

Tikkun

POLITICS+SPIRITUALITY+CULTURE

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JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2008

ISRAEL/PALESTINE
PEACE?

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An Insider's Account of
the Geneva Initiative



MENACHEM KLEIN
TRANSLATED BY HAIM WATZMAN

A Possible Peace Between Israel and Palestine

An Insider's Account of the Geneva Initiative

Menachem Klein

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Readers Respond

IS AIPAC "GOOD FOR THE JEWS"?

THE FUNDAMENTAL question for immigrant Jewish Americans from Eastern Europe was "Is it good for the Jews?" The answers to that question used to be more easily ascertained than they are in the 21st century. In fact, if God or some objective analyst were to consider whether political actions which are intended to support Jews—in Israel and here in the United States—are in fact 'good for the Jews,' I imagine the answers might be surprising.

It's my belief that some actions that are intended to "support Israel" have been counterproductive and harmful to the security of the Jewish people, in Israel and worldwide. In fact, actions that isolate and punish Palestinian and other Arab populations (as in Lebanon in the summer of 2006) have helped the most violent extremists in the Arab world. Punishing civilians in Gaza and in Lebanon provoked more anti-Jewish violence than might have been the case had policies been pursued that sought to empower the Palestinian people and the Lebanese people. Moderate Muslims who hope to co-

exist with the state of Israel now have less support in the Arab world than they did prior to the Bush/Cheney 'war on terror' and the construction of Israel's 'Separation Fence' (or Wall).

I am certainly not God, nor can I pretend to be objective. Nevertheless, I encourage readers to consider my assessment of which leaders and what policies are 'good (or bad) for the Jews'. Bad for the Jews: AIPAC (the American/Israel Public Affairs committee, the Occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, Sen. Joseph Lieberman's support of Bush/Cheney administration militarism. Good for the Jews: Theodore Bikel, Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, Brit Tzedek v'Shalom and Jewish Voice for Peace, Neve Shalom/Wahat-al-Salam's School, *Tikkun* Magazine and the Tikkun Community.

If we really think about what causes hatred and violence, it should be clear that what is good for all the people of the Middle East—including self-determination for the Palestinian people—will ultimately be good for the Israelis and good for the Jews.

WILL FUDEMAN
Ithaca, NY

MORE ON POLITICAL HUMOR

NAGLER HITS THE NAIL right on the head ("Response to Paul Lewis" [*Tikkun* Nov/Dec 2007]) with a very common issue in our society—that we are free, and have

the right to say or do anything (not specifically outlawed). Responsibility is not part of the equation. And, yes, this has proven to be quite counterproductive and a major cause of our negative society—from our community down to Congress.

Yes, as Christ taught, we must love and respect the human person unconditionally, though we can oppose immoral behaviors, attitudes or even ideas. Society must be protected from evildoers or criminals (and some politicians)—but, we must still love and respect them as God's creation. This consciousness is missing in today's national mass media. And even some religious practitioners have difficulty with this.

DON JONES
San Jose, CA

NSP RESPONSE

I AM WRITING TO THANK you for your outstanding last issue (Nov/Dec 2007). I am founder and president of the Virginia Commonwealth University student organization/chapter of the Network of Spiritual Progressives in Richmond, where I am a graduate student in Religious Studies. A few of the articles especially illuminated some of the pressing issues that we are currently exploring in my class, Religion, Racism and Social Justice, and on campus in general. I was particularly enthralled by the "Science and Spirit" article (Peter Gabel and George Lakoff are

two of my heroes) and have made copies of it to distribute amongst many of my fellow students, especially those who are not yet NSP members, and so do not get the benefit of the free *Tikkun* subscription. Please keep up the excellent work that you are doing. It inspires us to help create a more peaceful, loving and compassionate world.

JONNY CECKA
Virginia

FROM THE JENA TIMES

I WAS NOT IMPRESSED with Sheldon H. Laskin's "Jena: A Missed Opportunity for Healing" [*Tikkun* (Nov/Dec 2007)].

I would point you and your magazine to an exhaustive account of the Jena events found at thejenatimes.net. In this account, you can read for yourselves quotes from various officials involved, including U.S. Attorney Donald Washington, which dispels many of the untruths your magazine has printed in Laskin's article.

If Laskin would have researched and found the true story about all of the events of Jena, he most likely would have come away with an entirely different focus on his article. There is a common denominator in all of the events—but it is not the racially motivated angle that Laskin alleges. Rather,

Send letters to managingeditor@tikkun.org or to 2342 Shattuck Ave., #1200 Berkeley, CA 94704

This section includes letters we receive from snail mail and from responses posted on our website to specific articles. We may shorten, edit, or change some words for greater clarity. We only print a small set of the large supply of letters and emails we receive. All letters sent to us are read, but only a few can fit here in our limited space.

Vote to Change the Culture in America

Replace a Culture of Materialism and Selfishness with a Culture of Love and Generosity



Network of Spiritual Progressives

What America Needs in 2008

IF WE ARE TO HEAL THE CRISES OF WAR, VIOLENCE, INJUSTICE, ecological devastation and extreme poverty in the United States and around the world, we need a new kind of political conversation.

In our current political debates, it is taken for granted that our highest goals should be unlimited economic growth for the country and personal prosperity for individuals. Institutions, legislation, and social practices are evaluated according to how they serve these goals, how they maximize our material wealth and our power to protect it from those who would take it from us. This is the old

Bottom Line. What counts in this culture is what can be counted, measured, and used to increase our material well-being.

This deep assumption, which is present not only in our politics but in almost every aspect of our lives, has led to the triumph of greed, materialism, and selfishness. This me-firstism plays out in our lives in destructive and painful ways and has contributed to the destruction of our environment and the acceleration of global climate change.

We have lost our ability to value each other and the natural world as embodiments of the sacred, or, in secular terms, as inherently valuable and worthy. Instead we learn to see others, at best, in terms of how they can help us get ahead, and at worst, as competitors for everything from jobs to love to space on the overcrowded freeways. The price of material success, it seems, is a



certain amount of alienation from others and from nature. Then, when that material success proves ultimately unsatisfying, we lack an alternate frame of meaning for our lives.



The speed at which we feel we need to live, coupled with a materialist worldview, flattens our experience of the world. The media intensifies this with reality shows that glory in participants' backbiting and ruthless pursuit of their own interests. Elections are covered as a horse race in which we learn almost nothing about what the candidates really think about the issues, but only about who is leading in the polls or who has pulled what dirty trick on whom. Evening news shows flatten life further with scripted banter between the anchor-people, which reflects an inner deadness that we are supposed to accept as "real."

Phoniness surrounds us and presents itself as the only reality. Those who wish for joy, celebration of the grandeur of the universe, loving connections with others, and a community of meaning and purpose often feel driven to the margins. Many people feel they have to keep to themselves how alienated they feel under our current political and social systems. It is no coincidence that depression, numbness, loneliness, and anxiety are rampant. We are suffering from a society-wide repression of what might be called the life force, God-energy, or Spirit.

To address this deep spiritual crisis, we need a president and political leaders who are unashamed to talk and act from a commitment to a New Bottom Line of love, caring, kindness, compassion, generosity, environmental sanity, and awe and wonder at the grandeur of the universe.



Our next president and our Senators and Representatives should encourage the recognition that there is enough, that we can afford to share, and that slowing down and acting from love, gratitude, awe, and wonder is actually more satisfying than the frenetic material consumption that is destroying our environment. We need leadership that can inspire the American people and the people of the world with that sensibility, and

with the recognition that our own well-being depends on the well-being of everyone else on the planet and of the health of the planet itself. More than someone who is just charismatic, we need a leader who is committed to this New Bottom Line consciousness.

We need a leadership that can challenge the fundamental assumption that domination of the world is a good way to achieve security, and instead advocate for a **Strategy of Generosity**, recognizing that it is through caring for other people around the world and eliminating their suffering that we are most likely to dry up the cesspools of despair, anger, and rage, from which terrorists are able to recruit their suicide bombers.

The following questions may be useful in locating the right candidates for those leadership roles.

1. Resolving the War in Iraq: How would your Iraq policy foster reconciliation among Iraqis and show genuine concern for their well-being while bringing our own soldiers home quickly? The NSP proposes that all further war funding be focused exclusively on bringing home all troops. Would your policy accomplish that, or would it de facto leave tens of thousands of "advisors" or "pre-positioned forces" in Kurdistan or neighboring countries? How will you ensure that the rebuilding of Iraq is done in ways that best

protect the interests of Shi'ites, Sunnis and Kurds, and how will you withstand the corporate pressure to maintain major control over Iraq's oil resources and oil profits? Would you issue a public apology to the people of Iraq on behalf of the American people for the damage we have inflicted in the past years?

2. Strong Families: How would you challenge the selfishness, materialism and "looking out for number one" in our economy and in our society that undermine loving family relationships? How would you seek to support loving, healthy families?

3. Environment: Will you develop proposals and policies to deepen people's connection to and appreciation of the earth, including making the fostering of such appreciation part of our public school curricula? Are you willing to propose plans that would limit over-consumption of the world's resources (water, food, energy sources and other aspects of the global commons) and protect them from ownership and exploitation for private profit? Can you imagine any way to use your elected position to begin to heal the crisis in meaning that has caused so many Americans to turn to consumerism and materialism to feed their hunger and fill the void created by selfishness and spiritual deadness?

4. Health Care: At a very basic level, Americans believe in taking care of each other and each other's families. Guaranteeing health care for everyone would be a beautiful way to manifest that caring as a nation, yet the profit-hungry healthcare industry inhibits our ability to do that. How would you help us make sure that every single American gets the health care he or she needs? Would you support efforts to direct our health care system to pay greater attention to the ways that people's emotional, mental, and spiritual well being affect their physical health?



5. Education: Would you support legislation aimed at requiring schools to teach students to be socially, ethically, and ecologically responsible, and to develop students' capacities to care for others, as well as to teach academic skills? How would your plan help to foster the moral and spiritual sensitivity and imagination of the next generation rather than encouraging schools to focus *exclusively* on training students to do well on standardized tests?

6. Poverty and Homeland Security: The poverty suffered by so many people both here and around the world is a source of great pain and anger. Do you agree that a United States that demonstrates generosity and care toward the world would ultimately be safer and more secure than a United States that devotes its foreign policy exclusively to maintaining its status as "number one" in the world?

We are advocating for a Strategy of Generosity as an alternative to our current Strategy of Domination. As part of this Strategy of Generosity, would you support a Global Marshall Plan to allocate 1-2% of our gross domestic product each year for the next twenty years to ending global and domestic poverty and inadequate health care and education and to healing the environment? Do you



Paul Lachine



believe that this is the primary way to provide safety, or do you intend to fund new wars in Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan or other countries to continue a war on terrorism? What specifically would it take for you to agree that the war on terror is over?

Will you protect the human dignity even of those who are suspected of a crime or of being an enemy combatant, prohibiting torture, physical pressure, waterboarding or denial of the rights of *habeas corpus* and a speedy trial? What specifically will you do to strengthen civil liberties, human rights, and protection of our citizens from infringement of our privacy by corporations and by government related agencies?

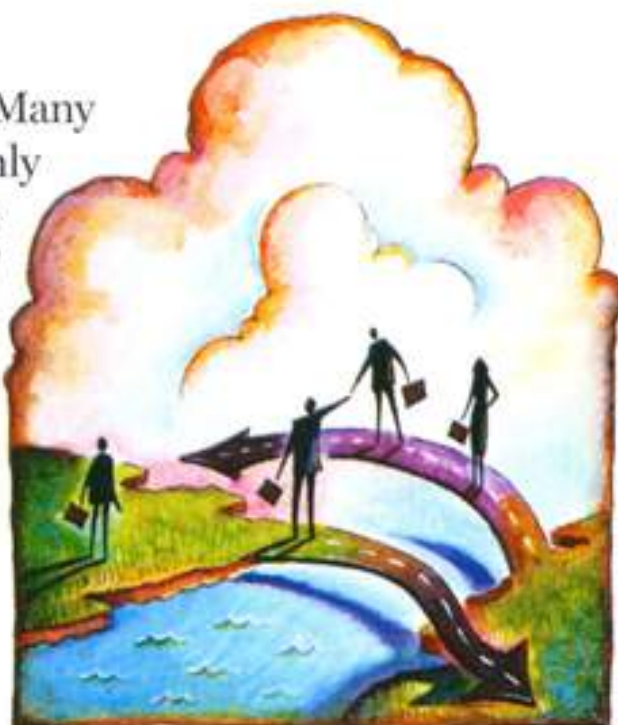
7. Social Responsibility: We believe that many of the people leading corporations actually want to be socially responsible but are limited in doing so by their responsibility to maximize shareholder profit without regard to societal consequences. How can we devise policies that empower such leaders to act on their principles and that affirm that shareholders themselves often have concerns about the social and moral consequences of their investments? For example, we have suggested legislation that would require every large corporation (income over \$50 million/year) to get a new charter every ten years, with the charter being granted only to those corporations that could prove a satisfactory history of social

responsibility to a jury of ordinary citizens. Would you support this legislation? Do you believe that the “free market,” based as it is in an inequitable distribution of money and hence of inequitable “consumer power” about what is to be produced, should be the only mechanism for shaping production of goods?

8. Modeling Personal Responsibility: How can you, your campaign, and your staff model what it means to care for others? The NSP has called for elected officials and their staffs to give a few hours during each work week to hands-on service to the needy, for example in a soup kitchen or homeless shelter. Would you take this on?

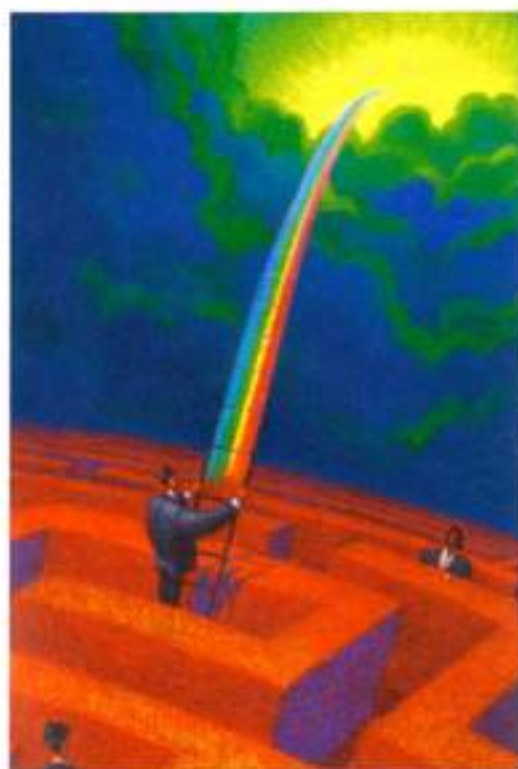
9. Meaning and Purpose: Do you agree that the economy should not only increase financial wealth but also provide ways for people to contribute to some higher meaning and purpose? In what ways would you give priority to resisting our society’s tendency to value human beings primarily in terms of what societal, economic, or sexual needs they can serve? What steps will you take to make politics about meaning more than about large monied interests? Will you support electoral reform to eliminate the influence of money and incumbency, replace the Electoral College with the popular vote, require free media time for candidates, ban political advertising, and fully equalize the possibilities of ordinary citizens running for office even though they do not have the backing of corporate interests?

10. Values in the Public Sphere: Many of us have worried that openly supporting values in the public sphere violates the separation of church and state. This hesitance has cleared the way for the values of the market—profit, competition, narrow self-interest—to dominate our common life. How would you bring a values-based



moral voice into the public square, affirming that the creation of a loving and caring society is a legitimate purpose of governmental action as the expression of the caring impulse of the people?

A Note on Elections and Political Pundits



In the coming months, you will hear the media, political pundits, bloggers, and the mavens of the political parties refer to certain candidates as “realistic,” “pragmatic,” “knows how government works,” “electable,” “not too partisan,” or “savvy.”

Beware the weight placed on these labels. They are shorthand for “willing to accept the basic contours of economic and political power,” even as they work for some limited but valuable reforms. The labels

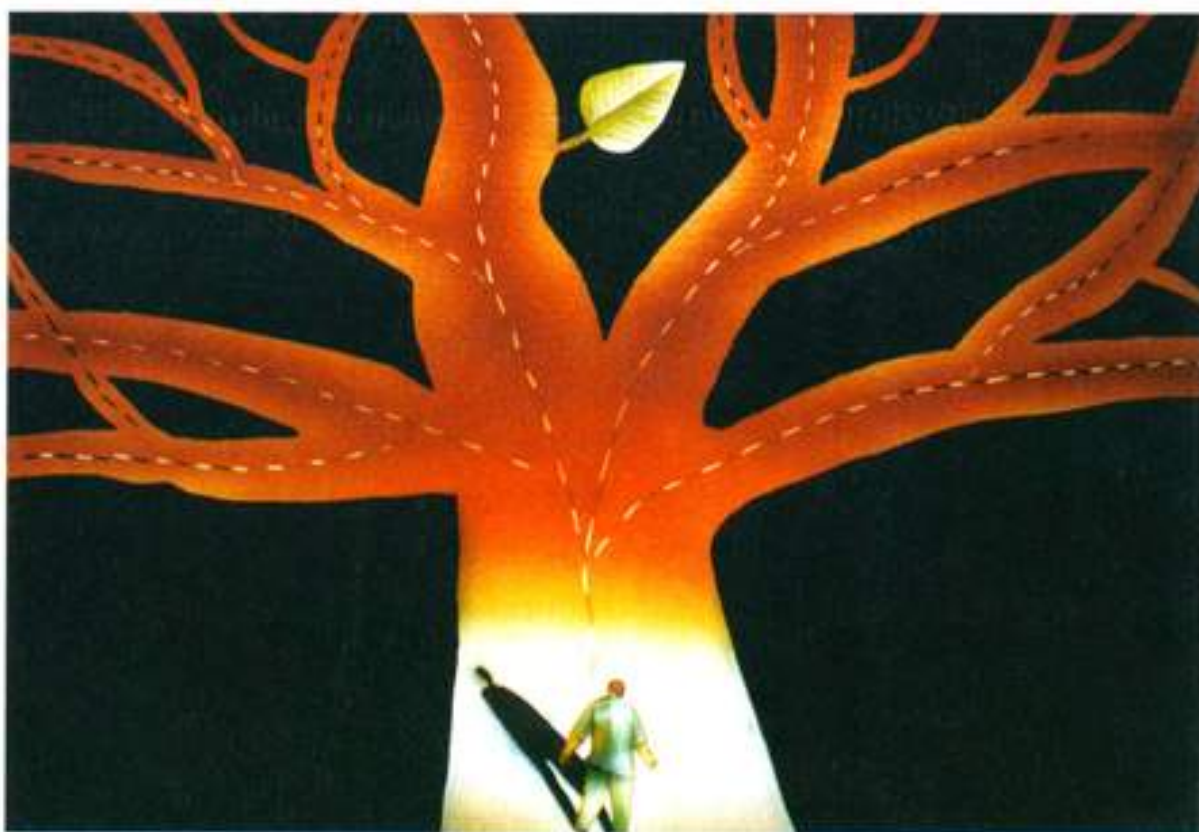
urge candidates to stay within the limitations of what *is* instead of reaching for what *might be*. In many of our religious traditions, such fixation—“being realistic” and accepting the way things already have been set up in our world while ignoring the transformative power of God—is called idolatry.

The truth is that a candidate who courageously speaks to our distress at the selfishly manipulative way people treat each other and the earth will get voters’ attention in a way no candidate has in decades. If that candidate can then point the way to maximizing a meaningful life rather than just maximizing material success, that candidate will be electable. By moving beyond the normal range of political discourse and addressing the pain and frustration generated by the spiritual and ethical crisis in American society, a

spiritually progressive candidate can become more viable than the more traditional politicians who stay within the box of conventional political discourse.

The Network of Spiritual Progressives has developed a Spiritual Covenant with America that might be a starting point for such a platform. The Spiritual Covenant can be downloaded from www.spiritualprogressives.org . We offer this covenant in a spirit of humility while standing steadfast in our call for a new bottom line of love and caring.

If you are excited about this new vision, please join the Network of Spiritual Progressives! You can help us spread these ideas. Use the elections to challenge the conventional ways of thinking about politics. Don't waste your money, time and energy backing candidates who don't really support your highest ideals and vision of a healthy society. If you can't find a candidate to support, consider becoming a candidate yourself and running on these ideas. Become a member of the NSP by visiting our website and clicking on "Join & Donate."



Todd Davidson

What You Can Do Toward a Meaningful 2008 Election

Become a Delegate to Your Party's National Convention and/or Run for Public Office Using our Spiritual Covenant with America as the Foundation for your Campaign

Ordinary citizens with good ideas can sometimes beat establishment candidates who have all the money. But run even if you can't win—it can be a great opportunity to speak about these ideas. Contact Nichola Torbett (Nichola@tikkun.org) for more information.

Attend Candidate Forums and Ask Questions

Candidates need to hear questions framed from the spiritual progressive perspective in order to become familiar with these ideas. Take this guide with you when you go to candidate forums and raise these questions, or send these questions to the campaigns of candidates you are considering and let them know you represent the Network of Spiritual Progressives.

Contact Campaigns and Ask Questions

Likewise, you can send these questions to the campaigns of candidates you are considering and let them know you represent the Network of Spiritual Progressives. If enough people do this, candidates will begin to respond.

Write Letters to the Editor

Look for articles in your local newspaper about the issues mentioned in this guide, and write letters to the editor articulating this perspective on the issues.

Vote for Your Highest Vision

Especially in the primary races, people will try to talk you into sacrificing your values to the "electability" debate. Support the candidate who best articulates your highest vision for the future. If enough of us vote for the candidates who stand for our values, those candidates become electable.

Start a Spiritual Caucus in Your Political Party

A caucus is a group of people dedicated to a common set of issues or shared vision. You can start one around the perspectives articulated in this brochure. Visit www.spiritualprogressives.org and click on Get Involved for more information.

Invite People to a House Party

Many of the people you know have never heard a spiritual progressive perspective on the issues facing America. You can raise the issues in this booklet as focus for the conversation, and/or you can show one of the video clips we have on our website. You could also combine this conversation with a campaign debate-watching party. Then get people to go to their local city councils to get them to endorse parts of the Spiritual Covenant with America (see our website).

Join the NSP

Support our work in getting these ideas into the public sphere! Go to www.spiritualprogressives.org, and click "Join and Donate." While you are on our website, look for a chapter near you, or let us know you'd like to begin one. We'll help you get started.

Distribute this brochure to your neighbors and coworkers. Free copies—call (510) 644-1200.



The Network of Spiritual Progressives is a national interfaith organization dedicated to a fundamental shift from fear and domination to love and generosity in our institutions, public policies, and social practices. Please join us and contribute to spreading this way of thinking!

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it is a lack of parental guidance—something that would have been of importance to your readers.

CRAIG FRANKLIN
Assistant Editor,
the Jena Times

SHELDON LASKIN RESPONDS:

IN A RECENT *Christian Science Monitor* article, Mr. Franklin stated that the real motivation for the nooses was not racial, but to stage a prank on fellow white students by satirizing an incident—presumably, a western lynching—from “Lonesome Dove.” But Mr. Franklin went on to argue that, as a result of the incident, the white students were given a nine day suspension at an alternative facility, followed by two weeks of in-school suspension, Saturday detentions, attendance at Discipline Court and evaluation by licensed

mental-health professionals.

Assuming the accuracy of the punishments Mr. Franklin lists, it is inconceivable that the Jena school officials gave any credence whatsoever to the “Lonesome Dove” explanation. An innocent schoolboy prank would never merit such harsh punishment.

An excellent detailed response to Mr. Franklin’s *Christian Science Monitor* article is available on the Friends of Justice website.

THANKSGIVING

{**EDITOR’S NOTE:** In an email letter to those *Tikkun* subscribers and NSP members who have given us their email address (to sign up, send us your email and snail mail address), *Tikkun* Editor Rabbi Lerner sent a Thanksgiving message urging us to use Thanksgiving

to really give thanks for all that is good in our lives and for the blessings of abundance that we in advanced industrial societies have achieved.}

UNWELCOMED GRATITUDE

MY HUSBAND AND I lived our sacred Thanksgiving at home sitting on the sofa in quiet and in words, sharing what is meaningful in our lives and for what we are given and receive. Then we went to our relatives for dinner taking food and receiving food. Soon inside the door my brother-in-law told me that he had felt an overwhelmed sense of gratitude when he was at the grocery buying food for the meal, seeing the abundance that was made available to us. I affirmed what he shared.

When we sat down to eat almost without think-

ing, because this is what my husband and I do before we eat together each day, I asked that we pause for a moment and hold hands. And it was then that the jeering and joking came from across the table. So indeed it was a brief pause and the hands did indeed all join for a brief time. However since it wasn’t my home and I was a guest, the opportunity to share in the depth of gratitude was not welcomed or recognized for more than a brief fleeting moment, in my view sadly, not recognized to celebrate the sanctity of the day and the moment.

In past years I have requested a time for a prayer of gratitude before the meal and the message was clearly made that the tone of the day was not going to hold with such solemnity, as it had been for so many years

Tikkun

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when I grew up, where prayer was central.

Such are the challenges you point out in your message reflecting on our secular infused culture.

ELLEN MCCOWN

REDEFINING THANKSGIVING

I support your message about embracing a spirit of gratitude and eschewing consumerism. Nonetheless, the uncritical embracing of Thanksgiving—especially coming from progressives—is highly problematic. Thanksgiving is a Day of Mourning among many First Nations/Native American peoples and our allies. Some refuse to celebrate it. Others acknowledge any opportunity to give thanks to the Creator, but acknowledge both the gratitude and the grieving—grieving, since it's a holiday based largely in white-washed myths that's linked to the genocide of First Nations people.

As to the illusion of redefining Thanksgiving:

Imagine that Germany won World War II and that a Nazi regime endured for some decades, eventually giving way to a more liberal state with a softer version of German-supremacist ideology. Imagine that a century later, Germans celebrated a holiday offering a white-washed version of German/Jewish history that ignored that Holocaust and the deep anti-Semitism of the culture. Imagine that the holiday provided a welcomed time for families and friends to gather and enjoy food and conversation. Imagine that businesses,

schools and government offices closed on this day.

What would we say about such a holiday? Would we not question the distortions woven into such a celebration? Would we not demand a more accurate historical account? Would we not, in fact, denounce such a holiday as grotesque?

When the dominant culture defines a holiday in a certain fashion, one can't pretend to redefine it in private. One either accepts the dominant definition or resists it, publicly and privately.

LAWRENCE ELLIS
Oakland, CA

SCIENCE VS. SCIENTISM

PERSONALLY I GO along with much of the Left critique of the American dominated materialistic, business-is-everything, environment-destroying culture. But if Fundamentalist Science = Scientism I cannot accept that Bush's America is being run by it. Bush believes fervently that God wanted him to be President and he was elected both times by the Bible belt. Thus he opposes stem-cell research. I'd be pretty sure that just about all atheists, including 'militant atheists' (not that there are that many in America) would have voted against Bush.

Science is the accumulation of factual knowledge about the nature and workings of the physical universe. By definition it is values blind. What people do with some of that knowledge is another issue. It seemed at times in

your article that Science was being blamed for atomic weapons and global warming. Ever since early man discovered that some plants contained powerful poisons (the hard way no doubt) knowledge gets misused, but it's not fair to blame the discoverer. There is a big difference between science and technology, even though the latter builds on the part of the former that it likes.

You may well have by now, but if not, do read *Rocks of Ages* by Stephen Jay Gould. He's so clear that both Science and Religion are needed, that they are important in different spheres (magisteria) of our lives. Gould is firm that each magisterium needs to know its limits. As a botanist who loves and records the beauty of plants I thought Gabel's description of the 'sensuous' bending of a plant a bit wacko.

BRYAN HAMLIN
Boston, MA

DAVID BELDEN RESPONDS:

None of the spiritual thinkers I reported on in the article "Science and Spirit" [*Tikkun* Nov/Dec 2007] issue were attacking science itself, only the ways that science is illegitimately made into something like a religion, "scientism." Bush is indeed influenced by religious fundamentalism, but the article argued that the influence of scientism is much larger on all our governments to date, even though it is harder to see because we are so used to it and are unfamiliar with criticizing it.

Fiction, nonfiction, art, and poetry by E.M. Broner, Marilyn French, Ruth Stone, Sandy Boucher, Paula Gunn Allen, Jane Lazarre, and others.

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Current THINKING

Defending Chanukah from The Latest Assault on Religion by Christopher Hitchens

Many liberals and academics are deeply antagonistic towards religious belief, so it wasn't much of a surprise when Christopher Hitchens, formerly a columnist for the *Nation*, struck a resonant chord among many of the U.S. opinion shapers with his book *God Is Not Great*. This book highlighted the alleged absurdity and intellectual vacuity of believing in God, and did so with venom and wit. While some were disturbed that Hitchens's religiophobia had taken him to the point where he was justifying the war in Iraq and the war on terror as appropriate to stop the spread of fundamentalist Muslims, others were too impressed with the obvious intelligence and word-crafting, and too happy to have someone publicly voice the anger at religion that they felt, to worry about the way that Hitchens's thinking had led him to defend the expansion of global American hegemony in the name of enlightenment values.

Now Hitchens has taken the next logical step: an assault on what he calls "the grim old routines of Torah." In an article in the online magazine *Slate*, entitled "Bah, Hanukkah" and summarized

(either by him or by the editors of *Slate*) as "The holiday celebrates the triumph of Jewish backwardness," Hitchens responds to an article by *Tikkun* Editor Michael Lerner sent out to the *Tikkun*/Network of Spiritual Progressives email list.

Lerner's article, entitled "Chanukah & Christmas: Their Spiritual Messages and Why NOT to Smoosh Them" argues that both Christmas and Chanukah have a common theme with previously existing festivals of the winter equinox: the hopeful affirmation that the sun will return and that the cold days of winter will be surpassed by a new summer and harvest in which the dimming of the light will return (hence the theme of a holiday of lights). But both Chanukah and Christmas add an additional dimension: the hope of social transformation, recalled in Chanukah by retelling the story of how a small guerrilla band of Jews were able to overcome the power of Hellenist armies from the Seleucid kingdom of Syria and provide for national liberation, and affirmed in Christmas by celebrating the birth of a messiah who would bring peace on earth and so-

cial justice as well. Lerner argues that both Judaism and Christianity are celebrating the possibility of a world transformed, yet he also warns that to respect each particular path to that transformation requires that members of each community not celebrate the other's holiday, a widespread practice that has led to the dissolution of the spiritual message into a secular holiday of gift-giving that has more to do with the triumph of the ethos of capitalist consumption than with the kind of liberation at the heart of both religions. When the holiday season transforms into a mass hysteria of endless consumption, not only does it generate huge amounts of depression or sadness (not everyone has the money to buy at the level that the media projects as reasonable nor the capacity to satisfy children's media-generated expectations of how love manifests in expensive gifts) but deflects any serious attention from the hope-oriented essence of the holidays.

Hitchens challenges Lerner and claims that Chanukah celebrates "the imposition of theocratic darkness." He champions the Seleucid Empire, which "had weaned many

people away for the sacrifices, the circumcisions, the belief in a special relationship with God, and the other reactionary manifestations of an ancient and cruel faith." He neglects to mention, however, that the Seleucid "weaning" involved an imperialist conquest, the imposition of confiscatory levels of taxation, and punishment by death for anyone who practiced what Lerner called the "oldtime religion," which was built around the story of the liberation of slaves from Egypt by a God YHVH who is, in Lerner's words, "the Force of Healing and Transformation in the world." It was the repression of this religion that led to the struggle against the Hellenism whose defeat Hitchens bemoans.

