in our first year, will be the same length as issues one and two. The big news is that because of the enormously strong reader response to *Tikkun*, we will be publishing bimonthly starting in July. Additional 1987 issues will appear in September and November. Although the magazine will be somewhat shorter, the switch from quarterly to bimonthly will allow us to present more of the thought-provoking material coming into our office.

We are frequently asked by readers about the media's reaction to *Tikkun*. As an update, Rabbi Meir Kahane issued a powerful denunciation of us in the Jewish press in November—we consider that high praise. Several European newspapers, including the *Observer* in England and *Die Zeit* in Germany have written about *Tikkun* as an anticonservative force in the U.S. And in the *Village Voice* (Nov. 11, 1986), Geoffrey Stokes said that "it's hard not to be struck by the richness and intelligence of *Tikkun*'s second issue."

As this issue goes to press, *Tikkun's* editor and publisher are preparing for their wedding. We came together through our commitment to work for a better world, the same commitment that generated *Tikkun*. Being part of a larger community of people who share our concerns, the "Tikkun community," strengthens and supports us in our commitment. □

# Editorials

## *Iran, the Contras and the Jews*

The arms shipment to Iran and diversion of profits to the contras is only the most highly publicized of a long list of immoral acts by the Reagan Administration. The sharp decrease in programs for the poor, resulting most visibly in the dramatic growth of homelessness, coupled with policies that transfer wealth from the poorest sector of our society to the richest, testifies to the callousness of American conservatives. The veto of sanctions against South Africa, along with the attempt to roll back affirmative action, demonstrates an insensitivity at the highest level of government—an attitude which has set the context for local outbreaks of racist violence such as that recently witnessed in Howard Beach, New York. Creating huge debts to pay for inflated military budgets while allowing America's core industries and agriculture to sink into deeper crisis is the kind of recklessness by one generation against the future that is only matched by Reagan's systematic refusal to make the compromises necessary to halt the international nuclear arms race.

Even so, the Iran/contra scandal deserves the special attention it has received for three major reasons: (1) It is a dramatic enactment of the moral bankruptcy of an American conservatism that promised to restore respect for moral values. (2) It is an important validation of the as-yet-unlearned lesson the antiwar movement of the 1960s tried to teach the nation: you cannot pursue unpopular and antidemocratic policies abroad without eventually having to attack democracy at home. (3) It conclusively demonstrates the fallacy of thinking that Jewish vulnerability can be overcome by tying our fate or the fate of the State of Israel to America's ruling elites and their foreign policy objectives.

America's disillusionment with Reagan starts on the moral level. People liked Reagan because he seemed to break through the normal moral cynicism of domestic politics—and to really stand for principles that he would fight for. Even those of us who opposed the content of those principles hoped that his style—a seeming willingness to fight for what he thought was right—might rub off on the Democrats and help them understand that the American people deeply desire a moral vision in politics. Instead, what we have seen has been a reversion to "politics as usual"—with conservatives abandoning all talk of moral leadership and instead trying to promote endless excuses for Reagan's moral blindness. And the Democrats, eager to show that they are "responsible," have kept their investigations so close to "the facts" that they fail to articulate the moral outrage that can be the only justification for keeping our focus on the scandal. Without a clear moral focus, the facts threaten quickly to become so boring that the country will lose interest, and then it really will be easier for the conservatives to portray the whole thing as a politically inspired vendetta against Reagan. Only by transcending the facts, by insisting on the larger moral and political meaning of the scandal, can the current issue be elevated from opportunism to a deeper significance.

Not only are conservatives cynically failing to condemn the way that Reagan systematically lied to his country about foreign policy. They are also using this opportunity to launch a new offensive against democratic values, attempting to enshrine Reagan's behavior as a new standard for "a great nation." Many conservative columnists are even now drawing the lesson that if the U.S. wishes to maintain its power in the world, it should give up its expectations that foreign policy will be subject to democratic control. These alleged "realists" are strong believers in the primacy of military power over principle. Democratic Party centrists fail to make a strong ethical critique because they share these values. Their complaint is only that a few of them should have been consulted—and their outrage is not with the substance of what Reagan did, but with the White House failure to "play by the rules" (which these centrists will not elaborate in greater detail). But liberals have a deeper critique—because we object to a foreign policy that supports anti-democratic forces, whether they be the Ayatollah or the contras. And it is no surprise to us that manipulating to support American imperial power abroad eventually leads to a decrease of democracy at home.

These same "realists" in both parties who would willingly sacrifice American democracy at home as long as they themselves are part of the process of decision making cannot comprehend the democratic impulses that lead people throughout Central and South America to struggle against the American supported dictatorships and oligarchs. By dismissing these struggles as "subversion" and "communism," by ignoring the legitimate aspiration of these people for the same economic and political freedoms that we enjoy in North America, they self-fulfillingly push the oppressed into the hand of the Soviet Union. This, in turn, gives the "realists" the very proof they wanted that the revolution deserves to be overthrown.

The result is that tens of millions of people, our

neighbors to the south, are forced to choose between living in intolerable oppression or joining revolutionary movements that will ultimately have to fight the United States. These people deserve a better set of alternatives.

We have no particular love for the Sandinistas. Their suppression of civil liberties, while arguably a response to the external threat to the revolution created by the U.S. and its proxies, is inexcusable. But the Nicaraguan revolution is broader and deeper than its present leadership—and the incredibly powerful, democratic aspirations of the Nicaraguan people need to be nurtured rather than overturned. However flawed that revolution, the United States' attempt to reimpose a new ruling class can only lead to years of bloodshed and unnecessary suffering. If, instead, the U.S. were to provide massive economic aid to Central American countries whose economics were forcibly underdeveloped by American corporate interests in the past, and were to to couple that with a genuine program of people-to-people aid and training, we would in the not-so-long run save lives and strengthen the democratic forces in the region.

There would be no civil war in Nicaragua today if the United States did not help create, train, and arm the contras. If Reagan's moral blunders slow military aid or support for that war then the Iran/contra scandal may be a true blessing. We should prolong and dramatize the scandal not to make partisan hay (after all, if the liberals were honest they would admit that lying to the country is something that they themselves tended to downplay when it was President Johnson in the White House systematically lying for years about the war in Vietnam), but to keep fresh in the minds of Americans this central message: if we really believe in democracy at home, we will have to oppose those who do not care about the democratic rights of others abroad.

* * *

Now, in the middle of all this mess, who should turn up but the Jews!!!!

It's a classic set-up: the kind that is the basis for much contemporary anti-Semitism.

Throughout the history of the West, ruling elites have used the Jews as their "front-men" for policies and practices that were unpopular. Faced with economic or political unrest, feudal rulers could provide an outlet for the anger that people rightly felt about their own oppressive condition: the Jews were the problem ("they killed Christ," or "they poisoned the wells," or "they stole our community's wealth"). In Eastern Europe particularly, the Jews were set up as the tax collectors, inn-keepers, merchants who sold what others produced, and foremen at the factories that others owned—in short, they were the public faces of a developing capitalist order over which they had little real power. Anti-Semitism cannot simply be reduced to Christian ideology or to an ontological "fear of the other." The Jews were hated because people correctly felt powerless and manipulated by a larger economic order they did not understand, and then were encouraged to take out their frustrations on the Jews. The Jews were wrongfully blamed—but there were real crimes. Ironically, the Jews often had to cozy up to those who used them as scapegoats because these rulers had the power to throw the Jews out of their country altogether (as they actually had done in Spain, England, France, and parts of Germany, and as the Czar attempted to do in the late 19th century).

The fantasy of Zionism was that it would end this dependent relationship and the corresponding vulnerability of the Jews. But building a Zionism without establishing peaceful relationships with the people who already lived in Palestine—a choice that was tragically imposed on the Jews by the triumph of anti-Semitism in Europe—has generated a new dependency. Faced with the implacable hostility of her neighbors, Israel has been driven increasingly into economic and military dependency on the United States.

This dependency is bad for Israel and it is bad for the Jews. It is bad for Israel because it creates internal distortions in Israeli policy. Instead of adopting responsible economic policies, Israelis have generated a high standard of living by allowing the U.S. to bail them out of economic problems. Militarily, Israelis have been encouraged to believe that U.S. arms and technology can make their enemies magically disappear. Quite oblivious to the fact that the U.S. is equally content to sell arms to all sides, naively believing that they could make common cause with American cold warriors who had only years before disdained Israel and its needs, the Israelis have allowed their dependency on the U.S. military arsenal to take the place of the serious commitment to a reconciliation with Palestinians that is Israel's only long-term hope for survival.

The Iran scandal shows how tenuous this tie really is. In a fix, the President's first move was to blame Israel. In 1987 the White House still suggests that Jews, trying to reap a profit from American weapons, had really masterminded the whole deal, pushing pliant Americans into this mess! One can easily imagine how Israeli politicians, anxious to show their usefulness to America's rulers, would try to help the President's National security staff figure out how to solve its problems. One can even imagine how some Israelis would feel that as long as Iran and Iraq continue to fight each other they are less likely to dedicate their energies to pursuing their one shared goal: destroying the State of

Israel. The outrage is to suddenly portray the U.S., the force that Israelis try to "play up to," as having been pushed into the whole Iran/contra scandal by scheming Jews. Here we get the typical inversion of Jews into the mysteriously powerful force manipulating history that is standard fare of anti-Semites—now being fed to the nation by the Reaganites.

Yet this explanation could only seem plausible because Israeli arms merchants did ship arms to Iran and may have played a role in delivering arms and money to the contras. In fact, at America's behest, Israel has shipped arms to many Central and South American dictatorships, and to South Africa as well. (As always, in this kind of situation, there are Israelis all too happy to make a profit along the way—and these arms merchants use their profits to support politicians who tell the Israeli public that such sales are "in the national interest.") What a tragedy that the Jewish people should allow their state to be used in such a disgraceful manner. We have much reason to critique Israeli profiteers and politicians who, functioning from a position of fundamental powerlessness, nevertheless manage to advance their own personal interests by being overly enthusiastic representatives of the real powers whose interests they have chosen to serve. These people do a disservice to Israel and to the Jewish people by allowing Israel to be portrayed as happily arming and supporting repressive forces around the world. Yet this is the price that Israel must pay for its continued dependency on the United States.

It is a price that generates new anti-Semitism throughout the world. Just as previous ruling elites managed to deflect criticism onto the Jews, so now the public face of the United States' imperial ventures is Israel. Unsophisticated about our history, people around the world are developing a distaste for Jews not based on religious differences, but on their current experience with the Jewish state.

Nevertheless, Israel's military dependency is real—after all, the Soviets have armed the vicious Assad dictatorship in Syria, and Israel could be militarily wiped out without U.S. support in a military crisis. It cannot overnight repudiate its ties with the United States—though it could certainly do a better job of resisting pressures to act as a middleman in some extreme cases. The dependency is tragic and calls into question some aspects of the original justification for Zionism, but it does not call for morally unequivocal and one-sided denunciation of the people of Israel.

Yet the moral calculus is quite different for American Jews. We can and should speak out not only because of our moral values, but also to defend the best interests of Israel. We should be outraged at the United States' attempt to set up the Jews once again. We should demand that our government stop blaming Israel and stop pressuring or encouraging Israel to sell weapons to the various pariah states in the world. We should do everything possible to separate the interests of the Jewish people and Israel from the interests of the elite in America that wishes to maintain its world power by supporting undemocratic regimes.

The first focus of our opposition must be on those conservatives in the American Jewish world who have tied our interests to America's ruling elite. However well-intentioned this move, these leaders have actually sold out the Jewish people and once again put us in a position of heightened vulnerability. Their claim to be "realists" who know how to protect our real interests has been shown to be a total sham. Now more than ever, with the Iran/contra scandal fresh in our minds, we need to repudiate this approach and to empower a new leadership that can speak honestly about these issues, that can explain to the world the unfortunate conditions that have made Israel so dependent on the U.S., and that can help say the things that Israelis may be unable to say for themselves without risking total cessation of U.S. military aid. Both morality and prudence require this shift.

## *The Oppression of Gays*

Recent court decisions in America appear to be clearing the way for a renewed offensive against gays. While we hope that the Iran/contra scandal will preoccupy Reagan and Meese, preventing them from spearheading this assault, we are deeply disturbed by the continuation of anti-gay sentiments among large sections of our population. While changes in attitudes cannot be legislated, what can be legislated is full protection for the rights of every human being regardless of sexual preference. We support all such efforts to prohibit discrimination against gays in employment or housing.

The hands of the Jewish world are not entirely clean in these matters. The Jewish community has never acknowledged its gay population, much less provided services and caring for it. Synagogues and community institutions that are remarkably open and innovative in most other areas have been inexcusably insensitive to the needs of gays. Overt and covert discrimination against gays in the Jewish community must be fought. We are heartened by the emergence of groups within the Jewish community who are raising these important issues, and also by the response of many "nonestablishment" Jews who are opening their communities to our gay brothers and sisters.

## *Liberalization in the Soviet Union?*

We will believe it when we see it!

Of course, any increase in freedom is to be welcomed. Even the tiny token gestures that Gorbachev has taken and which have received so much press attention. But for us, liberalization, to have any real meaning in affecting how we evaluate the Soviet Union, must bring the following:

1. Total freedom for the Jews—all Jews—to emigrate. Let our people go! No country that forcibly keeps its population within its borders can be much more than a large prison camp. While it may take some time to develop a general policy for all its peoples, a first step would be to let the Jews freely emigrate without facing economic or political sanctions. For those Jews who stay: the government must allow total freedom of religion, purge the Communist Party of those who have been stirring up the all-too-burning embers of Russian anti-Semitism, and publicly acknowledge the mistakes that were made in denying the Jewish people the same kind of cultural and religious autonomy that it allows other ethnic groups and the distortions in Russian history that have been taught by not focusing on the problem of anti-Semitism and on the special persecution of the Jews by the Nazis and by the Stalinists.

2. Basic human rights for all citizens, not just for a few prominent "dissidents." While we are delighted that Sakharov and others may be allowed to carry on a freer debate within elite circles in Moscow, liberalization means little until it extends to people at the local level. This must include, as a minimum, the freedom to organize political opposition, the right to freedom of speech, assembly and the press, the dismantling of the elaborate system of political repression, the freeing and providing compensation for political prisoners, and the introduction of democratic procedures within the Communist Party.

Of course, we realize that this second point may take some time to institute. The Soviet Union has good reason to be afraid that the United States, instead of playing a positive role in encouraging a real liberalization, would immediately seek to use its own extensive contacts in Eastern Europe to foster subversion and attempts to break Russian domination in Warsaw Bloc countries. Just as America's ruling elite violated its own principles of civil liberties and democratic freedoms when it judged its own power to be endangered during the Vietnam War protests (and justified this in the name of "national security,") so we can expect that the Soviets will be unwilling to allow liberalization to be a cover for an overthrow of their rule. So the introduction of real human rights for all its citizens may need to be phased in over time, and in such a way as to not threaten the fundamentals of their system.

But there is no similar plausible case to be made for failure to give full rights of emigration to the Jews. This is a necessary first step before we will be willing to believe that we are looking at a meaningful process. □

# Ronald Reagan and the Politics of History

*Michael Wallace*

Last November, after years of flawless performance, Ronald Reagan's personal Star Wars defense shield malfunctioned and an Irangate missile broke through to the White House. The impact of the ensuing blast was devastating and its fallout—the nosedive of the President's popularity in the opinion polls—was startling. But it was also puzzling. It was not, after all, the first time Reagan had been caught preaching one thing and practicing another. How, after being impervious to facticity for so long, was he rendered so suddenly vulnerable?

Part of the answer lies in the nature of Ronald Reagan's virtuoso performance as a symbolmonger. The President constructed and dwelt within a rhetorical sphere in which the laws of contradiction did not apply. In this enchanted garden he spent his days spinning golden words which he may (or may not) have believed but which he could (and did) project with winsome sincerity. Many in the nationwide audience consumed his symbolic speech with complicitous delight or bedazzled acquiescence. Many were quite prepared to overlook his discrepancies, to accept that his task was to proclaim virtue but not necessarily to embody it. But there was one symbolic construction that required special care and attention, for it was the foundation saga of his own Presidency—Ron Reagan, The Man Who Hung Tough with the Ayatollah. When, through temptation, foolhardiness, or incompetence, he presided over the dealings that stretched the disjunction between rhetoric and reality too far, he (as it were) skewered his own symbolic heart. The nature of the finale followed from the nature of the first act. It was as if a spell snapped, a balloon punctured, a house of cards collapsed.

Those of us who have viewed the Reagan years as disastrous ones for the country and the world can only hope that his setback will limit the amount of damage he can wreak in his remaining time in office. But even if his misstep does prove, happily, to be a terminal one, it shouldn't distract us from remembering that he has had a long and brilliant run. Indeed it is imperative, as we move into the post Reagan era, to begin to assess how the man was able to accomplish what he did. Was Reagan himself instrumental in the neo-conservatives' success? Can his role be replicated by others on the Right? If so, are there ways in which an opposition movement can counter the strategies Reagan developed so superbly and thus help prevent an instant replay of the last depressing decade? In the following contribution to a historical postmortem on Reaganism, I will be concerned less with the dramatic denouement of Irangate, than with analyzing the way Reaganism's symbolic structure was constructed in the first place. The way ahead, I suggest, lies through a detour back to the beginning.

* * *

One of the first things Ronald Reagan did on entering the White House was to conduct a purge of Presidential portraits. Down from the place of honor in the Cabinet Room came Thomas Jefferson. Up went Calvin Coolidge. A clear enough indication, had more been needed, of the impending neo-conservative attempt to return the country to the golden days of the Dollar Decade, before the New Deal and Great Society were even gleams in secular humanist eyes. But to a historian, the purge signalled something else, the arrival in power of an Administration that intended to wage symbolic war on the terrain of history.

Reagan and his colleagues set out both to claim historical pedigree for contemporary right wing policies and to reconstruct an edifice of historical explanation that was largely dismantled, by professional historians and popular protest, in the 1960s and 1970s. Several of his forays into the past received national, even worldwide attention. But the degree to which interventions around historical interpretation became central to his presidency has been perhaps insufficiently appreciated. Consider the following checklist of skirmishes he and his intellectual outriders initiated along the temporal front:

- Reaganites wheeled out some of their biggest rhetorical battalions in an attempt to destroy the "Vietnam Syndrome," that annoying cluster of public memories impeding their filibustering in Central America. To reverse widely held negative assessments of America's Vietnam endeavor, they insisted the war was

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a legitimate, indeed "noble" effort to bar Communist expansion; made stab-in-the-back pronouncements about the media's and the antiwar movement's responsibility for the war's failure; did end runs around the prevailing antipathy by trying to smuggle a blurred Vietnam experience into the pantheon of popularly accepted American wars; and baldly rewrote Southeast Asian history. Reagan, for example, claimed that before French colonization, North and South Vietnam were two separate countries; that it was Ho Chi Minh who refused to participate in the elections mandated by the 1954 Geneva Conference; that unarmed American advisers in South Vietnam were attacked with "pipe bombs"; and that in reaction JFK authorized sending "a division of Marines." Each of these statements was totally untrue. Taken together they produced a false narrative which transformed America's intervention into a virtuous response to Communist wickedness. This, in turn, contributed to his larger project of restoring America's Sir Galahad self-image—badly tarnished by the hellish realities of the Indochina war and the exposure, by a generation of historians, of some of the darker aspects of the American past—and helped resurrect the imperial culture that sped us along the road to Vietnam in the first place.

• At Bitburg, Reagan recast the history of yet another military conflict, the Second World War, again trying to alter or bury memories that hindered right wing geopolitical initiatives. At first he straightforwardly argued against "reawakening the memories" of the Holocaust "because we now find ourselves allied and friends of the countries that we once fought against...." Seeking to obliterate an inconvenient but obdurate legacy he asserted: "I don't think we ought to focus on the past. I want to focus on the future. I want to put that history behind me." (Perhaps the President thought this an attainable goal because of his belief that "the German people have very few alive that even remember the war, and certainly none of them who were adults and participating in any way.") When it became clear that induced amnesia was politically unfeasible, he assayed a reinterpretation of Nazism, reducing that complex historical phenomenon to "one man's totalitarian dictatorship." It was this analysis exempting all Germans but Hitler from responsibility for the war that facilitated his infamous proposition that the Waffen SS entombed at Bitburg "were victims, just as surely as the victims in the concentration camps."

• Reagan sought to legitimate his obsession with overthrowing the Sandinistas by justification-through-historical analogy, calling the contras—that collection of hireling thugs and hit men prowling the borders of Nicaragua—the "moral equivalent" of the "Founding Fathers." Supporting this canard on the generation of 1776 required overlooking the contras' Somocista heritage, their butchery of civilians, their drug running proclivities, and their complete reliance on outside funding (which, if we must indulge in historical analogies, made them the modern day equivalent not of George Washington's troops but of the Hessians, George III's hired gunslingers). The larger insistence that the Nicaraguan Revolution was the brainchild of Soviet imperialists required obliviousness to the long history of U.S. interventions in Central America: American Marines stormed ashore in Nicaragua before the Bolshevik Revolution had even transpired.

*At Bitburg, Reagan recast history, . . . trying to alter or bury memories that hindered right wing geopolitcal initiatives.*

• On the domestic front, Reagan and the neo-conservatives, in order to legitimate turning the American clock back to 1920, propagated a pseudo-historical analysis of the rise of the federal government. The right wing's assault on state power—or, more precisely, on those aspects of it which they did not like—rested on the bogus proposition that Big Government grew and grew in response to demands by Blacks, welfare chiselers, do-gooders and federal bureaucrats, and then sat, like a fat dragon, on the backs of beleaguered corporations, squashing entrepreneurial initiative, until its victims prevailed on Sir Ronald to drive it away. Purveying such a line helped immeasurably in garnering political support for budget cuts and tax reforms that favored the rich. But making this interpretation plausible required eluding a variety of facts: that the surge of big government in the 1930s was part of a desperate attempt to save a collapsed capitalism from its own failures; that Washington's growth in the 1940s was due first to the war, and then to the establishment of a postwar military apparatus which was cheered on by the defense contractors and multinational corporations whose interests abroad it helped support; that the ballooning of the Federal Government in the 1950s and 1960s was, in large measure, a corporate-applauded use of public resources to underwrite private profitability (highway construction made auto company dividends possible) or to stave off challenges to the stability of the system by ameliorating the damage, to people and the environment, created by its workings.

• Elsewhere on the home front, Reagan stood guard at the gate of the traditional American Pantheon of heroes, barring unwanted intruders. Recall here his

support for Jesse Helms's campaign to block Martin Luther King's birthday from being made a national holiday, on the grounds that King might yet be proved a Communist. Heroizing King, it was feared, would put a crimp in right wing efforts to dismantle the fruits of the civil rights movement, and give comfort to the political constituency—American Blacks—who were Reagan's most committed enemies.

• Reagan seized upon the occasion of the 1986 ceremonies rededicating the Statue of Liberty to distort the history of the "immigrant experience," less to legitimate a particular policy than to undergird a general ideology. In various addresses, the President argued that the "secret of our progress, our power, and our prosperity" is that we were a "striving, God-fearing, self-reliant people." At the heart of the Reagan reading of the history of immigration was the "up-from-poverty" saga of the model white ethnics. They, the story goes, escaped squalor and repression and came to the land of opportunity, where American freedom made it possible for them to climb the social ladder through their own individual, family, and community efforts, without help from big government or the taxpayer. Success, we were given to understand, is an "individual" not a collective achievement, and "freedom" means free enterprise.

*Reagan's immersion in The World that Hollywood Built—an imaginative construct that includes a historical dimension—was a major source of the mythic iconography he carried around in his political unconscious.*

This version of the immigrant experience simultaneously flattered now-comfortable ethnics by lionizing their ancestors as rugged and successful individualists, and legitimated the right wing's attempt to dismantle the New Deal. It also suggested that contemporary immigrants and Blacks should rely on themselves, and implied their depressed situation was a temporary phenomenon. In time, Blacks, Asians, and Hispanics, too, will move to the suburbs. And if they don't, the record of prior immigrant success suggests that modern failure is a matter of insufficient grit and determination. This approach abstracts the very real braveries of individual immigrants and sets them in the service of a corporate politics. Moreover, it obscures the crucial historical fact that older ethnics (and Blacks) were instrumental in creating precisely the institutions and practices currently despised by the Right—labor unions, the New Deal, unemployment insurance, social security, old age pensions, civil rights, GI benefits, and health care—all the things, that is, that provided the collective underpinning for individual efforts and successes.

To summarize, the Administration launched an aggressive and broad based attack on prevailing understandings of the past.

Now it might be argued that this was an unexceptionable, indeed perfectly legitimate project. There is, after all, no such thing as a single historical "truth." All history is a human production—a deliberate selection, ordering and evaluation of past events, experiences and processes. Consequently there have always been and will always be great differences amongst those who issue and defend competing constructions of the past. My generation of professional historians had overturned much of the established wisdom of the 1940s and 1950s, and Reagan—quite deliberately—set out to overturn *us*.

Back in 1970, in a speech entitled "Ours is Not a Sick Society," Reagan blamed student unrest on intellectuals who misled them: "I have news for [the students]—in a thousand social science courses, they have been taught 'the way it is *not*'." "One of my dreams," he told the American Bar Association in 1983, "is to help Americans rise above pessimism by renewing their belief in themselves." This enterprise had a specifically historical dimension: "Our cause," he said, "must be to rediscover, reassert, and reapply America's spiritual heritage to our national affairs." Such blemishes as marred that heritage were inconsequential: "Whatever sad episodes exist in our past, any objective observer must hold a positive view of American history, a history that has been the story of hopes fulfilled and dreams made into reality."

In 1981 Reagan addressed the Notre Dame graduating class:

> Now, I know that in this period of your life, you have been and are critically looking at the mores and customs of the past and questioning their value. Every generation does that. May I suggest, don't discard the time-tested values upon which civilization was built simply because they're old. More important, don't let today's doom criers and cynics persuade you that the best is past, that from here on it's all downhill.... My hope today is that in the years to come and come they shall—when it's your time to explain to another generation the meaning of the past and thereby hold out to them the promise of their future, that you'll recall the truths and traditions of which we've spoken. It is these truths and traditions that define our civilization and make

up our national heritage. And now, they're yours to protect and pass on."

The sleight of hand here is that what Reagan laid out for us was "the truth." Apart from the disturbingly dogmatic quality of the assertion (Reagan presented himself as sole possessor of the truth rather than more modestly claiming that his interpretation of events better encompassed the available evidence), the problem here is that, as we have noted, Reagan's historical pronouncements (like many of his statements about current affairs) were riddled with inaccuracies and falsehoods. He consistently refused to be bound by the historical profession's cardinal rule—you can't make up facts to suit your theories. No self-respecting historian, of whatever political persuasion, would have published the steady stream of untruths that Reagan did, and if she or he did, they would have been summarily drummed out of the profession.

Indeed, a small industry emerged that was devoted to chronicling the President's misstatements about contemporary and historical events. Within it, a heated debate sprang up about how to interpret the Reagan "reign of error." Some thought he spoke incorrectly on details but got the essentials right. Others thought him an ignorant but genial fool. A third group saw him as a conscious, habitual liar. Christopher Hitchens, for instance, derided the image of Reagan as "a hapless blooper merchant" and insisted that his presidency "has been a sort of experiment in the limits of mendacity, made even more objectionable by its presentation as a 'wing-and-a-prayer' inspired amateurism." But the debate's choices between deceit, ignorance, and excessive enthusiasm were too restrictive.

To be sure, Reagan lied. He had been doing so for a long time. Back in 1937, when Reagan was exploring a movie career and an agent asked about his experience, he responded by markedly embellishing the reality, reasoning, he tells us in his autobiography, that "a little lying in a good cause wouldn't hurt." (A phrase that could neatly have served as the credo of the Irangate operation.) But even Hitchens wondered if at least some of the roots of Reagan's mendacity didn't run below the threshold of purposive consciousness. He recalled the President's preposterous 1983 assertion, to Israeli Prime Minister Yitzak Shamir, that he (the Hollywood warrior) had actually assisted in the liberation of the Nazi death camps. In 1984 Reagan repeated the claim—to Simon Wiesenthal, no less. Hitchens argued that this "is an insult to the victims whose moral credit he is trying to appropriate. It is an insult to those who did risk their lives. And it is a lie. In fact, given the certainty of detection, it almost counts as a pathological lie." Now it is true that Reagan's mind repeatedly slipped between remembering things the way they were and the way he would have liked them to be. But this is, after all, a common enough failing, and only if carried to extremes is it evidence of a psychotic inability to distinguish reality from fantasy. But the deeper problem with Hitchen's perspective was not that it was wrong, rather that it rooted the problem too narrowly in Reagan's personal psyche.

It is more profitable to take the flagrantly cavalier quality of Reagan's rhetoric as being a clue that he was operating *outside* the domain of history and thus did not deem himself subject to its canons of scholarship. The President, I think, repeatedly sidled over the border—at times hard to discern but nevertheless very real—between history and myth. The historical disinformation he retailed with such conviction can better be understood as an attempt *not* to produce revisionist history but to perpetuate (or resuscitate) a structure of myths.[1]

Myth, more readily than history, forgives the subordination of facts to the higher end of value creation. There exists, admittedly, a great deal of romanticized, sentimentalized and sycophantic history, but the *ideal* of the profession insists on a continual dialectical interaction between theoretical practice and empirical reality. The Reagan approach soared happily above the messy, complex, poignant, painful and contingent ground of history into a stratosphere of idealized fantasies, and did so without remorse or fear of contradiction by facts.

If the Reagan approach was mythic, it had less in common with, say, Greek tragedians, than with such contemporary American mythmasters as the "imagineers" of Disneyworld. Their approach, as summarized by one of their ranks, is instructive: "What we create is a 'Disney Realism,' sort of Utopian in nature, where we carefully program out all the negative, unwanted elements and program in the positive elements." Sure "Main Street" (a supposed recreation of the town where Walt grew up) isn't the way it *really* was. Rather: "This is what the real Main Street should have been like." Compare this with the procedures of those who

1. I want to emphasize that none of this is in any way to suggest that all right wing interpretations of the past are inherently mythic (which would be a thinly disguised way of asserting that my brand of history is true and those with which I disagree are myths, i.e., false). At this moment, conservative professional historians are, quite properly, locked in confrontation with the critical scholarship of the last generation. But they have had much tougher sledding than Reagan had. Precisely because they are historians, they must engage in real intellectual combat. They must develop plausible revisionist counter-perspectives and support them with evidence. Reagan, on the other hand, simply jumped over the mass of recent historical studies and landed back amidst the old verities.

manage Reagan's political advertising. In the 1984 presidential campaign, Assistant White House Chief of Staff Richard Darman issued a revealing memo on rhetorical strategy: "Paint Ronald Reagan," he ordered speechwriters, "as the personification of all that is right with or heroized by America. Leave Mondale in a position where an attack on Reagan is tantamount to an attack on America's idealized image of itself—where a vote against Reagan is in some subliminal sense, a vote against mythic 'AMERICA'."[2]

This whiting out of inconvenient memories, this retrospective tidying up of the past, was not considered to be tampering with the truth, but rather bringing out *deeper* truths. Indeed the mythmaking process exempted its producers from the problem of error. Concern for factual truth became a superficial, surface matter—"the hobgoblin of little minds," to borrow Emerson's phrase—to be subordinated to the presentation of spiritual essences. Reagan spewed out "factoids" which may have been right or wrong, but all of them, like iron filings in a magnetic field, arranged themselves in the same direction; he never made an error that underwrote a pro-Soviet or pro-welfare state reading of history. But the teflon presidency endured as long as it did, not only because Americans considered getting names and dates wrong to be eminently excusable, but because people (quite properly) did not judge myths by the standards of history.

Another reason Reagan's speech was more akin to myth than history is that it embodied non-linear, non-causal ways of understanding the relationship between past and present. Mythmakers, like historians, discern patterns in the past and then present them to their audiences to help them appropriate their circumstances and establish meaning and value in their lives. But they do so by positing immanent metahistorical teleologies. The past becomes merely the record of the working out of an innate or Divine design. This renders the historical project immaterial. It becomes superfluous to analyze the passage of time in order to illuminate its legacy—the matrix of constraints and possibilities which human beings constructed and bequeathed to the present, the matrix within which present actors must work. One resorts to the past only to remember, through rites, rituals, and mythic replays, the moral messages there inscribed.

This approach to time is a widespread one, characteristic of many of the cultures anthropologists track. Its practitioners, ensconced within an enchanted circle of tradition, find the work of the historian irrelevant. They prefer to collapse time, to focus on founding myths, to reject historicity altogether. Their temporal needs are met by symbolically reenacting historical scenarios. They seek not to recollect but to reactualize, not to gain perspective on the past but to fuse past and present, not to temporalize present actors but to identify with former ones. The point of the past is to provide "evidence" for the truth of one or another metahistorical myth. In Reagan's case, "history" becomes the cosmic record of the eternal conflict between good and evil, of which America's struggle with godless communism is merely the latest encounter. As Paul Erickson notes in his illuminating analysis of Reagan's 1964 speech nominating Barry Goldwater for President, the symbolic strategy transformed the crusade for the republicans into an epoch battle on the order of the exodus of the Jews from Egypt, Christ's sacrifice on the cross, and the battle of Concord Bridge.

In fact, a good deal of Reagan's rhetoric dwelt on peculiarly American foundation myths. At the ceremony preceding the re-illumination of the Statue of Liberty, Reagan spoke of John Winthrop (the first Governor of Massachusetts Bay), who, in 1630, just before landing in the New World, told a little group of "Quakers[3] on the tiny deck of the Arabella" that "the eyes of all the world were upon them ... [and] they must be a light unto the nations of all the world—a shining city upon a hill." "Call it mysticism if you will," Reagan went on, "I have always believed there was some divine providence that placed this great land here between the two great oceans, to be found by a special kind of people from every corner of the world." These special people have a global mission: "our work can never be truly done until every man, woman, and child shares in our gift, in our hope, and stands with us in the light of liberty." "We," he concluded, "are the keepers of the flame of liberty. We hold it high tonight for the world to see, a beacon of hope, a light unto the nations."

Reagan's usage of Winthrop illustrates how foundation myths can be put to dangerous ends. Precisely because they are not situated in a specific historical context but rather are abstract emblems or exemplary

2. It is interesting that both Disney and Reagan fudged their *own* histories, bathing fairly wretched childhood experiences in a Norman Rockwell glow. Disney's father was an itinerant failure, given to exploiting and beating his kids until, one by one, they ran off; Reagan's early years were shadowed by his father's alcoholism, unemployment, and constant relocation, years that got gauzed over in his official recollections.

3. A small but characteristically sloppy error: in fact, Winthrop's audience on the Arabella *weren't* Quakers. Winthrop *loathed* the various super-radical sects that sprang up during the English Revolution, and did his best to ban them from Massachusetts (in an early form of immigration restriction). When—two decades later—Quakers *did* come to Massachusetts, Winthrop's legatees responded by lashing them out of town, cropping their ears, and dispatching them by judicial murder.

tales, they may be detached from their actual moorings and redeployed to almost any purpose. The Puritans, though moderates in America, were, in the context of 17th century England, full blown revolutionaries; those who did not flee to Massachusetts would shortly chop off a King's head. The imagery Reagan featured, that is to say, once had *radical* substance, and Thomas Paine's formulation of it, that America would be a "last refuge" from tyranny, was fulfilled many times over the past two hundred years. But Reagan, innocent of the real history, felt free to put the mythicized discourse to profoundly antirevolutionary uses. It required a mood-wrenching effort to remember that the man calling on Americans, "for love of liberty," to "champion, even in times of peril, the cause of human freedom in far-off lands," was, in fact, rallying support for Jonas Savimbi, Augusto Pinochet, Somoza's legatees, and beleaguered Boers trying to stem a planet-wide assault on apartheid. It was the same with his assertion that the contras were "moral equivalents" of the Founding Fathers. By ritually equating a symbolic wellspring of the American experience (the Revolution) with contemporary right wing enterprises, he aimed to forge an indissoluble spiritual link—to foster an identification—between the Founding Fathers, contemporary Americans, and assorted reactionaries around the planet. The mind set he sought to create was a mystic communion impervious to contradiction by facts. Reagan's genius was his ability to construct bastions of a mythic imagination that were impregnable to merely cognitive assaults. Only when he shattered the foundation symbology of his own presidency would he become vulnerable to the legions of reason.

* * *

So far I have suggested that Reagan was able to comfortably (and therefore convincingly) make statements which were dramatically at variance with widely known facts because they were nestled in a supportive context of myth which validated them for believers. But this still leaves two aspects of the matter in need of clarification. How did he come by his mythology? And how was he able to prevail upon large numbers of the American people to share it with him? A partial answer to both questions requires a brief exploration of the relationship between the form and content of Reagan's myths and the subculture of which he was so largely a product—that of Hollywood.

The impact on the President of his years in tinsel town has not gone unnoticed, but a few comments on the cinematic roots of Reagan's sensibility seem warranted here. Some of these are obvious. Reagan spent much of his adult life in a relatively insular world; as even right wing supporters like Paul Weyrich admit, "his Hollywood background has sometimes prevented him from being sensitive enough to the realities that are out there." Then again, the *process* of filmmaking is a model for would-be mythmakers: in the world of filmic make-believe, happy endings could be—were often *required* to be—manufactured at will. Good actors (and even second rate ones) routinely worked themselves into believing their scriptwriters' scenarios. Snippets of celluloid could be abstracted from their original context and redeployed to suit an editor's purpose. And scenes that didn't work well could be left on the cutting room floor.

*Reagan made his audiences into leading characters in a grand drama, and he derided those who promoted a historical analysis that led to passive paralysis.*

More interesting, perhaps, is the impact on Reagan of the *content* of particular films, or types of films. Many people noted Reagan's general reliance on the movies for his images of reality. On one occasion, the President told a White House audience of Jews on Holocaust Day that, unlike right wing extremists who claimed the Holocaust was an invention, he *knew* it had happened because he had seen movies of it. Jules Feiffer suggested, with tongue only partly in cheek, that had he not, "he might today be calling it the Holocaust Theory, as suspicious of the Holocaust as he is of evolution." Feiffer went farther, suggesting that "if Ronald Reagan in his Warner Bros. days had been cast in a movie about Charles Darwin, today he would believe in evolution."

Now this is overstated, of course, but it does seem that Reagan's immersion in The World that Hollywood Built—an imaginative construct that included a historical dimension—was a major source of the mythic iconography he carried around in his political unconscious. Michael Rogin argues that Reagan "found out who he was by whom he played on film"; that he engaged in an active merger of his on and off screen identities (becoming producer and script writer where originally he was only an actor); and that the resulting (con)fusion between life and film produced "Ronald Reagan".

It's also the case that Reagan's first, most impression-

*Continued on page 127*

# Movement Toward Equality for Women in Israel

*Galia Golan*

The status of women is a very new issue in Israel and one poorly understood within Israel itself, as well as outside. Indeed, one of the major obstacles to the development of a women's movement and the improvement of women's lives has been this lack of understanding. For decades our image of women and men in Israel has been colored by the myth of equality. This myth emanated from the socialist origins of the country and the egalitarian ethic of the early pioneers. It is questionable whether there was substance to this egalitarian ethic even in the early period, but if there was, it certainly vanished somewhere along the way. What remained, however, was the myth, reinforced by the ostensibly equal participation of women with men in the 1948 War of Independence, and by the election of a woman Prime Minister (about whom a popular joke said she was the "only man in the government"). The result has been a general belief amongst the public, including women, that the situation is satisfactory for all concerned.

This myth has blinded many people to the fact that women earn seventy cents for every dollar earned by men, that seventy-five percent of women working outside the home are in low-paid "women's" professions, that only ten of the one hundred twenty Knesset members are women, that only four percent of the country's full professors are women, that there are almost no women heads of department in the government ministries or senior executives in government-owned companies, that women are required to resign at the age of sixty while their male colleagues may continue working until the age of sixty-five, that advertising, including publicly sponsored commercials, portrays women in a sexist, even pornographic fashion, that school books and children's songs present classic male-female stereotypes, that girls are taught cooking and sewing, boys carpentry and electricity, that even in the kibbutz the traditional women's roles of tending the children, doing the laundry, etc. are filled almost exclusively by women, and so on.

Since the beginning of the women's movement in the early 1970s, these inequities have begun to be seriously, if slowly, addressed. In recent years many gains in the status of women have been made. Yet obstacles to true equality for women remain entrenched in Israeli life. In addition to the myth of equality, issues of national security have obstructed the advancement of women. Many problems in Israel have been ignored or postponed because of the albeit understandable obsession with security problems. There has been a tendency to see the woman's position as a minor issue, far overshadowed by more urgent (less divisive) national needs. Moreover, these needs have made the army central to Israeli society. This semi-dominance of what is basically a male institution merely perpetuates the inequalities of the sexes. For example, despite the apparent compulsion for all citizens to serve, young women can merely declare themselves religiously observant in order to be exempted from military duty, or to perform a shorter, alternative national service. Those who do serve, do so for one year less than the men (two years instead of three) and are assigned virtually no reserve duty, which is in fact the mainstay of the Israeli army (men are in the active reserves up to three months a year until the age of fifty-five). Thus even in the best (non-discriminatory) circumstances there is less incentive to invest time and money to train a woman for a task which a man can pursue for a much longer period of time. The result is that women have been allotted the less interesting, less prestigious, more traditional tasks such as clerking, teaching, social work and service positions. The perception that women are not really "needed," because they are not in combat positions or do not perform the more important tasks, reinforces the sexist attitudes of the society. Additionally, women who take up a professional army career face the institutional discrimination which prevents women from rising above the rank of colonel—including the head of the women's corps, whose command is much larger than that of many generals. Security needs perpetuate traditional roles in the larger society as well. In time of war women assume the nurturing role of wife or mother to support the fighting men, keeping the home fires burning and preparing "care packages" for sons or husbands or boyfriends.

A third obstacle to equality is the religious establishment which, like the army, holds a central place in Israeli society. In a country which borders on theocracy, in which the convoluted political system allows the small religious parties to dictate policy (by virtue of their ability to tip the scales in the direction of one or the other of the two main political

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blocs), the subordinate role of women in traditional Judaism takes on an oppressive, official quality. All family law in Israel is in the hands of the religious courts; for the Jews this means that all questions regarding marriage and dissolution of marriage are in the hands of the Rabbinate. In the Rabbinical courts women are not allowed to give evidence, there are no women judges and no women on the committees nominating the judges. A husband must "grant" his wife a divorce—and many are the cases of refusal, leading to years of suffering for the woman. The result of a woman being placed in this "suppliant" position may be the loss of her children (in any case the father has the right to custody of male children over the age of six) or grave financial hardship. Not satisfied with its already monopolistic role in the realm of marriage and divorce, the Rabbinate is seeking a broadening of its powers, that is, a legislative change empowering it to nullify civil marriage or divorce proceedings conducted outside Israel.

Because the Begin government in 1977 increased the political power of the religious establishment, Israel's first abortion law was amended, eliminating the so-called "social clause," i.e., the clause permitting abortion for other than strictly health reasons. In practice, even an authorized abortion is difficult to obtain in a city like Jerusalem where the religious authorities are particularly strong. Illegal abortions are relatively easy to obtain, but they are also costly.

The role of Judaism in Israeli society also contributes to the importance of family. This need not be a regressive factor, even in the religious community (Orthodox men play a large role in child-rearing when women work outside the home so that their husbands can study Torah). Yet family structures work against women's achievement of equality insofar as the society is not geared to accommodate working parents. The Israeli child's school day ends at twelve or one o'clock, necessitating part-time work for many women. Yet a person holding a part-time job (the vast majority of women in the work force) cannot get tenure at a university or achieve significant advancement in other professions. Flexible-time jobs are almost nonexistent, supervised after-school care for school-aged children is rare, and daycare centers for preschoolers are insufficient and increasingly expensive. Household help sufficient to permit a woman to work outside the home on a daily basis is scarce, very expensive, and not tax-deductible. Maternity leave is just three months and available only for the mother. Moreover, though the family is a hallowed institution, the woman's role within the family itself is a subordinate one. The woman's task is frequently—consciously or unconsciously—to serve the male members of the family (a tradition particularly strong amongst the Jews of "Eastern" origin). Wife-battering—by sons as well as husbands—is a serious problem. Only a few shelters for battered women, established privately by feminists and usually run on a shoestring, exist.

The list of problems could go on and on, including, for example, cases of laws which have been passed, such as an equal pay for equal work law from the early 1950s, which are simply not implemented. In addition, Israelis are not a litigious people in the way Americans are. Aside from a discrimination case regarding El Al stewardesses over twenty years ago, it is only very recently that women have brought cases to court, specifically two obligatory retirement cases: Hadassah women doctors, who finally settled out of court because of what seemed to be a negative decision in the offing, and a woman employee of the Jewish Agency, who lost her case.

However, while the institutions of religion, army and family often create impediments to women's advancement, all is not negative. Israel does have a draft for women as well as men, even if service is unequal. Women do have three months of maternity leave, free hospitalization for delivery, and more daycare centers than in many other countries. By law, at least, a woman may not be fired if she decides to take unpaid leave up to a year after the birth of a child, and she may work one hour less a day during the first years of a child's life. Household help is somewhat easier to obtain than in America, and housewives are covered by the national insurance/social security program. And just recently, thanks to the efforts of the Advisor to the Prime Minister for Women's Affairs, protective legislation preventing women from night work and overtime in certain areas was repealed. The office of the Advisor on Women's Affairs was, in fact, created almost ten years ago on the recommendation of the Namir Committee. This committee was appointed by the Rabin government in 1976 to examine the status of women in Israel; after two years of impressive work it presented over a hundred pages of findings and recommendations to the by then new government of Menachem Begin. While the changed political situation doomed the recommendations almost to oblivion, several positive measures did result. The above-mentioned Advisor's office was created, albeit with only a staff of one and almost no budget. Similar positions were designated for several other government ministries, and eventually a National Commission on the Status of Women was established, followed by the creation of over twenty such commissions at the municipal and local levels. A very direct consequence of these measures has been the delineation of new, nonsexist guide-

lines for the production of textbooks in the Education Ministry—the work (in addition to her regular duties) of the woman appointed as advisor on the status of women in that ministry. Last year advisors were appointed in all the government ministries, and the Prime Minister's Office has put all advisors through an assertiveness training program.

Another direct consequence of the Namir Committee has been a gradual change in the role of women in the army. Today some five hundred of the approximately eight hundred job categories in the army are open to women—virtually any noncombat task. Thanks to a feminist commander of the Women's Corps, the whole issue of the status and image of women in the army has begun to be treated. Recent measures include the creation of an advisory committee on the status of women in the army, a drive for voluntary reserve duty by older women to provide role models for young women draftees, and an effort to equalize the length of service of men and women, as well as an education campaign for both the public and the army—at all ranks—on the role of women.

While the rise in power of the religious establishment has stifled progress in many areas, at another level, perhaps one prompted by the Namir Committee, change is stirring in Israel. Women, if not men, are finally beginning to awaken, to exhibit the first signs of heightened consciousness, to organize and to make demands. The small, marginal Feminist Movement founded in the early 1970s is no longer isolated and shunned. The word "feminism" itself is beginning, slowly, to be used by women in influential and respected positions. Women's studies programs have been initiated at the country's universities, starting in Jerusalem five years ago, with public lectures attended by overflowing crowds. A myriad of grassroots and women's organizations have emerged, from rape crisis centers and childbirth groups, to the organization of single mothers and victims of the Rabbinical Courts, all the way up to the Israel Women's Network, a general women's group patterned somewhat on the example of NOW and conducting both lobbying activities and grassroots workshops on a variety of women's issues. Status of Women divisions or sections have been set up in two of the three major kibbutz movements to lead educational and training campaigns to change the role of women in the kibbutzim. All ten women members of the Knesset—from Geula Cohen on the Right to Shulamith Aloni on the Left, including Likud and Labor and Mapam women—have publicly joined forces to promote the issue of women in politics and to sponsor a seminar at the Knesset on the problem of the religious courts and women (at the initiative of the Israel Women's Network). The Government Press Office has held a public seminar on women in the media (also at the initiative of the Israel Women's Network) and, in fact, innumerable study days, symposia and conferences have been held in the past few years, including an international conference on women's scholarship, an international conference on rape, and an international women's music festival. This coming year an international women writers' conference and an international conference on women and Jewish Law will be held. These are not the activities of small, fringe groups. Even the traditional volunteer women's organizations such as Na'amat (organization of working women and volunteers generally associated with the Labor Party), WIZO (the women's Zionist organization), Emunah (the Orthodox religious women's organization associated with the National Religious Party) and others have taken on new roles or given new content to their traditional activities. The head of Na'amat champions women's rights as an avowed feminist and has channeled the resources of this vast organization toward such projects as television commercials challenging men to share in household chores and a campaign to foster marriage contracts to protect women from the chauvinism of the religious courts. WIZO has set up consciousness raising groups and Emunah women are waging a battle for greater representation for women in their party; both have joined forces with such groups as the Network on the issue of pornography, sexist advertising, sexual harassment and other problems.

*For decades our image of women and men in Israel has been colored by the myth of equality.*

Concrete changes, the tangible fruit of the above activities and developments, are still few and far between. Israel remains far behind the United States in many areas of awareness and legislation. Breaking the myth of equality and overcoming institutional obstacles will take time—but a beginning has finally been made. □

# LISTEN, DEMOCRATS!

*Although* Tikkun *does not endorse or support the Democratic Party, it does recognize that an important debate is currently taking place both inside that party and, more generally, in the liberal and progressive world. It is a debate about the way to define politics in the period ahead.*

*In the articles below, we present three alternative perspectives. Although each writer might agree with many of the points raised by the other two, each puts primary emphasis on a way of thinking about politics that differs in fundamental ways from the others. Presidential candidates and others contending for elected office in 1988 would do well to consider carefully the positions being advanced here. And in the first article, written by our editor, we present a paradigm for liberals that goes far beyond any electoral focus and provides a fundamental critique not only of the current assumptions of liberal Democrats, but also of the thinking of various liberal and progressive social change movements that often call themselves "The Left."*

# A New Paradigm for Liberals: The Primacy of Ethics and Emotions

*Michael Lerner*

The Spring of 1987 is a heady time for Democrats and for the liberal and progressive forces in America. Flush from a promising electoral victory in 1986, buoyed by Reagan's Iranian affair that left his supposedly "teflon" presidency looking considerably less invulnerable, the Democrats have a unique opportunity to redefine their public image and put forward a vision of politics that will shape the debate well into the 1990s. The Democrats are at bat, and liberal and progressive social movements like those concerned with nuclear disarmament, anti-apartheid, women's rights, and social welfare will find their own prospects dramatically influenced by the degree to which the Democrats can foster a political climate supportive of innovation and social change.

But never underestimate the ability of Democrats to triumphantly snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. Centrists within the party, rightly understanding that Reagan and the Right have touched some critical nerve in the American psyche, yet not really understanding the nature of the Right's psychological appeal, are foolishly counseling a path of "me-too-ism" in which Democrats will show the nation that they are really just a more moderate version of Reaganite conservatism—complete with inflated military budgets and "tough talk" about Russia, scaled down expectations for solving domestic poverty, and pro-corporate economic policies based on "trickle down" economics.

Liberals in the party, meanwhile, seem to think that if they can articulate an overall plan to deal with economic decline and the threat of international economic competition, tempering calls for self-sacrifice and austerity with promises of expanding the "social safety net" for the poor, they will appear neatly balanced between pragmatism and idealism. Even if such a scheme works to get Democrats back into the White House, it will not provide a political mandate for liberal politics. Instead, as in the Carter years, we will have a Democrat articulating a fundamentally pro-corporate agenda and this would eventually lead to the recrediting of the conservative agenda. If supporting corporate interests and fighting communism are really the highest goals of politics, the conservatives are "the real thing," so why support the ersatz Democratic Party version once the initial revulsion at "excesses" a la Contra-gate have been forgotten? Even in self-interest terms, then, the Democratic Party has much to gain by encouraging its liberal wing to project a genuinely creative new vision for American politics.

Yet the new vision that is needed is not merely a rehashing of ideas that are popular on the liberal-left. Of course we need full employment, health care, housing, disarmament, and equality in our society. But liberals will never have the political power to implement these ideas until they can speak to an even deeper level of human need. The liberals need a fuller understanding of the psychological and spiritual needs of the American people—and a vision of how these needs could be met within the framework of a new moral order. Putting together a list of "new ideas," trying to convince the press "we have the beef," will continue to be an inadequate strategy until the Democrats construct

a vision which addresses the underlying philosophical, moral and psychological issues that motivate most people.

* * *

A new vision for Democrats will only be really new if it transcends two major weaknesses in contemporary liberal thinking: the myth of externality and the excessive focus on individual rights.

*The Myth of Externality.* This is the fallacy of conceptualizing people as being motivated by a narrow range of external economic and political self-interest issues. Operating from this fallacy, the task of the liberal Democrat becomes how to show that liberal policies will directly benefit people's material self-interest. So Democrats focus primarily on tinkering with the economy or providing funds to build highways and transportation, money for welfare, or better housing or health care, or higher social benefits for the elderly. This is supposed to be pragmatic, hard-nosed, and realistic.

It would be silly to deny that economic issues are important to many sectors of the population. The 1986 election showed that many economic populist themes had deep resonance within important sectors of the population. Democrats will be politically stronger if they have the courage to integrate these themes into their politics in the coming years. A smart plan to reindustrialize America, rebuild its scientific and technological infrastructure, and increase its ability to use its material and human resources in productive ways—if that plan includes increased democratic participation in the management of our corporations and in the investment of our resources—can only increase the Democrats' appeal.

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*Never underestimate the ability of Democrats to triumphantly snatch defeat from the jaws of victory.*

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It is equally important to note that these issues no longer enthuse as large a segment of the population as they seemed to in the days when the Depression (or in subsequent decades, its *memory*) shaped American political reality. In the 1980s we have had numerous instances where the very workers whose economic well-being has been threatened by conservative policies nevertheless identify with the Right's social program and vote "against their economic interests." While acquiring a bigger share of the pie may influence many people's decisions in their private economic lives, it does not always determine their political choices.

It may even be a mistake to give an economic-reductionist account of the Democrats' original mass appeal during the New Deal. The New Deal, after all, did not solve the economic crisis of a faltering capitalism in the 1930s. Only vast military expenditures during World War II and the perpetuation of military spending through a post-WW II anti-Communist crusade managed to stabilize the economic picture for most Americans. It was not the economic miracle that tied most Americans to Roosevelt and the Democrats. Rather, the widespread feeling that these liberal Democrats could understand the inner experience of daily life encouraged identification with them. By articulating a social vision that helped people understand how the problems they were facing in their daily life were reflections of larger social problems and not of personal failures, the liberals helped to decrease the "self-blaming" endemic in a capitalist economy ("you get what you deserve") and to increase Americans' ability to have compassion for themselves. It was this compassion that was the basis for the Democrat's vast popularity, providing the foundation for a political mandate to carry out economic and political programs.

What has happened in the last few decades has been a shift in the locus of self-blame. Although America's economic expansion was eventually slowed by a rebuilt Europe and Japan, its initial economic hegemony in the post-WW II decades enabled American corporations to inherit many of the economic benefits of a faltering European colonialism and to use the wealth thereby accumulated to enlarge America's economic pie. While inequalities of wealth and power persisted, the growth in absolute terms of the standard of living for most Americans allowed American ideologists to proclaim a new age of affluence marred by only a few "pockets of poverty." Although never fully economically secure, and although now ridden with stressful work and intense competition, most Americans experienced their economic lives as considerably less problematic than in the past. Increasingly they came to believe that the "good life" was at hand; all they had to do was be "successful" and real human fulfillment would be theirs. Happiness was increasingly defined in terms of personal life, supposedly available to each person according to his/her own merit. And when people began to discover that their expanded material well-being had not brought an increase in satisfaction (indeed, the satisfactions of human community, friendship, and solidarity seemed less available after the Depression and WW II) a new and even more painful self-blaming came to dominate the social psychology of American life.

The new self-blaming is deeper and more intractable precisely because it draws upon the deepest wellsprings

of our societal ideology. Inequalities of wealth and power have always been justified in America on the grounds of a supposedly meritocratic economic marketplace which allocates rewards according to ability and effort. This ideology seemed considerably less self-evidently true during the Depression when Democrats suggested everyone was suffering from a common economic problem. But with post-war prosperity, the ideology revived with an even deeper vigor and was extended to virtually every area of personal life. Everything was supposedly in the hands of the individual—s/he could shape a fate alone, based on his/her own decisions. "Take responsibility for your own life," "You've made your bed, now sleep in it," and "You can make it if you really try" are pop-psychology formulations of what became the deepest belief in America's religiously held ideology: the belief in meritocracy. If you merit happiness, you will get it; if you don't have it, you have only yourself to blame.

It is not hard to see how this way of thinking was functional for those with established power. Corporations could use the resulting psychology of self-blame and insecurity to sell their products: If you aren't yet achieving happiness in your personal life, it's probably because you haven't been using our product. But at a deeper level, the continued existence of fundamental inequalities of wealth and power could be portrayed as reflections of an inherently just society. As long as equality of opportunity was secured for all, the inequalities of outcome were merely reflections of different ability and merit. This internalization of self-blame on the part of the masses of Americans produced a set of deep psychic scars, resulting in a growing crisis in personal life, increasing instability in family life, decreasing community ties and increasing difficulties in maintaining deep friendships, and the absence of larger ethical ties and commitments. In turn, all these social realities were interpreted by most people as personal deficiencies. The material well-being of post-WW II society has not produced a society full of happiness, but one full of pain and neurosis, a society in which people interpret socially generated problems like the increasing instability in family life as reflective primarily of their own personal inadequacies.

While the locus of self-blame has shifted, the locus of liberals' compassion has not. Liberals have rightly championed the poor and those facing overt racial and sexual discrimination. But for the most part liberal compassion has been restricted to the most overt economic and legal oppression. It's as if they remained frozen in "1930s consciousness," giving compassion only to people in the economic Depression, while ignoring the growing psychological depression. The result is that when they talk about compassion, they mean only compassion for the poor and those facing overt discrimination, leaving out nearly everyone else.

Given the externality fallacy, however, liberal Democrats are likely to hear this call for compassion as an appeal for more social welfare programs, only now addressed to the economic interests of middle-income voters. Certainly it is true that the Democratic Party needs to develop programs that can link these voters with the economic interests of the poor, and that the development of programs for housing, health care, and full employment may provide such a link. But while such programs would follow from the compassion I am talking about, they do not constitute it. Rather, I am talking about a new kind of compassion—a compassion that counteracts the self-blaming that dominates personal life today. It is by understanding and acknowledging the pain that people are experiencing in these not-strictly-economic arenas, the pain in families, the pain generated by the absence of community and an ethical frame to life, that the liberals can connect with the deeper needs that are central to contemporary American politics.

*The internalization of self-blame on the part . . . of Americans produced a set of deep psychic scars, resulting in a growing crisis in personal life . . .*

Ironically, it has been the conservatives who have been able to address these issues and thereby appeal to a large segment of Americans who might otherwise be resentful of the conservatives' defense of corporate interests. The pro-family politics the New Right has articulated has struck a chord precisely because it seems to address self-blame and despair. It is certainly true that right wing programs offer no plausible solution to the crisis of families. Many of the people who have been drawn to the Right have not been persuaded by the specifics of its program. But pro-family politics nevertheless has a powerful draw because it acknowledges the crisis in personal lives while pointing the finger at a set of social causes (feminism, gays, "liberal permissiveness") that are not the fault of individual Americans.

While strongly rejecting the conservatives' scapegoating, we can also see that by encouraging people to find a social cause for family crisis they decrease self-blame and increase self-compassion—and this is what makes the conservative pro-family package attractive to many Americans. Instead of denouncing the reactio-

nary content, and implying that anyone drawn to pro-family politics is merely someone who wishes to oppress women and children (a line taken by, among others, feminist leader Barbara Ehrenreich), we would do well to see that the underlying needs to which these politics appeal are quite reasonable. It is perfectly understandable that people in pain would respond to those who seem to understand their pain and who articulate externalized, social solutions.[1] The irony here, as I shall explore in greater detail below, is that it is precisely the economic order that the conservatives support which plays a central role in creating and sustaining the dynamics that undermine family life. But as long as the whole issue has been ignored by the liberals, or, as in the Democratic National Committee's latest attempts at "me-too-ism," simply dealt with by adding a few "pro-family programs" to a long list of other demands without any understanding of the deeper psychological and philosophical issues, conservatives will continue to appear as the pro-compassion force in society. No matter how often Democrats throw the word *compassion* around, as long as what they *mean* is compassion for somebody else (the poor, the oppressed) while ignoring the deep need for compassion of the average middle-income American grappling with the pains of daily life, they are likely to be greeted with distrust by most Americans (even those who on simple economic grounds have more reason to support the Democrats than their opponents).[2]

This analysis helps us understand the popularity of Reagan in the first six years of his presidency. Reagan's picture of an America in which people could find true community and pride in their lives offered a seductive alternative to self-blaming. We need not adopt or accept a similar patriotic chauvinism, but we do need to be able to understand the seductiveness of such an appeal. Instead of denouncing programs or ideologies as reactionary or fascistic, we must attempt to understand the underlying psychological needs that these ideologies gratify. We can then begin to ask how we might develop alternative programs and analyses that speak to what is legitimate in these needs. Who knows whether liberals in Germany, had they been able to think in these terms in the 1920s, might not have been able to develop a more relevant program in countering fascism, rather than just ineffectively denouncing it.

In our case, I have little hope of speaking to the hard-core twenty percent of the population enamored of racist, sexist and patriarchal notions. But there are many others, people who often represent the swing vote in an election, whose attraction to the Right has much more to do with the issues I am discussing than with a knee-jerk conservatism. These people will vote for candidates who make them feel good about themselves or who at least can distract them from feeling bad. From this perspective, there is no magical mystique about Reagan as the "great communicator": his strength lies primarily in his ability to reduce self-blaming and provide a way for people to feel compassionate toward themselves. Similarly, the great candidates of the late 1980s and the 1990s will not be those who are most photogenic or have mysterious charisma, but those who are best able to make people feel affirmed, and who can help them deal with the real pain they experience because of the breakup of families, the decline in friendships, the breakdown of communities, and the absence of a morally coherent way of understanding their world.[3]

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1. Throughout this essay I shall talk about the pain in daily life as a general and widespread social phenomenon, not confined to those who are in acute crisis, family breakdown, or seeking psychological help. The basis for these sweeping assumptions is defined more carefully in my book *Surplus Powerlessness* (1986) and is grounded in six years of empirical research that I conducted at the Institute for Labor and Mental Health in Oakland, California. In the course of analyzing several thousand interviews with working people from every sector of the work force, we discovered a deep pattern of pain, self-blaming and internalized anger that is referred to in the analysis in this article. We should also note, of course, that alongside this pain there is also much joy and satisfaction in some aspects of family and personal life. Usually, it is this side that is accentuated, and used as a first level of cover or "defense" against dealing with the deep and pervasive pain that is also there. In this essay I focus primarily on the pain. In a more complete account the elements of happiness and pride would also have to be acknowledged and addressed.

2. Liberal psychologists have only compounded the problem by popularizing the notion that the way to true emotional health is to learn to take responsibility for yourself and your own life. Of course, it is true that we should avoid the extreme of "victimization" that leads some people to feel passive and unable to act—conveniently blaming "the system" for their own failures to act in ways that could change their situation. But more often than not, the factors working to shape our reality are not created by one individual (or even one family) alone. Real empowerment, then, may require understanding the larger social forces that shape our individual situation, and then learning how to join with others in taking not individual but collective responsibility for shaping our lives together. Our individual responsibility may often be to join with others—not to solve the problem on our own! To apply this to a current debate: It is true that seeing themselves as victims may not help inner-city blacks—but neither has preaching to them about individual responsibility. What is most empowering is a vision of collective responsibility—that only by working together on an intolerable social reality can individual lives ultimately improve.

3. We do not want to substitute a politics of emotion for a politics of rationality. In the long run, the great strength of the liberal and progressive forces is their ability to provide a rational account of the world, and to increase the total rationality in the world. It is precisely because—and to the extent that—we speak the truth about the world that people have grounds to trust us. But we have been narrow in the focus of our rational thinking and have failed to address the rational foundations for people's emotional pain. Conversely, their pain has kept them from hearing the rational content of many of our ideas. To shift towards a focus on emotional life, then, is not to shift towards a primacy of feeling over intellect, but to a focus on using our intellectual strengths to give us guidance on how to repair the emotional damage created by our social order.