Hitchens goes on: "To celebrate Hanukkah is to celebrate not just the triumph of tribal Jewish backwardness, but also the accidental birth of Judaism's bastard child in the shape of Christianity.... When the fanatics of Palestine won that victory, and when Judaism repudiated Athens for Jerusalem, the development of the whole of humanity was terribly retarded." While finding nothing wrong with displaying Christmas trees or

manger scenes in public because they have nothing to do with the Christmas message at all, Hitchens fumes against the public display of the Chanukah menorah, which he sees as "an explicit celebration of the original victory of bloody-minded faith over enlightenment and reason. As such it is a direct negation of the First Amendment and it is time for the secularists and the civil libertarians to find the courage to say so."

Hitchens's position on Chanukah is totally consistent with his support for the war in Iraq and for the more general crusade of the "war on terror." Just as Alexander the Great and his successor imperialist regimes (the Seleucids in Syria, the Ptolemies in Egypt, and the Romans throughout the known world of its time) imagined themselves not as brutal conquerors seeking to exploit the peoples they were conquering but as enlightened liberators who would bring to the world their superior science and culture, so too the advocates of a clash of cultures or Norman Podhoretz's "4th World War" believe that they are saving the world from barbarism by imposing Western corporations, media, and culture, and the democratic system of the United States on the barbarians of the world (viz. anyone who doesn't celebrate and warmly embrace global capitalism and its political representative: the U.S. army).

It is in response to this cultural, political, economic, and religious imperialism that people turn to the only other source of values available to them: fundamentalist forms of existing religious traditions which provide a different

framework for what counts as valuable. Whereas Hellenist and subsequently Roman culture were undoubtedly advanced over that of the countries they sought to dominate in terms of science and technology, they were primitive in regard to ethical values, willing to murder millions and enslave hundreds of millions through the 1,000-year history of Roman domination. The brutality of Greece and Rome, and, for that matter, the brutality imposed on the world by Western science-drenched and technologically superior colonialism and imperialism, has made any cruelty Hitchens can mine from the Bible seem trivial and inconsequential by comparison.

But we do not have to choose fundamentalist forms of religion or imperialist forms of democracy and capitalism. The central point of the spiritual vision put forward in Rabbi Lerner's book *The Left Hand of God* and in the material of the Network of Spiritual Progressives is that one need not embrace the most fundamentalist versions of religion in order to protect oneself from the most insidious and values-destroying aspects of global capitalism. The middle path around which we have rallied spiritual progressives is one that affirms freedom of religion and resists the imposition of any particular religion on the public sphere, including the religion of scientism or secular atheism. We affirm the importance of bringing into the public sphere values that counter the dominant religion with its claim that "all that is real is that which can be measured or validated through sense-observation." We have called for a New Bottom Line

in which institutions and social practices are described as efficient, rational, and productive not only to the extent that they maximize money or power (the Hellenist/Roman approach) but also to the extent that they maximize love, kindness, generosity, ethical and ecological sensitivity, and enhance our capacities to respond to others as embodiments of the sacred, and to the universe with awe, wonder, and radical amazement at the grandeur of creation (the Jewish and Christian approach, found in many other religions and spiritual practices, including among many atheists or spiritual-but-not-religious secularists). But we strongly insist that no particular religion should be imposed by the state, and hence seek an end to the imposition of Judaism on the citizens of Israel just as we seek to challenge attempts by sympathizers of the religious right in the United States to undermine the separation of church and state.

It is true that the new Hashmonean society set up by the Maccabees eventually did become oppressive and corrupt, and facilitated the rule of Rome over Jerusalem. But we would no more discount the value of the Maccabees's struggle against the Hellenists on the grounds that its connection to liberation eventually gave way to corruption than we would the struggle of the American revolution, though it quickly gave way to a constitution that counted slaves as three-fifths of a white human being, and that eventually produced a government that waged colonial and imperial wars and claimed the right to militarily intervene in the affairs of other countries all

around the world.

Hitchens's assessment of Torah is harshly judgmental and follows a line of anti-Judaism put down in the attempts of the early Church to assert Christianity's superiority to the "old" covenant, which, according to the Church, Jesus had superseded. Here Hitchens is simply ignorant of the history of interpretation of Torah that has developed over the course of the past 2,500 years. But where he is most dangerous is in his mobilization of the religophobia that already exists in liberal and intellectual circles, channeling the (sometimes justified) rage that many people have about the way some religions have imposed sexist, racist, and authoritarian practices and turning that rage specifically against Judaism. This is both unjustified and destructive. ■

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The Joy of just being here on this beach
still without a Hilton or Sheraton.
Sand as at the dawn of creation, triumph
of existence. Look how the baby turtles
crawl from their egg shells.

Watch how they advance over the hot beach
to the sea which itself is life, the source of our own.
Taste this cool water fresh from the well.
We will not even eat the clams,
do nothing that would remind us of death.

Paradise lasting an instant.

The birds come. They nose dive,
rake low over the shore, then pull up
with prey in their beaks: turtles
just born. And the birds are not gulls:
it is the Luftwaffe over Warsaw.

With great anguish the turtles drag themselves to the tide,
victims whose only fault was their birth.
Ten out of a thousand will reach the sea.
The rest will be devoured.

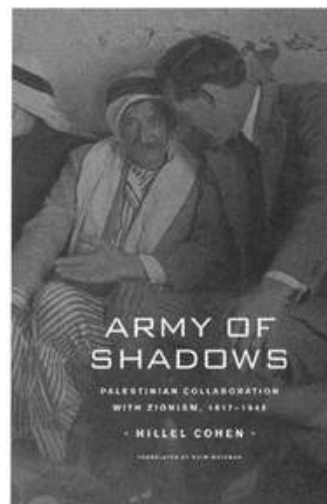
Let others say this is natural selection,
survival of the fit.

For me it is the horror of the world.

—José Emilio Pacheco

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After Annapolis— Middle East Peace?

We hope so. We pray so. But we don't think so.

BY MICHAEL LERNER

THE NEGOTIATIONS THAT BEGAN AFTER CONDOLEEZZA Rice's one-day "summit" at Annapolis are a hopeful sign. Raising hopes for a settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian struggle and an end to the longest-running post-WWII occupation anywhere on the globe, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian Authority Chair Mahmoud Abbas both have strong political motivations to achieve a lasting peace. Olmert's popularity sunk to close to zero after the disastrous Lebanon war in 2006, and Abbas has effectively lost control of Gaza to Hamas and is barely able to contain terrorist attacks on Israel from the West Bank. A reasonable peace accord would not only bolster the chances of political survival for these two leaders, but would also bring them a place of honor in the history of their respective peoples.

Unfortunately, neither Abbas nor Olmert has been willing to speak frankly and unequivocally to their own people about the concessions necessary to make a peace agreement that would actually work. Without challenging the fear and depressive certainty that the other side can't be trusted and is filled with hateful people, both leaders will find themselves under huge pressure not to make the necessary concessions. But at the moment, denial reigns supreme, and nowhere more powerfully than in the discussions of what is needed by the U.S. government. The Bush propaganda machine is so hopeful that it can show some positive achievement of the Bush presidency, that it is likely to be proclaiming victory for very partial and inadequate accomplishments. And frankly, the rest of us are so hungry for peace that we too may be willing to avoid the tough questions and pretend that we've accomplished more than we have. So, the task of the Tikkun Community and the Network of Spiritual Progressives is this: to continue to articulate the fundamentals that would make a peace accord viable. Here are the elements that are essential for a lasting peace:

1. Return of Israel to its pre-1967 borders with minor border modifications mutually agreed upon (language adopted at Taba in 2001) by both parties to indicate that some of the Israeli settlements in the West Bank near the 1967 boundaries and the Jewish sections of Jerusalem including the Wall should be incorporated into Israel, while trading an equal amount of land from Israel contiguous to the Palestinian border to the new

Palestinian state. Arab sections of Jerusalem (those that held a majority of Palestinians before the Oslo Accord) including the al-Aqsa Mosque would be incorporated into Palestine with free and unimpeded entrance to Israelis and all others, and Palestine would be granted a strip of land connecting the West Bank and Gaza.

2. Creation of an economically and politically viable, democratic, and human-rights-respecting state in all of the pre-1967 West Bank and Gaza, including Jerusalem, except as modified in point one.
3. An international fund to provide compensation to Palestinians and to assist in resettling Palestinian refugees inside the borders of the new Palestinian state, and to provide compensation for Jewish Israelis who fled from persecution in Arab lands, and to resettle Israeli settlers within the pre-1967 borders of Israel (while allowing Israelis who remain within the territory of Palestine to do so, conditional on their willingness to become citizens of the Palestinian state, live in accordance with its laws, vote only in its elections, and renounce any claim for Israeli intervention or adjudication of their situation, which will be governed by the courts of Palestine).
4. Peaceful relations, economic cooperation, and diplomatic recognition of Israel and the Palestinian state by surrounding Arab and Islamic states.
5. Sharing (by Israel, Palestine, and surrounding Arab states) of the water and other natural resources of the area, and joint cooperation to preserve the region's ecological well-being.
6. Active participation of Palestine and Israel, in cooperation with international forces, to protect both countries from the inevitable violence and terrorism that will continue after this peace agreement has been implemented—recognizing that some groups on each side will continue to use violence against the other side, and that a joint effort supplemented by international forces and funding will be needed to contain and eventually root out that violence (which in any event will decrease as cooperation on the ground becomes something people on both sides can count on).
7. International guarantees of the safety and security of both Israel and Palestine backed by ironclad military agreements to protect both countries from any states or terrorist forces that have hostile intentions.

8. The creation of institutions in both countries designed to foster mutual understanding and an open-hearted reconciliation between both countries, including but not limited to: a. the elimination of the teaching of hatred and stereotyping in the media, religious communities, and educational systems of each side; b. support for educational and social practices aimed at building trust and cooperation between the two peoples, including the learning of the other's language and history; c. public and private acts of repentance and atonement for past violations of human rights, including the creation and intense publicizing in both the countries and in their respective diaspora communities of a Truth and Reconciliation process modeled on South Africa's, but shaped to the specific cultural and religious realities of the Middle East.

Look for these features in an agreement. Teach others about these requirements so that they too can make independent assessments about how significant the agreements they are hearing or reading about in the media really are. And then, ask this question: is what either the Palestinians or the Israelis are doing at any given moment contributing more to the development of hope, trust, and open-heartedness, or is it contributing more to the development of fear, distrust, and the need to defend oneself against a hostile Other?

"Ok," you may say, "that's fine for the outcome, but isn't what is happening now a significant step toward more trust and hope?"

Our answer: Maybe. We hope so, we pray so.

Apart from hoping and praying, however, there are steps that each side could take to increase trust:

- A. Israeli and Palestinian leaders could write personal letters to the families of those on the other side who have been impacted by violence, terrorism, and the Occupation, acknowledging the pain that this has caused, and apologizing on behalf of their own people in a language that feels moving and real to the people in the culture to whom they are addressing these remarks.
- B. Israeli and Palestinian leaders could command media time to allow the other side to tell their own story and how they see their plight in a language that is sensitive to the potential viewers and listeners. They could also seek to have the other's story told to students in Israeli and Palestinian schools.
- C. Palestinian and Israeli leaders could both declare that in 2008 they will use the holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Ramadan to encourage public acts of repentance and atonement for the killings of people on the other side of the struggle.
- D. Israel could release all the prisoners now being held in Israeli detention centers for whom it is unable to provide a non-military trial within the next three months. Palestine could put on trial people who have engaged in acts of terror in the past ten years and it could try in absentia the people who are holding Israelis hostage at the moment.
- E. Each side could begin a massive program to teach the other's



U.S. President Bush, center, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, left, and Israel's Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, right, stand outside during their meeting at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD, Tuesday, Nov. 27, 2007.

language and culture in their own school systems including in religious schools.

- F. The leaders of each side could explain to their own population why an approach of compassion and open-heartedness to the other side is the indispensable foundation upon which peace and security must be based.

From the perspective of many of the people in the Israeli peace movement, both sides are far from taking the confidence-building steps of A-F or seeking to build public support for agreements that would include 1-8 above. But you can use these two sets of criteria to make your own assessment whenever you hear statements or bargaining positions from either side: do they look like they are moving toward the points specified here? If not, don't count on this process yielding lasting peace. Moreover, the process could harden each side's extremes as they get plenty of chances to denounce even the halfway measures as a "betrayal of the true needs of our people."

Of course, there's another possible scenario: At the end of an enormous amount of foot-dragging and halfway measures and proposals that make little sense, suddenly the leaders on both sides make dramatic concessions, act in ways that build enormous confidence on the other side, and miraculously pull the rabbit out of the hat. Didn't Anwar Sadat do something like that with his trip to Israel when he was able to convey in his being a sense of true peaceful intent? It was that visit, after all, which switched the Israeli public opinion (80 percent opposed to withdrawing troops from Sinai before Sadat's 1977 visit, 80 percent in support after his visit).

But there was one huge difference: Sadat was the dictator who controlled Egyptian society and hence could deliver on his promises of peace. Even though he could not protect himself from the assassin's bullets, and was murdered for having signed the peace accord with Israel, he represented a military, political, and

economic elite that had decided that it wanted that peace and the economic aid that the United States threw in as an incentive. Thus, even after he was murdered by Islamic fundamentalists, his agreement with Israel was solid. There is no such figure today in either Israel or Palestine who can make an agreement that actually delivers the peace that they promise.

Does that mean that the process is useless? No. It could be very useful if the political leaders on both sides, including in their diaspora communities, were to commit themselves to taking the confidence-building measures meant to create a climate of mutual understanding and reconciliation. Imagine if, for example, the Conference of Presidents of Major (sic) American Jewish Organizations, the Anti Defamation League, the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, and the Jewish Federations all around America were to make a serious effort to teach their members Palestinian history as Palestinians understand it and to join in a massive effort of repentance and atonement on the High Holidays of 2008 for the ways that the Zionist movement and, later, the State of Israel, had been inadequately

sensitive to the needs of the Palestinians people. Imagine if the Council on American-Islamic Relations, the Muslim American Society, and other relevant Palestinian and Muslim diaspora organizations were to do the same, teaching their members Israeli history, as Israelis understand it. Imagine if each side demanded that their politicians make no more one-sided statements. That kind of spirit would have an important impact in supporting Israeli and Palestinian leaders who were starting to take the kind of steps toward reconciliation in A-F above, and that, in turn, would start to provide a political foundation for building mass support on both sides for the 1-8 points that are necessary for a political agreement to work.

And since it is too early to write-off the possibility that these steps could and would be taken, it seems appropriate for the Tikkun Community and the Network of Spiritual Progressives to be advocating for these ideas, projecting them into public discourse, and praying that they catch on and influence the relevant decision makers. This is our task, and we can each do our part. I hope you'll join us. ■

Iran With No Nukes

BY MICHAEL LERNER

SO THE CAT GOT OUT OF THE BAG. ACTUALLY, IT WAS let out. At some point we'll learn the story of the courageous people inside the various intelligence agencies who had the integrity to tell the world once again that the American emperor had no clothes, that there is no secret program by Iran to develop nuclear weapons.

One can argue that the motivation of some of those involved must have been to restore respect to their own agencies, which had capitulated to the implicit (possibly explicit) demands of the Bush Administration to "cook the data" about the Iraq war and claim that there was a nuclear threat. Some may have imagined how much further their credibility would have sunk if President Bush were to continue claiming, as he had been doing until December 4, 2007, that the best intelligence made it clear that there was an Iranian secret program to develop nuclear weapons, a fantasy that Iranian President Ahmadinejad was able to use to scare Israel since he had no actual nuclear weapons to use. All the more dangerous to the CIA's credibility if agency loyalists knew that revelations about destroying CIA video tapes of torture were imminent.

But we imagine that there were others in the intelligence agencies, principled people who followed the path of Daniel Ellsberg. During the Vietnam War, Ellsberg leaked insider documents from the Defense Department that proved that the Johnson and Nixon Administrations had knowingly and systematically lied to the

American public. Ellsberg faced jail, the end of his career, and threats to his life, but he accepted the risks once he understood fully the immorality of the Vietnam War and the lies that were being told to justify it. At least some of the people in the CIA and other intelligence agencies probably had thoughts similar to Ellsberg's: protecting the United States from yet another crazy, self-destructive, and immoral war was worth the personal risks. Though we doubt that intelligence personnel will ever tell us the real dynamics that led to this disclosure, it's clear that if even one person had decided that he or she would go public with the information that the agencies concluded years ago that Iran posed no real nuclear threat, the other intelligence agencies would have had to decide whether to try to kill or jail that person, or create new data to justify what Bush/Cheney wanted justified. Instead, they decided to reveal the truth and thereby challenge the White House.

Our point is that it would have only taken one courageous person to shake that intelligence establishment. **And this is one of the great reasons to be hopeful. No matter how powerful the corporate machines of global capital, no matter how invincible its military force, no matter how seductively the media disempowers us and convinces us that we live in a world in which people are only motivated by self-interest, the weak point in all these systems of domination is that they depend on human beings to run them, and these human beings, no**



Whistleblowers, right to left: Army Corps of Engineers chief contracting officer Bunnatine Greenhouse blew the whistle on fraud by Halliburton in Iraq, military analyst Daniel Ellsberg on Government lies in the Vietnam War, and Enron executive Sherron Watkins on the company's inflated profit statements.

matter how far gone from ethical considerations they sometimes appear to be from a distance, have never fully let go of their own ethical and spiritual core, and at some moments that core can be accessed and mobilized for the sake of humanity rather than for destroying it.

If you can see the world that way, you are a spiritual progressive, and you've found your way home—here to *Tikkun* and the Network of Spiritual Progressives. Welcome home!

Meanwhile, to return to Iran, there are two other points to be made. One is that the willingness of the president to pursue the same path of confrontation with Iran even *after* the new intelligence report showed that there is no current nuclear threat, on the speculation that at some future time they might develop a secret program, has been used by many as final confirmation not only that the President should be impeached (in the debate among the Democratic party candidates on December 4th in preparation for the Iowa caucus, Congressman Dennis Kucinich made clear that warmonger Dick Cheney should be impeached first so that he did not become the next president when Bush gets impeached), but also suggests that Bush seems to be in such a state of denial about the reality facing him as to warrant the country demanding a mandatory psychological assessment of the president and the vice president.

What is not crazy or irrational in any way is to be very disturbed by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards and the politics of the mullahs who run that society. It was hard to speak forcefully on that topic when such words might have been used to justify military intervention. But now that such intervention seems increasingly implausible (though we should never underestimate the criminality of the Bush Administration and the lack of backbone of the Democrats, who previously had refused to pass a requirement that Bush get Congressional approval before any military strike), it's time for those of us in the progressive world to say clearly what we said before this language seemed to be a cry of support for the warmakers: the Iranian regime is disgustingly oppressive to its own people; its sexism and homophobia rival those of Saudi Arabia and the most vicious elements of Al Qaeda and other Muslim extrem-

ists; its anti-Semitism goes far beyond any legitimate critique of Israel and has roots in a xenophobia and Islamic chauvinism that is just as hateful as the worst elements in Christian and Jewish chauvinism; and its control over an ancient and noble civilization, and its distortions of the wisdom and goodness in Islam, deserve to be remedied by revolutionary overthrow from within Iranian society. While we cannot support those elements of the Iranian revolutionary underground who are willing to use violence or who have made alliances with the Bush Administration and de facto have encouraged armed intervention by the United States, we do support all those within Iran who seek a nonviolent path to overthrowing the current regime, and reestablishing real democracy (which would require freedom of the press, assembly, organization of alternative parties, and freedom for women and equal rights in all matters of family, economic, and political life). While we still vigorously oppose U.S. intervention in any form, we do support those who non-violently resist this regime and seek instead a society that embodies the wisdom, sensitivity, and human decency that has characterized most Iranians throughout their history. Just as we seek a non-violent change of regime in the United States and Israel, so we seek a non-violent change of regime in Iran—in each case affirming the fundamental decency of the vast majority of the population, and refusing to blame them for the sins of those whose control of media and the economy have given them the ability to manipulate and distort the life of their societies.

Luckily, in the United States we have a democratic mechanism to make such changes, if people can be weaned from the fear of being seen as "unrealistic" and instead stay true to their own highest values, and demand political leadership that articulates those values and concretizes them in specific economic and political programs. That's what we've done with our Spiritual Covenant with America and our Global Marshall Plan (GMP) (which can be read at www.spiritualprogressives.org), and that's what we are urging you to do by endorsing the GMP on our website, and by using the Voter's Guide (between pages 16 and 17 and downloadable at our website) to challenge all candidates and all parties to respond to this vision. ■

The Trouble With Liberals

How Liberals are Greasing the Slippery Slope that Our Current Political Discourse is Leading Us Down

by Chet Bowers

PAUL KRUGMAN ENDS HIS NEW BOOK, *THE CONSCIENCE OF A LIBERAL*, with a startling statement. While claiming to be an activist with the energy of a progressive, he makes the claim that “to be a liberal is in a sense to be a conservative” (p. 70). The reader is partly prepared for this contradiction by the opening paragraph of his last chapter, “The Conscience of a Liberal,” where he states that “one of the seeming paradoxes of America in the early twenty-first century is that” the agenda of liberals is essentially a conservative one: to restore the middle class, to defend social security and Medicare, the rule of law, and democratic principles. The agenda of today’s conservatives, as he puts it, is to reverse the achievements of Roosevelt’s New Deal and to promote the free enterprise system—no matter what the human cost. What George Lakoff referred to as the “Essential Guide for Progressives,” which is the subtitle of his book *Don’t Think of an Elephant*, contains the same view of conservatives. But unlike Krugman, he sees no paradox in identifying as liberal progressives the advocates of conserving our traditions of civil liberties, species and habitats, and what remains of the traditions of ethnic groups.

Unfortunately, both Krugman and Lakoff reproduce today’s formulaic thinking that represents the anti-democratic and anti-social justice agenda of President George W. Bush as the expression of modern conservatism. And both reinforce the widely held misconception that Adam Smith’s principle of laissez-faire, with its magical “invisible hand,” is one of the conceptual and moral foundations of today’s conservatives—when it is a foundational belief of market liberals. While both Krugman and Lakoff also agree that the success of conservatives can be traced to what they refer to as the conservative think tanks, such as the CATO, American Enterprise, and Hoover Institutes, they fail to question whether they have correctly labeled the political agenda of these institutes.

For anyone who has read the writings of early theorists of classical liberalism such as John Locke, Adam Smith, and John Stuart Mill, as well as the writings of philosophical conservatives such as Edmund Burke, Samuel Coleridge (misidentified as one of the “Romantics” when he was actually a critic of the dehumanizing impact of the Industrial Revolution), the authors of *The Federalists*, Michael Oakeshott, and T. S. Eliot, the current use of political labels by self-identified liberals and conservatives is evidence of something fundamentally wrong with our educational system—especially our universities. Not to be outdone by Krugman, Lakoff, and other commentators who are mislabeling America’s retreat into the



According to Bowers, Which Ones Are Conservative?

Answers in margin on page I6. Hint: think outside the usual boxes.

hellhole of friend/enemy politics as the handy work of conservatives, self-identified conservatives such as Rush Limbaugh demonstrate a similar disregard for the fact that words have a history.

A large number of Americans are also unaware that words have a history, and that they can carry forward over many generations both the misconceptions as well as the wisdom of past thinkers; they are easily influenced by Limbaugh and the other faux conservative voices that have gained a strong foothold in the media. Thus, many people readily accept that the recent Supreme Court Justice appointments bent on reversing previous Supreme Court decisions are conservatives—because that is what journalists and political pundits tell them. That the doctrine of “original intent” is really part of the market liberal strategy for reversing laws that regulate business practices, on the grounds that the men who wrote the Constitution did not provide for this function of government, will also go unrecognized. In effect, the faux conservative media voices, including otherwise intelligent observers of the American political scene such as Bill Moyers, who also misidentifies the market liberal agenda of President George W. Bush and his base of supporters, have taken on the role of educators of the nation as to which agenda fits under which political label. Unfortunately, universities have largely abdicated their responsibility for introducing students to the history of liberal and conservative thought. Without this background knowledge, which many academics also lack, the meaning of words such as liberal, progressive, tradition, and conservative, become context-free adjectives that can be reframed without any form of accountability other than what fits the interests of groups seeking to impose their agenda on others.

Ironically, while liberals such as Krugman and Lakoff are unconsciously complicit in reinforcing the current misuse of our political vocabulary, the institutes they identify as the seedbeds of modern conservative thinking such as the CATO, American Enterprise, and Hoover Institutes, identify themselves in a way that acknowledges their classical liberal lineage. According to the mission statement of the Hoover Institute, its primary purpose is to promote “the principles of individual, economic, and political freedom” and “private enterprise.” The American Enterprise Institute makes an identical claim on its website to defend the same classical liberal principles, but puts them in this order: “the institutions of American freedom and democratic capitalism—limited government, private enterprise, individual freedom and responsibility, vigilant and effective defense and foreign policies, political accountability, and open debate.” The mission statement of the CATO Institute, which had a budget last year of \$22.4 million dollars, includes what the institute explicitly acknowledges as its “market-liberal” agenda of promoting “limited government, individual liberty, free markets, and peace.” Its mission statement includes the observation that seems to have escaped the attention of liberal commentators who continue to identify the CATO institute as a conservative think tank. To quote directly: “‘Conservative’ smacks of an unwillingness to change, of a desire to preserve the status quo. Only in America do people seem to refer to free-market capitalism—the most progressive,

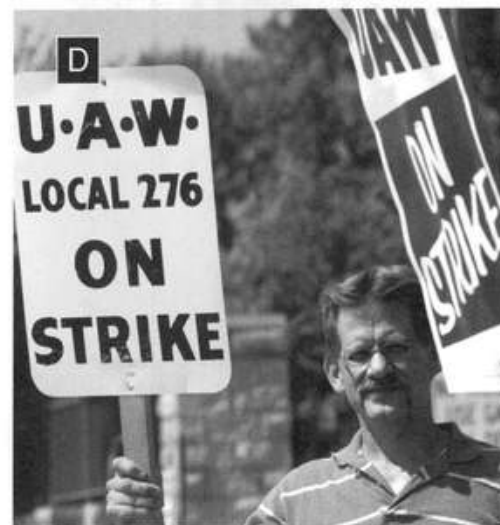
dynamic, and ever-changing system the world has ever known—as conservative.”

The use of the label “neo-conservative” and now “necons” is yet another example of formulaic word play. Awareness of the history of this group, which now justifies the invasion of Iraq, defends extraordinary rendition and the use of torture, and is promoting war with Iran, should originally have led to their being tagged with the label of market liberal and, more recently, as anti-democratic extremists. Given their current political and economic agenda labeling them as neo-fascists would not be too far off the mark. Two early books that were mislabeled as examples of neo-conservative thinking included George Gilder’s *Wealth and Capitalism* (1981) and Michael Novak’s *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* (1982). Neither one addressed the ideas of philosophic conservative thinkers, such as Burke and Oakeshott. Other early spokespersons for what was mistakenly referred to as neoconservatism such as Irving Kristol, Gertrude Himmelfarb, and Norman Podhoretz attacked what they considered as the social engineering approach of their former liberal colleagues. They revived the laissez-faire liberal argument for reducing the role of government in providing programs that enabled people to escape from poverty and limited opportunities. The true responsibility of government, as William Kristol would later put it, is to promote the “politics of liberty” and the “sociology of virtue.” What he and other neoconservatives meant by these high-sounding phrases is that the government should eliminate the anti-poverty programs and, in their place, promote the social uplifting potential of capitalism.

The inability of our leading intellectuals to recognize the travesty in labeling this group as neoconservatives is now being repeated on a daily basis in the media. Every effort of the Bush Administration to dismantle our checks and balances system of government, and to turn the previous functions of government over to capitalists who place their own interests above those of the public, is identified with conservatism. The practices of extraordinary rendition and presidential signing statements, along with putting in place the technology for achieving a total surveillance society, are similarly represented as carrying out the true mission of conservatism in an era of total warfare with the external enemies of the American way of life.

This current Orwellian political discourse serves two purposes. For many Americans who experience the rapid rate of cultural change as a threat to life as they know it, the constant references to the conservatism of the present administration is reassuring—even if they do not understand the political system that is at the end of the slippery slope President Bush and Vice-President Cheney are leading them down. In effect, the market liberal and anti-democratic extremists gain much of their support from this largely non-reflective segment of society. And as the term conservative becomes increasingly associated with an anti-social and anti-eco-justice agenda, advocates of social justice continue to identify themselves as liberals without questioning the double bind this puts them in.

The double bind that few liberals recognize is that the deep, largely taken-for-granted cultural



According to Bowers, which of these powerful LIBERALS did NOT help grease the slope to Global Climate Change?

Answers in margin on page 16.

ANSWERS

CONSERVATIVES?

Answer: C and D, according to Chet Bowers. A: the American Enterprise Institute is not conservative but market liberal; Cheney is in addition an anti-democratic extremist. B: The Religious Right are no more conservative than Cheney about the constitution. C: Indigenous conservatives. D: Environmental conservatives.

LIBERALS?

Answer: According to Bowers, they all did. FDR (at A) and the UAW are social justice liberals. GM and Bush are market liberals. They all support high growth industrial capitalism.

assumptions that underlie Western liberalism are, with only a few exceptions, the same assumptions that gave conceptual direction and moral legitimacy to the Industrial Revolution that has now entered the digital phase of globalization. These assumptions underlie the liberal's penchant for equating change with progress, for representing the autonomous individual as the highest expression of human development, for thinking of the environment as needing to be brought under rational control, and for imposing their way of thinking on what they regard as the less developed cultures of the world. What is seldom recognized is that the Industrial Revolution required the autonomous individual who, in lacking the intergenerational knowledge and support of community, would be dependent upon consumerism to survive. Similarly, the driving force of the Industrial Revolution was the constant quest for progress in developing new technologies and markets. The Industrial Revolution also depended upon advances in science and technology in order to further exploit the Earth's natural systems. The liberal view of other cultures as needing to adopt the Western model of development also fits what the Industrial Revolution required.

Yet there continue to be differences between liberals in how they understand the nature of progress. A useful way of understanding these differences is to identify liberals working to alleviate poverty and various forms of exploitation as social justice liberals. Liberals who use critical inquiry to develop new technologies and to exploit new markets should be labeled as market liberals. The former were and continue to be critical of the exploitive nature of the free enterprise system, while the latter were and still are willing to let the "invisible hand" supposedly operating in the free market system distribute the benefits to the deserving—which usually means those who are already privileged. Given these differences, and they are hugely important, the two groups of liberals nevertheless share a common set of silences and prejudices. Already mentioned is their shared prejudice of the knowledge systems of other cultures—particularly indigenous cultures. They also share a very narrow and thus basic misunderstanding of the nature and importance of cultural traditions. In effect, they both fail to recognize the misconceptions of the Enlightenment thinkers who only identified oppressive traditions and did not understand the intergenerational knowledge and skills that enabled communities to be more self-sufficient and to have complex symbolic lives. And both social justice and market liberals fail to understand that language is not simply a conduit in a sender/receiver process of communication, but instead is metaphorically layered in ways that reproduce past misconceptions in today's taken-for-granted patterns of thinking. This latter oversight accounts for how both social justice and market liberals are continually embracing whatever is represented as a progressive step forward—and not asking about which traditions vital to the well-being of community and to a sustainable future are being lost.

There are many unrecognized assumptions that are shared by students on university campuses who identify themselves as conservatives and the professors whom they regard as subverting the American way of life. Again, the failure to recognize the shared assumptions and silences can, in part, be traced to the failure of universities to engage students in a discussion of the writings of the early political theorists whose influence continues today. The misunderstandings resulting from this lack of historical knowledge are particularly evident when the beliefs and values of the self-identified conservative students are compared with the market liberal agenda promoted by the CATO and American Enterprise Institutes. Indeed, they turn out to be nearly identical—though some of these students balk at the idea of open debate as advocated by the American Enterprise Institute. As most university faculty embrace social justice liberalism they see no reason to introduce students to the thinking of philosophical conservatives or to the ideas of classical liberal thinking. And the few social justice faculty who are introducing their students to the work of environmental writers such as Rachel Carson, Aldo Leopold, Wendell Berry, and Vandana Shiva fail to clarify for students that these are essentially conservative environmental thinkers. By not engaging students in discussions of the different forms of conservatism, including the faux conservatism of President George W. Bush and his religious, corporate, *(continued on page 68)*

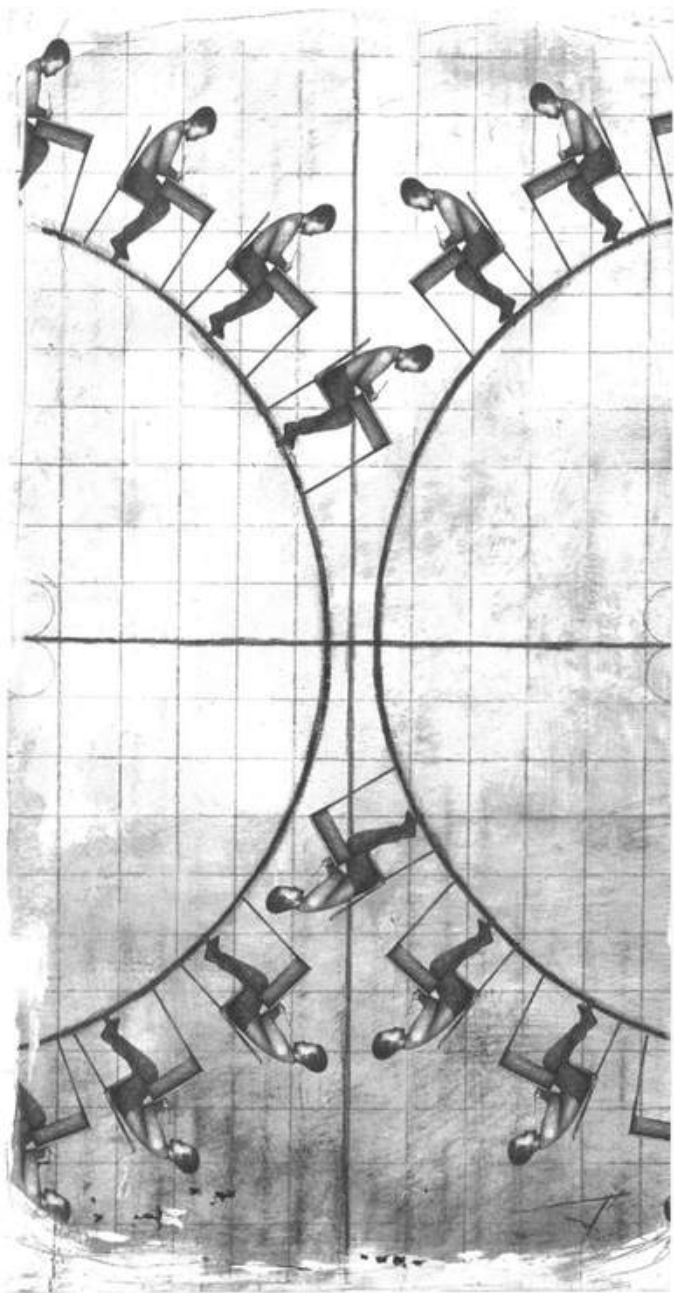
It's Time for a Progressive Vision of Education!

by Svi Shapiro

THE PRIMARY DEBATES ARE AN EXCEPTIONAL VEHICLE to make, as the educational philosopher Maxine Greene put it, "the familiar strange and the strange familiar." They are, in other words, an opportunity to pose serious questions about the conventional wisdom that guides our public policies and practices, as well as a time to suggest radically different visions for how we might do things in our society and in our world. At least as far as education goes, the candidates have failed miserably in both regards. They have neglected to ask the deep questions about what is really happening in our schools. Nor have they even begun to offer imaginative possibilities for what education might be about in these early but difficult years of the 21st century. This is both sad and troubling, not merely because of the limitations of what these individuals have had to say about this one sector of our culture, but, more importantly, because education in many ways instantiates the root metaphors that guide and structure how we think about the purposes of human life and social relationships. What we have to say about education is intimately bound up with what we say to the young about the meaning of our lives, the aspirations we value for them, and how they should understand their relationships and responsibilities towards other human beings. In this sense education is always about the qualities we favor in human beings as reasoning, moral, and spiritual beings, and about our capacity to teach these to young people. Sadly, the candidates' shallow banalities and overwhelmingly predictable discourse about schools has done little to point the public in new and more meaningful directions in thinking about what it means to educate the young in these turbulent times.

The No Child Left Behind Debacle

PICKING UP ON THE INCREASING SENSE OF FRUSTRATION AMONG PARENTS AND TEACHERS with No Child Left Behind, candidates are now comfortable with deriding or even dismissing this legislation. Yet their reasons are left vague or unclear. Perhaps it is time spell out what it is that makes this law such a ghastly mistake. They might, for example, make clear how it has resulted in making schools little more than testing mills. They might point out that it has led to an extraordinary distortion and disfiguring of the classroom experience for children in the way that learning has been reduced to its most shallow and reductionist form—rote memorization and canned answers devoid of creative or critical input. Far from learning that enhances curiosity, imaginative exploration, and joyful wonder, the classroom has become an increasingly anxiety-fraught experience where everything takes a backseat to preparation for the next test. Teachers as well as students burn-out in these test-factories with their daily grind of deadening, yet stress-filled, demands. No test-prep rallies or post-test 'victory' assemblies can overcome the increasing boredom and alienation that No Child Left Behind has produced among young people. Nor does it allay the desire among so many new teachers to leave



the profession as quickly as they can. We are aware, for example, of how much our current schooling has reduced or even eliminated those non-tested areas of the curriculum: the arts, social studies, foreign language instruction, P.E., even recess. We are aware, too, of the increasing propensity to cheat among students, as well as among teachers and administrators, as the pressure to produce the right scores mounts. In this brave new world of education, (to paraphrase Albert Einstein) nothing that cannot be counted counts. Unless it can be measured on a test and plotted on a bell curve it has no merit. Only things that enable us to create those league tables of success and failure have worth. In this perverse version of democratic accountability, public education has become little more than public evaluation.

Most cruelly, it really does nothing to ensure that many children are not left behind. The gap between the achievements of children of poverty and affluence has been little affected by the law. The evidence on this is now quite clear. The recent report of the National Assessment of Educational Progress showed minimal progress on narrowing the gap between the achievement of white and minority students between 2003 and 2007. Despite their democratic promise of a common education for all, schools are sorting machines whose primary mission is to construct hierarchies of worth and opportunity. They are our way to give some legitimacy to those glaring inequalities of race and social class that scar our society and contradict our cherished ideas about being a land of opportunity. To believe that no child can be left behind in a society in which so many adults and parents are left behind, is to believe that what happens in schools is not somehow related to the blighted neighborhoods, poor health, inferior nutrition, low incomes, and lack of economic security that surround the lives of kids in what Jonathan Kozol has referred to as our apartheid system of public education. We might be cajoled by Republicans into absencing 'class warfare' from our political discourse, but we know that school success has everything to do with kids' social and economic circumstances, and the expectations that are consequent upon them.

We delude ourselves into thinking that educational change will cure the ills of our deeply and increasingly inequitable society. Indeed public schools with their so very different facilities and resources, levels of safety, curricular offerings, and extent of teacher turnover are the very embodiment of our nation's social and racial injustice. Democrats cannot run away from this critical reality of American life. We must stop offering school reform as if it is a primary lever for moving towards a more socially just society. This is quite simply the ideology of mass distraction. An honest discussion of current educational policies—their harm to kids and their diversion from our real societal challenges—would be a valuable contribution by Democratic candidates to the larger public discourse on growing inequality in America.

Democracy and Education

WHILE THE DAMAGE AND OBFUSCATIONS OF CURRENT EDUCATIONAL POLICIES MUST BE made clear, candidates still have to do more than critique. They must offer a language of possibility too. In this sense, education's vision must speak to the wider concerns of our nation and our world. I will suggest here three such concerns and how they might help shape a revitalized purpose and meaning for the education of our children. First, I suggest that the candidates remind Americans that we once talked about the connection between public education and our vision of a democratic society. Whatever the hypocrisies of such talk (going all the way back to Jefferson's assertion that a democracy required an educated citizenry while he simultaneously affirmed slavery and deep class privilege) we nonetheless possess an enduring legacy that argues that citizenship in a democracy demands citizens who are trained in the knowledge and skills of democratic life and culture. While our country is prepared to go to war for somebody else's democracy, even the rhetoric of democratic purpose seems to have disappeared from the mission statements of schools and school systems. Yet can we really be in doubt as to the crucial importance today of our educational institutions seeing the preparation of democratic citizens as their core responsibility? With our nation and our planet facing such extraordinary challenges can there be much doubt about how important it is to cultivate among young people the capacity for critical, creative, and courageous thinking,

and the interest and commitment to engage in public life?

Sadly, we are told that there is a deep sense of political impotence and a profound cynicism among young people about the possibility of significant social agency. Of course, they are not alone in this sense. Political power is now so far removed from average people's lives that meaning can only be found in our private worlds (perhaps this explains the special attraction of the cell phone and the chat room in the lives of young people). The public world seems to offer little sense of purpose or connection, or the possibility to influence or shape it. Schools themselves typically provide little real opportunity for the practice of democratic governance. They are increasingly authoritarian spaces, often prison-like, obsessed with monitoring and regulating the lives of young people. The spaces they offer for meaningful deliberation and decision-making about what goes on in their institution are meager at best.

Within the classroom we continue to teach in ways that overwhelmingly squelch the life-blood out of democratic life. There is little encouragement of genuine dialogue or the sharing of ideas and opinions. With the exception of those students in the top academic tiers of high school, there is little chance to approach texts and knowledge as propositions to be challenged and interrogated rather than passively accepted and memorized. Little time, if any, is used to teach the characteristics of civil discourse; respect for the views of another, and empathy for the experiences and perspectives of those whose lives may be different to ours. For few students is the classroom a place where one's voice and the capacity to articulate ideas or argue one's beliefs is nurtured and strengthened. Our culture also reinforces the assumption that democracy is not about expression but about the capacity to consume. Choosing what to buy next, not the ability to think and question, define for the young the meaning of freedom and autonomy. It is an astounding fact that for all the well-documented influence of the media and popular culture, very little time is spent in school equipping young people with the capacity to critically interrogate our culture of advertising and persuasion. Notwithstanding the way that young people are the subject of powerful influences that encourage them to shape their aspirations around the acquisition of material objects, and their identities around the desire for glamour, fame, and celebrity, we offer little to the young that might empower them to challenge and resist these extraordinary influences in their lives.

Believing in democracy means believing in the right of young people to be offered more in their education than memorization, 'well-behaved' passivity, and subject matter that speaks little to the real problems and issues that confront us today. It means, for example, creating the space where students may ask why we so often turn to war or violence as the way to resolve our differences; or why such huge disparities exist in the lives and well-being of people both in this country and around the world; or what it means for our political system when so much influence is exercised by corporate interests. Democracy can mean nothing if it is not the vehicle through which we think and question self and social values in the context of our national and global priorities. It will require courage to remind our fellow citizens that the struggle for our democracy starts not in Iraq but in the institutions of our own country. Our concern for a vibrant and meaningful democracy surely requires a younger generation educated in the skills, knowledge and dispositions that ensure democratic ideas are much more than the abstract words on the pages of a civics text book. They will need to infuse the classrooms, hallways, and assemblies of our schools.

The Priority of Community

WHILE DEMOCRACY IS ABOUT THE ADVANCE OF INDIVIDUALS, IT IS NOT ABOUT INDIVIDUAL advantage. It is about the quality and well-being of our shared community. It is a sad consequence of our educational priorities that our classrooms are places that are so shaped by the emphasis on competition and individualism. It has been well-described by many observers and researchers just how much of the real curriculum of schooling is concerned with learning about the process of 'getting ahead' of one's peers. From their first day in school, students learn that human worth is linked to success or achievement, and *(continued on page 70)*

Awe-Based Work

by Kirk J. Schneider

REDISCOVERY OF AWE—THE SENSE OF HUMILITY AND WONDER BEFORE creation—is vital to our contemporary lives. In too many ways, across too many settings, we not only fail to ask the big questions about our lives like, “What really matters?” and “How do we live in the face of the daunting enigma of death?” but we fail to be fully *present* to those questions, to integrate them into our everyday routines. As a result, many of our lives become truncated, minds cut off from bodies, rituals separated from spirit.

In this article, I examine how awe i.e., the cultivation of presence to the big questions in life, can apply to one of our most prosaic rituals: work. What has awe—the sense of profound wonder and humility before creation—got to do with such an everyday scenario as a job? What has the sense of mystery, discovery, and possibility got to do with filing forms or crunching numbers, investing in stocks or flipping burgers?

Much has already been written on and indeed applied to this general topic, from lunchtime speaker forums, to seminars on sustainable work places, to workshops on employee mental and physical health. However, what I don’t believe has been optimally explored is an alternative drawn from experiential-depth therapy principles that I call “awe-based” well-being programs (see my book *Rediscovery of Awe* for an elaboration). Awe-based well-being programs provide a weekly forum whereby issues pertaining to employee (and employer) well-being are not just talked about or reported on but affectively and kinesthetically experienced. Additionally, such programs would be facilitated by experiential-depth psychologists (or kindred professionals) who are schooled in the art of affective/kinesthetic searching. This approach helps participants learn to pause and to stay present to, not just the content of their concerns (e.g., the need to improve product safety), but the feelings, body sensations, and images that arise in association with that content (e.g., the implications of product safety for the employee’s sense of planetary integrity).

As an experiential-depth psychologist myself, I have seen numerous cases of businesspeople who, through the art of attending deeply to what matters to them, discover not only a fresh approach to their work activity (e.g., an innovative idea), but a rejuvenated approach to life (e.g., a renewed appreciation for the here and now). Here is a brief illustration of what I have witnessed and would like to see extrapolated, perhaps as a pilot study, to the business setting:

Joe: I’m feeling bored at work. The calculations and the cookie-cutter paperwork are just not doing it for me anymore. I used to see a value in these when I was younger, and I did everything by the book, or for the boss’s approval, but now I feel like I’m just going through motions and I really don’t see that they lead anywhere.

KS: Joe, see if you can stay with that feeling a moment and check in with what you’re experiencing in your body right now—any other feelings, sensations, images?

Joe: Yes, I’m thinking of how I enjoyed making popsicle stick airplanes as a kid, how I’d be in a big field and tied the things together and made them go. I loved the freedom that brought.

KS: You smiled as you said that, Joe.

Joe: Yes it's exhilarating to feel that again, it was the freedom, the looseness to just try things.

KS: Can you feel that freedom or looseness right now? Where do you feel that in your body?

Joe: Yes, it's in my chest area.

KS: Take a moment to feel that area, Joe, what comes up?

Joe: Hope, a sense that maybe I could try something different today.

KS: Is there anything "different" you'd like to try out today, perhaps at work?

Joe: Yes, as a matter of fact, I'd like to be part of a team that's taking another look at how we design products in my industry, and see if we can come up with one that allows for more creativity and imagination.

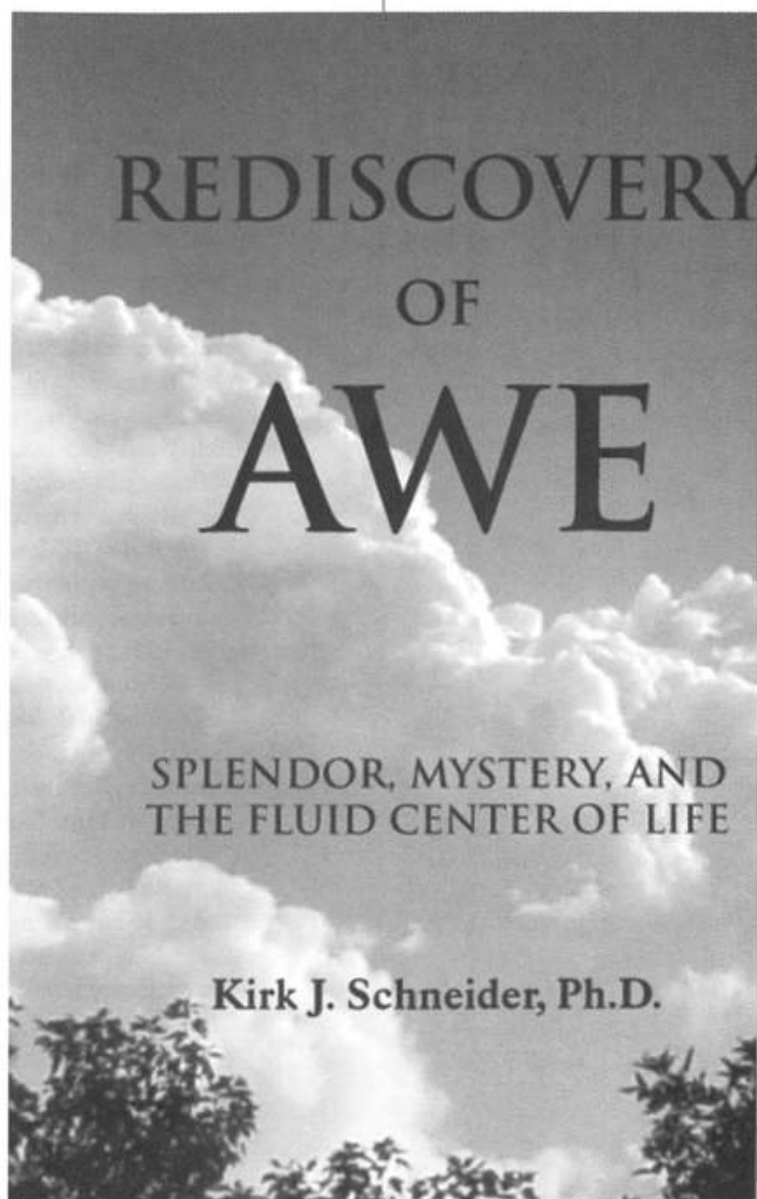
Now the vignette above is, of course, condensed. But it is a glimpse, in my view, of what could viably be transferred from the consulting room to a business setting. As a matter of fact, companies like Google already set aside a weekly period for employees to explore potentially innovative ideas. The awe-based well-being program, on the other hand, appears to go beyond what Google and other companies offer. It would enable employees (and ideally, employers) not just to have a period of time to think or talk about innovations, meaningful ideas, etc., it would foster immersion in these issues, with appropriate follow up, for the implications that may ensue.

My point here is that to effect lasting and holistic change at the work setting, lasting and holistic change modalities must be implemented.

What employer would be willing to pay for such an undertaking, or risk such self-expression? At this time in our cultural climate, probably very few. But even a few could be foundation-shaking, and all we may need to get started are a few far-seeing souls who would sponsor the project on a pilot basis. The impetus for this sponsorship would come from three key sources: the recognition of a human need to consider what really matters about life, the acknowledgment of work as a vital link to individual and collective well-being, and the realization that a gratified and healthy work-force, as has been shown time and again, is a devoted and productive work-force, serving a productive and grateful clientele. These visionaries would also perceive that one of the fundamental paradoxes of an ethically fortified bottom line is that the financial bottom line also tends to strengthen, commensurately.

In sum, there would surely be formidable challenges to awe-based well-being programs. In addition to those already discussed, the whole question of nonretaliation, safety, and confidentiality would also need to be addressed. Conflicts and tensions would inevitably arise, but the balance of benefits in my view would far outweigh the risks—for the worker, the manager, and our world at large. By providing a space to dwell outside the box, by asking and experiencing the deeper questions about work, and by exploring how work is connected with the community it serves, and indeed, life itself, we are all the beneficiaries. ■

This article is adapted from Kirk Schneider's Rediscovery of Awe: Splendor, Mystery, and the Fluid Center of Life (2004) Paragon House.



Thanks for the Inconvenience

by Barry Flicker



ON JUNE 25TH I LEFT SAN FRANCISCO AROUND NOON ON A FLIGHT BOUND for Raleigh-Durham, NC to conduct a training session for a corporate client the next morning. As we buckled ourselves in, I exchanged a few pleasantries with the guy sitting next to me. During the entire five and half hour flight to Washington, D.C., where I would make my connection for Raleigh, these were the only words that passed between us. I've never been good at small talk. Also, I think of flying as a respite from the bombardment of constant stimulation in the wider world. I assume others feel the same way. So I read my books, work my puzzles, and keep to myself.

The flight was filled with the typical litany of petty irritations; a prelude to the delayed landing and breakneck rush to catch my connecting flight. My dinner consisted of a crappy sandwich that cost five bucks. The movie was inane, the sound and picture barely functional, and even the meager pleasure it afforded was repeatedly disrupted by pointless cockpit chatter concerning how high we were flying or the speed and direction of prevailing winds. I have learned to insulate myself from all this by playing Sudoku. A handful of these brain-teasers can distract me sufficiently so that I can fly across the entire country barely conscious of the cramped, noisy and intrusive assaults of the flying experience—a boy in a bubble.

The bubble burst as we came in for a landing. Lightning storms up and down the Eastern seaboard had forced air traffic control to require more space between inbound aircraft, and we had to circle an additional 30 minutes before being allowed to return to earth. This left only 20 minutes for me to catch my connecting flight, which, of course, was sitting at a gate at the opposite end of the airport. So I ran. It was 8:30 PM. I was hungry, tired, and I needed to pee. But more than anything else I needed to make that plane, so I ran, my little black wheelie-bag trailing behind. As I bobbed and wove my way through the zombie throngs slouching past me I noticed someone else running right along beside me, like an NFL blocker protecting a wide end run. It was the guy I had sat next to the entire flight. It seemed stupid that I never even bothered asking him where he was going. Apparently he was going my way.

The connecting flight was run by Mesa Airlines, the lemonade stand of air travel, and I got to the gate, sweating and out of breath, in what should have been the nick of time. But I was wrong, before even looking at the flight board I knew it—the “fall of Saigon” tumult engulfing the waiting area told me so—our flight departure had been delayed until 11:00 PM. ELEVEN PM! I'd be lucky to get to my hotel by 3:00 AM the next morning at that rate. After a cross-country flight and no sleep I would be a wreck for my presentation the next day. When I informed the twenty-something kid at their check-in counter that this was completely unacceptable, he informed me that it wasn't their problem, it was all orders from the FAA, that I was lucky to have a flight leaving at all that night, and that they had already been forced to cancel half a dozen other aircraft. Then he packed up his gear, shut down the desk, and disappeared into the emptying fluorescent gloom of the late night airport.

"I'm going to miss my gig. I have just spent an entire day flying across the entire country for nothing!" Repeating the word "entire" as many times as possible was helping to anchor my mood. It was at this very moment, after half a century of queer glances and ridicule that my penchant for loud, animated self-conversation finally paid off. Apparently overhearing my lament, and being in the same boat (or on the same plane as the case may be), a gracious Southern couple informed me that the 11:00 PM departure was more than likely a fiction as well.

"The same thing happened to us last month flying up from Raleigh," the gentleman with his comforting Carolina drawl informed me. "We're going to try and rent a car, and you're welcome to join us if you like."

Even a four and a half hour drive through the Deep South with complete strangers sounded better than being stranded alone overnight in an airport and missing my gig, so I accepted on the spot. This scion of Southern hospitality then tried to use his cell phone and his Hertz Gold Card to secure a rental. Unfortunately, thousands of other stranded passengers had apparently preceded us down this escape route, and he was put on a waiting list with best prospects for a car being available somewhere around 2:00 AM. Overhearing this, my former seatmate got on his cell phone and tried renting a car with his Double-triple priority Hertz Gold Card (apparently there are gold cards and then there are *gold cards*) and he managed to reserve one immediately. We were now a party of four. As we were leaving the waiting area an African American guy, who shared our predicament, asked if he could join us. We quickly concluded that the full size car we were renting could hold five as easily as four. Thus our party coalesced, and we were off to see the wizard.

And in that instant of coming together the techno-bureaucratic nightmare ended and a Tolkien-like adventure began. This serendipitous collaboration acted like a tonic, revitalizing me. Where moments before I had felt drained, isolated, and defeated, I now felt awake to the unknown and uncharted future, alive with possibility and discovery, and energized by the happy creation of our common purpose. The night was no longer hot and humid but Southern and sultry. By class, race, politics, religion, or any other measure we were as unlikely a human constellation as one could imagine, and yet our forced expedition filled us with such buoyant conversation and laughter that we might as well have been college chums at a tailgate party. We even talked dicey politics with a level of candor and civility that hasn't been seen on these shores in many a moon.

"This immigrant business just burns me up," our Southern gentleman offered. "These people come pouring into our country, using our services, while folks who play by the rules wait for years to can get in. It's not fair, it's not right, and they're breaking the law."

"I understand what you're saying," said his African-American seatmate, "but I think we need to take some responsibility for this mess ourselves. We passed NAFTA and CAFTA and our corporations go down to these countries and destroy the local economy and culture so that these folks can no longer feed or support their families. Wouldn't we do whatever it took to take care of our families?"

"You've got a point there. I hadn't thought about it quite like that."

And so it went, onward into the night. When we got to Raleigh I discovered I was driving with a car full of locals. They knew where everything was, and the fastest route to get there, including my hotel. I got dropped right at the front door just after 1:00 AM. Splitting the cost of the car and the gas five ways, my portion of the tab came to \$42. That's just slightly more than it would have cost to take a cab from the airport to my hotel.

For me, this was a golden moment. People coming together, strangers trusting each other, helping each other to achieve a common purpose—isn't that what love is? It sure is the kind of country I want to live in. It started me wondering how we might get there, and then I thought—maybe it's been there all along. I'll just have to do a better job of looking for it from now on. At least now I know what I'm looking for. ■

Barry Flicker, author of Working At Warp Speed, is founder of Basic Training, a Bay Area company helping organizations keep pace with the rapid transformations of the global economy.

Today's Class Brought to You By...

by Allen D. Kanner

REVLON, THE COSMETICS COMPANY, IS BEING taught in public schools these days. The corporation provides teachers with a free curriculum that instructs students on "good and bad hair days" and asks them to list the three hair products they would absolutely need if stranded on a desert island. Meanwhile, in science class, students can conduct a Campbell Soup "Prego Thickness Experiment" comparing the thickness of Prego versus Ragu spaghetti sauces. They can also learn from the American Coal Foundation that the planet may be helped rather than harmed by increased carbon dioxide, while materials sent by Chevron challenge the existence of global warming. A first grade curriculum uses logo recognition—K-Mart, Pizza Hut, Jell-O, and Target—to teach reading while McDonald's, not to be outdone, asks first graders to design a McDonald's restaurant and instructs them on how to apply to the company for a job.

These are examples of Structural Educational Materials (SEMs), free curricula produced by major corporations and directly distributed to the nation's teachers, typically through the mail or at educational conferences. Companies spend from \$25,000 to more than one million dollars per SEM. The materials, which include colorful texts, entertaining videotapes, and detailed lesson plans, are a means for corporations to promote their products and market messages to a captive audience that can't change the channel or click to a new website. An additional bonus is the implicit endorsement of the school.

The usual explanation for the success of SEMs is that desperate teachers in underfunded schools use them as a last resort. Certainly this is true, and SEMs are most prevalent in poorer school districts. But funding is not the whole story, for American schools have grappled with financial difficulties before without opening their doors to corporate plundering.

Here is why things are different today: In the 1980s, market researchers discovered that children have far more discretionary income, and influence on parental spending, than previously imagined. The result was the rapid commercialization of childhood. In 1983, American companies spent \$100 million advertising to children; in 2005 the figure was \$16.8 billion. In this context, schools emerged on the marketing radar screen as a golden opportunity to reach millions of children while avoiding a key obstacle: their parents. It suddenly became expedient for corporations to participate in the education of American youth.

And participate they did. There is now advertising on school buses and school bus radio programs, on gym floors and clothes, over PA systems, inside school buildings and classrooms, and on school computer screens. Math textbooks present problems using Nike, Gatorade, and Topps trading cards as examples. Pizza Hut's BookIt contest gives

free pizzas to kids who read a certain number of books. Tens of millions of children have entered the contest. Exclusive contracts with Coke or Pepsi exclude the presence of other soda companies from campus. Channel 1, a twelve-minute puff news program with two minutes of advertising, is viewed by 40 percent of U.S. teens. One company, The Field Trip Factory, has organized more than 20,000 off-campus excursions to destinations such as Domino's Pizza and Toys 'R' Us. In an educational environment rife with sales pitches such as these, the introduction of SEMs does not appear particularly radical or worrisome.

The use of SEMs is also bolstered by the current national shortage of teachers. The lack of qualified teachers comes mostly from baby boomer retirements and high turnover among new teachers, who are often asked to step into difficult classroom situations to teach subjects for which they are inadequately trained. This shortage is particularly acute among math and science teachers and in poor school districts, a perfect setup for SEMs. Further, many young teachers themselves were educated in schools undergoing commercialization, perhaps making them more tolerant of SEMs than their older peers.

Aiding the commercialization of schools significantly, SEMs also contribute to an ongoing attempt by the business world and conservative politicians to privatize public education. This project includes school voucher programs, charter and for-profit schools, and private testing services, all of which increase the corporate presence in K-12 education. If privatization succeeds, sponsored educational materials could become the norm.

There are several ways to stop SEMs. One approach is to ban advertising in schools, thereby eliminating SEMs. Another is to require SEMs, like textbooks, to be screened for scientific accuracy and completeness, as well as educational relevance. Fully funding schools would also work. In fact, protecting schools from commercialization is now a pressing reason to ensure that public education is well financed.