If one consequence of the fallacy of externality has been to keep Democrats from understanding ordinary Americans' central need for compassion, a second consequence has been to overlook the need for a moral framework for politics and daily life. The thirst for moral meaning is one of the deepest in American life. The latest rebirth of religion in America is partially a response to that thirst: within the religious community, one can find a moral vision to order events, locate oneself in history, and find one's own moral intuitions affirmed.

*Moral vision, far from being a "soft issue," is potentially the guts of American politics.*

It is precisely this ability to speak to ethical norms, to call for a return to "traditional values," which has been engraved on the calling cards of the New Right. Yet it was the same commitment to ethical norms that also fueled the great social movements of the 1960s. Unfortunately, Marxist materialists and pro-capitalist cynics often join forces to reduce these struggles to seemingly narrow self-interest projects. For example, the anti-Vietnam War protests can be seen by these cynics as a self-interested struggle against the draft. But those who carefully chronicle the 1960s know that the militant demonstrations in which college students took serious risks to their lives and careers started before the draft reached into middle-class constituencies; that many of those who took part never were at risk of being drafted; and that the biggest anti-war demonstrations took place after the draft had stopped posing any serious threat to the majority of college students who participated in them. A deep moral outrage fueled the anti-war protests and the civil rights protests before them.

It was only when the New Leftists felt they had lost their internal sense of moral legitimacy (partially a result of the violence introduced into the Movement by the Weathermen and other "super-militants," partly the result of the Women's Movement and its focus on the New Leftist's sexism) that activism gave way to a more internally focussed approach to change. But even in the 1970s, when most 1960s activists had put some distance between politics and their pursuit of individual self-realization, they understood themselves not as having abandoned the moral quest for a good society, but as contributing to a social transformation—precisely by changing themselves. It was only with the triumph of selfishness in the 1980s that self-realization fully yielded to self-gratification, as many Yuppies left behind the larger moral vision (and even then, the moral claims were not renounced, but only put aside as "unrealistic for the 1980s").

The deep moral thirst of Americans is emphasized once again in their genuine revulsion at Watergate, and now, the Iran-Contra scandal. Before being manipulated by the press into restraining their spontaneous moral outrage, most Americans responded to the revelations that they had been lied to with a quite fitting sense that this was just plain wrong.

The shallowness of many centrist Democrats is reflected in the statements of "concern" that the crisis not weaken "the Presidency." Many Democrats are joining Republicans in calling for a speedy resolution so that we can "return to the business of the country"—as though establishing clear moral requirements and democratic restraints on the Presidency was not precisely the best way they could use their time. If eventually the issue is dropped by Democrats who are unwilling to demand full moral accountability from a president who has broken the law, it will be because of their own inability to adequately articulate back to the country the moral revulsion that was the spontaneous reaction of most citizens. But the underlying reality remains: Americans deeply want a moral world, were attracted to Reagan in part because he consistently communicated a moral vision in contrast to Democrats, who seemed to be morally confused bureaucrats, and now are disillusioned with him to the extent that they find his morality less credible. Moral vision, far from being a "soft issue," is potentially the guts of American politics.

When moral concerns do sometimes play second-fiddle in politics, it's usually not because they yield to hard-boiled pragmatics and economics, but rather to personal pain that so grips our consciousness that we have trouble hearing our own inner moral voice. When people feel badly about themselves, when their lives seem to be confusing or meaningless, when they see themselves as "bad" or as "failures," it is hard for them to think in moral terms. This is why the term *compassion* as used by Democrats often has so little appeal. The people hearing this term feel that the Democrats are saying to them: "Don't worry about your own pain—there is someone else who is *really* in bad shape, and you are being selfish to worry about yourself." People resent that message. They don't intend to be selfish. Often, they feel that their own situation is not understood, and they resent that someone better off (a liberal Democrat who obviously doesn't know about the pains the rest of the people are experiencing) is telling them to pay attention to people

who are worse off than themselves. When this resentment becomes strong, moral intuitions begin to cloud and childhood feelings of helplessness and need lead people to accept political views and follow political leaders they might otherwise dismiss, leaders who seem to affirm them and recognize their pain.

By ignoring these two central dimensions—the psychological pain of daily life and the deep need for a moral universe—liberal Democrats often put themselves in a strange kind of political isolation. They can sometimes win elections despite themselves—as they may do in 1988—but they never perceive themselves as having a strong enough mandate to legislate adequately funded, comprehensive and coherent programs.

What they consistently fail to win is a deep level of trust. By staying away from the psychological and moral needs of their constituents they create a powerful barrier to ever getting the kind of support they need to make a lasting political contribution.

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*People who spend all day manipulating and controlling others eventually form personality structures that are narcissistic . . . and they are in no position to enter into intimate relationships.*

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Nowhere is the centrality of these concerns more evident than in the fates of the Labor Movement and the Women's Movement. The Labor Movement is the purest embodiment of the externality fallacy. The economic reductionists who run the AFL-CIO have bet the future of the Labor Movement on the assumption that what all workers care about is bread-and-butter issues. The emotional detachment of union members from their own unions, the cynicism they express about their leaders, and the lack of interest in union meetings is largely a result of defining unions as places to get benefits and due-process when management acts against negotiated work rules. But the guts of the work process, the stress that people experience each day at the workplace, their lack of opportunity to use their intelligence and creativity, the lack of respect with which they are treated, the absence of workplace democracy—in short, everything that causes the daily experience of pain at work—these are all ignored as somehow "subjective" issues that supposedly the membership doesn't care about.

Faced with massive defections and a membership that often doesn't support the candidates that Labor endorses, Labor leaders are now searching for some new economic gimmick—perhaps an associate membership or a union credit card or some new material benefit that will revitalize their show. In national politics, they push Democrats to make new economic programs a central focus. These geniuses, fresh from engineering the Mondale fiasco, are ready to go down with their ailing Labor Movement rather than to formulate any new policies that would recognize people's emotional and moral needs.

The Women's Movement burst onto the political scene in the late 1960s and early 1970s with a moral vision and psychological acuity that quickly commanded the attention of the American people. Based in consciousness raising groups, addressing the daily experience of people caught in the vice of sexist assumptions and practices, the feminists spoke with a moral authority and emotional depth that no one could ignore. Understandably, many women wanted to channel the incredible energy unleashed in this process into achieving concrete changes in political and economic realities. Unfortunately, women too quickly traded "consciousness raising" for "hard-nosed" realistic politics. As their strategies became reduced to winning legislative victories, or convincing state legislators to vote for ERA, the connection to personal life began to seem more remote, and fewer and fewer women felt inflamed by the original passion. As legislative victories were won, it became increasingly difficult to pass the feminist torch to a younger generation of women for whom the right to legal equality seemed already given and who had never been challenged to understand the deeper meaning of feminism. By framing politics in narrow external terms, the realists managed to squash the moral fervor and emotional immediacy that had given the women's movement its main power.

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*"Individual Rights" Consciousness.* This is the second element in the liberal paradigm that must be changed. Its core is this: the assumption that the individual exists outside of a complex set of human relationships, as a being apart. Others are seen primarily as potential threats to one's independence and autonomy. In this context, the liberals come forward as champions of individual rights, protecting us from the external coercion of the state, the community or other individuals. Yet the emphasis on individual rights has important hidden costs.

The focus on the rights of individuals has given the liberals a tremendous credibility—and for good reason. Although the picture of the world painted by this focus is certainly distorted—human beings are fundamentally

social and born into families and communities, they depend on each other for survival and cannot flourish without the loving affirmation of others—its original function was to provide a bulwark against a coercive form of communitarianism that was embodied in the feudal order. For thousands of years people lived in traditional or feudal societies in which every aspect of their lives and thinking was prescribed for them by the larger society. For those of us who are several generations removed from any community governed by traditional or feudal norms, it is hard to imagine the pain inflicted upon people who had no exit from arranged marriages, who were continually observed and judged by how much their behavior conformed with the behavioral standards of the community, and who were dominated by religious norms that made them feel guilty about their sexual drives and desires. The liberal rebellion against external compulsion was a breath of fresh air to people who felt themselves suffocating under the demands of family, religion and traditional values. The rights of the individual became the intellectual battle-rams used to smash through repressive legislation, customs, and traditions—and to create an ability to discern our own needs and wants from those induced through societal norms.

Yet the struggle for individual rights created a distorted tilt in liberal politics. First, it misidentified the real problem. Feudal societies were not really communities in any meaningful sense. They were hierarchies in which a small group of people (feudal lords and their allies in the Church or established religious and intellectual elites) used the language of community, family, religion and ethics to impose their private agendas on the rest of society. Liberals struggling against this coercion understandably overreacted, suspecting that every time someone talked about ethical obligation the underlying agenda was manipulation. They were unable to distinguish between the coercive use of institutions by ruling elites and the appropriate use of notions like "obligation to community," when that community was democratically structured and provided respect and autonomy to its participants. This distinction would have seemed quite irrelevant to those who needed all the energy and moral righteousness they could amass to fight oppressive structures in the past—but it is critically important today when many of the battles against feudalism have actually been won.

Second, the struggle for individual rights, posed as a demand to keep society from making any claims on the individual, led in two different and sometimes contradictory directions. On the one hand, it allowed people to insist that they have the right to define for themselves the kind of lives they want to live, with whom and under what conditions. On the other hand, it also was used as a justification for the newly emerging class of merchants, entrepreneurs, manufacturers, and bankers to insist on freedom of the marketplace. To them, individual rights meant their right to create an economic life not subject to interference by societal or ethical norms.

Over the past two hundred years much conflict has resulted from these two alternative manifestations of individual rights. Increasing numbers of individuals have come to realize that their ability to define lives for themselves is very limited if they have to spend most of their waking hours in a world of work that has been shaped by others. Yet, stuck with the commitment to an abstract concept of individual rights, fearing that any relegitimation of communal norms and ethical categories might give the society a mandate to once again dictate standards for personal life, the liberals have been unwilling to act on their correct intuitive belief that there must be some constraints on the power of capitalists to shape American economic life.

When the capitalist economy was in total crisis during the Depression, liberals created programs to alleviate the worst suffering generated by the system—but they did so not in the name of new values, but rather in the name of strengthening the system of individual freedoms, including the freedom of the marketplace. Ultimately, this has left the liberals unable to justify continued interference with the prerogatives of capital once the most serious elements of an economic crisis have abated. Unless they can develop a notion of ethical obligations to the community, liberals will always seem to be on the defensive when they advocate limitations on the rights of individual entrepreneurs while simultaneously proclaiming their highest value as the rights of the individual.

But there are deeper problems caused by the view that the world is constituted of abstract entities called "citizens" who hold "rights." Once we begin to abstract from the concrete social and economic realities within which people really live, we fall easy prey to the mythology of meritocracy. We come to think that when all external legal constraints have been eliminated, the individual person can actually shape his/her life in any way s/he wants—limited only by internal constraints. So we talk about the right to the pursuit of happiness—and this translates into a mythology of society in which there is equal opportunity for all. The underlying assumption is that the economic marketplace will reward merit and endeavor, and those who succeed will be those who deserve to succeed. The only task for the liberal is to remove

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# Memorandum to the Candidate: How You Can Get Beyond the Old Liberalism Without Becoming a "Neo"

*Peter Edelman*

According to Arthur Schlesinger's view of history, the Democrats' time should be coming soon. If our politics run in thirty year cycles, a new progressive period is about to begin.

Schlesinger is no fool, of course. He offers no warranty that 1988 is the magic year. There are other variables. As Jesse Jackson might say, it depends on the man and the plan. (To the women, forgive me: I trust the time is not far off when a new rhyme will be required. But in 1988, the candidate is likely to be a man.)

There are times, to be sure, when even the man and the plan do not matter very much. After Watergate the Democrats could win with a weak candidate in the middle of what we now realize was a Republican cycle. Irangate, especially coming at the end of eight years of Republican rule and twenty years of Republican domination, may help, although probably not nearly as much as some people think. The sheer length of the period of Republican hegemony is more important. The Senate elections of 1986 are one demonstration that voters sometimes want a change of party even when there is no convincing suggestion that this will mean much of a change in substance.

But the man and the plan do matter most of the time. In a close election they may make the difference. In one that is not so close, they may make the outcome a mandate.

This essay is about the plan, not the man, even though, sad to say, the chemistry of the man usually means more than the content of the plan. And, truth in labeling being a good progressive notion, the discussion here is only about part of the plan. Given Iranscam, the 1988 election is likely to focus on foreign policy and national security issues more than one would have otherwise expected, and that is not the focus here. (Again, let us not kid ourselves. Foreign policy in a campaign usually means issues like Quemoy and Matsu. But it looks now like the Democrat who can convincingly project knowledge and experience on foreign policy and defense will benefit from that, at least in the primaries.)

Here is the game, I think. The battleground is for the younger half of the electorate, Ralph Whitehead's "new collar" voter. Not that anyone can be either taken for granted or written off, but the question is how the Democrats can make themselves interesting to people who know the New Deal only from books, know Jimmy Carter as their only direct experience of a Democratic President, and think of government only as an entity that collects taxes and does God-knows-what with the proceeds.

These are people who have a proclivity to believe the Republican line that Democrats stand only for tax and tax, spend and spend, and for a big federal government as the solution for every problem. If that was ever true, it is not true now. Democrats have not talked that way for years, if they ever did. Not even Teddy Kennedy sounds like that. (Sure, the Republicans say, but we know what they really think and what they would really do if they, God forbid, got in).

Some people reading this are thinking to themselves at this point, "This guy is the problem, not the solution. We need more big federal government solutions. Maybe he is right that the Democrats never really advocated far-reaching enough programs, and that is where the problem is." Stop reading if that is what you are thinking. I am not your cup of tea. Go live in Sweden if you want to win an election.

The Democrats' response so far has been "competitiveness." Now I am not against that, but it does have at least two problems. One is, it has too many syllables, and the other is, it takes in everything from protectionism to early childhood education, or perhaps more to the point, it includes all the territory from protectionism to free trade. Its content may be too malleable to be suitable.

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Nonetheless, people talking competitiveness are on the right track. The economy is a major issue, and it should be a key focus for the Democrats. However, the threshold problem is that people seem to think they are better off. The farmers know they are not better off. Texas and Oklahoma know that, too, and so does the Rust Belt. But somehow people in general think they are better off. The myth of morning in America has been convincingly sold. Those whose regions are experiencing a long, stormy night evidently think it is morning elsewhere, or perhaps that their local problems are unrelated to what government does or does not do.

So the first task is to explode the myth. The average American family's income was lower in real terms in 1985 than it was in 1979. The average male worker's wage was worth 9.3 percent less in real terms in 1984 than it was in 1976. And those observations leave out the massive upward redistribution of income that has occurred over the past six years. The upper twenty percent *are* better off, much better off. The next twenty percent are a little better off. Everybody else is worse off. In 1984 the lowest sixty percent had their smallest share of the pie since these statistics started being kept in 1947. People need to know the facts. They do not.

New jobs? The last half of the 1970s was better by far than the first half of the 1980s: fifty percent more new jobs in total. And too many of the new jobs are not "good jobs." They are heavily in the "service economy" and they pay around two thirds of the typical manufacturing job. Economic growth? The rate in the 1980s is two percent. In the 1970s it was forty percent higher.

Ask any of millions of young couples. Both have to be working in order to achieve the living standard they want, and that standard is not much higher than the one their fathers could deliver by being the only earner in the house. If they are better off, it is only because they work twice as hard. They are worried that they will never be able to buy a house, that the social security system will go bankrupt before they are in a position to benefit from it, and that the bank where they have their savings may well go belly up at some point along the way.

Even understanding that the Reagan medicine was snake oil, voters are not going to return automatically to the Democratic fold. The Democrats still evoke a reflex image of the New Deal in people's minds and, rightly or wrongly, that is not an image that seems responsive to people's current needs. Indeed insofar as history is to be invoked as part of the argument, people need to see the Democrats not as the party of WPA and the National Labor Relations Act, as worthy as those were, but as the party of the GI Bill and FHA loans and low interest rates. The historical model should not be the Democrats of the 1930s but the Democrats of the late 1940s and early 1950s. These are images that people know from their own experience or their parents' experience. Politics has moved on a generation from the 1960s when the New Deal served this purpose. The New Deal is now ancient history. Reminders of the Democratic successes after World War II are more relevant now. People need to hear what the comparable ideas of the 1990s are, the ones that speak to their needs. They need to see the Democrats as specifically responding to their concerns and worries with realistic thoughts and ideas.

If the first task is to explode the myth that things are fine, the second is to do some educating about the problems. The persistent high unemployment, the budget deficits, the huge trade imbalances, and the dangers posed by third world debt are all interrelated. Although there are independent causes, all are connected to and by the persisting structural weakness in the American economy. A hallmark of the Reagan Administration has been its adamant refusal to see any of these as problems, let alone acknowledge their interrelationship.

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*If our politics run in thirty year cycles, a new progressive period is about to begin.*

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I hasten to add, broad economic answers that are simple enough to use in a political campaign are scarce. Some of the answers—witness Senator Bill Bradley's thoughtful work on the third world debt question—are too complicated for a campaign. Others—major governmental involvement in planning a là the Japanese—are of dubious efficacy in the American context. Still others—demagogic protectionism—collide with the evidence of history. A limited role for government in encouraging demonstrations of ways to raise productivity makes sense, and significant government to government pressure on sector-specific trade barriers and practices certainly does, but I don't think these add much electorally.

So it seems to me that, from demonstrating that there is a problem and that we understand what it is, it is necessary to move to economic specifics which are understandable because they affect people in their daily lives.

We could certainly begin with lower interest rates. The price of homes is much too high, but lower interest rates would help a lot. They are down already, but not nearly enough. Would this be too stimulative? Would there be too much danger of inflation? Perhaps. So we need to reduce the deficit as well: looser monetary policy and tighter fiscal policy, lower interest rates and budgetary common sense. How do we achieve the latter? Reduce the rate of growth of defense, for one thing. Be clear and tough on Star Wars, too, and keep slashing away at wasteful procurement, all the while insisting that everyone favors a strong national defense.

How about higher taxes to reduce the deficit? Probably right substantively, but a nonstarter politically, although a sitting President could make an offer that I think people would not refuse. He might say that he could get long-term interest rates down another three or four points if he could be sure that the result would not be unduly inflationary, and that he could ensure that result if he could raise taxes. The tax increase to the typical homeowning family would be less than the interest rate savings. Refinancing might save a thousand or two a year in interest and people might be asked in turn to give back a few hundred of that in taxes. Not a bad deal.

So we could start with advocating lower interest rates. It would be nice to believe we could add selective stimuli for accelerated development of sectors and areas of special promise, but it does appear after nearly three decades of experience with that sort of thing that what happens instead is pork-barrel politics, subsidies for the industry which dominates in the chairman's state, or subsidies for my priority in return for subsidies for yours. Lower interest rates will work in a generalized way to stimulate economic activity among both producers and consumers. Fiscal policy can be used to neutralize inflationary effects. Keynesian economics. Time-honored. Politically saleable. The old-time religion. Democrats sounding like Democrats in a positive way, without baggage or pejorative overtones.

What else? As columnists find pleasure in deriding the Democrats for their dearth of ideas, and as Democrats themselves bemoan their paucity of intellectual capital, issues have been developing, unmet needs have become palpable, and thoughts have been germinating.

For example, health coverage is becoming a problem among people who vote (as opposed to the poor, whose numbers, large as they are, do not decide elections). As the economy changes, the number of people with no health insurance, long a problem but previously an unpoliticized one, is growing rapidly, and now exceeds thirty five million. Manufacturing jobs which offered health coverage are being replaced by service jobs which do not. The bulk of net new jobs are in services, too. Many employers are turning to part-time and temporary configurations to avoid the need to pay for fringe benefits. Even unionized employers who negotiate for give-backs are achieving reduced health coverage. The result is that the number of Americans with no health coverage at all is growing larger every year. This is a real problem that real voters are worrying about.

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*The average American family's income was lower in real terms in 1985 than it was in 1979.*

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Am I saying that national health insurance should be revived as an issue? Definitely not. We need a new solution, one that involves a partnership between the public and private sectors for those people who have no coverage. And, while we could use it right now, that is not the way it is going to happen. We can only finance it in steps, for obvious reasons. We need to be moving toward a system where government contributes part of the cost of insurance for the uninsured out of general revenues, there is perhaps a small tax on employers who provide no coverage, and the workers themselves pay some. Moving in steps is important for policy reasons, too. We do not want to drive out existing employer-employee contributory arrangements. We do not want to destroy small businesses which do not provide coverage because they really cannot afford to. So we need to move with care, step by step, but we need to move.

Is this a liberal idea? Or even worse, an old liberal idea? (It's so hard even to make oneself say the dreaded "l" word out loud.) The idea does involve government spending, to be sure, but it also involves no ideological antipathy to private health insurance and, in fact, features a commitment to utilizing and underwriting the private insurance system to deliver the necessary coverage. And it involves a fair contribution by individual workers.

The point, I think, is that we have learned a tremendous amount since the days when national health insurance was a knee-jerk liberal dream, and even since it became a shopworn throw-away line in party platforms. There is a real problem. It has a real electoral political impact. And there is something we can propose to do about it which is both operationally sophisticated and institutionally quite different from traditional "liberal" approaches.

Child care is another issue that is ready for the front burner. Almost half the women with infants of under a year old are working now, a figure that is far more arresting than the even larger percentage of women with older children who are employed. Talk to any group of young couples and you will find serious concerns about child care. It is a daily worry for millions of Americans. There are votes there for candidates who show they understand. We have lived through the period of the grandfather-President who beguiled people with promises of a return to a nostalgic, uncomplicated Golden Age but displayed total unawareness of people's real, everyday problems. Such a Presidency will no doubt occur again, but at the moment I think candidates who show they are in touch with people's everyday concerns will benefit from the dawning realization that we have had a President who was not.

*Americans are generous in their willingness to assist others in their own communities, but see little connection between conditions that evoke their individual action and government policy.*

As with health coverage, the solutions to be proposed in the area of child care would not take the form of a massive national program. There are many difficult policy questions, but there are also emerging answers to some of them. For a long time child care advocates bitterly opposed any role for the public schools in delivering child care, and some school people were equally monolithic in demanding an exclusive assignment of responsibilities. That confrontation is softening and compromises are beginning to occur. Years ago child care advocates saw only one model: the community-based child care center. Now, in addition to the possibility of school locations and adding extended day options to pre-kindergarten programs, family-based child care has been recognized as appropriate. Quality assurance issues still lurk in that area, but it is not shunned as it once was. Employers are beginning to play a larger role, too, not just by offering child care themselves, which is still rare, but also by including it as a benefit option and by offering locator services.
All of these strands need to develop. Presidential candidates can talk about federal incentives for training more child care and for states to regulate child care more effectively, and about expanding Head Start and the existing federal Social Services block grant which already puts over a billion dollars into state and local support of child care programs. But they should also talk about the responsibility that others have: educators, business people, trade union leaders, clergy, state and local officials, United Way participants. Times have changed. We should now understand how broad the participation has to be in solving a problem of this kind. Leadership from the White House which says to the country that child care is a legitimate and important problem and that people in government, schools, the private sector, and the nonprofit charitable world all need to be addressing it would make a significant difference. The concern is the concern of a Democrat. The proposals fit no stereotype or shibboleth. We are talking about old values applied in sensible ways to new (or newly recognized) problems.

A footnote on child care: let us be clear, it is an issue of special concern to women. Fathers should be equally concerned and should take as much responsibility for making child care arrangements. But they do not, in most families. If I am right that it is a women's issue as a practical matter, then I will add that it is a bread-and-butter women's issue in a way that the ERA never was. The ERA was worthwhile and should have been ratified, and certainly has served a leverage function in gaining attention for other political concerns for women, but it was also, at least in retrospect, ideological and divisive. Child care also brings Phyllis Schlafly to the barricades, to be sure, but I think the reality of millions of young mothers in the labor force has left her isolated. She will find the ranks of her followers greatly thinned.

Toxic wastes is a third issue which a national candidate could productively address. It is not a matter of pressing, daily anxiety like the stress of making child care arrangements, but revelations in widely dispersed locales about the deadly consequences of indiscriminate dumping have created broad concern. And here again, younger voters are particularly attuned. Nowhere is the fear more focussed than on the possibility that one might bear a child who suffers a birth defect caused by some unseen peril. No candidate will make this his primary issue, but as one issue among others it will resonate with a significant portion of the electorate. The organizer-activists of the Citizen Action movement have found toxic wastes to be politically potent in the dozen plus states in which they work, and candidates for office from the United States Senate on down have noted the power in the issue as well.

Toxic waste clean-up flies the "beyond liberalism" flag, too. Environmental policy is an area where there has been a genuinely new federalism, and some new

regulatory ideas. For well over a decade a considerable number of environmental statutes have involved a "cooperative federalism" which features a carrot as well as a stick, saying to the states that if they enter the field of, for example, air pollution control with a regulatory approach that satisfies federal standards, the feds will stay out of it. As opposed to the Reagan "new federalism," which is merely a euphemism for federal abdication, the environmental policy departure is an innovation that is working. Similarly, the environmental field has abounded with proposals and demonstrations of incentive approaches to regulation as opposed to traditional command and control formulas. Candidates discussing toxics would begin by committing themselves to adequate funding and vigorous enforcement of the superfund, itself a regulatory innovation, but would go on to discuss incentives to the states to regulate beyond some federal minimum level. In addition to the merit intrinsic in making headway on toxics, the issue represents yet another exercise in breaking down stereotyped expectations.

Education is a fourth area that will be especially meaningful to younger voters. Many governors in recent years have placed major emphasis on education, especially in the South. President Reagan picked it up just long enough in 1983 to neutralize what would otherwise have been Walter Mondale's ownership of the issue. The Reagan exercise was pure politics, although a masterful example thereof, but many of the states have taken significant substantive steps, including tax increases tied to education, and these seem to have been politically popular.

There seems to be a growing agreement, going beyond the usual rhetoric that our children are our future, that our people are our economic comparative advantage in an increasingly competitive (I know, I used the word) world. An agenda to deal with America's economic stagnation since 1973 will include major emphasis on how we go about assuring a skilled, productive, literate labor force for the 21st century.

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*The economy is a major issue, and it should be a key focus for the Democrats.*

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Many of the governors who succeeded with educational initiatives in recent years did so with somewhat narrow appeals to their citizens' wishes to succeed in competition with other states. A national candidate will be raising the ante, emphasizing America's need to invest in its children in order to compete in the world. Yet, his proposals will inevitably involve a dominant role for local and state actors in carrying out new initiatives, because there is perhaps no area more localized, traditionally, than education.

Is there room for a federal role in education? Yes, in the form of incentives to encourage states to pick up promising initiatives that other states have adopted, like fiscal rewards to school districts or schools that demonstrate improved educational outcomes, or mini-grants to teachers with innovative ideas. Or incentives to states that will take special steps to recruit, train, and hold onto science and mathematics teachers, or to reinvigorate foreign language study. Here again there is a role for presidential leadership, not just for a week or a month or as long as it is politically expedient, but for as long as it takes to enlist the nation, including all of those who need to play a role, in the effort.

All of the foregoing can be broadly viewed as part of a program to revitalize our economy. The education of the labor force is the most obviously connected, but mothers whose work we wish to encourage cannot do so if they have no child care, and people marginal to the labor force may choose welfare, which brings Medicaid along with it, if no health care coverage comes with a job. And the victims of toxic waste represent an obvious economic loss to society.

None of the foregoing represents the classic federal, big government, bureaucratic solutions stereotypically associated with the Democrats. Federal financing should fill the health coverage gap but in an innovative way. A federal regulatory framework should govern toxics but in a nontraditional way. Federal leadership and funding are needed in education and child care but the challenges in these areas will not be met without the broadest kinds of participation and commitment throughout society.

It cannot escape notice that I have discussed neither race nor poverty. These issues are bound up in everything I have discussed, but I had a reason for not mentioning them explicitly until now. This is the point where they should appear in my candidate's stump speech. They should not be left out. There is to be no benign neglect here. But I do not think I should offend anyone if I say this is not the lead in 1988.

Yet once again we have said to the voter, here is what we offer directly to you. I think we can also say, here is what an economic agenda should include for others that also is in your self-interest, beyond the fact that it is the right thing to do.

We are entering a period of labor scarcity. There will

*Continued on page 137*

# Toward 1988: Uniting North and South

*Stuart Eizenstat*

"Boston and Austin," "LBJ and HHH," "Grits and Fritz," were winning Democratic combinations in 1960, 1964, and 1976. These campaign slogans must be reminders to the Democratic Party that to offer a winning presidential ticket for the balance of this century, its estranged southern conservative and northern liberal wings must be reconciled.

The 1986 congressional elections confirmed Democrats as the majority at the state and local levels, where Democrats control a majority of the state legislators, and constitute more than half of the governors, mayors, and county officials, and now both houses of Congress —places Americans look for delivery of government services. But Democrats are the minority party at the White House, where Americans entrust their economic well-being and the defense of the nation.

Democratic candidates have won only three presidential contests since 1960, have lost four of the last five elections, and three of the last four by landslides. When Ronald Reagan finishes his second term, Republicans will have controlled the White House sixteen of the past twenty years.

The electoral arithmetic necessary to amass the 270 electoral votes for victory in 1988 and beyond dictates a revival of the North-South alliance which dominated the presidency from the New Deal through the Great Society.

If the Party's standard bearer won the District of Columbia and every major industrial state in the North and Midwest, where the Democrats have done relatively well in the past twenty years—Connecticut, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Maryland, Minnesota, Michigan, Ohio, and Illinois—he would still be far short, needing seventy-eight more electoral votes. The balance would only come about realistically by winning at least five southern states, including Texas and Florida. Even more southern states would be necessary if there were slippage in the North.

The West should not be written off—particularly California, Oregon, and Washington—but it affords inhospitable ground for recapturing the White House with its conservative, anti-government mood, alienation from Washington, and paucity of ethnic and minority groups. Only once since 1968 has even one western state in the continental U.S. voted for the Democratic ticket. California has voted Republican eight of the last nine times—five consecutively. Except for the *sui generis* 1964 LBJ stampede, even the two Democrats elected President in the last quarter century hardly made a showing in the West—Kennedy winning only New Mexico and Nevada and Carter winning with no western support at all. Every western state has consistently voted Republican since 1972.

The importance of melding South with North is underscored by demographic trends which will reduce northern electoral strength. The North is expected to have negative population growth of almost two percent from 1980 to 1990 and negative growth of over four percent from 1990 to 2000, the largest declines coming in two of the most consistently Democratic states, Pennsylvania and New York. The South and West will see population increases from fifteen to twenty percent.

It will not be easy to reverse the recent antipathy of the South to our Party's presidential standard bearers. In the last two presidential elections only one state in the Old Confederacy supported the ticket as the solid Democratic South became solidly Republican at the presidential level. Ronald Reagan captured over seventy percent of the white southern male vote in 1986. Even at the congressional level things have changed. In 1954 there were only eight Republican members of the House of Representatives from the South. In the 100th Congress, of 129 members from the South, forty-three are Republicans.

Nevertheless, the South offers the greatest opportunity to add Democratic territory to the North and Midwest.

- The South has a long Democratic tradition dating from Reconstruction days. John F. Kennedy won a higher percentage of the vote in Georgia than in his native Massachusetts. The Democratic Party in the South still has almost a monopoly on local officials. Conservative southern voters feel the Party abandoned them nationally, not that they abandoned the Party.
- The South has the heaviest concentration of Black voters, the most loyal Democratic followers. Their almost ninety percent support made the difference in the

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Party's 1986 electoral success in the southern senate races, demonstrating that with strong Black support a presidential candidate can carry many southern states with less than forty-five percent of the white vote.

- The South remains the nation's poorest region in per capita income and responds to governmental initiatives which fall on deaf ears in the West.

Two things are essential to bring the South back into the tattered Democratic presidential tent. The first is that a southerner must be part of the ticket. It is not coincidental that the only presidential elections won by Democrats since 1948 had southerners as either the vice presidential candidate (1960) or the presidential nominee (1964, 1976) and that the losing tickets in 1968, 1972, and 1984 had no southerner. There is a strong regional pride in the South. For all of its historic nature, Walter Mondale's choice of Geraldine Ferraro dashed hopes of victory by creating a North-North, liberal-liberal ticket. Second and more complex, the Democratic Party must develop a modern message which will resonate throughout the North and South.

The reasons for the Party's loss of presidential votes nationwide and the drop in southern affections stem from several historic role reversals. These reversals, in turn, led the Party to forfeit the two quintessential tests of voter confidence—whether a party enhances personal economic well-being by sound economic policies and whether it advances the country's security interests by a forceful national security policy. The Democratic Party was found wanting on both counts over the last decade.

A party identified after the Great Depression with growth and economic progress became associated with fiscal mismanagement, limited growth, and economic trauma. The genius of Democratic economics from the New Deal through the New Frontier was that it combined an attractive macro-economic fiscal policy to stimulate growth with a micro-economic policy to develop poor regions like the South, through federally supported power, electricity, and roads.

After the halcyon economic days of the early 1960s, Democrats became associated with high inflation—first, when President Johnson let the inflation genie out of the bottle by failing to adequately pay for the Great Society and the Vietnam War, then again when President Carter, faced with an oil price explosion, was unable to tame double-digit inflation and soaring interest rates. After-tax real incomes declined in the 1970s.

While Ronald Reagan was converting the Republican Party from economic royalists to economic populists with "supply side economics" (a glorified Keynesian tax cut), Democrats preached the old Republican virtue of tight budgets—which had kept the GOP in the political wasteland for decades. At the same time, environmentalists within the Party championed low-growth, and Democrats, traditionally a free-trade party, became latter-day protectionists.

A second role reversal occurred in social policy. A party committed to using government to eliminate barriers to individual advancement and secure equality of opportunity appeared to support equality of results and to view welfare programs as an end in themselves rather than as a means to achieve self-sufficiency. We championed causes like school busing which we were unprepared to support for our own children. Our conventions became showcases for fringe causes while major issues of economic prosperity got short shrift.

While Roosevelt fought Republican efforts to limit New Deal social security and jobs programs for the poor, we latter-day Democrats set means tests for our major social programs, Food Stamps, Medicaid, CETA, which disenfranchised voters above the line. A party for whom innovation was a watchword became so wedded to the status quo that every Federal program was supported with equal zeal, while at the same time we failed to make the very real case that much of the Great Society had worked.

The third role reversal, one particularly damaging to the Party's fortunes in the South, was the transformation from a foreign policy of bold internationalism to one of passive neo-isolationism, eschewing the full use of America's resources abroad.

Presidents Wilson, Roosevelt, Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson used the full panoply of America's moral, diplomatic, economic, *and* military capabilities to defend freedom around the world. But as Vietnam shattered the Party's foreign policy consensus, the Party took literally our 1972 presidential candidate's message to "come home America," precipitously cutting off aid to South Vietnam in 1975, barring assistance to anti-Communist forces in Angola, and placing limitations on presidential action abroad. The debilitating Iranian hostage crisis was one result. Our 1984 San Francisco Convention platform effectively precluded use of U.S. forces in defending the Persian Gulf.

Both the southern conservative and the northern liberal wings of the Party must compromise to capture the White House. The Party's message needs to combine a modern liberalism on domestic issues (resonating with the North liberal wing) with a more assertive national security policy abroad (appealing to the more conservative southern wing).

While our domestic policy must reflect fiscal moderation and prudence, as congressional Democrats grapple with the budget deficit and the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act, this is not a positive presidential theme. If we

fall into the same trap in 1988 as in the 1984 election, making the central issue who can best balance the budget, we will lose again—and deserve it. Despite President Reagan's record deficits, the public through long history believes Republicans are better budget balancers. A Democratic message centered around tax increases and spending cuts is doomed to failure.

Nor should the Party retreat on its historic mission as the principal defender of civil rights for Blacks and Hispanics in order to recapture southern white voters. Rather, as our successful senatorial candidates did, we should stress economic growth issues which unify rather than polarize. We cannot run away from a constructive role for government.

*It is one thing to "stand tall," but the U.S. must stand tall for something.*

Our theme should be, "Let's make America competitive again" in a new world economy, by an investment strategy. America cannot recapture its competitive edge and the economy cannot show higher rates of growth with the Administration's prescription of laissez-faire economics and massive domestic budget cuts.

Just as the nation in the latter part of the Eisenhower presidency needed "to get moving again," we have been treading water during the latter Reagan years while many of our competitors moved ahead. We are not prepared fully for today's modern, technological, competitive world economy. GNP growth has been declining from an average of 4 percent in the 1950s, to 3.8 percent in the 1960s, 2.8 percent in the 1970s, and only 2.4 percent in the 1980s. U.S. productivity growth lags behind our major foreign competitors. Our trade deficit will exceed $150 billion in 1986, and we are on the verge of having a deficit even in high tech products, our flagship in world markets. We are a debtor nation—the world's largest—for the first time since 1914. There are 2.1 million fewer Americans employed in manufacturing industries today than in 1979. Our education system is producing students who fall near the bottom of industrialized countries, with one in six seventeen-year olds functionally illiterate, four of ten among minority youth.

A policy to increase America's competitiveness requires public investment in people:

- Investments in education to encourage statewide programs for high school students gifted in math and science, to assist school districts in obtaining modern computer technology and training teachers in its use, to encourage graduate fellowships for Americans in science and technology, and to provide aid to school districts with disadvantaged students.
- Investments in private sector job training, including an employer-employee fund, so American workers can develop the skills necessary for a rapidly changing economy.
- Encouragement for employees to take more of their income in bonuses tied to performance and to share in profits.

Incentives to stimulate more research and development by the private sector and by universities are also essential. Antitrust laws must permit distressed industries to rationalize over-capacity through mergers and allow companies to jointly develop prototypes of new technologies too expensive to develop individually. A more aggressive international monetary policy can avoid the wide and destabilizing swings in the dollar, and an international debt plan must be negotiated so the third world can afford more of our exports.

A competitive strategy is not an excuse for trade protection and arbitrary limits on foreign products through devices like across-the-board tariffs. These are the antithesis of competitiveness since they artificially shield American business from foreign competitive pressures. But a tougher nonprotectionist trade policy than this Administration has followed must be pursued, aimed at more U.S. exports rather than less foreign imports. A more competitive Export-Import Bank will enable our products to compete with heavily subsidized foreign exports for world markets. Streamlining unnecessary export control will enhance exports. Our trade laws should give the President stronger weapons to open foreign markets to U.S. products.

For Americans to become more competitive a new attitude is necessary from all sectors of society. Schools must teach courses relevant to today's world; management must become more efficient and learn more about world markets; labor must accept more flexible work rules.

Where feasible, recipients of federal benefits should make a contribution as a condition of obtaining taxpayer dollars: college aid recipients can contribute a year of public service; beneficiaries of unemployment insurance and trade adjustment payments should engage in job training and placement as a condition of assistance; welfare recipients should have benefits tied to work so long as childcare, transportation, and training assistance are provided. Import relief to industries should be strictly conditioned on industry revitalization plans so government assistance helps industries adjust to change rather than serving as corporate welfare. It was unconscionable for U.S. Steel to use the public resources the Carter Administration provided in the

1980 steel plan to buy Marathon Oil rather than modernize its own facilities.

The other part of the message is to modernize the Party's historic foreign policy stance of both strength and democratic values. The American people have more recently perceived the Party's national security policy to be vacillating, weak, and temporizing. It is a delusion to believe a Democrat will be returned to the White House to implement more of the same. We can project a more muscular foreign policy without aping the Reagan Administration's instinct to use military force as a first rather than last resort. We can implement a tougher policy without skirting our own laws, as the Administration has done in Iran and by mining Nicaragua's harbors.

There are three legs to this foreign policy. First is a clear-headed appreciation of the dangers of Soviet aggressive intentions and a willingness to meet Soviet challenges wherever they occur. The Soviet Union has projected globally a greatly strengthened military capability, is involved in direct military intervention in Afghanistan and eastern Europe, funds terrorism itself or through its allies, encourages Communist subversion in the third world, and actively seeks to divide the U.S. from our NATO allies.

The next Democratic presidential candidate must both enunciate this clear and present danger and develop effective and flexible responses which involve a willingness to engage the full range of America's diplomatic, economic, and military resources. Internationalism does not mean reflexive unilateral military action on a first preferred response. Skillful diplomacy can treat the nations of eastern Europe as something other than part of a monolithic Soviet Bloc, maintain close relations with our key allies, and serve as an instrument for the patient resolution of differences around the globe.

But when nonmilitary avenues have failed or will work only in conjunction with military aid, we should support friendly countries like El Salvador and the Philippines threatened by Communist subversion, and aid anti-Communist groups fighting Communist governments which have come to power by force and which threaten their neighbors or American interests. We must be willing to use diplomatic and economic sanctions—and when these fail, military action, as the President properly employed in Libya, for countries which support terrorism. To excuse terrorists because they fight for a cause, however misguided, is the international version of excusing crime because it is fostered by poverty.

No foreign policy issue is more divisive within the Party than the approach to subversion in Central America in general, and Nicaragua in particular. If we make it clear that we will do everything in our power to prevent Communism from spreading like a cancer throughout our hemisphere, we will have latitude to pursue our own policies to achieve this goal. A Democratic internationalism would strike at the problems of deprivation upon which Communism grows through a Marshall Plan for Central America; negotiations to achieve a meaningful, verifiable treaty with Nicaragua in which her armed forces are reduced and her support of external revolution ended, in return for pledges of nonintervention by the U.S.; and a military shield to friendly governments in the region fighting subversives. If genuine efforts at negotiations fail to stop the export of Marxism by Sandinistas who have betrayed their own revolution, force, direct or indirect, must be available.

A second leg is a defense policy which meets the needs of a world racked by terrorism, subversion, and local conflicts. This requires:

- Sustainable defense commitments guided by clear strategic goals aimed at a well trained and equipped conventional force, and modernization of the Triad with strategic weapons systems like the MX and Midgetman missiles and the Stealth bomber.
- Procurement reforms to stress competition for Pentagon dollars.
- Verifiable conventional and strategic arms control agreements which enhance our security.

The third leg of a national security policy is the projection of American values in support of human rights and democratic forces abroad. It is one thing to "stand tall," but the U.S. must stand tall for something.

Republicans have tended to stress human rights violations by leftist regimes, like Nicaragua, Democrats by right wing governments, like Chile. The next Democratic presidential candidate should emphasize both.

The projection of U.S. values must be done with sophistication, weighing the possibility that the alternative to an autocratic pro-western regime, like the Shah of Iran, may be worse. But we must constantly strive to encourage pro-western, democratic forces so that we are not faced with a Hobson's choice between dictatorial pro-western regimes and Communist totalitarianism.

The 1986 elections provide hope—but far from certainty—that Republican realignment in the South can be stopped and a Democrat elected to the White House for only the second time in twenty-four years. If we fail to bring southern Democrats back into their historic alliance with the Democratic North in 1988, the presidency may be lost to the Party for the balance of the century. □

# "Over the Thorn": The Post-Holocaust Poetry of Paul Celan

*Esther Cameron*

It is a paradox worthy of our time that the most significant continuer of the Western poetic tradition after World War II was a Jew who had survived the Holocaust, and that one of the most original positions in post-Holocaust theology was formulated in poems written in German. The work of Paul Celan is something like what physicists call a singularity—a terminal or initial point at which the usual laws seem to be suspended. Sixteen years after his death, his reputation continues to grow, accompanied by a sense of his more-than-literary importance.

Celan was born in 1920 in Czernowitz, capital of the Bukovina region, which had a large population of German-speaking Jews. Among the influences to which he was exposed there were his mother's love for the German language and the German classics; his father's Zionism and commitment to Hebrew; the illegal Communist youth movement, with which he was briefly associated; and the Yiddish, Rumanian, French, Russian and English languages and literatures.[1] During the Nazi occupation his parents were deported to the Transnistria camp and there murdered; he himself spent eighteen months in labor camps. After the war he moved to Bucharest; in 1947 he emigrated illegally to Vienna and in 1948 went on to Paris, which became his permanent home.

Apart from numerous translations (Shakespeare, Mandelstam, Esenin, Valéry, Ungaretti, Emily Dickinson, René Char, André du Bouchet, and others), Celan's work consists of nine volumes of verse, three of them published posthumously, and a few brief, densely-compacted prose pieces.[2] The poems are the protocol of an inner odyssey, of a struggle to endure the memory of his experiences and to find or make a meaning for them. The stages of this struggle are reflected in the successive styles of the poems, from the romantic-surrealist early lyrics to the late atonal cryptograms. It is a work of great literary sophistication and ingenuity; as a master-innovator of language, Celan ranks with Joyce. But the note of personal and immediate authenticity is never lost; he remains true to his own definition of poetry as the expression of "one once-only-animate being who with his speech and his silence is seeking a way."

At the same time, as Celan also stressed, his poetry is "dialogic." The influence of Buber's *I and Thou* is evident throughout Celan's work, which may be seen as an attempt to find a way of speaking truly consistent with Buber's "basic word," "I-Thou." Most of the poems explicitly invoke a "you." Sometimes the "you" is self-addressed, in which case the poet is presenting himself as one addressed by the world and inviting the reader to identify with him; sometimes the "you" is another person. It is clear that specific encounters are behind many of these poems, but the "you," in Celan as in Buber, tends to assume a numinous generality, so that the identity of the referent remains open.

Another consequence of the "I-Thou" orientation is the absence of objectifying description. Realities are invoked, pointed to, hinted at, called by name; they are not usually given hard and immediately recognizable outlines. In order to see them the reader has to enter into the scene, supply his or her own knowledge and associations. This may account for the paradoxical first impression which Celan's poems often make. On the one hand they may seem "obscure," because we are used to the patterns and stereotypes of "I-It" discourse, and because we have not yet found our way around the poet's universe. On the other hand we sense immediately that we are being addressed, that someone is trying to tell us something, and that it is not indefinite but precise, although we cannot yet translate it into our language.

With many readers Celan's reputation still rests on the early poem "Todesfuge" (Death Fugue), written in 1945. In his work this poem is exceptional, yet constitu-

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1. Israel Chalfen, *Paul Celan: Eine Jugendbiographie* (Frankfurt: Insel Verlag, 1979).

2. Unfortunately, Celan's work is not yet completely available in English, though the *Collected Prose*, translated by Rosemarie Waldrop, is scheduled for publication by Carcanet in November, 1986. Collections of poems include *Speech-Grille and Selected Poems*, translated by Joachim Neugroschel (Dutton, 1971); *Poems*, translated by Michael Hamburger (Persea, 1980); and *Last Poems* (a selection from Celan's last three books), translated by Katherine Washburn and Margret Guillemin (North Point Press, 1986). Jerry Glenn's bibliography in the fall 1983 issue of *Studies in Twentieth Century Literature* 8, 1, lists many individual translations.

tive: it is his most explicit picture of the historical trauma which forms the background of his work. The persona is the chorus of martyrs, yet the poet's personal rhythmic signature—the amphibrachic beat which was to crop up repeatedly even in the truncated later lines—is already present. It is as though, in transmitting their message, the poet had both completely submerged his own identity, and attained it by that very act. The poem begins:

*Black milk of the daybreak we drink it at evening*
*we drink it at midday and morning we drink it at night*
*we drink it and drink it*
*we shovel a grave in the air there no one lies narrow*
*In the house lives a man he plays with the serpents he writes*
*he writes at nightfall to Germany your golden hair Margarete*
*he writes it and strides from the house the stars blaze he whistles for his dogs*
*he whistles for his Jews to come out and shovel a grave in the earth*
*he commands us now play for the dance*

We recognize the elements of life in hell.

Implicitly, the poem also raises the problem of its own moral status. For it is an indictment not only of Nazism but of German culture—which the poet, by writing it, joins. The murderer's heartlessly sentimental invocation of Margarete recalls the heroine of *the* German classic, Goethe's *Faust*. The poem has to be read in conjunction with the last act of that work; it is Faust's megalomania that constructed the world of Auschwitz, just as it is the sentimentality evoked by the name "Margarete" that enables the murderers to go on feeling "human." And yet the indictment of the culture can also be read as a lament for its genuinely humane elements. For Margarete in *Faust* was intended by Goethe as a compassionate portrayal of an innocent victim—Faust's first victim, in fact. Thus the final juxtaposition of Celan's poem "your golden hair Margarete/ your ashen hair Shulamit" grieves for a general loss of human innocence, as well as for the victims.

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*. . . as a master-innovator of language, Celan ranks with Joyce.*

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"Death Fugue" is said to have caused Theodor Adorno to revise his notorious dictum that poetry cannot be written after Auschwitz. But the poem has not escaped criticism on grounds of "aestheticizing" the horror, and Celan himself came to mistrust it—or perhaps rather its all-too-ready reception by Germans anxious to make a token display of reawakened conscience. Deeper than this, one senses Celan's awareness of having accepted the role of a token figure by continuing to write in German as a Jewish poet. This awareness must have helped to stoke the internal rage of his poems, their intense self-criticism, self-denudation and self-destructive gestures. But, given his commitment to writing in his mother-tongue ("The fateful once-onliness of language"), he had little choice but to accept the role of a token figure, play it to the hilt, try to awaken a real instead of a pseudo-response—to give the symbol real meaning. His work can be read as a request for the bridge between the symbolic and the real. Involved in this quest is the question of whether or not poetry can make things happen, and perhaps even the question of God's existence or effectiveness.

All these concerns are reflected in the poem with which Celan's first book, *Mohn und Gedächtnis* (*Poppy and Memory*), begins.

A Song In The Desert

*A garland was woven of leaves that turned black in the region of Acra.*
*There I reined my dark stallion around and aimed at Death my sword's blow.*
*There I drank from wooden cups the ashes of the fountains of Acra*
*And lowered my visor and charged—the ruins of Heaven were the foe.*

*For dead are the angels and blind went the Lord in the region of Acra,*
*and there's no one to watch in my stead over those who here went to their rest.*
*The moon was hacked to pieces, the blossom of the region of Acra—*
*so the hands shall blossom like the thorn in their rings all of rust.*

*And so at the last I must bow for the kiss when they pray there in Acra—*
*Ill-wrought was the armor of night, through the graves I see the blood seep!*
*So, changed to their smiling brother, the iron cherub of Acra,*
*I still pronounce the name, and still feel the blaze on my cheek.*

Acra was a fortress which the tyrant Antiochus Epiphanes, in the second century B.C.E., built on a hill overlooking the Temple mount, in order to keep Jerusalem in check. The association with the Crusader town of Acra (Akko) is also opposite; both are connected with past persecutions. These allusions and the

medieval imagery make the contemporary Holocaust which is the poem's real subject seem like something eternally recurring.[3] Cast in regular metric form, more romantic than surrealist in imagery, this poem forms an almost conventional introduction to Celan's work. But its stylization only seems to hold the horror at a distance; poignancy arises precisely from the sense that this is *not* an adequate treatment of the Holocaust—though no more inadequate than any other. Death cannot be run through with the sword, the ruins of Heaven cannot be taken by storm; these things, like the Lord who has "gone blind," are absences, nothingness, and any human response to them can only be a tilting at windmills. Yet despite this awareness of nothingness and futility, the poet remains pledged to the memory of the dead and the ravaged community. The "moon," the "flower of the region of Acra," suggests the *Shekhinah*, the "rose among thorns." The rusted rings stand for a bond that persists even in destruction; hands, throughout Celan's work, often represent the act of writing. His commitment in a Godless world is a conscious quixoticism; later, in "The Meridian" (1960), he will speak of "the majesty of the Absurd, which bears witness for the human presence and present." But he is not free from self-reproach; the hands "blossom like the thorn" because he has survived into the world of the murderers and is writing in their idiom, even in the guise of a Crusader knight. Perhaps this is why he becomes "the iron cherub of Acra"—a counter-image to the cherubs of the Temple.[4] If in the last line he "still pronounces the Name," this is both a profession of stubborn faith and a profanation: the Name's holiness *forbids* its pronunciation. The necessity of speaking of sacred things in a secular context—"in the middle of the market," as he was later to write in "Shibboleth"—is another persistent source of anguish.

Celan's second book, *Von Schwelle zu Schwelle* (*From Threshold to Threshold*, 1953), also begins with a poem that relates a symbolic action taken in response to a real catastrophe.

I Heard It Said

*I heard it said, there be*
*in the water a stone and a circle,*
*and over the water a word*
*that places the circle*
*around the stone.*

*I saw my poplar go down to the water.*
*I saw how her arm grasped down into the deep.*
*I saw her roots raised heavenward, begging for night.*

*I did not hasten to follow her.*

*I only picked up from the ground that breadcrumb*
*which has your eye's form and nobility;*
*I unclasped from your throat the chain of the sayings*
*and with it bordered the table, where now the crumb lay.*

*And saw my poplar no more.*

This is an extraordinarily delicate and subtle poem which illustrates Celan's practice of giving the reader enough information to feel the situation, but not enough to categorize it. We can never be quite certain of understanding the relations among the "I," the poplar, and the "you," nor the meaning of the poet's gesture in the context of these relations. We can only approach such certainty of understanding through a deeper knowledge of Celan's work as a whole. Yet even out of context, on first reading, the poem's structure makes its impression. We see that in the first stanza a kind of order is created with the placing of the circle round the stone. The second stanza hints at loss, death, reversion to chaos. In the third stanza, again, there is the creation of an order, parallel to that in the first stanza, with the "chain of the sayings" encircling the "breadcrumb." In the fourth, consisting of a single line, we are again reminded of loss.

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Furthermore, the first stanza is a version of the Creation story, although the ambiguous phrasing of the first line (*"ich hörte sagen, es sei"*) leaves us in doubt as to whether the poet is claiming actually to have heard the "yehi" of Creation or merely reporting hearsay in the German subjunctive of indirect speech.[5] The destructive image of the second stanza inevitably recalls the Shoah, the more so as "poplar" (*pappel*) comes from a Latin word (*populus*) nearly homophonous with the word for "people" (pōpulus). The second "creation," in the third stanza, is the poet's own. It cannot undo the destruction; it is purely symbolic. Yet the presence of a "you" adds a dimension, for the eyes of another person, a symbol may have *meaning*. The picking up of the breadcrumb that reminds him of the other's eye (that is, capacity for sight, for insight) recalls both the *minhag* of not letting bread fall to the ground and the Kabbalistic gesture of "raising the sparks." In

3. See Jerry Glenn's interpretation of this poem in *Paul Celan* (New York: Twayne, 1973), pp. 51-52.
4. Ibid.
5. The last poem in *Breathturn* begins: "ONCE/ I heard him,/ he was washing the world,/ unseen, all night long,/ really."

the structure created by the poet, the breadcrumb replaced the stone, but we may also think of it as a word; in the Scriptural field of associations, a word can be bread and also light.

So this poem voices a hope for the future, even in the presence of the irreparable: the hope that after the disaster, poetry may be able to reconstitute humanity, by a rearrangement of the symbols that guide its consciousness. In the first two volumes this hope is the source of a certain lyric and visionary exaltation, in which Celan did not feel completely alone; both books contain references to other poets whom he evidently regarded as sharers in a sacred enterprise. But in a disillusioned age that hope and the "vatic" voice seemed increasingly out of place.

In the summer of 1959 Celan wrote his only piece of fiction, a four-page story entitled *Gespräch im Gebirg* (*Colloquy in the Mountains*). In it a Jew named Small (the etymological meaning of the poet's first name) meets his older cousin, Big, and the two speak—not in literary German but in the dialect of Czernowitz, which leaned toward Yiddish. It is a release from the terrible solitude, an opportunity to talk "to me or to you ... with my mouth and with my tongue and not just with the stick," as Small says. But the release is short-lived. Each can tell the other only what he knows already; it quickly becomes hard to tell the speakers apart, and the dialogue ends in monologue. Celan later showed the story to Adorno, who replied that the real "Jew Big" whom Celan ought to meet was Gershom Scholem. The poems of *Die Niemandsrose* (*The No-Man's Rose*, 1963), suggest that Celan did indeed find something of a "rav" in Scholem. The encounter with Scholem's works on Jewish mysticism probably did not change Celan's basic approach, but it gave him a much surer sense of the rootedness of that approach in Jewish tradition.

In 1960 Celan received the greatest literary honor of his career: the Georg Büchner prize of the German Academy of Language and Literature in Darmstadt. It was an occasion on which the awkwardness of being a token figure became especially acute (in a letter to a friend he said it was "a trial, that is a temptation and an affliction"). He dealt with it in his speech by making "The Meridian" his definitive statement about what he was attempting to do as a poet. The circuitous and painstakingly-qualified argument of the speech may be summarized "on one foot" as follows: The poet's basic commitment is to human life as a thing to be defended against all systems and ideologies which rationalize its wanton destruction. In the identification with what is destroyed, the poet experiences a kind of annihilating exodus from historical and social reality, even from nature itself. Celan both describes and prescribes this quasi-mystical kind of experience. But this exodus is also an entering into contact with the potential for response of a human other who might be addressed. It may even be a contact with the will of a "wholly Other"—a broad theological hint—who may just possibly speak through the poem even as the poem speaks on its "very ownmost behalf" out of the "straits" into which the poet is led by his experience and perceptions. The *ultima ratio* of this view, even though God's existence is not definitely asserted, is the Biblical idea of the human being as made "in the image of God" and therefore to be respected. Subtending the argument, and cautiously surfacing at the end, is a hope that the isolate radical perceptions might one day add up to a new basis of human solidarity, to a foundation for "Utopia." He also hints—it is a hint of utmost importance, which had not yet been sufficiently taken up—that this hope may depend on the development of a method of *interpretation* adequate to deal with poetry "in the light of Utopia." The "meridian" which he imagines touching, along with his audience, at the end of the speech, symbolizes this possibility of human communication, by which inmost perception becomes the basis for a new universalism.

*... this poem voices a hope for the future, even in the presence of the irreparable: the hope that after the disaster poetry may be able to reconstitute humanity, by a rearrangement of the symbols that guide its consciousness.*

The poems of *The No-Man's-Rose,* published three years later, draw on the confidence which this definition of his position had given him, as well as on the Kabbalistic imagery to which he gained access through Scholem's work. Among the poems which show Kabbalistic influence is the one which gives the collection its title.

PSALM

*No one kneads us again out of earth and clay.*
*No one speaks to our dust.*
*No one.*

*Praised be thou, No One.*
*For thy sake we*
*will blossom.*

*Towards (or: against)*
*thee.*

*A nothing*
*we were, we are, we*
*will be, blossoming:*
*the nothing—, the*
*No-Man's-Rose.*

*With*
*the pistil soul-bright,*
*the stamen heaven-desolate,*
*the crown red*
*with the crimson word we sang*
*over, O over*
*the thorn.*

Like "A Song in the Desert," this poem, which conveys the quintessence of Celan's post-Holocaust theology, starts from the perception of God's helplessness or nonexistence and the irrevocability of death. The poem recalls the Yom Kippur prayer ("Before I was created I was worthless, and now that I have been created it is as if I had not been created"), but now there is no God, promising resurrection, to whom that prayer could be addressed; there is no one. But then the very idea of "No One" is hypostatized and addressed. We could say this is because humanity cannot endure the thought of God's nonexistence, but we also sense here the Kabbalistic view that sees God in the very abyss of nothingness. Around this Name that remains empty, like the "heaven-desolate" (*himmelswüst*) stamen, the speakers assemble into the rose which is the image of the Shekhinah. They are united by their common need for God and understanding that this need is destined to remain forever unrequited. This understanding (which unlike a positive image of Godhead could not be used as a club to assault unbelievers) replaces "faith." It is now the human soul which, in accepting this destiny, becomes luminous (*seelenhell*). The rose is dyed red (in contrast to Dante's rose, which derives from the same tradition) as the sign of a human, earthly solidarity, which begins in identification with the victims and assumption of the pain of God's absence—both of which, I think, are implied by the "thorn."

Before the radiant negativity of this poem, in which the poet's voice is once more absorbed in a community which spreads out from the dead of the Holocaust, through all human dead, to all humanity viewed under the aspect of mortality, questions of the efficacy of symbols fall away. The symbol has become a reality in which one lives.

This certainty can also be found in a longer poem, "Tabernacle Window," which continues the global vision of "The Meridian":

*The eye, dark:*
*as a tabernacle window. It gathers*
*what was once, is still, a world: the Wandering*
*East, the Hovering Ones, the*
*Humans-and-Jews,*
*the Folk-of-the-Clouds, magnetically*
*it draws, with heart-fingers, at*
*you, Earth:*
*you come, you are coming,*
*dwell, we shall dwell*

The "eye" which can exert a gravitational pull on the earth is the fused vision of those united in understanding. In the course of the poem sparks are gathered from the human and Jewish past, to form "the constellation/ which he, the human, needs/ in order to dwell, here, among humans." Finally the letters of the alphabet—both Hebrew and Greek—are gathered into "you,// Beth—that is/ the house where the table stands with// the light and the Light." In 1970 those posters with the photograph of the earth taken from space, and that phrase "Earth Household," were for this reader a kind of déjà vu.[6]

*. . . the most profound hope was expressed by one for whom the struggle to express hope ended in the ultimate act of desperation.*

After *The No-Man's-Rose* there is a radical break in Celan's work. In *Atemwende* (*Breathturn*, 1967), the poems are "darker" in every respect—more difficult and more desperate. Whereas in Celan's early work the separate poems strike one as "outcroppings" of a profound unity, here there is a sense of irreparable fragmentation. In *Fadensonnen* (*Thread-Suns*, 1968), technological and commercial jargon invades a vocabulary which suffers rather than absorbs it, often to incredibly grotesque and violent effect. The posthumous collections *Schneepart* (*Snowpart*, 1971), *Lichtzwang* (*Compulsion of Light*, 1970), and *Zeitgehöft* (*Croft of Time*, 1976) are final messages in the same basic manner. It is as if some second catastrophe had occurred for Celan, which may well have been a catastrophe of communication. In "The Meridian" and *The No-Man's-Rose* Celan had succeeded in formulating a world-view which implies a certain program. But the program could only have been executed with the help of others. The con-

6. For a more detailed discussion of this context see my essay "The Distant Earth: Celan's Planetary Vision," in *Sulfur* (1984), pp. 61-70.

sequent next step after "Tabernacle Window" would have been not another volume of poems by an isolate poet, but something like the beginnings of a poetic Talmud, a real innovation in intellectual and religious institutions. But poetry, together with its interpretation, is a very different kind of speech from halachic discussion based on an authoritative text. It is much more difficult to socialize, for reasons which are deeply rooted in the human psyche and which cast Freudian shadows over Celan's Buberian vision. Part of the agony of the last work is Celan's perception of them in himself. But unless the vision could prevail in practice, as well as in poetic projection, Celan saw that he was doomed to the creation of symbols that had no counterpart in reality—to tokenism with all it implies. The late work is punctuated with desperate lunges out of that false position: "The namegiving ends,/ over you I throw/ my fate."

In 1969 Celan paid his one visit to Israel, where he stayed for three weeks. While there, and after his return, he wrote a series of love poems[7] whose ultimate addressee is Jerusalem as the symbol of human community: "Say that Jerusalem *is*." He considered settling there, and efforts were made to help him do so. But whether he feared the final conjunction of symbol and reality in Jerusalem, or feared on the contrary some final disillusionment there, or whether he simply lacked the strength for a new beginning (recurring mental breakdowns had left him unable to function without medication), the thought came to nothing. He returned to Paris, where he committed suicide the following April by drowning in the Seine.

Strangely, his last two poems are expressions of hope. One contains a phrase toward which his whole work seems to point: "... a shared truth." The other—the last—seems to look back to his stay in Israel and ahead to some fulfillment that still might occur there. But to summarize it thus is already to have inflected a poem which, as if deliberately, leaves the determination of its meaning up to us. As in many Celan poems, this effect is produced by exploiting the ambiguity of the present tense in German, which can also have a present progressive or even a future meaning. Translation is, of course, always interpretation.

*Vineyard men are redigging*
*the dark-houred clock,*

*depth upon depth,*

*you are reading,*

*the Invisible*
*summons the wind*
*into bounds,*

*you are reading,*

*the open ones bear*
*behind the eye the stone*
*that recognizes you*
*on the Sabbath.*

To offer a further paraphrase, which partly follows that of John Felstiner[8]: The "dark-houred clock" must refer to Jewish history with its many sufferings. The "redigging" of the clock might be the working through of traumas in Israeli life today. The "wind" could stand for the hostile forces still threatening the State of Israel (compare Agnon's story, "From Foe to Friend"), and these lines are something like a prayer for the peace of Zion. The open ones with the stone behind the eye (the singular of "eye" is important) are those whose insight, sharpened by suffering and unified by understanding, will enable them to recognize the "you," the one who is reading, in a "Sabbath" atmosphere where conflict is held at a distance. If this interpretation corresponds to his intention, then he seems to have felt, at the last, that the mutual trust and recognition which readers of his work would need to find must be sought in the Jewish community.