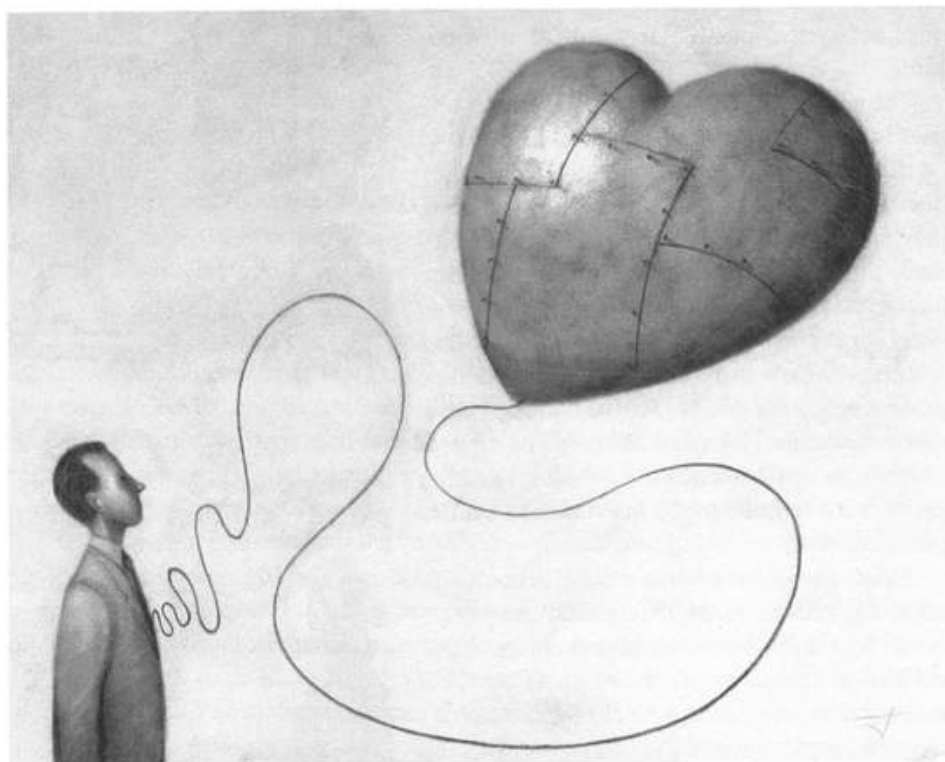
Good teaching involves passing on society's deepest knowledge and highest values. SEMs pervert knowledge and undermine values. It's time they be expelled from school. ■

*Allen D. Kanner, Ph.D., is a co-founder of the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood (www.commercialfreechildhood.org), co-editor of *Psychology and Consumer Culture* and *Ecopsychology*, and a Berkeley child, family, and adult psychologist.*



Heart-Centered Realism

by Frances Moore Lappé



THE WORD “EVIL” MAKES ME SQUIRM A LITTLE. As a four-year old in Texas in the late 1940s, I visited a Christian Sunday school with a friend. Returning home, I asked my parents: “What does ‘hell fire and brimstone’ mean?” My parents quickly decided, or so the story goes, that it meant they should found a Unitarian Church. In that church—now Fort Worth’s First Jefferson Unitarian Universalist Church—I don’t think I ever heard the word “evil.”

Many on the Right don’t share my uneasiness. They blame the evil *Other*—whether it’s Willy Horton or Osama bin Laden—for our ills. And George Bush rallies Americans to support his (endless) war to rid the world of evil by the masterly honing of fear to stifle questions about just how that’s going to work.

While many progressives also blame the bad guys—starting now with Bush and Cheney—we mainly fall silent when it comes to the “e” word. But to contribute positively to our troubled world, progressives need to tackle this question: just what is an effective frame for understanding the root of so much brutality in our world and how to mitigate it? Failing to offer a persuasive conceptual framework is an enormous handicap. We leave ourselves open to charges of being in denial—naively out of touch with the “real world”—which isn’t a convincing political posture at any time, but certainly not in today’s fear-drenched atmosphere.

To help us get a grip on a progressive stance toward evil, let me offer these gambits. I'll start by defining evil as the infliction of pain and suffering on others—by willful act or willful neglect.

Fortunately, and for the first time in our history, humans can combine three sources of learning to arrive at a theory of evil: 1) historical and anthropological records of human brutality over millennia—including the roughly 180 million killed in genocide, tyranny, and intentional famine during the twentieth century; 2) contemporary cross-cultural comparisons of the prevalence of violence; and 3) laboratory experiments studying human cruelty under controlled conditions.

From them, one conclusion seems inescapable, however painful to acknowledge: Under *certain* conditions, most humans will inflict pain and suffering on others, even those who have done nothing to harm them.

In his new book *The Lucifer Effect*, Stanford professor Philip Zimbardo gives us, for the first time, a blow-by-blow account of his infamous 1971 prison experiment. Within only a few days, “normal” young people placed in roles and garbs of jailers and prisoners demonstrated behaviors eerily similar to the horrors at Abu Ghraib. The abuse was so bad that Zimbardo had to stop in six days what was to have been a two-week experiment. Zimbardo's book also reviews evidence from Stanley Milgram's “obedience” experiments, beginning a decade earlier, in which the majority of subjects inflicted what they believed to be painful and even deadly electric shocks on others.

From other studies as well, it is now possible to identify with some certainty the conditions that educe evil human behavior. These include:

- Extreme imbalances of power
- Anonymity
- “Othering” through negative stereotyping
- Rigid ideologies that block people from learning from evidence

But in this sad review, there is also some terrifically good news for the species. We now know what to do—and what not to do.

We know the specific conditions under which the worst in us will likely emerge, so we have clear guidelines. We no longer have to grasp at straws or go for palliatives in efforts to reduce suffering and enhance life. We can turn each of these four conditions on its head and be pretty sure we are moving closer to a world with less brutality and more love in all forms.

Given the limit of a single essay, I'll focus only on the first of these four conditions shown to bring out cruel behavior: extreme power imbalances. What does it mean to turn this on its head? We can make the evidence-based case that standing against evil—in the most powerful way—means working for power's continuing dispersion.

True, this message has long been part of the progressive vision, but inconsistently. Authoritarian strains have claimed that justice sometimes requires revolutionary authoritarian leaders and tactics. Other progressives fear power so much that they eschew talk of it altogether, believing that exhortations for more righteousness and more caring are enough, or are at least our main tool.

Rethinking Power

IN WORKSHOPS OVER THE YEARS I'VE ASKED PARTICIPANTS TO BLURT out the first words that come to mind when I say the word “power.” I hear “force,” “money,” “corruption,” “guns,” and worse. Power has become a four-letter word—and concept—to many progressives. Aren't we, instead, about “generosity” and “caring”?

But it gradually dawned on me: if power—from the Latin *posse*, to be able—is our capacity to act, how can we ever hope to bring about a better world if our view of power is narrowly negative? Many progressives emphasize our deep, now-proven-to-be-hard-wired needs and capacities for cooperation, caring, and helpfulness. Great. But we tend to ignore the equally deep human need to “make a dent,” as social philosopher Erich Fromm puts it: our need for efficacy. Our species would never have made it to over



Milkman in Northern India. For many of India's rural poor, daily milk sales from the few cows they own is an essential part of their income.

6 billion people if we were couch potatoes. Human beings are doers, creators of our world.

So progressives can make the compelling case that power's ongoing generation and dispersion is necessary *both* to mitigate evil *and* to meet our deep positive human needs to be problem solvers. Not to mention the obvious: solutions to today's gargantuan global crisis depend on the buy-in and active engagement of billions of us, which will never happen unless we participate in creating solutions.

In other words, we now know that power's dispersion is needed to protect us from the worst in us. It is also necessary to unleash the very best. Rethinking and remaking power, then, is a matter of human survival.

This power perspective unleashes an invigorating rationale for what I call "living democracy"—not a new "ism" but a new way of seeing self in society that both accepts our capacity for evil, under conditions that heighten social distance and fear, while celebrating our need not only for fairness and community but for power understood as our capacity to create. In this way of seeing, we also come to embrace power not as a *thing* wielded but as a *quality* of all human relationships. Power is always relational.

Looking through a power lens, we realize that democracy involves far more than political life and we can perceive our economic model's anti-democratic consequence: based on a single rule—highest return to existing wealth—it inexorably concentrates power when democracy depends on its wide dispersion.

Progressives should stress that truly grappling with the roots of evil requires us to democratize both political *and* economic life: that we rethink democracy as a culture characterized by a value-driven participation in power—no longer something simply done to us or for us. Doing so involves not just making current rules—such as the minimum wage and anti-monopoly laws—more fair and effective. Living democracy also means remaking underlying rules that govern our economy: for example, closing the power gap between employers and workers.

A pipedream?

Hardly. In part it means restoring rights many Americans alive today were born with: significant protection of the right of workers to organize, for example. The United States once enabled 40 percent of private employees to choose a union. Today the percentage is about 8 percent and each year 20,000 U.S. workers are fired or have their wages cut because of their organizing efforts. It also means moving the United States to ratify and honor core International Labor Organization Conventions, as most of the world's countries have done.

At a deeper level it means effectively confronting the economic dogmatists persuading Americans that the concentration of economic power is our only option. In *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, the *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman writes "...[T]here is no more mint chocolate chip, there is no more strawberry swirl, there is no more lemon-lime. Today there is only free-market vanilla and North Korea."

"Free-market vanilla" is code for corporate globalization, with its centralizing power. And Friedman is wrong.

Even in this era of global corporate expansion, business enterprises are also spreading in which equitable sharing of power is right there in their DNA. They are cooperatives, organized on the principle of one person, one vote. Their membership has doubled worldwide in a generation and more people are now members of cooperatives than own shares in publicly traded companies.

Co-ops also provide more jobs worldwide than do multinational corporations. In India, a network of over a 100,000 village dairy cooperatives, owned by nearly 11 million members, provide several times more jobs than does India's much-touted high-tech sector. In Italy's wealthy Emilia Romagna region, 5,000 diverse, networked cooperatives generate over 30 percent of economic output. When I visited there in 2006, one member explained why he was working in this movement: "I tried working for a corporation but it wasn't for me. Too anonymous. I tried then working for myself. I was too lonely.

Now I'm with the cooperative. This is the interpretation of life that I enjoy."

Closer to home, the dairy co-op Organic Valley, launched by desperate Wisconsin farmers in the late 1980s, now has almost 1,000 member farms. Their profits return to rural communities, not to faraway corporate headquarters.

The effectiveness of democratic economics is striking: a recent ranking by the elite World Economic Forum found that the three countries ranked highest by share of their economies contributed by cooperatives were among the four ranked highest for economic efficiency.

But imagining the wider emergence of a more and more democratic, and thus just, economy, reducing the preconditions for evil still feels impossible here, you say. And I agree, *if* one has given up on removing the power of concentrated wealth over public decision-making and feels resigned to live in the "best democracy money can buy," as writer Greg Palast so aptly summed up ours.

But the reign of despair about money in politics may come to an end as a well-kept secret leaks out: Clean Elections—voluntary public financing—is working across the board in two states, Maine and Arizona. And in 2008, Connecticut will join this leadership club. Most elected offices in these states—in Maine it's about 80 percent—are now held by those who took no private funds beyond small qualifying donations from a specific number of citizens necessary to get on the ballot.

Without Clean Elections, "I wouldn't have dared to try," says Mainer Deb Simpson, forty-five, who was a waitress and single mom when elected to the state legislature in 2000. She now co-chairs the state judiciary committee. Armed with proof that the approach draws candidates and voters in and keeps money out, citizens in fifteen states are crafting similar laws.

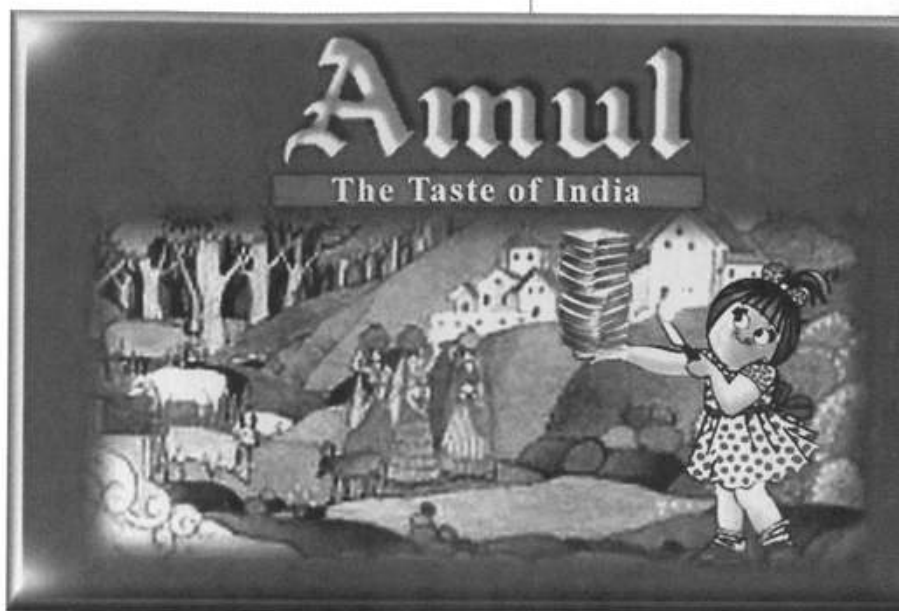
Note that we needn't be deterred in this spreading revolution by the recent Supreme Court's ruling against restrictions on campaign spending and affirming the conflation of the right to spend and the right to speak. Voluntary public financing doesn't run afoul of this legal view.

From supplying missing things to building empowering relationships

IT'S EASY FOR PROGRESSIVES TO SEE A "POWER FRAME" AS LACKING spiritual uplift, as a cop-out, cave-in alternative to the purer path of moral exhortation. But to be credible to ourselves and others, and therefore to be truly uplifting, our moral case must be grounded in reality, and that's what the power, relational lens offers.

An example of the significance of the shift: The Network of Spiritual Progressives calls its ambitious Global Marshall Plan a "Strategy of Generosity." Immediately, the language sets the frame: The goal is giving more—contributing to a view of the world divided between givers and receivers, the active and the passive. Even though the second plank of the plan stresses a goal of "empowering people," the frame of generosity diverts us from focusing on the underlying rules within global corporate capitalism that are disempowering, creating a world where the wealthiest few hundred people control the equivalent of the total annual income of the poorest 3 billion.

The Global Marshall Plan's third point calls for righting the inequities in trade agreements that now privilege the rich. Excellent! But the generosity frame in which the plank is set can blur the fact that it is the poor who are presently the contributors: in 2006, \$658 billion, net, moved from poorer countries of the Global South to wealthier



Amul Dairy has organized over 10,000 village cooperatives, and designed and implemented multiple interventions along the value chain. Together these cooperatives bring more than 10 million liters of milk to market daily, which makes them the leading player in the Indian milk industry.



Francis Moore Lappé plants a tree with Kenya's Green Belt Movement. The movement was founded in 1977 by Professor Wangari Maathai, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004, and the National Council of Women of Kenya. It reduces the effects of deforestation and provides a forum for women to be creative and effective leaders. Its programs have expanded to include projects in civic education, advocacy, food security, greenbelt eco-safaris, and "women and change."

countries. Replacing a generosity frame with an empowerment frame would help us see changes in trade relationships as justice—a consequence of healthy and fair power relationships.

A case illustrating the two frames is hanging in the balance now: whither agricultural development in Africa. The Rockefeller and Gates Foundations are putting over \$150 million into what they call a Green Revolution for Africa. Its focus is research toward developing improved seeds and using small shopkeepers to sell them. Attention is on supplying missing "things"—improved seeds—and on reinforcing the current economic structures. The initiative appears to ignore a very different

approach underway in many countries in Africa: Networks of small farmers are effectively reclaiming degraded land and increasing both crop diversity and yields by developing and sharing their own seeds, in addition to their tools and knowledge. Their focus is on relationships and the generation of new power, widely dispersed.

The first approach might actually require more "generosity" than the second in terms of money transferred. The second requires that donors build relationships with local farmer organizations, listen to their ideas about what is most empowering for them, and work to support it.

On caring and courage

MANY PEOPLE ARE SUSPICIOUS OF PROGRESSIVES FOR WHAT PSYCHOLOGISTS CALL A "situational" perspective on evil. Blaming the "situation"—poverty or bad schools and so on—for anti-social behavior takes the bad guys off the hook, they say.

But we can make clear that, actually, it is the "dispositional" view of many on the Right—that evil lies *within certain individuals*—that takes most of humanity off the hook, and, therefore, ultimately dooms us. Acknowledging the capacity of most of us to become brutal puts all of us on notice for our responsibilities to create real democracies protecting us from that possibility. "Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible," writes Reinhold Niebuhr, "but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary."

So progressives can get off the defensive. We are the hard-nosed, heart-centered realists. We can honor and build on both religious and civic traditions calling on humanity to transcend evil. We can come together in the realization that our God-given and/or nature-evolved capacities allow us to transcend evil by learning from evidence. Identifying with some certainty the key elements of life-serving social orders that bring forth the best in us while protecting us from the worst, we can rethink and reclaim our power to manifest love and to minimize evil.

From the power lens, things get personal very fast.

While a generosity lens encourages us to give our fair share, a power lens requires us to ask: How does my life—my employment, purchases, political engagement, and more—abet the emergence of fair, creative power? How am I learning and modeling the skills and the courage to stand up against illegitimate authority, including that of group pressure not to challenge the givens of our power-concentrating, democracy-destroying economy?

If true, then what the world needs most right now might not be more caring people,

exactly. (Could it be that virtually all of us are caring enough?) The much bigger problem may be that expressing our caring—our deep need for connection—is now stifled by power-concentrating systems driven by fear. Maybe, then, what we most need are people courageous enough to explore the root causes of evil and to face their fear of being out of step, people willing to do the work of pushing forward the very frontier of democracy itself, bringing to life a culture of relational power permeating economic life as well as political and cultural life.

If we are confident in our caring but less so in our courage, we can rethink courage, too. In part courage is simply our capacity to walk with fear, including our fear of seeing the world through new eyes. And we can take heart from the insight of Oxford historian Theodore Zeldin, who writes that history teaches us that curiosity is the greatest antidote to fear.

So let's get curious concerning history's lessons about evil, their practical implications, and the hope-filled consequences of courageously facing the facts. Only in so doing can we join with others in creating truly living democracies able to manifest our caring. ■

Frances Moore Lappé is the author of sixteen books. Her first was Diet for a Small Planet, and her newest is Getting a Grip: Clarity, Creativity & Courage in a World Gone Mad.
www.smallplanetinstitute.org.

Empowerment is Not Enough

Response to Lappé

by Nichola Torbett

FRANCES MOORE LAPPÉ ARTICULATES A PERSPECTIVE THAT WE OFTEN hear expressed with less eloquence and sensitivity by people who object to the NSP's approach: It's not more of your do-gooder love and generosity that we need, but empowerment and democratization.

While empowerment and democratization are indeed necessary, they are not sufficient.

Lappé is right to point out the way that "generosity" is often a mechanism by which existing power relationships are maintained: i.e., we'll give you this much so that we can feel like good people as we go about dominating you and exploiting the resources of the planet. That is not the kind of generosity we advocate. Our Global Marshall Plan explicitly addresses structural transformation and the empowerment of local people, as Lappé acknowledges.

We must always keep in the foreground this commitment to a world in which the spiritual as well as material needs of every human being can be met.

The love and generosity we advocate is not about feel-good charity but about radical transformation of how we see ourselves in relationship to other people and other forms of life.

Anyone who has experienced a meeting that emphasizes democratic process knows that democracy can be a nightmare when people bring to it their fearful, small selves. In those instances, "democracy" is reduced to a battle among the self-interested agendas of each person in the room. Each individual remains encased in the self-righteousness of his or her own



position. Those skilled at the rules by which such meetings are conducted—usually Robert's Rules of Order—make use of every possible mechanism to make sure that their position is heard and that the positions of others are not. Eventually, a vote is called that means that the self-interests of some triumph over the self-interests of others. If you've been watching Congress during the past few years, you are familiar with this scenario. It is a microcosm of what has become of our American democracy, where individual tax impact means more than love of neighbor.

Is this our highest vision for public life? Is it what we want for the Iraqi people, or any other people?

The problem with empowerment as our highest goal is that power is in itself amoral. Moreover, a program of empowerment does not call into question our view of human beings as self-contained packets of individual self-interest, packets that most of us long to transcend in order to encounter each other more fully. Many of us are deeply lonely in our little self-interest containers.

Power, to be transformative, must be tempered by love—not some sentimental feel-good love but a deep compassion steeped in the humility and wonder that comes from acknowledging the sacredness of all life and recognizing the profound ways in which we impact each other, the ways that we are not separate after all. From this point of view, a different kind of public conversation—a different kind of democracy—becomes possible, one that acknowledges that the well-being of any one group cannot be secured without also attending to the well-being of everyone else. That is what we mean by love and generosity. ■

Nichola Torbett, Director of National Programming for the NSP, moved cross-country to work for this organization because it is the only one that squarely addresses her lifelong obsession with the intersection of love, politics, and meaning.

The Presidential Primaries—a Special Section



Introduction - Self-Blaming is Sometimes Appropriate

by Michael Lerner

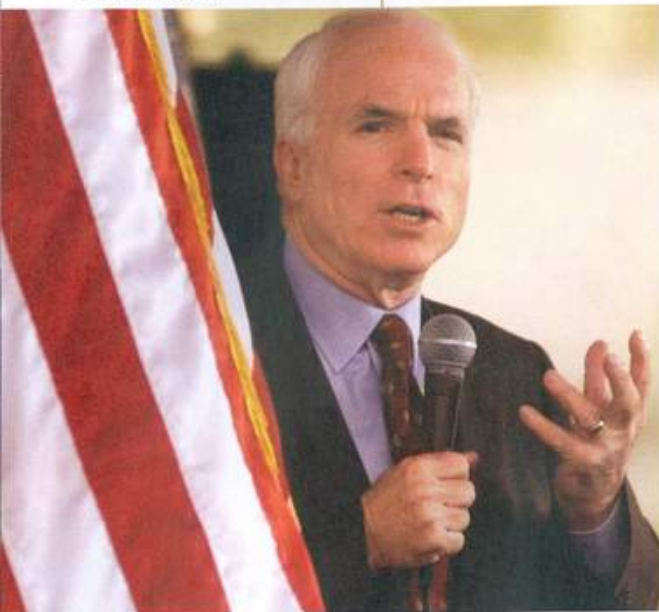
FAR MORE THAN THE PRESIDENTIAL elections themselves, the presidential primaries are the most democratic aspect of American politics.

Yes, of course we know that money still plays a big role. We know that the corporate media jumps in from the start. Having failed in the past four years to give any publicity to the people who have spoken out against the war in Iraq and the proposed war in Iran, or who have championed social justice, non-violence, ecological sanity, and the rights of the oppressed, the media then turns around and tells us who is a viable candidate by the earliest possible polls which inevitably reflect the media's own choices about which names and personalities to promote. Yes, we know that even the "leading candidates" rarely have their views explored in any depth by the media, so that most people have only a "slogan-level" knowledge of what they stand for.

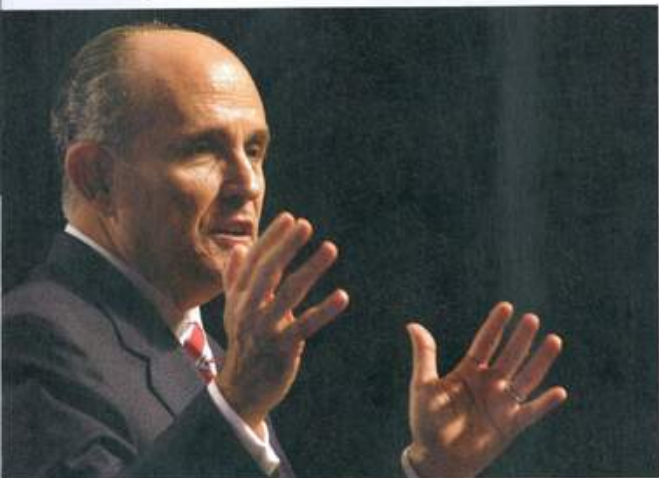
And yet, time after time ordinary people have made a mark by refusing to follow the media's scenario. It was ordinary people like you and me who voted for Eugene McCarthy, which led to the decision by Lyndon Baines Johnson not to seek a second full term as president. It was ordinary people like you and me who selected a virtually unknown Jimmy Carter to become the Democratic nominee for President in 1976.

So why is it that in 2008, the sixth year of a war that is immensely unpopular, none of the leading candidates for president in either party are committed to withdrawing all troops and advisors from Iraq by the end of 2009, close to two years from now? Why haven't ordinary citizens pushed to the fore the candidates who *do* support some form of immediate withdrawal? Why haven't ordinary citizens made it clear that they will not

John McCain ▼



Rudy Giuliani ▼



Mike Huckabee ▼



vote for anyone who does not unequivocally commit to ending every form of torture, including waterboarding, who will restore all the rights to privacy whittled away by the Patriot Act, who will close the School of the Americas (in all its various incarnations and extensions), and who will be willing to confront corporate power in order to immediately institute universal single-payer health care, a Global Marshall Plan, and a global restructuring of the world economy in the interests of preserving the environment?

The problem is not that people don't share these goals, nor is it that we feel uncertain that a different way of doing things would be preferable to the way we do things now.

Rather, the problem is that most people who share our values do not believe that they can or deserve to win. The core problem is what I call "surplus powerlessness"—the tendency of many people in capitalist societies to make themselves even more powerless than they actually are by buying into a set of beliefs about themselves and others that keep them from fighting for what they really believe in.

On the psychological plane, we have all been subjected to endless indoctrination into the notion that we live in a meritocracy, and that those who "win" in almost every arena are those who deserve to win. Yet most people, when viewing their lives, do not think that they are winners. They have a life story about why they didn't exactly get the kind of work or job that would have really fulfilled them, the kind of life partner that they had fantasized about, or the kind of children and friends who would treat them the way that had hoped to be treated. Instead of understanding the complex forces operating in our society that make work so stressful to most people, families so unstable and often unfulfilling, and friendships so tainted by the ethos of me-firstism that predominates in the capitalist marketplace, people are encouraged to blame themselves for everything that has happened. This self-blame permeates all of our perceptions and teaches us to accommodate to a world very different than the one we actually want. People suffering from surplus powerlessness—which tends to include almost all of us (even some members of the ruling elites)—rarely stand up for the kind of world that they secretly yearn and pray for in churches, synagogues, mosques, and ashrams.

It is such people who are particularly susceptible to the primary idolatry of our time: the call to be "realistic" and hence to abandon one's own values and accommodate to the values that predominate around us. The difference between the period 1960–1977 and today is the gradual ascendancy and internalization in our consciousness of the demand to "be realistic."

The most dramatic example of this social-psychological pathology was the 2004 primary season in the Democratic Party. The majority of Democrats opposed the war, yet they voted for John Kerry, who supported the war and only argued that he was a better militarist who could run the war in a smarter way than Bush. When asked why, most Democrats who voted for Kerry explained that they were sure that the anti-war position would not be able to reach a majority of Americans. Even though they didn't believe in the militarism that Kerry espoused (he actually called for the United States to track down and kill every terrorist on the planet as his way of providing homeland security), they reasoned that he was the candidate that "the others" (in red states) would be most likely to get tricked into supporting, and hence the most likely candidate to beat Bush. The strategy didn't work, in large part because most other Americans realized that the Democrats were trying to trick them, that the Democrats secretly hoped that Kerry was a flip-flopper who would change what he said and did once elected. Those Democratic primary voters ensured the loss of the candidate by selecting someone that they themselves couldn't get

excited about, simply because they believed him to be “electable.” But that is precisely what made him unelectable. People didn’t trust him. This was heightened by the fact that his own Democratic supporters hoped in their hearts that he was a flip-flopper, and that once elected he would flip-flop back into being the John Kerry who had once stood up courageously against the Vietnam War.

We are seeing that same thinking crippling the liberal and progressive electoral forces today. Instead of asking, “Who comes closest to articulating my views about what needs to happen in America?” people are asking, “Who can appeal to the mythical middle and be most electable?” As a result, those would-be-candidates who most clearly oppose the war in Iraq, torture, corporate ethical and social irresponsibility, ecological recklessness, or the erosion of human rights are not even given a serious hearing because the rest of us have decided that they can’t win. Yet, if all the people who said “candidate X can’t win” even though they agree with her or him more than others instead said, “I’m with candidate X because s/he speaks the truth and says what I believe,” then that candidate X would in fact be a serious contender and might actually win, not only the nomination, but the election itself.

In come the media, the professional politicians, and the champions of corporate power to ridicule this kind of thinking. “Remember the devastation caused by the McGovern campaign?” they warn the budding idealist, “We can’t afford that once again.” But the myth about the McGovern campaign was created by these very people. The fact is that once McGovern won the nomination his campaign was taken over by Democratic Party professionals who insisted that he stay away from the issue of the war. In 1972, his main focus leading up to the election was to reassure the powerful that he was really a traditional Democrat who would leave things as they were. I personally met with (later to be U.S. Senator) Gary Hart, who had been McGovern’s campaign manager. Hart told me that he had lost control of the campaign to these status-quoers. These voters did everything they could to ensure that the campaign was not fought on the principle of stopping militarism and American imperialism, but then, immediately following McGovern’s defeat, proclaimed that the reason for his loss was that he had been “too liberal.” McGovern himself recently confirmed to me the truth of this analysis. Moreover, the Democratic Party was not destroyed—it won a majority in Congress, which it maintained in the next election, and then went on to win the presidency in 1976. But the mythmakers still use this supposed “lesson of McGovern” to cow people into corporate “realism.”

This primary season, we have a choice. The voters who fill the ballot boxes will be free to abandon the idolatry of “being realistic,” their fears, and their depressive “certainty” that they are alone in wanting a different kind of world, and instead to vote their hearts and minds. If we as voters begin to act this way, we will help to liberate the candidates themselves from twisting and turning into what a “realistic” candidate must look like and allow them to be who they really are.

If we elect candidates with whom we do not resonate, we have no one to blame but ourselves. As spiritual progressives, the most important message we have to anyone in politics is this: Don’t be realistic. Go for your highest values and vision.

In this section on the primaries, we’ve asked a number of spiritual progressives to speak to the candidates or party of their choice and give them advice on how they might better embody their own highest values in this campaign.

To help you to determine which candidates really do share your worldview, we’ve designed a Voter’s Guide for use this election period. We hope you will use the Voter’s Guide and share it with members of your community. If you are a subscriber to *Tikkun* or a member of the Network of Spiritual Progressives (www.spiritualprogressives.org), you can contact our office for more copies. You can find the Voter’s Guide between pages 16 and 17 of this issue of *Tikkun*. ■

Dennis Kucinich ▼



John Edwards ▼



Hillary Clinton ▼



Dear Brother Barack

by Obery Hendricks

I WRITE TO YOU TODAY NOT AS A POLITICIAN, BUT AS A BROTHER IN FAITH. And I want you to know that I have been watching you. I've read your words, listened to your speeches, and scrutinized your record. I have watched, not as one enamored of your charisma and oratory, but as one who has known more political disappointments than I care to count. Yet, as I've trained my gaze upon you these last months I've come to sense the possibility that within you is a spiritual imperative, to serve God by serving your neighbors, that few possess in this—or any other—campaign season. I've sensed the possibility that you have the gifts, the spiritual depth, the moral courage and the sincere will to become an agent of constructive social and political transformation in our nation, the likes of which

we have not seen in decades. It seems to me a real possibility that the motivating values of your politics are the same as the motivating values of our shared faith: love, justice, and service to those to whom Jesus himself gave special attention, “the least of these,” our most vulnerable and needy sisters and brothers of all faiths, nationalities, tongues, and hues. I venture to suspect that we hold in common the belief that “love your neighbor as yourself” is more than just a quaint biblical saying; I suspect that you are as convinced as I that it is a biblical imperative that must be applied to all people in all walks of life.

I do believe that these are real possibilities. Yet it seems that thus far they remain only possibilities. That is why I am writing to you today, brother Barack, to encourage you to manifest the spiritual power of your vision in the hard, loveless terrain we call American politics. What would it take to manifest that power in your campaign and your presidency? I believe it is this: that you become a tireless and uncompromising seeker.