It would be another paradox worthy of the post-Holocaust era if in these years the most profound hope was expressed by one for whom the struggle to express hope ended in the ultimate act of desperation. But this should not be allowed to obscure the hope itself. Celan was one of the final inheritors of that German Jewish intelligentsia, with its hope for synthesis at a high level between Jewish and Western cultural values, to which Nazism dealt such a crushing, perhaps mortal blow. In the wake of the catastrophe he tried to sort things out, and to give universalism a symbolism it had lacked before. If this symbolism and its implications could be understood and accepted, perhaps the vitally important movements for social justice, peace, and protection of Earth's environment would gain in spiritual depth and staying-power, in relation to Judaism's age long quest. Which would indeed be "a new light." □

7. See John Felstiner, "Translating Celan's 'Jerusalem' poems," *Religion and Literature* 16, 1 (Winter, 1984), pp. 37-47.

8. Felstiner, "Translating Celan's Last Poem," *American Poetry Review*, July-August, 1982, pp. 21-27.

# The Bank Teller

*Peter Gabel*

Imagine a row of bank tellers serving customers in a typical American bank. Although each of them appears to be performing competently, taking and giving paper, opening and closing drawers, showing for the most part efficient politeness and a good mood to each person who approaches the window, we know that each of them is under a great deal of stress. We know this not primarily because we know the objective conditions that define their respective situations—that they must perform a repetitive series of manual operations very rapidly in order to keep their jobs, earn a subsistence wage, and so forth—but because we detect in each of them, simply from the vantage-point of an onlooker, a continual artificiality. Each reveals in every word and gesture what we might call the attitude of being a bank teller. Each of them feels compelled to *enact* an "efficient politeness" and a "good mood." They feel this politeness and good mood not as spontaneous expression, but as a kind of role that is somehow superimposed on their being from an experiential "outside."

Thus we can detect that they feel somehow "outside" themselves and "inside" the enacted role of being-a-bank-teller. And we can detect that this is stressful to each of them precisely to the degree that it is artificial, that through being compelled to feel artificial in this way they feel at the same time unable to express themselves spontaneously. Neither we nor they can know what this spontaneous expression would "look like" exactly because both we and they feel it only as an absence.

A good way of measuring this absence is to notice that each gesture is a moment "behind" or "too late," and it is this fraction of delay-time that reveals to us the gesture's enacted quality. We can see that they are perpetually acting *as if* they were bank tellers, and one way of measuring the gap between these as-if performances and the absent spontaneity that is somehow buried inside of them is in the felt sense that if spontaneity were to somehow "break through" (as sometimes happens), the delay-time would vanish, absorbed in the plenitude of total presence. A whole person would have momentarily erupted through the split being of the "bank teller"; through the split "between" the as-if performance and the absence that is immanently bound within it. In a milieu of as-if performances like those of the row of bank tellers, the absent spontaneity cannot be described positively, but only negatively as something "not there," although we would immediately recognize its positive incarnation if it were to suddenly appear—we would feel that *that* is what was missing or "not there" a moment before.

This feeling of being perpetually trapped within an as-if performance that seems to come from the outside is an experience of ontological passivity. By this I mean that in their very being these bank tellers feel a loss of agency in relation to their own movements. They feel compelled to enact a "self" that is somehow not *their* self but another self that seems to move through them in the form of a role and that leaves them feeling "other" to themselves, and "other" to each of the others with whom they interact. Yet this feeling of "otherness" is not a feeling that descends on each of the tellers individually; it is rather a collective phenomenon that unites the tellers to one another in a perverse way. Thus a new teller, when she first arrives at the bank, will proceed to indoctrinate herself into her own passivity by taking cues from all of the others in discovering how to act (or how to enact herself), and in so doing she will gradually come to feel "with" the others in an as-if way, in the sense that she will come to feel, as do each of the others, that they are all undergoing the same passive experience which establishes among them a social bond. But since this social bond is constituted as a feeling of being other-than-themselves-together, of being collectively trapped within the same role, it is simultaneously pervaded by a collective sense of universal isolation, since no one is capable of really making contact with any of the others spontaneously without violating the norms of "being-a-bank-teller."

Ontological passivity is, therefore, a collective experience that simultaneously divides a group of people by an infinite distance and unites them in the false communion of being-other-than-themselves-together. The source of this collective passivity and impotence is to be found in the relation of the tellers to the bank as an institution. This "bank" has a double reality, or rather its singular reality must be understood simultaneously from two points of view. On the one hand, the bank is a functional organization of human labor

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that has a determinate relation to economic production, in that it serves to reproduce finance capital in what economists call an "efficient" way. There is a certain division of labor that corresponds to a certain level of technological development, and the functional organization of work that derives from this correspondence bears a definite relationship to a system of economic pressures (this bank must compete with other banks, and so forth). But this approach to defining what the bank is can tell us nothing about why the tellers behave and feel as they do, because it is an approach that turns the bank into a thing.

To understand the bank as a living milieu, we must attempt to grasp "the bank" from the inside, as it is experienced by the people who dwell "within it" and who thereby create it as a collective Gestalt. In this subjective sense, the institution of "the bank" is, as we shall see, an imaginary entity to which the tellers (as well as the other "bank personnel," the customers, and so forth) have given over their being by believing in "its" existence as a determining power. Precisely to the degree that the tellers feel a loss of agency in relation to themselves, they feel themselves to be agents of "the bank" as an imaginary entity, and they feel themselves to be united with one another or socially bonded in relation to this imaginary entity. It is not an economic method of explanation but rather a socio-phenomenological method of description that can make "the bank" intelligible as a lived experience for the people who create and then "inhabit" it.

The first step in gaining access to this lived experience is to detach ourselves in a radical way from the social milieu that is generated through the communication of signs (spoken language, tone of voice, gestures, and so forth) within the bank. If we can manage to attain this hyper-objective viewpoint, we can observe something that is at once perfectly obvious and normally very difficult to see or "remember"—namely, that "the bank," for all of its pretense and style, consists of nothing more than a group of people in a room. From this position of hyper-objectivity through which the social interactions before us are stripped of their symbolic and signifying content, we do not experience "the bank" at all except perhaps as a kind of random fact about what they call this type of social gathering ("this is what they call 'a bank'"). Yet to the people immersed within the socially communicated reality within the room, "the bank" has a ubiquitous presence—in fact, they cannot, except in very private and quasi-unconscious moments of distraction, escape from their absorption in "the bank" and see before them simply a room full of people. This person who approaches the window is first of all a "customer," that person on the left is first of all a "teller like me," those velvet ropes are first of all not merely ropes but signs that "the bank" uses to "line up the customers," just as the adjacent machine with the green lights is first of all a "computer" that "the bank" uses to retrieve information about "customer accounts." Every object and person within the room, in other words, is always already layered over with a relatively impenetrable symbolic coating that seems to derive from this "bank," this entity that appears to allocate to each person a role and to each object a signifying power.

Yet from this subjective point of view, "the bank" *is* nowhere. It does not reside in the Board of Directors or in the President's office, or anywhere else except in the minds of those who believe in its existence as a kind of phantom presence that has vampirized their being and made them agents of its imaginary power. How does this collective internalization of "the bank" take place?

*If we can manage to attain this hyper-objective viewpoint, we can observe . . . that "the bank," for all of its pretense and style, consists of nothing more than a group of people in a room.*

The answer to this question is to be found in a complex reciprocal relationship between the role of collective anxiety and the role of the bank hierarchy in shaping the internal experience of each of the bank's members. At a very deep and basic level, every person in the room feels that she is subject to both the physical and psychological power of other people, that if she fails to conform to the norms of expected behavior within the bank, she will be thrown out of the bank by force or be subject to psychological humiliation. If a "customer" fails to act like a "customer," he will be thrown out by a man with a gun; if a "teller" fails to act like a "teller," she will be fired or at least risk being socially ostracized; the same or similar sanctions are available for the "President" and even the "Chairman of the Board." This fear of dismissal in both the physical and psychological sense is ever present at what we might call "the base" of everyone's experience, and it establishes the experiential ground for the transmutation of people's being that occurs through the internalization of the "bank," in the sense that if these conditions were not present, people might refuse to conform

to what was expected of them and recover their spontaneity.

What is the source of this shared anxiety among the banks members that each of them is in danger of being "dismissed" or humiliated by a dominant other? In part, this fear is a rational response to real inequalities of power in the bank, to the fact that many of the banks workers must depend for their survival upon owners who may be indifferent to them except as factors of production and who have the power to deprive them of both their income and their sense of social identity. But a deeper reason for the anxiety, and one which may even account for the persistence of the inequalities of economic power, is a contradiction that exists at the heart of every one's experience. On the one hand, each person wants to connect with the others in a life-giving way, to make contact in a way that would produce a feeling of genuine recognition and mutual confirmation. This desire is fundamental to being a social person, and it animates all of us in every moment of our existence. Yet at the same time, everyone has learned to fear this very desire because its realization implies an openness to the other that leaves the self essentially vulnerable and risks a kind of total humiliation should the other respond with "disconfirmation," domination, or rejection. Since the experience of genuine connection and confirmation has been very rare for all of the banks members owing to the alienation and mistrust that pervades our social world, and since their desire for it is therefore associated with the anticipation of pain and loss, the very existence of others has become a source of ontological anxiety for them. Each person has learned to expect to be "dismissed," and so each seeks to avoid being fully present to the other by mediating their presence through a distancing persona and by making themselves unconscious that this mediation has occurred.

*A good way of measuring this absence is to notice that each gesture is a moment "behind" or "too late," and it is this fraction of delay-time that reveals to us the gesture's enacted quality.*

The transmutation of each persons authentic being into a false or as-if self, therefore, occurs through a process of collective and reciprocal flight on the part of everyone from experiencing their own desire for real contact and the vulnerability this desire implies. By absorbing themselves in their role-performances and implicitly asserting (to themselves and others) that these performances constitute who they really are, the banks' members try to withdraw the immediacy of their social presence from their outward appearance, becoming anonymous "bank tellers," "customers," "Vice-Presidents," and so on, whose artificiality makes them inaccessible to the threat of the other's gaze. The lack of agency that we earlier observed in the tellers' relationship to their own movements can now be understood as the outcome of an intentional effort to "empty" their role performances of any signs of authorship or personal identity, and the delay-time we observed in their gestures can now be seen as reflective of a chronic self-consciousness through which their outward expression is repeatedly uncoupled from its generative foundation. Yet we must ask ourselves why, if the desire for genuine connection is really a basic aspect of our being, do these tellers not find a way of resisting this perpetual flight which can only leave them continually threatened and isolated? The answer is that while they all feel the same unrealized desire, no one can ordinarily gain the confidence that the desire she feels within herself is also felt by those around her. From the point of view of her isolated position, each person always already experiences all of the others as other-than-themselves, as participants in collective flight. And since the possibility of recovering one's authentic being can come only through being recognized as fully human by another, no one can normally find the strength to resist in a milieu where the possibility of such a recovery is reciprocally denied. Instead, each person feels compelled to become "one of the others" and participate in the collective flight that holds everyone's alienation in place.

The medium through which this collective flight is carried out is commonly called a hierarchy. The bank-hierarchy, as I am using the term here, is a purely imaginary entity that is generated by the felt need of everyone to "identify" with "the bank," to establish the ontological basis for one's passivity as a false self by constituting an "other" before whom one can be recognized as false. This hierarchy bears no relation to the direct interpersonal relations through which real power is exercised in the bank, since real power is exercised not "from above" (there is no "above") but by one person acting directly upon another, by the subordination of one to another's will. The hierarchy is rather conjured up imaginatively as a way of escaping the universal sense of danger that I have described: it provides what we might call the imaginary vehicle through which everyone becomes able to find an imaginary and passive station in relation

to everyone else. The hierarchy allows each person to substitute a legitimate authority, which is "the bank" itself as a subjectively constituted institution and which can serve as the relational agent for each person's self-falsification, for the illegitimate sense of humiliation that haunts each person's true being and true sense of what is going on in the room.

To see how the hierarchy comes into being, we need only look carefully at the reciprocal interaction that commonly takes place among two tellers and their so-called "supervisor." Let us suppose that the two tellers are called Jane and John, and that the supervisor is called Harold. Jane and John work side by side at their windows. Harold, who is otherwise engaged in a variety of lower-management clerical tasks, walks back and forth behind Jane and John and occasionally looks at them to see not only what they are doing, but who they are being. Jane discovers the contours of her as-if performance through watching John, as John does through watching Jane, and in this sense Jane and John "recognize" one another as "bank tellers." Both, in other words, take the position of "other" to the other and in so doing discover the way of becoming other to themselves. Yet because this relation of reciprocal otherness involves a loss of agency in relation to themselves and a sinking into ontological passivity that is measured by this loss of agency, both of them require an agent to ground their impoverished "identities." They must project into a third-party the active power to establish the ontological basis for the series of performances which they experience as passive and lacking in any self-generated agency. Without such a third-party, they could not "exist" as "bank tellers" because there would be no source for their being. This role is allocated to Harold, whom they perceive to be their authority (author-ity). And in together perceiving Harold as the source of their being, they also discover their own unification as "tellers-together," which is to say that they discover a social bond through their perception of how they believe Harold perceives them, and this bond reassures them to the degree that it compensates for the feeling of actual isolation that dwells within each of them. Harold allows them to feel the illusion of being "with" one another to the degree that each, in being "other" to each other and "other" to themselves, are "other-together" before Harold, as they perceive him. And because Harold must always remain with them as their relational "authority figure" in order for them to exist as tellers-together, they internalize him and "identify" with him as the one to whom they owe their own identities. Even in his absence, they know how to act because they have internalized his authoritative image and made it part of themselves.

Harold knows how to play his part through his empathic understanding of how tellers are supposed to be, and in fact he enacts his authority in all of his relations with them, in his way of approaching them, advising them, and in criticizing their performances. Yet it is evident that this "Harold" that we are describing is no more an actual person than are Jane and John. Harold merely plays the part of "supervisor," in that however "active" and "authoritative" he appears for John and Jane, he remains passive in relation to himself. He discovers his being-as-a-supervisor only through the reciprocal internalization of themselves-as-supervisors that characterizes the relations among the supervisors at his level in "the bank," relations which are pervaded by the same passivization that pervades the inter-relations among the tellers. The supervisors, in enacting their authority in relation to the tellers, are also "other" to each other and "other" to themselves, and as a result they also require an agency outside of themselves to activate and ground their own passivity. Harold finds this agency through his own supervisor, who is perhaps a "Vice-President" and who performs for all of the supervisors at Harold's level the same ontological function that Harold performs for the tellers. Thus Harold discovers how to become a supervisor through watching and internalizing how the others at his level enact themselves as as-if authorities, while their actual experience of collective passivity is grounded for them by a superior whom they project and then internalize as the agent of their as-if selves. Thus, in the relation teller-supervisor-Vice-President we discover the ontological foundation of the hierarchy as a form of collective being, a form that I am calling imaginary because it creates the appearance, among people who are in fact simply people, of a top-down ordering that serves to establish each person's sense of his or her imaginary social place.

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*. . . the institution of "the bank" is . . . an imaginary entity to which the tellers (as well as the other "bank personnel," the customers, and so forth) have given over their being by believing in "its" existence as a determining power.*

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The paradox of the hierarchy, however, is that no one actually feels in command because the authority that the hierarchy distributes throughout itself is never more than the active role-complement of the universal passivity out of which the hierarchy is born as a pro-

jected-internalized, imaginary entity. If, for example, we reach the "top" of the hierarchy, we find a "President" who does not feel himself to be his own "author," because his authority is merely the as-if authority of a "President" in a "bank." He receives his authority, in other words, from the subjects who constitute him, and this requires of him that he find the basis of his own being outside of himself in precisely the same fashion as the others. Yet there is no *one* "above" him; his ontological recourse is to the Board of Directors, who are constituted as the "fiduciaries" of "the bank." In the realm of the imaginary, the Board of Directors is comparable to the modern "State," in that just as the State serves as the imaginary basis for the political unification of the "United States" and so establishes for each of us our imaginary identity as "Americans," so the Board of Directors is the incarnate representation of "the bank's" existence as a political organization (and this Board is itself enfranchised by the State, which establishes the political legitimacy of "the bank" as an entity that derives its existence ultimately from the democratic constitution of "the nation"). Thus the "President," like all of the other bank personnel, finds his agency outside of himself and shapes his being to the set of performances required of him by "the bank" as it is embodied for him through the Board to which he is "accountable" in an imaginary way. And since the Board members experience themselves as fiduciaries in the service of "the bank," we find that the ultimate source of authority within the hierarchy is "the bank" itself, as a phantom "other" to whom everyone "within the bank" owes their as-if existence. In this milieu of universal otherness, "the bank" is believed in as a kind of "God," as an object of belief which is invested with authorship or authority for the group as a whole.

The relationship of "the bank" as an imaginary entity to the hierarchy as an imaginary ordering is, therefore, that the hierarchy is the vehicle that the group uses to bring "the bank" to themselves through a series of embodied human gazes. The underlying fear of domination and humiliation from which everyone flees is transmuted, through the constitution of "the bank" and the hierarchy through which it is concretely and intersubjectively mediated, into the shared submission of being-"other"-together before an imaginary object with whom everyone identifies as the active foundation of their passive and false selves. In and through this process, they recover an imaginary sense of being "with" one another as "of the bank," even as they are utterly lost and isolated from one another as real people who would know themselves as agents of their own collective activity.

The self that is produced within this hierarchical environment is, to borrow R. D. Laing's phrase, an ontologically divided one that has a rather complex organization. Each person experiences his or her authentic being as a privatized non-self that is denied recognition and that is therefore "invisible" or unconscious: it is known or comprehended only through the experienced bodily tension that derives from not being-oneself and through a continual obsessive and pre-conscious fantasy life that reaches a dim awareness in moments of distraction (as in being vaguely aware of wanting to sleep with a customer, or in vaguely noticing that a shape on a wall resembles a wild dog). The "visible" or conscious self that is enacted in behavior is experienced as a "public" or "outer" synthesis of as-if performances which is at once lived as passively undergone to the degree that it lacks any sense of its own agency and yet is "owned" to the degree that each person feels this self as "I." And corresponding to this ontologically passive public self is a projected-internalized active or authoritative "other" which serves as the passive self's agency and which generates within everyone the feeling that one's being is fashioned from the outside. This ontologically divided self-organization is the internalized residue of all forms of social organization within which people lack the actual power to express themselves freely in their practical activity together, which is to say virtually all forms of social life that have existed in human history and that exist today on earth.

Yet because each person's privatized and authentic being continually clamors for recognition in order to realize its desire and explode the false "outer" self which contains this desire, we must look more carefully at the interpersonal dynamic through which everyone's true needs are perpetually subdued in order to see how the clamoring of desire for genuine recognition by the other perpetually checks itself through being held in check by the other. The way to do this is to observe what happens in the event of a disturbance that reaches visibility, as when John begins to complain to the other tellers that he really hates his job, that it somehow makes him feel unreal and like an automaton. If John makes this complaint to Jane alone over a cup of coffee, there is no threat posed to the collective belief in "the bank" because coffee with a quasi-friend (they work at adjacent windows) is sanctioned as a private space appropriate for passive commiseration, or in other words the complaint remains sufficiently private to elicit a restorative concern.

But if John begins to "go public" with his dissatisfaction, he threatens to expose the imaginary nature of "the bank" as the vehicle of collective flight, producing within everyone an anxiety that the humiliation which everyone is fleeing from will be drawn to the surface

and will *occur* for each of them. As a result, to the degree that John reveals himself publicly as being in pain, everyone will adopt toward him the position of the authoritative other through which their passive selves are secured. They will see themselves in John, see their own alienation from themselves and one another *recognized* through his affirmation of its existence, and so they will secure their own "otherness"' to themselves and to one another by taking the position of the agent through whom their passivity is founded. They will act toward him, in other words, as if he is "crazy" and indicate to him that he ought not to be *being this way.* But in addressing him, they will actually be addressing themselves as they are revealed through him, simultaneously quelling their own anxiety and reestablishing their imaginary connection with one another as depersonalized "personnel," as "of the bank." In taking the position of the authoritative other, they secure a collective reassurance which is also a collective denial. And through this collective denial they perpetually supress their true desire to recognize one another as fully human beings.

The clamoring for authentic recognition of which I speak is therefore held in check by the perpetual anticipation of this "reversal of voice" whereby the others adopt the attitude of the Other toward each other and themselves. And it is the perpetual conflict between the clamoring for recognition and the anticipation of rejection (for each person knows that he, too, would join the others in rejecting another) that produces collective despair and adaptation. But in order to guarantee that this reciprocal holding-in-check will not unravel, the "lines of authority" through which "the bank" is sustained as a totemic source of unification are usually externalized and represented in a "flow-chart," which may appear in an office manual or may even be posted on a wall. This "flow chart" is nothing other than a "constitution" of the imaginary ordering in the hierarchy, and it is the institutional analogue to "the law" insofar as it attempts to legalize in an authoritative document the alienated relations that comprise "the bank" as an imaginary entity. Its image resides within the consciousness of everyone as something that can be pointed to in the event of a disruption, and its effect is to reify these alienated relations, to represent the collective experience of passivization and otherness as a timeless "fact" of "bank life." To the degree that the flow-chart is internalized by everyone in this way, it establishes for everyone the basis of their abstract integration with all of the others, or in other words it generates an appearance of social unification that contradicts the felt sense of isolation and unconnectedness that pervades each person's private experience of being in the room. As such it is both reassuring and compensatory insofar as it signifies to each person that she is "of the group" (that she is "part of something"), and repressive insofar as its abstract image of social integration is a denial of each person's concrete sense of the truth.

As a sign that is "pointed to" in the event of a disruption, the flow-chart becomes an interpretive document that inscribes the necessity for both the passivization of the self, which is signified as an abstract "role" within each box, and the inevitability of reversal, which is represented in the lines linking the flow-chart boxes from top to bottom. The chart is therefore a spatial representation of the temporal experience (for everyone) of being-in-the-bank, and because the spatial inscription appears as something fixed (instead of being merely the drawing that it actually is) it functions, insofar as it is internalized, as a social defense mechanism. It becomes, in other words, a shared internalized representation of "the group" that simultaneously inhibits everyone's genuine impulses for connection and recognition and partially gratifies these impulses in an imaginary way.

This, then, is a "bank" as it appears to the people who "inhabit" it. As a social institution, or an institutionalization of a particular way of being social, it is obviously not unique, but rather typical of virtually every social formation in contemporary society. Changing such institutions requires overcoming the alienation and fear that give rise to them. And this will not happen until we find a way of collectively gaining confidence that the desire we each secretly feel within ourselves exists with equal intensity in those around us, no matter how remote, threatening, or unreal they feel compelled to make themselves appear. □



# The Threat of Comparable Worth

*Alan Freeman*

In 1977, Pauline Christensen, on behalf of herself and other clerical workers at the University of Northern Iowa, brought a lawsuit against her employer, charging that the University was guilty of sex discrimination. The clerical workers, who performed jobs such as computer operator, library assistant, or data technician, were being paid less than physical plant workers, who were carpet layers, bus drivers, mail carriers, and the like. All of the clerical workers were women; most of the physical plant workers were men. In 1978, Mary Lemons, Director of Nursing, brought an action against her employer, the City of Denver, on behalf of herself and other registered nurses working for the city, claiming sex discrimination insofar as nurses were being paid less than auto mechanics or tree trimmers.

Both cases involve legal claims based on the idea of "comparable worth" (also called "pay equity"), meaning that the respective job categories, in terms of their contributions to the employer and required level of skill, effort, and responsibility, are at least sufficiently similar to mandate equal salaries. Comparable worth, as a legal or political strategy, is a way of attacking pervasive and institutionalized forms of sex discrimination that cannot be reached with more traditional and conventional versions of civil rights law. Traditional antidiscrimination law (e.g., Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act as narrowly interpreted by the courts) would require proof that the lower salary was being imposed on women *because they are women* and not for some other, neutral, reason. Even under the Equal Pay Act, to win one must show that men are being paid more than women for doing jobs that are basically the same but named differently by the employer (like the distinction, in hospitals, between "nurse's aides" and "orderlies").

It would be hard to argue that nurses and tree trimmers do the same work, given the respective physiologies of trees and people, among other things. It is equally difficult to prove that particular employers adopt job categories as part of a purposeful effort to keep women in a state of economic subordination. Yet there is a vast problem, of which the two opening cases are representative.

What is the problem? It is that women are systematically underpaid for the work that they do when their job is one that has traditionally been (and still is) exclusively or predominantly done by women and is regarded, culturally (by men, and, I fear, by many women as well) as "women's work." The average American working woman earns 59 cents for every dollar earned by the average American working man. What kind of work do women do? They are (as of 1980) 98% of secretaries, 75% of elementary school teachers, 90% of bookkeepers, 83% of cashiers, 88% of waitresses, and so on. Their work falls largely within a stereotyped category, "women's work," which usually involves domesticity, sex appeal, dexterity, patience, nurturing, or contact with young children. The overall result is lower status, lower wages, and fewer benefits than their male working counterparts. (By talking about the undervaluation of women's paid employment, I do not mean to exclude as a problem the *nonvaluation* of traditional women's work at home; it's just a problem requiring steps somewhat more radical than comparable worth.)

What, then, is the answer? From a sincere, liberal, reformist perspective, the answer seems easy and obvious. Take the traditional female jobs, compare them with traditional and still predominantly male jobs that pay more, and decide whether, in each comparison, the male job really requires more skill, effort, or responsibility. Thus, one need simply answer the question of whether or not tree trimming in fact requires a higher level of skill, effort, or responsibility than nursing. Likewise, one should easily be able to decide whether carpet laying really deserves more money than assisting in a library. If the result of the comparison is that the lower paid job is really no different (under the applicable criteria) from the higher paid one, then the remedy is equally easy and obvious. Raise the pay of the lower paid job until they are equal.

At this point, then, we have identified a traditional sort of liberal social problem—the economic oppression and subordination of a distinct and relatively powerless group of people, working women—and also identified a traditional sort of liberal solution—equalization through forced redistribution of money to neutralize

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the oppressive conditions. So what is all the fuss about comparable worth? Let's start by going back to the two cases I began with.

In the *Christensen* case, the court concluded that the plaintiffs had failed to demonstrate that the wage differential was based on sex discrimination, as opposed to some "other legitimate reason." The real reason for the disparity, said the court, was that jobs like the physical plant jobs were more highly paid than jobs like the clerical worker jobs in the "local labor market." All the law requires is that "individuals shall be entitled to equal *opportunities* in employment on the basis of fitness." Thus the court concluded that it is *not sex discrimination* when employees of different sexes receive disparate compensation for work of differing skills, even if the work is "subjectively" of equal value to the employer, if the work "does not command an equal price in the labor market."

Fred Winner, the judge in the *Lemons* case, showed even less restraint. One does not need to have read much Freud (or Marx) to be puzzled by his statement in the first sentence of the opinion that the case was "pregnant with the possibility of disrupting the entire economic system of the United States of America." He conceded that the skills of the nurse-plaintiffs were "such that in a truly egalitarian society they would receive more money," but he refused to "open the Pandora's box of restructuring the entire economy of the United States." He concluded that the plaintiffs' theory "ignores economic realities." Thus, both the clerical workers in Iowa and the nurses in Colorado lost their cases, as have most women who have brought such lawsuits in federal courts to date.

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So what's going on? A serious and obvious social problem that implies a discrete liberal solution is not only rejected by the courts (whose job it is to enforce sex discrimination laws) but characterized in their so doing in apocalyptic terms. Is it that judges just aren't liberals any more, that it's the 1980s, not the 1960s, and what can you expect from courts anyway? No, I don't think so. Let's take a look at what the seemingly modest agenda of comparable worth might really entail. One way of exploring this issue is to ask (as I've done when teaching this subject) why the Right (whatever that means, which is of course a whole other article, but I think it means at least enough to use the word) is so threatened by the very mention of comparable worth. Ronald Reagan, after all, called it a "cockamamie idea." His appointee as chairman of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Clarence Pendleton, referred to it as probably the "looniest idea since Looney Tunes came on the screen." This sort of rhetoric suggests an effort to avoid the issue rather than engage it. Let's try engagement instead.

Earlier, I characterized the pervasive problem of lower pay for "women's work" as an obvious problem of sex discrimination. As you move toward the Right on the political spectrum, I must concede, the perceived level of obviousness about the characterization declines. Why? Because, they will say, this is not a problem of sex discrimination at all. Rather, they will assert, your so-called problem of sex discrimination is no more than a socio-economic condition brought about by the interplay of three basic and normal features of American life—the free market, freedom of choice, and the system of equality of opportunity. Employers pay wage rates determined by prevailing market conditions, which makes sense, since it would be silly (in fact irrational) to pay workers more when you can get them for less. And, the argument will continue, what's this "women's work" nonsense anyway? Are they slaves? Don't they choose the occupations they want? Perhaps women feel more natural and in tune with their womanly natures when performing those jobs that you denounce as imbued with stereotypical assumptions. Finally, our basic system of equality of opportunity removes procedural barriers to self-improvement. People can earn what they deserve to earn based on merit and ability, and it may just be that women generally, still prefering as primary roles those of wife and/or mother, choose not to invest as much in their own "human capital" as do men, and therefore earn less because they are worth less.

At this point the Right has hauled out its Ideological Big Gun—the Myth of Market Freedom. The myth can be answered. As a description of the world, it is false. It is based on presuppositions about human life that have nothing to do with experienced reality. To deny that market freedom is a reality is obviously threatening to those whose hierarchical status (the ruling class, the bosses, the power elite, the oppressors, call them any-

thing you like) is felt to depend on perpetuation of the myth as truth. The suggestion may, I fear, be equally threatening to many, both women and men, who are powerless themselves yet prefer to see their own plight as the plaything of impersonal forces or an inadequate stock of self-worth.

What is the claim of "market freedom?" The market is depicted in ideology as an impersonal, procedural mechanism for bringing together rational self-maximizing individuals and firms so that they may enter into freely chosen exchanges which will in turn produce prices according to the laws of supply and demand, and in so doing, satisfy authentic human wants under conditions of scarcity. Central to this depiction is the notion of "freedom of choice," so let's begin by taking a closer look at that one.

Freedom of choice assumes that one makes a voluntary decision, given a wide range of opportunities, under conditions not of coercion or duress but of freedom. What does this model have to do with the actual experience of working women who "choose" to become secretaries or waitresses? Almost nothing, I suspect. Is it because they have a "taste" for servility, subordination, and repetitive drudgery? Or is it because they are desperate for money, often in order to raise kids as a single mother, and oppressed by a culture that surrounds them and stereotypes them from the time they are born? The culture tells them what their roles as women are, roles that are enforced by the men they know and often made a condition of their relationships with them. You take what work you can get, given what you know how to do, and what they want you for. That some women fight back, that some women are authentic heroines in their resistance, does not suggest that even their situation is a product of "free choice."

Even a staunch right-winger might not push the freedom of choice argument to its limit. Instead, he (or she, in this post-feminist political world that has, for example, rejected the ERA) might concede that the women who become secretaries or waitresses don't really have a whole lot of choice about jobs, but that it's still basically their own fault. Why? Because they lack the skills to do anything else. And why do they lack the skills? Because they have not taken advantage of education and possibilities for self-improvement. The basic ploy here is to invoke, along with freedom of choice, the supplementary myth of equality of opportunity, an important correlative of which is to "blame the victim" for failure.

Equality of opportunity assumes a world of free and equal atomistic actors competing with one another as players in a game with neutral rules and identical starting positions. The game image is powerful because it helps us forget that real people are situated by history and social circumstance in vastly unequal starting places.

In the fantasy world of the game image, people have "talents," "society" values some talents more than others, and people can, through education and training, "develop" their talents into skills to be sold in the marketplace. It must be amusing for the spoiled middle-class teenager who goes off to college to get drunk for four years to learn that he or she has in fact been engaging in "deferred gratification" as an investment in her or his own "human capital." The extreme example aside, the reality of equality of opportunity, for women and men starting at the bottom and elsewhere, is that it does not exist. The skills rewarded are ones, like performance on SAT exams, that are possessed already by the very classes in our society who set the terms of competition for newcomers. Despite the few and always highly publicized examples of Horatio (or Henrietta?) Alger, the reality is not equality of opportunity but inter-generational replication of hierarchy.

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If both freedom of choice and equality of opportunity are nothing but pervasive and insidious myths, what then is the "market" in which they are supposed to be operating? For starters, it's surely not a "thing," it's not out there by itself, operating impersonally. What it really is, is a collective conspiracy to believe in a fantasy in order to deny the realities of hierarchical power and stereotypical assumptions. The market cannot be anything other than what we put into it as people, for it is only an aggregate of particularized human relationships in social and historical settings. Those relationships are characterized by distortions of power and pervasive, lived-out, stereotypes. The relatively powerless simply submit, using the form of exchange, to the coercive demands of those who are already on top.

This description of market exchange is not the one usually celebrated in free enterprise mythology. According to conventional market theory, exchange is a process by which free and rational actors make bargains with each other for the sake of mutual gain. Each agrees to forego something of value (e.g., leisure time) in order

to receive something of greater value to that individual (e.g., a paycheck). Exchanges are thus regarded by definition as value-enhancing. How could they be otherwise, since they are freely chosen?

In fact, however, there is no way to separate the process of exchange from the context in which it operates. The operative context of *every* free exchange is a legally sanctioned threat to withhold. For example, those who control the resources (capitalists, employers, bosses) simply tell those who don't (workers, the powerless): "Unless you work on my terms, you will get no paycheck." That implicit threat to withhold means that the so-called "free bargain" is, in reality, always a function of the social distribution of power.

If market freedom, which has been hauled out to put down the claim of comparable worth, is itself an ideological fraud, then the comparable worth debate places a wider and more complicated agenda on the table than the one with which it began. That agenda is the question of human worth in capitalist society. Central to the world view of market capitalism is the treatment of human labor as an exchangeable commodity whose value (or worth) is revealed through exchange. If there is nothing "natural" about the market and the way it operates, the notion that human labor can be authentically valued through exchange must collapse. At that point, the question of comparable worth becomes more than a liberal reformist enterprise, and in fact becomes a basis for a pervasive political attack on the hierarchy of human worth.

At this point, some comparable worth proponents may be wanting to tell me to shut up, accusing me of taking a discrete and liberal feminist program and recharacterizing it as a call for radical transformation of our society and economy in terms inevitably threatening to all but the political Left, which hardly exists anyway in this country. I plead guilty, not because I want to turn comparable worth into something else but because the goals of comparable worth cannot otherwise be realized in anything more than a trivial and tokenized manner.

The parallel is antidiscrimination law and the legal struggle against racism. The story there is that a massive struggle for civil rights was processed into a safe, legalistic, conceptual form that could tolerate some tokenization without seriously threatening the established hierarchy. There, too, the predominant myth of equality of opportunity serves the real power that keeps masses of people powerless and poor. As with affirmative action as applied to racism, one can imagine a "safe" version of comparable worth that will equalize some low-level (in status and money) jobs to the point where men begin to complain (as whites have about affirmative action) but which neither improves the life situation of more than a token number of women nor threatens the stability of existing hierarchies. One can also imagine the production of interminable bureaucratic processes as job after job is compared according to "analytic" criteria by "experts," who will in turn be challenged by counter-experts. That such will happen seems likely despite the fact that it is obvious to me (and should be to anyone else) that in Denver, Colorado in 1980, it is unjust and oppressive to pay tree trimmers more than nurses.

*If there is nothing "natural" about the market and the way it operates, the notion that human labor can be authentically valued through exchange must collapse.*

Comparable worth, like the struggle for civil rights, represents the dilemma of liberal reformist programs. Substantive goals, i.e., *results*, cannot be achieved without seriously threatening established hierarchy and ideology. So the movements for reform are tamed instead, tamed into safe, symbolic, and nonthreatening forms. But that does not have to happen. Comparable worth provides a wonderful occasion for people on the Left to organize, bring lawsuits in federal and state courts, and to lobby legislatures. This can be done without settling for reformist tokenism, but by insisting on the transformative potential of the idea.

As surely as comparable worth is a women's issue, growing out of women's experience of oppression in this society, it is necessarily everyone's issue as well. It is in the interest of all of us to free our sense of self-worth from the dehumanizing notion of "value" embedded in market mythology. It's time to start imagining a world where nurses and childcare workers will be worth a lot more than leveraged buy-out specialists, or even law professors. □

*The Holocaust was more than an event in Jewish history—it was a major occurrence in the history of the human race. Not only because it was the product of one of the most culturally and scientifically advanced and sophisticated countries in the world (thereby calling into permanent question the ethical value of much of this enterprise), not only because it was an outgrowth of 1,700 years of Christian racism against Jews (a racism which has never been fully atoned for and which finds contemporary expression in the Church's failure to recognize the State of Israel), not only because of its testimony to the colossal moral insensitivity of the majority of the human race to the suffering of one of its minorities—but also because it provides a dramatic warning of what may yet become a more universal holocaust if the lessons of the first one are not learned.*

*All the more tragic that the Holocaust has been largely ignored and repressed by the non-Jewish world—so that President Reagan's attempt to rewrite history when he went to Bitburg was politically possible for him without offending the common sense and moral sensibility of the American people. It is also tragic that the Holocaust has been appropriated by conservative leadership in Israel and the American-Jewish world to justify policies that are otherwise lacking in wisdom.*

*In this issue, we begin a process of rethinking the Holocaust that will continue in future years. Even though we do not always agree with everything these authors say, we find them refreshing and able to break through the reified thinking of the past and thus to open new intellectual and emotional space that humanity badly needs. We begin with Eleanora Lev's article—profound in its universal significance precisely to the degree that it manages to capture the particularity of a female experience of the Holocaust. Adi Ophir,* Tikkun's *Israel Editor, portrays the possibility of a new religion that may emerge—a religion that replaces God with the Holocaust—and shows how mainstream Jewish interpretations of the Holocaust may ultimately lead to this distortion; Richard Rubenstein comments on Ophir. David Biale questions the assumption of total powerlessness that is often derived from the Holocaust, while Idith Zertal questions the role of the pre-Israel Jewish community in Palestine (the Yishuv) and assesses its failures. Danny Diner shows how Germany today still refuses to deal honestly with the legacy of the Holocaust. And finally Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and Arthur Waskow draw upon the religious traditions of Judaism to guide them in drawing spiritual and political lessons for the present.*

# Don't Take Your Daughter to the Extermination Camp

*Eleonora Lev*

We walk, embracing, down the paths of the Maidanek extermination camp. She complains that she's hot and cold inside her body. Her head presses against my shoulder, nestling in my embracing arm, working nonstop in its complicated, invisible way. What is she building in there? Into what secret language is she translating what she sees with her eyes? She is still sheltered by the blessed ignorance of her age; ultimate despair still falls outside her spectrum of familiar emotions. Her powers of imagining have not yet faltered under the effort to imagine things that really happened. She still hopes I'm omniscient and already suspects I'm not; for now, however, this suspicion brings only a good-hearted smirk to her lips.

To her I am transparent. As fully understood as the seasons, as essential as the weather, and to the same extent nothing special, merely what's available. Thus she clings to me, the child who is usually as casual with me as with her bedroom slippers. The forced, self-conscious effort, the doubts, the ever-present feeling of not-up-to-the-job—all these, it seems, come from my side. It is she who teaches me compassion, humility, a life of constant attention to every detail, a compelling concern and a trusting devotion. From her I have come to know the magnitude of my power to destroy, to

*Eleonora Lev emigrated from Poland to Israel in 1956. She writes for the Israeli daily* Maariv. *This piece is taken from a forthcoming book entitled* A Sort of Orphanhood, *written after a trip to Poland in April of 1983.*

inflict pain. The difficulty of controlling that power. And the fact that I can wreak this destruction so easily, with a word, a glance. And that blunders and negligence can hurt as much as willful malice.

Her hands are long and thin, usually dirty: black crescents of sand under the fingernails, glue stains, felt-pen doodlings, water-soluble Donald Duck tattoos. Her hair is thick and smooth, that caressable hue somewhere between honey and light brown. It gets darker every year; when she was very little, she was straw-blond. The quick glinting gold scattering and disappearing from her hair is one of the certain sweetnesses of my life, like the shape of her head in my palm, the roundness of her forehead. The look in her eyes is bittersweet chocolate, a look she had even as an infant, a wise and pensive look set in a little elongated face. Hidden dimples in her cheeks emerge only when she laughs hard. And now her body is blossoming with the first signs of approaching womanhood. When I gave her a bath in the hotel in Warsaw, she sang loudly, gaily, a "soap song" she invented on the spot, a made-up melody with nonsense words, and explained, choking with laughter between "stanzas": I don't know what it is, it's the song the soap makes. If I had a son, would I love him differently?

The burden I bear, sometimes with pleasure and always with a hundred regrets, is this desire: to be forever very sane for her, very, very good. As Andre Gide said, "I intend to give you strength, joy, courage, perspicacity, defiance." And how shall I give her all these when they are forever eluding my own grasp? The thing I always try to keep secret from her—out of shame, out of fear of hurting—is the rabid dog, the drooling, worm-infested beast, eyes inflamed, who races about madly in a corner of my mind, gnawing on rotten bones, ridden with leprosy, wailing in the dark from its stinging wounds as it pisses on itself. The essence of its madness is its vehement refusal to die. DeathFear, that's its name, and there are nights when I have nowhere to escape from its howling. Then I am really alone and cold. But if she suddenly appears by my bed in the middle of the night, I immediately make her a warm, soft refuge under the blanket; I wrap and curl myself around her and put her to sleep. The front of my body, concave to her, radiates confidence and serenity as if nothing were the matter, as if the hateful dog isn't still crouching, panting at my arched back—like the dark side of the moon—lying in wait for an opportunity to bare its teeth, to suck my very marrow. Thus we curl together, three crescents tightly sandwiched in the dark: tiny Effie, going back to sleep, I curling around her in the middle, and DeathFear grabbing me from behind and breathing down my neck.

Why on earth are you taking the girl to Auschwitz, people asked me. How old is she? Are you sure it's for her? I had no good answer, as if I had been accused of taking my only daughter to a brothel, a bad mother, what a scandal. I invented some macabre smart-aleck answer: and the children who arrived at Auschwitz forty years ago, was it for them? It's not a place for people of any age, if you ask me. The discomfort did not go away.

I never raised my hand at her in my life, not even once. This was a deliberate commitment I assumed when I was about her age: when I have children, I vowed then (my body burning from one of my hot-tempered mother's painful outbursts of rage), I will never beat them, never. Thus I expunged violence altogether from my life. I do not hit and do not get hit. I always say, I don't understand women who hang on for years with a man who beats them. Let someone dare just once to give me a light slap, just one little slap, I will not stay around to hear the end of the story, I will walk out for good, then and there. Never mind how much I love him, no one will control me by force. That's rather hysterical, people tell me. What are you afraid of? That a little slap you give your daughter will lead to murder? And I agree, something's out of whack here. All the laws of psychology tell us that the thing we detest most fiercely is precisely that which we are attracted to in our subconscious—the most righteous and moralistic types are the biggest lovers of lechery.

Must I take these rules upon myself? Is my anxious abhorrence of violence passive or active, a psychic stop-sign against my own drives? I, who shut my eyes in goose-pimple fright at any fight scene in a movie—what have all the murderous apparitions of the Nazis been doing in my nighttime dreams all these years? What do you think they represent, all the Nazis you dream about, Yasmine asked me. I tried to study the question with an open mind. I've read the literature, haven't I; they've got to stand for some hidden facet of my character. It's a fact that these Nazi dreams are much more frequent when I am depressed, and less so when I am in a better mood. Thus I considered Yasmine's question carefully and at length, and finally said: I think they represent Nazis.

In other words, absolute evil. In other words, something which I am wholly unwilling to acknowledge in myself. It is a fact that in these dreams I am usually the persecuted, murdered Jewess, sometimes the desperately fighting Jewess, and, less often, the onlooker who does not lift a finger. But never, never did I dream I was one of the black-uniformed Nazis, the absolute sovereigns, who bash an infant's head against the wall without batting an eye, who have high, gleaming boots, whips, cold blue eyes, the supreme calm of those who

are sure nothing will ever touch them, who know their supremacy, their invincibility. And something forces me to ask, what makes me so sure even when awake, that I am not like this, that I couldn't—if the circumstances were right? Where is the breaking point at which I would join them, in mind or in body? How do I know I will forever be a victim, always, automatically in the right?

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*She is still sheltered by the blessed ignorance of her age; ultimate despair still falls outside her spectrum of familiar emotions.*

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When I was little I had a dream of knowing the world encyclopedically. The names of every country and river, every people and civilization, every flower and insect, every shade of blue and clear glass, every book written in every language, and the experience of flying in every flying machine—especially a balloon. There was no place at all to sort the reflections of evil which seeped, in a constant septic trickle, into the exciting multicolor world I looked forward to. They came from a source which seemed at first external, random, banishable with a bit of effort. When every evening the radio carried a summary of reports about the horrors revealed at the Eichmann trial, I used to steal the World War II "Stalag" thrillers my older sister was reading furtively. Hot all over, I would consume the imaginary tales, the orgies of the SS officers, the whippings (the skin on the victim's back always peeled off "strip by strip"), every kind of rape and erotic humiliation. It was disgusting and it was frightening and it was arousing, and I was unaware of the relationship between this literature, penetrating-to-the-clitoris, and the *nicht schuldig* which echoed in my ears from Jerusalem. Only years later, of course, did I hear of Wilhelm Reich's theories.

Sometimes, when I open my kitchen cupboard or the drawer where I keep my socks, I am an occupation-army soldier searching my house—isn't there any food here, or something to loot, maybe concealed jewelry or something? The soldier who rifles through my things down to the last corner of the house (my corpse is splayed on the floor, gushing blood, or else I'm very, very far from here, the train has already taken me) is neither a Syrian nor an Egyptian nor a Palestinian; he is always a Wehrmacht soldier of the Second World War. All the black demons who have the power to claim my soul, who terrify more thoroughly than any terrorist, have German names.

("All the black demons who have the power to claim my soul have Jewish names," thought Hitler to himself. And the rest, as they say, is history.)

How long my handicap will last, I don't know. It's a matter of generations, I suppose, perhaps many generations—perhaps as long as anyone bothers to ferret out details, to read documents. The scourge is fading away. There are Israelis who visit Germany as tourists, some even settle there. Even so, it's not just me. I am Alice in Horrorland, alternately growing and shrinking, living in a shadow which does not pass, the ground treacherous under my feet. When I walk, kick a stone, tread on an anthill, watch the ants scramble blindly to save themselves—I can wipe them out to the last ant with a single squirt of spray—I think-not-think about the time when people were ants, when hobnailed boots burst through doors. It was no use to scramble; they were taken away in mid-everything—work, lunch, love, scheming, gossip, prayer—and exterminated with insecticide.

When I get on Bus No. 5 and they push me from every side, shoving me all over, sour, short-tempered people, crowding like sheep under the ticket-taker's staff as he arbitrarily slams the door in their faces, I half-remember how very easily this could have been a cattle-train heading "east": the same desperate shoving, the same selfish backs turned on the aged and the weak. In a momentary flash of hate, I assess the ticket-taker as a fit candidate for the job of *kapo* once we reach the final destination. When I pass the show window of a Tel Aviv electric shop and see heaters made by Krupps (Krupps!) made-in-West-Germany, and the shopkeeper has added a handwritten note: "Just the thing for the bathroom." I say to myself yes, sure; the main thing is to take a deep breath as ordered.

When we were setting out for Auschwitz we hesitated for a moment at the rent-a-car place: for this of all trips, would we take a Mercedes? So what, we deserve it, we thought childishly. Hate is not an exact science. (If it were, Hitler would not have decided to kill our families, who did him no harm.) The idea of pulling into Auschwitz in a Mercedes was a piece of magical thought, an attempt to armor ourselves against fear by dressing in wolves' clothing. I have a Holocaust survivor friend who is dying to screw German women, the blonder, the better. Like everyone else, we were under the spell of the evil charisma which this place radiates—which even the name radiates. Oswiezcim in Polish, Auschwitz in German, "Oshvitz" in the hybrid abbreviation of Israelis who have trouble with foreign pronunciation. For those who were there, the supreme horror goes by various names, those of the camps or the ghettos where it

happened to each of them. Some of these names mean very little if anything to us today: Stutthof, Neungame, Trawniki, Gröss-Rosen, Sachsenhausen, and so on—hundreds of names. There were little places, and places where no one survived to tell the tale, even though each of them was one hundred per cent Auschwitz for its prisoners. So Auschwitz, this camp of all places, has become a trademark, a symbol, an astonishing page out of the *Guinness Book of Records*. "The world's greatest anything" grips people's attention and casts a shadow on everything else in its field. And if the trip to Poland, the whole of it, was first of all a trip into a myth—the myth of my birthplace and that of my father and Nathan's mother, the myth of the city of Lodz, the War, the Warsaw Ghetto, Graf Potocki, Galicia, Solidarity, Gefilte Fish, and so forth—Auschwitz of course is the greatest myth of all, the very Heart of Darkness.

In a dispirited world, dissolute in mediocrity, where the old dividing lines between good and evil are gone forever and the dominant emotional tone is a perplexed ambivalence, if not total indifference, one point of reference remains constant. We belong to a generation that has lost sight of the origin of absolute good, even though our hunger for it survives. The old illusions of being satisfied become faded, threadbare (we can perhaps get by without a God, but not, it seems, without some kind of prayer). So we cling, at least, to the only absolute we've still got, the only word without a "maybe," without an "on the other hand": Auschwitz, the focal point of absolute evil. At the backstage of consciousness it functions as a metaphor, the raw material of nightmare, a negative reflection of every hope for a Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

*The thing I always try to keep secret from her—out of shame, out of fear of hurting—is the rabid dog, the drooling, worm-infested beast, eyes inflamed, who races about madly in a corner of my mind.*

And so we are going to Auschwitz (not in a Mercedes), sixty short kilometers west of Cracow where we spent the previous night. We are in Silesia, Shlonsk in Polish, the disputed mining district. I expected a bare, gloomy landscape, mountains of industrial waste, an accursed, mosquito-infested land. But the tender greenery of early Polish spring lies on everything like a festive down blanket, and the places of human settlement along the way look no more God-forsaken than their counterparts elsewhere. (Had I been brought here blindfolded and were suddenly allowed to see, I wouldn't have known this was the way to Auschwitz.)

When they went, in the trains, they did not know they were going to Auschwitz. Not even when they arrived did they know. Nor when they died. (Like Stendhal's soldier at Waterloo—with a difference!—who never got to see the Emperor, history happened to them without their realizing it.) For them, everything broke down into a physical continuum of moments of terror and pain beyond any known or knowable experience: hunger, thirst, excrement, suffocation, slow dying in the locked cars, *Raus! Schnell! Schnell!* dogs barking, the cracking of whips, and on the platforms "porters" in striped prisoners' clothing, skinny, heads shaven, turning furtively in a hoarse urgent whisper to this or that one of the new arrivals: "Have you got any food? Jewelry? Give it to me, you won't be needing it anyway." The wails of children, Mommy where are you? Occasional gunfire, blood, no time to stay behind with the fresh corpses, *Raus, Schnell, Schnell.*

The road skirts the town of Oswiezcim: cute two-story houses, budding potted plants in the windows, and signs directing you "to the Museum". A giant parking lot for the convenience of visitors, next to railroad tracks which still appear to be in use.

Roland Barthes tells a parable of the ship *Argo*: the argonauts gradually replaced all its parts over the years, ultimately producing a ship which was wholly new, though unchanged in name and shape. Amazingly, it was the very same *Argo*. Identity—of a space, of an object—is therefore determined by the structure and the name an object bears, says Barthes. If he were right, we would indeed, now, in April, 1983, be approaching Auschwitz: the name is unchanged, the structures are faithfully maintained, with most of the original parts carefully preserved. Yet obviously it is not Auschwitz to which we have come. The *Argo*, for all those years and for all those parts replaced, continued to be the same ship, wandering the seas in quest of the golden fleece. But Auschwitz ceased to exist—even though the name and site have been preserved—the moment it stopped serving its intended purpose. Auschwitz is dead (yes yes yes yes may it be so). The place we are visiting is only the bottle of formaldehyde where the corpse of memory is kept. Identity is determined, after all, by the human function an object or space fulfills; without that, all that remains is matter, neutral, always tending toward insignificance.

(And if Auschwitz' function still exists, it exists not here but is dispersed throughout the world, in fragments, in the survivors' memories. There, Auschwitz still lives day and night, continuing to strangle and gnaw and consume, without refuge.)

The first thing missing here, of course, is the odor, one of the first strong impressions mentioned in most accounts. The stench of tens of thousands of corpses wafted from this place for years, spreading into the atmosphere for kilometers around. This cool and fresh spring day, its air gentle and peaceful, has lost all memory of that overwhelming stench.

The large structure standing at an angle outside the fence, just off the parking lot, is the reception hall where certain lucky arrivals checked in (all were young and healthy-looking, most were men; even so, youth, health, and maleness did not guarantee a thing—not here), got a tattoo on the arm, that is, a stay of execution for another few weeks or months of torture, beatings, starvation, endless lineups and grueling labor, while fully conscious. This, in fact, was the choice you had—which was not yours at all—once you reached this place: to get a reprieve and become, for the moment, a blue-numbered walking skeleton, who knows what they are doing to you—or, so fast you don't know what's happening, to become a little heap of ash to be scattered the next day in the fields or into the Sola, a tributary of the Vistula a few kilometers south of here.

The moment we park and climb out of the car, a sudden numbness comes over me, as if a thin layer of intelligence has evaporated and left only a bare crocodilian field of sensation. I lose the ability to focus; my vision goes flat and cloudy, riddled with scales. My thoughts wander weakly down the blurred lines left in my memory by the reading I have done, the maps I have seen: "The structure at an angle at the front of the camp was the reception and registration building." The half-fainted crocodile in my head notices, through the thickness of its dense stupidity, that the building has become a youth hostel. Groups of school children come here on their annual field trip; tourists drop in from all over the world.

The Auschwitz Youth Hostel. They've also got a kiosk where they sell color postcards to tourists: "Vacation in Oswiezcim"—sailboats on the lake, modern hotels, flags fluttering in the wind. Only in the afternoon, when we returned to Cracow—outside the circle of death—did we gather our thoughts, open the Oswiezcim maps we had bought, and learn: pop. 45,000, a lake, a Town Hall, churches, libraries, hospital, two stadiums, even an old Jewish cemetery (for there was a Jewish community here, before the deluge. At the beginning of the occupation, its last members had to prepare the original structures for the camp about to arise at the edge of town.) The former I. G. Farben factories have become Poland's largest chemical plants.

In its heyday Auschwitz held 200,000 prisoners or more. But even today, as a mere museum of horrors, it continues to dwarf the town beside it sprouted like a virulent cancer. It is stronger than the town, its life, and everything which preceded it; its grip over the future as well, for generations on end, is total. Oswiezcim, robbed of its name, its innocence, will never free itself from the shadow of this camp, just as the city of Versailles will never slip away from the shadow of Louis' chateau and garden. It was selected—one of Himmler's random orders—because it was small, faraway and nevertheless close to a junction of railroad tracks from four corners of Europe. And how does it go on existing there, as if it were nothing, a blemish of normality beside that mammoth malignancy? Why is it the town, with its human face, that looks shameful, monstrous in its insistence on staying and brazenly pursuing its ordinary life? From here Israel looks surprisingly virgin, innocent of the malice of memory: look at what the Poles have to live with day in and day out.

## *I am Alice in Horrorland, alternately growing and shrinking . . .*

Along with a throng of visitors we enter the gate (the maps show it at the lower left-hand corner of the peripheral fence), and overhead passes a thin shadow of the words cast in iron: *Arbeit Macht Frei.* This inscription, apparently conceived by Rudolf Hoess, the kommandant, was used in several other camps. The background slide they use on Israeli TV whenever Haim Yavin talks about Auschwitz (a true-blue German Jew, he pronounces the name in the German original) was taken at a gate built into the wall of a different camp. Here in Auschwitz the inscription is cast in metal, a lettered arch over the iron gate. Auschwitz did not hide behind a stone wall; people outside could see right into the yard. The notorious double electrified fence: I am afraid to touch it, to make sure the current is really off. *Achtung.* I always found this the most terrifying word in the world; I thought it was the skull and crossbones' first name.

Outside the camp fence, not far from the gate, is Gas Chamber No. 1. That's the "little" one, where they killed about 70,000 people until 1942. It was plainly not equal to the ambitious goals of annihilation set at the Wannsee Conference: 11,000,000 Jews from all countries of Europe. So they built Birkenau a few kilometers to the west, and the bulk of the extermination was carried out there. But Birkenau's four big gas chambers, each with a capacity of thousands, were blown up—one by its Jewish operatives in their last-minute desperate insurrection, and the others by the Germans themselves

before their retreat. Only this one, the "little" one, still stands.

What do you do when you visit a gas chamber, what do you do? When you go in, you gauge the dimensions of the sealed room (about one and a half average Israeli living rooms? No, larger? Rather dark in there.) You tell yourself this is it, this is the place, here's where it happened. You repeat it to yourself. Here. You take your daughter's hand and go on to the next room, for a look at the massive crematoria (made by Topf). Little trolleys used to carry the corpses from the gas chambers to the mouths of the crematoria, which blazed and thundered with fire, and now are cold and dark; you can put your hand in, if you have the guts. You recall

*Had we been brought here by train (with Effie clutching her woolly lamb, Jo) we would have been sent, together, in the very first selection, to the line heading for the "showers."*

that the extermination in Birkenau's great gas chambers took place in an underground hall, and that the corpses were hauled in a special elevator to the crematoria at ground level. Auschwitz, you make a mental note, had everything on one level. For years you've been imagining, haven't you, that studying the technical details would help you understand, digest it, lance the inner abscess which fills with pus each time anew. Why did you imagine that, what secret did you think the technical details might hold? We step outside and climb the dirt bank to the flat roof. There we find several square chimneylike openings. Nathan lifts the cover of one of them by its handle, and we look down at the tourists wandering around in the gas chamber. They look up, surprised at encountering our eyes in the sudden gaping hole. It was from right here that the German on duty observed the naked people packed erect in the locked room below, after they had been forced in with beatings and shoving—or with soothing words, promises that it was only a shower before going out to work. Afterwards (wearing a gas mask for the sake of good hygiene) he opened his little boxes and dropped the bluish crystals down this chimney, this hole in the roof, and quickly slammed the cover shut. Then he went away to wash his hands. Removal and cremation of the bodies, after all the screaming inside had stopped, were entrusted to prisoners, the *Sonderkommando*, who unlike the other prisoners, ate well and enjoyed regular rations of schnapps. After several months at this labor they, too, were exterminated and replaced by a new *Sonderkommando* detail which was annihilated when its time was up, and so on. The first duty of every new gas chamber squad was to cremate the corpses of its predecessors.



A few meters from the gas chamber stands a lonely gallows. Here Rudolf Hoess, kommandant of Auschwitz and Birkenau, was hanged after being tried by the Poles; he was extradited to Poland after the Nuremberg trials, where he testified against his cohorts. (This was Rudolf Hoess, not Rudolf Hess, Hitler's deputy, who flew off to England in 1941 and who still languishes in Spandau Prison. In Hebrew the two names are written exactly the same; the problem troubled me for years. I didn't know how to ask, how could this be, the same man, running Auschwitz after having deserted to Britain at the beginning of the war?) Imprisoned in Warsaw awaiting trial, Hoess was asked by his investigators to write his autobiography. He was glad to oblige, because "I have always been a man of action, and I find this forced idleness in jail insufferable." His personal account is an orderly document in which, calm and collected, he recalls, among other things, that one of his postings in World War I, as a soldier in Kaiser's army, was Palestine. An unexplained (almost sexual, as he describes it) ecstasy seized him, he relates, early in his concentration camp

career when he saw for the first time a man beaten unconscious. Afterwards, such sights caused him no further excitement. He estimates the number of victims gassed in Auschwitz at 2.5 million. He expresses no regret, no philosophical ruminations about his beliefs and life-work. Even with Hitler defeated and his own noose ready and waiting, his self-definition is curt: "I am National Socialist in my weltanschauung."

From the vicinity of Hoess's gallows, looking south, just past the far corner of the camp fence, one sees the house where, according to the maps, the Kommandant lived, with the frau and kinder. "My wife grew flowers as she loved to do . . . For the children it was a veritable Garden of Eden," he writes nostalgically in his autobiography. He does not mention what I've read elsewhere, that he also put up an Italian prisoner as a maid. She became his concubine, but when she got pregnant, he shipped her off to the gas chamber. Her name was Eleonora, a detail I cannot forget, of course. Neither can I forget the fact that his first meeting with Heinrich Himmler—the inauguration of his career as concentration camp kommandant—took place in the mid-1930s in a Nazi party convention in Stettin; Stettin is Szczecyn, the town where I was born. Heinrich, too, is German for Henryk, my brother's name. That's how the mind, that incorrigible megalomaniac, maps out the world and history: Auschwitz and me, Hoess and me, World War II and me.

So we look south from Hoess's gallows and see the house, and in its yard, yes, children are running about and laundry flapping from a line. Even now it doesn't stand empty. But who lives there? Who can? Who, today, doesn't mind raising his children next to that fence, a few steps from a real gas chamber and gallows?

Slowly, as if stirring underwater, we turn away, though I really want to study the mirage of the children and the laundry drying in the yard of Hoess's house. I cannot explain why I do not say to Nathan and Effie, wait a minute, let's see what's happening there. I cannot explain why I shut up and slip into my little, intimate group of people returning soundlessly to the car for the trip to Birkenau, leaving this living picture behind me. For months to come I will ask Nathan at times: Did you see what I saw? Was my impression right, that someone was living in Hoess's house?

We reach the entrance to Birkenau, a pointed tower over a yawning arched gate inside the elongated, fortified structure, a little bit like a fairy-tale castle. Two tracks merge in front of the gate with the smooth, elegant motion of an arrow in flight, and the unified track, two parallel rails with cross-ties, thrusts inward and vanishes deep and far. It is like a crude caricature, two or three lines converging at acute angles, basic primitive pornography, exactly like the hackneyed pictures in all the books, all the bad dreams.

We leave the car outside and enter on foot; weeds are growing between the ties that bracket the rusting rails. The date of manufacture is imprinted in the metal: 1942. At first the transports, with their attached invoices designating them for "special handling," were unloaded outside. But to lead them to the gas chambers almost a kilometer away inside the camp was a nuisance and a waste of time. So they extended the track into the camp where the unloading, and the selection that immediately followed, could be handled conveniently at the yard in front of the gas chambers.

Thus we enter on foot and walk down a boulevard of sorts, split by the track and flanked not by trees but by long one-story wooden barracks—some of them are in ruins, with only the foundation intact—separated from the track and from each other with barbed wire. In contrast to the claustrophobic density of Auschwitz 1 (a smaller camp, where the barracks are taller and closer together), here you get a feeling of space. And tranquility. Fewer tourists, and the distances greater, more open.

The houses alongside us are silent; their straight-edged yards, still demarcated with fences, are empty. The mind's eye tries to populate them with women, men, gypsies, families, orchestras.

I always feel I must look at the pictures, the documentary films. Especially hard to evade are the ones where people's faces, eyes, gazes while still alive, come out clearly. As if they have a claim to my life, I feel I have to hand them some of my minutes. "Don't be a pig," the eyes say. "You still have lots. We no longer have even one minute of life; they took it all from us, killed us before we knew what was happening." In order to free myself, to escape their insatiable demands, so that my life might once again be totally mine, I feel I would have to tarry with them, with each and every one of them, however many millions they might be, not only here but in all the valleys of death, east and west, where they were gassed, starved, shot to death in pits, burned, hanged, and driven to despair; to look into all their staring eyes and not flinch; to give each and every one, without exception (Jews, gypsies, Communists, homosexuals, the mentally ill, the retarded; and first of all the children, every last child), however long it would take, a chance to escape their anonymity: Tell me your story. Tell me what they did to you. Is the pain gone now?