Seek to give full reign to the spiritual strength within you, to drink even more deeply from the spiritual well of your faith.

Seek to honor that faith by eschewing amoral image-crafters and poll-driven policies.

Seek to speak truly about the terrible betrayal of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness that today stains the hands of the many who falsely claim to serve us.

Seek justice in education. Seek justice in wages and fair treatment of workers.

Seek justice for the innocent, care for the aged, protection for the young.

Seek to end the corporate debasement of this nation's ability—and its will—to feed every hungry child, to safeguard their well-being and bequeath to them an ecological environment and a body politic that gives life instead of destroying it. That also means finding a way to rework your own healthcare plan to cover every American, as love for our neighbor demands.

Seek to attain the high perch of the presidency, yes, but keep your eyes on the greater prize: leading our nation to fulfill the promise of its creed.

Most importantly, seek to be a servant of love, mercy, and justice before every personal and political consideration.

Yet while you are seeking, there are also things you must stop.

Stop flirting with the pandering militarism of your opponents. Words of bombing and death are what you are called to silence, not repeat.

Stop attacking your political rivals. They are only symptoms of the problem. Correct their misstatements if you must, but be certain to voice the breadth of your vision and to exhort America to follow a



more humane and righteous path at home and in the world.

Finally, brother Barack, there is something you must begin.

Begin to model—really model—a new politics of ethical and moral transformation before our nation forever falls from the high ground of moral purpose into the slimy swamp of corruption, cynicism, and selfishness that has all but overwhelmed us in these last tragic years. Make it your mission to restore America's love, to restore America's righteous works, to restore America's honor.

Let it be a hunger and thirst for righteousness, not a selfish quest for power that orders your steps, crafts your policies, and guides your pronouncements.

Jesus has said, "From whom much has been given, much is required." Barack Obama, in a very short time you have been given much. What is required of you as senator today, and perhaps president tomorrow, is that in all things, at all times, and in every way, you must ever treat the needs of the people you serve as holy, as before God.

In love and faith,

Obery ■

Obery M. Hendricks, Jr., is professor of biblical interpretation at New York Theological Seminary and author of The Politics of Jesus: Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of Jesus' Teachings and How They Have Been Corrupted.

Dear Senator Edwards

by Tracey Lind

YOU'RE RIGHT, OF COURSE, WHEN YOU WRITE IN YOUR *Plan to Build One America*, that "especially now, our country needs to hear the truth from its leaders." And I applaud your platform planks: End the War in Iraq, Guarantee Universal Health Care, Support Middle-Class Families, Teach Our Children, Achieve Energy Independence and Fight Global Warming, and Revitalize Rural America. If our nation could achieve those goals, there's little doubt that we would pass on a better life to our children.

As you travel around the country promoting your plan, however, I hope that you will also answer another, much deeper need of the American people. Especially now—after years of a devastating war, escalating environmental ruin, a chasm between rich and poor that has grown nearly unbridgeable, and prejudice that has been used to create wedges between minority groups for political gain—Americans need to hear more than just solid policy proposals and workable plans. We need a prophetic voice in our national political debate. We need to know that the things that unite us are greater than the things that divide us. We need a presidential candidate who, in the words of the prophet Isaiah, will help bring about the day when the wolf shall dwell with the lamb and the leopard shall lie down with the kid.

Recently on the American Public Media program *Speaking of Faith*, evangelical Christian leader Jim Wallis said that one of the obstacles we have to ending poverty is that we do not know poor people. He said that "until poor people are our friends, not just the objects of our concern on the liberal side or the people who are to blame for their own misfortunes on the conservative side," we will never be able to address the root causes of poverty or have a hope of ending its scourge.



I think that Wallis's approach is right, not just for poverty, but also for war, health care, global warming, lesbian and gay rights, immigration policy, civil rights, and all of the other issues you lift up in your platform. We need a leader who will tell us the truth about these problems, to be sure. But even more, on the 2008 campaign trail we need a leader who knows that we will only be truly unified when we have listened to one another's hopes, dreams, and pain, and allowed ourselves to be transformed by that experience into people who embody true justice, love, and mercy for all of God's creation.

Late in 2007, We Believe Ohio, a group of more than 100 clergy and committed laypeople from Jewish, Muslim, and Christian traditions, issued a call to declare Ohio a "political sleaze-free zone." The petition, now signed by nearly 1100 Ohioans and available at www.webelieveohio.org, asks candidates to run positive campaigns in Ohio, and we invite you to be the first presidential candidate to sign. In calling for an end to political sleaze in Ohio, we have practical concerns, of course: we want the inevitable political din that will soon descend upon our state to be as focused as possible on giving Ohioans real information about the issues that face our state and our country.

But even more than wanting a campaign that gives us real political choices, We Believe Ohio has profoundly spiritual reasons for seeking to end the politics of polarization and its damaging focus on deeply divisive issues. We know, as leaders of diverse faith communities, that only when we can sit down together and talk, without invective and mudslinging and attack, do we have any hope of healing the deep wounds and divisions from which we all suffer.

Even with the right leadership—even with a prophet in the Oval Office—we won't overcome our divisions quickly, and the work will not be easy or light. Myles Horton, the great labor organizer and civil rights activist, tells a story in his autobiography about the backlog, the log that is set at the back of the fireplace to keep the fire burning. According to Horton, the owner of a southern plantation once promised his slaves that the Christmas holiday would last as long as the backlog in the master's house burned. The slaves knew that Christmas meant less work and more food, and so by planning and ingenuity, they managed to find a backlog that would burn for a very long time.

To be one in America today—to know that the things that unite us are much greater and more profound than the things that divide us, to listen to one another and be transformed by what we hear—we need a backlog that will burn for a very long time, lighting the way to a place of peace and justice for all God's people. As you continue your campaign, I pray that you will be that light. ■

Tracey Lind is the Dean of Trinity Episcopal Cathedral in Cleveland, convener of We Believe Ohio—Greater Cleveland, and author of Interrupted by God: Glimpses from the Edge (The Pilgrim Press, 2004).

Dear Senator Clinton

by Glen Stassen

WHEN JESUS WAS ASKED, "WHICH COMMANDMENT IS FIRST?," he answered, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." The second is this, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:28-31). Jesus was quoting Moses' teaching in the Hebrew Scriptures (Deut. 6:4-5 and Lev. 19:19).

In a remarkable statement on October 13, 2007, 138 Muslim scholars from around the world, representing diverse traditions of Islam, reached out to Christians and Jews—on our ground. They affirmed the double love command as also the heart of Islam. Christian scholars responded with gratitude, saying, "For Christians, humanity's love of God and God's love of humanity are intimately linked. As we read in the New Testament: 'We love because he [God] first loved us' " (1 John 4:19). God loves all on whom God gives sunshine and rain (Matthew 5:45). You can read the texts at www.acommonword.com/ and www.yale.edu/fai/abou-commonword.htm.

Loving God and loving our neighbors means we need to try to find ways to cooperate with our neighbors. Our complex world, where problems are global and too complex for one nation to solve alone, requires international

cooperation. Senator Clinton, if you make restoring international cooperation your theme in this presidential campaign, you will get great appreciation. Just say "Moses and Jesus are right. And many good Jews, Christians, and Muslims are right, too. We need to restore realistic and specific international cooperation because it is right. And because a world hostile to the United States is not a world of real security."

The past seven years have brought so much unilateralism that many don't think of the U.S. as a historically cooperative nation. But World War II was nothing if not cooperation with allies. And the United Nations began as a U.S. initiative—the product of bipartisan cooperation here and international cooperation worldwide. When the UN's charter-writing assembly in San Francisco was finished, the world press who were there took a vote on which delegate did the most for achieving unanimous international agreement for the UN Charter. The winner

was the ambassador from Australia, tied with an American (and a Republican)—my father, Harold Stassen. Dad came home from the U.S. Navy, fighting in the South Pacific, and said: "Glen, war is so destructive that we have to do all we can to prevent WWII and nuclear war." His hope was that the United Nations would help prevent that kind of war, and, before he died at age 93, he said, "so far it has." After World War II, the United States devised the Marshall Plan for the recovery of Europe from WWII, helped organize regional treaty organizations in Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America, and entered into numerous treaties to support trade relationships and prevent wars. *Tikkun* and the Network of Spiritual Progressives are now advocating a Global Marshall Plan to help alleviate poverty and strengthen economies in the developing world. A United States known for spiritual generosity and international cooperation is a much less likely target for terrorism than an arrogant United States. And it's just plain right.

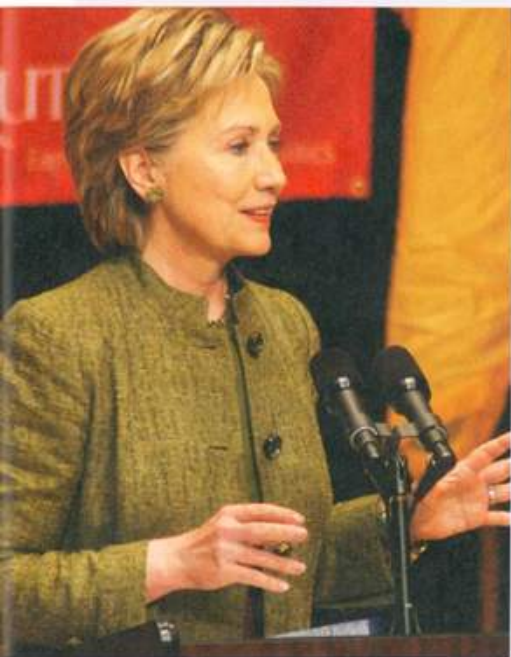
Americans know that recent unilateral and militaristic policy has cost us enormously in international reputation and has earned us anger from potential recruits to terrorism. In a Gallup Poll from June 9-11, 2006, the worst result by far came when they asked about "the image of the U.S. around the world." Sixty percent of those surveyed believed the international image of the United States was worse off and only 11 percent thought

it was better off. Even Republicans know our international image is worse than it was. If you focus on this widely agreed problem, you are on highly persuasive ground. Your attention needs to be international cooperation as the correction for go-it-alone domination.

Two of my students were planning a summer trip to Europe. They got backpacks with Canadian flags on them. They did not want anyone to know they were Americans.

A recent Pew Global Survey reported: "An important factor in world opinion about America is the perception that the U.S. acts internationally without taking account of the interests of other nations. Large majorities in every nation surveyed (except the United States) believe that America pays little or no attention to their country's interests in making its foreign policy decisions."

The Iraq War, on top of the Afghanistan War, the declaration of a "War on Terrorism," and threats of war on Iran, have greatly increased the anger of Arabs and Muslims in the Middle East. The increased Arab anger is directly related to the increased recruits for terrorism. The U.S. State Department reports that the number of terrorist incidents and deaths has increased exponentially since the United States invaded Iraq. In 2003, the first year of the Iraq war, 208 international terrorist attacks caused 625 deaths. The next year, 3,168 attacks caused 1,907 deaths. In 2005, the number skyrocketed to 11,111 attacks and 14,602 deaths. And last year the number of attacks increased to just over 20,000, 100 times as many as in 2003. Unilateral policies are causing anger, recruitment to terrorism, and terrorist attacks to increase, and security to decrease. Americans know the rest of the world is either angry at arrogant U.S. policy or shaking their heads at this administration's unwillingness to listen to other nations. Condoleezza Rice knows this, and, to her credit, is doing what she can within the limits



of her situation to correct it.

I bet some of your advisors say you need to look tough on national security in order to beat Republicans, who manipulate attention away from their own greed and mess by saying they are tough on terrorism. But those advisors lost the last two presidential elections. Speak from your own knowledge, experience, and passion. Point out what most people know from life experience: when "tough" means go-it-alone domineering, it causes anger and retaliation, and increases recruitment of terrorists. We have survived these many generations by finding ways to cooperate against threats, not by beating our breasts and declaring how macho we are. You will be tough and focused in recruiting cooperation by other nations.

To find terrorists, to cut off their funding, and to build cultures that oppose becoming a recruit to terrorism, requires international cooperation. The U.S. army can't do it alone. To get international cooperation, the United States needs to start being internationally cooperative. We need a president who can restore a United States that works with other nations, not one who just lectures them.

In most recent elections around the world, whether in Australia, Latin America, Iran, Gaza, or Lebanon, the candidate more opposed to U.S. policy won. Leaders do not want to be seen as doing what the U.S. government is asking; it's the kiss of death. So we cannot get other countries to do what we think is good. Our influence has sunk to rock bottom. Americans know this and we do not like it.

You could say: "We are going to rebuild community at home. We are going to rebuild community in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. We are going to rebuild community in our cities. We are going to rebuild a sense of whole community with healthcare insurance for all. We are going to rebuild community and a cooperative spirit in Congress. We are going to use the Global Marshall Plan to help rebuild community for those living in poverty. And we are going to rebuild community with other nations. Americans are a people who value community and cooperation, not arrogance and going it alone."

I hope you say that, "It's all about the basic commandment of the Hebrew Scriptures, as well as of Jesus, now affirmed by Muslim leaders: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" We need you to help win people of faith away from the ideology of hate, fear, and self-centeredness that is infiltrating our nation. Suppose you win the nomination and Huckabee is your opponent. Will you give us language to win people of faith away from that ideological infiltration?

We don't get cooperation by fuzzing issues so that people don't know where we stand. We get cooperation by spelling out clearly the ground on which we can stand together. We can stand together for a little humility, a lot of listening, and a restored spirit of working with other nations. This includes respecting international law on torture and working together to overcome poverty worldwide. We need real security through international cooperation and human rights.

You could say clearly and specifically: "The Bush administration has withdrawn from or blocked five international treaties designed to prevent the spread of WMD's: the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the Nuclear Fissile Materials Cut-off Treaty, the Antiballistic Missile Treaty, the Treaty Banning Landmines, inspections for the Chemical Weapons Treaty; and the International Criminal Court and the Kyoto Accords. Shockingly, in a time of threat from terrorism and climate crisis when we should be cooperating with other nations to prevent the spread of WMD's, this go-it-alone, unilateralist, lone-ranger administration is tearing up the fabric of international treaties that our elders worked so hard to knit together. I will work to ratify these treaties that prevent the spread of WMD's and the destruction of our beautiful planet."

Frame the campaign to get out of Iraq responsibly in terms of international cooperation: "The current administration made the war as a go-it-alone action while ignoring the checks and balances of *the UN and the other nations of the world*. They said that WMD's were in Iraq while ignoring the reports of the *international* inspectors who said that no weapons could be found. They gave the reconstruction contracts to greedy U.S. corporations while ignoring *international* corporations. They ignored the warnings of *international* inspectors that 350 tons of high-intensity explosives in sheds at Al Qa'Qa needed guarding, and left them unguarded, so all those high-intensity explosives are now probably in the hands of IED-makers for use in killing our troops and the people of Iraq. They ignored the warnings of the *International* Red Cross that torture and abuse were taking place, so now the world despises the United States and children become terrorist recruits. They lifted the protection of *international* law and the Geneva Convention from defenseless prisoners. The Iraq policy needs a multinational security force under the UN or Iraq's

neighbors. As the bipartisan Baker-Hamilton report says: We must seek a new path in Iraq that relies on international cooperation to meet the needs of the Iraqi people. A little neighbor-love could go a long way. ■

*Glen Harold Stassen is the Lewis B. Smedes Professor of Christian Ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary. He has published a number of books, including *Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices for Abolishing War*, *Living the Sermon on the Mount*, and *Kingdom Ethics*, which won the *Christianity Today* award for best book of 2004 in theology or ethics.*

Dear Fellow Republicans

Reimagining Republicanism

by The Contrarian—George Vradenburg

I am the Co-Publisher of Tikkun, and a longtime Republican who often disagrees with the editorial position of this magazine (my column is styled "The Contrarian"), but who believes strongly that Tikkun's distinctive voice should be heard and supported. Likewise, Tikkun itself encourages unusual, provocative, and intellectually exciting perspectives on politics, culture, social theory, and religion. So I was not surprised, when the editors decided to publish letters challenging presidential candidates from a Tikkun perspective, that they sought Republicans to challenge Republican candidates.

Fellow Republicans, it is time to refresh the Republican ideal. We Republicans believe that the "self-evident" values of individual freedom, opportunity, and responsibility are derived from a Supreme Being, not the State. The divine, individual spark in each human is a sacred principle that should guide all of our policies. Too often, however, we have allowed our advocacy of limited government, lower taxes, and family values to be hijacked by those with a cramped, exclusionary view of America.

It is time to articulate a new Republican vision for the twenty-first century.

America is not just a place, but also an idea. It is the idea of individual freedom, striving, and dignity;



it is the idea that every person should have the opportunity to find and pursue his or her special dream, purpose, and life potential; it is the idea that the individual is responsible for his or her own path in life; it is the idea that the family is where the capacity for human development is best nurtured. This vision is broadly inclusive, generous, and extends to all people.

We Republicans are rightly the champions of limited government and capitalism, since private enterprise has proven to be the most powerful engine in history to foster individual freedom and economic opportunity, here and abroad. Yet, capitalism correctly pursued requires respect for the individual customer, worker, or investor whose trade or labor is being sought, and pursuit of competitive market position through products and service that best serve individual consumers. To honor these values, we Republicans should insist on strict enforcement of market-making regulations, such as truth-in-advertising, product safety, investor and labor protection, and anti-trust laws.

Some Republican candidates view immigration as a threat to our identity. But immigration reflects just that hunger for freedom, dignity, and opportunity that refreshes the American identity. The money that immigrants send home is a sign of individual responsibility and family loyalty, values we revere. Recent immigrants are us, not them. We should embrace the immigrant dream of American citizenship even as we seek to more effectively police our borders.

Gays and lesbians who want to marry and start a family through adoption are not challenging family values, they are expressing family values. We Republicans should endorse gay marriage.

Individual ability to pursue opportunity and freedom is built on education. We should be the party of education. No Child Left Behind is exactly the right mantra. And we should financially support stronger performance in our K-12 school system and the teachers who are the frontline fighters in that effort.

Our belief in individual responsibility should not blind us to the needs of lower income families for the basic social safety net that permits individuals to focus on how best to pursue a better life, not just daily survival. We Republicans oppose the condescending culture of dependency that welfare systems can create, but we should not oppose a fiscally-sound system of universal health insurance, earned income tax credits, housing supports, and other basic benefits that provide the opportunity platform for individuals to pursue the economic, educational, and social advancement necessary to become productive members of American society.

We Republicans cannot be blind to the social and racial barriers to individual opportunity in our country. These barriers need to be confronted through anti-discrimination laws, and toughly enforced. It is a charade to trumpet individual responsibility if we do not affirmatively reach out and knock down the systemic barriers standing in the way of women, racial minorities, and gays and lesbians to the pursuit of their individual life goals.

As for foreign policy, we Republicans believe in the strong national defense needed to protect our special American idea from enemies foreign and domestic. We are rightly pursuing with vigor and vigilance the terrorists and rogue states seeking WMD's for aggressive ends. We must finish our interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq with respect for the dignity of those we have freed from tyranny.

Perhaps the greatest national defense challenge is our dependence on the imported fossil fuels causing global climate change. Relying on our innovative private sector, we Republicans should be challenging America not just to conserve energy, but also to develop alternative sources of renewable energy and nuclear power that will preserve our independence, our planet, and the human race.

Fellow Republicans, we must inspire our fellow citizens with a new vision of Republicanism in the 21st century. We Republicans will earn the trust of Americans only if we commit to steward their government with principles that honor the divinity of the individual. ■

George Vradenburg is co-publisher of Tikkun.

A Values Agenda for the Next President

by Shmuley Boteach

TIKKUN ASKED ME TO ADDRESS THE REPUBLICAN candidates for President, but what I have to say applies, I believe, to the entire political process. Indeed, what Republicans must remember is that many of the values voters who helped them so much in 2004 could shift allegiance unless a more effective and authentic set of moral values is presented. Instead of emphasizing abortion and homosexuality as threats to family life, there is a real need to offer positive support for the broken American family.

The rot has been reinforced by the ineffectiveness of religion in bolstering family values. Truth be told, religion is even obstructing the formulation and propagation of workable family values through the subterfuge of opposition to gay unions and abortion as a values platform. But neither of these issues is going to strengthen families.

Here, then, are four ideas that can begin to stem the rot, consolidate our families, and ennoble our culture.

1. Make marital counseling tax deductible. I have argued this before, but it is so important it bears repeating. Studies show that marital counseling, for the most part, really works and the difference between staying together and getting divorced is often simply the difference between a couple having a wise counselor with whom they can consult and not having one. But sadly, many couples simply cannot afford the huge costs of going to a good counselor on a regular basis. Let's give them the financial incentive to do so. Marriage is society's most important social structure. Without marriage children do not have stability and men and women are often relegated to lives of solitude and loneliness. When couples divorce the burden of raising children often falls to the government, especially in the case of dead-beat dads. So whatever revenue is lost from the tax deduction would be more than made up from the vast savings in government expenditure for children that should not be the government's responsibility. And this is aside from the vast savings of policing and punishing teenage delinquency that would vastly decrease if our children had two parents working in concert to raise them.

2. Impose a dress code, or even uniforms, at public schools. I am currently writing this article from Dublin, Ireland, where I am doing a TV appearance. Seeing the school girls walk on the streets is a pleasure to behold. The uniforms of the public schools are modest and convey the serious nature of attending an institute of learning. Compare that to our own public school system. *Time* magazine reported in 2003 that 40% of our teenage girls wear thongs to school, mostly with the underwear band showing above their jeans. This is a disgrace and immediately conveys both that going to school is akin to going to a peep show and that the flirtatious interaction of girls and boys is more important than the learning experience. Getting our kids to wear uniforms, or at least conform to an appropriate dress code, teaches them that serious things, like learning, must be taken seriously. It conveys to girls that they should carry themselves in a dignified manner that invites respect. And it teaches both boys and girls that the body is not designed to be exploited but respected and that sexuality is something private and best kept out of a public space.

3. Create a national family dinner time. There is no more important daily family interaction than the family supper. Sitting down to a meal together, the one great unifier of all cultures and religions, allows a family to connect, interact, and debrief about their day. It gives parents the opportunity to not only talk to their children, but to listen to them about how school and their lives are going. The next president should call on all the American people to sit down for dinner either right before or immediately after the network news broadcasts (which might even provide some interesting conversation topics). A president could appeal to the national TV networks to either go completely dead during that daily half hour, or at least put on something so boringly unappealing to children and teenagers that the

family dinner will be a more stimulating alternative. The president should be seen sitting down with his family every night at that exact hour, notwithstanding pressing matters. A lottery should then be done of families who abide by the national family dinner time to meet with the president once a month so that the institution becomes more and more ingrained into the national psyche.

4. Create a daily moment of silence in America's public schools. This was an idea championed by the Lubavitcher Rebbe. The brokenness of today's men is the direct product of a culture that promotes accumulation and acquisition as the rudiments of success. Men are especially prone to the depression that results from feeling like failures; that they could not measure up to the accomplishments of their peers. This must be countered from the earliest age by allowing our young boys to reflect on their intrinsic value as human beings and their being an essential part of G-d's overall plan. America wisely separates Church and State, and I'm not asking that prayer be imposed on America's public schools. But a moment of reflection on something important and spiritual will directly counter the pounding materialism that reduces us men to nothing but what we earn and reduces women to nothing but what they look like. I agree that G-d should never be coerced into the American school system, but neither should incessant materialism. An innocuous moment of reflection, and a teacher telling children that this is their moment to think about anything which is larger than them, can nourish the soul and perhaps jumpstart some serious reflection on the part of a young boy and girl to lead a deeper and more wholesome life. Our schools need values, and a moment of reflection will ingrain into a child the idea that a higher power is within their reach.

I believe strongly that the candidate that seizes the values agenda will triumph in the next election and will seriously strengthen our nation. In the 2004 vote, while the pundits focused on the war with Iraq, 22 percent of people voted for their values. It made the difference between George Bush's victory and John Kerry's defeat. In this cycle, not a single candidate has made a significant effort to offer healing values to the American people and American families. Let the healing begin. ■

Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, the international best-selling author of 18 books, is host of the hit TLC series Shalom and the Home. His upcoming book, The Broken American Male, will be published in January by St. Martin's Press. www.shmuley.com.

A Letter from a Torture Survivor to Those Seeking the Democratic and Republican Nominations for President in 2008

by Dianna Ortiz

FOR THE TORTURED, FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS ABOUT TRUST, FAITH, AND HUMAN decency have been betrayed. It may not be surprising then that your position on this subject is of central importance to us.

None of you has said you favor torture, but it appears that, for some of you, it's the word "torture" that you oppose and not its practice. (President Bush provides a good example. He has insisted that the United States does not torture but it seems clear that he has not only condoned but ordered its practice.)

While no one has argued in favor of torture *per se*, some of you have used the kind of euphemisms that signal that you countenance its practice. We know by now what "enhanced interrogation

techniques" mean, just as we know that by calling water-boarding "a dunk in the water," Vice President Cheney was approving the technique. (And as we also know that when Michael Mukasey claimed not to know what water-boarding was, or whether it was torture, he was protecting the Bush administration.)

Of course, not all of you are torture's advocates. John McCain's first-hand experience with torture has under-girded his opposition to it. Others, in one way or another, have taken small steps in that direction, from announcing opposition to its practice to introducing or co-sponsoring bills that would limit its practice by the government.

Still, we wait in vain for the meshing of the spoken word against this crime with action to bring it to an end. If there is one recent litmus test, it is the Military Commissions Act, the vote in favor or opposed and, since it passed, action to repeal it in its entirety. It is from this dreadful act that I cull three questions for each of you:

- Should the President of the United States have the unilateral right to designate and detain unlawful enemy combatant persons, including U.S. citizens, without charge?
- Should the President have the right to decide what practices constitute torture?
- Should evidence be admissible at trial that has been obtained through coercion?

These are but three of the questions that might be asked. There are others dealing with *habeas corpus*, the narrowing of the definitions of rape and sexual assault, hearsay evidence, and the like, but these three will do.

An answer in the affirmative to any of the three marks one as an advocate of torture. When asked if you oppose torture, none of you said, "NO." But where do you stand on the subject of legislation that legalized its practice and provides immunity for those, including the President, who violated U.S. law?

The Military Commissions Act is indeed the litmus test for those of us who have survived torture. To date, only one of your number has stood that test. Ron Paul has introduced legislation to repeal the act, plain and simple. It is true that others, Senator Dodd for example, have introduced legislation that would turn back parts of that act. Parts, not all.

In the last few years, there has been a significant change in the amount of conversation about torture—from nearly nothing to an incessant drumbeat. Sadly, the subject has now become debatable. What is the proper way to commit crimes against humanity, open and above-board or in secret shrouded in lies? How much pain is too much? What kind of brutality leaves a lasting impact? Congress talks on and on, wanting desperately not to answer these questions. How do we know? Because they do not ask those who do know. *You* do not ask torture's survivors. None of you asks us. And some of you even refuse to respond to our calls and letters to meet to dialogue about the issue and its effects.

And so the debates go on. The evasions go on, carried on the wings of euphemisms. Torture is opposed, yet those Senators who claim to abhor it cannot even make it back to the senate to vote against an attorney general nominee who claims he doesn't know if water-boarding is torture.

Torture survivors call on the candidates to say what they mean. For those who truly oppose torture, we ask, "When will your actions match your words?" Stop beating around the bush! ■

Sister Dianna Ortiz founded and is now the current director of Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition International. Her memoir, The Blindfold's Eyes: My Journey from Torture to Truth details the shattering effects of torture on her life and her efforts to bring her perpetrators to justice.

Dear Candidates by Antonia Juhasz

I WRITE TO YOU TODAY TO ASK THAT YOU DEMONSTRATE TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE THAT YOU will take a firm stand in defense of our future.

Our nation and world are drowning in two simultaneous and deeply interrelated crises: a war for oil (with another on the horizon), and a climate catastrophe pushed ever forward by the burning of fossil fuel.

The American public spoke with a firm and united voice on both the Iraq war and global warming in the 2006 elections. We sent Congress a clear message and elected it to accomplish two goals: end the war and take firm and immediate action to curtail climate chaos. Neither message has been heard. Our voices appear to be drowned out by those moneyed few who profit from the continuation of war and global warming—Big Oil.

The oil and gas industry ranks among the top ten highest all time spenders on federal election campaigns, donating over \$209 million just since 1990 (all of the figures I use in this letter come from the Center for Responsive Politics). Three of the biggest spenders are Chevron, ExxonMobil, and BP. Chevron spent almost \$9.5 million trying to get its chosen presidential and congressional candidates elected to office from just 1990 to 2006. ExxonMobil spent \$9.3 million and BP spent \$5.7 million.

There is simply and utterly no comparison to the financial reach of the oil industry among organizations and groups working on behalf of peace, the environment, consumers, public health, communities living near oil production or gasoline refining, in support of clean and sustainable energy alternatives, or the protection of human rights.

The evidence is clear: candidates who take Big Oil's money do Big Oil's bidding.

Oil Change International compiled voting records for the five most important bills on the Iraq war: the 2003 vote authorizing the use of force in Iraq and the subsequent supplemental war funding bills in 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006. Members of Congress who voted for all five bills received on average eight times more money from the oil and gas industry than those candidates who voted against the war, approximately \$116,000 per candidate from 1989 to 2006, compared to \$14,000.

The Center for American Progress investigated the connection between votes and money for H.R. 2776, the Renewable Energy and Energy Conservation Tax Act of 2007. The bill would eliminate \$16 billion in oil and gas industry tax breaks to fund clean energy alternatives. Members of Congress who voted against the bill received on average four times more money in campaign contributions from the oil and gas industry than those who voted for the bill, approximately \$110,000 to \$26,000 on average from 1989 and 2006.

We need assurance from every candidate running for president. We need to know that you will not be beholden to Big Oil.

To date, every one of you has received money from the oil industry at some point in your political career. To date, every one of you has received money from the oil and gas industry in your 2008 presidential bid. The top contributors are Koch Industries (the largest private oil company in the United States), ExxonMobil, Valero, Chevron, Occidental, the American Gas Association, Marathon, Sunoco, and BP.

Rudolph Giuliani has received the most, more than half a million dollars. Mitt Romney is second with just over \$300,000, and Hillary Clinton is third in line with more than \$220,500. Barack Obama is seventh with over \$100,000, Ron Paul is tenth with just under \$35,000, and John Edwards follows closely behind him with just under \$30,000.

In the 1990s, people opposed to the influence of Big Tobacco on our elected officials launched a campaign that succeeded in leading many politicians to reject campaign contributions from the tobacco industry. The result was a clear and tangible diminution in the power of Big Tobacco over our government and an explosion of anti-tobacco policies and activism.