Who imposed this punishment on me, I do not know. It occurred to me once that this might be the ransom I have to pay for not being religious: for *someone*'s got to see, at least see what happened to them; one cannot let them be erased just like that. If I could

*Continued on page 139*

# On Sanctifying the Holocaust: An Anti-Theological Treatise

*Adi Ophir*

*In Israel today there are more than ten public institutions specifically concerned with the Holocaust. There are museums and research institutes that publish books and organize conferences. There is a whole "memory industry" which has its own high and low culture. On the annual Holocaust Remembrance Day last year there was an organized quiz for Jewish children on the topic of Jewish heroism during the Shoah (Holocaust).*

*Almost every political dispute in Israel eventually leads to each side trying to prove its point with reference to "the lessons of the Holocaust." Professor Yishayahu Leibowitz of the Hebrew University thinks that the conquest of the West Bank may turn Israel into a Jewish-Nazi state; while Menachem Begin claimed that the alternative to fighting the PLO in Lebanon would be to face Auschwitz again—the 15,000 PLO fighters suddenly appearing to have the power and threat of the entire Nazi apparatus of destruction. The attempt to remember the Holocaust has already generated its share of distortions in the political discourse of the State of Israel.*

*There are accumulating signs that the Holocaust may become the core of Jewish identity in the future, overshadowing the role of traditional Judaism or of contemporary Zionism.*

Many years from now, decades, perhaps centuries, when the stories have become intertwined and interwoven through the distilling violence of forgetting, what form will the saga of the destruction of European Jewry take? How will story-tellers then nourish their legends of terror—if there still remain story-tellers, if a nuclear holocaust does not erase the signs of all the atrocities which preceded it. Will the survivors be gathered in an ark of the righteous people of their generation, will the destruction be seen as the Jewish flood? Or perhaps those of the ghetto revolt, the partisans, the few who took to arms, will be seen as the sons of light against the sons of darkness. Will their struggle be the first battle between Gog and Magog? Perhaps a new story of sacrifice will be told, that an entire people was brought as a sacrifice, without an angel and without a ram in the bushes?

Perhaps from that Holocaust altar, whose dimensions are the dimensions of an ancient continent, a mighty belief will spring forth, seven times greater for its absurdity than the belief of Abraham, the first Hebrew who, after all, continued in his innocence to believe—because his God refrained from telling him that his descendants, multiplied as the stars of the heavens, would be slaughtered in the death camps of Europe.

A religious consciousness built around the Holocaust may become the central aspect of a new religion, one which has at its core a story of revelation that goes something like this: "In the year five thousand seven hundred since the creation of the world according to the Jewish calendar, in central Europe, Absolute Evil was revealed. The Absolute—that is, the Divine—is Evil. Every act has a part, to a greater or lesser extent, in this Absolute Evil, every act is an expression of it. But until the emergence of the Absolute Evil no one believed that there was a hidden lawfulness controlling every appearance of evil in our world. Until then, no one had placed his or her trust in the absolute, transcendent, one and only Evil, which is the ground of our lives and deaths, the logic of our finitude and suffering, the rock of our destruction, and the promise of our annihilation. Indeed, time has passed before the meaning of this horrible event could be digested and understood completely, but how is it possible that an event of such dimensions of horror could have no meaning? From a secure distance of time the individual acts of extermination have been collected—particular pullings of the trigger, particular and repeated acts of the opening of gas-pipes, lighting of furnaces—and they have woven together to form the infinite face of the Absolute. The proper place of each atrocious act is in the infinity of Evil, those six years can already be seen as a single unique revelation of the Absolute."

The God described in this religion, revealed in the furnaces, will be seen as a vengeful God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generations. Their iniquity—that they did not reject their Jewishness while there was still time,

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that they did not bother to change their names, to hide their descent one hundred, one hundred and fifty years before the calamity. Vengefulness requires bookkeeping, listing and documentation. Absolute Evil is a perfect bookkeeper, an all-documenting bureaucrat, supervisor and detective; he is a beneficiary of Providence in the full sense of the word. Every Jew was accounted for; grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren were also accounted for. After which the accounts of loading and unloading were managed, dates were coordinated for the travel of the trains, the rate of expiration was discussed, the volume of the ashes was measured. The face of Absolute Evil was revealed, or at least this is how the myth will reconstruct it, as the face of a bureaucrat (the Absolute, even the embodiment of Evil, cannot be understood without a certain degree of personification). The Holocaust is God. In a way we are today already partners to this utterance. The ears of my readers are ringing, I know. But the new religion is already taking form today, and already there are few who would reject the popular interpretation of its revelation: the commandments which echo from within that thick cloud which arose from the earth of iron to the empty iron heaven of Europe (Deut. 28:23).

The four commandments of the new religion (Exod. 20:3): Thou shalt have no other holocaust before the Holocaust of the Jews of Europe; Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image or any likeness; Thou shalt not take the name of the Holocaust in vain; Remember.

**"Thou shalt have no other holocaust."** There is no holocaust like the Holocaust of the Jews of Europe. To what lengths Jewish historians, educators and politicians go to remind us over and over of the difference between the destruction of the Jews of Europe and all other types of disasters, misfortunes and mass murders! Biafra was only hunger; Cambodia was only a civil war; the destruction of the Kurds was not systematic; death in the Gulag lacked national identification marks. Even those who are wary of a demonization of the Holocaust, even those who take care to present the slaughterers as human beings, soldiers, policemen and common clerks, go on to claim: There was never before such an organized, comprehensive and horrifying outburst of evil as in the Holocaust. The Holocaust is a collection of human acts which has turned into a transcendent event.

**"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image or likeness."** It is possible to draw another Guernica, to sing the songs of the Partisans, to present "Ghetto," but the Holocaust itself cannot be represented. No artistic or literary representation can succeed. Whoever tries to peek through the furnace of revelation and describe what he saw with his own eyes, or in his mind's eye, is destined to fail. The best of literature, drama or cinema can only touch upon the margins of the atrocity, document it through fragments of memories of those still living—they do not dare be caught in the world of the slaughtered, and anyone who actually tries to describe the hell is punished severely by the critics. (Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*, a movie that takes place in the present, is an exception). What was then real is beyond the capabilities of poetry, art and dramatic reconstruction. Exactly as it is impossible to understand the transcendental in the framework of a scientific theory, it is equally impossible to capture it in the realms of the imagination. The outcome of every such analytical or artistic attempt is distortion rather than representation, camouflage rather than reconstruction, forgetting rather than remembering. These are almost *a priori* rules of the critics, which are independent of the nature and quality of the specific artistic piece toward which they are directed.

*A religious consciousness built around the Holocaust may become the central aspect of a new religion.*

**"Thou shalt not take the name in vain."** How many outbursts of rage did Menachem Begin earn when he dared to profane the name. How many warnings have been uttered since then by researchers of the Holocaust, politicians and educators, against that disreputable phenomenon, a transgression, no doubt, derogating the Holocaust by borrowing its name for calamities and disasters of a lesser order of atrocity, the earthly order.

**"Remember the day of the Holocaust to keep it holy, in memory of the destruction of the Jews of Europe."** This is the most important commandment. This is the burden whose shirking is the archetype of sin. Not only the organized drive to forget, but also the innocent forgetting, the result of assimilation or simple lack of interest in the remnants of the Jewish possessions which a person carries with him or herself, is an act of terrible renunciation. Those who cause forgetting, to say nothing of those who deny, cooperate with the enemy. Those who assimilate complete the Nazis' work. Those who are faithful to themselves, and to their people, will repeat the tale until the end of time. Even if a thousand years pass and all the documents are lost, the revelation of Evil will be present in the midst of the nation through the countless threads of its common memory.

Absolute Evil must be remembered in exquisite de-

tail. And already scattered throughout the land are institutions of immortalization and documentation, like God's altars in Canaan one generation after the settlement. Already a central altar has arisen which will gradually turn into our Temple, forms of pilgrimage are taking hold, and already a thin layer of Holocaust-priests, keepers of the flame, is growing and institutionalizing; only, instead of rituals of sacrifices, there are rituals of memorial, remembering and repetition, since the sacrifice is completed and now all that is left is to remember.

The mythologization and demonization of the Holocaust are inextricably tied to one another. They are part of the same process of "sanctification" which adds an important layer of religiosity to our lives, as free-thinking and secular as we may be. It is quite possible that the more the secular self-awareness is developed, the deeper the distancing from what is required from the revelation at Sinai, the stronger is the tie to and the need for a modern revelation, the revelation of Absolute Evil. The commandments reside almost by definition beyond the political Left and Right, beyond the power struggles and ideological conflicts, beyond the opposing interests and world views. They establish the boundaries of Jewish legitimacy; they establish the Holocaust as a transcendent event which precedes and qualifies any attempt to fashion a modern Jewish identity. Who will dare deny them publicly? Who will dare deny the uniqueness of the Holocaust? Who will dare claim that he or she has comprehended it, in theory or in a work of art, as it actually was? Who will admit bearing its name in vain? Who will dare to let loose the reins of forgetting, to relieve the burden of the memory?

Why is our Holocaust myth so dangerous? Because it blurs the humanness of the Holocaust; because it erases degrees and continuums and puts in their place an infinite distance between one type of atrocity and all other types of human atrocities; because it encourages the memory as an excuse for one more nation-unifying ritual and not as a tool for historical understanding; because it makes it difficult to understand the Holocaust as a product of a human, material and ideological system; because it directs us almost exclusively to the past, to the immortalization of that which is beyond change, instead of pointing primarily to the future, to the prevention of a holocaust—like the one which was, or another, more horrible—which is more possible today than ever before but is still in the realm of that which is crooked and can still be made straight.

Is it possible to break away from the myth in a responsible way, without wicked cynicism and without pleasure for its own sake at the bursting of a myth? It seems to me to be possible. First of all, I must state explicitly: I am in no way trying to say that the Holocaust was anything less than Absolute Evil, that we may already forget, that we can already use the name indiscriminately. But I do want to deny the commandments as they were formulated above and as they are present in public Jewish life and political discourse in Israel and abroad. And more than anything else I wish to deny the one assumption hidden behind the entire Holocaust myth, that the Holocaust is an exclusively Jewish matter. I do not necessarily refer here to the destruction of the Gypsies, the slaughter of Russian captives or the persecution of the communists and other opponents of the regime, even though these should be accounted for, and the exact differences should be considered carefully. I mean to say that the Jewishness of the Holocaust (like its Germanness) is only one aspect of the horror, the most crucial aspect from our point of view but by no means exclusive, and that the overlooking of other aspects, which are not necessarily related to the Jewish issue, is no less dangerous than the denial of the Holocaust by contemporary anti-Semites.

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*Until the emergence of the Absolute Evil no one believed that there was a hidden lawfulness controlling every appearance of evil in our world.*

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It is impossible to explain Nazism without explaining what gave birth to and maintained in Nazism that "cruel lust for total destruction" of the Jews. But to the same degree it is impossible to explain how that same lust could be filled, in such a systematic, exact, prolonged and insane manner, without explaining those modes of discourse which expelled the Jews from the domain of humanity, the technologies of power activated to implement the ideological statements, and the erotica of power used to guarantee complete execution of the mission, until the last moment, until the final breath. The Jew was, of course, placed, from the first moment of the Nazi phenomenon to its last, in the focus of these modes of discourse, a final target of all the power technologies and a last release of its eroticism. One question is what were those things which made it possible to turn the Jew into the object of that "excluding" discourse, an insane discourse of power penetrated with eroticism but complete in its mechanisms. This is the "Jewish Question" of Holocaust research.

Another separate question (in theory, though in reality not completely separate) is the structure, the enabling conditions, and those factors which allowed those same modes of discourse and those same power arrangements, from which the Nazi phenomenon was composed, to emerge and to persist. This is the "Universal Question" of Holocaust research. It is a question which we too rarely ask.

A similar distinction can be made from another direction. What distinguishes Nazism, like what distinguishes the Holocaust, is the unique combination of a series of extreme factors, each one of which alone would not have been able to give birth to the terror. One question is what made possible the combination which turned Nazism and the destruction of the Jews of Europe into phenomena without compare in human history. And another question is what were those extreme factors, how do they appear in less extreme conditions, what encourages their radicalization, and what is likely to prevent it? The question of reconstructing the unique combination is the "Jewish Question," the question of deconstructing that combination into factors is the "Universal Question." The reconstructive question presents the Holocaust, whether consciously or unconsciously, as a transcendent event which lies beyond the limits of human reach, an event whose horrors we, as humans, will never be able to come close to repeating. The deconstructive question, on the other hand, returns to the horror of its humanness and points out the possibilities and their degrees and continuity. The Jewish Question turns the Holocaust into a holy source of reference to the past. The universal question presents the Holocaust as a permanently necessary background to interpretations of the present and intentions for the future. In the final account, the difference is a question of where we choose to place Absolute Evil: as a revelation whose place is in the past, or as a possibility whose place is in the present.

**A possibility whose place is in the present.** This can be understood only if we try to deconstruct into factors, only if we try to closely examine the humanness of the structures of discourse and power, only if we stubbornly insist upon seeing them as the realization of human possibilities, or in other words, as our own possibilities. First of all, the "excluding" and "another," reference to another which serves as the borderline, as the archetype of negation, as a focus for the definition of a reverse identity; a package of "excluding" oppositions wrapped in the same fundamental distinction and drawn after it: superior-inferior, authentic-unauthentic, holy-profaned, pure-impure, healthy-sick, living-dead; a systematic application of the conceptual borderline (Aryan—non-Aryan) over geographic space (and also over historical time: before and after the Jewish pollution, before and after the German revolution); the revealed and concealed mechanisms for encouraging, distributing and imposing the "excluding" modes of discourse, its internal organization and principles of the hierarch contained within it, the sterilizing of channels of debate and blocking of the possibilities of disagreement and deviance.

*One Holocaust was; another is possible; therefore do everything possible . . . so that there will be none at all.*

Parallel to these, the development, organization and nurturing of the technology of power: use of all existing power mechanisms while developing new tools of power; complete exploitation of the social potential for supervision, surveillance, policing and exclusion and a refinement of those mechanisms responsible for these functions; takeover of the educational system and establishment of cadres of the reliable and loyal; management of the individual among the masses, and of the masses for purposes determined in advance; rationalization and bureaucratization of the power mechanisms, independent of the irrationality of the goals; adaptation of the academic world and the takeover of the sources of applied knowledge; accelerated development of new technologies of destruction.

And finally, the tremendous eroticism invested in the organization of the power order: the training of the individual's body, along with the massive parade exercises; the emotional bond between the individual and the masses, between each individual and the leader, and between the leader and the masses; the development of obedience as the model of love relations; covert and overt opposition to objectivity, rationality and modernity, and an emphasis on inner life, emotion and mysticism; the transformation of "nation," "race," "people" and "fuehrer" to objects of love, loyalty and sacrifice, with the necessarily adjacent concepts as objects of hate, disgust, and "lust for destruction."

This list is not meant to be exhaustive, the analysis is not meant to be radical (modes of discourse were never detached from mechanisms of power, and power has never been very separate from its erotic overtones), but these, or something close to these, are the factors which can be the basis for possible continuums. Of course, the distinction between the search for the unique combination, which is meant to protect the transcendence of the Holocaust, and its division into



factors, which can specify the range of possibilities, is not unequivocal. These two questions are doubtlessly interconnected and interdependent. But the difference exists and is decisive. It is the difference of priorities in the directions of research, of emphasis in the rhetoric of mourning and remembrance, of directions in learning for the future. In short, the difference is essentially political: It is the difference in the use which the living make of the memory of the dead, the present of its history. This is the difference in whose light I propose to part with the myth and to rewrite the commandments of the Holocaust. To rewrite means that we ourselves interpret and write, while we strive for self-awareness in our attitudes to the Holocaust. To rewrite means not to listen silently to the voice carried to us directly from the destruction of Europe, from the sight of the revelation of Evil. To rewrite means to determine commandments whose hidden assumptions are open to the light of day and may stand over and over again the test of critical thought. To rewrite, something like this:

**Thou shalt have no other holocaust.** In reality. One Holocaust was; another is possible; therefore do everything possible so that you will not have, so that they will not have, so that there will be none at all.

**Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image or likeness.** Do everything that you can to concretize the horror. Honor its intricate details. Present as much as possible of its creeping before the explosion, its day-to-day occurrences, its uncountable human, all too human, faces.

**Remember.** First of all, try to understand. Remember in order to understand. To understand the technology of power and the modes of "excluding" discourse which made the Holocaust possible: the discourse which made it possible to exclude a group of people from within the borders of the human race, and the technology which made it possible to massively deport them to their deaths.

What is being discussed here is no simple problem of historiography. What hangs here in the balance is the process of the political institutionalization of a joint national memory, and essentially the borders of the self-awareness of the modern Jew, the self-identity of post-Holocaust Jewry. The Jew who, in relating to the Holocaust, accepts, whether explicitly or implicitly, the theological treatise which I described, is as a firebrand saved from the fire who counts his or her losses over and over again in ritual periodicity; one whose memory is always a nightmare and whose nightmares fashion dreams, whose mere live presence is a reminder of the destruction, who does not cease to blame, judge and accuse others, to swear that s/he will never again be their sacrifice.

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*Why is our Holocaust myth so dangerous? Because it blurs the humanness of the Holocaust; because it . . . puts . . . an infinite distance between one type of atrocity and all other types of human atrocities; because it encourages the memory as an excuse for one more nation-unifying ritual and not as a tool for historical understanding . . .*

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But perhaps it is already possible to make a breach in the theological treatise which requires such a stance—perhaps it is already impossible not to—to strive for a more delicate balance between the enslavement of the present to the burden of the past, and the interpretation of present reality in terms of the possibilities which this past presents to it as its own real possibilities? Perhaps it is already possible to restrain the laments, immortalizations and blaming, to make a

little room for the deconstructive effort, which is essential and urgent because it also means an effort of location and deterrence? Our lives are already penetrated with the presence of some of those very factors that should be deconstructed; the hour is urgent.

From that conflagration we must today carry a different message, a message at whose center lies the humanness of the atrocity, the fact that the atrocity is an existing human possibility—that is, our possibility. This is the proper basis for modern human solidarity. When the required modes of discourse exist, when the technologies of power are at hand, when love and hate are present in the proper dose and directed in the appropriate channels, then every person may be the sacrifice, and everyone may be a participant in the slaughter. And we must also take into account how much the technologies of destruction have advanced since then, and how much, as a result, the investment in obedience, loyalty and lust, required to operate them, has been reduced.

The moral confrontation of a Jew today with the Holocaust entails the personalization of the acts of destruction and the universalization of its possibilities. The universalization of the Holocaust is today an essential component in the consciousness of the Jew, one generation after Auschwitz, and a necessary condition for our moral existence. □

*(A version of this essay appeared in the Hebrew language journal* פוליטיקה *[Politika].)*

# In Response to Professor Ophir

*Richard L. Rubenstein*

Professor Ophir is to be congratulated for both the insight and the courage with which he has taken up perhaps the most important emotional and intellectual question confronting contemporary Jews: *How shall the unmastered Trauma be mastered?* Rejecting a religio-mythic response, Ophir calls for the radical demystification of our understanding of the Holocaust. In place of fixation on a past which cannot be altered, he urges upon us a program of critical study of the Holocaust as a human venture so that the phenomenon can be grasped in terms of the larger context of institutions, ideologies and events that enabled Hitler's hateful fantasies to become a realizable state project. If we cannot change the past, we can perhaps contribute to a more hopeful future by realistically comprehending it.

Is Ophir's proposal realizable? Although this writer is convinced that such a project is an indispensable component in the long-term healing process of the Jewish community, he has come to doubt that *any* community can elect demystification as its fundamental mode of confronting its overwhelmingly important events and institutions. For example, the training in the history of religion imparted to candidates for the ministry in every non-fundamentalist theological institution in the western world, whether Jewish or Christian, is methodologically dependent upon the same demystifying spirit of critical rationality Ophir urges the Jewish community to employ in coming to understand the Holocaust. It is impossible to receive a theological degree from any non-fundamentalist institution without studying the basic texts of biblical religion as purely human documents to be investigated in the same spirit of dispassionate inquiry as any other item of historical evidence. That spirit is secular, desacralizing and demythologizing.

Nevertheless, as soon as the recipient of such training, be s/he Jewish or Christian, is entrusted with the leadership of a religious community, s/he has no choice but to forget or ignore that same training in his/her chosen vocation. A principal vocational function of such men and women will be to attest to the superordinate, that is mythic, meaning of those events which are of supreme importance to the community they serve. Having been trained to demythologize, they have little choice but to remythologize, because the hunger for superordinate meaning, especially when confronting redemptive or catastrophic events, would appear to be unquenchable. Indeed, one sociologist of religion has argued with considerable cogency that "religion is the audacious attempt to conceive of the entire universe as being humanly significant" (Peter Berger).

Throughout its history, the Jewish community has

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sought to conceive of its overwhelmingly important historical experiences as humanly significant in terms of the covenant with the God of Sinai. By so doing, it has saved itself from the ultimate threat to its long-term viability, the loss of all conviction of the meaningfulness and purposefulness of Jewish life. Put differently, had it not so interpreted its historical experiences, the community would have been afflicted with the threat of *anomie*, the nightmare of meaninglessness which assuredly would have precluded all hope of communal survival.

A generation ago this writer sadly concluded that the Jewish community's traditional mode of constructing a meaningful cosmos could only retain its credibility if the Holocaust were interpreted as God's chastisement of a sinful Israel. Since such a view entails seeing Hitler as a latter-day Nebuchadnezzar and the death camps as God's method of punishment, ideas this writer regarded as beyond obscenity, he had no choice but to conclude that the Jewish community was faced with a theological crisis of unparalleled dimensions.

Now Professor Ophir paints an even bleaker picture of what will eventually have to be affirmed if the Holocaust is to be interpreted mythically or theologically: *The Holocaust must be seen as the true and final revelation of the Divine as Absolute Evil.* Unfortunately, it is difficult to reject Professor Ophir's suggestion out of hand. One can hardly infer a gracious and merciful Divinity on the basis of the Holocaust. Moreover, Professor Ophir argues, correctly in this writer's view, that those most prone to a mythic demonization of the Divine will not be religious Jews whose faith in the covenant remains unshaken. At worst, they will regard the Holocaust as exemplifying the attribute of divine justice. Professor Ophir has suggested an infinitely greater obscenity than that involved in seeing Hitler as the rod of God's wrath, namely, unconditional faith in God as Absolute Evil, and he has further argued that those most prone to such "faith" will be secular Jews whose hunger for meaning is intensified by their lack of religious belief. As Ophir argues, such men and women have the strongest need for "a modern revelation" with which to infuse the Holocaust with meaning.

*An endangered species is far less likely to survive if it is so fixated on traumatic memories that it lacks realistic awareness of its present . . .*

When Ophir calls for rejection of "the one assumption hidden behind the entire Holocaust myth, that the Holocaust is an exclusively Jewish matter," he is doing no more than carrying his program of demystification and critical inquiry to its logical and methodological conclusion. The Holocaust did not happen in a vacuum. it occurred in a very specific location at a particular period in the cultural, religious, economic, demographic and technological development of the peoples of Europe. The Holocaust was a *state-sponsored program of population elimination.* But, the Nazi state has not been the only modern government to target for elimination a segment of its own or a subject population. Nor has extermination been the only method employed by governments in their population-elimination programs. Answers to questions such as those raised by Ophir concerning how and why it happened could in the long run prove to be indispensable to the survival of the Jewish community and, perhaps, the human race. An endangered species is far less likely to survive if it is so fixated on traumatic memories that it lacks realistic awareness of its present and potential opportunities and dangers. □

# Power, Passivity and the Legacy of the Holocaust

*David Biale*

Human beings respond to trauma in contradictory ways. We obsessively rehearse the most minute details of a traumatic event and we equally make every effort to forget. We oscillate between memory and repression until we finally succeed, if indeed we can succeed, at arriving at some reconciliation in which the thorn of memory's pain is dulled but not removed. So, too, with collective trauma, and what collective trauma could be greater than genocide, for the victim stands as powerless in memory as in the event itself?

No wonder, then, that thoughtful Jews today express the most ambivalent feelings about how to respond to the Holocaust. On the one hand, never before have rituals of remembrance been so widespread; never before has the Holocaust been such a central element in Jewish self-definition, especially in America. Reference to the six million is an obligatory feature of Jewish life; in Jewish studies programs at universities, no courses are better attended. On the other hand, one hears repeatedly the ghoulish joke: "There's no business like Shoah business." Perhaps there is too much wallowing in this terrible past, too much haste to apply the "lessons" of the Holocaust to our present politics, too much talk where there should be silence and meditation.

This ambivalence finds expression in public debates about the contemporary culture of the Holocaust, but it is an ambivalence that dwells like two souls within the breast of every Jew touched by the great destruction. Even Elie Wiesel, perhaps identified more than any other person (and now by the Nobel Prize committee as well) with the memorialization of the Holocaust, has repeatedly said that the only truly appropriate response to the Holocaust is silence. These are the conflicting, but equally legitimate demands of the Holocaust. In the very fact that it is impossible to reconcile memory and forgetting, that one cannot refute the other, lies the essence of the continuing Jewish trauma.

And yet, it is a trauma which is not only Jewish. For Germans, too, the question of the past remains unresolved. Here, the desire to forget can only be condemned as a cover for the ugliest forms of apology. Ernst Nolte, one of the most prominent German historians of fascism, recently argued that Germany must come to relate to the Nazi period as it does to every other period in German history: without the overwhelming emotion that distorts the past. Nolte goes on to suggest that the barbaric methods adopted by Hitler in his war against Russia were prompted by the justified fear of the "Asiatics" and the way they would wage war against Germany. Thus does the desire to suppress memory in the service of contemporary anti-communism revive the racism which was the true cause of Hitler's war against the "Jewish-Bolshevik Commissars."

For Jews the burden of history is different. If for Germans, the danger lies in forgetting, for Jews, it may consist more in the opposite: the excesses of memory. What I wish to discuss here is the way the Holocaust has reinforced a particular strand of Jewish memory, distorting in a certain way our image of the Jewish past and, in turn, affecting the way we confront our contemporary problems. I will then offer some reflections on other ways we might conceive of both Jewish history and of our relationship to the Holocaust.

The historian Yosef Haim Yerushalmi recently described the Jewish consciousness of the past as strangely ahistorical. The traditional Jew sees his or her history through the lens of memory for which all events are cyclical recurrences of ancient archetypes. The exile from Spain conjures up the memory of the exile from Judaea; the pogroms of the Crusaders are repetitions of the slaughter of the martyrs by Antiochus Epiphanes. From the point of view of memory, Jewish history is a vale of tears, a tale of powerlessness and passivity from the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E. to the creation of the State of Israel in 1948.

This topos of Diaspora Jewish history as apolitical and powerless has a long history and did not begin with the Holocaust. It has existed ever since both the prophets and the rabbis of Talmudic times in the view of the *galut* as a punishment for the sins of the Jews; in the midrash of the three oaths taken by Israel and the

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nations, the exile is portrayed as a contract between the Jews and the nations in which the Jews give up their political aspirations in exchange for a modicum of toleration. In the Middle Ages, it received perhaps its clearest expression in the response to the Crusader pogroms in which the victims believed that their suffering atoned for the sins of all generations. At about the same time, Judah Ha-Levi, the great Spanish Jewish poet and philosopher further suggested, in appropriation of a Christian motif, that the suffering and humiliation of the Jews is a sign of God's continued election: powerlessness becomes a virtue.

It need hardly be added that official Christian and Islamic theology conceived of the Jews in a similar way. For Christianity, the powerlessness of the Jews is testimony to the transfer of God's chosenness to the Israel of the spirit. For Islam, the Jews—and Christians—deserve toleration as peoples of the book, but on the condition that they renounce all political pretensions. Anti-Semitism is based on the belief that the Jews have violated this compact and acquired more power than is their due; in modern racial anti-Semitism, the power of Jews is secret, in inverse proportion to their public powerlessness.

In the nineteenth century, the theme of an apolitical Judaism was turned into a virtue by those who fought for Jewish emancipation. According to these modernizers, the Jews deserved emancipation since they did not constitute, as their enemies claimed, a state within the state. As a non-political, religious group, the Jews were ideal candidates for citizenship. Moreover, the suffering of the Jews was a result of their inferior status which could only be corrected by full emancipation. Thus, what Salo Baron called the "lachrymose" view of Jewish history became a powerful weapon in the fight for Jewish integration.

The most outstanding exponent of this view was Heinrich Graetz, the greatest Jewish historian of the nineteenth century. Graetz asserted that Jewish history in the Diaspora is the history of *Leiden und Lernen*, suffering and learning. On the intellectual and spiritual plane, the Jewish spirit soared and progressed, if by fits and starts, to the glories of the eighteenth century Enlightenment. The political and social realms, however, were a desert, marked by poverty and persecution. Indeed, Graetz seems to suggest that the very fact that the Jews were divorced from politics and therefore suffered as passive victims of their enemies had some causal connection to their spiritual accomplishments. In the introduction to one of the volumes of his *History of the Jews*, he wrote: "History still has not produced another case of a nation which has laid aside its weapons of war to devote itself entirely to the peaceful pursuits of study and poetry, which has freed itself from self-interest and let its thoughts soar to fathom its own nature."

Graetz did not regard the spirituality of the Middle Ages as the end of Jewish history; in his vision of a messianic Jewish state that would combine both the political and spiritual dimensions of Jewish history, he may have anticipated later religious Zionism. Despite his reluctance to give up the national component of Judaism, however, Graetz accepted the fundamental assumption that Judaism had lost touch with political power when it lost its state: the Jews became a spiritual people in medieval times, giving up political "self-interest" in favor of intellectual and religious achievements.

Twentieth century European Jewish writers were similarly attracted to the theme of Jewish powerlessness. Hermann Cohen celebrated the lack of a Jewish state as a necessary model for mankind whose messianic future required the unification of all peoples in a confederation of states. Cohen writes movingly in his last work, the *Religion of Reason* which was published after his death in 1918, of the suffering of the Jews as a messianic sign to the nations. Similarly, Cohen's main disciple, Franz Rosenzweig, held that the very lack of a Jewish politics made it possible for the Jews to become an eternal people, a people outside of history.

It is no surprise, therefore, that the Zionists, whom Cohen and Rosenzweig opposed so vociferously, rejected the archetype of Jewish powerlessness in favor of a revolution in Jewish history, a return to the biblical period of state sovereignty and political power. The Zionists did not see powerlessness as a virtue, but they nevertheless accepted this interpretation of Diaspora Jewish history as correct. Indeed, so powerful has been the influence of Zionist ideology on Jewish thought, that the concept of the Diaspora Jew as passive, apolitical and powerless is commonly considered the "Zionist" interpretation of Jewish history.

Today, too, this view remains pervasive in the popular consciousness, if not necessarily in the work of all professional Jewish historians. It can be found among Zionists and anti-Zionists alike and it remains one of the most uncriticized cliches in Jewish life. Here, we inevitably return to the Holocaust, for the utter powerlessness of the Jews during World War II could only reinforce the memory of historical powerlessness and prevent a fresh and critical examination of the past. Is not the Holocaust the culmination of centuries of passivity and impotence? Was not the failure of the Jews to resist the Nazis, with the pathetically marginal exceptions of a few ghetto revolts, the legacy, as Raul Hilberg has argued, of a mentality of powerlessness?

Here, too, the peculiar and tragic history of the return of the Jews to sovereignty has played an unwitting role as well. Zionism aimed to "negate the exile" and turn the impotent *galut* Jew into a normal human

being. If the essence of divine election was suffering, Zionism wanted to transform the "chosen people" into a normal one. Yet, the very conditions of warfare and siege under which Israel has lived have made a mockery of this desire. Rather than a symbol of normality, for many Jews Israel has become the representative of an eternal Jewish fate. Isolated and besieged, Israel continues the legacy of the chosen people, a people that "stands alone, uncounted among the nations." And, indeed, according to this view, the clearest justification of Jewish statehood is to prevent another Auschwitz, an ironic justification, for it is precisely in Israel that a second Auschwitz is judged most likely. From the association of Israel with the Holocaust came the belief that the PLO, in its desire to destroy the Jewish state, is the reincarnation of the Hitler of Berlin, a reincarnation, in turn, of all the Pharaohs and Hamans of Jewish history. In place of the normal Jew of classical Zionist ideology comes the Jew as armed hero, the diametric opposite of the Jew as victim. Yet, since the metaphor of the hero is tied indissolvably with the metaphor of the victim, Israel as the symbol of Jewish power remains tied to the Holocaust, the symbol of powerlessness.

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The identity of American Jews also has a considerable share in the Holocaust. For many Jews, the television program "Holocaust" fulfilled the same cultural function that "Roots" did for Blacks, by creating a public catharsis out of what had been an ethnically private experience. The paradox of such events and such institutions as the United States Holocaust Commission is that they use the epitome of Jewish powerlessness as the vehicle for expressing and strengthening Jewish power.

Twentieth century Jewish history, in both its catastrophes and its triumphs, has reinforced the memories of historical powerlessness. The rituals and literature that have emerged out of the Holocaust contribute to these memories. As the Yiddishist David Roskies has so eloquently argued, contemporary responses to the Holocaust must base themselves upon, even as they rework, responses to other, earlier catastrophes; the literary tradition of response to catastrophe is the only recourse of contemporary memory if it wishes to be authentic. There is no choice for ritual and literature but to return to the view of Jewish history as cyclical archetypes of suffering and impotence.

I do not wish to dispute Roskies' description of the response of ritual to the Holocaust. The commandment to remember what he so movingly calls "the ruined cities of the mind" is one that no Jew may safely ignore. What concerns me are the consequences of only hearing the voice of memory, the voice of historical powerlessness as an eternal Jewish fate. If both memories of powerlessness and grandiose fantasies of present power lay behind Israel's Lebanese disaster, then the collective Jewish psyche requires more than memory to provide therapy for a traumatic past. Memory is necessary, but if its unrestrained excess produces a Lebanon War, it requires a counter-balance, a different perspective on both the Jewish past and present.

What can provide therapy for memory? The answer is history, the critical investigation of all periods of Jewish history. For the historian, the past is not a repetition of timeless archetypes, of endless cycles. Each event from the past must be understood in its own context. Historical criticism can liberate us from the burden of a mythical past, while at the same time present us with a new past that we may have not considered. In the words of Walter Benjamin, the historian can "brush history against the grain" to discover the past that lies buried under the products of memory. The task of history is not to deny the past or to encourage forgetting, but, quite the opposite, to integrate each event, no matter how catastrophic, into the whole; to put trauma into perspective and make it possible to remember without being overwhelmed.

What would such a critical view of Jewish history, of the relationship of the Jews to political power, look like? Without appreciating the political acumen of the Jews in earlier times, Jewish history can only appear to be a miraculous accomplishment, explicable only in theological terms. Yet, if we wish to understand Jewish survival from a secular, historical point of view, we must look for explanation from the world of power and politics. Without some modicum of political power and the ability to use it, the Jewish people would certainly have vanished. The history of the Jews has always been subject to the same laws as the histories of all other peoples. This history of the Jews is "abnormal" due to the Jews' lack of territory for such a long period, but the response to this abnormal condition, in fact, was always political.

The key to the Jews' remarkable survival never lay in either pure power or powerlessness, neither of which exist in pure form in the real world. They possessed an extraordinary ability to maneuver between a quest for full sovereignty and apolitical passivity. To adopt either

of these two strategies would have been disastrous and, indeed, nearly was in the case of the revolts of ancient times. Yet, the alternative to revolt was not a retreat into otherworldliness. Jewish history was always characterized by a wide spectrum of persistent and ongoing attempts to achieve some measure of political power.

We must subject the concept of power to historical criticism, for power clearly means something different in every age. Today we assume that power means and has always meant state power, yet the concept of the sovereign state and theories of sovereignty are only a few hundred years old. Power in the ancient Mediterranean world, from the Assyrian through the Roman empires, was concentrated in the hands of large empires; in a world of imperialistic powers, sovereignty for most nations in the modern sense was limited. Power for most of the Middle Ages, on the other hand, was fragmented, divided between numerous corporations and guilds; the state was only one of many centers of power. In order to properly evaluate and understand the nature of Jewish power or powerlessness in these different ages, we need to have some notion of what power meant then and we must avoid imposing our concepts on the past.

Jewish history cannot therefore be divided into distinct periods of power or powerlessness. During the ancient period of Jewish sovereignty, normally considered to end in 70 C.E., the power of the Jews was severely limited by the great empires of antiquity. The few periods of full national sovereignty were altogether very short and were more a result of the temporary decline of this or that empire rather than Jewish power alone. Thus, King Josiah was able to establish a kingdom similar to David's in the late seventh century B.C.E. during the hiatus between the decline of the Assyrians and the rise of the Babylonians. Similarly, the Maccabean revolt in the 160s B.C.E. did not result in full political independence, but, at best, the removal of Greek persecution; the Hasmonean state became independent only when the Seleucid empire went into a severe decline in the 140s B.C.E.

Conversely, the period after the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. was not an age of total political impotence. In fact, the power of the rabbinical government was perhaps greater in the century *after* the destruction of the Second Temple than the power of Jewish self-government in the seventy-five years before that destruction. The rabbis in both Palestine and Babylonia did not retreat from politics into a passive world of the Torah (as the myth of "Yavneh" would have it), but, quite the contrary, constituted a political leadership intent on preserving its internal authority and its relationship to the Gentile state.

The Jewish Middle Ages was similarly not a period of retreat from political "self-interest" into a spiritual and physical ghetto. As Salo Baron has shown in his monumental *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, the medieval Jews in Christian Europe saw themselves as a free people in terms of their right of free movement and they were so regarded by medieval law. Meir of Rothenburg, writing in the second half of the thirteenth century, claimed that "Jews are not subjugated to their overlords as the Gentile [serfs] are.... The status of the Jew in this land is that of a free landowner who lost his land but did not lose his personal liberty." The Jews had full citizenship rights in many medieval cities and their supra-communal synods symbolized a form of autonomy much greater than any other medieval social class. In both the Christian and Muslim worlds, the leaders of the Jewish community often also occupied positions of considerable influence in the courts and city governments.

For substantial portions of the Middle Ages in Christian Europe, Jews carried arms and were called upon to use them in defense of the cities in which they lived. During times of persecution, such as the Crusades and the Chmelnitski pogroms of 1648–49, the Jews defended themselves with their arms and only turned them upon themselves in acts of martyrdom when all else failed. The carrying of arms by Jews in the Muslim world was less common as a result of Islamic law, but even there one finds exceptional cases such as that of Samuel ha-Nagid, the eleventh century poet who also served as a general in Muslim Granada.

The actual status of the Jews in both the Christian and Muslim worlds was considerably more secure and powerful than the memory of persecutions or official Christian or Islamic theology would suggest. Rather than subsisting on the fringes of society as an impotent and marginal people, the Jews were close to the centers of power and it was this proximity to power, as much as anything, that attracted the animosity of their non-Jewish neighbors. Indeed, the most violent attacks on the Jews in the Middle Ages were from popular forces rather than governments or other legitimate authorities. Expulsion was a distinct danger, but physical annihilation as an official policy in the modern sense had no medieval precedent. The Jews did not always possess sufficient power to protect themselves against their enemies but neither were they powerless or without recourse to powerful defenders.

Jewish political theory throughout the Middle Ages gave expression to the sense of Jewish power. The theory of *dina demalkhuta dina* ("the law of the kingdom is the law") suggested to the Jews that the relationship between the Jews and the Gentile kingdoms were defined by a clear contract in which each ceded some of its

natural sovereignty to the other. The Jews thought that they had some real powers to govern aspects of their own internal communal life in return for specified contractual obligations to the Gentile kingdom. The violation of this contract by the kingdom gave the Jews the right to resist, even if they did not always possess the power to do so. Similarly, the political theory of the Jewish community established the legal legitimation for the considerable power the communities exercised internally.

*Without some modicum of political power and the ability to use it, the Jewish people would certainly have vanished.*

All Jewish thinkers recognized that the Jews were in exile and therefore deprived of the fundamental dignity of statehood, but not all interpreted this fact in the same light. Some did indeed construct theologies of passivity, messianic ideologies in which the Jews must wait for God to send the Messiah in His own good time. But others, such as Moses Maimonides, articulated messianic doctrines that were activist, that asserted that human action might contribute centrally to the coming of messianic times. For such theorists, the very real power exercised by the Jewish communal authorities was the surrogate for past statehood and constituted the basis for the future Jewish state. Messianic times for them would not come from a break in Jewish history, but would instead constitute the natural culmination of the political life of the Jews in the Diaspora.

The opposing categories of "sovereignty" versus "powerlessness," "messianic redemption" versus *galut*, may therefore be overly simple and misleading ways with which to judge the rich complexity of Jewish history. Instead, the nature of Jewish power in the past involves a dialectic between these two, defined differently in each age. This, then, is the legacy of Jewish history as opposed to Jewish memory.

Today, too, neither Israel nor the Diaspora Jewish communities of the West fit into such simple categories. If Israel is a sovereign state, its power remains peculiarly circumscribed by its situation. As Michael Walzer remarked in *Tikkun* (Volume 1, Number 1) in its incomplete ingathering of all the exiles and its political dilemmas, Israel "is more like exile" than like redemption. Forced by circumstances to become the client state of America (a status again brought home by the recent arms sales to Iran), Israel's sovereignty is less complete than the theorists of classical Zionism had hoped. In many ways, the modern Jewish state resembles more the partially sovereign Israelite states of antiquity than it does the modern ideal of full sovereignty.

And, conversely, the Diaspora Jewish communities of the West enjoy both new kinds of power and new kinds of vulnerabilities unknown in earlier Jewish history. Partly as a result of the existence of the state of Israel, Diaspora Jews, particularly in America, enjoy political influence perhaps greater than ever before. The very success of Zionism has, ironically, strengthened the American Diaspora instead of "negating" it. American Jews owe their political clout to their social, cultural and economic status in America, but it is largely the cause of Israel that has given collective coherence and direction to Jewish politics. At the same time, the power of the Western Jewish communities does not consist, as it did in late antiquity and the Middle Ages, in an autonomous legal status and structures of internal self-government. One wonders what the American Jewish community would look like politically if (a messianic thought) peace should come to the Middle East: would its power turn out to be as ephemeral as it today appears impressive?

If Jewish history is not only cycles of persecution and suffering, what is the meaning, if any, of the Holocaust? Once we integrate the Holocaust responsibly into a more comprehensive picture of the Jewish past, what message may the Holocaust have for us today? Many believe that the study of the Holocaust will prevent a recurrence. I would submit that precisely the opposite is true: once an event has occurred, once it has been conceived of as possible, its recurrence is likely, regardless of memory, perhaps even as a result of it. Once a crime has been invented, it will be committed again, although perhaps not repeated in precisely the same way. Remembering the Holocaust cannot prevent a recurrence, but it can serve as a core symbol in a new political discourse. The Holocaust needs to be divorced from what it tells us about Jewish history and connected instead to the special dilemmas of contemporary politics.

Against the belief of memory that Jewish fate is unique, the Holocaust may signify quite the opposite: that the fate of the Jews has become a symbol for the fate of all mankind. To "universalize" the Holocaust does not mean to erase the special character of the Nazi genocide of the Jews and equate it with all contemporary horrors. Neither does it entail forgetting the identity of the victims (on the contrary, their identity was essential to the fact that they were victims). Instead, the experience of the Jews should be seen as a limited case, the extremity against which all political evil must be measured, even if such evil never approximates that of the Nazis. The Holocaust may serve as a great plumb line against which to measure our political behavior, to

remind us of what we as humans are capable of and, equally, to serve as a way of keeping our crimes in their proper perspective. Vietnam and Lebanon were assuredly not the same as the Holocaust, but as a result of our con-sciousness of the Holocaust, we have a clearer language for saying exactly in what the evils of Vietnam or Lebanon consisted and in what they did not.

The relative passivity with which the Jews met their fate, even when it became known to them, has something to teach us about contemporary political behavior in extremity. The relevant question here is not why the Jews did not resist more or whether or not there is something in Diaspora Jewish history that prevented resistance. Instead, the response of the Jews teaches us something about the effects that totalitarian systems have on all people. The nature of such states is to utterly suppress autonomy and the ability to act (witness the response of Russians to the persecutions of Stalin). The Jews of the Holocaust, rather than representing the culmination of a history of passivity, are a symbol of the helplessness of the individual in the face of the modern state gone mad. Clearly, some people are able to resist fascist and other authoritarian governments (the Jews themselves did, after all, resist as well), but as a limited case, a heuristic example, the passivity of the Jews should teach us greater sympathy for the victims of such states and impress on us the need for external assistance.

The total powerlessness of the Jews during the Holocaust also points to the fate of all humanity in the face of nuclear war. It is now possible for governments to deliver the ovens of Auschwitz to all corners of the earth, to make a holocaust of all mankind. Like the Jews of Nazi Europe, the people of the world will be utterly impotent in such a war, neither soldiers nor even innocent bystanders, but, again like the Jews, intentional victims.

As a metaphor for a new politics of irrationality, the Holocaust contains a message of inescapable relevance for a nuclear world. For the first time in human history, a government sought to eradicate a whole people from the earth for reasons that had nothing to do with political realities. In a similar way, the idea of nuclear war lacks the most elementary political rationality, for it would necessarily destroy everything it meant to save: it would take genocide, invented in its most systematic form by the Nazis, to its global and suicidal conclusion.

Jewish nationalism after the Holocaust, the accepted ideology of most of the world's Jews, derives its logic and its legitimacy from both the modern history of the Jews and the modern history of the world. From this point of view, Jewish nationalism is the irrefutable answer to the powerlessness of the Holocaust. At the same time, as a prefiguration of the terrors of contemporary politics, the Holocaust has thrown a dark shadow over the future of the nation-state as such, obscuring the promise of modern nationalism for the Jews as for all other peoples.

*. . . the fate of the Jews has become a symbol for the fate of all mankind.*

The urge toward a normal existence in a Jewish state grew out of a profound desire to escape what David Ben Gurion called the "unique destiny of a unique people." Yet, if a "normal existence" today means confronting the terror of global genocide, then instead of the Jews escaping their historical destiny, it is the world which has become Jewish; the Jews have entered the world of nations only to discover that all mankind faces the Holocaust they themselves already suffered. In this world, power is no longer a complete antidote to powerlessness. Instead, possessed of the power to destroy the earth, the nations of the world have become the impotent prisoners of their own power, limited in their sovereignty by forces of their own making: power has created its own vulnerability.

In this dialectic between power and vulnerability, the long history of the Jews may unexpectedly serve as a beacon to the nations. From biblical times to the present day, the Jews have wandered the uncertain terrain between power and powerlessness, never quite achieving the power necessary to guarantee long-term security, but equally avoiding, with a number of disastrous exceptions, the abyss of absolute powerlessness. They developed the consummate political art of living with uncertainty and insecurity; their long survival owes much to this extraordinary achievement. Jews today must struggle to come to terms with this history in light of their present power, to see both past and present through a realistic lens, neither exaggerating their past powerlessness nor inflating their present power, neither drowning in the trauma of the Holocaust nor forgetting its most relevant legacy. They need to remember not only how they died, but also how they lived. The successful resolution of this struggle between memory and repression is critical for the health of the Jewish people and may equally convey a lesson for the continued existence of all peoples. □

# The Historians' Controversy—Limits to the Historization of National Socialism

*Dan Diner*

For several months now, a discussion conducted in the media and in public has shaken the Federal Republic of Germany, a discussion for which a unique catchword has already been established: "the historians' debate." The subject is Auschwitz, or *the* past, as it is labeled euphemistically.

As it appeared on the surface, the controversy can briefly be described as follows: On June 6, 1986, the conservative and sophisticated German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* ran an article with a contribution by the generally respected historian, Ernst Nolte, entitled "A Past That Will Not Disappear," a title which, totally unintended by the author, has already turned into a prophecy, if not a curse. It seemed to be clear to everybody that the title referred to National Socialism—except for the author. In his contribution he expounds his thesis that long before the murder of the Jews by the National Socialists there had been Stalin's Gulag, Stalin's "Clean-ups," and the social extermination policy toward the kulaks. The quintessence of this "Asian deed" claims first-born rights: Auschwitz actually was just an imitation whose innovative significance lay only in the fact that gas was used in the mass killings. In addition, the historian Nolte was asking for considerable empathy for his subject, namely that it was a question of understanding Hitler, who had felt threatened by that original deed; and that, consequently, he had only reacted to the "Asian peril" with his own means. Why it had to be the Jews who became the primary victim in this "reaction" is an omission in the argument which Nolte failed to explain.

A fight for the correct historical interpretation of National Socialism and the murder of the Jews, a fight for memory, had started in Germany. When shortly thereafter in the left-liberal newspaper *Die Zeit* the social philosopher Jürgen Habermas discussed not only Ernst Nolte but also other contemporary historians, particularly Andreas Hillgruber, Michael Stürmer, and Klaus Hildebrandt, and accused them of efforts to revise German history to the extent of infusing national, even nationalist, tendencies, a storm of indignation broke out in the German press. The battle was pro and con the historians who had been incriminated as "revisionists," pro and con the primacy of the Bolshevik "sociocide," pro and con the specificity of Auschwitz. It becomes emphatically clear to the observer that there is more at stake than an historiographical debate, a controversy about the "correct" appropriation of the past. Somehow one cannot cast off the impression that, in actual fact, it is a future that is being prepared here.

The "historians' debate" coincides with a development in Germany toward a positive national identity, which has been going on for some time and is gathering more and more momentum. It has in general been ascribed to the opponents of the arms race, to the Greens, and to the proponents of alternative life-styles and politics in Germany. Certainly, it is true that the "national question," "national identity," and other free-floating political metaphors exist in Germany and have made an indelible impression on the spectrum of the Greens. One cannot ignore these romanticist and populist tendencies. But in the effort to denigrate the Greens and the friends of the environment, people have overlooked, as if blinded—especially in the USA—Germany's overall development in the last few years, which has been moving toward a national self-discovery, slowly but persistently like a glacier.

The longing for normalcy is not limited to individual political parties, but is general. Of course, there are different degrees; and it is especially the Greens who, due to their institutional frankness, are a group that will be open to arguments and objections. Nevertheless: the question about a German nation is no shibboleth by which one could clearly separate Right from Left as Habermas, understandably, wanted to do when he labeled Nolte, et al, "neo-conservative creators of meaning." It might be better to agree with Andreas Hillgruber in this point, when he insisted during the latest controversy that the quest for a nation in Germany is not just an issue for the conservatives, but that it is equally at home in the political center and in the Left.

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The conservative *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, a true opinion-setter when it comes to nationalism, tenaciously and steadily has been working on the trend to re-nationalize the country. In December of 1986, a new pinnacle was reached when this newspaper for "intelligent people" endorsed the stealthily advancing idea to rename the Federal Republic of Germany to "Westdeutschland" [West Germany]. The commentator strategically explained that the public should gradually be made aware of the fact that the Federal Republic is only a part-state. Never before has the conservative, or "Atlantic," side talked so openly about the political liquidation of the Federal Republic. In the Christian Democratic Union one can hear voices that claim an historical weakening of the two flank powers, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., and that are speculating about the concept of a "European center," including reunification. Years ago, the alternative and Green movements in their most embryonic stages advocated such ideas and, consequently, had to listen to the most scornful scolding from the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. Now these very ideas enjoy an almost wholesome approval.

The chairman of the German Socialist Party (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschland) un-

*and the murder of the Jews, a fight for memory, had started in Germany.*

One should be aware that the political changes in Central Europe, triggered by modern weapons technology and as a consequence of the increased tension between the superpowers since the late seventies, could lead to changes in Moscow and Washington which would grant Europe a new and more independent significance. Gorbachev's plans for an economic reform mean that the Soviet Union will concentrate more on itself. This will necessitate a temporary or even long-term easing of Soviet presence in Central Europe. As for the political "East Europeans," or rather the cultural Central Europeans, the Soviet Union used up its credit long ago. In Czechoslovakia, in Hungary, and in other countries of the political Eastern Europe, a Central European nostalgia has been noticeable for years.

For years, Germany has been undergoing a phase of national reconstruction. At stake are self-image and the problem of "national-identity" and, as part of that—how could it be otherwise—its attitude toward history. This reconstruction of a self-image coincided with the above-described process of the return of the concept of Central Europe; it does not stand in a causal relation to it. But whether coincidence or causality: the search for a positive national identity, the longing for normalcy,

quences of that decision. Much has been written about it in the last few years from defense and strategic points of view. Not much, however, has been said about one point, namely that excess armament in Europe would mean—besides political and strategic changes—endangering the detente in Central Europe, a detente that, since the mid-sixties, has required considerable expenditure and diplomatic detail work. Those who were in immediate danger because of the aggravated relations between East and West were the Germans on both sides of the borderline that separates two global systems. It had not been their original intent, but the protests against stationing of American missiles also opened the national Pandora's box in Central Europe. The argumentative attacks of the opponents of deployment, which began to be directed against the principle of nuclear deterrence as a whole, also caused the old Europe to emerge from the distinct borderlines which had been ratified for strategic reasons by virtue of the principle of nuclear equilibrium.

## *A fight for the correct historical interpretation of National Socialism*

right Jochen Vogel—whose party does n
rently enjoy a great deal of popularity with the v
also cannot think of anything better to do than t
into the national current. In his party's ideo
paper he muses at length about the apparently u
able surging toward "national identity" in the
the Germans. He does not miss the opportu
boast about the fact that his party is the only on
Federal Republic that carries the word "Deutsc
in its name. Peter Glotz, the Socialist Party's ent
ing secretary and primary intellectual, fantasizes
ously about a "Central European identity" and a
possible leftist variant. And with this, we have
at the link to those historians who, for a long tim
been talking and writing about Germany and th
ter of Europe."

The catchword "Central Europe" was alread
tioned years ago. Those well-versed in history w
mediately recall a number of old political co
associated with the idea of "Central Europe,"
were believed to be forgotten.

Actually, it all started with the peace movem
rather with the events that led to the first waves
peace movement in Germany. As is well-know
concern at the time was the planned, and fina
lized, deployment of U.S. middle range missiles i
ern Europe; primarily, however, in the frontier
Western alliance, in Germany. This is not the p
elaborate on the circumstances, conditions, and

can be considered a prerequisite to holding a position in Europe equal to Germany's importance and significance. And we are not even talking about a complete, a reunified Germany in the "center of Europe." The Federal Republic alone exerts a gravitational force in the European region that cannot be matched by other countries. Neighboring France, for instance, vacillates in its policy toward the Germans. The contradiction in France's politics is best expressed in the persiflage that France wants a Germany that is stronger than Russia and, at the same time, weaker than France. In this attempt to square the circle, France does support a military strengthening of Germany and even its reunification; but by the same token, it carefully watches any nationalist tendencies in Germany and notes them with prophecies of doom. In spite of all the proclaimed and celebrated homogeneity which, because of its common Western culture is said to be supra-national, European consciousness of history is nationalistic. And it is increasingly becoming more so. But there is one event that will block the way to Germany's return to itself, to a positive "national identity," an event that refuses to be integrated. That event is called Auschwitz—or, in Germany, euphemistically, *the* past.

Hence, the great significance of Bitburg. In this event of symbolic politics, an exculpating awareness of the past merged—like in a historic burning glass—with the exculpation-oriented preparation for a future active German policy in Europe. Thus, at the graves of soldiers of the "Wehrmacht" and the SS, World War II, in analogy to World War I, was falsified into a deplorable but, in the final analysis, normal event. The World War II fronts were inverted to the extent that the joint struggle against totalitarianism, i.e., the Soviet Union, is regarded as the lesson learned form National Socialism. Bitburg, so to speak, was the anti-totalitarian reconciliation which could only occur at the expense, and at the exclusion, of the memory of the victims of the mass extermination. For Auschwitz was not part of the war activities; rather, it happened in their shadow.

It appears that with his visit, Reagan wanted to "pay off" the Germans for their consent to station the missiles. But there is a deception here: by symbolically forcing Americans to accept a certain interpretation of the events in World War II, one releases the Germans of an obligation that continues to be fed by the event of Auschwitz. According to such a liberal interpretation of history, Germany would be free to turn to a national-oriented perspective, to a perspective that would no longer be blocked by the specificity and the monstrosity of Auschwitz. Thus, the solemnly celebrated reconciliation at the gravesites of Bitburg was not a confirmation of the Western alliance, but its opposite: the gradual dismissal of this alliance in favor of "national identity" and a move toward the "center of Europe." In that respect, the notorious "historians' debate" only portrays the historiosophical variant of Bitburg: the relativization and de-singularization of Auschwitz as a condition for a gradual re-nationalization of German historical consciousness.

Alfred Dregger, parliamentary leader of the ruling Christian Democratic Union, for years has been working toward such a normalization of the German consciousness. Dregger insists that the soldiers at the front did not know what was going on behind their backs. They were not guilty of what was happening—the army, which was courageously and with a clear conscience defending Germany as best it could against the red flood, was caught in a tragic conflict. Either they had to let Hilter perish, and with him Germany, or they had to defend Germany and, at the same time, Hitler.

*There is one event that will block the way to Germany's return to itself, to a positive "national identity," an event that refuses to be integrated. That event is called Auschwitz—or, in Germany, euphemistically, the past.*

Dregger ignores a central point! Defending Germany also meant maintaining the conditions that kept the crematories burning. Only as long as the front was upheld could the mass destruction machinery function undisturbed. And the "conflict" turns into *tragedy* only when one does not realize that the participation of the German society—with the exception of some individuals and heroic and unselfish resistance groups—in the overall system of the "Third Reich" makes it impossible to differentiate between nationalism and National Socialism. Whoever wants to rescue the national aspect in retrospect and through the duration of National Socialist rule, must inevitably accept National Socialism and its historical nucleus, the mass extermination. This is the price that has to be paid for reconstructing nationalism in Germany.

In this context we can understand the work of World War II historian and professor in Cologne, Andreas Hillgruber. With his small, almost insignificant volume, most tellingly entitled "The Shattering of the German Reich and the End of European Jewry," he attracted, very much to his amazement and incredulity, the right-

eous wrath of his critics. Taking the perspective of the "defenders" of the German East, of the German population, and of those Germans who were evacuated to the West by sea and by land, Hillgruber tries to elicit that concept of *tragedy* which Dregger had politically articulated before him. However, one can only talk of a tragedy, of an insolvable, destiny-like entanglement, if one sides with the past from a nationalistic viewpoint and, above that, places the war-related cruelties towards Germans, including their eviction from the eastern provinces, on the same level with the senseless and purposeless extermination in Auschwitz, which stood totally outside any wartime confrontation.

Hillgruber and his defendants absolutely refuse to accept the necessary consequences of such a *subjective* and, therefore, *nationalist*, particularistic view of history. They are adopting a perspective that—now historiographically—*must* be directed against the victims of National Socialism. History is repeated in historiography. By choosing the nationalist German perspective—now voluntarily and un-tragically—one now opposes the only possible, the most extreme view: that of the victims. This is not, as it may appear at first sight, another subjective, albeit inverted, perspective. Rather it is the only perspective possible, considering the "radicality" of National Socialism. Only if one starts out from the existing, most extreme perspective, can one understand the multiplicity of the historical problems involving National Socialism. Choosing the nationalist perspective implies, at the same time, ignoring—like it or not—that which has made National Socialism what it is: the bureaucratically and factory-like organized extermination of the European Jews and of other biologistically stigmatized victims.

*Bitburg . . . was the anti-totalitarian reconciliation which could only occur at the expense, and at the exclusion, of the memory of the victims of the mass extermination.*

Since Auschwitz, there is no objectivity, i.e no *common* historical view for victims and perpetrators—except from the perspective of the victims. Not because of chauvinism and narcissistic self-portrayal, but because of the fact that the Nazis, by *realizing* their *negative utopia*, co-defined the conditions for the judgment of the deed. This is the nucleus of the incomparability of the incomparable, and thus an absolute limit of historization.

In Spring of 1985, the eminent German contemporary historian and director of the renowned Institute for Contemporary History in Munich, Martin Broszat, published an article in the periodical for the intelligentsia, *Merkur*, entitled "A Case for the Historization of National Socialism." He wanted National Socialism to be interpreted as a quasi-normal period in recent history and, as such, to be accessible to the scientifically value-free approach of the historian. Such a request is, in principle, legitimate, if National Socialism could be historicized like any other historical period. However, this, of course, is extremely questionable. Not only because there is something special about National Socialism. Not only because the Nazis destroyed the very criteria of historical evaluation by committing a crime on civilization, but because the historization in the meaning of integrating National Socialism into the overall historical context of German history leads to extremely paradoxical reconstruction problems. It leads to results that could mean annulment of the actual historical significance of National Socialism.

Saul Friedländer, in his essay in *Ha'aretz*, pointed out that Broszat's case for the historization of National Socialism could lead to the conclusion that one was dealing with a period of extreme banality. Social developments, indicators and trends, for instance, could have started during, even long before, the Weimar period and could have transcended the Nazi era up to the times of the Federal Republic—for example, social policies or everyday phenomena. But it is especially everyday history, particularly when restricted to a specific region, that can and will lead to a total de-politicization of National Socialism. That does not mean a falsification; on the contrary, it reflects reality and experience in the consciousness of the population, and it is precisely in that manner that it turns National Socialism into a complete banality. Polemically accentuated, such historization, based on everyday phenomena, can lead to the conclusion that nothing did really happen after all. And such a diagnosis would be totally true. For, an approach that is oriented on everyday life in Germany during National Socialism will reflect the picture of a reality which was constructed by the Nazis themselves: the normalcy of a normal German leading a normal life. The victims and their history will have to be portrayed parallel to that, as the history of an extreme, exceptional situation, and it will be impossible to tell both stories as one and the same. Thus, the historical approach reproduces the reality of National Socialism: the story of the Germans as a history of normalcy, with periods that will be set to correspond not to the actions against humanity, against the Jews—i.e., 1933, 1934, 1935, 1938, 1941—but which will be divided into a good phase, perhaps until 1942 when the

bombs began to fall, and a bad phase, starting with 1942 until the years 1948/49. Thus 1945, the year of liberation for the surviving victims, will not be an incisive point in this periodization marked by experiences which were integrated in the consciousness. In that respect, everyday history de-politicizes. It does not touch on the indisputable parameters of that which constitutes National Socialism. Everyday history that leads to historization is, therefore, a history that perpetuates banality. The history of victims, on the other hand, is about the breakdown and the state of absolute extremity. One cannot historicize both together, i.e., as *the* history of National Socialism. If one does, then historization will become part of normalization, which, at best, would entail its implicit distancing from the history of the victims—all of which brings us back to the beginning.

Coincidence or causality: the as-yet-undefinable tendency toward a re-nationalization in Germany reached its first important climax in the historians' debate. How else could it be; after all, the road to a nationalizing future, by necessity leads via the past. And on the way, the national history, while being historically constructed, will run into the event "Auschwitz"—which cannot be integrated into the nationally constructed historical stream without bursting its banks—or, rather, without accusing those of poisoning the well who, by their constant reminders of *the* past, are disturbing that national reconstruction.

*Defending Germany also meant maintaining the conditions that kept the crematories burning.*

Such aporia is significant for the European dilemma, which in the final analysis leads back to Auschwitz. The fact that at the moment these questions surface with such vehemence, paradoxically may be related to the relatively long time span: history comes closer the farther we remove ourselves from it. But there are also tectonic political changes in and around Germany that lend an excessive political charge to dealing with history.

Whatever happens, one thing is certain: the relationship between Germans and Jews will become more complex and more difficult—for history's sake. □



# The Poisoned Heart: The Jews of Palestine and the Holocaust

*Idith Zertal*

When Yitzhak (Antek) Zuckerman, one of the leaders of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, died several years ago, a record of remarks he made for a documentary film about the Holocaust in Europe and the yishuv in Palestine was found among his personal effects: "The Land of Israel, our hearts' beloved, did not love us," he said. "There was a psychological abyss ... it will never be forgiven."

In another place at another time, Zuckerman said to Israeli poet Haim Guri: "If 500 Palmah fighters had set out for Europe, German anti-aircraft fire would have downed 490 of them. And if the remaining ten had parachuted into Poland and reached the ground alive, we would have had the problem of how to conceal them, with their ignorance of Polish and Yiddish, their Mediterranean faces, and their *sabra* Hebrew. You could not have saved us; you were not supermen. But why didn't one come? *One*?!"

In these unforgettable words of this somewhat inarticulate man—who told Claude Lanzmann, creator of the film *Shoah*, that "If you could lick my heart, it would poison you to death"—we have an historical reckoning of the failures of the Jews of Palestine, Eretz Israel, "the chosen people" among the Chosen People, the personal fulfillers and crowning jewels of the Zionist idea.