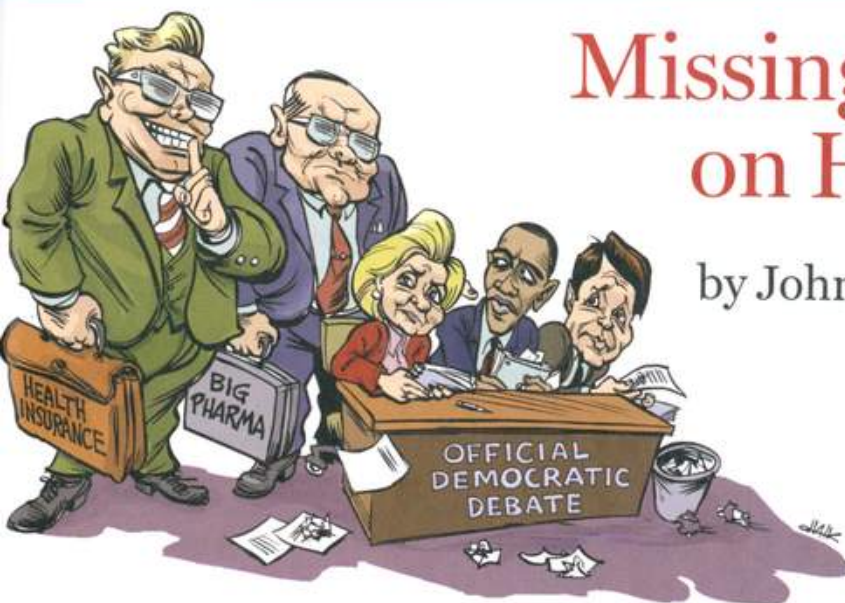
Oil Change International has launched a campaign based on this success calling for the "Separation of Oil and State." People across the country are joining together to announce their support for candidates who pledge to renounce oil company campaign contributions, to support peace, and to support clean, sustainable, renewable energy.

I ask you to take this pledge. I ask you to renounce oil industry money. I ask you to turn your back on war and global warming and to embrace a peaceful future. Only then will we embrace you. ■

*Antonia Juhasz is a fellow at Oil Change International (<http://www.PriceofOil.org>), and author of *The Bush Agenda: Invading the World, One Economy at a Time* (HarperCollins) and the forthcoming *The Break-Up: The Case for Taking Apart Big Oil* (HarperCollins). (<http://www.TheBushAgenda.net>).*

Missing the Boat on Health Care?

by John P. Geyman

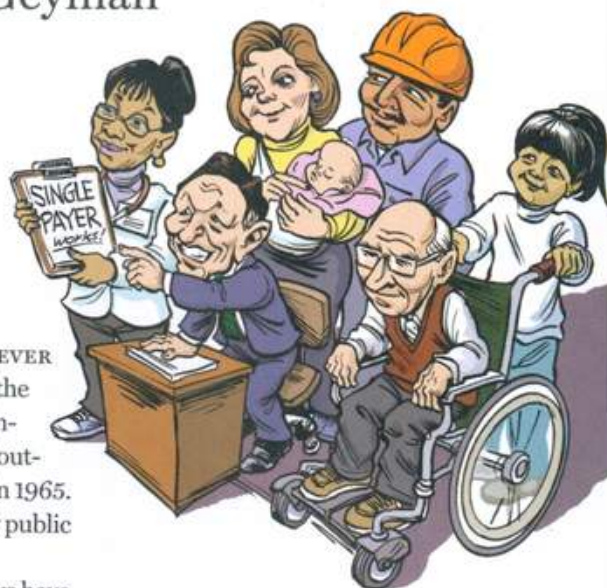


AS WE FACE THE 2008 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS, THE STAKES HAVE NEVER been higher for health care reform. Health care is pricing itself beyond the reach of lower-income and middle-class Americans with no cost containment yet on the horizon. Seniors with Medicare are paying much more out-of-pocket for their medical care now than when Medicare was enacted in 1965. We already have a perfect storm as the U.S. health care “system” falls apart, and many public polls put access to affordable health care at the top of our domestic agenda.

Although we spend far more than any other country in the world on health care, we have little to show for it except high prices, decreasing access, variable quality, underuse of essential care by vulnerable populations, and a significant amount of unnecessary and inappropriate care for those who can pay for it. Our enormous private health insurance industry of 1,300 insurers competes to cover healthier and lower-risk enrollees with more limited policies each year, while denying coverage of sicker individuals or raising premiums to unaffordable levels. That shifts the burden of the more costly care of sicker people to the public sector, defeating the whole principle of insurance: to spread risk broadly. Meanwhile, as the private insurance industry no longer finds growth in the employer-sponsored and individual markets, it has been shifting its sights to privatized public programs, including Medicare and Medicaid. Here it has found generous subsidies and little oversight from friendly conservatives in government.

Now would be the ideal time for leading Democrats to advance a progressive agenda for health care, such as Teddy Roosevelt did as a Progressive, with his call for national health insurance in 1912. The Republicans have been weakened by scandals, cronyism and incompetence, and have no new or credible ideas for health care reform. They still offer up only warmed-over ideas such as tax credits, health savings accounts, and how the competitive market can fix our problems, while limiting government’s responsibility for care of the poor—blatant social Darwinism. As William Greider recently observed in the *Nation*, “Democrats have a splendid opening to be substantive and political and righteous for working folks, all at once.”

But so far, with only one exception, the Democratic presidential candidates have been disappointing, if not derelict, in reforming the system. In their misguided efforts to avoid too much controversy and to build a “centrist consensus,” they are completely missing the target even before starting. Although Democrats in Congress united behind reauthorization of an expanded State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), that effort has diverted them from the real challenge—how to reform the system to make accessible and comprehensive health care affordable for all Americans. That would require taking on powerful stakeholders, especially the insurance and drug industries, in the medical-industrial complex, now one-sixth of our economy. All but one of the Democratic presidential contenders shy away from that battle, usually with the limp excuse that real reform is not politically feasible.



What Are the Leading Democrats Proposing?

IN THEIR RUSH TO BUILD CONSENSUS FOR UNIVERSAL COVERAGE, ALL THREE LEADING Democratic presidential candidates avoid taking on the real culprit—a failing private health insurance industry. There is abundant evidence of the industry's failures, such as premiums increasing by three and four times the rates of cost-of-living and median family income. Projections show that, at this rate, premiums alone will consume *all* of household incomes by 2025. Administrative overhead will become five to nine times higher than Original Medicare. "Denial management" is a vigorous growth area within the industry, while proliferation of near worthless limited benefit policies under the guise of insurance (e.g. deductibles up to \$5,000 or annual caps as low as \$1,000), and successful avoidance of regulation by state and federal regulators for many years is standard. Even as employer-sponsored insurance declines, the insurance bureaucracy keeps expanding as it seeks to exclude higher-risk enrollees and keep its "medical loss ratio" attractive to investors (the industry's often-stated goal is to keep at least 20 percent of premium revenue for overhead and profits).

Despite these mounting problems, the proposals for "reform" of each of the leading Democratic candidates would build upon the private insurance industry. Both Senators Hillary Clinton and John Edwards call for an individual mandate whereby everyone is required to buy health insurance. Senator Barack Obama stops short of universal coverage, except for children.

There are many more similarities than differences among their proposals. All would offer choice among plans and government subsidies for those unable to afford coverage. All would require employers to shoulder some of the costs of coverage. All would need additional funding (\$110 billion a year for Clinton's plan), and all support new efforts to rein in "cherry picking" by insurers. However, how these objectives would be achieved remains unclear in every case. What does seem certain is that any of these Democratic proposals, if enacted into law, would provide yet another new windfall for the private insurance industry through government subsidies for those unable to pay for coverage. And nowhere in this "debate" does the issue of actual benefits appear. Would mandated policies cover all necessary health care for all enrollees? How about cost-sharing requirements?

These proposals are too general and nebulous to know how they would be implemented. The devil is always in the details, and market stakeholders lobby their interests very effectively in and out of revolving doors from their bases on K Street.

As the current front-running candidate, Senator Clinton's plan is carefully crafted to appeal to centrist voters. Under the label of American Health Choices Plan, her individual mandate "assures affordable health coverage for all" through use of refundable tax credits, means-tested limits on premium payments to a percentage of income, promoting shared responsibility by large employers and tax credits for small employers, and expansion of Medicaid and SCHIP. Her plan adds in other trendy components as well in an effort to lower costs or improve quality of care, such as more emphasis on preventive care, disease management for chronic disease, expanded use of information technology, and health insurance purchasing pools. A new component in the Clinton plan is the proposed creation of a public Medicare-like plan intended to compete against the offerings of private plans. On the surface, this may appeal to some as a way to keep the private plans honest and even as a possible future route toward achieving publicly financed Medicare for all.

What's Wrong With the Leading Democrats' Proposals?

THOUGH WELL INTENDED, THERE ARE MANY PROBLEMS WITH ALL OF THESE PROPOSALS. Unfortunately, the reasons are more intertwined and complex than we can reasonably expect to have clarified through political discourse. Leading the list by far is the failure of these proposals to address the central problem blocking reform—the private multi-payer system itself—all in the name of political compromise, without even putting single-payer on the table. In the just-released Rockridge Institute Report on "The Logic of the Health Care Debate," George Lakoff and his colleagues describe how this kind of neoliberal thinking falls into the

'Surrender-in-Advance Trap' by continuing to support failed market-based policies because of political opposition to the economically and morally superior progressive approach: single-payer public financing.

All three leading Democratic proposals leave the private insurance industry in place. This is a bad idea for many reasons. The industry has already demonstrated its bureaucratic inefficiencies, profiteering by cherry picking and favorable risk selection, fragmentation of risk pools, and commitment to the financial bottom line rather than reliable coverage of comprehensive benefits. It is well known that 10 percent of the population account for 72 percent of all health care spending. The industry goes to great lengths to avoid these enrollees' preference in order to market their products to the healthier majority of the population. The industry has no mechanisms or prospects to contain costs and any expansion of private financing is inflationary.

The industry has failed the public interest. It is unwilling (and unable) to compete with such public programs as Original Medicare on a level playing field. It has only survived to this point by avoiding higher-risk enrollees, increasing cost sharing, raising its premiums to increasingly unaffordable levels, and hollowing out coverage that people can afford. It does no good to mandate coverage with inadequate benefits.

The much-touted Massachusetts individual mandate enacted in 2006 is a case in point. Even in a state with relatively high regulation of insurers, this mandate is already failing. The “Massachusetts Miracle” has no chance of providing universal coverage for all state residents, premiums are higher than expected, benefits remain controversial and fall far short of covering essential care, and the costs of promised government subsidies will end up much higher than anticipated. Meanwhile, of course, administrative and bureaucratic complexities have been moved up another notch. This experience also shows that mandates cannot really be enforced (the state has already lowered its initial expectations of employers, and private insurers will always respond to more mandated benefits by raising their premiums).

After some years of trials, there is still not a single example of successful mandates, whether upon employers or individuals. As long as we depend on private financing, mandates will be non-starters, though popular with politicians and welcomed by the insurance industry.

The other trendy "extras" promoted by these Democratic proposals likewise stand little chance of success. An increased emphasis on preventive care is needed and a good idea, but this cannot be expected to contain health care costs. There are a few instances where costs are reduced, such as smoking cessation and wide use of seat belts, but in most instances, health care costs go up with implementation of screening and prevention programs as new illnesses are identified, requiring follow-up and treatment.

Better management of chronic disease is certainly needed. Institutions with integrated systems such as Kaiser Permanente and Group Health Cooperative of Puget Sound have done pioneering work in this area, often with improved quality but not less costs. But "disease management" (DM) programs being promoted by commercial venders to employers and health plans are a different story. Initially started by the drug industry in the 1990s (with a stake in expanding sales of their drugs), DM programs are largely disconnected from primary care and have yet to demonstrate any long-term cost savings.

It is the same story for information technology. How can wider use of electronic medical records increase the efficiency of a multi-payer system with 1,300 *(continued on page 72)*



Don't Bury Sexual Justice Beneath 'Common Ground'

by Debra W. Haffner and Timothy Palmer



Women clergy support reproductive rights at the March for Women's Lives, Washington DC, 2004. Rev. Debra Haffner is at the microphone at right, Rabbi Sally Priesand, America's first female rabbi, is at the mic at left.

COURTESY OF DEBRA HAFFNER

PROGRESSIVE FAITH LEADERS PERCEIVE opportunity in the 2008 elections. The Family Research Council's Values Voter Summit in October revealed disunity among the religious right and no clear presidential frontrunner. That same month, the *New York Times Magazine* reported that prominent Evangelical Christians such as Rick Warren and Bill Hybels are softening the anti-abortion and "preserving marriage" (i.e. anti-same sex marriage) rhetoric to seek common ground on larger social justice issues, such as health care and poverty.

Religious leaders on the Left may be tempted to meet them halfway. That is certainly where the Democratic presidential field has drifted. The leading candidates have barely addressed abortion, and none has spoken out for marriage equality. Meanwhile, many so-called "progressives" have privately cautioned us at the Religious Institute not to insist on engaging sexual justice issues. Their thinking appears to be this: Abortion and LGBT rights have polarized the electorate and ~~over~~

shadowed other moral issues. Why not shift the debate from these "hot buttons" (the media's label, not ours) and focus on bigger concerns? Surely we can find common ground with the evangelical mainstream on issues affecting children and the poor.

We must resist the temptation to bury sexual justice beneath common ground. We agree that the moral issues at stake are broader than the mainstream media would suggest. In fact, they are all woven together. And the irony is, if we push aside women's reproductive rights and LGBT inclusion, we could do real harm to the very constituencies we agree we are called to serve: children and the poor.

Consider the children of same-sex couples. The 2000 U.S. Census counted nearly 600,000 same-sex households, although the actual number is probably much higher. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) estimates that there are anywhere from 1 to 10 million children living in these homes. Denied the 1,318 marriage benefits conferred by federal law, same-sex couples must negotiate an obstacle course to ensure joint-parenting rights, secure family health benefits, and provide the level of stability that married heterosexual couples take for granted. As the AAP concluded, "children of same-gender parents often experience economic, legal, and familial insecurity as a result of the absence of legal recognition of the bonds of their non-biological parents." The burden of legalized discrimination,

however, falls heaviest on lower-income families, who cannot afford the lawyers to help them.

Similarly, poor women are disproportionately affected when reproductive health services are denied or inaccessible. The rate of unintended births is five times greater among poor women than higher-income women in the United States. Between 1994 and 2001, unintended births among poor women grew 44 percent. As a result, more than half of the unwanted children in the United States are born into poverty.

The trends are particularly stark among teenagers. Although teen pregnancy and birth rates have declined by one-third since the early 1990s, one in three American girls still gets pregnant by the age of 20. Rates of sexual activity among lower- and higher-income adolescents are virtually identical, but the outcomes are not. Poor and low-income adolescents account for nearly three-quarters of women aged 15-19 who become pregnant.

Many progressive religious leaders have joined the call to reduce the number of abortions in the U.S., a goal that is difficult to support when there are those working tirelessly to deny women access to abortion. Our emphasis instead should be on reducing the number of unintended pregnancies. It is precisely because life and parenthood are so precious that we must ensure that life is not created carelessly. This requires a commitment to comprehensive sexuality education and family planning services.

We must continue to press for LGBT equality and reproductive choice. That is our moral obligation to those we are called to serve. Furthermore, it makes no sense to compromise our values at the very moment when the political climate, and voters themselves, seem ready to move forward.

Yes, there is common ground emerging, even for sexual justice. Nearly half of Americans now consider themselves pro-choice, three-quarters favor some level of abortion availability, and most do not want *Roe v. Wade* overturned (Gallup poll, 2007). Similarly, 51 percent of Americans favor either civil unions or full marriage equality for same-sex couples (CNN/ORC poll, 2007). Even among evangelical Christians, four in ten support some legal rights for same-sex couples (American Values Survey, 2006). Support for all of these issues is generally higher among younger Americans than older ones.

This is not the time to change course. We may not achieve the full measure of sexual justice we pray for in 2008. But we have every reason to press on. Millions of women and children are counting on us. ■



Mothers Robin Shlakman, second from left, and Dee Hoole, right, both of Huntington, NY, hold the children they wished to adopt, Chelsea, 3, left, and Sydney, 3-months, posing for a family photo after a news conference in Garden City, NY, Nov., 1995. The lesbian couple, who conceived their daughters by the same sperm donor, won a historic court case in 1997 allowing them to cross-adopt each other's offspring.

Rev. Debra W. Haffner is director of the Religious Institute on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing in Westport, CT. Timothy Palmer is director of research and communications for the Religious Institute. For a succinct guide to the issues and facts see the authors' A Time to Seek: Study Guide on Sexual and Gender Diversity, September 2007, available at www.religiousinstitute.org.

Psychotherapy and the Politics of Meaning

by Tony Campolo



EVER SINCE HANS EYSENCK'S STUDY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF London in 1952, there have been questions about the effectiveness of psychotherapy. That study, along with subsequent research, showed that those who seek relief from depression through psychoanalysis are less likely to find deliverance than those who receive no help at all. That may be because so much of psychoanalysis is self-centered. Therapists far too often cater to the egoism of the client and make the object of the therapy sessions some sort of self-actualization in which the individual is encouraged to live out his or her repressed yearnings. The emphasis is on individualization.

Philip Reif, one of the most brilliant social theorists of our time, has pointed out in his book *The Triumph of the Therapeutic* that counseling prior to Sigmund Freud was, for the most part, a ministry of reconciliation. If there was a troubled marriage, the counselor, usually a member of the clergy, concentrated on helping the individual to achieve a healthy relationship with his or her partner. If the client was experiencing depression caused by a sense of loneliness, then efforts were made in the counseling sessions to emotionally reconnect the isolated person with the community from which he or she felt estranged. If the client was feeling cut off from the spiritual "ground of all being," the minister, priest, or rabbi strove to re-establish fellowship with God. In short, it was then assumed that there was healing in community, and counseling sought to bring troubled persons back into relationships that could cure the maladies of his or her soul.

Western society experienced a loss of the sacred under the impact of the Enlightenment. Simultaneously, we were victimized by the estrangement from community brought on by the urban-industrial revolution. In a world wherein God became increasingly unreal, talk of fellowship with God grew for many to be an archaic concept. Living in a mass society made

many of us feel that we were living in what David Riesman called "The Lonely Crowd."

This new cultural milieu created what the sociologist Max Weber would call an "elective affinity" for a new method of curing the sicknesses of the soul (that is, if the word "soul" was any longer viable). This new cure was to be found in psychotherapy, and especially in that form of therapy, proposed by some of Freud's followers, called psychoanalysis. The ardent followers of Freud (though not Freud himself) came to believe that psychoanalysis could, in and of itself, cure the angst and depression that had become endemic to our times.

It took a generation before social scientists discovered that there might be something

amiss in this approach. Among those who came to question psychoanalysis was Philip Reif. As he studied the effects of psychoanalysis on those who sought its help, he came to the strong conviction that to simply understand *why* individuals suffer psychological ills, as psychoanalysis does, proves to be of very limited, if any, help. This is not to say that people do not need to understand how "the child is father to the man," as the poet has said, but Reif argued that only understanding who and what we are and how we got that way is not enough. In-depth analysis of the psyche will not of itself, he claimed, cure the emotional condition that Søren Kierkegaard once called "the sickness unto death." Self-understanding is good, Reif said, but something more is needed. There is no salvation without commitment, and he contended that psychoanalysis was a therapy without commitment.

Reif's thinking is in harmony with much of the Bible. In the Hebrew Scriptures existential decision-making is a requisite for spiritual and psychological well-being (Ps. 65:4). To all who are trying to "find themselves" through analysis, Jesus declared that they would end up losing themselves. He then emphatically preached that those who are willing to lose themselves in commitments to doing God's will in the world will find themselves (Mark 8:38). In straightforward language, what Jesus was saying is that the best therapy comes from committing ourselves to living out God's call to love each other and to work for justice in society.

In his book *The Politics of Meaning*, Rabbi Michael Lerner wrote in harmony with what Jesus said as he pleads for Americans to reject the "Culture of Narcissism," which is concomitant with the pop therapies of our age, and instead to embrace altruistic lifestyles marked by living out spiritual values by making commitments to caring for others. Following such directives, Lerner encouraged us to believe that we are cured through praxis, which is to say that in what we do to create a world marked by health and well-being for people and for the rest of nature, we ourselves become spiritually and emotionally whole. In other words, as we commit ourselves to changing our society into the kind envisioned by the prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures and by Jesus, we will find cures for the maladies of our souls. Deliverance comes from working for the social salvation of others, according to Lerner. It is by "losing ourselves" in commitments to creating the Kingdom of God "on earth as it is in Heaven," that we become whole.

At one of the town meetings that were part of the 1992 presidential campaigns, a young man asked George Bush and Bill Clinton, "If elected, what will each of you promise to do for me to make my life better?"

As I listened to that question, I thought of an answer that probably would have come from another president years ago, "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country!" That president might have told that young man that by striving to create a great society, he himself would become great. That in seeking the good of others, he himself would become good.

Lerner is right when he contends that the American people have a spiritual hunger for a new kind of politics. Perhaps unconscious of our own need, we long for a politics based on generosity and love. Lerner is picking up on the message that Erich Fromm made clear in his book *The Art of Loving*: it is in loving and working for the well-being of others that we find deliverance from that sense of separateness that has rendered so many of us emotionally empty and devoid of any feeling of meaning. At a time when so many believe that *being* loved is the answer to their estrangement and despair, Lerner's *Politics of Meaning* proposes instead that it is in loving and serving others that we ourselves become whole persons. Being loved is vital if for no other reason than that it is in being loved that we are equipped to carry out the commandment to love others as we love ourselves. But if we do not live out love for others by seeking their good, we fail to access the healing of the soul we all ultimately need.

The individualization and self-actualization that are often the goals of psychoanalysis can lead to self-indulgent hedonism. When therapists promote being freed from the impulse restraints that were imbued through early socialization, they may be opening a Pandora's Box that can result in living out destructive behavior. Instead of overcoming our inhibitions, as some psychoanalysts suggest, the cure for the sicknesses of our souls is likely to be found in living out a politics of meaning. Analysis can create paralysis, but (continued on page 66)

POLITICS OF MEANING

(continued from page 53)

commitments to creating God's Kingdom here on earth may be just the therapy that our troubled generation needs. Jesus said, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and all these things will be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). That Kingdom is one in which the poor get the good news that there will be economic justice; captives are set free; God's creation is restored; racism, sexism and homophobia are abolished; and all of us come to live together as brothers and sisters in shalom.

As Reif argued in *The Triumph of the Therapeutic*, the goal of the clergy who counseled troubled souls prior to Freud was always to foster reconciliation for those made sick because of alienation. They tried to renew love between married couples, and to bring those cut off from their religious communities back into fellowship with fellow believers. And when dealing with those who felt that hell was other people, it was to engender empathy for those who were deemed strangers. But after Freud, things changed. With psychoanalysis, as with most other forms of psychotherapy, the end often became just the opposite. It became the actualization of the individual that was primary. That self-actualization often involved breaking bonds that were far too easily viewed as enslaving social forces.

Of course, it takes no genius to recognize that there are a variety of relationships that can be extremely destructive, but Reif makes the case that it is community that provides most of what is required for personal fulfillment. Love and generosity toward others are the essential grounds of our humanness.

This emphasis lies at the core of the Biblical message, and in contemporary politics this is what *Tikkun* is striving to propagate. The call to our fellow citizens is a call to commitment, not to individualization, but to a community. It is a call for all of us to affirm our ties as part of a universal family and to commit ourselves to tearing down the barriers that prevent us from being one people.

We are not to seek uniformity, but we are required to seek unity. We are not asked to abandon the diversities of reli-

gion, race, and culture, but we are called to recognize that the same God who created us all is waiting to be embraced in all who encounter us, regardless of their differences. This in no way excludes our secular humanist brothers and sisters. We join them in recognizing the infinite value that they find in all who meet them on life's way. It is just that the transempirical quality of being, which they find in people all around them, we religionists call the "image of God."

We believe that it is in a common commitment to living out love and justice for the entire human family that much of the angst and fear that haunts so many seekers of health can be cured. We Christians are convinced by the New Testament that we find joy in life when we join together with others who seek the common good in a "ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18). That is what our Jewish friends at *Tikkun*, with its politics of meaning, are all about. And that is why this Christian is honored to be part of the *Tikkun* family. ■

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THROUGH A GLASS, DARKLY

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Buddha not to go walking unescorted through the countryside but he ignored them and went anyway. Angulimala, garlanded with a necklace of the severed fingers of his victims, came after Buddha, but no matter how fast Angulimala ran, Buddha managed to remain out of his reach. Finally, the brigand shouted out, "Stop, stop!" and the Buddha replied, "I have stopped, Angulimala. Why don't you stop?" That was enough to wake him up—he became one of Buddha's closest disciples.

Buddha was extraordinarily careful in the way he used the authority that his followers conferred on him. He did whatever he could to create circumstances where the

consequences of acting or not acting could be known. When he was first forming his order, his own monastic community was riven by dissension. The precipitating event seems trivial to a modern eye, but it was critical at the time. The threat to the *Sangha*, the community of monks and nuns, was major. It seems that one elderly monk, a teacher of Discourses, left a vessel of washing water in the latrine one day, only to be taken to task by another monk, a master of Discipline. The disagreement that followed, as chronicled in the Buddhist Sutras, reads much like the details of the recent Presidential debates. The glass in this case, far from being already broken, seemed all too real to the warring monks.

"Did you leave your washing water in the latrine?" asked the master of Discipline.

"Yes," said the teacher of Discourses.

"Did you know it was an offence?"

"No," said the teacher of Discourses.

"If you did not know it was an offence, then it will be considered no offence," offered the master of Discipline. Thus the former left thinking he was forgiven while the latter went to his monks and told them that the Discourse master didn't even know when he had committed an offence. Gathering momentum, he proceeded to inform the Discourse master's students that their teacher had broken the rules, even though he was under the impression that he had not. All hell broke loose. The disgraced master of Discourses told the Discipline master's students that the Discipline master was a liar. The Discipline master convened a council and suspended the Discourse master. Buddha, unaware of these developments, was eventually brought the bad news.

"There will be a schism in the Sangha, there will be a schism in the Sangha," Buddha repeated. He tried three times to urge the two parties to stop their quarrelling and then gave up. "These misguided men seem obsessed," he said. "It is impossible to make them see." Then, uttering a famous stanza, Buddha began a policy of sanctions against his own followers. He withdrew from them all, refusing to be drawn into their battle.

"If you can find no trustworthy companion

Through a Glass, Darkly: Freud & Buddha on Individual Responsibility

by Mark Epstein



Buddhist psychiatrist Mark Epstein is married to sculptor Arlene Shechet. Shechet says of her celebrated Buddha sculptures, represented here by "Touching Ground" (hydrocal, acrylic paint, 1997, collection Jill & Jay Bernstein), "I had young children. I was teaching. Sitting and meditating was not going to work. Buddhist teachers suggested that I make my work my meditation practice. In the studio, I began experimenting with a material that changes quickly. It was difficult to work with. It required a special kind of focus—which is how I brought my practice into my work."

TRAVELING IN ASIA IN MY EARLY TWENTIES WITH MY AMERICAN Buddhist teachers (Jack Kornfield, Joseph Goldstein, and Richard Alpert), I woke up one March morning, still a bit Valium-encrusted after an all-night train ride from Bangkok, to find myself in the forest monastery of a Thai meditation master named Ajahn Chah. The monastery wasn't just *in* the tropical forest; it was constructed *out* of it. Ruddy wooden buildings rose on stilts over neatly swept dirt strewn paths. Bird calls mixed with the ringing of chimes, the murmurs of the monks and the faint residue of incense from the temple. Ajahn Chah met with us after we shared the monastery lunch. It was obvious to everyone why we were there, we were part of a pilgrimage of psychologically-minded Westerners pillaging the wisdom of the East, trolling for some seed or shoot that might take root in American soil—we hurriedly constructed a question so as to generate a reply. I can no longer remember our question, but Ajahn Chah's response still lingers.

Before saying a word, he motioned to a glass at his side. "Do you see this glass?" he asked us. "I love this glass. It holds the water admirably. When the sun shines on it, it reflects the light beautifully. When I tap it, it has a lovely ring. Yet for me, this glass is already broken. When the wind knocks it over or my elbow knocks it off the shelf and it falls to the ground and shatters, I say, 'Of course.' But when I understand that this glass is already broken, every minute with it is precious."

People ask me what Buddhism brings to psychotherapy and I think of Ajahn Chah and his glass. Freud, whose dourness put me off in my first encounters with his work, used to say that the best he could do for someone was to take them from a state of neurotic suffering and return them to one of common unhappiness. When I first heard this, I did not sufficiently appreciate Freud's wry humor, nor did I accept what an achievement common unhappiness could be. I heard Freud as a fatalist instead of as a realist and did not yet see the spiritual potential in his unrelenting opening to reality. I heard the Buddha's teachings on nirvana as promising relief from common unhappiness and I obviously wanted *him* for a therapist. I did not yet realize how close the Buddha's vision was to Freud's. For just as the monastery was constructed out of the forest and was not separate from it, so is release from suffering constructed out of common unhappiness. Instead of feeling defeated by our suffering, according to both Freud and Buddha, we can learn to use it to open our hearts.

Both the Buddha and Freud came to appreciate that the source of self-generated misery is an exaggerated sense of self's absolute reality. As with the glass, we try to make ourselves more real than we really are and we struggle and squirm and fight to maintain that illusion. We fear that if we surrender to the self's fragility, we will break, not realizing the inherent freedom in being already broken. Professor Robert Thurman of Columbia remembers his elderly Mongolian teacher as putting it this way:

"It's *not* that you're not real," his teacher would say. "We all think we're real, and that's not wrong. You are real. But you think you're *really* real, you exaggerate it."

This is true on a personal level, within the domain of psychotherapy, and on a societal one. In the group psyche, as in the individual, there is tremendous fear of instability of all kinds.

Once having achieved a degree of independence, power, control, or success, we will do almost anything to maintain it, even if that means inflicting pain upon other people, other cultures, or the world. Our self-image (as an individual or as a nation), our exaggerated sense of self-importance (and the insecurity that underlies it), demands it. As the Buddhist writer Stephen Batchelor put it in his recent *Living with the Devil: A Meditation on Good and Evil*, "We try to ward off fear by desperately avoiding or destroying whatever seems to pose a threat to our well-being." This tendency increases in proportion to the magnitude of the perceived threat. The mood today in America, where we are sensing a decline in our international authority, a lessening of our hegemony, and an erosion of our currency, is a prime example of the anxiety that comes when a society starts to see through the illusion of its own solidity.

Living and working in Vienna during the rise of the Nazis, Freud watched what was unfolding in his historical moment with the same dispassion that he brought to all of his work. As chronicled by Mark Edmundson in his recent book *The Death of Sigmund Freud*, Freud was particularly interested in "the adulation of the tyrannized for their tyrants." Like Buddha, Freud recognized how powerful the lure of absolute authority can be. People want their rulers to not only be real, but to be *really* real: all powerful, all knowing, and full of authority. In return for this guarantee, they are willing to give up their freedom and their own individual initiative. Buddha outlined this phenomenon in the individual—Freud was unsparing in his elucidation of it in the group. For Buddha, this need manifested in clinging to an absolute self, for Freud in the attachment to a patriarchal God—a father, a ruler, or a leader. "It is hard to escape the view that when people subordinate themselves to cruel dictatorships and tyrannical deities," says Edmundson, "they are satisfying needs that are, among other things, psychological, infantile. They are creating sound, solid identities for themselves, rather than exploring human possibility." The longing for the Freudian father who can serve as a bulwark against weakness, helplessness, and instability is another version of the wish for a glass that will not break, for a father that will not falter. Submitting to such an authority is a way of paralyzing oneself while still feeling a part of something powerful—it takes away individual responsibility and substitutes the gratification of belonging to the primal horde.