Quite apart from the moral accounting we can demand of the rest of the world there is a Jewish reckoning, to be pursued among Jews. Never had Jewish civilization and heritage, with all its facets and values, been put to such an extreme and revealing test as during those years, and never had the Jewish communities' unity, mutual commitment, and reciprocal responsibility of one Jew to another been subjected to such a serious ordeal.

This reckoning is being done today by an ever-increasing number of Israelis who are aware of themselves and their history, and are willing to look carefully at themselves and their forbearers. This is a symbol-heavy reckoning, for it essentially belongs to the plane of consciousness, perception of reality, and images of self and others. Only a part is concerned with the historical circumstances themselves. For these were so unequivocal, so crushing, that the maneuvering room of individuals and groups, even if not absolutely zero, was extremely marginal.

Antek Zuckerman's remarks are intrinsically symbolic. He knew Jews could not stop the Nazi machine, and he knew there was almost no way of landing fighters or paratroopers from Palestine in the heart of occupied Europe. He knew it even though thousands of emissaries, couriers, and spies belonging to espionage and underground groups—including Jewish and Palestinian groups—circulated throughout occupied Europe and succeeded in penetrating the ghettos and even the extermination camps, when rescue was still possible, when there were still people to rescue. And he knew that if a fighter from Palestine were to succeed in reaching the area, he would have caused his "hosts" severe complications and problems, if not mortal peril, as they fought for their lives. It was not actual help he expected, then, but something in the domain of a humane gesture, a symbol from the world of symbols, an indication of fraternity and responsibility on the part of the Palestinian yishuv.

The other side, the yishuv, also harbored expectations—of itself and of the Diaspora. These belonged more to the level of ideology and consciousness, and less to the dimension of real, concrete action.

When the emissaries of the pioneering movements in Palestine returned from occupied Poland in late 1939 and early 1940—only a few months after having voted unanimously, in a display of fervor the night the Zionist Congress in Geneva ended, to return to the countries to which they had been sent, and to their "flocks" in the Diaspora, with all the risks this entailed—Berl Katznelson, one of the founding fathers and guiding lights of the Labor Movement in Palestine, turned

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there may be only another four or five years (if not fewer) that stand between ourselves and that terrible day." In 1938, he asserted that "There could be a war which would bring a catastrophe upon us ... There is Hitler, and he can be relied upon in this manner ... If there is a world war, he will carry this out. First of all he will destroy the Jewish people in Europe." Ben-Gurion, who with penetrating vision was capable at times of breaking through the barriers of the present and contemplating the future with precision, never appointed himself, even when the horrifying facts about the annihilation became fully clear, as the leader of the yishuv's rescue efforts. By behaving in this fashion, he in fact relegated rescue to a role of secondary importance, both on the yishuv's practical concrete agenda, and in its consciousness and ethos.

Rhetoric was not lacking. By November, 1942, the reports which sixty-nine Palestinian Jewish eyewitnesses had provided—members of kibbutzim, scientists, and veteran Zionists who had been trapped in Europe when the war broke out and exchanged for German residents in Palestine—were confirmed: European Jewry was being systematically slaughtered. The yishuv marked its identification with the devastated Diaspora by holding ceremonies and declaring days of mourning. At this time, Ben-Gurion, in a special session of *Asefat ha-Nivharim* (the representative assembly elected by Jews in Eretz Israel during the British Mandate period) declared: "We do not know if, upon the victory of democracy, freedom, and justice, Europe will not prove to be a vast Jewish cemetery in which the bones of our fellow nationals are strewn ... Our own children, our own wives, our own sisters, and our own elderly are being singled out for the special treatment of being buried alive in graves dug by themselves, of being incinerated in crematoria, of being trampled underfoot to the point of strangulation, and of being murdered by machine gun.... " Continuing, he tied the fate of Europe's Jews with that of Palestine's, and linked their rescue to the Jewish state: "Let us tell our dear brothers and sisters, the tortured martyrs of the Nazi ghettos: your disaster is ours, your blood is ours ... And we shall allow ourselves no rest until we redeem you from *the Nazi inferno* and from *the degenerate state of exile*, and bring you up ... to our land, which is being built and redeemed." Ben-Gurion not only viewed a future Jewish state as a *sine qua non* for rescue, but was even capable of creating in his psyche and his design a symmetric parallel between the Nazi inferno and the "degenerate state of exile"—i.e., between the atrocities of systematic, assembly-line annihilation of a sort the world had not known hitherto, and the "degenerate" condition of exile, which had been familiar and routine since time immemorial. Addressing the Zionist Executive on December 6, 1942, Ben-Gurion said "We are duty-bound to make every effort, and we must not reject in advance the possibility of effecting a rescue."

His personal commitment, however, was not primarily to the rescuing of Jews, but to the building of the Jewish state itself. In pursuit of that goal, he fought for the integrity of his party, Mapai, and devoted day and night to the endless political discord which shredded the Labor Movement in Palestine from within—while the Jews were being slaughtered in Europe. He succeeded in viewing the intra-party struggle as the essential issue, and concocted a strange dialectic in which it proved to be a condition for rescue, if not during the war, then after it. "Although the burning issue is the matter of rescue," he told the Mapai Secretariat in a meeting in early 1944, "and although the matter is desperately urgent in Rumania and Bulgaria, we must consider the internal (party) matter as a first item on the list at this moment ... The party's work ... is perhaps the only road to rescue."

Ben-Gurion left the rescue efforts to his colleagues, whose powers, aptitude for leadership and ability to persuade, within the yishuv and vis-à-vis world Jewish organizations and heads of state, were far inferior to his.

*Everyone in Palestine had relatives in Europe ... nevertheless ... repression mechanisms were hard at work.*

"Two facts may be established firmly," writes Ben-Gurion's biographer, Shabtai Teveth (whose quotations from Ben-Gurion have been used here). Ben-Gurion "did not give rescue top priority in Zionist policy, and did not view the rescue enterprise as a central matter which he was duty-bound to head. Neither did he feel it necessary to explain his behavior—at that time or at other times."

At the end of January, 1943, after prolonged arguments and disputes as to the representation of many parties and organizations active in the yishuv, the Jewish Agency succeeded in establishing the *Va'ad Ha'hatzala*, the Rescue Committee, as an umbrella framework for the coordination of rescue operations, and installed Yitzhak Gruenbaum as its chairman. Though an admired leader of Polish Jewry, Gruenbaum had little public and political clout in the Palestinian yishuv, and, worse still, did not enjoy the esteem and backing of Ben-Gurion himself.

Throughout the entire period, the Rescue Committee was pulled this way and that by the various and conflicting interests within it, and failed to establish an unchallenged position in shaping and implementing the yishuv's policy on rescue. Gruenbaum's leadership was controversial, and provoked harsh criticism on the part of the committee members, the Jewish Agency Executive, and the yishuv's emissaries in Europe.

*To continue pursuing the mission of creating a Jewish state in Palestine, the Zionist leaders had to refrain from perceiving Nazism in its full horror . . .*

Ironically, it was Gruenbaum (a figure connected more with Polish Jewry than with the Palestinian yishuv) as head of the Rescue Committee who remains in historical memory as the man who is most clearly identified with valuing the yishuv above all. In a meeting of the downsized Zionist Executive in Jerusalem on January 18, 1943, convened for discussion of the possibility of mobilizing the yishuv on behalf of Diaspora Jewry, Gruenbaum refused to allocate JNF funds for the rescue efforts. "I said that the yishuv is the emissary of the Diaspora," said Gruenbaum. "The yishuv is holding the deposit which Warsaw, Berdichev, and Zhitomir entrusted to it. I dare say, in the name of all the tortured Jews of the Diaspora, that the yishuv should safeguard this deposit first of all. Whenever this deposit is endangered, the yishuv should be concerned with it alone, letting events in the Diaspora occur as they will. This kernel will emerge from this catastrophe, from this war, not only intact but stronger, larger, and ready to serve as a homeland for those who escape the inferno in Europe." His remarks provoked a tempest. Some of the speakers insisted that rescue be the prime goal of Zionism at that time—"This is Zionism now"—and insisted that funds of the Jewish Agency Executive be devoted to it. Gruenbaum objected: "Let them call me an anti-Semite (as a Tel Aviv newspaper did, in fact); [let them say] that I do not want to save the Diaspora; that I don't have a *varm Yiddische hartz*, that I've forgotten the Diaspora. They can say what they please. I shall not demand that the budget of the Jewish Agency Executive, the money we've got, include a sum of $300,000 or 100,000 pounds [sterling] pledged to this cause [rescue]. I won't call for it. And I think anyone who makes demands like these is performing an anti-Zionist act."

To allocate funds is to express policy. In *An Entangled Leadership*, a new book (in Hebrew) about the Jewish Agency Executive and the Holocaust, historian Dina Porat reveals details of the yishuv's expenditures that show that the Jewish Agency Executive was very slow and hesitant about budgeting expenditures for rescue purposes. Its considerations were practical: wouldn't the money be squandered in hasty operations? Were the chances of offering help real, sure, and even useful? In September, 1943, Ben-Gurion said that "the cause of rescuing the Jews of Europe has not only a financial aspect but a moral one. It is one of the major issues at the present time. It not only constitutes aid for the Jews of Europe; it also advances the cause of Eretz Israel. By pursuing it, we advance the most exalted of all causes. The fact that the Jews of Eretz Israel positioned themselves at the head of the rescue operation is an important Zionist asset, and every Zionist asset is also an asset of the cause." Moshe Shertok, Ben-Gurion's colleague in leadership circles and Chairman of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency Executive, added: "If the matter is considered in Zionist terms, the most urgent and essential thing in terms of present requirements, and the thing which draws the most attention to the yishuv's responsibility and its [position as] the center of the people—is an enterprise such as this [a special fund-raising drive for the Diaspora]." Fund-raising for rescue, and rescue itself, were therefore considered important aims in themselves by the Zionist leadership. At the same time, they were also, and perhaps chiefly, Zionist assets which might lend the Zionist enterprise importance and prestige, and underscore its centrality as well.

Yishuv emissaries in Istanbul and Geneva, who maintained ties from these cities with Jewish communities and organizations behind the occupation lines, had to wage a daily battle for their operating budgets. Direct appeals for help came in from the occupied countries, too—while the yishuv argued at length about every pound diverted to the rescue effort. Thus, in April, 1944, a telegram from the Jewish National Committee in Warsaw was read aloud in a meeting of the Secretariat of the Histadrut Executive Committee. "We appeal to you at the last moment, before the last remnant of Polish Jewry is destroyed ... The monies which reach us are like drops in the ocean. We are presently receiving from you the last increment of ten thousand Palestine pounds ... We beg you: please increase your financial help tenfold ... The last survivors of Polish Jewry are waiting for you to save them."

According to the Rescue Committee's balance sheets, the yishuv spent 1,325,000 Palestine pounds ($31,800,000 in today's dollars) on rescue between February 1, 1943 and June 1, 1945. Of this sum, the yishuv's

own fund-raising drive for mobilization and rescue provided 647,000 Palestine pounds, the JDC gave 512,000, and the other communities in the free world contributed 170,000. Dina Porat's computations lead her to assess rescue expenditures at about one fourth of all the Jewish Agency's outlays. "These figures are rather surprising," Porat writes, "considering the fierce criticism which both the Histadrut and the Rescue Committee levelled at the Jewish Agency." Just the same, they certainly do not bespeak a mighty and sweeping effort on the yishuv's part to save European Jewry. On the contrary, they indicate that had a special financial institution devoted to rescue been established, and had systematic, constant action been taken to raise funds for this endeavor, it would have been possible to solicit much greater sums from the public during the Holocaust years—"boom years" for the yishuv—and allocate them exclusively to rescue. This was never done. Had more money been allocated, more lives could have been saved, even if the total picture of devastation would have remained essentially unchanged.

Because the Jewish Agency Executive acted slowly and hesitantly, and because it was not directly responsible for the yishuv's rescue operations, the emissaries bypassed it in their appeals for money, in favor of the Histadrut's Executive Committee. As a result, this more activist institution, under the leadership of David Remez and Golda Myerson, served as a conduit for many of the yishuv's clandestine activities vis-à-vis Great Britain, which could not be performed under Jewish Agency Executive auspices. It also spurred the Jewish Agency Executive to be more active. "The Jewish Agency Executive made a great mistake," said Remez in late 1943, "by not allocating unlimited funds to the rescue cause from the beginning of the operation. Had the Executive obtained a million Palestine pounds credit for this activity for ten years, the whole Jewish world would have known that no rescue opportunity was being passed up."

The yishuv's formal leadership, however, was not the only actor whose operations were marred by shortsightedness, insensitivity, and—insofar as it acted at all—relegation of this matter to a status secondary to yishuv-centered, Zionist interests.

For example, Berl Katznelson, a spiritual father and guiding light of the Labor Movement—a dominant force in the yishuv—spent the critical years preoccupied with establishing and consolidating the Histadrut's "Am Oved" publishing house. He also spent days and nights in attempts to bridge gaps among rival factions within Mapai, though his personal status in the party was already on the wane. Yitzhak Tabenkin, leader of Ha-Kibbutz ha-Meuchad—always the first body to harness itself to any task involving settlement and Jewish causes—and a friend and partner of Ben-Gurion and Katznelson, was almost totally immersed in the cauldron of intra-party strife.

More amazing still was the nearly total silence of the yishuv's important authors and poets. Wouldn't their utterances and human sensitivities be much sharper than the politicians'? Yet, Uri Zvi Greenberg and S. Y. Agnon were silent as the Holocaust raged. Martin Buber, addressing a conference of writers in July, 1942, said that the major danger facing the yishuv and the Jewish people was not the menace from without but disintegration from within. Omitting all mention of the fate of the Jews of Europe, he spoke of the phenomena of corruption and speculation. Natan Alterman, a poet without equal in his attentive ear to current events, wrote hundreds of weekly columns during the war, but dedicated a mere eleven poems to the annihilation of the Jews in Europe. Alongside them, he continued to write about daily life, routine affairs, the theater, and the town of Tel Aviv. His attitude was mirrored by the entire yishuv; not only did it hardly stray from its routine pattern of life, but it flourished and blossomed as never before. Once Rommel's defeat at Al-Alamein in late 1942 lifted the German threat from the yishuv itself—and just as reports about the Germans' planned and systematic murder of the Jews of Europe reached a stage at which they could no longer be ignored by the free world and the Palestinian yishuv—the Jews of Palestine enjoyed a rare surge of cosmopolitan life, fueled by an economic boom which pulled the entire yishuv in its wake. Palestine was a transit station for thousands of Allied soldiers. In the large towns, cafes and taverns opened their doors, while theaters staged performances virtually every evening. University students threw Purim parties. At Kibbutz Dalia, the national dance gathering resumed. If the yishuv had 17,400 unemployed in 1939, their number diminished by 1944 to a mere 490. Palestine was a safe, placid, and enjoyable place to live.

Expressions of guilt for the yishuv's island-in-the-storm ambience, and its reluctance to take extreme measures to help its fellow Jews of Europe, also turned into a routine of sorts, a sidekick-ritual of the routine life itself.

"We all eat and drink," someone wrote in the newspaper *Davar*, in February, 1943—"sleep and enjoy it, read for pleasure, attend concerts, visit the theater, and frequent the coffeehouses. It is not the type of amusements that is terrible, but rather the empty hearts thirsting for the amusements, which are so puzzling and hair-raising." □

# Between the Fires

*Arthur Waskow*

I am writing during the week of the Torah portion called *Lekh L'kha*. In the midst of the portion (Genesis XV) there is the eerie story of how the wandering Abram—not yet Abraham, not yet our forebearer—experiences the Covenant between the Fires. He has come in spiritual agony, fearful that for him and Sarai there will be no next generation. He places the divided bodies of several sacrificed animals in two rows. They flame up in a "smoking furnace." He stands between these fires, and there falls upon him a "thick darkness." He slips into a profound trance. In it he becomes a partner in the Covenant of the Generations: he and Sarai will have seed, more numerous than the stars and the grains of sand, and they will live in the land bounded by the Jordan and the Sea.

Abram has created a kind of "Shabbat in space." In one direction there is a fire that represents the candles that begin Shabbat; in the other direction, there is a fire that represents the Havdalah candle that ends Shabbat. But what makes the space between these two into a Shabbat-space is that Abram experiences and accepts in it the Dark of Mystery. Shabbat is the emblem and the practice of Mystery. In it we recognize that although we feel sure we know exactly what to do next and feel driven to do it, in fact we do *not* know what comes next—since there is in life a mysterious element. And so on Shabbat we do nothing, and celebrate the fact of not-knowing with joy, not fear or anger. From our plunge into this Mystery we learn new paths.

Abram lets the mysterious darkness come into himself. He "rests"—not merely pausing, but letting the Mystery absorb him. And so there wells up in him the Covenant that extends through time to future generations. In a recognition that this Shabbat is one in space, he receives a promise of a holy space—the Land that is infused with Shabbat.

How does this speak to the meaning of the Holocaust? *We are the generation that stands between the fires*—behind us the smoke and flame that rose from Auschwitz, before us the nightmare of the flood of fire and smoke that could turn our planet into Auschwitz. We come, like Abram, in an agony of fear that for us—for all of us—there may be no next generation.

What will transform the Fire that lies before us? What will turn it into a light that enlightens rather than a blaze that consumes? What will make possible for us the covenant of generations yet to come?

The first teaching of this story is to see the Holocaust as both unique and not-unique: to see its fire reflected in a giant mirror that could dwarf even its unprecedented horror. To see ourselves living not *after* the Fire, but *between* the Fires. And to see a profound connection between them, not mere accident.

The second teaching of the story is to make this time between the Fires into a time of Shabbat: a time of affirming and celebrating Mystery, a time to pause from the project of modernity and let a new path emerge from the mysterious darkness.

Let us explore these two teachings in more depth. What does it mean to experience and connect the two fires?

Both of them flame up from the sparks of modernity. The dark sparks, struck on the granite face of History by the dark side of modernity. There are two ways of talking about this: one uses God-language, the other History-language. Let us start with the second—the one that modern people are used to—and then see whether we learn something more from talking God.

Over the millennia the human race learns, empowers itself. Learns to organize larger and larger societies, more and more complex patterns. Learns to make itself, and then reaches a whole new stage—learns that it is remaking itself. Breaks from the embedded traditions of its past. Decides that there are no mysteries to be celebrated, only ignorances to be conquered.

The human race creates modernity. Learns the workings of the planets, the stars, the Galapagos turtles, *drosophila*, DNA, the proton, the id, the working class, the historical dialectic. Reunites the two lost supercontinents. Abolishes smallpox. Sets foot on the moon, makes deserts bloom. Changes the chemistry of the oceans, puts every human voice throughout the earth in touch with every other, makes five billion people, brings down the center of the stars to burn and freeze the earth.

And along the way, as a byproduct, it makes possible the Holocaust. Before modernity, pogroms—but not a

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Holocaust. Only the social organization of a modern bureaucracy, only telephones and radios, only railroad trains, only Zyklon B, could make an Auschwitz possible.

But why was it the Jews who became the target of this runaway modernity?

In the language of modernity, we can say that history put the Jews of Eastern Europe into the most vulnerable position possible when confronting a human race that was drunk on its new-made "modern" power. The Jews were a stateless people. A non-military people. *A prototype people.* What is it Elie Wiesel says? That in the face of nuclear annihilation the whole earth is Jewish—like the Jews who faced the Holocaust. Why (say I)? Because now *everyone is a stateless person.* Every people, even every government, has been disarmed. Because in the face of Planetary Auschwitz Camp I (the U.S. nuclear "arsenal"), the Soviet Union has no weapons of defense—only the threat of Planetary Auschwitz Camp II. And vice versa. "To provide for the common defense" is the deadest letter in the American Constitution.

*Powers once felt to be Divine are now infused into human beings.*

The holy people, the stateless people, the people who had only the Talmud for a Constitution and rabbis for police—they died the soonest. But they point the way for all of us.

We have been talking the language of modernity. I think this language is necessary, but I do not think it is sufficient. If the Holocaust Past and the Holocaust Yet-to-Come are cancers of modernity, then some other language, some language that encompasses and transcends modernity, is necessary. I propose that this language is God-language. But not the old God-language. God in a new key, a new name, a new sensing. For the *old* God-language was itself transcended, reduced, relativized, by the leap of modernity.

The Hassidic Rebbe of Chernobyl gave us a hint, two hundred years ago. He taught that we must see the world as God veiled in robes of God so as to appear to be material. *Alz iz Gott. All is God.* Our job is to unwrap the veil to discover that our history is God, our biology is God, our ... is God.

In this way of speaking, the Nazi Holocaust and the Bomb are byproducts of the Divinization of the human race.

Even the Holocaust—it is all right to tremble as you read this, for I am trembling as I write it—even the Holocaust was an outburst of light. Those who say we cannot blame God for the Holocaust are only partly right: it was the overflow of God, the outbursting of light, the untrammeled, unboundaried outpouring of Divinity, that gave us Auschwitz ... and may yet consume the earth.

Start back, before the Holocaust. Imagine the God Who stood outside the world, but let a spark of Godness flare up in every human being. And over millennia of slow human history, let the spark catch into a glowing coal—into a sense of God, the Presence, hovering almost among us, almost within us, not quite beyond us.

And then, in the burst of light that is the modern age, the coals burst into flame. Powers once felt to be Divine are now infused into human beings. Powers like the ability to make a revolution (it was God Who made the Exodus from Egypt). Like the ability to create new species. Like the ability to destroy all species. Flame by flame, the human race in the modern age incorporates into itself the powers that we once called Divine.

And now in this God-language, why the Jews? In this kind of language, the God Who chose us from outside history at Sinai is still choosing us from inside History. We are God's canary-people: the people God sends down the mineshaft first, to test out whether the air breathes ecstasy and revelation or is full of carbon monoxide. If we keel over.... Now God knows, we all know: the air is heavy with poison.

Why us, how did we get chosen? From *inside* history—the history that made us the first stateless people is the history that chose us to be the canary-people. No more mysterious than that—but that is plentifully mysterious.

So was the Holocaust inevitable? Were the Nazis God's own Arm, in a paroxysm not of punishment—not at all this time "for our sins"—but of untrammeled power striking down its holy victim? Did God forget to put on *t'fillin* one morning and the unbound Arm of the Almighty.... ?

Wait a minute, *damn* your midrashic poetry, are you saying so many babies and so many bubbes died because God was coming deeper into the world? How good can such a God be? *Very* good; but not totally good. *Very* good, despite and because of the evidence of the Holocaust, because it was the surge of enormous God-power to do good in the world that made it also possible to do such enormous bad in the world. And *very* good because the teachings from God, about God, teach and taught the human race how to prevent the Holocaust. And very good because the teachings left us free to choose. But not *totally* good—or we would have used our freedom better.

I do not believe that Auschwitz was inevitable—but the Divine Insurge made it very hard to avoid. I do not

believe that the looming Planetary Auschwitz is inevitable, but rather that the Divine Insurge is making it very hard to avoid. Indeed it is a little less hard to avoid because we have already experienced the Nazis. The fact that our canary-people keeled over is one of the weightier rocks that we can roll into the path of the juggernaut. Maybe the most we can hope to gain from Auschwitz is not perfect security for the State of Israel, not the end of anti-Semitism as a Christian dogma, not Mashiach, but indeed just "never again"—just the minimum, never again.

*The teaching is to pause. The teaching is to make Shabbat. The teaching is to put a boundary, a loving limit upon the unbridled God-energy that is bursting its way into the world.*

I do not mean Kahane's "never again the Jews." That one is easy to refrain from doing. Why bother with the Jews again, who needs to prove that *that one is possible*?—But *never again, not the whole earth*, now *that* remains to be proved. The Universal Auschwitz, now *that* is an eternal monument still waiting to be erected by some Super-Hitler who will not even mind that no one will remain to be horrified by his monument. So the warning of "never again"? The warning to the rest of us to prevent such a Super-Hitler, *that* may remain as the one decently usable product of the Holocaust.

I am not saying that God sent the Holocaust and murdered the Jews *in order to* warn the planet. I would say, instead, that God and only God made the Holocaust immensely possible; God also made the Holocaust avoidable; we chose. If we can learn from the Holocaust not to destroy the earth, then we could have learned from the murder of Abel not to do the Holocaust.

Why did Abel die? Because the curse of Eden was work-work-work-work until you die. Exhaust yourself. Shabbat comes into the world to reverse the curse of Eden.

*What is the teaching? The teaching is to pause.* The teaching is to make Shabbat. The teaching is to put a boundary, a loving limit upon the unbridled God-energy that is bursting its way into the world. As God's Own Self needed to pause after six days of Creation in order to seal the acts of making with a non-act of not-making ... so do we.

The modern era, with its works of production, must pause and make Shabbat if the very brilliance of its productivity is not to burn up the earth. It must celebrate Mystery instead of trying to conquer it. Must learn from Mystery that the dark is light enough—is joy, not frightening.

Why is the celebration of Mystery crucial? It is not that Super-Hitler will necessarily come as Hitler came, with full deadly, murderous intention. The idolatry of death may come this time not with deliberate intention, but by putting into place a potentially lethal system—and then insisting that we can keep it totally under control. *No* mistakes, *never* a mistake. *All* is known, *all* is controlled. The total rejection of Mystery.

We, the human race, have painted an extraordinary picture. The picture was completed, but we kept on painting. Hiroshima was a brush-stroke too many. The Holocaust was a dozen, a hundred brush-strokes too many. The painting is marred. It is on the verge of ruination. We must stop our painting, take it off the easel. We must recognize that *we do not know* what to do next, we must celebrate that mystery, stop doing, make Shabbat, and find a clean canvas. Then we will hear the new teaching from within us; we will uncover what to do.

We are the generation that stands between the fires. *If we see this*, we can make where we stand into a Shabbat. We can, like Abram, receive the Covenant of the Generations—that there *will be* future generations, despite our deep dread that it will end with us. And our future generations—those of all humanity—will get to live in the land that lies between the rivers and the ocean of space: all earth.

If we do *not* see the two fires in relation to each other, then the fire behind us will lose all meaning, and the one that is yet to come will consume us.

Between the fires is the place of thick darkness, of impenetrable mystery. Will we celebrate this Mystery and live, or scorn it and die? □

# Some Dawn Thoughts on the Shoah

*Zalman M. Hiyya Schachter-Shalomi*

*In these meditations, I want to first point to the need for trans-dialectical thinking about the Shoah and to make a liturgical suggestion; second, look for the implications of the Shoah for the planet; third, consider the possibility of making Auschwitz a place for the work of t'shuvah, for one's final witnessing and for the work of psychic rescue; and finally I want to deal with the psychic issue of "recycled souls."*

For forty years have I contended with the generation.

*(Psalm 95.)*

It has now been some forty eventful years since the Shoah. Elie Wiesel has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. His witnessing message has reached many and they have affirmed it. By and large, however, we Jews have yet to reach a consensus of understanding about the Holocaust at a level responsive to Wiesel's message.

I, who am also a survivor, do not write these lines lightly. I write from my own firsthand experience. Thank God, I was not interned in one of the Nazi camps. Instead, I was a refugee internee in two Vichy camps before coming to the United States in 1941. Our suffering in France at that time was due to a series of events which to us then seemed simply unfortunate. Had we had our way, my parents, siblings and I might have joined our family in Oswieczim (Auschwitz). They were *Shochetim*, a position they had inherited from my grandfather, a fervent Belzer Hassid. They were also among the first to be forcibly inducted into the ghastly task of building the KZ.

I hesitate to make my statement here, knowing that even I, one haunted by The Great Shoah Question, have difficulty maintaining an awareness of it. The inner work that allows one to do creative thinking instead of falling into reactive defense is hard. The blindspots are many. The mind circuits have a way of overheating and underlighting on this issue. Affirming the popular "explanations" set forth by our tradition would not be of much help here. None of the theology derived from Deuteronomy ("Blessing if you harken ... Curse if you don't") helps us to understand our fate and destiny in the world. And to view the Holocaust from the dialectical viewpoint would lead only to the wish for getting even.

There are those who claim that there are no lessons to be derived from the Holocaust. Its evil is too unique, the concatenation of circumstances too weird to help us transfer meaning to other situations. They maintain that we cannot persist with the theology of self-blame. The murder of children as punishment for the transgressions of Shabbat and Kashrut does not make sense to our souls. The enormity of the massive Nazi evil will never make sense. Still, I disagree with the notion that one cannot derive any lessons from the Holocaust. As I previously wrote:[1]

> What Jewish guilt is there in Auschwitz? No single-valued reductive statement can serve to answer the question in a sociological frame. But, ethically and morally, our weakness was not enough righteousness toward the goyim [non-Jews]. "What?" I hear exclamations all around me. "*We* should have been more righteous? Why don't you preach to the Germans, why to us?" And here is the answer. Why did we not preach to the Germans (as some of us are preaching to the Johnsons about Vietnam and as many non-Jews are preaching to the South Africans)? Why did we not preach to the Arabs? *This is the point.* Thinking that we, as victims of the Nazi Germans' oppression, somehow had no right to preach in order to save our own necks, we kept an anguished silence. In response to Nazi hostilities, we judged *all* Germans to be inhuman, predatory beasts, and the Germans returned the compliment. They were stronger, and we, by definition, the vermin to be exterminated. In short, *the Holocaust was partially caused by Jews who did not think it worthwhile, or even possible, to reprove the Germans.*

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1. "Homeland and Holocaust," by Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, *The Religious Situation*, Beacon Press, 1968.

This brings us to our next point. *Jews are responsible not only for themselves, but also for goyim. Their responsibility as the chosen people (chosen to be responsible and to be a kingdom of priests) must work paradoxically to eliminate their own chosenness by delegation of the responsibility to others who will also become God's people—Germans, Arabs, and Russians included.* And here halakha [Jewish law] enters the picture.

There has been much refinement in Jewish Law. Prior to the Holocaust, the Torah of the Jew had proliferated into the most minute levels of life. But the Jewish Torah of goy, by and large, did not have any specific action directives. Those that it did have were ambiguous and self-contradictory. We, who were charged with the responsibility of reproving our neighbor when we saw him involved in a sinful act, had excluded the goy from our reproach. The goy was given the same consideration as a compulsive beast: no amount of rational reeducation could possibly help him. At best, we sought only the application of subtle pressure: "You are such a nice Minister of the Interior; please stop the pogrom." The goy who could be bought and cajoled was not good enough to hear with us the word of the Lord. Our theology will continue to fail us as long as our halakha—that which provides us with our action directives—has not yet come to grips with our relations with goyim. *Jewish halakhists must provide us with an application of God's law which will be more in the service of the total redemption. They cannot do this by recourse to old patterns, because these will bring only the old results.*

## So I say they are a people of confused heart.

*(Psalm 95.)*

Our[2] vision has indeed been narrowed by reinforced old suspicions and new-found vigilance. We are frustrated that we could not find all of the Nazis who went underground and punish them for their crimes. Moreover, how can we leave bygones when we are still confronted by the threat of genocide, this time at the hands of the PLO and its allies? Did not the special vigilance of the El Al security people save that plane in London? How are we then to let go of our preoccupation with self-defense? In such a climate it has once again become *them against us* while "the world" shows more concern for the price of oil than for our lives. In turn, we feel justified in holding onto our defensiveness in the absence of any willingness on "their" part to enter into any accommodation with us. This deepens our entrenchment in our difficulties, because without giving up the wish to better ourselves at the expense of others, we cannot figure our way out of the automatic response pattern which has us lost in a maze of retaliatory moves. We are locked into a system that compels us to repeat the plea of being blameless victims—or, in desperation, to take on the tactics of those who threaten us—while trying to get even.

## So I say to you in the pool of blood "Live!"

*(Ezech. 16:6.)*

At times, in deep meditation, it seems to me that I hear a horrifying scream from a catastrophic future alarming us to wake up and correct our course. It seems almost too late because there is so much sophistication in the technology of destruction and so little in the technology of making peace. The distance between what *is* and what *needs to be avoided* is too vast. Who can live daily life and remain conscious and aware in the presence of such stress?

We are numbed by the anguish of our impotence in the face of such overwhelming evil. We are even blocked from turning to God for solace and help. We are still angry with the God of our ancestors of whom we learned in Hebrew school. When we turn to those who claim to know God and God's will, we realize that they, too, are paralyzed. The *g'doley yisrael* (halakhic authorities) have not even once met in council to tell us of their consensus on the meaning of the Holocaust.

We are on our own now. We must open our minds to important questions. Are *we* not—even as victims—playing supporting roles in the evil system? This until now unvoiced question comes with a "yes" for its answer. We cannot just hide in our victim status.

We, who want the world to learn something from the Holocaust, what have *we* learned? How do we deal with our *own* people and our cousins in Israel? Are we not aware of how victims can internalize their oppressors and emulate them? Are we not steadily and forcibly being pulled into the place of the oppressor? How can we, as conscientious supporters of Israel, allow our

2. When I think *we, our, us* it is a con-*fused* identity. Fused of many differing "I"s, it is at times the I of a traumatized, brutalized individual who has not yet healed from the Shoah. At other times it is the I of one who is planning Aliyah and already identifying with Israelis. Most of the time when I think of myself in terms of my political *hashgafah* I see myself in the same camp with the New Jewish Agenda people. Religiously I am at home with the post-denominational Jewish renewal folks and spiritually I am committed to generic spirituality deriving deeply from the Hassidic tradition. At other times I am just *'amkha*, a Jew like all the other Jews who feels that some things are fitting for us and others are, while not *treif*, nevertheless "*s'passt nit*" for Jews. I am happy if good things happen to Jews and I wince when a Jewish name is connected with crime. So the *we, us* and *our* are fluid and depend on the context.

high-tech weaponry to be exported to those who openly are bent on Israel's destruction? Why do we, in our search for hard currency, abandon all principles and sell arms to repressive, totalitarian governments—into whose hands we press our Uzzis?

These questions make us very anxious. How can we remain so complacent and ignore the reality that Israel may cave in, not due to external pressure, but from inner and moral collapse?

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*We are locked into a system that compels us to repeat the plea of being blameless victims—or, in desperation, to take on the tactics of those who threaten us—while trying to get even.*

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At one time the reluctance to change gave us the advantage of cultural and traditional stability. Now we cannot any longer afford this. The victim scripts have to be abandoned if we are to survive. Our traditions do not have to be discarded. By transforming the cultural treasures of the past to help us in the present-future we can maintain many of the major values in the deep structure. By adapting the surface structures to new scripts we can enhance our lives. However, for many of us, letting go of the martyr script would create an identity crisis.

Survival as an integral part of life on this planet is worth it. The tides of constant arming amidst conspicuous and wasteful consumption, our excessive use of energy and goods cannot be stemmed by morals-as-usual. We will have to create an ethic and a morality more effective than the present dialectical ones.

We want to maintain our identity. However we are confused as to how to play Jew in the present world. Looking into some mirror of truth, how do we seem to ourselves? From Woody Allen to the IDF paratrooper, from Communist to *nturey karta* we caricature conflicting postures, none of which makes us into winners in the game of life. Without a clear archetypal model "JEW" we know not whom to emulate. Have we yet envisioned the process—Lammedvovnik AM 5786-5800? We have to design such a type today if we are to survive that era as Jews. We have to package the information, directives, tropisms into accessible models for the future righteous men and women and inject these resources into the educational system in order to produce them.

Scripts are more expendable than lives. They have the cultural inertia of tradition on their side—it has to be this way in order to give each paradigm the needed stability. The paradigm has now shifted as our technology shifted. The benefit of global communication is part of the same system as the threat of global destruction. Alas, we may not have the moral power to change the karmic path we are on.

For all our vaunted Jewish intellect, we have not yet demonstrated that we have what it takes to reassess the dynamics of our Holocaust involvement. We are still caught in the reactive strategies of victims who have not seen the full and dynamic drama of their intimate reciprocities with their oppressors. Hypnotized by the constant need to make countermoves, to defend and retaliate, we have not yet had the safe space, time and energy to develop the vision and the meta-strategies needed to get out of the victim—oppressor cycle.

The Shoah warns us that no ethnic victory over others and at their expense can serve as justification for destroying the planet. Yet we still have not learned to think in trans-dialectical global terms.

Where a pervasive process is concerned, the answers cannot be gained from any single individual. The only way to get it together is TOGETHER, and that includes those with whom we'd rather not talk.

God! I remember and am dazed.

*(Slichah for N'ilah.)*

We have yet to attend to the Holocaust liturgically. With only a few notable exceptions (*The Authorized Kinot For the Ninth of Av*, by Rev. Abraham Rosenfeld: London, 1965 [p.173] and the Yizkor sections of the RA Machzor written by Rabbi Jules Harlow), we have still not incorporated the Holocaust into our liturgical repertoire. Somehow, this demonstrates more clearly than anything else that even the *religious* people have not found a way to include a *kinah* (lamentation prayer) on Auschwitz.

I have written a Hebrew version in the style of the medieval *kinot*, with an English rendition. Both can be chanted to the melody of *Eli Zion V'areha*.

DIRGE FOR 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.*

*Shalt Thou, O G-d, not bear Thy guilt this day*
*For standing by while multitudes in blood did lay,*
*And silent Thou unmoved didst stay,*
*Thy covenant to help us didst betray.*

*While millions' lives to ash were turned,*
*To their last breath Thine intervention yearned,*
*Still hoping day and night, while all the ovens burned.*
*Why were our prayers of desperation spurned?*

*If Thine own we are, O Lord, and Thou art King*
*If only by Thy leave occurs each thing,*
*Then butcher Thou, and we the offering.*
*Yet who, but Thou, can heal our suffering?*

*The help Thou sendest must renew*
*All of mankind, not just the Jew*
*The Arabs and the Russians too*
*Must be freed, ere peace is true.*

*Send Thine anointed Saviour, Lord,*
*To turn to plowshare atom's sword.*
*May each in Him see One adored*
*And prophesied by prophet's word.*

* * *

I have been to Germany since and taught there. I must say that I enjoyed the experience of teaching at Tuebingen. I found that both students and colleagues sought to know, and wished to set right, what a generation before them had wronged.

I met Germans in Israel who are motivated to work for tikkun. I met German converts to Judaism there and in Germany who live noble Jewish lives. I met Christians in East Germany whose sympathy for our people and heritage causes them to live close to the edges of danger. I salute them.

I cannot say that the warm and touching experience at the university healed me completely of my traumas. On a train from Heidelberg to Tuebingen, I became terrified when the train filled with soccer fans returning from a game, and a rowdy cadre of youths were making their way through the aisle. Suddenly, one of them noticed me and shouted: *Da sitzt ein Jude!* I, then sixty years old, felt the fear of a pre-adolescent again. I felt as if some time trap had plunged me back to the late Fall of 1938. I calmed down when I spotted a train policeman patrolling the car, but the incident put me in touch with some unconscious fears still active in my guts.

Your brother's voice cries out to me from the earth.

*(Gen. 4:10.)*

My wife and I visited Auschwitz, a painful pilgrimage, to see if we wanted to bring more children into such a terrible world. The most terrifying impact the place had on me was a psychic one. There are souls there that still haunt the site. "The voice of your brother's blood cries out to me" was no longer a mere metaphor for me. According to Rabbi Gedaliah ben Yossef ibn Yachyah (16th century), souls cut off tragically and suddenly "hover about the area where they have lost their bodies" (*Shalshelet Hagaballah*, Treatise on the Soul and its Nature).

I felt then that it was imperative for some of us to go and live at the scene of the horror for at least a year to raise those *n'shomes* chained to their hells. I envisioned a Bet HaMidrash in which psalms would be said, the Mishnah (*N'shamah*) be studied and Kaddish recited, a place where those of us who wish to work for peace could meditate and think, mourn and grieve and do that work to which we would be drawn by the souls who need our work and help.

*We, who want the world to learn something from the Holocaust, what have* we *learned? . . . Are we not steadily and forcibly being pulled into the place of the oppressor?*

I gave up on this "dream" because of the unfriendly government, and because of the sad fact that it would be most difficult to find the right people to do this work. By "the right people" I mean those who know the meaning of psychic rescue and release work, and who believe in it. While there are some who are capable of doing this, they are, understandably, too preoccupied with the enormous spiritual needs of the living.

I spoke with some people about this. When I raised the possibility that some souls may still be chained to their suffering and to their wish for revenge, I was attacked with such vehemence that I dropped it. My conviction still holds.

I forgive whoever has hurt me . . . in this gilgul or any other.

*(From the bedtime Sh'ma.)*

One does not need to visit the death camps to come across their impact. Even if I had not believed in reincarnation as a result of my study of kabbalah I would have begun to believe in its reality for reasons of fact. My reputation as one interested in spiritual phenomena has attracted people who have confided in

me about memories of having lived during the Holocaust years in their vast life-cycle. Some of them have vivid memories of having been victims. A few have memories as oppressors. Some have come back in Jewish births, others in non-Jewish ones. Some of the Jewish ones have chosen blue-eyed, blond-haired bodies that would make them pass as Aryans. Others, born to non-Jewish parents, have felt an overwhelming attraction to Jews and Judaism and feel themselves haunted by that pull.

*. . . letting go of the martyr script would create an identity crisis.*

Recycled souls are still around us. Here are only two of such phenomena as I have witnessed them.

Mark (not his real name), who had never spoken Yiddish before, attended a Havurah Shabbat session during which a visitor had introduced a breathing exercise calling on the participants to breathe deeply and rapidly, alternating the breathing in and out more and more rapidly. Mark entered into a state of panic, beginning to cry in Yiddish for Mashiach to come. He banged on the door, could not open it and collapsed, whimpering. Fortunately, he recovered in the warmth of the gentle ministrations of his friends. His story, when he could be coherent, was that during the exercise he had lost touch with the reality of the present and had fallen into a state in which he re-remembered his dying in the gas chamber.

A woman from upstate New York, was referred to me by her psychiatrist because of the strange anxiety attacks she experienced each time she tried to daven in a traditional shul. She belonged to a progressive congregation. Though she preferred the traditional davening, she felt terrified when she would attempt to daven in a more fervent minyan. I instructed her to shut her eyes and imagine the davening going on, and as she did so she began to weep. She re-remembered davening in the traditional fashion in another lifetime. When the fervor rose, it triggered in her memories of the outcry of the last Sh'ma in the gas chamber. Working together with her therapist, I was able to help her to remain present to both the horror memory *and* that this was not in the present lifetime.

## Sitting in the secret of the Highest—in the shadow of Shaddai.

Each technology has its shadow cost. Each mile of highway has a statistic of lives lost. Each advance of science brings some chaos with it. NASA's achievements are limited by the Challenger. Three Mile Island and Chernobyl are the shadow costs of Nuclear Energy. In common cost accounting the shadow costs are usually not included. We do not wish to be made aware of them. Still, as we look to the insurance companies to cover us, they charge us the actuarial rates which the shadow thrusts on them.

If we could become aware of the costs and of the dynamics of the shadow energies, then we might be able to reduce them. Here too we are just at the beginnings of glimmers on our awareness. Kabbalists called these energies *Q'lippot*. Some have voiced that the Shoah was the shadow cost of the State of Israel. Our tradition has taught us of the *Chevley Mashiach* as the shadow cost of the planet's redemption. How tragic it would be if we did not derive from the Shoah what we must learn to be able to say "Dayenu." □

## המקום ינחם את העולם כולו!
## אושביציון
### מאת משלם זלמן הכהן שחטר־שלומי

אֵיכָה יִשְׁמְשׁוּ מִילִים לְהַבִּיעַ כְּאֵבֵנוּ
בְּזָכְרֵנוּ אָבְדָן מִלְיוֹנֵינוּ
בְּעוֹד עַל שִׁכְמֵנוּ אַשְׁמוֹתֵינוּ
עַל עֶזֶר אַחִים שֶׁבּוּשַׁשׁ וְלֹא עָלָה בְּיָדֵינוּ

וְיִדּוּי תְּחוּשׁוֹת אוֹתָנוּ לֹא יְנַקֶּה
בְּעוֹד מִי שֶׁהוּא עָשׂוּק לְעֶזְרָה מְחַכֶּה
עוֹד הוֹרֵג נְפָשׁוֹת עֲנִיִּים יָדֵכָא
וְאֵם שְׁכוּלָה בָּנֶיהָ תְּבַכֶּה.

שְׁמַע יְיָ כִּי גַם אַתָּה אִתָּנוּ
אָשֵׁם, כִּי מְתִבּוֹסְסִים מְרָם רְאִיתָנוּ,
וְעַל שְׁתִיקָתְךָ לֹא גָּבַרְתָּ לְהַצִּיל אוֹתָנוּ
מִי הֵפַר בְּרִיתְךָ לָמָה רְמִיתָנוּ?

בְּמַחֲנוֹת הַהֶסְגֵּר מִלְיוֹנִים עֵינוּ.
וְתִקְוַת אֲנִי מַאֲמִין לֹא סָרָה מִפִּינוּ
כָּל הַיּוֹם כָּל הַלַּיְלָה לְיִשׁוּעָה קִיווִינוּ.
וְלַמְרוֹת אַכְזָבוֹת מִמְּךָ לֹא סַיטִינוּ.

יְיָ־ה! אִם אָנוּ עַמְּךָ וְאַתָּה מַלְכֵּנוּ
אִם אָנוּ חֶלְקְךָ אַתָּה חֶלְקֵנוּ
אִם אָנוּ שׁוֹבְךָ אָז אַתָּה זוֹבְחֵינוּ
אִם אָנוּ שׁוֹבְךָ אָז עָלֶיךָ לִפְדוֹתֵנוּ.

צְמַח יְשׁוּעַת יַעֲקֹב חִישׁ נָא מְהֵרָה
הַבְּעִתּוֹ כְּבָר עָבַר וְעוֹד יַד רָשָׁע גּוֹבֶרָה
יְהוּדִי רוּסְיָא גֵּאֻנִּים מֵאֵין בְּרִירָה
וּסְבִיבוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל עוֹד עוֹמְמָה הַתַּבְעֵרָה.

יִגְאָלֵנוּ הַגּוֹאֵל לֹא אוֹתָנוּ לְבַדֵּנוּ.
כִּי יִגָּאֵל אַף יַעֲקֹב וְלֹא בְּנֵי עֵשָׂיו אַחֵינוּ
אָז הַנִּגְאָל עוֹד מוּכֶה, עוֹד עוֹרְכִים טִבְחֵינוּ.
אֵם לֹא יִגָּאֵל הָרִשָּׁע עוֹד חַי רוֹצְחֵנוּ.

וְאֵם עוֹד מִי סוֹבֵל הַגְּאוּלָה פְּגוּמָה
בֶּן חַם אוֹ בֶן יֶפֶת אוֹ אָדָם אוֹ בְּהֵמָה,
אֵם עוֹד בַּעַל חַיִּים סוֹבֵל צַעַר וּמְהוּמָה,
אֵין שָׁלוֹם וְשַׁלְוָה לְיָחִיד אוֹ אוּמָה.

נָא: רַחֵמָן, הַנֶּעֱרָץ מֵרִבִּים
הַמְכֻוָּנִים לְךָ וְלֹא לְעַצָּבִים!
גְּאוֹל נָא כָּל אֶחָד בִּלְבוּשֵׁיךָ הָרַבִּים
בּוֹ תּוּאַרְתָּ מִפִּי שְׁלִיחִים אֲשֶׁר בִּשְׁמְךָ מְנַבְּאִים.

FICTION

# Killing the Bees

*Lynne Sharon Schwartz*

After Ilse and Mitch had both been stung twice, Mitch sprayed insecticide around the flower beds at the side of the house, where the bees seemed to congregate. But the very next day Cathy, their youngest, got stung on the back of the neck. It was a bright May afternoon, the three of them out on the lawn with the Sunday papers, Cathy plugged into her Walkman. Quiet Ilse made a great fuss, jumped up and grabbed a handful of damp soil from the flower bed to slap on the bite, then crooned soothing words—as if, Cathy said with a brave patronizing smile, she were an infant and not almost fifteen.

"But doesn't it hurt a lot?"

"It hurts, Mom, but I'll live."

"What's the matter?" Mitch must have been dozing behind the travel section. He rearranged his body in the lawn chair and blinked, trying to look alert. He was a graying man of fifty-three, handsome in a ruddy, solid, ex-athlete's way, with strikingly pale blue eyes. He owned a chain of hardware stores. A safe man, Ilse thought each evening when he returned from work. And decent, competent, sexy: mornings, watching him dress—the ritual bending, reaching, zipping and buttoning—she felt a reflexive pleasure, compounded with satisfaction, like the interest on capital, at how durable this pleasure had proved. If that was love, then she loved him well enough.

"It's those bees again. We really must do something about them. Poor baby. Come, let me wash it and put on some ointment."

"God, what would you do if I had rabies?"

Ilse knew why she was making a fuss: the one time she herself had been stung as a child—at four years old—her usually attentive mother hardly seemed to care. That baffling lapse, the utter failure to respond properly, even more than the throng at the airport or the loudspeaker barking, the pinched, scared faces and the forest of gleaming tall boots, told Ilse something portentous was happening. Her father had already kissed them goodbye and disappeared, leaving her mother teary, and she was close to tears again five minutes later, showing some papers to a mustached, uniformed man at a desk who waved his clipboard in the air and called them to a halt in a gritty voice. Soon, like a little firecracker fizzling out, he spat a bad name at them and sent them on. Her mother was tugging her by the hand, rushing towards the stairs at the plane, when Ilse let out a howl.

"Shh! Don't make noise. What is it?"

"Something is in my dress! In back!"

Her mother yanked at the dress and slapped her back hard—to kill the bee, she said later—but that only made the sting worse.

"Be still now, Ilse!" she ordered. "I'll take care of it afterwards."

But Ilse wailed running up the stairs, and as they entered the plane people looked up disapprovingly. Her mother kept her head bowed. Only when they were above the clouds did she become herself again, rubbing spit on the sting till Ilse calmed down.

"When we meet our cousins," she said, belatedly kissing the sore spot, "can you say 'How do you do,' in English? How do you do?" She exaggerated the shape of the words on her lips and Ilse repeated. How do you do. But for long after, she felt betrayed in her moment of need.

In England, when she asked for her father, her mother said, "He's coming. He'll come as soon as he can." In time she understood there was a war going on: the children at school wouldn't let her play and made fun of the way she spoke. Her mother couldn't get a job and often they were hungry. Just as the hunger was becoming unbearable, food would appear, Ilse never knew how. If she complained, her mother said cryptically, "Still, we're lucky. Lucky." She stopped asking about her father and eventually the war was over. When they went looking for a flat in London she heard her mother tell the landladies he was killed in the war. Then her mother would murmur some words very low, as if she were embarrassed, and the landladies' granite faces would loosen a bit, and one Mrs. Soloway finally let them have a room.

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*Lynne Sharon Schwartz has written five books, including the novel* Disturbances in the Field *(Harper & Row, 1983). "Killing the Bees" will appear in her forthcoming collection of short stories entitled* Subversive Stories *(Harper & Row).*

In bed with Mitch that night, Ilse heard a humming noise, muffled, but rhythmic and relentless like the plangent moan of an infirmary.

"Listen. Do you hear anything?" she whispered.

"Only you breathing." Mitch lay with his head on her stomach. His arms locked around her hips. Always, after they made love, his voice was heavy and sweet with a childlike contentment. "You sound sensational, Ilse. Do it a little harder." He began kissing her belly again.

She smiled even though the noise agitated her. "Not that, silly. Listen. It sounds like something in the wall."

He groaned and sat up, businesslike, turning on the lamp as if that could make the noise clearer. They stared at each other, concentrating, and indeed enlightenment came. "I bet it's those fucking bees. They've managed to get into the wall now. Jesus Christ!" He turned away to roll himself in the sheets.

"Hey, I didn't put them there," Ilse said softly. "Come on back."

"You know what I'll have to do now? Make a hole in the goddamn wall and spray inside. Just what we needed. A bee colony."

"My sweet baby," she said, stroking him. "My prince to the rescue. My Saint George killing the dragon."

"It's going to stink to high heaven," he said.

Mitch slept, but hours later Ilse was still trapped in wakefulness by the humming noise. She pictured a gigantic swarm of bees fluttering their wings together in the dark, a shuddering jellylike mass. It was an unbearable sound, ominous, droning. Of course, she thought. Drones.

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*. . . the one time she herself had been stung as a child—at four years old—her usually attentive mother hardly seemed to care.*

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The next two evenings Mitch forgot to bring the extra-strength spray home from the store. On the third day Ilse phoned to remind him. "Look, I hate to keep nagging but I've hardly slept."

"They can't come out, Ilse."

"I know. I'm not afraid of bees anyway. It's the noise. Just bring it, will you please?"

After dinner he listened with his ear to the wall for the place where the noise was loudest, then chipped with a screwdriver till a tiny hole appeared. Quickly he shoved a small rectangle of shirt cardboard over the hole, and using that as a shield, made the hole bigger. When it was about a half-inch in diameter he told Ilse to go out of the room and close the door. She closed the door but stayed, standing back. It didn't seem fair to protect herself while he was in danger. Besides, she felt an eerie fascination. Mitch moved the cardboard aside and inserted the nozzle of the spray can. The smell was nasty and stinging, but not as bad as she had imagined. Then he covered the hole again and they fixed the cardboard to the wall with thumbtacks. Ilse heard a sharp crackling like the sound of damp twigs catching a flame.

"What's that?"

"It's them. That's what you wanted, isn't it? Let's just hope it gets them all."

A wave of nausea and dizziness assaulted her, and she lay down till it passed. That night she slept well, in blissful silence.

The following morning, one of her days off—she worked as a part-time secretary at a law firm in town—she was outside, kneeling to put in the marigolds, when she noticed a patch a few feet off that looked like speckled black velvet. She crawled closer. The corpses of bees, hundreds, thousands, the obscene remains of a massacre. She had never thought about where they would go, never thought further than getting rid of them. Why hadn't they simply rotted in the wall unseen? Peering up, she spied a dark mass the size of a cantaloupe, attached like a tumor to the outside wall not far from their bedroom window, and almost hidden by the thick leaves of the maple. Somehow they had never thought to look for a hive, but now it seemed obvious.

Ilse was not squeamish. She had disposed of dead ants and flies and even mice, but the sight of the slaughtered bees paralyzed her. She knelt in the garden for a long time, then dragged herself inside and phoned Mitch, but when he answered she found she couldn't tell him right away.

"This must be our lucky day," she said instead. "Both wanderers heard from." There had been a postcard from their son Brian, who was working on a cattle ranch in Wyoming, and another from Melissa, who had just completed her second year of law school and, with three girlfriends, was recuperating for a week in Jamaica before starting her summer job.

"That's great." He sounded distracted.

Stammering a bit, Ilse mentioned the dead bees and the hive near the bedroom window.

"A hive, eh? I should have known. Well just sweep them up, Ilse, okay? I'll have a look when I get home."

"Yes, well—you can't imagine how hideous . . . These enormous bees. It's like a battlefield . . . What should I do with them?"

"Do with them? Put them in the garbage, sweetheart. Unless you want to hold a mass funeral."

"I see I shouldn't have bothered you."

"Ilse, it's just that I've got a store full of customers. Leave it if you can't do it. Or have Cathy do it. It's not worth bickering over."

She tried sweeping them into a dustpan but as she watched the bodies roll and tumble, the wings and feelers lacing and tangling, she felt faint. Finally she abandoned the task and left the marigolds, too, for another day. When Cathy came home from school she asked her to do it and Cathy obliged, with pungent expressions of disgust but no apparent difficulty.

Mitch got on a ladder and sprayed the hive. There was silence for several nights and they thought it was over. Then Ilse woke before dawn and heard the humming in the wall, fainter, but still insistent. She began to weep, very quietly, so as not to wake Mitch.

After the war her mother got a clerical job at the National Gallery in London where she met an American tour guide and married him.

"We're going to have a new life, darling," she told Ilse excitedly. Mostly they spoke German when they were alone, but her mother said this in English. "We're going to America with Robbie. Denver. You'll love it, I know." Ilse nodded. She was a silent child, the kind who seems full of secrets. At school she had few friends, was politely enigmatic and did her work adequately, but the teachers nonetheless accused her of dreaming. In America she changed. Robbie was all right; he looked like a cowboy and sounded like Gary Cooper, and Ilse treated him as a casual friend of the family. But she did love America. No one shunned her. They liked her British accent and were eager to hear stories of life in London. I can be a normal girl, she whispered to herself one morning in the mirror. From now on. And she behaved as she perceived other normal girls to behave, a tactic which worked so well that she adopted it for the rest of her life. Meanwhile when she was old enough to understand, around Cathy's age, she went on a binge of reading books about the war, till she was satisfied that she comprehended what had happened to her father, what his final years or months had been like, and had thoroughly, viscerally partaken of them up to the point where his bones lay in a ditch indistinguishable from the millions of other bones.

"You never talk about him." She expected her mother would hedge and say, About who?, but she was mistaken.

"What can I say? He died in the war."

"But I mean, about how."

"Do you know how?" her mother asked.

"Yes."

"Well so do I. So.... "

She was craving a significant scene, tears and embraces, or lies and shouting, culminating in cloak-and-dagger truths, secret horrors not included in any books, and above all in profundities vast enough to connect the past to the present, but her mother offered nothing.

"Did you cry?"

"What a question, Ilse. I cried plenty, yes."

But she was not about to cry anew for Ilse. They were lucky, her mother repeated with lips stiff and quaking. "Remember all your life what a lucky person you are."

Ilse fled from the room. Now she had long forgiven her mother. At the time they boarded the plane for London, she realized, the day she got stung, her mother was twenty-four years old. A girl the age of Melissa, who was swimming and dancing in the Caribbean moonlight and about to earn extravagant sums of money. And at the time of their talk her mother had known Robbie for as long as she had known Ilse's father. Her mother was truly lucky. In compassion, Ilse stopped pestering her and let her live her lucky life.

Twice more Mitch moved aside the cardboard and sprayed into the hole. Twice more the bees crackled, the room smelled, and the nights were silent, then the noise returned.

"It's no use. We need an exterminator." And he sighed a husbandly sigh of overwork.

"I'll take care of that." Ilse was expert at arranging for services and dealing with repairmen. In the Yellow Pages she found just what was needed: Ban-the-Bug, which promised to rid your home of pests for good. Ban-the-Bug's logo was a familiar black-bordered circle with a black line running diagonally through the center. Three times a week Ilse saw the symbol, but in red, on the door of Ban-the-Bomb, a local group with a small office opposite her own. Except instead of the mushroom cloud in the center, Ban-the-Bug's circle displayed a repulsive insect suggesting a cross between a winged cockroach and a centipede. The black line was firm and categorical: it meant, Ilse knew, No More, Get Rid Of, *Verboten*.

On the telephone she did not even have to supply details. Ban-the-Bug understood all about the problem and would send a man over late that afternoon.

"Don't worry, you'll never have to hear that sound again," a reassuring, motherly voice told Ilse.

Never again. She would sleep in peace. The soothing promise echoed as she shopped and chatted in the market and set out on the kitchen counter all the ingredients for a Chinese dinner. With another secretary from the law firm she was taking a course in Chinese cooking, and Mitch and Cathy had been teasing her for a demonstration. Cathy had brought a friend home from school, and both girls volunteered to help. As Ilse

sauteed garlic and ginger the kitchen filled with a luxurious, tangy odor. She chopped the pork and set the girls to work on the peppers and scallions and cabbage.

The smell made her hungry, and as usual, hunger made her think of being hungry in London, such a different kind of hunger, long-lasting and tedious, like a sickness, and panicky, with no hope of ever being fully eased.

That was far away now, though. Her present hunger is the good kind, the hunger of anticipation.

The girls are jabbering across the large kitchen. Since Ilse has raised two children to adulthood she is not passionately interested in the jabbering of teenagers. But this conversation is special. It snares her. Evidently they are learning about World War II in history class, and Mary Beth, a thin, still flat-chested girl with straight blonde hair, is a Quaker, Ilse gathers. She is explaining to Cathy the principles of non-violence.

"But there must be limits," Cathy says. "Like supposing it was during the war and you saw Hitler lying in the road half-dead and begging for water. You wouldn't have to actually kill him, just . . . sort of leave him there."

"If a dying person asks me for water I would have to give it," says Mary Beth.

"Even Hitler?"

Mary Beth doesn't hesitate. "He's a human being." Ilse chops pork steadily with her cleaver. She rarely mixes in.

"But, my God! Well supposing he asks you to take him to a hospital?"

"I guess I would. If it was to save his life."

"You'd probably nurse him and help him get back to work, right?" Cathy is irate, Ilse notes with a keen stab of pleasure in her gut.

"No, you don't understand. I'd never help him make war. But see, if I let him die it would be basically the same as killing him, and then I would become like him, a killer."

"So big deal. You'd also be saving a lot of people."

"I'd rather try to save them by talking to him, explaining what—"

"Oh come on, Mary Beth. What horseshit."

Ilse accidentally grazes her finger with the cleaver and bleeds onto the pork. She sucks, tasting the warm blood with surprising glee. It has just left her heart, which strains toward her daughter with a weight of love.

"Look, Cathy," replies Mary Beth, "the real issue is, what do I want to be? Do I want to be a truly good person or do I want to spend the next fifty years knowing I could have saved a life and didn't? How could I face myself in the mirror? I'd be, like, tainted."

This Mary Beth is a lunatic, that much is clear, thinks Ilse. Get rid of her this instant. Out, out of my house! But of course she cannot do that. The girl is Cathy's blameless little friend, invited for a Chinese dinner.

"Who gives a damn about your one soul!" exclaims Cathy. "What about all the other souls who'll die?"

Enough already, please! moans Ilse silently, watching her blood ooze through a paper napkin. What kind of people could teach their children such purity? They should teach her instead about the generous concealments of mirrors. Taste every impurity, she would like to tell Mary Beth, swallow them and assimilate them and carry them inside. When you're starving you'll eat anything. Ilse has. And none of it shows in any mirror.

*Taste every impurity . . . swallow them and assimilate them and carry them inside. When you're starving you'll eat anything. Ilse has. And none of it shows in any mirror.*

"I'm sorry for those people. I mean it. I'd try to help them too. But I can't become a killer for them."

"That's the most selfish, dumbest thing I ever heard."

It begins to appear the friends will have a real falling-out. Not worth it, in the scheme of things. "How're you girls doing with the chopping?" Ilse breaks in. "Oh, that looks fine. Mary Beth, do the cabbage a little bit smaller, okay? Cathy, would you get me a Band-aid? I cut my finger."

As soon as she gets the Band-aid on she hears a van pull into the driveway. Ban-the-Bug. The peace symbol with the grotesque insect is painted on the van. In her torment she has forgotten her appointment. She greets the smiling young man at the kitchen door and takes him around to the side of the house where the hive is. Behind her she can hear the girls tittering over how good-looking he is. Well fine, that will reunite them. And indeed he is, a dazzling Hollywood specimen, tall, narrow-hipped and rangy, with golden hair and tanned skin. Blue eyes, but duller than Mitch's. Wonderful golden-haired wrists and big hands. He is holding a clipboard with some papers, like a functionary, and "Ban-the-Bug" is written in red script just above the pocket of his sky-blue shirt, whose sleeves are rolled up to the shoulders, revealing noteworthy muscles. Ilse points out the hive and he nods, unamazed.

"I would judge from the size," he says, "you've got about forty thousand bees in there."

Ilse gasps.

"Yup, that's right." His tone is cheerfully sympathetic. Really a charming young man. Perhaps attended the local community college for two years, like Brian, Ilse

thinks. Found he was not academically inclined, though bright enough, and looked for any old job till he could decide what he wanted. He would make a nice tennis instructor. "They're honey bees. There's most likely a lot of honey in the wall."

"Oh, can we get it out?" Ilse loves honey.

"Well, once we spray, it won't be good any more." He sounds genuinely regretful. "You see, the bees take turns fanning the honey with their wings to keep it at sixty-five degrees. But now with the warm weather it'll melt pretty fast. You might even have to break through the wall and get rid of it. It could smell or stain, it's hard to say."

*She lies awake listening. The sound is feebler, and intermittent. She trusts it will stop for good very soon, as she was promised.*

She envisions forty thousand bees frantically fanning, protecting their product and livelihood, their treasure and birthright. That is the terrifying, demented noise she hears at night.

"Will you get them all?"

"Oh sure," he laughs. "No problem. We guarantee. Any that don't die just fly away—with the hive gone you won't be seeing them around. Except if you have holes in the wall some might try to get back in and start all over."

"I don't think there are any holes."

"Could you just sign this paper, please?" He holds out the clipboard.

Ilse is always careful about what she signs. Robbie taught her that when she first came to America. "What is it?"

"Just routine. That we're not responsible for any damage to property, the terms of payment, the guarantee, and so on. Go ahead, read it. Take your time."

Feeling rather foolish, she scans the document. It is merely what he said, as far as she can see, and seems excessively formal for so simple a transaction. The undersigned is to pay half now and half on completion of the service, but since this case will probably require only one visit, the young man says, she can pay all at once. A hundred dollars for forty thousand bees. A quarter of a cent per bee, Ilse rapidly calculates, though it is a meaningless statistic. She signs and hands the document back.

"How long will it take?"

"Ten, fifteen minutes at the most."

"No, I mean before they're all gone."

"Oh." He chuckles at his little error. "The stuff works gradually, like, in stages. You might still hear something this evening, but then, during the night"—and he grins so ingenuously that she realizes he is just a boy, after all—"*baaad* things will happen to them."

He pauses but Ilse has no ready response.

"Okay, I'll do the inside first." He fetches several cans and a small toolbox from the van and follows her up to the bedroom, where she shows him the makeshift cardboard patch. He nods as if he has seen it all before, and asks her to leave the room and close the door. Although she again has a secret hankering to stay and watch, Ilse obeys. So she never gets to see exactly what is done, but sits at the kitchen table, writes out a check and waits. The girls have vanished for the moment, leaving their assigned vegetables ably chopped. In a few minutes the Ban-the-Bug man reappears and goes outside to do the hive. After she thanks him and watches him drive away, Ilse scrubs her hands at the sink before returning to the food—why, she does not know, for she has touched nothing alien except his pen and paper.

Mitch, when he comes home, is pleased at what she has accomplished, and listens respectfully as she relates all the pertinent facts. The dinner is excellent and lavishly praised, and the girls seem to be reconciled. Mary Beth is not such a thoroughgoing prig, as it turns out—she can be highly amusing on the subject of her family's foibles and idiosyncrasies. Later, in bed, Mitch wants to make love, but Ilse cannot summon the spirit to do it. He is disappointed, even a trifle irked, but it will pass. There will be other nights. She lies awake listening. The sound is feebler, and intermittent. She trusts it will stop for good very soon, as she was promised.

The next day, after work, she returns home and finds Cathy stretched out on a lawn chair, Walkman on, eyes closed. She calls to get her attention and Cathy unplugs. Ilse asks her to gather up and dispose of the corpses, which are so numerous they look like a thick, lush black and gold carpet. Shaking her head morosely at her fate, Cathy fetches a broom and dustpan. Ilse remains there as if turned to a salt block, watching her daughter work.

"Do we really need to go to all this trouble?" Cathy grumbles. "I mean, maybe you could use them for fertilizer or something."

She darts two giant steps to Cathy, grabs her shoulder and shakes her hard. "How dare you say such a thing!" Her other hand is lifted, in a fist, as if to deliver a killing blow. "How dare you!"

Cathy, pale, shrinks back from her mother. "What did I say? Just tell me, what on God's green earth did I say?" □

# Reddersburg

*Peter Sacks*

## For My Father

New Year's Day. The journey to your childhood
home dragged hours out of schedule
by our breakdowns on the road
west from Natal,

already too late for your boarding school
(among the places I'd requested),
no talk now of coming back, of how "you'll
see it next time you come out."

Driving slowly through the red swirl
of an Orange Free State dust-storm,
Bloemfontein by nightfall,
the "flower-fountain" at the scorched

heart of our country—trash
blown through the empty streets,
car rocked by the hot wind, map
uncrumpled on your knees,

I peering for the sign to Reddersburg,
swerving past torn tumbleweed,
each bush trapped dead-white
in the high beam of our lights.

The Sarie Marais Hotel: thin corridor,
old pegboard walls, no water after dark.
Too late even for the bar,
we bled the pipes a cupful at a time,

enough to rinse away the sweat,
though all that night the wind drove sand
through window-cracks, pink drapes, the sheets.
I remember waking, grit between my teeth,

to look out at this semi-desert town
surrounded by "but *Nothing*," as you said
with chronic emphasis. Your birth-place
like a broken callus on the plain.

Dirt streets, gaunt iron windmills,
low veranda cottages on blocks,
the park for Boet Coetzee—dry scrub
circling a monumental lump of rock.

Low-voiced, with the slow deliberate style
I'd overheard recording diagnoses after work,
you dictated memories to a small
recorder as we passed the *Dopperkerk*

you'd watched Italians building
stone by stone between the wars;
a dark garage and blacksmith stall; the old
*drankwinkel* with its bottles behind bars;

and here, rebuilt within its compound of new wire,
the squat police station still edging town
at the corner of Boshof and Beyer.
Only the jail's unimproved, the same stone

blockhouse you remember, calling it
*die tronk* to savor the hard grip
of rock and iron, the Afrikaans word
fastened to its ancient root.

A typical location for such buildings, set
to guard the white town from its shadow
flung out on the veld
a mile away—a snarl of yellow

footpaths disappearing into coalsmoke, dust—
like all black encampments in this country,
isolated well enough to cut the tenants off
from killing any but themselves.

You never liked such talk. Too mild
yourself for bitterness; perhaps too strong,
a stubborn strength that turned from what
you couldn't change, crossed with an instinct

for what nourishes, the almost liquid softness
of a man whose favorite word is "rugged."
I'm trying to adjust that mixture
in myself, remembering now the small house

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*Note: Reddersburg ("town of the saviour"), a small village in the Orange Free State, South Africa.*

you were born in, wooden rooms,
the lights on pulleys weighted down with shot,
a front stoep now enclosed, you recollecting
what was gone—the upright piano,

a cooling box of coal and chickenwire
(you spoke of kosher meat brought in by post-car
six hours from the railway-line),
your mother's cleanliness, fanatical

as any prejudice (vacations home began
with castor-oil to purge away the *tref*),
her nervous clutch on the familiar
broken only by migrations, deaths—

the same grip I can barely tell
from love or fortitude years later
in the Home; one hand held soft
yet rigid as a dead bird in the other.

I bought a tin mug at the trading store
your father owned before they moved away—
a Lithuanian refugee among the Boers,
his Yiddish mixing into Afrikaans,

the daily Talmud crossing
with tough sheep-farmers' lore;
not tough enough to save
his own farm in the drought.

Each July they'd winter with us at the coast.
I still hear him beat time on the table
as he *davened* after dinner. Strong almost
as prayer itself, an image now of iron

wrapped in cloth. One Friday night
outside the shul I caught his fingers
in the car door: so softly he said "my fingers,"
so gently—the words repeated twice

before I understood. Cut hand reddening
a handkerchief, he sat through services
as if unhurt. As if religion
took the place of arbitrary pain.

Since the last drought, little's grown
except the cemetery. The old names,
Beyer, Boshof, Van der Walt
cut deep on horizontal slabs,

the ground too hard for any flowers
except these imitation petals
of rough porcelain. Once globed
in cheap glass, shattered now—

tin leaves, jagged petals,
shards of glass caught
in a nest of rusted stems—
a brittle crater baked on every grave.

In a small plot of their own,
a handful of young soldiers
killed "for King and Empire"
somewhere in this empty plain:

Irving, Murphy, Dimsdale,
buried among their enemies—
the Boer War still a hard stone
in the belly of this nation.

All your life you've known this blue void
over long undeviating roads, "as if you could
look straight into forever," the sun
sledge-hammering the veld, bleached earth,

grey-green furze, sharp stones.
Signs of what you came to trust,
a standard of reality I've not known
this clearly until now,

discovering here something congenital,
the core of a resistant strength
that calms me, obdurate and loyal
against my drifting ease,

yet terrifies—an image of the fixity
now shattering the country;
or the stone heart of a personal regime
that turns away from each

new headline of detention, death,
knowing no words however chosen
that may change or break
the will of those who rule,

yet praying, if not for inherited
belief or patience,
then for a persistent anger
hardening the hope that listens

for a sound—improbable, warm and vehement
as the rain, heard falling evenly
beyond the one clear ring of steel
chiselling memorials for what it could not save.

# The Spiritual Legacy of Franz Rosenzweig

*Paul Mendes-Flohr*

In modern Jewish thought, especially as it took shape in Germany, the teachings of Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1929) mark a radical return to a Theocentric Judaism. After having been virtually eliminated from modern Jewish religious discourse, God—the living God to whom the traditional Jew prayed, to whose grace and love he submitted himself—suddenly reappears with Rosenzweig at the center of the Jew's theological imagination.

With his characteristic humility Rosenzweig ascribed the beginnings of this Theocentric shift in modern Jewish thought to Hermann Cohen (1842–1918), the founder of the so-called Marburg school of Neo-Kantianism and who, toward the end of his life, made an inspired reaffirmation of Judaism as a religious system. To illustrate his contention Rosenzweig was fond of telling the following story. On the occasion of one of Cohen's last lectures at the University of Marburg, Rosenzweig relates, the esteemed professor of philosophy spoke of "the concept of God," which he viewed as a rational construct that guaranteed the eternity of the physical world, thus providing the necessary condition for the eternal moral tasks imposed by Reason on rational humanity. At the conclusion of the lecture, Cohen was approached by a simple East European Jew—that is, a traditional Jew unaffected by the sophistication *and* religious self-consciousness of the western Jew. In halting German, this visitor from the East admitted to the professor that he did not understand much of Cohen's learned discourse, but nonetheless he had one question: Herr Professor Cohen, in all your talk of the concept of God where is the *bore olam*—the Creator of the Universe—the God of our prayers? Stunned by the question, the elderly Cohen—who had been raised as a traditional Jew by his father, a *hazan* in a German Village near the Polish border—bowed his head in contrition and began to cry. This moment of truth, according to Rosenzweig, points to Cohen's incipient shift from a rigid rationalism and philosophical idealism to a type of religious existentialism that allowed him to acknowledge the ontological significance of religious emotion and experience. It has, however, been cogently shown that this anecdote and similar ones that Rosenzweig related about the man whom he regarded as his spiritual mentor tell us very little about Cohen's actual intellectual development, but are patently projections of Rosenzweig's spiritual fantasy, offering us profound insight into his own religious sensibility.[1]

On the conceptual or theological level, Rosenzweig's point of departure is what he called *Offenbarungsglaube*—a belief based on revelation. Genuine religious belief, he maintained, affirms the reality of revelation—both the factual reality of the historical revelation at Sinai and the possibility of its renewal as an existential event in which God turns to an individual in the here and now, and addresses him by "his first and last name," thereby freeing him from the curse of finitude. The God of Revelation, Rosenzweig emphasized, is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the sovereign Creator of the World and the Heavens—it is this God who from the heights of his utter transcendence addresses humankind with gracious words of commandment and love. Such an *Offenbarungsglaube*, Rosenzweig further affirmed, must be the ground or "heart" of our theological thinking, otherwise we court the danger of perpetuating the absurdity of nineteenth century liberal theology which he characterized with the oxymoron "atheistic theology,"[2] a theology which fails to take God seriously, at least the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

This flight from the God of Revelation was shared by both Protestant and Jewish religious philosophers of nineteenth century Germany. Jewish thinkers were particularly reticent about revelation. This retreat from revelation is already discernible with Mendelssohn (1729–1786) who, in his valiant attempt to demonstrate Judaism's allegiance to the autonomous rule of Reason, restricted revelation to the narrow realm of God's legislation to Israel governing its duties of worship. His noble intentions notwithstanding, Mendelssohn's restrictive definition obfuscated the mystery and power of the traditional Jewish experience and understanding

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1. Steven Schwarzschild, "Franz Rosenzweig's Anecdotes about Hermann Cohen," *Gegenwart in Rückblick*. Festgabe für die Jüdische Gemeinde Berlin (Heidelberg, 1970), pp. 35ff.
2. "Atheistische Theologie," in F. Rosenzweig, *Kleinere Schriften* (Berlin, 1937), pp. 278-290.

of revelation. And when nineteenth century liberal Jews dared speak of revelation, they enjoined the lofty term as a metaphor for some *human* effort of a unique quality. Abraham Geiger (1810–1874), the most respected name among the founders of Reform Judaism, for instance, employed the term as the equivalent of the "creative [moral] genius" of Israel.[3] And even in his posthumous work, *Religion of Reason* (1919), which Rosenzweig acclaimed as a breakthrough to religious existentialism, Hermann Cohen declared rather apodictically that "revelation is the creation of reason" (*die Offenbarung ist die Schopfung der Vernunft*).[4]

Clearly, Rosenzweig's affirmation of revelation as the central category of all serious theological discourse was a radical position to assume in both Jewish and Protestant thinking of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[5] Attendant to his affirmation of revelation, he also reasserted the centrality of Creation and Redemption—again categories that modern religious thought in Germany had tended to ignore or treat "poetically," that is, as metaphors bereft of genuine theological content. Each of these concepts—Revelation, Creation and Redemption—teach us, according to Rosenzweig, not only about God's gracious involvement in the world but also about the structure and meaning of existence. It is thus the exigent task of theology to rescue the phenomenological and theological significance of these concepts (as well as the ancillary and, alas, similarly obfuscated notions of miracle, providence and divine love). To this sublime task, Rosenzweig dedicated his *Star of Redemption*, published in 1921.

Rosenzweig's endeavor to revalorize the central categories of classical (indeed biblical) theology does not, of course, mean that he advocated a romantic return to a pristine, traditional Jewish faith untouched by the modern experience. On the contrary, Rosenzweig remained firmly rooted in modern culture and sensibility. Even a casual reading of *The Star of Redemption* and other writings will readily indicate his abiding commitment to the Western cultural enterprise. Indeed, what is compelling about Rosenzweig's teachings is that he does not suggest that a reappropriation of authentic Jewish faith (and religious practice) requires that we undergo some sort of mental lobotomy and violently discard all "alien" culture from our inner universe. Such an exercise Rosenzweig would surely contend, would not only be preposterous but also profoundly injurious to the supreme effort of renewing Jewish faith and religious practice. This is certainly one of the implied arguments in his frequently quoted letter to Jacob Rosenheim (1871–1965), a leader of Orthodoxy in Germany. Alarmed by the claims of modern scholarship, especially as represented by the documentary theory of Julius Wellhausen (1844–1917), that the Bible is the literary creation of several hands, Rosenheim followed the beaten path of Samson Rafael Hirsch (1808–1888), the founder of German Neo-Orthodoxy, who sought to secure the integrity of the Torah by fortifying it behind a fundamentalist faith dogmatically proclaiming its unique status and divine authorship. From the bastion of this faith, the Jew should summarily reject the scandalous claims of modern biblical scholarship. In a letter dated April 1927, Rosenzweig, who was at the time working together with Martin Buber (1878–1965) on a translation of the Hebrew Scripture into German, wrote Rosenheim criticizing this obscurantism:[6]

> ... Where we differ from Orthodoxy is in our reluctance to draw from our belief in the holiness or uniqueness of the Torah, and in its character as revelation, any conclusions as to its literary genesis and the philological value of the text as it came down to us. If all of Wellhausen's theories were correct and the Samaritans really had the better text, our faith would not be shaken in the least. This is the profound difference between you and us—a difference which, it seems to me, may be bridged by mutual esteem but not by understanding. I, at least, fail to understand the religious basis of Hirsch's commentary [to the Bible] ... Still, how does it happen then that our translation is more closely akin to that of Hirsch than to any other? ... We too translate the Torah as a single book. For us, too, it is the work of one spirit. Who this spirit was, we do not know; that it was Moses we find difficult to believe. Among ourselves we call him by the symbol which critical science is accustomed to use as a designation for [the Bible's] redactor: R. But this symbol R we expand not into Redactor but into *Rabbenu* [i.e., "our teacher"]. For he is our teacher; his theology is our teaching.

3. A. Geiger, *Das Judentum und seine Geschichte*, 2. Aufl. (Breslau, 1864), I. Band, pp. 27ff.
4. H. Gohen, *Religion der Vernunft aus den Quellen des Judentums*, 2. Aufl. (Darmstadt, 1966), p. 84.
5. Rosenzweig's *Offenbarungsglaube* was inspired by his initial theological mentors, namely, Eugen Rosenstock, and his cousins Hans and Rudolf Ehrenberg. Although Jews by birth, they developed their theology within the Lutheran tradition, whereas Rosenzweig, of course, did so within the context of Judaism. The centrality of revelation to Judaism was emphasized by the nineteenth century German Jewish writer Solomon Ludwig Steinheim (1789–1866). Regarded his multi-volume work, *Die Offenbarung nach der Lehrbegriffe der Synagoge* (1835 ff.) was largely ignored and indeed its significance was only first recognized in light of Rosenzweig's *Star*.
6. Rosenzweig, *Briefe* (Berlin, 1935), pp. 581-2.

Just as it would be fatuous to give up belief in revelation because of Wellhausen's scholarship, Rosenzweig gently suggested, so Orthodoxy's desperate obscurantism is equally inane, for it creates but a brittle basis for an enduring, vibrant faith. To be sure, Rosenzweig observed in his letter to Rosenheim, the tradition refers to Moses as *rabbenu*, as our teacher of God's Torah, but even as critical scholarship suggests this does not necessarily imply that the theology of the redactor was not inspired by God. Thus, for Rosenzweig (and Buber), the redactor, the human hand that spliced the various literary elements of the Bible together, is also *rabbenu*, "our teacher" who, guided by the spirit of God, conveyed to us the Torah whose *theological* unity and sacrality may be affirmed without assuming an obscurantist antagonism to modern critical scholarship.

German Orthodoxy's fundamentalism was, in Rosenzweig's judgement, an extreme form of the defensive, "apologetic" attitude that characterized modern German Jewish thought. German Jewish thinkers, he observed, be they liberal or Orthodox were forever trying to parry the diverse and often invidious criticisms of Judaism posed by the philosophers and scholars of Germany. Responding to a specific challenge, Rosenzweig observed, the answer given by the Jewish apologist is perforce selective and distorting. Medieval Jewish philosophy, Rosenzweig reminds us, was also largely prompted by the polemics of an occasion, and thus similarly apologetic. A genuine Jewish Philosophy, such as presumably pursued in *The Star of Redemption*, would be to philosophize about Judaism from *within* Judaism itself, *systematically* clarifying the principles *and* practices of Judaism. A non-apologetic method of theological interpretation would require that Judaism be regarded apart from not only the polemical circumstances of the historical hour but even from life itself; Judaism must be understood not in opposition or contrast to life but as an "a priori" modality of life.[7]

This Archimedean point from which a genuine, non-apologetic Jewish thinking must begin seems not only to have methodological but also substantive significance for Rosenzweig. The consideration of Judaism as a modality of life *apart* from life itself appears to be dialectically related to his view of Judaism—"the Synagogue"—as a metahistorical fact. Content with its unique relationships with the God of Eternity and standing beyond history—namely, politics and war—the Synagogue exemplifies the Messianic promise and thereby prods the Church, enmeshed in history, to lead history beyond itself to the *eschaton*. Meanwhile, the Synagogue is to look inward in blissful seclusion from the world. There is a compelling sublimity to this perception of Israel's destiny, but many would also find it profoundly distressing. For it suggests that isolation from the world is an intrinsic quality of traditional Jewish spirituality. Notwithstanding his ascription of a dialectical, eschatological significance of the Synagogue's seclusion, Rosenzweig's celebration of an indifference to history was deemed offensive by many of his contemporaries immersed as they were in the urgencies of Jewish and world history. Here Rosenzweig's friend, Martin Buber, despite—or perhaps because of—his weakness for "apologetic thinking" proved a more eminent guide.

Rosenzweig, on the other hand, proved to be a much more valuable guide to a generation of German Jews eager to break the spell of assimilation and to reintegrate their life into the fabric of Jewish tradition. Rosenzweig taught this generation of post-World War I Jews how to read the sources of Jewish tradition, to encounter these sources without surrendering one's intellectual integrity and to engage them as religious texts which speak to one's soul. Rosenzweig also taught them that in order to appropriate the spiritual reality of Jewish tradition one had to know it from within, that is, as he once put it, to know it hymnically. Intellectual acquaintance, hence, is insufficient. For Judaism is, after all, a mode of life, and as such it entails the praxis of Judaism, the life of Torah and its mitzvot. To be sure, Rosenzweig conceded, from the perspective of the observer the life of Torah and mitzvot seems to be but a heteronomous legalism—impositions, as Buber for one suggested, that shackle the Jew's spontaneous relationship to God. But as experienced from within its "hymnical" reality, the world of Torah and mitzvot, may in fact quicken the Jew's relationship to God—this was the challenge Rosenzweig posed before his generation and which so many joyfully accepted.

The grim irony of the spiritual renewal of Judaism inspired by Rosenzweig is that it came as the dark clouds of death began to gather over Germany. The endeavor of that generation to create anew, out of the midst of assimilation, Jewish religious community and spirituality was to be cruelly aborted. This tragically unfulfilled task, so singularly associated with the name of Franz Rosenzweig, is perhaps the most challenging legacy of German Jewry. □

7. See his essay, "Apologetisches Denken," *Kleinere Schriften* (Berlin, 1937), pp. 31-42. Also see Arthur A. Cohen's very insightful discussion of the recent English translation of this essay, in *The Jew: Essays from Martin Buber's Journal, Der Jude, 1916-1928*, selected, edited, and introduced by Arthur A. Cohen (University of Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1980), pp. 162-4.

# Passover

*Andrew Schmookler*

What I like best about Passover is the way it *renews* a special experience, the deliverance out of bondage into freedom.

A key experience can serve as a compass. In my own life, a few moments stand out like that, so vivid they're etched in Technicolor, as if to say: this is what life's about! Often I recall, for instance, one moment I was able to pull myself out of panic by trusting the love in my brother's face. For guiding me through my days, a thousand hours of washing dishes or reading the newspaper weigh as nothing next to that one moment of liberation.

It's hard enough to hold onto those moments of revelation in one's own life. So much harder in the life of a people whose members arrive, each generation, without memory. And that's what's so wonderful about Passover: for three thousand years, every generation of Jews makes the experience its own. "We were Pharoah's slaves in Egypt," we read from the Haggadah, "and the Lord our God brought *us* forth from there . . ."

The story of deliverance, for a people oppressed through the centuries, is a vital one to keep before the eyes. It's no coincidence that the uprising of the Warsaw ghetto against the Nazis began on the first night of Passover.

How to pass along the key lessons of our history from generation to generation—it's a challenge that's not always met. Some in Europe have worried, recently, about the coming to power of the "successor generation," a generation that didn't go through the trauma of Nazi aggression. The fear is that those whose experience has been too sheltered will not understand how freedom needs to be defended by vigilance and, when necessary, by sacrifice.

But if it's dangerous to forget, memory too has its dangers. Of the generation that came of age in the 1930s and 1940s, it's been said that "they had the image of Hitler seared upon their eyeballs." The experience that's indelibly etched can lie superimposed on all that comes after. It is a kind of blindness. To American cold warriors, Ho Chi Minh looked like Hitler. Overlearned, the "lesson of Munich" made all accommodation seem like weakness. So, on both sides of the cold war, old images created new dangers.

The cold warriors protected us vigilantly. But the other part of the "lesson of Munich" is: we will not be truly free so long as we are enslaved to our old images of the world.

*Often I recall, for instance, one moment I was able to pull myself out of panic by trusting the love in my brother's face.*

So, at this time of Passover, the ancient memory of liberation is renewed for one more year. We celebrate our deliverance from bondage in Egypt, finding the old story a perpetual guide to the perpetual task of freedom. Without such maps of our reality we'd surely be lost.

But I remind myself also of our other side. That to mistake the guides of our own creation for reality itself is but another form of idolatry. That while our ancient maps are invaluable, by themselves they cannot get us to the promised land. □

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# Doomsday as Gang Bang, or Dodging the Reality of the Holocaust

*Baruch Hochman*

*The White Hotel,* by D. M. Thomas. Pocket, 1981.

*Sophie's Choice,* by William Styron. Bantam, 1980.

Last summer I found myself reading in quick succession two novels which I might otherwise not have read at all. The novels in question were *The White Hotel* and *Sophie's Choice*, and their juxtaposition triggered a series of reflections—on fiction, on character, on the way we see things in the twentieth century, on the Holocaust—which I am hard put to exhaust. It is these reflections that I want to set down here.

The occasion for my reading was a course I had given the year before. The course was called "Character and Fictionality in the Twentieth Century Novel," and it dealt with post-modernist fiction—the self-conscious fiction that has been written by novelists like Nabokov, Beckett and Pynchon in the past fifty years. Its focus was the conception and portrayal of character in our century. We read a fair amount of Nabokov and Pynchon, and for comparison, a nineteenth century realistic novel as well as some classic "modernist" work by Proust and Lawrence. And we reflected on the relation between characters and people—that is, on the portrayal of people in books, and how it is like and unlike our perception of people in life.

It proved to be a heady brew I had concocted, and one that stirred up a great variety of feelings about both literature and life. Required to write on "outside" books, my students wanted to grapple with novels that were close to their hearts. Touched by their enthusiasm, I gave them free reign. They read me ragged.

*The White Hotel* and *Sophie's Choice* were among the texts they chose. Reading them in quick succession, I was struck by troubling affinities between them. They were very different—in tone, in setting, in structure, in theme. In that context, however, and with my students' bewildering enthusiasm in mind, what struck me was their kinship, and the problematical quality of whatever it was that made them so appealing. Both projected what was for me an odd and even a perverse vision of the Holocaust; both handled their protagonists in ways that seemed shocking even in the context of contemporary novelistic practice.

With regard to the Holocaust, it was striking that two gentiles, of very ent moral and literary complexions, and writing in very different novelistic modes, had chosen to convey the experience of the horror through women, and that both of them had chosen women who, for all intents and purposes, were not Jewish: that is, were not even "proper" members of the chief target community of Hitler's extermination machine. Both had, moreover, chosen to make their protagonists not only victims, but victims who never visibly confront the moral and imaginative logic of their situations. As a result, both had avoided concrete engagement with the logic of the experience undergone. Both were therefore free to work with large fields of symbolization—highly sexualized fields—and thus to overlap the particulars of the experience they broach. Through their deliberately opaque protagonists, who are presented as victims of literal and historical rape, each writer played with his material in ways that verged on the morally, if not always on the erotically, pornographic. Reflecting on my impression, it strikes me that both handle their protagonists in ways that prevent the reader from forming a coherent view of their character, or of integrating in consciousness the facets of the experience attributed to those protagonists. The strategies are different, but the effects are similar. The victimization in both cases overtakes a woman who is unable to face or synthesize her experience, and whose experience it is beyond the competence of the reader to make sense of.

Sophie's suffering, in the present action, seems convincing enough, but it is highly localized and rarely integrated into our sense of what makes her tick. The guilt about her choices, and the past action that gives rise to the guilt, remains wholly abstract. It remains as abstract as its disclosure is late, and unrelated to the novel's center of emotional and imaginative gravity and what we take to be Sophie's essential identity. The overall and final impression, which so many of the facts of her case contradict, remains one of splendid, childlike innocence.

The sustained impression of innocence, moreover, has the peculiar effect of removing her from the full horror of what should have been her experience as the victim of Nazi outrage at Auschwitz. On the face of it, she is ultimately a victim; her innocence, like Isaac's in the story of the binding of Isaac, or that of Herod's Innocents, should heighten the horror of her victimization. But it doesn't. It doesn't, I think, partly because of the way the novel as a whole explicitly handles questions of guilt and complicity.

In a series of dialogues between the narrator, who is a gentile and a southern liberal, and Sophie's demented but brilliant Jewish lover, who blindly holds the narrator responsible for all the racial bigotry and violence of the South, it is established that one can live with bigotry without being oneself a bigot, and that it is immoral to fault everyone within a social system for all the evils of that system. That issue clearly bears upon the question of

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Nazi/Polish guilt, and the guilt of those who, like Sophie, were drawn into its orbit. The effect of this debate is to heighten Sophie's dissociation from the contexts of her experience, and to enforce our tendency to isolate her from it.

More central to this effect, however, is the fact that Sophie is not felt to *undergo* her own experience. It is not only that we see her from the outside, but that the novel deflects attention from her experience, presumably because it does not want to engage us with it. Styron is interested in her for other reasons, reasons linked to her value as an object of the narrator's—and Styron's—adolescent idealization of the whore as perpetual virgin, and the guilty as true innocent.

In such a context, the issues of the Holocaust, even when elaborately unfolded, cannot be engaged. What we are involved in is an intricate fantasy that centers on a glamorized erotic object which, unlike the rest of the novel, is projected with consummate, if devious, artistry. The narrator is full of callow self-pity for the plight of the uninitiated male in those remote, repressive times in the late forties when America teased its young men with Lana Turner's mammary endowment but puritanically denied them fulfillment. From within the welter of his thwarting, he experiences Sophie, and the stormy innocence of her passions, as a paradisal alternative to the castrating American girl. In this perspective—which is, to be sure, not the only perspective the novel creates—Auschwitz may even come to seem a valuable training ground for accommodating houris.

No such inference can, by the farthest stretch of the imagination, be drawn from *The White Hotel*. Yet that novel's solemnly ironic version of the concatenation of love (or more appropriately, sex) and death is perhaps more alarming because of its moral and metaphysical implication. *The White Hotel*'s "portrayal" of the Holocaust itself—or of the fragment of the Holocaust that it suggests may be taken for the whole—cannot on the whole be faulted; insofar as it directs us to the genocidal horrors of the Nazi Juggernaut, it does so with rare purity. It lifts, more or less verbatim, a segment of eyewitness account of the implementation of the Final Solution at Babi Yar. That account is, by general consent, the best piece of writing in the novel, and it has all the concreteness and immediacy one would wish of such a report. Thomas, moreover, has not only embedded a fragment of the hideous "reality" of the Holocaust in his own text, but has written, in the course of a public debate on his "plagiarism," that the morality of writing about the brute horror of those events which together have been termed "the Holocaust" dictates recourse to testimonial material, since fictionalization would be a travesty.

Yet *The White Hotel* is a work of fiction, and as such it works with those patterns of meaningful juxtaposition which are the privilege and the special province of fiction. Toward the end of the novel, when the protagonist meets her death in a mass grave at Babi Yar, the caving in of the walls of that grave bring to mind the fires, floods and avalanches which accompany her ecstatically orgastic adventures in the first chapter of the novel. Analogously, the climactic piercing of her privates by a bayonet in the Babi Yar episode is prefigured both by the pains in the groin that bring her into psychoanalytic treatment earlier in the novel, and by the eruptive penetration of her privates in the course of her fantasied and fantastic erotic adventures in the first chapter. And her grotesque offering of withered dugs to the concentration camp attendants just before her death is anticipated by her lavish suckling of all and sundry in that same fantasy. As it happens, *The White Hotel* has as its epigraph, on its title page, a fragment of a poem by Yeats. The epigraph reads:

*We had fed our hearts on fantasies,*
*The heart's grown brutal from the fare.*

There is a sense, we come to feel, in which Lisa Erdman's horrible death at Babi Yar is a fulfillment, if not *the* fulfillment, of what she has wanted, even as she feared it, all the time.

One possible inference is that Lisa got what she wanted, horrible as that may be. This, of course, is not what *The White Hotel* is "saying." Thomas is a cunning fictionist, and he constructs a complex and tricky novel in which issues and implications shift with the shifting perspectives of his text. The content of Lisa's psyche, and then the relevant facts of her life, are rendered, not in and for themselves, but as a case-in-point for a critique of the Freudian reading of experience. "Freud" himself actually figures as a character in the novel; "he" even "writes" a case history on Lisa, in which he traces the origins of both her fantasies and her symptoms to traumatic childhood experience. In this perspective, in fact, the culmination of her life and experience in the mass grave can be taken as refutation of Freud's understanding of her "case." The novel suggests that the violence in her fantasies is not mere wish-thinking or conflict resolution to be confronted clinically. It reflects a reality, in the world, in human history, of which her fantasies may be grasped as clairvoyant prefigurations. It turns out that what the Freudian tradition would consider manifestations of her idiosyncratic experience of the Family Romance may be a clairvoyant intuition of her place in the larger pattern of human history.

Indeed, Thomas "places" the mass grave at Babi Yar in the context, not only of Lisa's hallucinations, and their projection into her quasi-pornographic poem, which fill the first, the *Don Giovanni*, chapter of the novel, but of all of human history. In the "Prologue," which consists of a series of letters from Freud and his "colleagues," we hear of the discovery of mass graves from prehistoric times, in the form of peat bog corpses—an unearthing which "places" both Babi Yar and Lisa's fantasies in a world-historical, almost an evolutionary perspective. The effect is not a sober assessment of meaning, but a flattening of historical, moral and psychological contour. Just as the rivers in T. S. Eliot's *The Wasteland* verge on being no-river by virtue of being all rivers, so the placement of Babi Yar in the long perspective of all-human-history, going back to the caveman, divests it of its unique, its final horror. It becomes part of the pattern, rooted in the vagaries and the brutalities, the loves and the hates, the *eros* and the *thanatos* of the human heart as such.

Altogether, *The White Hotel* swarms with patterns, and with perspectives within which to assemble the patterns and to multiply ways of reading and assessing them. On the one hand, for example, it organizes its material to mount an ironic assault on Freud's interpretation of the life history and symptomology of the individual; on the other, it seems

to affirm his reading of the history of that aggregate of individuals which we call mankind, and to project a quasi-Freudian view of history itself. Thus Chapter IV seems to undercut Freud's interpretations in Chapter III by underscoring the lies Lisa told in the course of her analysis, and Chapter V further undermines them by rendering them, and the entire analysis, trivial in the light of events, of history, of the Holocaust.

*[Both books] give the impression of the Holocaust as a gang bang—as a colossal ravishing of uncomprehending women—and of essential passivity in response to it. The victims of the horror are female and passive . . .*

Yet Freud's reading of Lisa's case also points to a reading of history itself in overarchingly psychic terms. Freud reads the symbolism of the white hotel, as it figures in Lisa's fantasy-filled poem in the first chapter, as a representation of the mother's body—that is, as a condition of potentially pure, guiltless, unselfconscious pleasure experienced from within a condition of utter symbiotic harmony. That harmony, in his view, is disrupted at birth and then progressively ever after, as the cut-off individual seeks the restoration of such unity. The violence of human history is therefore at once the violent expression of human rage within the condition of struggle, and the means through which men achieve and impose that surcease of struggle which is death, a restoration to the condition of inorganic matter.

Conceptually, all the events in the novel can be read as part of such a drama of disrupted harmony—up to and including the ambiguous and ambivalent fantasy of reunion in heaven in the sixth and last chapter, where Lisa suckles her mother even as her mother suckles her. Life, in this vision, is not "rounded with a sleep," but rather with a symbiotic unity, in which passivity is active and activity passive, and in which life and death are one. History is in effect the disruption of such harmony and the anguished and ecstatic quest for it.

Yet even within this bifocal, op-art perspective, there is still another option. The total, supra-individual Freudian vision is undercut by both the brute facticity of the Babi Yar-cum-Holocaust episode, which implies that nothing has meaning, and by a post-modernist gamesomeness which insists that everything can be given meaning, but that meaning is as arbitrary as the perspectives from which it is imposed. It is within the latter perspective that Freud serves so eloquently and so subversively in the novel.

All this is very interesting, very engaging. Thomas is an acknowledged master of fictive prestidigitation which may be taken seriously or not, as the reader chooses. What is distressing from my point of view is the way that all the elements within the masterful manipulation of perspectives that is *The White Hotel* fuse into patterns and are submerged within patterns in such a way that nothing can stand as meaningful or challenging in itself. In fact, with regard to Lisa herself, we have a situation very like the one that defines Sophie. We have no way of penetrating her inwardness or engaging her experience from within the perspectives of her ongoing subjectivity. Not only do we not know what her experience in the mass grave meant to her—the novel is rigged so that we cannot. We are denied the possibility of taking hold of any fragment of her experience as a manifestation of or as a vehicle for meaning.

This is perhaps the most striking thing about *The White Hotel*: the tension between the richness of detail in the presentation of Lisa and the impossibility of synthesizing a coherent image of her. It seems to me that we cannot imaginatively constitute a comprehensive conception of her development, or of the meaning of her experience, as she might have undergone it had she been a person. If we were to imagine that Lisa Erdman had really existed, we would have to say that in rendering her, Thomas has abstracted her from herself in much the same way people in case histories are abstracted—that is, in ways that prevent us from reconstituting her as herself. There is no dramatized center of self from which to apprehend her, and from which to apprehend her experience. But there is also, as though reciprocally, no stable perspective from which to grasp the realities which impinge on her, which trigger or constitute her experience—of which the synecdochic fragment of the Holocaust, named Babi Yar, is a part.

Thus, the Holocaust, as an object of contemplation, is dissolved into the perspectives in which we are asked to contemplate it—much as Lisa herself is dissolved in them. What we have in the end is not a novel that asks us, as Thomas, in justifying his "plagiarism" would have us believe, to contemplate the brute reality, the facticity, of the Holocaust. Rather, we have a novel that resolves Babi Yar, and with it the Holocaust, into the tissue of textualities—the maze of perspectives—that is its reason for being and its center of substantive concern. That concern denies the possibility that things can have a center, and that center or centrality are relevant categories. And it does so in the name of a view that sees reality as a fabric of fictions, which endlessly weave and shuttle back on themselves, like the loom of life in the terrifying vision of Goethe's Faust.

As the highly self-conscious, post-modernist work of fiction that it is, *The White Hotel* presents difficulties diametrically opposed to those of *Sophie's Choice*. Where *Sophie's Choice* undercuts its laboriously imposed structuring of materials in a way that muddies meanings and blurs perspectives, *The White Hotel* generates a set of crystal-clear relationships among its elements, relationships which proliferate meanings with cold, cutting intellectual clarity. The former is dominated by a crude fantasy of innocent sexuality, envisioned from within a center of festering desire, and no amount of manipulative crafting or intellectual wrenching of its material within the text brings it under control or into perspective. The latter so thoroughly subordinates everything to its question-posing, game-playing system that we are virtually unable to put our finger on either a dominant element or a germinative seed. The sweaty palms of *Sophie's Choice*, with the object they so palpably want to grope, stand in stark contrast to the dry eyes—the searingly dry eyes—of *The White Hotel*, staring into the limbo

of the undefinable, where All Hallows melt into Halloween, *danse macabre* into camp drag.

Polarized though they are, in both their formal organization and their affective quality, they nonetheless remain curiously congruous in the impression they give of the Holocaust as a gang bang—as a colossal ravishing of uncomprehending women—and of essential passivity in response to it. The victims of the horror are female and passive, and the writers themselves, for all their high activity in generating their fictions, subscribe to a posture of passivity in relation to it. They would seem to want to give us a meaningful perspective on it, and they struggle to render something of its reality, but in the end they speak to us, and their protagonists speak to us, from a position of bewildered submissiveness.

This distresses, even alarms me. I myself—like most people, I would think—have never been able to define for myself a view of the Holocaust, or to take a satisfactory position on it; I have the greatest difficulty envisioning it in even its most limited dimensions. And I have no notion how one should go about digesting it. Better minds than mine, or Styron's, or Thomas's have tried to grapple with it, from myriad vantage points, from the technological to the theological, and none has to my knowledge begun to deal with it. But it seems clear to me that it must be dealt with—and dealt with actively.

I don't, to be sure, have much hope that such grappling will get us very far. Most of the massive traumas of human history have been digested, domesticated and attenuated by mystification of one sort or another—literary, religious, mythic. We know of the fall of Troy through the measured hexameters of Homer, and the truth of the cataclysmic moments of Jewish history—the destruction of the Temples and the exile they wrought—comes down to us wrapped in legends of redemption and in Lamentations couched in cadences so exquisite that we are hard put to grasp the meaning of their words.

Yet even in my despair of adequate definition or even engagement, I bridle at the facile image-making in which these two novels indulge, and at the way in which both novelists dematerialize the realities of the Holocaust, and of the moral and psychological issues it gives rise to. There is courage in their taking on the subject—in so far as it *is* their subject—and there is energy, intelligence and (even, sporadically, in *Sophie's Choice*) skill in recording what they have to say about it. But the novels themselves seem to me not only meager and inadequate in dealing with this aspect of their "material," but specious and frightening in what they in fact do with it.

*What concerns me here is not so much exploitation as deflection, the deflection of consciousness from the real issues of the Holocaust . . .*

The main issue for me here—I should be absolutely clear—is not pornography, by which I mean the exploitation of the Holocaust for any of the varieties of erotic stimulation. This is a problem in the culture at large, where erotic outrage tends more and more to take center stage, and where there is massive commercialization of the horror under the guise of engagement with it. What concerns me here is not so much exploitation as deflection, the deflection of consciousness from the real issues of the Holocaust, however we define them. Novels like *Sophie's Choice* and *The White Hotel* sidetrack the real issues by shunting them onto the well-oiled skids of familiar and lubricious fantasy.

The real issues, as I understand them, have to do with varieties of helplessness, loss of control, humiliation, complicity, dehumanization, responsibility—issues which boggle the mind and baffle the imagination, and the moral faculties. To shunt consciousness from these things onto ready-made grids of association suggested by the images like those of raped women in our novels is to obviate engagement with the realities those novels claim to confront.

It is, of course, a difficult issue—in literature, but also in culture at large—how to represent harsh realities, especially when they figure on a heroic scale. The difficulty crops up not only as a matter of aesthetics—for example, how to portray on stage the blinding of Gloucester in *King Lear*—but also in the perspective of symbolization itself. Nothing can be represented, or even reproduced, exactly as it is. The very act of framing an apple or enacting a murder on stage makes something else of it. Mass executions, enacted on stage or projected on the television screen, become something other than themselves.

Normally, though—in art if not in newscasts—the literal object of representation is not reproduced; some more or less remote analogue of it is represented. The murdered babies in Macbeth are no more literally accurate an image for the murderous mismanagement of a kingdom and the disruption of its divinely appointed harmonies than raped women are for the murders of millions in the Holocaust. They too elicit relatively facile, relatively ready-made associations, that carry us away from the thing they refer to. Yet they seem immeasurably less specious, less automatic, less evasive than sexy Sophie or violated Lisa are as vehicles for the horror of the Holocaust. They seem less evasive—and evasion is my concern here—because they do not obstruct our return to the realities to which they purport to refer; they do not fix us on themselves and the associations they stir.

*The White Hotel*, of course, is far less culpable in this regard than *Sophie's Choice*; if we stay within its highly distanced frames of reference and cleave to the variety of intellectualized perspectives it creates, we are not likely to take its images for the things to which they refer. It is more problematic, however, in respect to its characteristically post-modernist shaping of its materials.

Indeed, insofar as *The White Hotel* can be taken as a viable example of the ethos of post-modernism, it raises painful questions about that tradition as a whole, and ultimately of what it means to take all of reality as a concatenation of texts, and therefore of fictions. For post-modernism tends at once to blur and to heighten the traditional distinction between fiction and reality, reversing the relation between them. On the one hand, fiction no longer purports to represent or imitate reality; on the other, reality stops being an independent and verifi-

able entity. Instead, it becomes a construct of the minds or the words that meet "in" and "upon" it. In doing so, it becomes a consensual fiction that loops, labyrinthine, in upon itself, so that there is no escaping it or penetrating it to reach an objective reality beyond itself.

In such a conception of reality, there is no reason to think anything out there really exists, either in the present or in the past, either in New York or in Auschwitz. Babi Yar, which Thomas insists is an irreducible reality resisting fictionalization, so that only an eyewitness report can suffice for his needs, therefore in fact exists *only* as a fiction: a fiction within the network of fictions that lend themselves to interpretation, both in the world and in his novel. Equipped with such a conception of humanity, of history, of language, of fiction itself, we do not need neo-Nazi or Soviet-bureaucratic machinations to deny the Holocaust.

In this perspective, characters in fiction, like the reality in which they are generated, are dissolved into a sequence of constructs sustained by the frame of reference, traditionally called the fictional world, within which they subsist. Character, in this sense, is merely one way of evoking the man-made, the factitious constellation of elements traditionally conceived as a person.

A consequence of such a view is that characters cease to be repositories of experience, in that their experience is neither cumulative nor integrated within any field of imagined inwardness. Identity is shattered and fragmented, dispersed into discrete moments or "sites" of experience or language. Hence, in a text, there is no center of imagined being to synthesize or integrate what is undergone. Any effort to conceptualize such a center is to indulge in fantasy, and is usually seen as either a preordained, mass-produced configuration imposed by convention, or an idiosyncratic delusion of either a madman or of language itself, the symbol-system of the texts called human beings.

Hence it is not surprising that the experience of Thomas's Lisa cannot be penetrated, and that the reader cannot assemble her from the mass of elements Thomas offers. Nor is it surprising that a Lisa who cannot be assembled or imagined cannot be perceived or experienced as confronting her experience. Her experience cannot be pondered, as Othello's or Anna Karenina's can, in terms of *her* sense of it. This is so despite the fact that the novel vividly *presents* her in the throes of her struggle to confront it.

It is a desperate view of the world, of language, of experience, that *The White Hotel* projects. The very artistry of the novel—artifice is surely the better word—serves, in its effectiveness, to convey it. That is what is so troubling about it, far more troubling than the same lack in Sophie: that it is not a failure of art, as in Styron, but a consummation of it, a realization of a project which is established not only by the individual writer, but by the very conception of art which he espouses.

More troubling still is the fact that this conception of art would seem to dominate virtually all serious writing being done today. It is one that boggles my mind, and not on Holocaustic grounds alone. □

Book Review

# Jewish Women's Rituals

*Jo Milgrom*

*Miriam's Well*, By Penina V. Adelman. (Fresh Meadows, N.Y.: Biblio Press, 1986,) 144 pp.

*Miriam's Well* is a daring book. It is an innovative assemblage of rituals for Jewish women to use throughout the year. The idea alone is ingenious, and attractive particularly to women alienated from traditional Jewish communities by the stifling lack of creativity and equality in those communities. What began in concept as a Rosh Hodesh celebration of the new moon and its harmony with the feminine cycle, has developed into an entire year of feminine focus and celebration, both joyous and somber.

Whether it is mask-making in honor of the revealed and concealed Esther (the month of Adar), or a mikveh song (month of Nisan) celebrating the coming out of Egypt, or an introspective meditation on menopause (Iyyar), or the challenge of dealing with loss (Tammuz), no participant can sit back as a spectator. Both the photographs, personal narrations and descriptions of the rituals indicate profound personal involvement. Adelman is courageous in seeking ritual expression and validation for conditions and passages as yet unmarked in Jewish practice; for example, the experience of miscarriage, yearning for fertility, reconciliation with infertility, and the onset and cessation of menstruation.

For all her creativity, however, Adelman doesn't go far enough or deep enough. Where biblical passages are simply read as part of a ceremony, they could also be studied. There is no reason why an experiential ritual shouldn't have a stimulating intellectual component. It is certainly an authentic Jewish principle, for example, that no prayer service is complete without some Torah component. In fact, I would aver that a thoughtful participant in these rituals might feel cheated if the content were wholly ad hoc and experiential, or might be deluded and conclude that Judaism does not have more to offer. Thus, for example, prior to a personal meditation on the Tree of Life (p. 43, for the month of Shevat) it might be appropriate to examine the biblical text itself, as well as the history of art on the symbolism of trees starting with the Garden of Eden, and leading to the idea of the tree as a self-portrait (Psalm 1) and the Tree of Life as Torah. This could bring the group to realize that the tree is not only a symbol of feminine nourishment but is also a reflection of the arborescent systems of the human body: lungs, brain, digestive tract, retinal structures, etc. The ultimate effect of this kind of perspective is to celebrate the human body, not only the female body. Perhaps one of the most important purposes of a Jewish feminist group is not only to seek unique feminine celebration for the disenfranchised half of the Jewish community, but to promote healing within the total community.

Adelman is also shortsighted at times. She misses the mark, for example, in emphasizing women's tree names in the ritual for the month of Shevat. The fact that Tamar means palm tree is irrelevant to the content of Genesis, chapter 38, despite the fine "midrashic" comment that "Tamar had to reach deep down within herself to draw up the sustaining force which would make her fruits grow" (p. 45). It would be more valuable for the group to study the intriguing interpersonal relationships in the narrative of Judah and Tamar and its place within the Joseph stories for a deeper understanding of the workings of biblical narrative. Robert Alter's insightful book, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, could be an effective guide here.

Carelessness, too, mars Adelman's book. Error begins on page two where the Bet Alpha zodiac mosaic is dated 2nd century B.C.E., rather than 6th century C.E., and is in fact not identified by name, but simply as a synagogue mosaic. This mosaic is followed by a chart which associates the months of the year with astrological signs and biblical personalities. We are given no explanation of how the selection of biblical personalities is arrived at. The introduction is flawed by facile generalizations which do no credit to the sustained effort and creativity of the thirteen rituals of Part II, which is the bulk of the book. Part I concludes with a series of photographs of biblical women depicted by various artists, without explanation or proper source identification. There are omissions and errors in the notes and the book sorely needs an index.

*One of the most important purposes of a Jewish feminist group is not only to seek unique feminine celebration for the disenfranchised half of the Jewish community, but to promote healing within the total community.*

Despite these limitations, *Miriam's Well* is full of ideas. Some of the chapters are too full, in fact, so that we see all the brainstorming which was not weeded out in the editing process. Nevertheless, the fact that we can sometimes disagree with the selection of sources in planning a particular month's event only means that this little book has broadened our perspectives and sharpened our discretion. If it is outrageous at times (no, I have no desire to image myself burying my postmenopausal uterus on the Mount of Olives), well, that's the privilege of the fertile imagination. This book was published a little unripe: I can hear the author saying, Yes, but we have a good thing here so why not get it out; we can polish it in the second edition. To which I say, Amen, so be it. □

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# Hypocrisy and Terrorism

*Louis René Beres*

*Terrorism: How the West Can Win*, edited by Benjamin Netanyahu. Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1986.

In *Terrorism: How the West Can Win*, Israel's UN Ambassador Benjamin Netanyahu has done both scholarship and U.S./Israeli security a genuine disservice. Proceeding on the desolate assumption that the world is organized into representatives of the Sons of Light (West) and the Sons of Darkness (East), he and his thirty-five contributors (all of whom took part in an international conference of the Jonathan Institute held June 24–27, 1984 in Washington, D.C.) offer an overwhelming barrage of indignation and bravado, but nothing in the way of evidence or authentic understanding. Rejecting the myriad axes of competition and conflict that operate in modern world politics, they identify only "two main antagonists of democracy in the postwar world, Communist totalitarianism and Islamic radicalism. . . ." Between them, states the anonymously written Introduction, these ideological and religious forces have "inspired virtually all of contemporary terrorism."

The book begins promisingly, offering to distinguish between lawful and unlawful insurgencies. Yet, after properly rejecting the notion that "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter," the contributors proceed to apply geopolitical rather than jurisprudential standards of differentiation. Thus, such groups as the PLO are correctly identified as terrorists, but U.S.-backed Contras in Central America and Unita (together with South Africa) in Angola are presumably freedom fighters. As for state sponsors of terrorism, Wolfgang Fikentscher's essay ("Terrorism, Marxism and the Soviet Constitution") laments that "The Soviet Union is permitted to foment virtually all kinds of unrest" and that "Destabilization is enshrined as a constitutional principle" (pp. 54–55). But as for destabilization when it is practiced by the West, no mention. Ambassador Netanyahu and his colleagues cry out against "the deliberate and systematic murder, maiming and menacing of the innocent to inspire fear for political ends" (the book's definition of terrorism), but only if such actions run counter to the interests of the West.

What exactly are these interests? In the still developing aftermath of "Iran-Gate," they certainly look unclear. Do these interests point to an overriding concern for security against terrorism? If so, why did the Reagan Administration supply arms to a state sponsor of terrorism in the Middle East and give the cash from the proceeds to Contra terrorists in Central America? Why did the President condone arms transfers to the enemy of Iraq that can only heighten U.S. and Israeli vulnerability to Arab terrorism?

The answer to these questions lies in the continuing primacy of anti-Sovietism. More than anything else the interests of the West—as they are defined in Washington—are identified with control of an "Evil Empire." As current events reveal, where the objectives of counter-terrorism seem opposed to the expectations of anti-Sovietism, Washington inevitably favored the latter. Ironically, such thinking produces the worst of both worlds, decreasing our distance from nuclear war as it increases our susceptibility to terrorism.

And what, exactly, is this "West" that we must protect? What, precisely, are its boundaries? Does it include South Africa in its extant form? Are SWAPO and the ANC terrorists (SWAPO *is* included as a terrorist group by Moshe Arens in his essay on "Terrorist States") even though they have been far more restrained in the use of force than the Contras and Unita? Does it include Chile and Paraguay (which are only "authoritarian" rather than "totalitarian") even though the Pinochet and Stroesner regimes are the most repressive in this hemisphere? Shall we also worry about France, which expresses the standards of Western civilization by assassinating environmentalists at sea and by trafficking (as does the Reagan administration) with state sponsors of terrorism in the Middle East? And what high ideals do we sustain by concern for such exemplars of the Free World as Austria, whose president just happens to look very much like a Nazi war criminal?

The ironies and double-standards are outrageous. Moreover, they are plainly visible and self-defeating. Perhaps Netanyahu is correct in his statement that "The Qaddafi regime in Libya, for example, is less a government and more a murderous clique" (p. 62), but where is his indignation over similarly invidious regimes that he counts among the members of the "Free World"? And where is his understanding that our uneven stance toward "murderous clique" governments does not go unnoticed, and that it enhances our vulnerability to terrorism?

How can we take seriously the statement by George Schultz: "The lesson for civilized nations is that we must respond to the terrorist threat within the rule of law, lest we become unwitting accomplices in the terrorist's scheme to undermine civilized society" (p. 19)? What shall we make of such sanctimoniousness by an administration that chooses to disregard the compulsory jurisdiction of the World Court in the matter of U.S.-supported terrorism against Nicaragua and then vetoes the Security Council resolution compelling America to comply with international law? Shall we be moved by those very persons in Washington who publicly practice "disinformation" (Netanyahu urges that we "educate the press" as part of an effective strategy of counterterrorism), and who secretly ship arms to Iran (a state sponsor of anti-American terrorism) in contravention of U.S. law and policy?

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The West, of course, is led by Washington. Speaking for America, the Reagan administration is animated by an obsessive anti-Sovietism, a configuration of vacant intuitions that runs counter to our interests and our ideals. Displacing every other dimension of international relations, this caricatural view of another country—a view supported and reaffirmed by the authors of *Terrorism: How the West Can Win*—creates rather than controls terrorism.

The overriding risk of terrorism does not lurk in guerrilla camps or in Soviet machinations. It rests on our own failure to understand that human rights *everywhere* are important, and that they are important *in themselves*. To be effective against terrorism, lawful and resourceful states will have to end their support of all repressive regimes ("authoritarian" as well as "totalitarian"). And they will have to end their sponsorship of *all* insurgents that fail to comply with the humanitarian rules of warfare.

Regime terror breeds insurgent terror, and must be opposed strenuously by the entire community of nations. Failing to understand this, the contributors to *Terrorism* discover no contradiction in their concern for "democracies" that display no regard for human rights. For them, as for the Reagan administration, all anti-Soviet states are by definition democratic and all pro-Soviet states are totalitarian, period! Not surprisingly, the recommendations in this book will impress no one who can still recognize the difference between shallow cliches and purposeful scholarship.

Perhaps the most intellectually barren piece in this disappointing collection is Jean Kirkpatrick's "The Totalitarian Confusion," which summarizes her views on human rights as follows: "The United Nations' acceptance of so-called national liberation movements as legitimate is as good an indicator as any of the moral confusion that has come to surround this view of violence as the preferred method of political action" (p. 58). Surely the principle of "national liberation" is often used to shield terrorism, but for an exponent of the democratic West to conclude from such abuse that the *principle itself* is defective is astonishing.

The world is no longer willing to accept the gibberish of the Free World/Socialist World dichotomies. Although the Soviet Union is a repressive society that carries out subversion in other societies, the West is hardly blameless. If there is an essential difference between the Brezhnev Doctrine and the Reagan Doctrine from the perspective of international law (both doctrines invoke the "right" to violate the peremptory obligations of non-intervention and to exempt their respective states from the normative expectations of the UN Charter), it has yet to be revealed.

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*. . . it is only through expanded superpower cooperation that we can secure ourselves against terrorism.*

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Consider Haiti and the Philippines, where President Reagan now takes credit for supporting the forces of "democratic revolution." Here it is apparent that the West's eleventh-hour shift in loyalties was mandated only by the collapse of long-standing U.S. policies. The true crimes of Jean-Claude Duvalier and Ferdinand Marcos, according to Washington, were not ones of despotism, but of weakness. Had these dictators been able to remain in full control, they would still be counted by the administration as bastions of the "Free World." And efforts to topple them from power would now be characterized as "terrorism."

The simplistic polarity of East and West embraced by Netanyahu and his associates makes clear thinking impossible. Lucidity must not be opposed. We must, indeed, take a firm stand against international terrorism, but this stand must be informed by more than the banal syntax of an endless Cold War.

The contributors to *Terrorism* see only rivalry with the Soviet Union, but it is only through expanded superpower cooperation that we can secure ourselves against terrorism. In the absence of such cooperation, America will remain indifferent to human rights in "authoritarian" states while it supports terrorism against "totalitarian" ones. As a result, we will elicit *more* terrorism against the West, and the Soviets will be *compelled* to support such terrorism wherever possible. Moreover, because the deployment of Euro-missiles generates anti-Americanism on the Continent, it may also generate future instances of terrorism against the United States. Such instances would, of course, be a direct result of this country's all-consuming policy of anti-Sovietism.

Curiously, in his essay on "Defining Terrorism," Netanyahu rails against terrorism because it "breaks down the pivotal distinctions that define the moral limits of war" (p. 11), but nowhere in this book is a similar concern expressed about U.S. and other Western preparations for nuclear war. (All we are given is the familiar warning: "Imagine a Qaddafi or a Khomeini with nuclear weapons" [p. 176].) If the West were really intent upon confining such prospects to the imagination, we would have to achieve real cooperation with the Soviet Union. There is no other way.

In the Soviet Union, Gorbachev is understandably worried about a superpower nuclear war. Should the Reagan administration be prepared to relieve these worries with a far-reaching arms control agreement, it is likely that the Soviets would be willing to reduce or eliminate their support for anti-Western terrorist groups. To safeguard Israel and the United States (the two Western states of real concern to the authors) from terrorism, America will have to reject both the Reagan Doctrine and Star Wars. As a *quid pro quo*, we could expect the Soviet Union: 1.) to oppose (together with its client states of Bulgaria, East Germany and North Korea) what it freely calls "adventurist" anti-American/anti-Israel groups in Europe and the Middle East, and to acknowledge that such groups are not authentic movements for "national liberation"; 2.) to end support of states in the Middle East that harbor and sustain anti-American/anti-Israel terrorists (especially Syria), and to acknowledge that such states do nothing to advance the interests of "self-determination"; and 3.) to end shipments of arms to Cuba and Nicaragua as reciprocity for U.S. renunciation of lawless insurgencies against those countries.

Surely Israel can never benefit from a condition of protracted U.S./Soviet

hostility. Nor can it benefit from close ties to a superpower that not only bargains secretly with terrorist patrons in Iran, but that also exploits Israeli dependence by forcing Jerusalem to take part in such dealings. Indeed, a predictable outcome of U.S./Israel aid to Iran against Iraq will be renewed Arab terrorism.

*Israeli security must be built upon correct assessments of Arab hostility.*

Israeli security must be built upon correct assessments of Arab hostility. In this connection, such security can only be degraded by the assessment that Arab hostility is based upon a hatred of *democracy*, a view offered by Netanyahu: "Middle Eastern radicals did not develop their hatred for the West because of Israel; they hated Israel from its inception ... because Israel represents for them precisely the incarnation. of those very traditions and values foremost of which is democracy, which they hate and fear" (pp. 62–63). Whatever the problems of democracy in the Arab world, this argument is a parody that no one can take seriously. Hence, it only undermines Israel's security.

The book concludes with the following charge: "The terrorist challenge must be answered. The choice is between a free society based on law and compassion and a rampant barbarism in the service of brute force and tyranny. Confusion and vacillation facilitated the rise of terrorism. Clarity and courage will ensure its defeat." On its face, this is good advice. In its intended meaning, however, it is based on a vision of *Realpolitik* that deforms reasoned analysis by the bewitchment of language. Should it be taken seriously, *Terrorism: How the West Can Win*, would serve only the interests of despair. □


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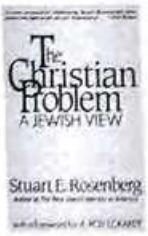
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# Worthy of Your Consideration

*My Friend, the Enemy* by Uri Avnery (Lawrence Hill & Co., 1986). Uri Avnery is a tireless crusader for peace in the Middle East as well as editor of the Israeli weekly Haolam Hazeh. His book provides a fascinating personal account of his crusade for peace as a maverick in Israel. While he is sometimes politically naive—he rarely checks to see if the PLO people he meets with are willing to communicate to their own audience the reassurances they give to him—this account is provocative and worth reading.

*Presidents' Secret Wars* by John Prados (William Morrow and Co., 1986). This is required reading for a backgrounder to the current Iran/Contra crisis. The attempt by various presidents to limit their democratic accountability is detailed here.

*World Hunger: Twelve Myths* by Frances Moore Lappé and Joseph Collins (Grove Press, 1986). If you think world hunger can't be solved, this is must reading. Ditto, if you have friends who think that the large problems are too complicated to be dealt with. In this powerful book, Lappé and Collins talk more political sense than you are likely to hear in all the political campaigns of the next two years combined.

*Neither Right nor Left: Fascist Ideology in France* by Zeev Sternhell (University of California Press, 1986). Fascism did not pop up from nowhere in the France of the late 1930's—it had a long historical germination and many of its ideas had already become quite popular in intellectual circles in the decades before the Nazis actually came to power. Sternhell is a first rate intellectual and scholar.

*Miriam's Tambourine* by Howard Schwartz (Seth Press, distributed by Free Press, 1986). A collection of classic Jewish folktales from around the world retold by one of the country's leading folklorists.

*Femininity: The Politics of the Personal* by Barbara Sichtermann (University of Minnesota Press, 1986). A significant challenge to feminist approaches to sexuality, yet written from the perspective of a committed feminist. Sichtermann provokes a serious rethinking of our understanding of sexual desire, orgasm, and sexual fantasy.

*Death and Birth of Judaism* by Jacob Neusner (Basic Books, 1987). Jacob Neusner is one of the most prolific of serious Jewish scholars in the world today. This book provides an overview of the contemporary Jewish world, seen as a product of responses to the breakdown of a more traditional Jewish world. As usual, insights abound.

*The Healing Web* by Marc Pilisuk and Susan Hillier Parks (University Press of New England, 1986). The breakdown of strong communities in the contemporary world has caused a profound physical and emotional crisis for all human beings. The reason? People fundamentally need caring support from others. Pilisuk and Parks present a careful analysis of the social support networks that have survived the larger breakdown or which are being intentionally constructed, show how they function, and present the best existing overview of contemporary research on social support—setting the framework for understanding current attempts at community self-help projects.

*Among Friends* by Letty Cottin Pogrebin (McGraw Hill, 1987). Although written in a popular style, Pogrebin's book has many deep insights about the contemporary crisis in friendship. Her discussion of class and ethnic factors, her keen sensitivity to the impact of sexism (Pogrebin was one of the founders of *MS. Magazine*), her insights into developmental issues take this book beyond the conventional wisdom and make it a valuable contribution.

*After the Last Sky* by Edward Said (Pantheon Books, 1986). A compelling and people-oriented account of the experience of the Palestinian people. Edward Said is a master propagandist, and he manages to redescribe the PLO as a "national apparatus for directing and protecting working Palestinians from the lonely ravages of market, war and exile." As an entree to Palestinian self-understanding, this book is powerful. Yet in its remarkable insensitivy to how the Jewish people could reasonably be expected to understand the situation, Said's book is a reflection of the problem that has kept his people enslaved by mythology rather than a hopeful sign of transcendence.

*Wine, Women & Death: Medieval Hebrew Poems on the Good Life* by Raymond P. Scheindlin (Jewish Publication Society, 1986). The rich human complexity of Jewish life in medieval Spain is captured in this superb presentation of Jewish poetry. Scheindlin's analysis of the poems provides a fascinating introduction to Medieval Jewish culture.

*Taking Reform Seriously* by Michael W. McCann (Cornell University Press, 1986). McCann argues that public interest liberals fail to offer a coherent alternative vision of democratic economic reorganization and this failure severely limits their possibilities. No matter how powerful their values, unless they have a coherent economic policy, or at least a coherent vision of how these decisions will be made, they will either not be taken seriously, or gain credibility only by engaging in cooperation with corporate agendas that may ultimately undercut the principles which originally motivated them. An important book for anyone who is interested in public interest liberalism.