Like Freud, Buddha lived in a time beset by war and tyranny, and like Freud, he did not often confront the perpetrators directly nor was he able to bring about any lasting cessation of hostilities. He shuttled between two warring kingdoms, but rarely counseled any of the rulers, to whom he turned for patronage and protection, to put down their arms—he asked only that they treat their soldiers and subjects fairly. Just before the Buddha's death from food poisoning, one of the rulers invaded his home province and slaughtered most of his Shakyan clan. Like Freud, who died of mouth cancer in London in 1939, Buddha passed away just as many of his blood relatives were being massacred by the tyrannical rulers of his day.

The failure of either Freud or Buddha to effectively counter the gross oppression of their day has reinforced a common tendency to read both of their worldviews as counseling resignation in the face of injustice or suffering. If the glass is already broken, one might think, isn't common unhappiness our fate no matter what? Doesn't the inevitability of suffering somehow let us off the hook? If the world is inexorably deteriorating, what hope is there of saving it, what purpose in pouring energy into a doomed enterprise? In fact, both Buddha and Freud were champions of the individual, great encouragers of one's ability to break free from mass delusion. To return to Ajahn Chah's parable of the glass, the crucial, and often overlooked, aspect of his story is his statement that every moment with the glass is precious. His attitude is not a passive one of letting the glass fall and break, it is a caring one that is mindful of what a gift the glass is in the first place. Seeing the fragility of the glass did not make him careless with



Arlene Shechet's
Tribeca Studio, 1999.

it. To extend the analogy, allowing the ubiquity of suffering to open one's heart does not breed callous or selfish disengagement, it breeds care and concern and an active sense of responsibility.

Both Freud and Buddha were interested in what keeps people from healing their worlds, in what keeps them passive, selfish, complacent, or in thrall to their masters. They each pointed out that there are only a few times in ordinary life when we break through the illusion of separateness and instinctively look out for the other before ourselves. One instance, as Freud observed in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, is in love. "Against all the evidence of his senses, a man who is in love declares that 'I' and 'you' are one, and is prepared to behave as if it were a fact," he wrote. The other state, much extolled in the Buddhist literature as well as by later psychoanalysts, is that of parenthood. As the British child analyst D.W. Winnicott put it, the "good-enough" mother is sometimes able, through her "ordinary devotion," to put her child's needs ahead of her own. The Buddhist approach takes this capacity and builds upon it, encouraging its practitioners to question what is called the "intrinsic identity habit," the tendency to set the self up in opposition to the rest of the world instead of as a part of it. In order to undercut this tendency, Buddhist monks cultivate compassion by reflecting upon all beings as having once been, in the endless cycle of death and rebirth, their mothers. The personification of this shift in perspective is the Buddhist ideal of the *bodhisattva*, a person who delays his or her enlightenment to work tirelessly for the benefit of all beings. Rather than resigning oneself to the inevitability of suffering and retreating into *nirvana*, the individual chooses to remain in the world and work for the liberation of others.

The other day, after a lecture that I gave in which I quoted Ajahn Chah's story, a therapist in the audience came up to me and, in a troubled voice, told me of her guilt over not doing more to help heal the world. She wanted me, I think, to either reassure her that she was already doing enough or to tell her directly what more she could do. She clearly felt helpless, as many of us do. I encouraged her to wrestle more directly with the problem, not to hide out in her shame. There is certainly no shortage of meaningful activity that she could engage in. The eruption of this feeling of responsibility is important, though, and we all too often quell it before it makes too much trouble for us. I thought of a story I read in the paper not long ago, written from the Thai border with Burma, about a young monk, one of the fifteen leaders of the recent uprising in Burma, who had recently escaped his country. He described for a reporter the moment this autumn when he stepped forward to lead the monks' protests. "We were like a train with no locomotive," he said. "Someone had to lead." He asked for ten monks to come forward to form a committee of leadership and fifteen stepped up. After the crackdown, he hid in a shed in his home village, then, after his mother was arrested, took off his robes, dyed his hair blond, bought a crucifix in the local market and boarded a bus to the border where he was ferried across the river to Thailand, the only one of the fifteen to escape so far. I thought also of an obituary I found in the paper last week of a Dutch woman who died in her nineties in upstate New York. During the war she and her husband lived in Holland in a three-bedroom farmhouse at the end of a dead-end road abutting the forest. From a shed in their backyard was a hundred foot tunnel that reached to the trees from under an unused coal stove. Throughout the war, they sheltered up to thirty-six Jewish neighbors in their house and in the forest. A friend who worked as a village policeman would call the house, ring twice, hang up, and call again whenever the Gestapo were approaching. Her husband, who knew the forest from his youth, would guide the Jews while she would dissemble to the Gestapo. Jewish neighbors who refused to accept her shelter sent their three year-old daughter to them on the day they were taken away to the camps. The couple raised that child as their own. The woman refused to be called a hero, said that she didn't even know that her neighbors were Jewish before the war, and consistently denied doing anything extraordinary. Yet she and her husband were able, in the moment, to make decisions that put their own apparent self-interest at risk.

The Buddha always encouraged his followers to make their own choices. The closest he ever came to giving a clear directive was to a brigand named Angulimala who was terrorizing the countryside robbing and murdering people. People warned (continued on page 66)



A Story from The Road

by Irwin Kula

A SHAGGY, GRAY HAired, TOUGH LOOKING, CAB DRIVER NAMED GEORGE, WHO looked to be in his fifties, picked me up after a recent talk I gave in Queens, New York. It was a Tuesday night, rainy and dreary, and all I wanted to do was sit back and close my eyes for the thirty-five minute ride home. "You look familiar," he bellowed from the front seat staring at me from the rear view mirror, "weren't you on television, weren't you that rabbi on the *Today Show* a few days ago talking about the sacred messiness of love." "Yeah," I said quietly, hoping that I wouldn't have to engage in conversation when all I wanted was to get home. "Hey, is there any 'love' going on between you and that minister who was on with you," he snickered, referring to the Reverend Sherri Hausser, with whom I have jointly appeared on the *Today Show* a number of times over the past few months. I didn't really respond to his teenage humor and after a couple of minutes of uncomfortable silence he said in a solemn tone, "Sorry, I was just joking. Can I tell you a story how I know what you said on the show is really true?" And then George proceeded to tell me, in a non-stop rapid-fire delivery, the most amazing story about the mystery and unpredictability and redemptive quality of love.

George was raised Greek Orthodox by traditional parents in a very strict but loving home. A product of the Sixties, he became a member of a rock and roll band that actually played in clubs all around the country, did quite a bit of studio work with some important artists and made a very decent living. When he was in his mid thirties his parents moved to their ancestral home in Greece and in that same period, after years of only "normal" dabbling and partying with drugs he began to snort heroin. Soon after he was hooked and wound up having a \$100 dollar-a-day habit that he paid for by small time dealing, though he stressed only enough to pay for his own habit. For about a decade he lived like this—a "functioning addict," in his words, "playing music and staying alive." When his mother died he could not attend her funeral in Greece because leaving the country with a heroin habit was impossible. He felt terribly guilty. One day, about a year after his mother died, he returned home from making a drug deal and he smelled this overwhelming aroma of perfume at the entrance to his apartment building, which he recognized but could not place. He frantically searched everywhere, even climbing into the garbage bins from where the smell seemed to be emanating, but he could not find the source of the smell. And to make things worse his wife and neighbors did not smell it at all. After more than an hour of crazed search he gave up, went into his apartment and plopped down on the couch. Within five minutes the police were banging on his door. Someone had ratted on him and he was arrested for dealing heroin. At the sentencing the judge said to him, "This is your lucky day; because you have no previous record and no history of violence, I am giving you two year probation on the condition that you enter detox, and if you remain clean for two years your record will be wiped clean."

So George got clean. A few months later he was speaking on the phone with his father, who still lived in Greece. At some point they began talking about his mother's funeral at which he had not been present and his father happened to confess something strange that he did at the funeral. Before the casket was closed he had poured an entire bottle of her favorite perfume on her. As his father said this, George remembered the unaccounted-for aroma of perfume that he had smelled the day he was arrested and realized it was his mother's perfume, and that his mother had "reached out to save my life that day."

"My mother never gave up on me," he said, "she really embraced the messiness of love, right." Precisely as he finished his story with these words, we pulled up in front of my apartment building and he turned around and said, "When I heard you say that love isn't just a feeling, but is serious work that takes practice every single day, I wanted to yell out I have been practicing at it ever since that day I realized how much my mother loved me when I was such a mess. I even practice love with customers in this cab in this crazy city. So, thanks rabbi, you guys were really cool on TV."

I put double the fare into George's hand, and as I stood there watching the cab drive away I realized I had been given a gift. I thought I was going to get a nap on the way home after a long day. Instead, I was offered a teaching by a most surprising teacher—a *ba'al agalah* (a harbinger of the Messiah who conceals himself as a wagon driver) in a most surprising place (a beat-up taxi taking me from here to there) about what it means to really be at home.

We all yearn for love. Embracing the messiness of love—its disappointments and difficulties—is the necessary path to greater intimacy, to gaining the wisdom and compassion to allow ourselves to be loved and to love others more deeply.

Thanks George. ■

Rabbi Irvin Kula is the author of Yearnings: Embracing the Sacred Messiness of Life (Hyperion, 2006) and the President of CLAL—The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership.

Is Caste Intrinsic to Hinduism?

by Anantanand Rambachan

IN A RECENT ARTICLE, "UNTOUCHABLE AND UNTHINKABLE," THE *ECONOMIST* (October 4, 2007) described the caste system as "possibly the world's ugliest social system." The article went on to speak of caste as "sanctified" by the Hindu tradition and cites the violent punishments recommended in an ancient law code (*Manusmriti*) for lower caste persons who transgress caste boundaries. The suggestion here is that caste is intrinsic to Hinduism; a caste-free Hinduism, in other words, is a contradiction in terms. The argument that Hinduism and caste are inextricably related is one that I struggle with and often engage. Last year, I was a Hindu guest at the 9th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Porto Alegre, Brazil. In one of the sessions focused on interreligious dialogue, the participation of Hindus in the Assembly was loudly criticized and condemned by a Christian bishop from India. The bishop was a Dalit (the oppressed), the name preferred by many relegated to the lowest rungs on the hierarchical caste ladder and regarded as untouchables. He chastised the WCC for giving legitimacy to his oppressors and their religion. Hinduism, in his experience, is inherently oppressive and bereft of any redeemable features. The only legitimate response to Hinduism, in his view, is to work for its extinction.

How do I as a Hindu and a Hindu scholar respond to this challenge and characterization of my tradition? First, by acknowledging the inhumanity, injustice, and oppression of the caste system and the fact that, although not inseparable from Hinduism, the system has indeed been widely legitimized by the tradition and its practitioners. As Hindus, we must desist from apologetically explaining away the caste system as a creation of foreigners or as simply a response to foreign presence in India. The fact is that, by 400 CE, standard features of the caste system such as physical segregation and prohibitions on socializing and intermarriage were firmly in place. Today, in spite of laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of caste, we must admit that the phenomenon of untouchability persists in contemporary India and that too many Hindus still continue to define the meaning of Hindu identity over and against those who are deemed polluting and, for this reason, are marginalized. It is necessary to move from defensive apologies to self-criticism. We need to see caste as one historical expression of a system of human oppression and domination that sanctified itself in the garb of religious validation. Hindus are not exempt from this susceptibility to the corruption of power and the tendency to affirm self-value by devaluing others.

Second, although caste has sought and continues to seek legitimacy by appeal to the authority of tradition, there is a theological vision at the heart of Hinduism that invalidates the assumptions of inequality, impurity, and indignity that are the foundations of caste belief and practice. Nourished by this theological vision, there is a chorus of Hindu prophetic voices, ancient and modern, protesting the practice of caste as a betrayal of Hinduism's highest teachings. Some protesters, like the Buddha (6th century BCE) and Mahavir (6th century BCE), became the inspiration for the founding of alternative religious traditions



"In creation, God enters into every created form and it is the presence of God that gives value and significance to the human being."



Activists of the National Conference of Dalit, or low caste, listen to their leader's speech during a rally, in New Delhi, India, Dec. 5, 2006. They held the rally to press their demands of a time-bound program for distributing land to low caste and landless people and creation of special low caste departments in all Indian government ministries.

such as Buddhism and Jainism. They promised, not always successfully, communities that were free from caste prejudice and injustice. Others such as Tiruvalluvar (2nd century BCE), Tirumular (6th century CE), Basaveshwara (12th century CE), Ramananda (15th CE), Kabir (16th century CE), and Eknath (16th CE) spoke of human brotherhood and the equality of all before God. Their impact, however, was limited by regional linguistic differences. The equality they advocated was an ideal of the religious and not always the secular sphere. Many of these teachers were of a pacific turn of mind, tolerant in outlook, and eschewed controversy and conflict. Social reform was periph-

eral to the reconstitution of religious belief and many emphasized an otherworldly attitude to life. Contemporary protesters against caste such as Narayan Guru (1854-1928) and Swami Dayananda Saraswati (1824-1883) became the founders of successful, but circumscribed, regional movements. The Hindu tradition awaits an all-embracing effort to repudiate and overcome caste.

From the perspective of Hinduism, it is clear that the highest value is attributed to God. As the single, unique, uncreated, and imperishable source of all that exists, the reality of God surpasses everything that is subject to time and to change. God's existence is independent; everything is contingent and dependent on God. Along with affirming the existence of the one God before all else, the Hindu tradition understands God alone to be the source of all creation. In creation, God enters into every created form and it is the presence of God that gives value and significance to the human being. The dignity and worth of the human being is the consequence of the fact that she embodies the infinite divine spirit.

The Hindu understanding of divine immanence is all-inclusive. "God," as the Bhagavad Gita (13:28) puts it, "exists equally in all beings." The significance that Hinduism grants to the truth of life's unity in God may be appreciated from the fact that its discernment is considered the hallmark of wisdom and liberation. We are invited to recognize the sameness of the divine in ourselves and in all beings. The Bhagavad Gita (18:20) commends the knowledge that enables us to see the one undivided and imperishable Reality in all beings. A false and inferior way of understanding reality is to regard beings as isolated, separate, and independent. Although the social and political implications of this truth are not detailed in the classical texts, the requirements are unmistakable. When the implications for human relationships are enunciated, they are done so in terms of equality. As the Bhagavad Gita (5:19) states it: "Even here on earth, those whose minds are impartial overcome birth. God is perfect and the same in all beings. Therefore, they always abide in God."

The teaching on divine immanence and the consequent equal worth of all human beings must inspire and impel us to identify and overcome the exploitative and oppressive caste structures of Hindu society. Hindus cannot be content only with offering concessions to those who have been disadvantaged and who have not traditionally enjoyed the privileges accorded members of the upper castes. While supporting such measures, the tradition must also get to the heart of the matter by questioning the very legitimacy of a hierarchical social system that assigns different privileges and value to human beings on the basis of exclusive notions of purity and impurity. The role of religious doctrine and ritual in providing legitimacy for the system of caste must be examined. A self-critical sincerity is needed to acknowledge the ways in which many, especially those from the so-called untouchable castes, experience the tradition as oppressive and as negating their dignity

and self-worth. The fact that the religion into which one is born may not be liberative must be admitted. The acknowledgment of past and present injustices by those who have enjoyed the benefits of caste is a necessary step. There must also be the will for the reform and reconstruction of Hindu society on the basis of those central insights and values of Hinduism that promote justice, dignity, and the equal worth of human beings.

Discerning the unitive presence of God in all creation results in a deeper identity and affinity with all. It leads, in the understanding of the Bhagavad Gita (6:32), to the empathetic owning of the pain and suffering of the Other as one's own. It challenges attitudes of indifference towards the suffering of others with whom we do not identify because of caste boundaries. It enables us to see all beings as constituting a single community and provides a theological basis for a compassionate and inclusive community where the worth and dignity of every human being is affirmed and where justice, at all levels, is sought. Caste inflicts suffering on millions of our fellow humans and the "Hindu" tradition insists that we see this suffering as our own. Hindus must respond to caste as an urgent problem, as fundamentally incompatible with its most profound teachings and necessitating a unanimous and unequivocal repudiation. The meaning of being Hindu must not continue to require the demeaning of another human being. ■

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Spirit and Science in the Vedanta

by Michael Nagler

IN AUGUST OF 1932, MAHATMA GANDHI WAS IN PRISON WHEN NEWS REACHED him that the "Paramount Power," the British Raj, planned to introduce separate electorates for the untouchables and the caste Hindus. Believing that this would amount to a "vivisection" of India, what was he to do? On September 13th he stunned the nation by announcing that he would embark on a fast unto death the following week until the hateful measure was withdrawn. The "epic fast," as it came to be called, succeeded brilliantly, but it had come close to costing him his life. To those who asked what had possessed him to do it, Gandhi calmly replied that he had heard the voice of God. Even in India, there were those who said that Gandhi was hallucinating. But he said:

The claim that I have made is neither extraordinary nor exclusive. God will rule the lives of all those who have surrendered themselves without reservation to him. Here is no question of hallucination. I have stated a simple, scientific law which can be verified by anyone who will undertake the necessary preparations, which





are again incredibly simple to understand and easy enough to practice where there is determination.

Striking—and most pertinent to issues raised by *Tikkun* and the NSP—is that he was able to marry good scientific logic with what seems to most of us a transcendent religious experience. How did he do that?

In the beginning of the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad*, an important Vedantic text, we are told that in the depths of their meditation sages saw *devatmasakti*, felicitously translated as “the God of religion (Skt: *deva*), the Self of philosophy (Skt: *atman*), and the energy of science (Skt: *sakti*).” In their vision of the Supreme Reality, science, philosophy, and religion were one—somewhat like the Christian Trinity. And with this vision, Indian science reached great heights. It is fairly well known that Indian philosophy was in a class by itself; it is much less well known that until the seventeenth century, India’s astronomy, medicine, and other sciences were at least on a par with comparable sciences in the West. It was only with the rise of colonialism, along with the rise of ‘rationalism’ and materialism in Europe, that the sciences of what became the Third World were pushed into the background.

But that was then. Now the great breakthroughs of Einstein and Bohr have delivered a rude shock to the paradigm of Western science, and “only Vedanta,” as a prominent Indian physicist who joined religious orders as Swami Jitatananda said in 1986, “seems to be in a position to absorb the tremendous impact of the new science.” The Vedanta—a general term for the spiritual culture of ancient India—developed a quantum theory of mind 5,000 years before Planck discovered that energy comes in discrete packets (or quanta). It even came close, perhaps as close as words can, to accounting for the fundamental mystery of modern physics: how the strange quantum world of infinite potentialities becomes the “concrete” world of our ordinary experience; or in broader terms how the unchanging, infinite Reality becomes or in any way interacts with the flux of spacetime in which we live (the concept I’m thinking of, of course, is *maya*, Sanskrit for “illusion,” although this fails to describe the full complexity of the word).

Gandhi was able to marry science and religion because for him they had never been divorced.

This is an attractive vision. It could even have a strategic value for the revolution that progressives, especially *Tikkun*-reading spiritual progressives, yearn for. Despite the frightening rise of fundamentalism in the modern world it remains true, as Willis Harman used to say that, “Science is the knowledge-validating system of our civilization.” For most reasonable people (and admittedly their number is shrinking), something can be true only if it can pass the test of science; e.g. if it is universal and verifiable in the sense Gandhi claims for his experience of God. However, we of the “reality-based community,” in the sarcastic words of a Bush aide, are losing ground to those for whom science as we know it is at odds with “religion” as *they* know it. This means that often, for a conservative, some things can be scientifically valid or moral, but not both. Note how the President’s cavalier disregard of science (not to mention truth), i.e. in the area of stem-cell research, has started to make his position increasingly ludicrous in some quarters.

Peace researcher Kenneth Boulding explains, and every activist intuitively recognizes, that legitimacy is a key to the preservation or overthrow of any regime. Take away the legitimacy from a totalitarianism, for example, and it is all but gone. This is how nonviolent campaigns work, how they may yet be working in Burma today. The pitting of science against religion in the prevailing neoconservative regime has actually put a small crack in the sources of its legitimacy, and hence its power. And this has occurred concurrently with quite a few recent developments in science that have been not just compatible with, but supportive of, the vision of human beings as empathic, free to determine their destiny (not ruled by genes or hormones), and deeply interconnected on the spiritual level.

We progressives are not wedded to a narrowly moralistic definition of religion or an exclusively materialistic, externally-oriented definition of science. We can have a mature religious sensibility that has nothing to fear from the findings of real science, a complete inquiring system in which, as the Dalai Lama has been arguing, religion deals with the

subjective and science the objective dimensions of existence. The Vedanta was such a system.

But how available is a system that emerged from the soil of ancient India for contemporary and Western people? This is why I have been stressing the scientific nature of Gandhi's approach. As he once said, "To be a Hindu you have to be born into a Hindu family; but it is open to anyone to *practice* Hinduism." I'm a pretty good example, since in the course of my life I went from being a non-practicing Jew to a practicing non-Hindu, i.e. practicing meditation while not, for the most part, observing the many rites or celebrations, the *karmas* (mitzvot) of modern Hindu worship. In my personal experience the Vedantic worldview has been literally a godsend; I find it without equal in my ongoing struggle to understand what life is about and what I'm supposed to be doing here. That is because it is more than a worldview. It cannot be taken apart from meditation and allied spiritual disciplines that Gandhi casually referred to as "necessary preparations" for having the kind of experience he did in Yeravda Prison. Frankly, I haven't found them "incredibly simple to understand" or "easy enough to practice"! Still, the mind is no joke in our sense-bombarded, superficial, dizzyingly rapid, and consequently violent civilization.

We need a new civilization, a new culture. Where are we going to get it? The wisdom tradition is the reservoir to which we have to return today for our cultural renewal. I've been citing the Vedanta because it is a particularly pure and articulate source of that tradition. On Indian soil it gave rise to Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, and the practice of meditation. That last is primarily, for me, why it can give rise to a cultural and spiritual renewal on our soils today.

Most common Indians in their 700,000 villages recognized—for their culture had prepared them to—that Gandhi was much more than a political revolutionary. As one of them said during the freedom struggle, "God sends a Mahatma Gandhi every thousand years." When we think of Gandhi we think mostly, as we should, about *ahimsa* (Skt: *non-violence*), the great discovery that you can resolve conflicts without trying to use the same destructive energy that caused them. With this discovery, or rediscovery, he was able to rescue India—and in her wake countless other countries, including imperialist ones—from the scourge of colonial domination. But it's worth realizing also that he rescued an ancient civilization from cultural domination, because that civilization contains other important gifts that we need and are free to claim. ■

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Jantar Mantar is an astronomical observatory located in Delhi, India. It was built by Maharaja Jai Singh II in 1724.

Living Kaddish

by Ayelet Amittay

Mourners and those observing Yahrzeit, please rise.

OF ALL THE PRAYERS in the Jewish liturgy, only one lives inside my mouth. Ever since I was ten years old, I have wanted to rise with the other mourners and recite the Mourner's Kaddish. I want to rise, like the mast of a ship, in the sea of the seated congregation. I want to be seen, grief draped white across my shoulders like a tallis. I want to hear the congregation respond "Amen!" as I praise the glory of God's name in my father's memory.

But my father is not dead. One cannot recite the Mourner's Kaddish in memory of those who are living. Not even in memory of a father whose self has died, a father who does pushups to quiet the voices storming his brain. As a child, I saw a classmate mourn for her father and understood the power of the Mourner's Kaddish to make her losses visible. Every day during morning prayers, I watched her praise God's name while we fidgeted on plastic chairs, a dumbstruck supporting cast. Until I heard her single voice stitching together the Hebrew words, I did not know that grief could be so publicly expressed, and publicly received. The Mourner's Kaddish gives both the mourner and her community a way of perceiving and speaking about the loss of loved ones. I write this essay out of my need for a prayer that would redeem other kinds of losses—living losses.

When we were classmates in the sixth grade, Becky Wasserman's father died of cancer. Our whole grade filed into the largest classroom in the school. Such assemblies took place only during special events: to celebrate holidays, to watch on a huge screen as Arafat and Rabin shook hands while Clinton spread his arms between them like an angel, and now to hear this: *Becky's father has passed away*. The teachers spoke to us from the front of the room; they seemed far away, stiff as potted plants in their long skirts and plaster-colored shoes.

We were encouraged to visit Becky at home. We were told that we need not talk about her father unless she brought it up, that our very presence would comfort her. Even without her in the room, we were witnesses to her loss. Although we went to a Jewish Day School, we did not pray for her. But witnessing is also a form of prayer.

Back in history class, I couldn't concentrate. I smiled into my cupped hand, happiness bubbling for Becky. I was happy because we knew exactly what to do for her. No one had ever spoken to me about my father's mental illness, not even two years earlier when his brief, terrible crime was featured in our local paper. He had stabbed another member of my family, an act so extreme that no one seemed to know how to respond. Walking through the halls of fifth and sixth grade, I had grown used to feeling as if my body were a soundproof chamber, a room where people go to practice shooting guns in silence. I had never known that there was a way for my classmates, or any community, to respond to such a loss. Nor had I realized that Judaism has rituals to pull mourners out of their utter aloneness. So when we heard about Becky, I was stunned that someone's personal tragedy could be so completely seen and spoken, and with such compassion. Years later, I would begin to think about words like "obligation" and "responsibility," to consider the silence surrounding me as a failure of my religious community. That morning in history class, as we turned in our textbooks to the Roman Empire, I was simply happy that Becky's loss was visible. And, horribly, I was happy that finally, out of all the two-parent families in our grade, I had acquired a peer.

The teachers had encouraged us to visit Becky during *shiva*, the seven-day period during which mourners do not leave their home. Jewish law dictates low stools for the mourners,



mirrors clouded by sheets, a daily group of community members to help with the prayers. Seven days for a family to walk around the house in a daze. Not working, not going to school, they are supposed to be home, together, falling apart together. I watched Becky the one time I visited her, wanting to tell her: I know what it means to lose what you have lost. I wanted my earnestness to touch her, wanted her to feel our sisterhood and be comforted by it. This was a selfish comfort, my arms held out to her so that she could also hold me.

But she did not see my emotion shining on her face. She was talking with a few of our classmates, smiling, looking the same, no marks on her. I wondered then, do I look the same as I did before my father's illness? I had taken it for granted that what I had experienced glowed on my skin, radioactive. When I sat alone at recess, I imagined that glow swallowing me, so bright that if anyone looked at me they would be unable to see. Perhaps, at the center of those visitors, Becky had enough of being seen inside her loss and wanted back the normalcy of bookbags in the corner and quiet laughter.

The Mourner's Kaddish lets mourners be seen. On their feet among the seated congregation, they stand to praise God and to be seen praising God in spite of everything. But they are also standing to be seen for who they are: people in great pain. What we call the Mourner's Kaddish was once known as *kaddish yatom*, the Orphan's Kaddish, recited by a son three times a day for twelve months following the death of a parent. Even with its changed name, the prayer retains that sense of having been prematurely left to face the world alone. Standing: feeling alone. But the mourners are surrounded by the solid body of the faithful. The congregation sees them, and they are not alone. The prayer recognizes the impulse of the mourner to isolate herself even as it offers a negation, a redemption, an undoing of that impulse.

This communal participation in the Mourner's Kaddish is so crucial that the prayer cannot be recited without a *minyan*, a group of ten adults. There must be a chorus, a group to carry the lines at the heart of this prayer: "May His great Name be blessed forever and for all eternity." And to fall silent in the passages between, to listen to the mourner praising God's name in a public place. In public, for all to see and hear, the mourner reminds herself and the congregation that death has stepped into the circle of their unity but has not broken it.

Ten adults. Sitting in morning services with my classmates, I imagined nine witnesses watching me stand in the center of a chapel. Myself as a standing figure, reminding them of what it is I need: to be seen and heard by them in my grief so the loss is real. Reminding them of what they need: to know that one day they will stand or already have stood for this prayer, that they too will be held or were held in the attention of the (continued on page 67)

יְתִגְדֵּל

וְיִי-בָרָא בְרָעוּ

וּבְיוֹמֵיכוֹן, וְ

בְּזִמְן קָרִיב,

הָ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ

שְׁתַּמֵּחַ, וְיִתְפַּאֵר

וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלָּל,

כָּל לַעֲיֵלָא וְלַעֲיֵלָא

שִׁירָתָא, תְּשַׁבַּחְתָּא

בְּעֵלְמָא, וְאָמְרוּ אָ

מָא רַבָּא מִן שְׁמַיָּא

כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאָ

לֹאם בְּמִרוּמָיו,

זֶה שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ,

יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאָמְרוּ אָ

my father still alive? Couldn't I, if I wanted to, pick up the phone and call, fly to Israel and take him in my arms?

I wish I had told him what I thought then: If you knew my father, if you knew the dark thicket of his speech, his sudden surges of paranoia and lewd comments, you would not be so quick to get on the phone with him. I wish I had said: How dare you sit across the room and judge my life.

Instead, after several minutes of silence, I asked, "So you do not think it is fair to apply the ideas of the Mourner's Kaddish to my father's situation?"

"No, I don't," he said. Which meant: a comparison of your losses to death is immoral. He shuffled through books, looking for the prayer to say over the healthy body, I thought: He does not see my loss, just as no one else has seen it.

Without a prescribed response to a loss, there can be no true perception of that loss. Without the Kaddish, there was—and still is—no formalized way for the Jewish community to perceive and react to my family's situation. I want to recite the Kaddish for the visibility it renders, not for its occasion. I want to be seen in this grief just like any grief, seen until the stigma and shame of it burns off, wears away.

Mental illness is still taboo when it is not confessed in front of a live TV audience. My father was hospitalized over the summer; an article appeared in the newspaper, and once school began again I was haunted by this brief blink of publicity. What did people know about me? What were they thinking and not saying? Worse still, in some ways, was the thought that they knew nothing: that I carried the mortification and loss invisibly, the event real but unseen and therefore untouchable. I thought of the *shiva* calls to Becky's house, the talk with its constant undercurrent of *yes, you are in pain*. Steaming dishes left on doorsteps. In high school, lying on my front lawn with two friends studying for a math test, I froze when one of them mentioned a stabbing that had happened in this neighborhood. My stabbing.

According to Jewish law, mental illness erases the personhood of the person who is ill. Maimonides wrote that the actions the person commits while mentally ill should

be considered never to have happened. Other Talmudic scholars argued that while such actions did take place factually, the actor cannot be held accountable by Jewish laws since laws apply only to people—and personhood requires consciousness of one's actions. Thus, the mentally ill cannot be considered people. I think of my father, how considering him a "non-person" would make it so easy to turn away from the reality of his life. To not see who he became or what he had done. To not see my mother struggling to keep our family from buckling, carting my father from doctor to doctor, listening for ambulance sirens as if they were calling her name. To not see me as I left school every day, going home to the house where these griefs were readying to blossom.

Judaism does not give us a way of understanding and speaking about mental illness. So people turned away to spare me, and themselves, from seeing my life. One or two teachers might have expressed a generalized concern, pulling me aside as the others were emptying from the classroom, but I do not remember their words. I remember looking down at my hands, one folded inside the other. At the beginning of fifth, sixth, seventh grade, my mother would go in to tell my teachers about what had happened with my father. I never asked her why she did this or what the teachers said. I imagined this trip as a journey, her carrying a basket full of stones, the weight of what had happened given over to my teachers in handfuls. What they did with that handful of stone was unknown to me. My teachers taught me Hebrew and Bible stories, celebrated Jewish holidays with construction paper art projects and songs. To me, they were the embodiment of Jewish knowledge, and their silence said: we see you are doing well in class, so we will let lie the pain in your life.