*Alternative Americas* by Anne Norton (University of Chicago Press, 1986). Norton gives a provocative new reading to the foundations of American history by integrating cultural and political themes. It is an important corrective to those who think that they can understand history solely in economic or political categories, and a proof of how valuable feminism and literary criticism can be to our understanding of the past. □

# Current Debate/West Bank Contradictions

## *Two Critiques of Abba Eban on The West Bank*

*Martin Gouterman*

I was delighted to see Abba Eban's article in *Tikkun* (Vol. I, No. 2) state that "the permanent incorporation of the West Bank and Gaza into the Israeli state" is "stupendous folly." Nonetheless, there are aspects of the article that require critical comment.

Eban refers to the Labor Party platform that talks against "settlements in the heart of Arab populated areas." He goes on to say: "If Israel were able safely to disengage from the tasks of ruling the densely populated areas of the West Bank and Gaza it would not only be making concessions to Palestinian rights, it would also be serving Israel's values and interest." He quotes Peres as assenting to the doctrine of "territories for peace" and optimistically mentions the 1,030,000 Labor Party voters as signs of a large constituency for this. Thus the tone of Eban's article is that there is movement of Israel out of the occupied territories and that the Labor Party will carry this out.

Unfortunately this message omits the uncomfortable fact that the policy of planting settlements in the West Bank and Gaza was begun under the Labor Party during its unchallenged rule from 1967 to 1977, and that under the recent Peres government the settler population increased 20 percent. Moreover, estimating a cost of $50,000 per settler (a rough value taken from figures elsewhere) Israel has expended $2.5 billion on the settlements. It would have greatly enhanced Eban's article to acknowledge the Labor Party's role in creating the Frankenstein monster of the settler presence and the resulting waste of money.

Furthermore, since the article "does not deal with the various diplomatic expressions that could be given to the doctrines of disengagement or 'territory for peace'," it begs the real question. In committing to "disengage from the densely populated Arab areas," Eban goes no further than the Allon Plan, which would keep the sparsely populated areas as part of Israel. No Arab group that could credibly negotiate peace would agree to such a formula. Probably less than 20 percent of the Knesset would agree to realistic proposals that envisage withdrawal from all of the West Bank and Gaza. In the absence of such a realistic basis for "peace for territories" that status quo will continue.

What really is the status quo? For half its existence Israel has practiced de facto apartheid with regard to 25 percent of the population under its control—i.e. the 1,300,000 Arabs of the occupied territories. Furthermore, roughly half of the land in these areas has been appropriated by Israel for one purpose or another. Thus the effect of Eban's article is to lull liberal Diaspora Jewry to the current realities. Admittedly, a positive feature of the status quo is that Israel remains a democracy for the Jews, and the Israeli Arabs still vote. A negative feature is the rise of a fanatic element that will do anything (e.g. attack innocent Arabs with bombs and bullets) to further annexation....

The contempt that the ultranationalists have for liberal Diaspora Jewish values is openly expressed. The possibility that this element will gain control of Israel must be faced. Such control will likely lead to a narrowing of political expression for Israeli Jews. Furthermore, such a government in control of secret services can easily provoke Arab terrorist acts that would create a climate that would lead to disenfranchisement of the Israeli Arabs and the opening of offices to pay the Arabs to leave. This possibility gains reality in the light of the response that the ultranationalist M.K. Geulah Cohen makes when asked to comment on the danger of permanent annexation of territories containing 1,300,000 Arabs: "Something will happen."

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Eban's article closes with a valuable long time perspective. "Our road (i.e., leaving the territories) points to a crucial survival, not to another heroic martyrdom ... we can at least keep the sanctuaries of reason intact and arm ourselves with a rationality the lack of which is written in the death of past kingdoms." Unfortunately, the facts suggest that his road will *not* be followed. The ultranationalist religious forces have plans, they are a major force, and they are leading Israel toward a clerical fascist state....

One rationale for Zionism—both in the democratic version espoused by Eban and the clerical fascist version of Kahane—is the need of a Jewish state for Jewish survival. This need is manifest in those regions where once great Jewish communities have vanished: Alexandria, Babylon, Spain, and most recently East Central Europe. But if we look at our history, each of these communities lasted far longer than either of the two Jewish commonwealths. Liberal Diaspora Jews may be making a wiser decision in entrusting their future to the enlightened humanism of the Goyim than are the Jews of Israel, who must rely on the rationality of the current and future leadership of the Jewish state. □

*Martin Gouterman is a member of Kadima/New Jewish Agenda.*

In his essay, "The Central Question" (*Tikkun* Vol. I, No. 2) Abba Eban manifests the moral and spiritual condition of much of the liberal Jewish community, both inside and outside of Israel. There is only one term to describe it: self-deception.

The general structure of this self-deception consists of two elements. First there is the presentation of self as morally perceptive and concerned. This is the Eban who rejects annexation of the West Bank and Gaza. It is the Eban who says of the Palestinians living under Israeli occupation that they:

> ... cannot vote or be elected at any level, have no juridical control over the government that determines the conditions of their existence, have no right of appeal against the judgments of military courts, are not free to leave their land with assurance of a right to return, are not immune from judgments of expulsion from their birthplace and homeland, have no flag to revere....

The morally sensitive Eban recognizes the issue as one of "national self-expression." He defines himself with verbal power and clarity: "The idea of exercising permanent rule over a foreign nation can only be defended by an ideology and rhetoric of self-worship and exclusiveness that are incompatible with the ethical legacy of prophetic Judaism and classical Zionism." Eban #1 is a man of this tradition.

But, then there is the other Eban. This is the Eban who does not take responsibility for the morally indefensible situation he describes. He blames it on "Arab refusal to enter a substantive negotiation." This is the Eban that misperceives and misrepresents the historical record. This is the Eban that like Peres lacks the courage to take bold steps to achieve peace and overcome the injustice his country perpetuates. This he hides from himself and his audience.

Consider Eban's account of the failure to achieve a peace settlement: "The lack of progress in this direction is not the result of inherent Israeli obduracy; it is the consequence of Arab refusal to enter a substantive negotiation. Israelis react in one way to theoretical fantasies and in another way to concrete diplomatic prospects." But Eban does not even mention the most important peace opportunity of recent years. This was the Arafat-Hussein accord. Splitting the PLO, and deepening the hostility of Syria and Libya, Arafat and Hussein publicly proclaimed their effort to reach a political settlement with Israel. It was explicitly based on the principle of trading "territory for peace." Rather than speaking in terms of an independent Palestinian state, it called for a confederation of Jordan-Palestine. And as a basis for negotiations it indicated flexibility with respect to resolutions 242 and 338.

But how did Peres and the Labor Party respond to this "concrete diplomatic prospect?" Did they try to reinforce this move towards moderation in the PLO? Did they try to demonstrate to the Palestinians that the political road held significant promise? Did they encourage the U.S. to begin the process of negotiations with the PLO? No, quite to the contrary. The demonization of the PLO continued. PLO headquarters in Tunisia were bombed. The U.S. was held to its commitment to not negotiate with the PLO until after it had recognized 242 and 338.

After a year of effort, the Arafat-Hussein effort collapsed. But consider what it collapsed over! As a precondition for negotiations it was required of the PLO that they explicitly accept resolutions 242 and 338 (resolutions that treat the Palestinians only as refugees and recognize Israel's right to exist). The PLO offered to Washington various verbal formulas whereby it would explicitly accept 242 and 338 provided that the *United States* (not Israel mind you) recognize that the Palestinians have a right to self-determination. Yet, the United States refused to concede this abstract point. And, of course, it is a refusal that mirrors the refusal of the Israeli government, the Labor Party, Peres and Eban himself.

Eban speaks of the "urgent effort of Shimon Peres" to bring about negotiations. But what kind of negotiations? Not negotiations with one's enemy; not negotiations with the recognized leadership of the Palestinian people. No, they seek negotiations with King Hussein or with an alternative Israeli-picked Palestinian leadership. How is one to understand this refusal to deal with the PLO? Given the terrorist background of many Israeli leaders (e.g. Begin, Shamir) it cannot be a matter of deep principle. Given the recent condoning of the murder of captured terrorists in Gaza, it cannot be the reflection of an inner purity. But what is it about?

*It is not words that are needed. What is needed in Israel is courage and leadership; what is needed is action, in short, a new policy.*

Essentially it is the strategy of inaction. It is how you can seem to be, even to yourself, for negotiations and compromise without ever having to enter those negotiations. It is a strategy of talking peace and justice without having to take any risks for either. Essentially, it is the strategy of self-deception. This passivity that claims to be making all possible efforts for peace is nowhere more evident than in Eban's (and everyone else's) reference to the "dramatic change that ensued when Anwar Sadat made his voyage to Jerusalem." Here they are, the leadership of the militarily most powerful country in the region, here they are an occupying army for nineteen years, and they say, "You Arabs, you Palestinians, you do something dramatic to transform my psyche." Where is the dramatic action on the part of Peres and Eban; where is there willingness to even recognize the bold and risky moves Arafat did make?

Theirs is the politics of moral self-indulgence. When Eban says that "Israel can only affirm its membership in the democratic family of nations today by

*Norbert Hornstein is a professor and Jerry Segal a research assistant at the University of Maryland.*

asserting a provisionality" of their Israeli rule over the West Bank, he is really telling us about the psyche of Israeli liberalism. It seeks to "affirm its membership in the democratic family" and thinks that it can do so through *assertions*, that is, through words. But it is not words that are needed. What is needed in Israel is courage and leadership; what is needed is action, in short, a new policy.

The core of a new policy towards the West Bank and Gaza should start with two elements:

1. Israel should explicitly declare its recognition of the Palestinian right to national self-determination, and declare its willingness *in principle* to accept the results of such self-determination, including an independent state on the West Bank and Gaza.

2. Israel should abandon any efforts to select for the Palestinians their leadership. It should declare its willingness, without preconditions, to talk peace with any party interested in negotiations.

At the same time, Israel should undertake a series of unilateral actions designed to "create facts." But this time the facts created should not be in the direction of the de facto annexation of the West Bank. Rather they should be facts based on Eban's concept of the "provisionality" of Israeli rule over the territories. The long term goal should be an independent Palestinian state, with democratically elected leadership, and existing in stable peace with Israel.

To begin the creation of this "fact" Israel should:

- Permit free elections on the West Bank and Gaza to allow the clear identification of a legitimate leadership. Membership in or affiliation with the PLO should not be a bar to holding office.
- Contribute to the further development of democratic institutions by instituting the full range of civil liberties and legal protections afforded within Israel. Thus there would be an end to censorship, an end to administrative detention, an end to forced expulsion, an end to group punishment, an end to blowing up or bricking up of Palestinian homes and an end to the prohibition of political organizing.
- Halt all further expansion or creation of new settlements in the territories; halt all further appropriation of Palestinian land; institute processes for the restoration of land unjustly seized within the territories.

Up to now the Israeli policy of "creating facts" has been to confront the Palestinians with the prospect of creeping annexation. Israel must make a clean and dramatic break. It must move in exactly the opposite direction. The creation of a peaceful, democratic, Palestinian state will require broad reconciliation. The outcome will be determined by the process. Israel can do a great deal to initiate a relationship based on a mutuality of dignity and respect between Palestinians and Jews. In short, it must adopt a foreign policy that is based on the best in the Jewish tradition. □

# *Eban: The Abiding Tragedy of the West Bank*

## *Abba Eban*

Those of us who are accused of being intellectual should pay heed to the definitions which I once heard personally from the mouth of John Maynard Keynes: "people who use more words than are necessary to say more than they know." Gouterman, Hornstein and Segal seem to have read every word of my article without understanding its central purpose. The article was avowedly one dimensional. My sole purpose was to illuminate the idea that the permanent rule of Israel over the one million three hundred thousand Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza is a revolting prospect not only for the Palestinians who are subjected to that rule but to the Israelis in whose name it would be exercised. The only valid judgment of the article is whether it has achieved that limited but crucial aim. The evidence is already positive.

*Abba Eban is a Member of Knesset and the author of* Heritage: Civilization and the Jews. *He is one of the Israeli Labor Party's foremost authorities on foreign policy.*

The need for this formulation was dictated not only by the pursuit of objective truth but also by a frankly political calculation. The permanence of Israeli rule over a foreign people is becoming increasingly accepted even by those whose minds and consciences should revolt against it. This is because the occupation is still in force and because the present deadlock survives without intolerable turbulence in daily life. My task in *Tikkun* was to indicate the volcanic nature of this outwardly tolerable situation. My other motive was to stress that it is Israel that suffers most from the incongruous structure to which it is being committed by inertia and deadlock. The occupation is not primarily a foreign policy issue; it is in fact not causing Israel much trouble in its international relations. The real danger is to Israel's vital interest, including its Jewish vocation, its democratic structure and its security. If we can inculcate the idea that this is no longer a zero sum game and that both actors in the drama urgently need a change in the present situation, we may soon approach a negotiating atmosphere.

My article in *Tikkun* was only one phase of my current campaign, which has included articles in the principal national media in America and Europe and lengthy contacts with the Palestine-Arab leadership. I have found that American Jewish leaders are more militant in their devotion to what they believe to be Israel's interests than are Israelis whose proximity to danger compels a measure of realism and prudence. Some American Jews seem to regard the democratic vision of their country's founding fathers as crucial for themselves without being suitable for export. It matters little to many of them that the Palestinian Arabs in the territories might permanently live in conditions which would provoke mass demonstrations or protests if a Jewish community anywhere were in a similar state of inferior rank. My thought was that if we could unite all those who for whatever reasons oppose annexationist policies, the eclipse of that option would open the way to a rational solution which would reconcile Israel's security with Palestinian freedom.

One would have thought that men and women who call themselves Jewish liberals would have read my article with satisfaction (especially those whose own contribution to the anti-annexationist cause has not forced their way into the rather extensive literature). And yet my advocacy of disengagement from our rule over a foreign nation seems to have caused discontent to Gouterman, Hornstein and Segal. They simply cannot take "yes" for an answer.

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*I have found that American Jewish leaders are more militant in their devotion to what they believe to be Israel's interests than are Israelis whose proximity to danger compels a measure of realism and prudence.*

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Gouterman is at least courteous. Since he believes that the Jewish future belongs to the Diaspora where Jews will bask in "the enlightened humanism of the goyim," he can afford to be tolerant of our irrational foibles in what he conceives to be a transient phase of Jewish independence. Hornstein and Segal on the other hand are personally insulting. I really do not feel like persuading *Tikkun* readers that I am not a schizophrenic hypocrite. There is enough literature on the first decades of Israel's political history to make it comfortably possible for me to avoid personal image hunting. My unfinished struggle for an enlightened, lucid, rational, visionary Israel has not been confined to hours of leisure between courses at a university.

In the final analysis, my fellow citizens and I will have to make peace not with Gouterman, Hornstein and Segal, which is almost impossible, but with Arab Nationalists who seem to be less intractable. A shorter version of my article in *Tikkun* appeared in the *New York Times* and the *Herald Tribune* and the Arabs' reception has been generous. At a public meeting in Jerusalem the article was praised by Palestinian leaders who regard the PLO as their representative organization. In Egypt the government leaders expressed satisfaction with my formulation. A similar response came from leading Palestinian intellectuals in the United States. On November 24, 1986, the major daily newspaper in Morocco hailed my *New York Times* article as a significant step on the road to peace. The writer commented: "Arabs now have evidence that truth, logic, national interest and Jewish humanism are at work in at least one sector of the Israeli establishment."

More important to me than self-defense against cantankerous American Jewish liberals is the need to establish what is wrong with Gouterman, Hornstein and Segal's approach. My reservation lies in the crucial area between truth and half-truth. Many of their criticisms of Israeli attitudes are valid especially when reinforced by retrospective wisdom. I have myself sometimes articulated some of these criticisms. But both in relation to the past and in reference to the present and future the three critics have shown a total blindness to any except Arab sensitivities and Arab grievances. In their mythology, there is no Israeli case at all; no Arab wars against Israel; no Palestinian covenant with its genocidal overtones; no recollection of Arafat's grinning face celebrating the murder (at his command) of our athletes at Munich and our children at Maalot or of our hundreds of slaughtered bodies at Lod Airport and the coastal road. Hornstein and Segal sneer at the idea that Israelis should want the Palestinians who perform these outrages, both before and after the 1967 war, to "do something dramatic to transform our psyche" as did Anwar Sadat in 1977. But why should we not be entitled to our own psyche, our own memories even to our own conflicts and obsessions? The paradox of Israeli life lies in the tension between the reality of our strength and the psychology of our vulnerability. What is the use of requiring normal reaction to an experience which has been totally abnormal?

Passing in grossly insensitive silence over Israel's travails, Hornstein and Segal present an image of history in which there has never been a record of Arab rejectionism. This is really intolerable. Palestinian leaders rejected Chamberlain's 1939 White Paper. They rejected the 1947 United Nations recommendation of frontiers which they would dearly like to have today. They rejected Ben Gurion's repeated proposals to fix the 1949 armistice line as permanent boundaries. They rejected the Camp David proposals which would have made "the elected representative of the Palestinian people" the decisive arbiters of "permanent status of the West Bank and Gaza," in conditions which would have to "satisfy the legitimate interests of the Palestinian people and their just requirements."

The Palestinian leaders were never asked to "accept" any of these proposals as they stood; only to regard them as starting points of the negotiation. And this in light of the Sadat experience—which illustrates how drastically Israeli rhetoric melts away under the influence of direct encounter with a previous foe who is now ready to negotiate.

Hornstein and Segal conclude their accusations with a list of Arab demands for which they seek Israeli acceptance in advance of or instead of a negotiation. In their view the Israeli role is simply to find out what the Palestinians want and to carry it out without further adieu. There is nothing whatever that the Arab side should be asked to do in return. No requests for abstention of terror; no pledge for the demilitarization of areas to be evacuated by Israel; no opportunity to negotiate the location of the "secure and recognized boundaries," to which Israeli entitlement has been internationally recognized; no undertaking to regard the proposed withdrawal as the final end of the conflict.

Hornstein and Segal ask imperiously what Peres and I have done to express our interest in peace. Most of the serious actors in the Middle East drama believe we have done quite a lot. This is believed by King Hussein, by President Mubarak, by the U.S. Administration, by King Hussein of Morocco, by Margaret Thatcher, by other European leaders and by my Palestinian interlocutors here in Jerusalem. None of them think that the PLO has done enough. All of them lay much culpability at Arafat's door. The Hussein-Arafat agreement of February, 1985, was followed by Peres' speech at the UN in October in which the Israeli position was substantially modified. Peres made no disqualifying references to the PLO. He said only that "we will negotiate with Palestinians who would

represent peace, not terror." Later, at Alexandria, Peres accepted, in agreement with Mubarak and Hussein, the idea of an international conference. This was the most daring Israeli gesture of all, for not one of the other participants in such a conference would support Israel's minimal security and territorial proposals. Peres has created a situation in which Israeli formulations of the conditions for a peace conference are more lenient than those demanded by the U.S.

The gravest misrepresentation of the Israeli record lies in Hornstein and Segal's version of the Hussein-Arafat agreement. This draft accord was not killed by Israel's attitude. Why does an Arab negotiating position have to be endorsed by Israel? Has anyone ever heard of an Israeli position in the past forty years that ever received prior Arab endorsement? The Hussein-Arafat agreement was shattered by Arafat's refusal or inability to sign it—notwithstanding his promise to do so. The full story of this betrayal was revealed in a three hour speech by Hussein. Meanwhile, all the nonrejectionist Arab states—unlike Gouterman, Hornstein and Segal—have implored Arafat to revise his position. Most of them seem to have more respect for Israel's concerns and constraints than the two Jewish liberals from the University of Maryland.

*Why should we not be entitled to our own psyche, our own memories even to our own conflicts and obsessions?*

I believe that the peace process must be revived in spite of an unpromising parliamentary condition in Israel. In calling for Israeli abandonment of the West Bank I have addressed the Israeli half of the problem. The question is whether American Jews do the Palestinians any service by inciting them to regard all Israeli sensitivities and concerns with total contempt. The greatest adversaries of peace, however unwittingly, are those friends of Israel who support all Israeli obduracies and those friends of the Palestinians who urge them to take their rejectionism into its fifth decade. □

# At The Sea of Reeds

*David Curzon*

It is said:

In each generation we exodus from Egypt,
reach the Sea of Reeds, look back in fear,
and protest to our teacher or our god:
Why bring us to this desert just to die!
We'll suicide, drown ourselves in the Sea!
We'll return to slavery and escape annihilation!

We'll fight the forces of enslavement unaided!
We'll shout, frighten them with noise!

But that generation—so goes another midrash—
stopped their complaint against circumstance
and entered those waters up to their ankles,
up to their knees, up to their groin,
up to their chin, up to their nostrils,
and only then did the miracle occur.

# The Chosen People

The Hebrews in Egypt who chose not to leave—
mostly those holding responsible positions—
refused to be part of a stampeded populace
led by a mad stuttering murderer
who discoursed in the desert with burning bushes.
These realistic skeptics expected the worst;2
they could predict worship of golden calves.

It made sense to them to stay civilized slaves

and not be witness to the separating sea,
the pillar of cloud as guide by day,
the pillar of fire as guide by night,
the struck rock that gushed water,
the thunder and lightning as signs over Sinai,
the countenance of Moses descending the mountain.

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# Current Debate/Intermarriage

## *A Response to Anne Roiphe on The Jewish Family: The Problem of Intermarriage*

*Naomi Ruth Goldenberg*

Anne Roiphe's feminist perspective on the Jewish family in the second issue of *Tikkun* discusses several important directions which the Jewish community must take in order to support family life. I fully agree that afterschool programs, daycare, scholarships, and counseling must be parts of a far-ranging strategy to ensure Jewish survival. I also agree that we must refuse to promote the images of Jewish mother, Jewish Princess and Jewish Prince because these stereotypes encourage us to hate and mock each other.

However, in order to realize Roiphe's vision of a Jewish community which effectively nurtures Jewish families, I suggest that we add one more stereotype to the list of those we must exorcise—that of the self-hating, confused Jew who has betrayed her or his people by intermarrying. This is one cliched, destructive image which I feel Roiphe herself must examine closely both in her prose and in her heart.

In Roiphe's article, we hear how the Jewish family is now facing new dangers in addition to being "threatened by the familiar enemies of assimilation and intermarriage" (p. 70). "Part of the reason for intermarriage, for the loss of connection," Roiphe explains, "lies in the unhappy images Jewish men and Jewish women have of each other" (p. 71). But this is only one of the causes of intermarriage which she recognizes. A few pages later Roiphe adds two more reasons. First, she says that choosing a non-Jewish spouse can be the result of misguided ambition. "Of course," she writes, "the grass is always greener and the social status appears higher on the gentile side of the fence and that is sufficient to cause some Jews to intermarry" (p. 74). And, second, she mentions a rather Freudian motive: "Others are affected," she says, "by the vagrancies (*sic*) of incest taboos to seek out the stranger for sexual liaison and marriage" (p. 74). For example, she explains that "in the twenties, thirties and forties," Jewish men "heard" the anti-Semitism of American culture and absorbed it. "The movie stars," she says, "were blond and blue-eyed, the fashion models were corn-fed (*sic*), the Jewish model of beauty was not appreciated" (p. 72). No wonder then that so many men were led to choose a spouse "in the strange land of the goyim" (p. 72).

Besides functioning to convince Jewish men of the attractions of shiksas, the non-Jewish world, according to Roiphe, relishes hearing Jewish men exchange jokes about Jewish princesses. These tellers of tales, she writes, "don't understand that the Christian world uses these jokes to confirm and spread distaste for Jews, who they believe are greedy, money-hogs and spiritually inferior people" (p. 72).

I wonder if Roiphe realizes how these stereotypes hurt Jews, like myself, who are raising families in "mixed" marriages. Those of us who have married non-Jews do not believe that we are particularly sad, mixed up, brainwashed or self-hating. When I hear people like Roiphe explain the twisted reasons why Jews marry gentiles, I feel that I am being called names. And, when I hear false statements proclaiming the universal anti-Semitism of the non-Jewish world, I feel that my husband is being called names. People like me would like to participate in the activities of our Jewish communities. We would like to take our spouses and children with us. But the promulgation of these stereotypes about Jews who intermarry and about the gentile world as a whole often forces us to stay clear of Jewish organizations. We stay away in order to protect both ourselves and our families form ugly slurs.

I urge Anne Roiphe and all those who find nothing objectionable about her comments on Jews who intermarry to think about their displeasure at those of us who have mated with the goyim. Isn't your distaste for us another example of Jew-hating? Do you really want so many Jews to feel ill-at-ease in the Jewish world? I do not believe that fear of assimilation, of cultural homogeneity, or of the "new Hellenism" (p. 74), as Roiphe puts it, is the only motive behind the familiar railing against intermarriage. I suspect there is a measure of xenophobia behind such feelings. Why else would those, like Roiphe, who write about the evils of intermarriage so often be tempted to caricature gentiles either in silly ways, like Roiphe's meaningless description of fashion models as "corn-fed," or in cruel ways like her ill-considered generalization that "the Christian world" spreads contempt for Jews.

*Those of us who have married non-Jews do not believe that we are particularly . . . mixed up, brainwashed or self-hating.*

In "Politics and Anger," a fine article published in the first issue of *Tikkun*, Roiphe urges Jews to become conscious of the worrisome tendency toward xenophobia and racial hate. "If we do not admit," she writes, "even to ourselves, our own racial slurs against other people then we risk losing real friends and risk lining up with potential enemies" (p. 19). She also warns against shutting people out of the Jewish community. "The narrowest interpretation of Who is a Jew," she says "puts Jews in the position of denying refuge to some, potentially denying safety to others" (p. 21). In this first article, I see Roiphe as someone

*Naomi Goldenberg is the author of* Changing of the Gods: Feminism and the End of Patriarchal Religions, *(Beacon Press, 1979).*

struggling against the misplaced anger which rears its head in her second article. "Politics and Anger" shows me that Anne Roiphe knows better than to grow fond of the prejudice which creeps out of "The Jewish Family—a Feminist Perspective." I hope that Roiphe will be prompted to reconsider her words on mixed marriages in the light of her own better thoughts.

Perhaps the vast majority of the Jewish community would prefer that Jews like me who have intermarried take our tainted families and keep out of the Jewish world. If this is true, then writing a response like this one is a waste of time. But, perhaps, there might be many Jews, who, if pushed to do a bit of soul-searching, might realize that Jews who have intermarried deserve to be treated better within Jewish culture. Our "mixed" families might actually have some valuable contributions to make to Jewish life. The Jewish community, whose survival is of such great concern to so many, will have a much brighter future if it could only learn to support all the Jewish families who would like to feel welcome within it. □

## *Roiphe Replies: On Jewish Continuity*

*Anne Roiphe*

There is no question that intermarriage when followed by conversion or synagogue affiliation for children does contribute in every way to the vitality of Jewish life. According to Charles Silberman's book, *A Certain People*, three out of four families in which a Jewish woman has married a gentile man are now bringing up their children as Jews. At least 20% of all intermarried couples are converting to Judaism and joining synagogues. I would hope that Ms. Goldenberg and her family will find a way to join the many others who have, despite difficulties, found their way into the Jewish community. I know they will be eagerly welcomed.

On the other hand there can be no doubt that intermarriage followed by the weakening of ties to the Jewish world and a next generation that does not know itself as Jewish is not good for the survival of a small and already decimated people. Those of us who care about the future of the Jewish Nation do not dislike Christians or harbor secret racist thoughts. We are attempting to build a people strong in numbers so that the traditions of the past, the particular moral and spiritual creativity that began at Sinai can be carried forward.

Now it is possible that Naomi Goldenberg married out of simple romantic love and that no social attitudes, no rebellion, no ambivalence about Jewishness prompted or provoked her choice. Most of us, however, fall in love and marry for a variety of complex reasons and the background of the prospective mate does excite or interest us because our childhoods are part of our promise as adults. For this reason many Christian women sought out Jewish mates because they believed that Jewish men would not drink or abuse their wives as had happened in their own homes. Some White women wanted Black men and the reverse, not simply from pure individual love but from flirtations with danger, with sexual myth, with flight from home, with political ideas enhancing other appealing qualities or hiding less appealing ones. Some Jewish men believed Christian women to be more sexual than Jewish women and some Jewish women have believed that Christian men are better sexual mates than Jewish men. The matter is everywhere adorned with myth, folktale and playground gossip. It will not help us to understand this world to insist that marriage is the one pure act, romantic love its sole explanation and all the rest insulting racism. Our psychological choices are far too complex for that. Love is not an explanation. It is only the label we give to attractions mingled with social attitudes we hardly understand.

Ms. Goldenberg finds it cruel that I have said that the Christian world spreads contempt for Jews. I wonder if Ms. Goldenberg has heard of the Spanish Inquisition, the Pogroms in Eastern Europe, the crusades, the expulsions from England and Portugal and of course in more recent time, of Auschwitz and Treblinka. I wonder if Ms. Goldenberg knows that in America, up until the 1950s there were small quotas of Jews allowed into universities, medical and law schools? Does she know that Jewish movie stars changed their names and bobbed their noses in order to be acceptable to the general public? Perhaps she has forgotten the social clubs, the corporations, the hotels that would not accept Jews. The Christian world has indeed spread anti-Semitism of both the mild social sort that we witnessed in America and the murderous variety that swept through Europe 1939–1945.

*. . . the Christian society we live in has indulged in a host of attitudes towards Jews most of which were derogatory . . . Does she think it's all over, the suspicion of Jews, the vulnerability of strangers in the midst?*

This does not mean that any given Christian, Ms. Goldenberg's husband for example, is a repository of hatred for Jews, but it does mean that the Christian society we live in has indulged in a host of attitudes towards Jews, most of which were derogatory. Does Ms. Goldenberg know of the farmers groups in our midwest that are even today thrashing out against Jewish greed they see in (imaginary) Jewish bankers who theoretically create economic catastrophes? Has she heard Farakhan evoke the wonderful days of the gas ovens? Does she think it's all over, the suspicion of Jews, the vulnerability of strangers in the midst? If only one could clean one's history each morning as one cleans one's face.

Jews would not be human if they

*Anne Riophe is the author of* Generation Without Memory.

were not influenced by the society around them. It is worth discussing the ways in which the anti-Semitism of the larger world affects our inner self respect and how it causes us to look at each other, male and female. It is of value for Jewish survival to examine our most intimate attitudes toward each other and towards Christian men and women. Open anti-Semitism has declined dramatically in America in recent years and Jews in this climate will marry Christians for different reasons than those of an earlier generation, but since the matters of ethnic origin and religious tradition are of such central importance in each soul it cannot yet be as casual a matter as marrying a man with blue eyes or a woman with wide hips, and we know that even in these minor matters our choices can be affected by memories from our private histories.

I understand Ms. Goldenberg feeling insulted by a social analysis which is by nature broad and general and does not explain each individual route. Our tools when we think in large social terms are necessarily crude but as we dig away at cause and effect, as we uncover possibility and idea we do make small clearings where we can think about communal problems. Perhaps Ms. Goldenberg will feel better if I explain that because of derailments and confusions in my own life I learned to see how social issues had intersected with private psychological ones and drew me here or there. My thinking led to uncomfortable and sometimes unflattering conclusions but I am not afraid to admit that I am myself, a female writer, a half a century old, a Jewish person, a product of an immigrant family that was newly rich, eager to be American. I am the result of an American education in pre-feminist times as well as the beneficiary of feminism, modernism, post-modernism, etc. I am a product of a family that rushed to assimilate and of the turning back that is now common among some Jews. My belief system was shaped in response to ideas of beatniks and Martin Luther King and Golda Meir and Ghandi, Dachau and Hiroshima as well as by the particular light that filtered through my childhood home. In other words, who I am is a combination of my own bundle of nerves, memories and touchings along with the effect of the historical waters in which I have been paddling. Such a view takes a little wind out of my individual sail but it grants a helpful perspective. In this context I hope Ms. Goldenberg will understand that I was not insulting her husband but commenting on the social currents that threaten the continuity of the Jewish family. □

# Current Debate/ Human Autonomy and Divine Providence

## *Hartman on Human Autonomy: A Response to Landes' Review*

*David Hartman*

In a previous issue of *Tikkun* (Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 106-111), a reflective and thought-provoking review of my recent book *A Living Covenant* (Free Press, 1986) was given by Rabbi Daniel Landes, Roeters Van Lennep Professor of Jewish Ethics and Values at Yeshiva University. I am grateful for his appreciative reading of much of the book and for his sincere critique of that with which he was unable to agree. It seems to me, however, that answers to his central criticisms are to be found within the book itself, albeit sometimes in outline rather than in detail.

A case in point is his eagerness to defend Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik ("the Rav"), my revered teacher, with whom I can nonetheless disagree. Landes does not correctly formulate the manner and motivation of my basic disagreement with Soloveitchik.

> Hartman's problem with traditional theology, especially as interpreted by the Rav, is that it does not sufficiently stress human adequacy and that it often seems to promote withdrawal and self-defeat as a major religious category (p. 106).
>
> For David Hartman, the world is not big enough for the victory-minded man and for God's active direct presence (p. 107).

My concern is not with victory-mindedness nor do I have difficulty dealing with human inadequacies and with the fact that there is so much tragedy and failure and defeat in human life. On the contrary, the chapter on "The Celebration of Finitude" in my book suggested a way of attempting to live with the unresolved problematics of the human condition. What infuses my covenantal religious commitment is the ability to love God without necessarily demanding that He will finally intervene to sort out all the world's difficulties (eschatological redemption). Can Jews look at the mixture of hunger, love, pain, tragedy, joy and much more that constitutes human existence, yet still realize the fullness of the commandment: "And you shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might"? This was a major issue with which I sought to deal in the book.

One reason why Maimonides is a central paradigm for my own theology is that he offers in his *Guide of the Perplexed* an understanding of Judaism in which the religious passion of love of God is not conditional on the promise of a transformed human history. Maimonides' ideal of love of God, which is beautifully expressed in *Guide* 3:51, does not presuppose God's intervention to create a new historical order and a new human nature, but a different perception of one's relationship to the universe and to God, in which the world is perceived theocentrically rather than anthropocentrically. This is how Maimonides unleashes the fullest passion of the Song of Songs, of the great command of passionate love for God.

I am, therefore, not concerned with humanity always being totally triumphant, nor is my concern with human adequacy motivated primarily by a need to make the Zionist revolution work, as Landes seems to suppose. Indeed, my book explicitly acknowledged that political activism can grow from a Nachmanidean as well as from a Maimonidean perspective (pp. 254-255). My primary concern was to offer an approach to God's invitation to a covenantal relationship in which Jews can serve God all the more wholeheartedly because they sense that God will never violate their human dignity, but will rather encourage their human adequacy, in all that He demands of them in His *mitzvot* (divine commandments).

The Judaic tradition provides multiple models for the covenantal relationship: king/subject, master/servant, husband/wife and teacher/student. All these different models exist in the tradition. *A Living Covenant* is an attempt to see how one can develop the covenantal invitation to relationship with God under the controlling models of lover and teacher.

That the Judaic tradition portrays God in human terms would seem to imply that we must draw from the experiential human situation for an understanding of what is at stake in our relationship with God. Soloveitchik himself recognized in "The Lonely Man of Faith" that there is always a changed relational matrix when the theological framework alters. According to that essay, the God of majesty, Elohim, is mirrored in a relationship which is defined by utilitarian needs, while a relationship defined by the quest for love, intimacy and sacrifice introduces and prepares one for a relationship with God constituted by the Tetragrammaton, the God of revelation in the covenant. My book asks how the relationship is defined if God considers the partner of his relationship with radical seriousness, dignity and love.

I find a consciousness of this kind in the rabbinic tradition's faith in the autonomous ability of the human partners in the covenant to understand and apply and expand the word of revelation. Here I am not talking about the modern value of autonomy, but about an autonomy which grows in a relational context. What are the factors that make for dignity and love in a respectful relationship of teacher and student? A teacher does not envy the creativity of the student. The latter's

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own independence from the teacher is smiled upon by the teacher and is not seen as a rebellious act. One unfolds the fullness of one's own powers, yet always this unfolding is in a relational matrix. In all my discussion of human adequacy as a condition for living out the covenant, therefore, I am not talking about secular humanism, but about a relationship of love which is fundamental to making sense of why God seeks a covenant with Israel.

I am fully awake to the existence of covenantal models in the Judaic tradition which speak of submission, which speak of the absolute authority of God to ignore the moral sense of His human covenantal partners. It is nonetheless legitimate fully to explore the possibilities of what the Judaic religious life would look like if the traditional models preferred in my book were given control.

A love relationship demands sacrifice, commitment, surrendering one's narcissistic tendencies. It demands care, commitment and concern. Never, however, should it ask for self-negation of one's dignity. It should never ask the relational partner to give up that which is essential to his or her sense of dignity and worth. That a relationship has features which are not totally comprehensible need not undermine its integrity. What does undermine it is the defeat of the partner's sense of what counts as moral principle, such as when the person is treated as an object, as a pawn, as one who is asked to submit blindly, even if what is asked violates every moral principle. The Kirkegaardian teleological suspension of the ethical does not enhance a covenantal relationship in which love is the controlling notion. This, and not a "victory-minded" attitude (as Landes puts it), is what motivates my concern that the integrity of the human partner in the covenant must not be violated. Reducing human beings to unquestioning obedient servants vitiates the dignity needed to make for a flourishing love relationship.

My book acknowledged that the Judaic tradition operated with both kinds of models, with ones which confirm covenantal dignity and love and with ones which reflect suspension of human judgment and critical moral sense. After introducing both dimensions in the tradition and discussing how Soloveitchik and Leibowitz variously deal with them, the book offers an approach to the covenant in which love and the teaching relationship are the dominant models for understanding Judaism.

*A Living Covenant* was not an attempt to ascribe to Jews a triumphant Promethean courage and strength, nor the secular Zionist belief that Judaism requires a radical revolution in order for Jews to become responsible. My concern with Zionism is to see Jews becoming responsible in Israel for a full society as an expression of a covenantal relationship. The book therefore argues that it is not necessary for Jews to break with the covenant in order to become responsible for their political existence in a sovereign state, but that the very nature of covenantal life is an invitation for the full unfolding of the human partner in the covenantal relationship.

My concern with human adequacy is not, however, prompted exclusively or primarily by concern for the security of the State of Israel and the desire to produce a competent airforce, as Landes suggests. Instead, it arises because I believe that human adequacy is essential in any love relationship. Overemphasis upon obedience, submission and self-denial, lack of trust in one's own appreciation of what constitutes fairness and justice, being frightened to call on one's own intellectual and emotional resources—all these are detrimental to the joy and human flourishing that takes place when one is touched by the gracious love of one's beloved.

If God is a lover in the covenant, if I am to take seriously the emphasis in the tradition that "He loved us with a great love" and that is why He gave us the Torah, then I have to ask myself: how do Jews who receive the Torah in the modern world give expression to that invitation to a relationship organized around *mitzvah* which they perceive to be grounded in God's infinite love for themselves?

My uneasiness about Soloveitchik's emphasis upon total surrender, including the sacrifice of the human intellect and moral sense, as exemplified in the *Akedah* (Binding of Isaac), is not motivated by an obsession with victory and triumphalism, but rather I wonder what stunted love for God remains when the *Akedah* becomes a justification for halakhic practice which numbs and vitiates human moral integrity. What happens to love for God when everything I understand as fairness and justice becomes suspended because I am now asked to live in a relationship with God in which His numinous mystery and infinite power overwhelm me? If the covenant is an invitation to a relationship in which the controlling model is love, then you cannot make the supreme moment of that relationship a sense of defeat and nothingness and lack of worth. In the relationship constituted by *mitzvah*, the dignity of the human partner in the relationship must accordingly never be violated.

*What infuses my covenantal religious commitment is the ability to love God without necessarily demanding that He will finally intervene to sort out all the world's difficulties (eschatological redemption).*

There is another manner of experiencing God in Judaism, however, which is not covenantal. This I call the cosmic, not because one experiences God as permeating nature (pantheism), but because—as at the end of the Book of Job—one experiences nature as the handiwork of a God whose purposes transcend human understanding. Here is where the world is seen theocentrically rather than covenantally. It is in this cosmic, contemplative, aesthetic dimension of spirituality that the numinous is present: the terrifying sense of the insignificance of the human being, the ant-like quality of human existence, the feeling that human history and human aspirations appear trivial in light of the mute cosmic drama that does not seem to have human beings and their concerns at the center of their reality. This is indeed a deeply felt moment in religious consciousness, but it is not a covenantal moment. *Mitzvah* does not produce the central organizing framework for that religious posture. I believe one should not use that sense of human insignificance, that sense of God's radical transcendence and otherness, to characterize the halakhic ex-

perience. Halakhic practice cannot be the carrier of that religious emotion, as it is an emotion which does not grow from a covenantal invitation to relationship with God.

How the human sense of the ethical operates as a controlling category of halakhic practice was only suggested, however, in my book. The details of that idea will be elaborated on in my next work on law, ethics and politics in Judaism.

Because Landes misunderstands this central idea of how a halakhic Jew can develop in a covenantal relationship with God in which the lover model and the teacher model are the controlling categories, he misunderstands my discussion on prayer.

> Hartman believes that if God responds to man's petitional prayers, then human beings will be pictured as being incapable of tending to their own needs. . . .
>
> In Hartman's account, the worshipper is essentially engaged in a monologue in celebration of himself and in near obsessive discussion of his own needs. The monologue needs to be balanced with some concern for the Other and some critical self-judgment, but both the prayer categories of praise and of self-judgment are ignored by Hartman (p. 107).

For Landes, prayer—which is fundamentally a dialogue with God—is serious only if the human being seeks and relies upon God to answer his or her petitional requests. But Landes misses my explanation of how a worshipper who worships God out of love could view his or her petitional experience as a dialogue. Not an obsession with one's own needs, but rather a desire to share the ups and downs of life and to be in the presence of one's lover in the midst of one's needy situation, is the religious passion that may then infuse worship. Prayer in such a spirit is not a monologue. It is the desire of the worshipper to stand in the presence of the beloved God and feel that in any needy situation he or she can find the comfort of the attentive concern and love of God.

It is also doubtful whether Landes is, as he seems to think, defending Soloveitchik's view of prayer through his criticism of my view. Soloveitchik, in a much more radical approach to petitional prayer, claims that a redemptive experience comes through prayer because petitional prayer enables one to articulate what real needs are and to free oneself from superficial needs. Landes should therefore also level his criticism against Soloveitchik's concern with petitional prayer as self-discovery. In my own understanding of petitional prayer, on the other hand, the reality of divinity is essential to give petitional prayer its religious vitality.

If Landes believes that praying to God out of love is easy, I would much like to know how he perceives "the real struggle that many serious religious Jews face in approaching God's presence." I believe that love of God through Torah and *mitzvah* is a profound challenge. Finding the courage to live with God without expecting God to transform one's world is not as simple and easy as Landes implies it to be.

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*. . . a worshipper who worships God out of love could view his or her petitional experience as . . . a desire to share the ups and downs of life and to be in the presence of one's lover in the midst of one's needy situation . . .*

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My concern with petitional prayer was not to determine God's ability or inability to answer petitional prayer, but the motive impulse that the worshipper out of love may bring to petitional prayer. In a talmudic metaphor, which I quote in my book, petitional prayer is seen as the way a servant begs his master. It is through freeing oneself of that servant/master model that I seek to clarify how a petitional framework can give expression to a love relationship which finds its depth in the experience of learning Torah. My concern about prayer was to see how it could be understood in a way consistent with the halakhic Jew's manner of studying Torah, which encourages human flourishing in the relationship with God, which enables one boldly to say to God that "Torah is not in heaven" and to feel intimacy with Him and the joy of His presence as one unfolds one's own intellectual powers in meditation on the word of God. My concern was to show that one need not move into a totally new religious posture when one begins to be engaged in prayer, but rather that there can be a complementarity between prayer and learning.

Landes also misunderstands my discussion of eschatology and messianism in Judaism. Here my approach is not that of "eliminating God from direct involvement in history," as Landes puts it (p. 110). Rather, I suggest that if God is directly involved in manipulating the events of contemporary history, there seems to be no even moderately plausible account of what He has been doing. Moreover, messianic and eschatological expectations of God's direct involvement are as liable to mislead Jews today as they did in the past. Accordingly, I simply refuse to make the expectation of direct divine involvement into an assumption that guides my living out of Judaism today. At the same time, I claim that an adequate understanding of Judaism is possible without that assumption, and offer such an understanding in the closing two chapters of the book. My viewpoint was set out in a paragraph that I repeat here with added emphases.

> Notwithstanding, then, that hope for the messianic era has played such a prominent role in the Judaic tradition, I shall argue that the vitality of the covenant does not presuppose belief in messianic redemption, the immortality of the soul, or the resurrection of the dead. I am not claiming or implying that belief in a future radical transformation of history is naive, childish, escapist, or illogical. *Far be it from me to deny the ability of God to act in such ways.* I am merely claiming that those eschatological beliefs are *not constitutive* of the Sinai covenant and that, consequently, *the covenant can retain its vitality even when those beliefs are not adduced in its support or when they are given demythologizing reinterpretation* (p. 257).

Having set out my position so clearly, namely, that I do not *deny* God's

ability to act unilaterally, but simply *decline to base expectations* upon it, I am surprised that Landes, as in the following from his review, overlooked that basic distinction.

> But by restricting God from responding to an individual or to the nation, Hartman does to God what he would never do to another: defines His personality, eliminates His adequacy and autonomy, and prevents Him from relating. In flip-flopping from hidden transcendence (God's) to immanence (man's), Hartman seems to ask that we oscillate between pantheism and humanism. As theology and as a religious stance, it is schizophrenic and not satisfying. But what of his claim that God's involvement in history would crush human autonomy? This is a red herring (p. 110).

Instead of developing a metaphysics about what God can or cannot do, I ask only: can the Sinai covenant retain its vitality if one does not build into that notion the idea of messianic resolution? Can you, despite every adversity and defeat, retain human freedom and human responsibility as permanent features of the covenantal life? Jeremiah and Ezekiel could not. They believed that the human being was too frail and fragile and that human proneness to sin was so great that unless God unilaterally acted in history, then hope for a radical transformation of the human situation and a realization of the covenantal aspirations would be totally futile and religious despair would haunt Jewish history. I seriously appreciate this view and said so in my chapter on "The Celebration of Finitude." But is this the only approach that one can take to the covenant? Is it true that creation and revelation together necessarily imply redemption, or can there be an understanding of Sinai which does not make redemption constitutive of the very idea of the covenant? Can religious passion be nurtured, although one remains fully open to the possibilities of radical tragedy and radical destruction?

Therefore, I asked, how might Jews celebrate their religious life if they do not rely upon having an escape from this world, if they do not have the certainty of a transformed history, if they do not presuppose the promise of eternal resurrection, of another world to be created in the future in which all the dreams and aspirations that the Jews bring to life will reach their fullest expression? To live religiously without those assumptions is not to claim that the resurrection of the dead is false or that the immortality of the soul is impossible or logically contradictory, nor is it to rule out the possibility of God's unilateral redemptive grace in history. These are metaphysical claims which I clearly stated that I was not making. I asked only: how would a Judaic religious passion articulate itself if it did not rely upon these belief frameworks to support its religious commitment?

Belief in the resurrection of the dead is a protest against a world where there is tragedy and death. Adherents to that belief see the world of finitude in its givenness as an imperfect description of reality. For them, accordingly, the fullness of human existence should be expressed in some form of eternal life. My question is: can finitude itself be the world in which Jews act out their covenantal framework? Thus Landes is mistaken in labelling my view as "schizophrenic" and in ascribing to me the view that "God's involvement in history would crush human autonomy." I do not claim that Jews who believe in a personal God who acts in history become irresponsible. Nor do I believe that deism is necessary for a moral awakening of human beings. I do not need an impotent God in order to make human beings potent.

As this seems to be Landes' understanding of my covenantal emphasis upon love and the development of human dignity in that love relationship, he does not understand or does not appreciate the notion of self-sacrifice in my religious anthropology. Commitment to *mitzvot*, the commitment to the Shabbat that my father showed me in spite of financial loss, the ability to stand in opposition to congregations as a rabbi and fight for principles of Torah, are things that I have cherished and without which I believe there cannot be any serious commitment. It is not sacrifice or self-sacrifice that I am opposed to, but the crushing of human dignity in the covenantal relationship. It is attempting to bring numinous terror, religious dread, the sense of being but dust and ashes into the halakhic life that concerns me, since I am frightened that so much could be justified under that rubric.

How God acts and will act in history, does not depend on the way I write books. That depends on what God decides in His own infinite wisdom. As Torah is not in heaven, so theology is not in heaven. My book talks about our world of relationship with God instead of trying to define how God can and must act in history. What I have offered is a theology in which the mediating framework of the divine/human relationship is found in the ever-renewed covenant of Torah. God is involved directly in my life because each day he commands me to put on tefillin. Each day he speaks to me in a dialogue of great love as He gives me *mitzvot*. God is not absent from history if Torah, His speech, is an ever-renewed framework. Whether a *mitzvah*-grounded theology is capable of giving expression to the vitality of a living God, or whether one must have a clear perception of how events are an expression of His will—this is an open question. Buber and others prefer an event-grounded theology. I believe that those whose frame of reference and religious passion with God is organized around making events, both in nature and in history, into containers of a personal divine will often end up with a manic-depressive framework. "One day God loves me. The next day God judges me guilty. In the Six Day War, He is my lover. In the Yom Kippur War, He rejects me. When a child is killed in a bus accident, He punishes me. And when someone miraculously is saved in an operation, He loves me."

That type of see-sawing up and down requires a type of emotional disposition which is very difficult to balance and to harmonize. There is, however, another orientation in which the framework of Torah is the mediator of God's personal will and events are not asked to become the carriers of His divine guidance. He has created a world and has given the Torah. Can the world which pursues its normal course be infused with religious theism as it is nurtured by the passion of a God who expresses His love for the community by the giving of *mitzvot*? This is the open question that my book attempted to face. □

# *Landes Responds to Hartman*

*Daniel Landes*

Professor David Hartman's response illuminates the contribution his development of the classic Lovers model makes to Jewish theology. It most certainly fosters human dignity and adequacy needed for Halakhic response. That these are also useful qualities to have within Jews as they shape their political lives should not be sneezed at—the State of Israel's well-being is a Halakhic *desideratum*. My problem with Hartman is that his Lovers model is so absolute in scope and so defined in structure that it ultimately idealizes the divine-human encounter into a frozen embrace.

Hartman's theology is exclusivistic. He eliminates other models and thereby modes of being from his "covenantal framework." Love and the teaching relationships—the latter already well-worked by Rav Soloveitchik and for Hartman ultimately a subsidiary of the former category—are to be "the exclusive controlling factors." Jewish theology, however, has always reflected the fact that we exist in a multiplicity of relationships with God. Embedded within the confession of sin and unworthiness on Yom Kippur is the series of ringing affirmations sung in a lilting melody: "We are thy people and thou art our God; We are thy servants and thou art our Master; We are thy subjects and thou art our King;" and also "We are thy children and thou art our Father; We are thy lover and thou art our Beloved; We are thy treasure and thou art our Kinsman; We are thy validation and thou art our Validator."

This recital is important for the linchpin of Hartman's rejection of previous Jewish theologies in that they have assumed only one definition of being—usually dust and ashes—in relation to God and to self. The Rav, for example, is a target of such criticism. One should understand, however, that the Rav's chosen literary vehicle, the philosophic *Derashah* (homily), by the nature of its form, emphasizes one aspect at a given moment. But the body of his work testifies to the many varieties of religious experience: "That religious consciousness in man's experience which is most profound and most elevated, which penetrates to the very depths and ascends to the very heights, is not that simple and comfortable ... the ideas of temporality and eternity, knowledge and choice (necessity and freedom), love and fear (the yearning for God and the flight from His glorious splendor), incredible, overbold, daring, and an extreme sense of humility, transcendence and God's closeness, the profane and the holy, etc., etc., struggle within his religious consciousness, wrestle and grapple with each other. This one ascends and this descends, this falls and this rises." (*Halakhic Man*, pp. 141-142.)

What is true in liturgy and theology is indeed the felt experience of the believer. The mild mannered *mussarniks*, with whom I learn and pray, daily recite Maimonides' Thirteen Principles of Faith (including Reward and Punishment, the Coming of the Messiah and Resurrection of the Dead). If I would accuse them of thereby being inhibited in their freedom of action, robbed of personal dignity and reduced to pawns in the hands of a tyrant God—at the least they would react with genuine amazement at my naivete of the faith process.

Hartman's model of dignified love narrows the range of real human need for love that is met within Halakhah. The prime example within our tradition of this need for love is petitional prayer. I believe that there is a linkage between expressing one's petitional needs and the affirmation of a love relationship with God, but I believe that the linkage is a very different one from the ones suggested by the Rav's, Leibowitz', Maimonides' or Hartman's accounts. We can learn about prayer by looking at its origins in the prayers of the Avot (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob)—where we find that prayer is in essence a request for mercy.

The scriptural proofs for the patriarchal establishment of prayer have a certain similarity: all uttered in a moment of desperate isolation. Abraham, after unsuccessfully negotiating with God "rose up early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the Lord; and he looked toward Sodom and Gemmorah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and lo, the smoke of the country went up like the smoke of a furnace." (Genesis 19:27-28). Isaac's afternoon prayer was located by Rabbis after he had undergone the *Akeda* and the death of his mother. Estranged from his father, he knew not of Rebecca's coming: "And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the evening time" (Genesis 24:63). Finally, Jacob prayed the first night prayer when, after securing the birthright and blessing, he had to flee the wrath of Essau: "and he hit upon the spot" (Genesis 27:11). All three were in a terribly lonely situation: Abraham witnessing the destruction of an entire people; Isaac in the midst of a house where he could find "no comfort;" Jacob, a "simple man dwelling in tents," suddenly in the night of exile. The prayer that they called out was not a resolution of self-sacrifice; nor was it an intimate discussion between lovers. And it certainly was not a God-intoxicated meditation or a simple act of service. It was a cry for mercy which in Hebrew is *Rachamim* coming from the root *Rechem*—womb. They desired that empathetic tenderness that a mother has for a child she carries. Their cry was a plea to be held, to be returned to the womb. The Talmud is unembarrassed to locate the source of prayer in such a basic and fundamental human need, and in God's capacity for

*Prayer must at times allow for ... dependency—rather than always insisting on the kind of equality that Hartman roots in the Lovers' relationship.*

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maternal love. Our formal petitional prayer both articulates and evokes a crisis of existence which resolves into return, nurturing within the body of God, and rebirth. And the mother-child relationship proceeds in prayer concurrently with that of master-servant (*Shevach*—Praise and King-subject (*Lichitpallel*—self-criticism). This relationship of dependency does not denigrate the human personality or destroy ultimate autonomy. Prayer must at times allow for this experience of dependency—itself an element in human relationships that is at some moments appropriate and not always demeaning—rather than always insisting on the kind of equality that Hartman roots in the Lovers' relationship.

Hartman's Lovers model is not only restrictive in theological resources and narrow in relation to human needs, but overly rigid on its own terms. This is puzzling for it is evidently not so much a philosophic construct or Midrashic fantasy, but rather is "drawn from the experiential human situation." But an equal, balanced, dignified relationship between lovers is not a constant. In real life, there is a continual shifting of power between lovers due to role, responsibility, resources and sheer circumstance. The trick is to take advantage of its fluid nature and not let it create a sense of insecurity that would threaten the covenantal relationship. Nonetheless, there are times when love itself demands a "suspension" (not revocation!) of concern for dignity. Such a moment occurs, for example, when one lover sees that the other is on a self-destructive course and the former must therefore intervene with all possible power and boldness to set things right. In the divine-human context, this is a two-way street. Just as God commands that which at times offends our ethical sense, so too do we at "the moment to act" override the intent of the Law through exegesis and enactment.

In both instances, it is concern for the other that warrants such ostensible violations of dignity. This is possible for the partners are not considered to be autonomous, but rather utterly dependent upon each other. The human is the contingent recipient of God's Grace. As for God: "'So you are my witnesses—declares the Lord—and I am God,' (Isaiah 43:12) when you are my witnesses I am God; and when you are not my witnesses then *Kivyakhol*, as it were, I am not God." (Sifre Deuteronomy 346.) Thus each partner achieves an ultimate dignity—responsibility for the other's very existence, within our world of experience.

How is this set of responsibilities to be fulfilled by the partners? For the Jews, the answer has always been the covenantal act. I agree with Hartman that removal of the doctrines of Resurrection and of the Messiah will not diminish Halakhic behavior one whit. But, neither does their removal add any additional responsibility that the Jew did not have previously. These doctrines have never served as a source for *mitzvah* performance. They have, however, always been considered God's responsibility to his beloved and commitment to the shared partnership with humankind not to allow Creation to fail. Redemption is not a denial of History; rather it constitutes its fulfillment.

Before the final moment—may it come speedily!—Jews proceed with the task of ethical and ritual *mitzvot*. He and she are somehow strangely confident that in a world that "pursues its normal course" these deeds have a meaning and an effect. For life is defined by them as the ability to act and to relate. And by the very logic and symmetry of the covenantal relationship, they believe that God too responds to human efforts and acts within history without exploding its reality. They understand *Hestair Panin* (Eclipse of God's Face) as a temporary curse, not as a permanent element of human liberation. A living covenant needs a living God. □

*Continued from page 18*

able, and most successful years in Hollywood came at a moment—the tail end of the 1930s and very beginning of the 1940s—when the industry, with World War II looming, had begun constructing a mythic past that was worth fighting for. In those years, the backlots worked overtime churning out nostalgic movies about times that never existed except in the imagination of movie moguls and screenwriters. In 1939-1940 alone the major studios issued a barrage of "history" films that conjured up—or, better, collectively constructed—a "Spirit of America Past," including, among many others: *Gone With the Wind*, *Drums Along the Mohawk*, *Young Mr. Lincoln*, *Abraham Lincoln in Illinois*, *Union Pacific*, *Stagecoach*, *Young Tom Edison*, *Edison the Man*, *The Howards of Virginia*, *Stanley and Livingston*, *The Real Glory*, *The Story of Alexander Graham Bell*, *Dodge City*, *Let Freedom Ring*, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, *The Fighting 69th*, *Little Old New York*, *Northwest Passage*, *Dark Command*, *The Oklahoma Kid*, *Lillian Russel*, *Brigham Young—Frontiersman*, *Kit Carson*, *Geronimo*, *The Return of Frank James*, and *Land of Liberty* (Hollywood's contribution to the World's Fair).[4]

Not all the films of this period evoked precisely the same past, but there is a good deal of overlap in their characterization of U.S. history. This uniformity of perspective is partly explained by noting that Hollywood's search for a usable past was part of a much larger cultural phenomenon of the 1930s, which Warren Susman has characterized as an attempt to define the meaning of "The American Way of Life," a process initiated by the shattering experience of the Depression and accelerated by the rapidly darkening world situation. Hollywood studios (like many American intellectuals) turned away from the estrangement and cynical debunking of the 1920s and the radicalism of the early 1930s to a nationalistic celebration of America and its institutions as superior to those of European barbarism. And the bedrock of America was the People. The People (as opposed to the proletariat) were the common folk, the nation's repository of goodness, and they included almost everyone except economic and political elitists (evil bankers and party bosses). The discovery and celebration of the American People was a widespread phenomenon: museums featured folk art exhibits, folk music had a resurgence, WPA murals and guidebooks focused on the folk, populist history and historical novels had a heyday. Even the Communist Party, then in its popular front period, featured the slogan: "Communism is 20th Century Americanism."[5]

The high priests of the cult of the People were the movie-makers, and the movie houses were its (well-attended) temples: in 1938, there were over eighty million movie admissions a week in US theaters (a number equal to 65% of the entire population). Cinema houses prefaced their programs with—literally—flag waving ceremonies on stage and the singing of the national anthem. Will Hays, Hollywood's spokesperson, endorsed films "which discussed the values of our present day democracy and emphasized the traditions that have made this country great." In 1939, of the 574 feature films Hollywood produced, 481 were in some way celebrations of American life.

The search for America also involved a search for America's cultural roots. In Hollywood, the vehicle for this was the historical movie, especially the western, a genre which experienced a dramatic revival in 1939. Through films about the American Revolution, frontier individualism, wagon trains menaced by red hordes and saved by the cavalry, gracious planters, rugged industrial entrepreneurs, and the triumph of civilization over savagery and a threatening environment—ran characteristic themes of optimism, patriotism, democracy. And populism: critiques of self-serving and greedy businessmen continued to appeal to audiences in the late 1930s, and the history of films, like Americanism itself, retained a radical edge. Indeed many of these films were hugely successful (with leftist film critics and filmmakers as well as popular audiences) because of their strong evocation of a democratic spirit. But despite the surface radicalism of this message, it was, as Charles Maland notes, ultimately conservative in its assertion that to succeed, Americans needed only to apply traditional wisdom and values to contemporary problems. Capra's Grandpa Vanderhof (in *You Can't Take it With You*) denounces "ismania": "Communism, fascism, voodooism. Everybody's got an ism these days." What Americans needed was to "know something about Americans: John Paul Jones, Patrick

4. Reagan's own contribution to the genre was his portrayal of George Armstrong Custer in *The Santa Fe Trail*. (This 1940 epic was sandwiched between the two films which made the most impact on Reagan, *Knute Rockne—All American* [1940] and *Kings Row* [1942]). The "plot" revolved around the (largely imagined) activities in the 1850s of a clatch of soon-to-be-famous army officers (including Errol Flynn as Jeb Stuart) who tangle with John Brown (played, by Raymond Massey, as a crackpot villain, a manipulative outside-agitator of slaves who aren't interested in freedom). The film was such a mishmash of fact and forgery that Bosley Crowther was moved to write in his *New York Times* review that: "For any one who has the slightest regard for the spirit—not to mention the facts—of American history, it will prove exceedingly annoying".

5. In 1937, when the DAR somehow failed to commemorate the anniversary of Paul Revere's ride, a New York City chapter of the Young Communist League hired a man to dress up in colonial garb and ride down Wall Street on horseback carrying a sign proclaiming: "The DAR forgets, but the YCL remembers!"

Henry, Samuel Adams, Washington, Jefferson, Monroe, Lincoln, Grant, Lee, Edison, Twain. When things got tough for those boys they didn't go around looking for isms." American values had their wellspring, the history films argued, in the small town cultures (eastern, western, or southern) of the 18th and 19th centuries.

The problem is that the historical portraits were more fancy than fact, both in their particulars—*Young Mr. Lincoln* was strewn with fabrications—and in the general portrait that emerged. The films celebrated farmers, but were unwilling to recall the reality of farm movements; lionized workers, but sidestepped dealing with the historical reality of capital-labor struggles; sentimentalized the old South, but finessed discussing slavery. These were historical utopias—immensely appealing, but often about as real as Disney's Main Street. This didn't bother the filmmakers. In *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962), John Ford has a young reporter ask Senator Ransom Stoddard (Jimmy Stewart) if a purportedly factual event from the past might not be a legend, and Stoddard replies: "When the fact becomes legend, print the legend." For Ford, as it would be for Reagan, truth was beside the point, which was to affirm that the American Way of Life had deep roots in the American experience. The movies were moral fictions placed in historical settings.

More significant than the mythological character of movie history was the inadequacy of the myth to problems at hand. The films eschewed presentations of the political, economic and social contexts within which their protagonists operated—backgrounds which could have been made as dramatic and exciting for audiences as real history in fact is—and instead opted for the flat and easy moralizing of melodramas. History became a matter of good men vanquishing evildoers. Characters were cardboard creatures of allegory, supposed manifestations of aspects of timeless human nature, not agents rooted in a particular moment of contingency. The very real strengths of the American democratic tradition were, for all the flag waving, made less rather than more accessible. The films used national symbols as incantations; goosebump-raising scenes sought to summon up the almost magical powers believed inherent in the Liberty Bell or the Lincoln Memorial. (During the war, troops would be brought to Colonial Williamsburg for inspiration). While such rallying efforts may have boosted morale, they were poor devices for grappling with reality. Neighborliness and the Golden Rule weren't up to defeating the Depression or the Nazis any more than volunteerism today is a satisfactory substitute for government—despite Reagan's advocacy of it, which he supports by citing speeches read by Gary Cooper playing Jefferson Deeds! Indeed, when Capra began pushing his analysis deeper, in *Meet John Doe*, he foundered; it would not be Capra and Ford but Chaplin and Wells who would produce films that constituted decisive confrontations with the real crises of the times.[6]

Reagan, I believe, was drawn deeply to the Capraesque, Fordesque version of American history, and he retained both its mythic content and its casual disregard for the relevance of historical truth. It is also likely that Reagan was influenced by the revisionist quality of the post-1939 *process*. He lived through and participated in a successful overcoming of the more radical mid-1930s filmic rendition of America's past and present. This, I suspect, provided a model for his own later crusade in the 1970s and 1980s to reverse the representations generated in the radical 1960s.[7]

To sum up: Reagan projected an axiomatic certainty about things which were untrue not because he had a weak or impoverished historical sensibility but because he had none at all: like many in traditional societies, he lived not in a world of historicity, but in a world of eternal contemporaneity. The founding myths of society were timeless truths, to be repeatedly recalled by

6. These cinematic constructs can be pernicious as well as misleading. Take the classic movie western scenario of the "Winning of the West." It depicts an expansion of civilization by populist sodbusters and sheepherders who triumph over savage Indians, evil cattle "barons," and anarchic outlaws. A central mythic image is the wagon train drawn up in a *defensive* circle against hordes of screaming redskins until rescued by the Seventh Cavalry. This iconography (borrowed from D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*, the finale of which depicted a small band of whites, holed up in a cabin, surrounded by hordes of screaming Blacks, until rescued by the Ku Klux Klan) not only inverts the reality of the historical and moral relations between whites and Indians, but once it is widely accepted, it provides a latent set of images and values which can be detached from their original context and deployed to lend an aura of self-righteousness to other foreign policies. The most notorious case in our lifetime was Vietnam.

The interplay between history and cinema mythology can be incredibly complicated. Lyndon Johnson once told his National Security Council: "Hell, Vietnam is just like the Alamo." Commander William Travis had drawn a line in the dust telling those who would stay and die not to cross it, and LBJ (who insisted on telling young soldiers, falsely, that his great, great-grandfather had died at the Alamo) equated retreating in Vietnam with crossing that line. Perhaps Johnson's convictions were reinforced by a 1960 movie, *The Alamo*, starring John Wayne as Davy Crockett (he also produced and directed it). Wayne's gung-ho version became, for many, the official interpretation of the 19th century realities. This was the more understandable because, at the time, in the Alamo itself, there hung a mural commemorating the battle which substituted the faces of the Hollywood actors for those of the original heroes. The person presented to millions of tourists as Davy Crockett was John Wayne. (Only recently, under the impact of the new social history, did the Alamo feel compelled to send the mural to the mothballs).

7. Still another available model for Reagan (in content and process) was the newsreels of the day. Henry Luce's *March of Time* (1935–51) and its imitators (especially Hearst's *News of the Day*) were notorious for using film clips that may have had nothing to do with the events under discussion but which evoked desired responses in the audiences. Luce baldly admitted the newsreels could best be characterized as "fakery in allegiance to truth."

reenactment through ritual and ceremony. What was peculiarly American about him is that the sacred texts were only occasionally those of ancient tales or scriptures. When Reagan spoke about the importance of tradition and how much the past matters, as a good conservative supposedly should, his temporal reference point was not the sprawling, messy, contradictory reality of the last few centuries in America, but rather "Hollywood History," an artifact of mass cultural production, created in the late 1930s, and refashioned in the crucible of hot and cold wars.

* * *

This excursus into Hollywood history may help explain why Reagan believed what he says, but it still leaves us with the problem of how he convinced others. During the 1960s and 1970s many Americans, spurred on by the antiwar, civil rights, feminist, native American and gay movements, experienced a major de-illusionment. People drew sharper lines between fact and fiction, and extricated themselves from mainstream Hollywood's perspective on the past. (That even Hollywood responded to the times can be seen by juxtaposing *Roots* with *Gone with the Wind*). Much of this reflection was done by participants in the political projects of the day, and much by professional historians (like myself) who were involved in or sympathetic to those projects. This is not to say that we historians had finally come into possession of a timeless truth, or that we were not capable of romanticizing or sentimentalizing slaves, women, Indians, and working people. Still, I believe our analyses were more adequate to the facts of American history than those that had been promulgated by apologists for the status quo. We were capable of embracing (indeed our political sympathies required us to embrace) the stories of a far wider variety of social groups than had ever before been considered by historians. And by shedding a narrow nationalism and developing more global and ecumenical perspectives, we helped undermine the chauvinisms that had facilitated America's disastrous involvement in Vietnam.

Then, with the collapse of the long postwar boom and the loss in Vietnam, there was a clamor, especially on the part of those who had never been happy about the demythification process in the first place, to jettison the new history and return either to older historical formulations or to myth, in a process Paul Erickson has called an "orgy of re-illusionment." From Reagan's perspective, of course, it was a return to sanity. As he said to West Pointers in 1981, "I'm happy to tell you that the people of America have recovered from what can only be called a temporary aberration. There is a spiritual revival going on in this country, a hunger on the part of the people to once again be proud of America."

What, then, was the appeal of Reagan's rhetorical cultural revanchism?

Let me be very clear that, for all my focus here on ideologies and symbol systems, there were a host of *very* material attractions that drew particular sectors of the American population to Reaganism—like hogs to the trough—attractions Mike Davis has laid out in his *Prisoners of the American Dream*. The fact is that some Americans gladly jettisoned history and embraced myth because, consciously or unconsciously, doing so lent support to their relatively privileged position. Ignorance, after all, can be based on a desire not to know. Latin Americans have a saying: North Americans never remember but we never forget. In some cases amnesia was the tribute that memory paid to expediency.

And there were, to be sure, many (i.e., the fundamentalist Right) whose symbolic or spiritual needs were assuaged by the flow of comforting rhetoric from the precincts of power.

But what of the many whose interests might, arguably, have better been served by a continuing confrontation with history? There are a variety of reasons that might help account for their disaffection.

For one thing, the practice of history is not a comforting one. It is, rather, profoundly subversive. Yosef Yerushlami (in *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*) notes the purpose of history is not to bind up severed memories but to create a new kind of recollection. "With unprecedented energy it continually recreates an ever more detailed past whose shapes and textures memory does not recognize. But that is not all. The historian does not simply come to replenish the gaps of memory. He constantly challenges even those memories that have survived intact.... All these features cut against the grain of collective memory which ... is drastically selective. Certain memories live on; the rest are winnowed out, repressed, or simply discarded by a process of natural selection which the historian, uninvited, disturbs and reverses." Ultimately people will accept such strong medicine only if they have faith in the power of reason to enlighten their world. In times when reason seems ill equipped to the task, myth becomes the more appealing alternative.

Secondly, Reagan's approach was in some ways congruent with what I have taken to calling America's historicidal culture—one that systematically undercuts our ability to situate ourselves in time. For a host of reasons that go beyond the scope of this essay, Americans tend to assume the past is dead—"He's history" is a popular expression of dismissal—and have trouble recognizing that the present grew out of and now rests upon the past. In such a climate the flowers of myth can grow luxuriantly.

Other explanations are more chargeable directly to the President's particular skills. Recall our discussion of the Hollywood roots of Reagan's own convictions: he was, after all, not the only person so influenced. The poet John Clellon Holmes has written that "the experience of movie going in the thirties and early forties ... gave us all a fantasy life in common, from which we are still dragging up the images that obsess us." That fantasy life, moreover, was passed along to succeeding generations who were not original communicants. The impact of the old films, to be sure, got diluted with time; younger viewers saw them in rerun houses or on TV, detached from the cultural and social atmosphere which surrounded them as the country drifted into war. But they lurked, nevertheless, in our collective celluloid unconscious. The sacred texts—and Capra and Ford were at the center of late 1930s Hollywood in a way that Wells and Chaplin were not—remained available for reinvocation by fervent evangelical cinematic fundamentalists. Reagan, by his very ability to relive with conviction, to re-enact, to re-project that original movie sensibility became the high priest who could perform rites and rituals that retained the power to move our filmic soul.

Another (similarly quasi-theological) explanation dwells on his ability, at a moment of shaken national self-confidence about domestic and foreign affairs, to lead a religious revival in the church of America's civil religion. Reagan's core text was that Americans remained the chosen people of God, His agents on earth to create the good society, and he breathed new life into the American Dream, which Erickson calls the "confused but nevertheless potent set of convictions and visions that translates history into mythology and life into a dream." Surely there is some truth in the belief that Reagan threw out a psychic life-preserver to people who felt themselves adrift.

And Reagan offered more: his was an *activist* vision. Reagan made his audiences into leading characters in a grand drama, and he derided those who promoted a historical analysis that led to passive paralysis: Mondale, Reagan claimed in 1984, thinks "America is the victim, flinching under the blows of history." This insistence that Americans were agents, not subjects, was popular with people who felt themselves powerless. And history, after all, is not a prima facie instrument of power. A sense of history tells us nothing (nor should it) about what to *do* in the present. And because historical awareness cannot provide guidelines for the future (though it remains an indispensable precondition to coming up with viable ways forward), while myth comes complete with a vision of a new (or, more often, restored) social order, history can be less attractive to people in urgent need of solutions.

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So Ronald Reagan had a lot going for him as spokesman for a right wing revanchist movement. His own experiences in the mass culture industry provided a superb background for the tasks of political leadership he assumed. What does this suggest about the post Reagan era? It is unlikely that the Right will soon produce such an apposite champion—consider the patent insincerity of George Bush or the perfervid floridity of Pat Robertson—for Reagan was too overwhelmingly the product of a particular historical moment. But the mythologizing project he initiated is too valuable for the Right to abandon. What lessons can be drawn from this review about how best to deal with its future manifestations?

First, it is important to keep in mind that for all the acquiescence to Reagan, there was a great deal of *resistance* to the neo-conservatives around the issues of history, myth, and memory. Popular recollections—"living" memories—proved remarkably tenacious: Reagan was unable to significantly alter the adverse public estimation of the Vietnam War, and an overwhelming majority of the country rejected military adventurism in Central America (citing the former debacle as their reason). Reagan was forced to abandon Jesse Helms on the Martin Luther King holiday issue. And his attempt to put Nazism behind us succeeded only in stirring up major controversy, demonstrating, as Jurgen Habermas has written, that "a collective regression cannot be staged by administrative fiat alone." How is this to be explained?

Part of the answer is that the mythmasters lost when they came up against effective resistance from organized groups devoted to remembering the historical record. In the case of Bitburg, for example, Reagan ran afoul of the Jews, a people well aware that social, like individual memory, is often fickle and fleeting; that collective memory cannot be counted on after one or two generations; and that the protection and cultivation of memory must be an ongoing process—institutionalized, embedded in ritual and ceremony. Yad Vashem, the Heroes and Martyrs Memorial Authority, was established in Jerusalem by Israeli parliamentary law in 1953 expressly to commemorate the Holocaust, to institutionalize the perpetual activity of remembrance. In America, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council has launched a series of formal Holocaust-education programs, and a number of museums and memorials have been constructed in recent years. All this activity in turn aided the ability of American Jews to protest, with some measure of success, the Bitburgian flight from history.

This record of resistance suggests a small part of the way to counter future re-mythification programs. We

need a politics of "organized remembrance." We need to develop strategies to restore and sustain a collective memory. We need to make a persuasive case that history can be more useful to people than myth. We must convince them that while myth may comfort at first it will eventually make matters worse—ruled by myth, we misdiagnose our problems and hamper our search for solutions—whereas history, which may disconcert us in the beginning, will be instructive in the end. Such a campaign must explain, not guilt-monger. It must have some humility about its inherent limitations. And it must engage the feelings as well as the minds of its auditors. As Yerushalmi well puts it: "Those who are alienated from the past cannot be drawn to it by explanation alone; they require evocation as well."

An oppositional movement should keep in mind that there is a host of media through which America's sense of history can be strengthened, ranging from today's Hollywood movies, to TV docudramas, to the official memorials that serve as public memory markers, to the history museums (the institutions perhaps most explicitly devoted to nourishing a historical sensibility and acting as trustees of the public memory). Some of these cultural agencies have begun, in recent decades, to move away from the kind of mythologizing that characterized them for much of their history. They should be encouraged into a more active defense of the historical approach, into connecting past and present.

To be sure, if public historical institutions do bring their analyses down to the present, as opposed to cutting them off at some safely distant point in the past, they will run the risk of becoming politically "controversial," but this is exactly what they should be in this time of highly political assault on the historical method itself. Now, for example, is the time to tackle the problem of Vietnam. The upcoming generation knows almost nothing of the reality of that dreadful war, and hence is vulnerable—especially through movies and TV—to just the kind of ideological rollback the Right wants to achieve. We should move now to *strengthen* popular memories, through massive oral history projects (that recapture on video, audiotape, and the printed page the experiences of those who fought in and against the war), through films, through museum shows, through TV specials, through memorials (of which the one in Washington is a splendid example precisely because its specificity leaves no room for the mythologizing impulse), through public rituals and commemorations, and through small group retellings (in classrooms and living rooms), to ensure that the "Vietnam Syndrome" enjoys a long and hearty life.

More generally the goal should be to equip ourselves as citizens with a historical purchase point from which we can get a better grasp on the current public policy choices that confront us. History will not (like myth) tell us which way to go: that depends on who we are and what we want. The future will be decided not by the past, but by the outcome of contention in the present between people with different visions of what they want the future to be. Understanding how the present emerged from the past maximizes our capacity (whoever we are) for effective action in the present—no more, but no less. History can be a major support for democracy. To ignore its potential contributions is to impoverish, even imperil ourselves. □

## Suggested Reading

The sharpest and most useful analysis of Reagan's rhetorical style is by Paul D. Erickson, *Reagan Speaks: The Making of an American Myth* (1985). Useful introductions to Reagan's cavalier attitude toward accuracy about matters contemporary and historical include: Mark Green and Gail MacColl, *There He Goes Again: Ronald Reagan's Reign of Error* (1983) and David Smith and Melinda Gebbie, *Reagan for Beginners* (1984). The Bitburg episode is explored by a variety of insightful essayists in Geoffrey Hartman, ed., *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective* (1986). Presidential pronouncements can be tracked in the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* issued by the U.S. Government Printing Office. Earlier speeches are collected in Alfred Balitzer, ed., *A Time for Choosing: The Speeches of Ronald Reagan, (1961-1982)* (1983). The central text by the man himself is Ronald Reagan, *Where's the Rest of Me?* (1965). The Christopher Hitchens article referred to is in *The Nation* (September 20, 1986).

On Reagan in the movies I am indebted to Michael Rogin for his illuminating chapter "Reagan: The Movie," from his forthcoming book. Charles Maland's *American Visions: [The Films of Capra, Wells, Ford]* is an excellent introduction to film in the 1930s and 1940s and is particularly insightful on Ford's historical movies. Tony Thomas, *Ronald Reagan: The Hollywood Years,* is the standard filmography. Larry J. Easley, "The Santa Fe Trail, John Brown, and the Coming of the Civil War," *Film and History,* 13:2 (May 1983), 25-33 provides a closeup. Jules Feiffer offers a sharp perspective in "Ronald Reagan Presents: Movie America—or the Past Recaptured," *The Nation* (July 11-18, 1981). On the wider 1930s context, see several of the essays in Warren I. Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (1984).

Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (1982) is an outstandingly insightful and learned study. And William H. McNeill's "Mythistory, or Truth, Myth, History, and Historians," *American Historical Review,* 91:1 (February 1986), 1-10, helps sort out some theoretical problems.

Mike Davis' book is a good reminder that Reaganism rests on far more than merely ideological grounds: *Prisoners of the American Dream: Politics and Economy in the History of the U.S. Working Class* (1986).

Other essays of mine expand on aspects of matters treated here: "Visiting the Past: the History of History Museums in the U.S." and "The History of Historic Preservation in the U.S.," both collected now (along with many relevant speculations on the politics of public history by colleagues of mine, notably Ed Countryman's analysis of Ford's *Drums Along the Mohawk*) in Sue Benson, Steve Brier, and Roy Rosenzweig, eds., *Presenting the Past: Essays on the Public and History* (1986: Temple University Press); "Mickey Mouse History: Portraying the Past at Disney World," *Radical History Review* No. 34 (March 1985), 33-58; and "The Politics of Public History," in Jo Blatti, ed., *Past Meets Present* (forthcoming: Smithsonian Press). I have suggested two specific kinds of "organized remembrance" campaigns in: "Ronald Reagan, Ellis Island, and the History of Immigration," *Organization of American Historians Newsletter,* 14:4 (November 1986), 8-11, and "Industrial Museums and the History of Deindustrialization," *The Public Historian* (forthcoming).

## Listen, Democrats!
## Ethics and Emotions

*Continued from page 28*

external constraints to "equal opportunity" and then we will all be able to compete fairly in the marketplace. The actual inequalities of wealth and power disappear, and once again we are faced with a picture of reality in which we have only ourselves to blame for not having fulfilling jobs and satisfying personal lives. So, ironically, individual rights consciousness contributes to a world view that reinforces self-blame. If the individual is the core of reality, it is the individual we ultimately blame when satisfaction has not been achieved.

But the deepest problem with individual rights consciousness is that this focus shapes human beings whose hallmark is their isolation from others. Liberals have fostered a world view in which individuals see themselves as isolated beings who enter into relationships with others on a contractual basis aimed at increasing individual satisfactions.

The picture itself is severely flawed. No human being is "self-made." Not only does everyone go through a long childhood nurtured by family or family-surrogates, but these families themselves stand in a rich web of social relationships which make it possible for them to provide the nurturance and support we need to develop. No matter how much of a "loner" any individual eventually becomes, s/he inevitably draws upon the linguistic, cultural and scientific legacies from previous generations. Even more important is this: Every human being has a fundamental desire to be recognized, desired and needed by others. It is an ontological necessity of being human that we be confirmed, seen, experienced, and loved. The person who thinks s/he made it on his/her own is simply deluded—s/he has been blinded by an individualistic ideology to the socially constructed network of dependencies and the contribution of others that made possible his/her individual path. We are deeply rooted in social histories—yet the philosophy of individualism encourages us to think of ourselves as alone and separate from others, owing them nothing, and entitled to get what we can for ourselves even at the expense of others.

This focus on individual rights distorts human relationships. The logic of love is different from the logic of rights. Families are held together not by reciprocal exchange between independent contractors, but by cross-generational love. Parents' giving to their children is not and cannot be reciprocated by children who feel under some contractual obligation to repay what has been given to them. Loving relationships between people are undermined to the extent that they become dominated by a bookkeeping of equal exchange. If relationships are seen primarily in terms of contracts between individuals out to maximize their own benefits, then very quickly we get to the current situation: a marketplace in relationships in which people are encouraged to discard the "old model" and find someone new the moment difficulties emerge. It is precisely this thinking which accelerates the contemporary crisis of the family.

In fact, what gets called the crisis in the family is actually a crisis in all human relationships. If everyone views relationships primarily from the standpoint of what s/he can get out of other people, then all relationships become much more problematic. This is why divorce statistics tend to underestimate the scope of the contemporary problem: even families which do stay together experience the growing sense of insecurity generated by a society in which everyone is taught to see affective ties as instrumental to achieving personal goals. Nor is the impact of this crisis confined to families: the growing sense that friendships "aren't what they used to be," that it is harder to establish and maintain deep loyalty and connectedness between friends, is not just a romanticizing of "good old days." These difficulties are, in part, generated by a society which encourages a level of selfishness and self-centeredness, parading under the banner of "individual rights," that makes deep friendship seem naive and foolish.

Is it any wonder, then, that many Americans, deeply aware of the emotional pains in their daily life, are unattracted to the liberals (even when they agree with many specifics of liberal programs)? On the one hand, the liberals seem unwilling to address the emotional and moral issues that are central to human needs. On the other hand, the liberals seem to advocate a way of looking at the world that reinforces self-blaming and undermines love and caring. For these fundamental reasons, anyone who is concerned about the political fate of the liberal forces in the U.S. (and this should include those in the social change movements who normally don't spend their time worrying about the Democratic Party but who nevertheless can only implement their politics if the Democrats win) has a deep stake in the liberals adopting a new political paradigm.

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The irony in the plight of the liberals is that they have allowed themselves to become the fall guys for problems that they did not really create. The conservatives, positioning themselves as the champions of the family, traditional values, and obligation to community, have been able to hold the moral high ground only because the liberals have failed to take these issues

seriously enough and have pursued instead a politics framed by a focus on the externals of politics. If liberals were to address the emotional crisis of self-blaming in daily life, the decline in moral vision, and the limitations of a philosophy of individualism, they could turn the tide in American politics.

The reason that liberals could change the picture is this: the basic problems we have been addressing are *not* the result of liberal ideas, but of social and economic realities that the conservatives are committed to defending. Let us consider, for example, the crisis in relationships that is often described as "the breakdown of the family."

Human relationships depend on trust, caring, and the ability to give to the other. These are not the personality traits fostered by our economic system. The "successful" American spends much of his/her day manipulating and controlling others. In a previous generation these were activities reserved primarily for the businessman and sales person. But today, being a successful manipulator of others is increasingly the ticket to success in all aspects of corporate life, in large governmental bureaucracies, even in academia. Moreover, in the past the goal was to sell a product. Today each person must increasingly view herself or himself as the product to be sold—and the task is to shape oneself to have the appropriate personality, appearance, education, even "psychological awareness" to make oneself an attractive commodity, the kind of person who will be rewarded with promotions, clients, or customers. People, then, must learn to manipulate others, and even to manipulate themselves—always with a view to how the abstract "other" will see them. But people who spend all day manipulating and controlling others eventually form personality structures that are narcissistic and removed from real feelings. They have no idea of who they are apart from what vision "will sell"—and so they are in no position to enter into intimate relationships. It's not that they are hiding themselves as much as that they increasingly have no contact with their *inner cores*—so they have no way of sharing authentic feelings with others. On the surface they may be successful—but it is hard for them to keep in touch with anything deeper within themselves, much less to share that with others.

More than anything, it is the development of this kind of personality that undermines relationships, families, and friendships. Yet this is not a personal problem of a few "troubled" individuals—this is a major social reality that has increasingly dominated American life in the past several decades and threatens to grow worse. Precisely as we become a society less dependent on traditional manufacturing and more oriented towards information and service, these kinds of personality traits become generalized (in fact, even those who don't actually use them in their work see this way as being the strategy to success and study various self-help books or take courses in self-improvement so that they can become more like the people who are actually "making it"). To the extent that this kind of personality takes root, friendship and loyalty, trust and commitment become harder to attain.

This is why no short-term "family programs" will ultimately work—because the problem is to create a society that fosters a different kind of personality, a personality that builds on trust, caring and the ability to give to others. That may take changes beyond the scope of any short-term program liberal Democrats are willing to propose at this point. But, nevertheless, simply articulating this analysis, helping people understand that the problems in their relationships are rooted in the way we are forced to succeed in the world of work, can itself be an important contribution. Imagine if the Democratic Party were to talk about how the world of work encourages people to act in ways that undermine our ability to love. Or imagine them addressing unmarried people about the problems of building lasting relationships with those who have to spend all day manipulating others. Imagine the Democrats talking about why it becomes hard, given the competitive thrust of economic life, for people to trust each other and build lasting commitments. Talking in these kinds of terms would help many understand the social context to their individual lives and families, would undermine self-blaming, and would provide a message of compassion that was at once true and nourishing.

Precisely because we need to foster personality structures that are open, loving and caring we must reject the philosophy of selfishness that guides conservatives in their dealings with the poor. A society that preaches miserly conduct to the disadvantaged, that makes the poor feel ashamed of their poverty and encourages its middle classes to feel ripped off to the extent that public funds are used to solve problems of the poor, is a society that will foster human beings who do not understand generosity of the heart. It is this way of thinking, encouraged by the political conservatives, that strengthens the character traits most destructive to friendships and family life. People begin to measure out every act of love and kindness—demanding an immediate return on their investment. Grown children no longer respond to the needs of their aging parents—after all, what's in it for them? The very essence of friendship—spontaneous giving to the other—begins to seem like naive foolishness. The way that we learn to treat others in the larger society, then,

encourages a spirit of selfishness that fits well into the dynamics of a capitalist marketplace—but that simultaneously weakens our ability to have real friendships and commitments.

Apart from fostering a personality structure that is destructive to loving relationships, our economic and social arrangements, manifested in the world of work, play a more immediate role in undermining family life. The vast majority of Americans face work situations in which they are unable to use their intelligence, creativity and ability to cooperate with each other. Absent any significant control of this fundamental dimension of their life, they increasingly experience work as stressful—and this seemingly "merely subjective" valuation of their work has corresponded to a dramatic increase in stress-related physical health problems. But, stress at work is not only bad for health—but also for family life. Typically, stress is greatly intensified by self-blame. Rather than demand changes in their working conditions, most workers have bought into the ideology of the meritocracy. Although they know that their working conditions are fundamentally stressful, they believe it is their own fault for having stressful jobs. Most Americans nurture a story of self-blame that goes something like this: "If only I had been smarter, worked harder, made different choices or had been more attractive physically or more charming or had a better personality, or in some other way been different than I am, I wouldn't have this stressful job. So I have only myself to blame for my situation."

While inducing this way of thinking may be very useful for the conservatives—after all, their justification for the vast inequalities of wealth and power in the society rests on convincing everyone else that they only deserve what they have actually received—it is extremely destructive to family life. People return home from work not only stressed from their powerlessness, but also feeling terrible for *having* this kind of work. Instead of feeling angry at the situation and energized to change it, they feel angry at themselves (and discouraged about who they are as persons). The shame of not having "made it" into more fulfilling work—no matter what their actual level of achievement—causes great pain; and many people spend their time at home frenetically seeking ways to drown that anger they feel towards themselves.

The methods vary. For some, the pain of internalized anger and self-blaming can best be attenuated by alcohol or drugs or watching television (particularly shows that are not real enough to remind one of these painful emotions). For others, frenetic participation in sports, aerobics, exercise, politics, religion, or social life (activities that may be valuable in themselves—but which get pursued in a frenetic manner when they are used as an escape from the pain of the world of work) may do the job. But whatever avenue is pursued, the person who feels the need to drown her/his pain is to that extent blocked from participating in the kind of openness and sharing that strong intimate relationships require. So family life becomes increasingly emotionally sterile. To share one's feelings in this case would be to share feelings of anger and shame and self-blame. Most people feel sure that sharing these kinds of feelings would only diminish them in the eyes of their family—the one place where they still have hopes of receiving the kind of respect that is so frequently absent in the world of work. So they do everything they can to "make things nice" by staying away from their real feelings and projecting a veneer of "everything is fine." Over time, they may become so efficient at this that they themselves have little direct contact with these underlying feelings. The emotional emptiness that many people report experiencing in family life is a predictable consequence.

In many families the underlying anger pushes its way through somehow—sometimes in an unexpected edge of coldness or hostility, sometimes in overt bursts of anger, usually inappropriately displaced onto spouse or children. Yet people rarely understand the coldness, the hostility, or the outbursts of anger as the legacy of the world of work. Instead, they see these feelings as coming from nowhere—"out of the blue"—and this makes them even more scary, leading the self-blamers to work harder to repress their feelings. But a person working hard to suppress her/his feelings is a very poor candidate for a lasting and loving relationship. So either the relationships blow up and dissolve, or people end up settling for family life that is superficial and devoid of real contact and feeling.

We may not expect an immediate transformation in the world of work that totally eliminates these dynamics. But if liberals begin to talk about the pain in family life in terms of the real underlying issues that make relationships so much harder to sustain, they will both help in reducing the self-blaming and find that people begin to believe them when they say they are pro-family. Talking at this level will also quickly expose the shallowness and fundamental opportunism in the conservative's attempt to portray themselves as pro-family.

A similar kind of analysis could also show that the breakdown of communities and of moral values was more a product of the workings of the capitalist marketplace than conservatives have been willing to face. If people are spending all day long involved in economic relationships of exploitation, manipulation, and the subordination of ethics to profit, they will develop personality structures that have no place for ethical imperatives in their personal life. To strengthen America's moral fibre, we need to create an economic

life that daily reenforces our desire to treat other people as ultimately valuable subjects—not as enemies with whom we must compete.

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The liberal forces within the Democratic Party should take the leadership in forging a new direction for the party: a direction that focuses on the central issue of creating a society that promotes rather than undermines love, friendship, community and moral values. It is precisely the liberals who should insist on reframing the political dialogue within the Democratic Party—insisting on the priority of ethical vision and a commitment to dealing with the emotional needs of the American people.

The dominant paradigm for liberal politics should be the fostering of loving relationships within a morally strong community. The most important contribution they can make is to popularize an analysis of these problems that helps decrease self-blaming and increase compassion. Programs and legislation should be justified in these terms, public statements focused on these issues, and campaigns run on these themes.

Here are some of the concrete steps that must be taken:

1. Liberals should create a new national organization or coalition of existing organizations—perhaps we could call it Friends of the Family—that would articulate a pro-family agenda for the liberal world and would act as a public vehicle through which liberals in the Democratic Party and outside it could work together to promote a pro-family politics.

2. Liberals in Congress in both parties should meet together and foster a pro-family legislative focus. Unlike Reagan and the right wing pro-family rhetoric, a liberal program would be based on the kind of analysis articulated above and giving particular focus to the way that the world of work and the psychodynamics of self-blaming undermined family life. Among the kinds of legislative issues to be considered would be: a.) mandating workplaces to allow the creation of workplace safety and health committees elected by the workers and empowered to force changes in the conditions of work, so as to promote greater opportunity for workers to cooperate with each other, use their own intelligence and creativity, and participate in decision-making both in their own shops and in the larger decisions of the enterprise in which they work; b.) supplemental parental financial supports during the first seven years of a child's life—both to relieve the burdens of families with incomes under $70,000 a year, and to communicate the message that even those who do not have children should bear some of the cost for those who take on the valued role of raising the next generation; c.) mandating that workplaces provide extra sick days for children's illnesses, and extra leniency for tardiness when family emergencies intrude into daily life; d.) requiring workplaces to provide fully paid paternity and maternity leaves for six months; e.) creating a well-funded nationwide network of community-controlled child care centers based on a voucher system, so that parents could choose a model that fits their own ethical, emotional and religious beliefs, and funding communities to train childcare workers in programs shaped to meet the local communities' own needs; f.) a voucher system for supplemental support to the dependent elderly which they could use within either their own, their family's or well-financed community homes, hence giving many grown children the ability to afford to keep their parents in the home without fear of resulting financial destitution, while giving to the parents the financial security to be able to make the choice as to where to live their senior years.

Because these are practical, "external" programs it should be emphasized that these are only examples of steps that can be taken to build a pro-family reality. Congressional liberals must be careful to not reduce the focus to one of simple legislative remedies, but to talk to the underlying emotional realities. Liberals would do more to solve the problems in family life if they help people understand that these are shared and not just individual problems, problems that are rooted in the way we have built our competitive and self-interested society. If liberals dedicate time, money and energy to a serious campaign that attempts to undermine self-blaming and build compassion, to nurture ethical vision and promote real communities of caring—they will earn the respect and gratitude of the American people in a much deeper way than if all they do is to pass a few good pieces of legislation.

3. Together with liberals in state legislatures and city councils, Congressional liberals should promote the creation of local hearings in every neighborhood, where people can begin to discuss the real problems they are facing in daily life—with particular focus on the relationship between work and family life. Congressional hearings can highlight these activities, but liberals on the local level must be prepared to carry through and sustain on-going hearings aimed at helping people define for themselves what are the shared problems in family life, the world of work, and other aspects of daily life. The goal here is not simply to generate legislative remedies, though this can be one aspect; the message must be one which emphasizes the self-activity of local communities as well, one that focuses on the ways people can provide support for each other, learn from each others' experiences, and together build fam-

ily-support systems in their own communities. Most importantly, these local activities should increase awareness of the commonality of family problems and of the ways that our shared pains are themselves in part a product of a social order that promotes selfishness instead of love.

4. Presidential candidates should make their 1988 campaign focus on two themes: a.) A vision of a moral American community. Such a vision should be idealistic and *not pragmatic*. It should paint a picture of what life should be, and insist that practical programs must be measured by the degree to which they tend towards creating this kind of a society. Within this context, the Democrats should critique the conservatives' commitment to endless military spending and a reliance on the threat of nuclear war, the moral bankruptcy of support for the Contras, the moral failure of the Reagan years to adequately support Blacks in South Africa, the moral catastrophe of redistributing wealth from the poor to the rich that conservative policy leads to. Let television ads focus on these issues and pose to people the question: What kind of a society do you want? One that is morally sensitive and caring, or one that promotes selfishness and insensitivity to others? If the Democrats resist the pressure to be narrowly programmatic and insist on discussing fundamental underlying principles, they can receive a mandate for serious liberal change.

b.) A pro-family campaign that articulates specific pro-family programs but does not reduce itself to that. Instead, using the analysis developed here of what really causes pain in family life, liberal Presidential candidates should challenge the conservatives' strategy of scapegoating, and should talk about the psychic wounds that people experience in the world of work—and how that undermines family life. This kind of approach, of course, will offend the pundits and the "experts" who will, at first, be furiously writing op-ed articles about how the candidates are avoiding the issues. But the liberal who ignores the normal boring conventions of "respectable" politics and gets to the fundamental moral and emotional issues will ultimately win a responsive hearing from the American people.

5. No one will take seriously a pro-family shift by the liberals unless this move is done not as a momentary flurry to win an election but as part of a serious rethinking of liberal values. The Democrats should sponsor community forums and public discussions aimed at stimulating that discourse. They should challenge the popular notion, enshrined in pop psychology and liberal ideology, that the healthy person is the isolated person who has learned to be autonomous and not dependent on others, the person who can stand alone, facing the world as the courageous individual who, if s/he fancies, may connect with others.[4] We should instead insist that ontological priority goes to the human being in relationship to others, and that the very essence of being human is to be in relationship. The healthy human being is one who can allow him/herself to be vulnerable to others and who is not afraid of being in need and mutually interdependent with the human community, as long as that community is based on democracy and mutuality of respect. The liberals should create think-tanks and teach-ins, promote journals and magazines and use the media to help develop this kind of understanding.

It is easy to understand why Democrats and liberals will find this kind of advice somewhat difficult to accept in the Spring of 1987. The punctures in the Reagan balloon appear so critical that they may bring down any Republican candidate in 1988—and this thinking may lead Democrats to feel that they shouldn't rock the boat by pursuing new directions. But precisely because electoral victory may be more likely in 1988, it is important that Democrats attempt to use the opportunity to get a real mandate for a liberal program, and not just be forced into continuing Reaganism under a different name. It is particularly critical for liberals to seize this opportunity, because now they can speak to the American people with a moral authority that they had previously squandered under Carter. Yet if all that they offer is more of the same, they may only succeed in recrediting the politics that Reagan's moral blunders in Iran and Nicaragua have temporarily put into question with the majority of the American people. If ever there was a time for a new vision of politics, this is the moment. The liberals can succeed in creating a new agenda and a new balance in American politics. To do so now requires the kind of serious rethinking of fundamentals that has been described herein. □

4. Two caveats: First, liberals will rightly resist any attempt to define one "correct" model of family life, and insist that gay families and alternative families, insofar as they represent freely chosen alternatives and not simply accommodations to a bad reality, also deserve our respect. Second, we will resist any attempt to pressure people to enter relationships to be socially acceptable, or to stay in bad relationships that cannot be improved. Love requires choice, and we must create support systems for singles and for people leaving relationships, so that when people do enter families they do so not through subtle societal manipulations, but as a result of real loving choices. It is because we are pro-family that we must strongly resist any societal messages that put people down for being single or suggest that people are wrong to get divorced.

Yet we also reject any notion that being in a long-term loving relationship is just one possible choice among many equally valuable lifestyles. Human beings fundamentally need and are most fully realized within such relationships, and while we should avoid stigmatizing those who have not found them, we should see that the difficulty in finding and sustaining these relationships is one of the great indictments of our form of social organization.

## Listen, Democrats!

### Memorandum

*Continued from page 33*

be twenty percent fewer young people entering the labor force annually in the year 2000 than there are now. We know this. They are already born. A higher percentage of women will be working but the increase will be nothing like the huge increase we saw in the 1970s. We could let in more immigrants, of course, but with more and more jobs requiring literacy and other basic skills, many immigrants would not be what we need anyway. So what we are going to face unless we invest in the education of *all* of our young people is the prospect of jobs going begging (or going offshore or to automation) while American young people continue to roam the streets as a modern reserve army of the unemployed.

This is a case for a tough antipoverty and antidiscrimination strategy that is based on our national self-interest. The case has not been made in this way to the American people. For political reasons it is not the headline, but it is an inescapable, absolutely essential part of the story, and it is one that people will be more likely to listen to when it has been expressed in the context I have outlined. Every one of the items discussed earlier has policy elements which involve particular attention to the problems of poor people.

The major theme with regard to poverty is self-sufficiency: putting people to work in jobs that deliver a total income which lifts families out of poverty. That means the jobs have to exist and it means the people have to have enough education to be able to do the jobs and it means barriers like lack of child care and lack of health coverage and race discrimination have to be removed.

And, again, this is not something that will be done by passing one law or funding one program.

There are a number of themes here that are ostensibly new for Democrats. One is the idea that the best outcome is a private sector job. The shibboleth is that Democrats believe in indolence first and the public payroll second, or perhaps in both simultaneously. Another idea not routinely associated with the Democrats is that all individuals are responsible for making the most they can of themselves. Again, the myth is that Democrats think government will do everything and individuals have no responsibilities. A third "new idea" is that the states can usefully take initiatives and innovate. The shibboleth is that only Republicans believe in states.

A new antipoverty strategy would embrace these three ideas. But it would also insist that when private sector work does not pay enough to lift a family out of poverty, there is a public obligation to assist. Three million Americans work full-time and are still poor along with their families. Two-thirds of the non-elderly poor live in families where someone works full- or part-time. When people try their hardest, when they take responsibility, society has an obligation not to let them down. The reality that there are millions of working poor is only beginning to enter the nation's consciousness.

The new strategy would insist that if maximum training and placement efforts do not land a person a job in the private sector, if the economy, in short, is not producing enough jobs, then work must be offered in the public sector. (And it would add that if no work is offered at all, adequate cash assistance must be, as a real and genuine safety net.)

This is quite different from the "liberal" position of the late 1960s and early 1970s. On the employment front, that involved guaranteed jobs as a matter of first resort. The rhetoric was that the government would be the employer of last resort, but the strategy was dissonant from the rhetoric. Public employment advocates were pressing for a block of jobs that would be offered up front to the unemployed. Again, we have learned something. Now, when we talk about creating public jobs for those who cannot find private (or permanent public payroll) jobs after a maximum effort has been made, we are talking about a genuinely new idea, a real notion of the government as employer of last resort.

On the income front our thinking has undergone a parallel change. The "liberals" of the early 1970s favored President Nixon's Family Assistance Plan or perhaps a more generous version thereof. Many of us now see those negative income tax ideas (that is what they were) as insufficiently connected to the job market. Income maintenance should be our very last resort, the residuum when every possible effort to find work has failed. This, I am afraid, is a new idea.

I have suggested that all of the proposals I have made could be handled within the framework of an emphasis on the economy. Others, as I said, talk competitiveness. Another possible thematic framework is the family. Everything I have discussed surely would strengthen families. And, of course, the frameworks are not mutually exclusive. The same ideas can be touted as both economy-strengthening and family-strengthening. This may even increase their political value. Yet another thematic framework might revolve around the word "security." Democrats might argue that their commitment is to national security, economic security, and family security (and perhaps security of people in their homes and on the streets), and that only by being committed to security in all senses can the nation's security be truly assured.

So much for the economy, or competitiveness, or the family, or security. Whatever the organizing idea, the candidate also wants to emphasize that times have changed and the necessary players are different. To argue that the states and cities and the private sector are part of the solution is not to sell out some immutable liberal principal. The states and cities have a capacity they did not have twenty-five years ago. Outside advocates are much more numerous and sophisticated, too. It is certainly harder to have to watch fifty-one state legislatures, but it can be done. To encourage state initiative nowadays is no longer an invitation to abdication and abuse. We can be against ideological calls for wholesale privatization but in ideological favor of partnerships and alliances. We can oppose abdication of the federal role but support stimulation of initiatives at other levels.

All of this has been about substance and structure that would resonate with the younger voter. There is one more element that I think would do that. I started with the items that will appeal to personal concerns, not because people are disgustingly selfish, but because they are human and quite fearful in many ways at present. I think, though, that there is a patriotism and an idealism in our people as well. Half the electorate has come of age electorally since John Kennedy called on Americans to serve and help others. It may therefore be time for that call to issue once again from the highest level, this time perhaps directed at people in their own communities, to help the homeless and tutor children and spend time with the elderly.

There is a further dimension to this: the connection to government policy. Volunteerism to help the homeless is needed, but a government-led low-income housing strategy is vital, too. If people are inclined to be generous as individuals, it is essential that we seek to make that generosity encompass support of compassionate government actions as well. A president who means to educate us and bring out the best of what is in us will tell the voters that there is an inextricable connection, that neither service to others nor government's assistance is enough by itself. For that connection is agonizingly missing in our national consciousness right now. As Robert Bellah and his colleagues have documented so clearly in *Habits of the Heart*, Americans are generous in their willingness to assist others in their own communities, but see little connection between conditions that evoke their individual action and government policy which has caused or failed to alleviate those conditions. If that connection can be made clear and communicated by a candidate to people by the millions, it is not just the Democrats who will win. America will win. □

# Ottò Sz.

*Ottò Orbàn translated from the Hungarian by Jascha Kessler with Maria Körösy*

No blood relation, just my father's friend. My idiotic name's from him; he used to come through with little loans when things were tight. His face: two twinkling jacket buttons in a plate of stew. Once, I remember the three of us strolling in the park: an insidious light was sifting through the trees, that meaty piglet head glowing like red-hot iron; they were talking grownups' business. He hadn't made it through the grim times in some woodshed. He and his family went on an all-expenses-paid, one-of-a-kind guided tour. He missed the gas chamber, but saw his wife's smoke with his own eyes. Katha their daughter, nicknamed Katie, was kicked to death on one of the last days; she was interred in the stinking charred ground by an English bulldozer. Ottò Sz. returned. And looked for the family jewels—four valises and the sewing machine hidden from the Arrowcross men* by my father's brother-in-law and trundled to Kispest† on a wheelbarrow. But instead of the house in Kispest, there was only a hole. Ottò Sz. sued the thief, who was on vacation in Gorki. He cursed my father and everyone alive. He wanted the sewing-machine, his Cordelia, the pretty needle, the lovely pedal. He died in '47, that piglet face by then transmogrified by paranoia into the head of an ascetic. According to ear-witnesses, those laboring lips spouted vicious words from the deathbed, mentioning me, his namesake, too—"That bastard get of the Nazi whore." King Lear went mad in poetry only once.

*Ottò Orbàn is a well-known Hungarian poet and a Jewish survivor of Budapest.*

*Jascha Kessler has translated many Hungarian writers. Her most recent book is* Under Gemini: The Selected Poetry of Miklos Radnoti *(Ohio University Press, 1985).*

*"Arrowcross men," i.e., Hungarian Nazis.

†Kispest (pronounced "Kishpesht"), an industrial district of Budapest.

## Rethinking the Holocaust Daughter

*Continued from page 60*

believe that they all found a just resting-place under the Wings of the Holy Presence, I might not feel it necessary to offer them this miserable contribution—a minute here, a minute there of my life, an unjust resting-place in my lap, a substitute peace.

Now there is a great silence here in Birkenau, and green grass dotted with tiny wild flowers rises out of the soil. It's a trampled, dark soil, easy to walk on. Survivors often mention the quagmire of mud, and, of course, the glow of the fire at night and the pillar of smoke by day from the outdoor burning mounds (at a certain stage, even the sophisticated furnaces could not keep up).

The fence between the boulevard and the bloc compounds has been left open here and there for the convenience of visitors. The view inside does not confirm what the imagination has portrayed, and the crocodile issues a muted groan, as if out of duty. But it does not seem possible that nine people were crushed onto each bunk like this—there isn't room even for three. But it does not seem possible that they drank the foul soup from the same pail the *kapo* used as his chamber pot. But it does not seem possible that assignations were arranged in the outhouse, and that, despite strict separation of the sexes and liberal use of the death penalty, women took every opportunity to make themselves available next to the pit of excrement for anyone (who still had the strength and the mind for such matters), if he only gave them a rotten potato or some such in return. But it does not seem possible that an inscription on the inside wall of the hut states, in stylized Gothic lettering—I see it with my own eyes—"One louse can kill you." (Had I been here forty years ago, I would have found my way quite well: the German for "louse" and "death" resembles the English.) This is how the hygiene-loving Germans reminded the public to take extreme care in avoiding typhus-carrying lice. But the slogan had a different and much more realistic reading in this place forty years ago: in their all-out war against epidemics, the Germans sent anyone found carrying even a single louse straight to the gas chambers.

But it does not seem possible that we would be so dependent on the body—always wont to get filthy, to stink, to betray—on its hysterical insistence on staying alive; that we would depend on the demands of the stomach, a blind, wet, acid-emitting red sack: what has it to do with us? And the intestines, a few meters of slimy tubing, rolled up in the dark—*they* would turn us into wild beasts? (The camp rejoiced when the transports from Hungary began to arrive in the spring of 1944. Unlike the Polish Jews, who arrived destitute after years in ghettos, the Hungarians had enjoyed relatively normal conditions almost to the last moment. Since they usually set out well-equipped for their "resettlement", the starving camp gorged on dozens, hundreds of parcels of choice salami, preserves and alcohol whenever a transport was liquidated—it was a dream. The sorters always defied mortal peril by doing business with part of the booty. Thus the beginning of the annihilation of Hungary's Jews meant several months' reprieve for some of the veterans of Auschwitz and Birkenau.)

So, the body. A certain question irked me for years: what did they do when they had a period? It concerned me already at the age of eleven, when I listened to broadcasts of the Eichmann trial. Even then I understood that the Germans were not so kind as to provide the women of Auschwitz with cotton wool and sanitary napkins, that was obvious. Just the same, there were women there, yes, some spent years there, so what did they do, how did they get along? I never dared to ask. No one, of course, ever explained it to me by his own initiative.

The uncontrollable dripping, the sublime humiliation, my body with its bleeding and discharges. Certain troglodyte rabbis and their flock often "explain" the Holocaust as the result of Jews having "gone astray" and neglecting the rituals concerning menstruation. So much do they hate me and the "defilement" my body produces, that this is the punishment they think I deserve for my disgraceful bleedings—Auschwitz, no less!

Then we have the revealing appellation the language of my country has applied to me—*nekeva*, "hole". From the outside, it suggests a constant penetrability, a standing invitation to any maniac; from the inside, it bespeaks an inability to control the incriminating drip, drip, drip. Little boys and girls learn with much effort to control their emissions "like grown-ups", and they are praised for it. Ten years later, the little girl learns to her horror that her body has taken her back to a smelly, sticky, infantile helplessness, as least as bad as soiling her pants. (The girls in class used to whisper hair-raising tales about girls who "got it"—"right there in the middle of the street.")

What did the women in the ghetto do when the Judenrat handed out an announcement from the Germans to the effect that births in the ghetto were permitted only up to a certain date, and that "the Jewesses are asked not to give birth any longer thereafter"? There was such an order in one of the ghettos; it's in writing. The text often flashes through my mind, ever since I first saw the document. I automatically contract my

thighs, in the street, at work, standing in line, trying to close the incriminating holes, control them by force of will.

At night, cold sweat. DeathFear is not a dog but a bitch, a leprous, contemptible female, her hole dripping ceaselessly dirtying her entire surroundings. DeathFear lies supine, her legs splayed wide, tied in stirrups in the air, in a room awash with strong surgical light, and she writhes with waves of pain and no one stands beside her. She feels it coming out of her, big and scary and wet. I cannot get up, cannot escape, and she screams, it's coming out, it's coming out, look, it'll fall to the ground, and the grinning faces in the white cloaks tell me nonchalantly not to be hysterical, there's lots more time, and she howls no, it's coming out, and she's right: at the last moment they come on the run, they couldn't even get the rubber gloves on, grabbing with their bare hands the baby girl who bursts like a missile into a void and rips me to shreds.

DeathFear remembers: Dr. Mengele could help a woman give birth, take up the infant, inflate its lungs, and cut the umbilicus while observing all the rules of antisepsis—an attentive, concerned physician. Half an hour later he sent mother and child together to the gas chambers. DeathFear is an expert at minutiae, forwarding them to consciousness at just the right moment; she is a wizard at drawing hysterical comparisons, analogies as hoarse as a shriek. With her hate, her rancor, her constant sad wail, DeathFear still tries to fight for her supremacy; now she wants to continue to hurt, to bite, to grip the consciousness, and to bury it somewhere like a bone she has found and will never cough up. Bitter, sputtering again and again with rebellion, she gradually shrinks back into her corner. Only slowly, slowly does she finally grasp that for all that, something more important than she is happening here. This body with its secretions, this despised and embarrassing thing, has produced a gift from within: a pink, wrinkled baby girl, and she is breathing, and she is crying, and she has these dark and wondering eyes, and her name is Effie.

(Two days after I gave birth to her I sat up—it was hard, with my dozens of stitches—in the dining room in the maternity ward and watched television. Eleven Israeli athletes had been murdered by Black September terrorists at the Munich Olympics. All the announcers and all the politicians stressed how horrible it was that this had happened "on German soil, of all places." I grasped what was being said only with great difficulty, as if through constant static. My thoughts were on the tender bleating bundle they brought me every four hours from the baby ward. I was like a deposed queen, stunned by the Copernican blow I had taken: that's that; never again will I be the most important person in the world.)

So, Effie. She has reached the age now when she asks profound questions, and she is checking me out (it's got nothing to do with the trip to Poland): How would you like to die? And I answer: To tell you the truth, the deathless way. That gets her mad; I've broken the rules of the game. Oh really, but let's say you've got to, so what way is best?

We talk it over: Let's say I've got to die, let's say. How do we picture the various ways—drowning, burning, hanging? It's a talk about the facts of death. Long ago, and not only once, we had talked about what the women's magazines used to call, when I was a girl, "the facts of life". I wanted to spare her the female self-contempt and I am not sure I succeeded (against all logic, however, I am still sure that this really was my role, that I should have been perfect, that it should have been possible to save her). Before we set out on this trip I packed sanitary napkins for her, just in case, even though she's still a little young. For her part, she reviewed her menagerie of dolls, and finally selected the woolly lamb Jo, a pink-faced, wall-eyed, very genial creature. Sometimes Effie lets Jo look out the car window and asks her what she thinks of the scenery, and Jo gives erudite long-winded answers in Effie's voice. The lamb-monologue is our backseat driver. At night she sleeps with Jo in our Polish hotel beds.

It's hot and cold in my body, she says again at Birkenau, as she said at Maidanek, and I hug her, caress her head, her hair, and under it my fingers automatically search for the fontanelle, which has long since come together and hardened. It was a terrible thing to discover and feel it when I first held her—nothing but a thin layer of baby skin between my fingers and her tender brain. I did not trust myself to be careful and gentle enough; I would bite my lips sharply and cry with fear and pity for her, how her skull was open to the big evil world, and she had only me to protect her.

Had we been brought here by train (with Effie clutching her woolly lamb, Jo) we would have been sent, together, in the very first selection, to the line heading for the "showers." (Reading the testimonies, I got somewhat confused which side was life and which was death; the Germans chose "Left!" for the gas chambers in some accounts, and "Right!" in others. It may be a matter of point of view: was it the German's left, or that of the person whose fate had been sealed?) She has accompanied me on this imaginary journey since she was born. Parents, relatives, friends, loved ones—I lose sight of them as the train clatters inside my head. I am jounced in the car with strangers, and they are groaning, collapsing, crushing, crushed, their eyes radiate hate and fear. (Shared humiliation does not make for intimacy. The sense of community has already vanished; we reach that degree of terror where it's

every man for himself.) Only Effie, so familiar and beloved that there is no escape, gazes at me, clings to me the whole way, and cries: Mommy, water. And I say: soon, soon, we're almost there. Thus she clings to me for days and nights until the bitter end, when we arrive, half-dead, and the SS doctor orders us to go "Left". I clutch her hand and say: Come, Mommy's with you; everything will be all right.

Each and every one of my friends who live abroad assured me, in his or her turn, that he or she would take Effie in and raise her "if something happens in Israel"—if one of the wars here is serious, if we are ever really in danger of being thrown into the sea, or whatever. Though I pretend I am not quite serious in these conversations, I demand that the promise be made in utter seriousness: my friends, some sniggering at my Israeli paranoia (I snigger along, of course) promise as requested. It's obviously nothing more than a Russian-style declaration of boundless friendship, valid only at the moment it is given, for who knows how the future will strike us, when its time to strike comes.

My fear of the future always wears the face of the past, and, in these talks with my overseas friends, I strive perpetually to keep Effie off my last train ride.

## The Poisoned Heart

*Continued from page 83*

That very month, Ben-Gurion wrote to his secretary in Washington about a meeting he had with a young girl, a member of Hehalutz in Poland, who had succeeded in reaching Palestine: "I cannot free myself of the nightmare which has again been brought to us ... I heard stories of atrocity and suffering that no Dante or Poe could concoct in his imagination; you feel totally helpless, and you cannot even go out of your mind—the sun rises and you, too, have to go on with your regular work ... and it's not easy."

Yes, protest meetings were held and mass assemblies convened. Speeches were delivered in lofty rhetoric, and the public attended ceremonies of mourning. In synagogues there were special prayers for the Jews of Europe. The greatest effect of these ceremonies, however, was not their contribution to helping or rescuing the Jews, but their palliative, compensating, and purging aspects. After them, one could return to routine with greater verve.

Remarks uttered before the Zionist Executive Committee in May, 1943 by Yitzhak Gruenbaum, of all people—words so direct as to be brutal—arouse more than a trace of sympathy today. At least they are free of pretense, and avoid blind bereavement rituals unaccompanied by a genuine mobilization of local resources for action. Gruenbaum told his colleagues, "I do not think it our task to call a halt to normal life in a corner of the world in the Old Continent where there is normal life. And I am neither envious nor heartless that I cannot see that the Jews are a little happy with their lives. It's good that there is one corner of the world where a Jew feels himself free and also a little happy with his life. And I do not know why I've got to put an end to happiness in life. What would that achieve? Nothing but self-satisfaction for people who'd say, 'Look, we've cried for five minutes, and something's going to change because of that.'"

No doubt. An abyss—part psychological and part real—had opened between devastated European Jewry and the living, flourishing Jewish community in Palestine. Zion-based, self-fulfilling Zionism had turned its back on the Jewish people. Negation of the Diaspora, refusal to acquiesce to the image of passive reaction of Diaspora Jews to the attacker's blows, the strong, natural will to live of people who found themselves out of the Nazis' grasp and considered themselves lucky, and the psychic mechanisms which people employ in their subconscious to defend themselves against harsh experiences, trauma, and intolerable reality which threaten to upset their psychic equilibrium—the Jews in Palestine, and elsewhere, harbored them all. What makes this so surprising is that this community was a branch from the trunk of European Jewry. Everyone in Palestine had relatives in Europe—parents, brothers, grandparents, uncles, and aunts. Nevertheless, and perhaps for this very reason, those repression mechanisms were hard at work.

Neither was the abyss purely psychological. It had its real, actual side, in historical circumstances independent of the yishuv's attitude to European Jewry. The routes to the Nazi-occupied territories were totally obstructed. The yishuv itself had no political sovereignty, and depended for almost all its operations on the mercies of Great Britain.

The Nazis could be fought only within the British framework, and the British were not eager to permit Palestinian Jews to mobilize out of very well-placed apprehension that such a Jewish force would later come into play in the Zionists' struggle against the British for Palestine. It is also worth noting that the Zionist leadership regarded a Jewish army as a Zionist instrument first of all, a phase in amassing might toward the establishment of a state, and an important card to play in the political bargaining which would follow the war. However, once the British did permit the yishuv to enlist, about thirty-thousand men signed up and went. Some were young, others less young. Many of them did not have long-term Zionist

considerations in mind. They wanted to reach the Diaspora by any route. After all is said and done, some even got there in time to fight the Nazis, rescue Jews, and provide the surviving remnant some succor.

As early as the end of 1942, Eliahu Golomb, a yishuv leader and one of the founders of the Haganah, suggested that a regiment of paratroopers be sent into the ghettos of Europe, for the purpose of fomenting uprisings and arousing the Jews to act against the Germans. Though approaching fifty, Golomb sought to place himself at the head of the force and to parachute himself into Europe. The idea, which sounded fantastic at the time, underwent various metamorphoses. The British first rejected it and then toyed with it until the closing stages of the war. Finally, in late 1943 and 1944, thirty-two Palestinian paratroopers in British uniforms set out for the occupied territories. It was too late, and they were too few. They were neither properly trained nor suitably equipped. Their duties were poorly defined. It was a suicide mission. But they went, knowing they were almost certainly going to their deaths. Their heart-throbbing letters attest to this. They could have backed off, reconsidered at the last moment, and not gone. Some did, and their names have been blotted out from history. But most did not back off. They left young families, friends, and a tranquil and relatively secure homeland in favor of a blind landing in occupied Europe. Seven of them died and became heros, parts of the national myth. Others, who landed alive and succeeded in eluding the Nazis, even managed to do something. If they did not actually save anyone, they did organize the survivors, and after the end of the war, bring them to Eretz Israel.

Then there were the yishuv's emissaries in Geneva and Istanbul. These delegations, manning the front-line posts with regard to the occupied countries, wallowed in partisan squabbles and wasted tremendous energy on political disputes and questions of representation. They worked almost empty-handed; the leadership in Palestine provided them nothing by way of massive and significant backing. Some of them, however, did everything they could—they sent letters signed "my homeland," dispatched parcels of food and money to the ghettos ("poured a glass of water on a burning city" as one of them said), and tried to shake the yishuv out of its lassitude by decibel power. They sent signals in both directions—into the murk which blanketed the occupied lands, and toward Palestine. In both cases, the signals reached targets and were picked up. It later became clear that every letter and parcel sent from Istanbul or Geneva which reached its destination had the effect of granting more life and more meaning to life.

There is no doubt that the emissaries' ceaseless demands for greater mobilization and more action were the factors which ultimately provoked the yishuv to step up its rescue efforts—which, in the end, were not altogether meaningless. The total effort—the humane, fair, elementary acts of individuals and groups—could not, as stated, reverse the course of history. They did not reduce the magnitude of the slaughter by any significant measure. But the efforts were detected and recorded on both ends, in Europe and in Palestine, and set standards of human behavior at a time of great disaster. They became the substance without which historical memory and consciousness cannot exist.

At the same time that the yishuv was continuing with daily life its leadership was enslaved to long-obsolete ideological concepts and involved in drawing up its long-term political plans. As historian Yehuda Bauer put it, they were so preoccupied with planning the postwar world that they could not see what was happening before their eyes in Europe. Against all this, there were modest "workers of the present" at work—volunteers in the British Army, representatives in Istanbul, and above all the parachutists. These men and women of the yishuv, neither leaders, visionaries, nor idealogues, were free of the commitment to a great Zionist design. Thus they were free to help, to rescue, to rehabilitate, to succor—i.e., to do the immediate, vital "work of the present," in its new context of the Holocaust period.

Like Albert Camus' heroes in *The Plague*, like Dr. Rieux, Tarrou, Rambert, and the others who mounted a hopeless struggle against an all-consuming plague threatening the city, these Palestinian Jews—not many—went out and hurled their human emotions, their mercies, their determination, and their wisdom against the tyranny of death and passivity, because "the only means of fighting a plague is common decency." Or as Dr. Riex put it, "There is no question of heroism in all this. It's a matter of common decency." □

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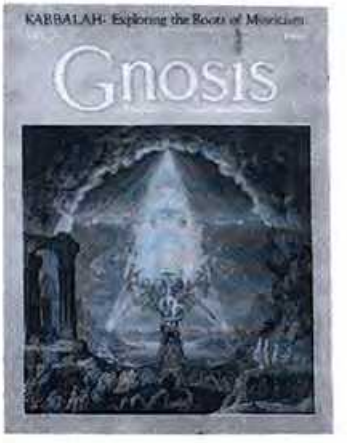
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# INTELLECTUALS AND RELIGION



Recently *The New York Times Magazine* carried an article on the "return to religion" among intellectuals. From Harvard to Berkeley, among both professors and students, and amid inquisitive people generally, there is an undeniable renewal of interest in the questions traditional religion raises and seeks to answer. This interest is largely a result of the failures of secular substitutes for religion (such as rationalism, narcissism, technological utopianism, aestheticism, and extremist political ideologies) to give abidingly satisfying answers to the truly significant puzzles in life: goodness, suffering, love, death, and the meaning of it all.

By no means, however, does this religious reawakening entail falling into the suffocating arms of a Rev. Moon or a Jerry Falwell, or embracing the ersatz gods of dog-eat-dog individualism, consumerism, or America First, which we see celebrated all around us these days. Nor does the religious renaissance imply a retreat from working for peace and justice. Rather, there is an awareness that, in the words of Jean Bethke Elshtain, religious commitment "can help further social reform," and that religion can supply the ethical bedrock upon which to make political commitments which are far more solid than those based on passing ideologies and enthusiasms. Nor does the new openness to religion signify a hostility to science, but rather an appreciation of the limits of science and the dangers of pseudo-scientific messianisms.

*The New York Times Magazine* article discussed the NEW OXFORD REVIEW as part of this "return to religion," and rightly so. We at the NEW OXFORD REVIEW are spearheading today's intellectual fascination with what Daniel Bell terms "the sacred." We are particularly interested in exploring religious commitments which result in progressive social consequences, as exemplified by such giants as Dorothy Day, Archbishop Tutu, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Lech Walesa, Martin Luther King Jr., Cesar Chavez, and Archbishop Romero. And we probe the literary riches offered by such greats as Ignazio Silone, Graham Greene, Thomas Merton, W.H. Auden, Flannery O'Connor, and T.S. Eliot.

An ecumenical and literary monthly edited by lay Catholics, we've been characterized by the University of Chicago's Martin E. Marty as "lively" and by *Newsweek* as "thoughtful and often cheeky." And there's no denying the *Library Journal*'s verdict that we will "doubtless command increasing attention."

Those who write for us — Robert N. Bellah, J.M. Cameron, Eileen Egan, Henri J.M. Nouwen, Robert Coles, Christopher Lasch, Walker Percy, and others — express themselves with clarity, verve, style, and heart. We bat around a wide variety of issues and defy easy pigeonholing. If you're keen on intellectual ferment and the life of the mind and spirit, subscribe today!

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*Excerpts from the Founding Editorial Statement*

# TIKKUN: To Mend, Repair and Transform the World

The notion that the world could and should be different than it is has deep roots within Judaism. The refusal to accept the world as given, articulated in the Prophetic call for transformation, has fueled the radical underpinnings of Jewish life. The idol-smashers of the last 150 years, Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud, articulated a fundamentally Jewish sensibility.

**Tikkun Magazine** hopes to provide a voice for those who still dare to hope, for those who are not embarrassed to dream, for those Jews and non-Jews alike who are still moved by the radical spirit of the Prophets and who insist on keeping their message alive.

It is not only Jews, much less religious Jews, who are able to hear the Prophetic voice and respond to it. **Tikkun** seeks to create an intellectual arena in which non-Jews as well as Jews, religious as well as secular, can explore the fundamental intellectual, cultural and political questions of our time.

Jewish religion is irrevocably committed to the side of the oppressed. Jews have a deep commitment to the liberal ideals of democracy, human rights and fundamental liberties. But we are not uncritically committed to liberalism. When liberal values are used as a cover for materialism and individualism, we demur. We stand for freedom, but not for giving corporations unlimited freedom to exploit the people and resources of the planet.

Many Jews are alienated from the Jewish world, not because it is too different from America, but because its values are too similar to the dominant American values. Yet within Jewish history and Jewish tradition there exists a core of wisdom, born from the struggle against oppression, that has much to contribute to our common intellectual and political life.

We strongly support Israel, and are lovingly critical of specific Israeli policies and critical also of those in the religious world who mis-identify contemporary Israel with the messianic goals that we need to strive for. We are committed to the struggle against nuclear war and nuclear weapons as a central moral imperative of our time. We also support the struggles against apartheid in South Africa and for economic and political equality for Blacks in the United States; for an end to world hunger and for a reorganization of the world's resources and productive capacities so that poverty can be eliminated; for the kind of social reorganization that promotes respect and dignity for women and the end to patriarchal oppression; for the empowerment of working people and for the creation of peace in the Middle East.

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The full Founding Editorial Statement appears in **Tikkun** (Vol. 1, No. 1) available from **Tikkun Magazine**, 5100 Leona St., Oakland, CA 94619. Cost $2.00.

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# תיקון

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*to heal, repair and transform the world.*
*All the rest is commentary.*