I want to say the Kaddish for my father so that my community, the Jewish community of my hometown, my world, will know exactly what to say in reply to my story: "Amen, may his great name be praised for ever and for all eternity." In the face of loss words can seem sparse. In this prayer the community has a place to go, something they can give. The mourner and the congregation are tied by the bond of liturgy, call

and response. The mourner's praise of God is also a crying out: hear me, see me. And the community hears, sees, and responds. My father's illness seemed outside human experience. For a long time, I thought this meant that I, too, was outside the circle of the human. The community that lets one of its members slip her moorings has lost a piece of itself. And that piece is valuable, no matter how damaged it has been. Each man is made in the image of God: even my father has some God in him.

What I need is a way to say: I remember my father. I praise God even in the face of his illness. Even now, may his great name be praised.

Congregation: Amen. ■

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THE TROUBLE WITH LIBERALS (continued from page 16)

and military base of support, students are more likely to accept without question Lakoff's designation of environmentalists as liberal progressive activists. And they will continue to perpetuate the silences and prejudices that have been an aspect of liberal thinking since the time of the Enlightenment, which will keep them from recognizing that revitalizing the diversity of the world's cultural commons will be a necessary part of achieving a sustainable future.

The reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Control, which reflect the consensus thinking of 600 scientists from more than 100 countries on the nature and causes of global warming, brings into focus another aspect of the slippery slope that both the market and social justice liberals are greasing. As the melting of the permafrost in the northern latitudes releases the vast quantity of methane gas that is an even greater contributor to global warming than carbon dioxide, as the glaciers that are the source of fresh water for hundreds of millions of people disappear, as the temperature of the world's oceans rise and as the oceans absorb more

With whom to walk, both virtuous
and steadfast,
Then, as a king who leaves a
vanquished kingdom,
Walk like a tusker in the woods alone.
Better it is to walk alone:
There is no fellowship with fools.
Walk alone, harm none, and know no
conflict;
Be like a tusker in the woods alone."

Over time, Buddha's sanctions worked. Laypeople began to withhold alms from the warring monks and they eventually sought mediation. As the two sides convened, questions were put to Buddha about how to welcome them. His guidelines stipulated only that no senior monks on either side were to be shown any disrespect. Finally, while waiting for the meeting, the Discourse master, who had originally left his vessel in the latrine, took responsibility. "That was an offence, not no offence," he realized. "I have offended...I am suspended." With this admission, the senior monks reinstated him and the Sangha reunited.

Buddha's emphasis on respect, even for those accused of an offence, coupled with his reliance on sanctions while there was conflict, was effective in his own community but could not quell the broader discord that eventually enveloped the society in which he dwelled. Buddha shared with Freud a skepticism of the political judgment of the masses. "There is no fellowship with fools," is a statement that could just as easily have come from Freud. Both were so suspicious of the group tendency to cling to an absolute patriarchal authority that each leader set themselves up to subvert the very power that their own followers imbued them with. Freud built psychoanalysis around his patients' eventual and inevitable disappointment with him. They might fall in love with him or wish that he could solve all of their problems but he was the patriarchal authority who ultimately revealed his humanity, exposing his patients' infantile wishes and forcing them to accept him as imperfect. Buddha did something similar. He made it impossible for his community to have an absolute leader. He scattered his monks after his death, telling them each to be a "lamp" or an "island" unto themselves, not to rely on

any other authority. He built his teachings around the idea that clinging to any absolute was the source of more suffering. He rarely took a fixed position, often contradicting himself and changing his teachings depending on the person he was talking to. The famous expression, "If you see the Buddha on the road, kill him," derives from this stance. The point was never to venerate the Buddha, it was to develop oneself.

People might wonder what relevance the integration of Freudian and Buddhist approaches might have for the troubled state of today's world. Could such an integrated approach help to heal a society like ours that is suffering and inflicting more suffering? What can we learn from the interplay of Buddhism and psychoanalysis that could help us in today's uncertain political climate? Both traditions point to the same threat: the human tendency to seek refuge in an absolute. In seeking protection from common unhappiness by elevating a father figure granted unlimited authority, people surrender individual responsibility in favor of the security of the status quo.

At the time of this writing, the presidential candidate courting the mantle of absolute authority is Rudolph Giuliani. While the Democrats are playing catch-up from the last election, insisting on their belief in traditional values and religion, the twice-divorced defender of abortion and gay rights is staking out the patriarchal position. As America's authority continues to be threatened, his charisma will snowball. And as the country admits to the ineptitude of its current rulers, many of its citizens, rather than choosing to be disruptive, will seek a stronger, more invulnerable leader: one who will see to it that no one ever speaks of the glass being already broken, who will use common unhappiness to justify oppressive means. Both Freud and Buddha died with such leaders in ascendance. Maybe their warnings, unheeded in their own eras, can help us now. ■

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LIVING KADDISH

(continued from page 65)

congregation, that they were seen, that their loss was witnessed as a real loss.

Looking back at my middle school years, at my longing for and fascination with Becky's Kaddish, I know that it seemed a way to understand loss and be understood inside of it. As I grew older, I tried to find my own substitute prayers that could do the work of the Mourner's Kaddish. All through high school, I woke in the early grey light to recite *Yehi Ratzon Milphanecha*, a prayer to heal the sick, speaking my father's name into the space that is left blank in the prayer-book. The prayer-book seemed to know I needed that space. But I knew this was not the prayer I needed; I knew that my father would never be healed. I needed a prayer that said, "Help me grieve for the father whom I hug across a long linoleum table, other prisoners on either side of us. Help me find a way to tell people about this father without stunning them silent." The Jewish liturgy has many prayers for strength in a difficult time, prayers praising God in the face of death and our enemies. But there are no prayers that say, "Help me grieve the many little deaths of my life as I knew it." I wanted a Mourner's Kaddish for living losses.

I didn't know then how problematic my desire might seem. A wish to say the Kaddish might seem to carry inside of it a wish for my father to have died. But in truth, I felt his death had already happened: the loss of my father was so total that it felt like death. During the time when I began this essay, I went to see a local rabbi to ask about religious practices of mourning. I wanted to ask him whether the Mourner's Kaddish, with its connective ropes that bind individual to community, might serve as an example for how the Jewish community can address mental illness. I wanted to ask his blessing for using the Mourner's Kaddish to speak my own loss.

The rabbi's office was crammed with expressions of determined optimism: pictures of his young son, books with cheerful titles like *To Life!* and *Celebration and Renewal*. The rabbi leaned back in his chair, far across the room from me, and admonished me to have a more positive attitude. After all, even if my father's mind were broken, wasn't his body still healthy? Wasn't

CO₂ and hence become increasingly acidic, as droughts and changes in weather patterns forces the migration of plants, animals, and people, and as more of the world's major fisheries near collapse, the convergence of the slippery slope leading to environmental catastrophe with the slippery slope leading to a fascist form of government becomes a more likely possibility. What is not usually recognized is that the emergence of fascism between the two world wars resulted when democratic institutions became so weakened that they were no longer able to address the sources of economic and social unrest. People have demonstrated time and again that they prefer order over chaos, and they have often embraced the strong political leader who, as the supreme "decider," does away with the seemingly endless debates which are at the center of the democratic process. The convergence of economic unrest resulting from the globalization of the market liberal agenda with the deepening ecological crises could easily lead to a repeat of this earlier history.

Both market and social justice liberals carry forward the silences and prejudices that have been part of the legacy of Enlightenment thinkers. Indeed some of these silences and prejudices can be traced back to the thinking of Plato, who invented the idea of pure thinking that is supposedly free of the cultural influences carried forward through narratives. These include the intergenerational knowledge, skills, and activities that enable members of communities to live more self-sufficient and thus less money and consumer dependent lives. Working to conserve the diversity of the world's languages, and thus the diversity of knowledge of local ecosystems, is yet another critical area of concern that is not being given adequate attention by social justice liberals who, unlike Krugman, refuse to consider anything that is associated with the word conservatism, partly because they lack knowledge of the many forms of conserving that are an inescapable part of daily life and partly because the word conservatism is now associated with authoritarian politics and the pursuit of economic self-interest.

There are many other analogs than those associated with the ideas and policies

of market liberals that need to be considered in determining the different meanings of the word "conservatism." Briefly, learning to think and communicate in the language of one's cultural group conserves its many taken-for-granted patterns of thinking and values. Our DNA is also a powerful conserving force that influences the most fundamental aspects of our biology. The taken-for-granted nature of most of our cultural knowledge and values is also an inescapable aspect of what can be referred to as embodied conservatism. And then there is temperamental conservatism, which is expressed in a preference for certain foods, clothes, friends, and so forth. These different expressions of conservatism are largely part of our embodied experiences, and are different in fundamental ways from conservative ideas of how societies should be organized and governed. In order to conserve the gains in social justice and civil liberties, it is important to keep in mind that not all conservative ideas, such as those advocating the right of states to enforce racist policies, cultural tradition of child brides, honor killings, and poll taxes, should be carried forward. On the other hand, the current practice of using the word to stigmatize individuals and groups who are more aware of the traditions that are the basis of their mutually supportive and intergenerationally connected communities should not be continued.

In order to make more informed judgments about the different expressions of conservatism—judgments about what should be supported and what should be resisted—we need to expand our political vocabulary. In addition to rectifying our use of political terminology so that labels accurately reflect the beliefs and practices of different groups, we need to follow the practice of different religious groups who use adjectives that identify the religious group's specific orientation or the tradition it is part of. Examples include the distinction between Orthodox and Reform Judaism, Greek Orthodox Christians and Evangelical Christians, moderate and fundamentalist Muslims, and so forth. The adjectives are not always as accurate as we would like, but they avoid the problem of including a wide range of interpretations

and agendas under a single rubric. The distinction between market and social justice liberals is an example that has been introduced here. Other examples might include environmental conservatives and indigenous conservatives. The problem of relying upon a single rubric can be seen in Thomas Frank's reference to the Christians in Kansas who support President George W. Bush's efforts to dismantle the separation of powers and the Constitution as conservative. Referring to them as members of the religious right would have brought into focus their political agenda, which included abolishing abortion, gay rights, separation of church and state, and equal opportunities for women and other previously marginalized groups. Journalists and media pundits need to use the label of extremist if it accurately represents the political agenda of certain individuals and groups. For example, Vice President Richard Cheney and his chief of staff David Addington need to be identified as extremists. And there is a need to use the label of fascist when it accurately fits the ideas and political agenda of an individual or group. It is important to note that few graduates of our universities possess a knowledge of the core ideas and practices shared by different fascist regimes, and thus are unable to recognize political trends that are moving the society in that direction.

Most of all, we need to avoid the intellectual laziness that characterizes so much of our formulaic use of conservative and liberal. There is an urgent need for reflective people to criticize our universities for their failure to educate students about the history of ideas we now refer to as ideologies—including the need for them to understand which ideologies are contributing to overshooting the sustaining capacity of the Earth's natural systems. If we can't get this figured out we will continue to be caught in the double bind of promoting the globalization of the consumer dependent lifestyle while at the same time searching for the technologies that will slow the rate of global warming partly being caused by consumerism. Our difficulties will be further exacerbated if the current misuse of our most prominent political language continues to marginalize the awareness that in this era of political uncertainties

and deepening ecological crises, we need a political discourse that addresses what needs to be conserved. ■

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EDUCATION

(continued from page 19)

that the latter is designed to be a limited resource. One of the most profound lessons of the classroom is that we are engaged in a constant contest for affirmation, not just of our intelligence and ability, but, more importantly, of our worth and value as human beings. Schooling is a constant reinforcement of these competitive relations between individuals. We learn from our earliest time in the classroom that this is a culture of 'separated desks' in which knowledge is the prized possession that divides winners from losers.

This is a world that values self-sufficiency and autonomy over interdependence and connection. For the young the rewards are teacher's praise and admission into more valued ability groups. For older students it is a passport into higher classes or tracks, which promise admission to the more prestigious colleges or universities. Sharing what we know violates the rules, which are always connected to distinguishing those who are successful from those that are not. The emphasis on competition has long been a central value of education, but it has become more pronounced in this era of intensified testing. Increasingly, schooling is about the process in which young people learn to see their peers as rivals and contestants in the game of invidious comparisons. We have already noted its effects in the increased amounts of anxiety and stress among young people. Its effects are also morally corrosive. We know that students view cheating as an increasingly acceptable risk in the high stakes game of schooling. From the social standpoint we are reminded again and again of the damaging consequences of institutions that encourage the growth of divisive distinctions among young people. We have seen its results in the unleashed rage of in-

dividuals who find themselves designated as losers in the competitive hothouse of school cliques and rivalries.

It is important to remind ourselves that education is not an end in itself. Education embodies our aspirations for what kind of world we wish to see and what kind of human behavior we hope for. It is the site in which these aspirations are nurtured and shaped. As inheritors of the progressive political tradition, we have always believed in the possibility of a world in which solidarity and mutual care are cherished values. However, in this era of market triumphalism fewer voices seem ready to articulate such values. Yet can we be in any doubt today of the importance of our vision of a world that values community and caring above competition and rivalry? Our nation and our world cries out for human connections that are more compassionate and socially responsible. Whether we look at the lack of health insurance for so many, the numbers of our fellow citizens deprived of adequate nutrition or housing, or the proportion of children growing up in impoverished circumstances, we are confronted with the shocking reality of the dysfunctional character of our own national community. The market society has unleashed a social order that is extraordinarily predatory and selfish. Our society has become one in which the bonds of connection between human beings have become increasingly instrumental and exploitative. Greater numbers of individuals experience themselves as used and manipulated, whether in the world of work, in relationship with colleagues, even in relations with intimate partners. We are urged to relate to others in ways that emphasize appearance and the capacity to impress rather than through relations of authentic concern and connection.

Education alone cannot transform our increasingly atomistic and divisive society into a caring and compassionate community. But we certainly might ask that it educate our young to the importance and possibility of human relationships where care, compassion, and cooperation matter more than the culture of winning and losing. There is good reason to believe that, at least with younger children, this is precisely what already matters to teachers and ed-

ucators. We can imagine schools where the competitive emphasis of grading and the attention to differential rewards and status among students gives way to a quite different moral climate—one where young people are encouraged to share and assist others in the development of their talents and understanding, to see one another not as rivals for achievement but as collaborators in learning. We have plenty of examples of how peer learning and cooperative relations can be nurtured in the classroom. Our vision becomes the quality of the school community *as a whole*. Our concern is the full inclusion of everyone regardless of difference in abilities, skills, or interests. Above all else, it is our responsibility to convey to our young people the unconditional worth of all human beings.

We need progressive voices that will promote education's connection, not to competition and individualism, but to the value of community as critical to our nation's social, moral, and spiritual well-being. It is human generosity, connection, and care towards others that provides the deepest sense of fulfillment in our lives, and provides the most enduring sense of meaning. Education needs to explicitly combat the ways human beings are divided and excluded from one another, whether through racism, religious intolerance, sexism, ethnocentrism, or homophobia. Education is a powerful vehicle for helping young people to recognize themselves as part of a single family in which no one deserves to be demonized, treated without dignity, or deprived of human rights. While we should educate to see ourselves as part of a single human family, this in no way detracts from the importance of recognizing and celebrating those mediating human communities of nation, ethnicity, religion, language, etc., that have been, and continue to be, the locus of much of our sense of meaning and identity in the world. It is within these communities that much of who we are and what we cherish finds expression and realization. More than providing the rich expressiveness, beauty, and diversity of wisdom found within the human experience, these mediating communities also often carry the valiant as well as painful memory of their struggles for justice and human dignity.

We must attend, as never before, to the *universal* dimension of what it means to be human. We must bring our students to recognize the terrible inequities in our world—the poverty, suffering, and indignities that scar the lives of so many—and also the multiple human efforts to bring hope and redress to this situation and the ways they may contribute to this work. Like never before, humanity is threatened by the destruction and abuse of our environment. The present crisis demands from us a radical realization of the interconnected nature of life on earth. To an unprecedented degree we are witnesses to the danger of acting as if our actions and behavior do not have drastic consequences on the lives of others. We exist as part of an interconnected web, which demands from us an unprecedented sense of concern and responsibility for all life on our fragile planet. Education has a key role in helping us to see beyond our divisions and separations to what connects and unites us. Candidates for office have a special responsibility to try to ensure that a new generation is educated to understand themselves as responsible and concerned members of the human community.

Educating the Whole Person

FINALLY, EDUCATION OUGHT TO BE ONE OF the primary ways through which we can realize the fullness of human existence. It is a sad fact that so much of what we now regard as the importance of education has to do only with its instrumental purposes. The mission of education is increasingly defined in terms of ensuring that students will become part of a globally competitive work force. Now, of course, the capacity to be economically secure is an important dimension of the education we offer our children. But when this dwarfs all other concerns, our educational vision suffers. Our vision of human life has become one-sided, distorted, and constricted. Where is the concern for our children's emotional life, intellectual curiosity, creativity, ethical awareness, and spiritual development? Young people experience schooling as primarily something of extrinsic value. Education's reward is in the grade awarded for a course, the end of term test score, the certificate or diploma received at the end of a

program of study. Little is derived through the *intrinsic* nature of the pedagogic experience. Students rarely expect to be moved, inspired, or intellectually roused by their classroom experience. The classroom becomes, above all else, a place where we learn the meaning of alienation. We are trained in the arts of daydreaming and clock-watching, mentally and emotionally estranged from our own activities. Above all, schooling teaches us what it means to not be present to our own lives, how to survive the exhaustion of experiences that leave us mentally passive and emotionally dead. Years in this environment rob many students of the capacity for passionate engagement with their world and the aliveness of awakened curiosity.

It is a sad fact of our public discourse that the word joy is rarely used in the same breath as education. From our first days in school, children are taught that what they are engaged in is 'work,' not 'play.' They are told that education is a serious and difficult business to be contrasted with what is pleasurable and inherently satisfying. The usefulness of what one learns is to be found mainly in the way it equips one for the next stage of schooling. Education is to be regarded principally as an instrumental process that takes one somewhere else, not because learning itself is its own reward in joy, stimulation, and illumination. It is easy to see how this process contributes to the emotional dis-ease of later years, when so many adults find it impossible to experience themselves fully in the here and now. No wonder that our bookstores are filled with volumes that promise to help us calm our minds so that we can be alive and present to what is already here rather than what might come next. We are a nation in a state of permanent distraction from where we presently are, always on route to somewhere else. Our view of the joy of play is still schizophrenic; it is at once immensely desirable but still caught up in the *Zeitgeist* of guilt, in which it is the sweet dessert that follows the onerous obligations of work and production. We are, if we need to be reminded of it, a workaholic culture. The notion that school should be centered on the pleasure of learning, rather than preparation for a work-centered life is, for some in our culture, a disturbing or even disruptive

concept.

Yet there continue to be voices that warn us against this shrunken view of human life and purpose in which people appear to have no other existence than as future employees in our corporate-driven economy. It is worth reminding ourselves that the rational-analytic abilities that are so much the focus of academic learning represent only a fragment of human capabilities. Such an emphasis ignores our intuitive and emotional wisdom that is indispensable to understanding human relationships. It minimizes the kinesthetic understanding of the world that comes through our embodied nature and that provides a very different vehicle for self-awareness and knowing. It ignores the aesthetic dimensions of learning with its attention to imagination, creativity, and form. And it ignores our spiritual capacity that can enable us to have such a profound recognition of the ineffable beauty and mystery of the universe. Against the two-dimensional view of human life that constitutes today's dominant vision of education we need voices that remind us of the richness and complexity of human life. We are holistic beings who seek meaning, struggle with ethical dilemmas, relate to others with empathy and compassion, are enlivened by our sensual impulses and our capacity for love, have deep commitments to social and political change, and are moved by spiritual and religious awareness that enables us to experience our world with awe and wonder. Tragically, we forget this when we reduce our education to the prosaic and pragmatic purposes that now seem to constitute schooling's mission.

The call to re-envision education is not about one more reform to improve achievement, make us more globally competitive, or even to close the gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged in our society. Nor is it about blaming or retraining teachers, or making principals and other educational leaders more efficient or effective managers. The task for those who would offer a new progressive direction for our country is to articulate a different vision about the very purpose and goals of education. But to talk about the purpose of education is also to talk about our purpose as a society. It means to ask what kind of a

world we envisage for our children and what kind of lives we wish for them. Our talk about the meaning of education must also be about what it is to live in ways that are worthwhile and meaningful. Such talk requires going beyond the boiler plate language of political debate. It will require what the philosopher Cornel West refers to as *parrhesia*, the capacity for bold and courageous speech that challenges deeply held assumptions and offers us radically different ways to understand what is both possible and needed at this time in our nation's history. ■

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MISSING THE BOAT ON HEALTH CARE?

(continued from page 49)

insurers, which results in 17,000 different health plans in Chicago and more than 700 different insurance policies among 2,000 patients with depression in Seattle?

High-risk purchasing pools are another idea without any track record of success. Although 30 states have started high-risk pools, they still cover less than 200,000 people and are largely ineffective, plagued by extended waiting lists, high premiums, limited benefits, and shortfalls of state and federal funds.

A fundamental mistake of all incremental efforts now underway across the country towards universal coverage is the disconnect between *insurance* and *health care*. Here we find an increasing gap. Many people with insurance find cost-sharing an increasing burden with benefits decreasing and out-of-pocket costs taking ever larger bites from their household income. "Underinsurance" is defined by the Commonwealth Fund as medical expenses amounting to 10 percent of annual income or more (5 percent for adults below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, which is set at \$41,300 for a family of four in 2007). Yet many millions of "insured" Americans are having to spend much more than that on health care. Two million peo-

ple were forced into bankruptcy by medical bills in 2001, the most recent year for which data are available; three-fourths of them were employed and insured at the outset of their medical problems.

The Medicare-like public option is an interesting idea, but does not make sense for several reasons. We have yet to show that the political process can yield a level playing field for competition between public and private programs. Another round of government subsidies would give the private insurance industry yet another opportunity to further divide the risk pool, concentrating the sick in Medicare, which could threaten its future viability. We would likely march toward even more of a two-tier system than we have now, and Medicare would face an increased risk of becoming a welfare program for sick people with significant medical problems. It would perpetuate a role for private health insurance and accept the illusion that it provides a valuable adjunct to health care financing when it is already clear that it doesn't. The battle over the industry's future needs to be fought, as it inevitably will. The Medicare-like option would simply delay that battle, perhaps losing an opportunity for real reform. Whatever further structures were put in place to implement the Medicare-like plan could themselves add to the obstacles of replacing an obsolete private financing system. If Medicare became excessively saddled with the most expensive care of a smaller population without adequate funding, its conservative critics could correctly claim that, "The government program can't do the job."

What Should the Government's Role be in this Crisis?

WE HAVE A MARKET-BASED HEALTH CARE system driving up its own costs beyond the reach of ordinary Americans, with government policies making things even worse through minimal oversight and regulation of the market. As the situation gets worse, we remain deeply divided over the role of government. On the Right, conservatives have been quite clear about wanting to downsize government, render it less capable, and, in the case of Medicare, privatize it and turn Original Medicare into a smaller welfare program. The Right has raised such

fears over creeping socialism and "government run" programs that the Left shies away from activist government. All of the leading Democratic health proposals studiously avoid any implication of government intrusion, despite the far greater bureaucratic intrusion of privately-financed health care compared to simplified public financing.

What can we learn from history about the role of government as our health care crisis grows? In an address to the Republican Citizens of Washington County, Maryland in 1809, Thomas Jefferson's answer was: "The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction is the first and only legitimate object of good government." Comparing our increasing gaps in income and opportunity today with those in the Great Depression, Joseph Stiglitz, Nobel Laureate in Economics and former chief economist of the World Bank, offered this perspective in 2004:

Markets do not lead to efficient outcomes, let alone outcomes that comport with social justice. As a result, there is often good reason for government intervention to improve the efficiency of the market. Just as the Great Depression should have made it evident that the market often does not work as well as its advocates claim, our recent Roaring Nineties should have made it self-evident that the pursuit of self-interest does not necessarily lead to overall economic efficiency.

But, instead of taking a progressive view of the responsibility of government to help solve our increasing problems of access, cost, quality, and equity of health care, we have the leading Democratic candidates perpetuating market approaches, with the already discredited notion that the insurance industry will respond to competition. They even take on some of the strategies of the Right, such as tax credits and purchasing pools, while offering up unpersuasive calls for cost containment, universal coverage, and improved quality of care. Despite conservative public policies favoring health care markets, as illustrated by continued overpayments and lack of oversight of private Medicare plans, these leaders remain unwilling to confront the insurance industry in the public interest.

Single-Payer National Health Insurance: The Only Effective and Sustainable Path to Universal Coverage

ONLY ONE OF THE SIX DEMOCRATIC presidential candidates gets it right on health care reform. Congressman Dennis Kucinich (D-OH), as co-sponsor with Congressman John Conyers (D-MI) of House Bill 676, the U.S. National Health Insurance Act, has recognized for years that the private health insurance industry will always stand in the way of universal access to comprehensive health care.

This bill directly addresses the central problem of our health care system—its private financing—replacing it with a public financing system modeled after a reformed Medicare program.

A Medicare-for-All program would provide universal coverage of all necessary health care for all Americans coupled with a private delivery system. It would not be socialized medicine, but social insurance. Its extra benefits could be extended to the entire population by saving about \$350 billion a year in administrative cost savings, monopsony (i.e., one dominant buyer) purchasing, and improved access with earlier diagnosis and treatment of illness. All Americans would have full choice of physicians, other licensed providers, and hospitals. Medical decision-making would stay with patients and their physicians with much less bureaucratic intrusion than we have today in our multi-payer financing system. With administrative and structural simplification, our system would be transitioned toward not-for-profit care in a more transparent and accountable way.

HR 676 is now endorsed by eighty-five sponsors in the House. It has received the support of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), and some in the business community are starting to view single-payer as a way to get out from under increasingly burdensome health care costs, to maintain a healthy workforce, and to better compete in the global economy. Poll after poll shows that about two-thirds of the public supports such a role for government in assuring health care for our population.

Health care reform should be a non-partisan issue. Health care is an essential need for all of us, regardless of age, gender, race, class, religious persuasion, or political

MISSING THE BOAT ON HEALTH CARE?

party. Everyone wins (except perhaps some corporate stakeholders in our market-based system) when we have a healthier population in a society that pulls together, instead of being split apart over economic and health disparities. Conservatives espouse principles of efficiency, responsibility, and eliminating waste. A single-payer system would be far more efficient than a multi-payer system, would have more leverage to reduce waste, and would provide a structure for more accountability than we have today. Everyone would contribute to its funding on a shared and equitable basis. Employers would pay a payroll tax in the range of 7 percent (less than they now pay), with further funding by a progressive income tax averaging 2 percent for most taxpayers (less than they typically now pay for premiums, deductibles, and out-of-pocket costs). With all these advantages, it is remarkable (but no surprise) how silent the media have been, dependent as they are on corporate support, in publicizing the Kucinich candidacy and single-payer reform.

Based upon its track record in recent decades, the private health insurance industry has proven itself not to be a reliable and useful base upon which to finance health care. The trend toward its demise is becoming more obvious, but is still denied by most policymakers, including many on the Left. As the number of incremental “reform” proposals proliferate in an effort to rationalize the industry under the false guise of “market competition,” we need to ask who our health care system is for: patients and their families, or the insurance industry? Our public policy to date supports the latter.

Hazards of Political Compromise

THE MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003 (MMA) gives us a classic example of the hazards of political compromise. The central problem requiring action was the rapid escalation of drug prices and their decreasing affordability to seniors. The drug and insurance industries launched a full-court lobbying campaign, resulting in compromises such that the main problem was dodged. Instead of controlling drug prices, the MMA was a sell-out to the drug and insurance industries, providing lavish new

overpayments to private Medicare plans, prohibiting the government from negotiating discounted drug prices as is done so well by the Veterans Administration, continuing a ban on importation of prescription drugs, and establishing health savings accounts. This new structure may be with us for years. Even after the Democrats gained control of both houses in the 2006 elections, they have yet to rein in the large subsidies handed over to the drug and insurance industries.

The leading Democrats’ health care plans, if enacted, are a prescription for failure by giving the private insurance industry another bonanza: a carte blanche opportunity to sell more limited benefit policies to healthy people and prevent a structural health care fix. They would further raise costs, increase bureaucracy, enrich market stakeholders at the expense of patients, families, and taxpayers, and perpetuate markets treating health care as just another commodity to be bought and sold. Wall Street would prosper as Main Street hurts.

So What Next?

THE PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY CHOICE facing us is whether or not to replace a failing private financing system with public single-payer financing. Making the right choice is the only way to gain affordable universal coverage of necessary care for everyone. It is that simple. This is not an issue to be compromised away by politicians. We need a new structure to heal many of the problems of U.S. health care. We have an opportunity now to galvanize a grassroots movement for real health care reform that may not come again for a long time. The Democrats are poised to regain the Presidency in 2008, together with both houses of Congress. We need activist government and leaders, as we have had earlier in our history, to confront our health care crisis. It is a matter of moral, economic, and social urgency. As a nation, we are long overdue responding to Martin Luther King Jr.’s call to action, some forty years ago: “Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and most inhuman.” ■

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Culture

BOOKS | FILM | MUSIC

[BOOKS]

The Single Diamond Made of All Our Lives

GULF MUSIC: POEMS by Robert Pinsky

Farrar Straus Giroux, 2007

Review by Tony Hoagland

IT'S HARD TO OUTFRAN the burden of having been poet laureate. For those readers who have a misconception of Robert Pinsky as a honky, wonky establishment former poet-laureate, the poem "Louie Louie" might be the right place to start reading his new book, *Gulf Music*. Like the 1960s pop roadhouse song it refers to, in which indecipherable, vulgar-sounding lyrics are drawled and growled, "Louie Louie" the poem is irrational and mischievous, deliberately adolescent, and defiant:

...I have heard of Kwanza but I have
Never heard of Bert Williams.
I have never heard of Will
Rogers or Roger Williams
Or Buck Rogers or Pearl Buck
Or Frank Buck or Frank
Merriwell at Yale.

I have never heard of the Pig Boy
I have never heard of the Beastie
Boys or the Scottsboro boys but I
Have heard of the singing boys, what
They were called I forget.

"Louie Louie," like so many of Pinsky's poems, is a Culturesong, a lyric about the complex dance of history, memory, artifact, and tribe. It suggests that we (Postmodernistas? Americans?) are erudite but simple-minded, sophisticated but half-literate, and that we live suspended in a medium of references of which we are mostly unconscious. The poem acts as a kind of purge, spitting out the host of names that we've in-

ternalized, both trivial and profound.

Pinsky's obsessions, it is now clear, are lifelong: myth, culture, language, material life, and national consciousness, the mind of nation. These are the particular province of his alertness and attention. His meditations about what binds us together are passionate, nuanced, full of insight and unexpected connections. Culture, including poetry, is both our way of transcending and belonging to our place and time. "Culture the lock, culture the key," he says, in "Poem of Disconnected Parts," "Culture the penalty. Culture the escape."

But discursive understanding alone will not suffice. Only song can perform poetic knowing, and poems are uniquely valuable because they live halfway between sense and cry, memory and invention. Like knowledge itself, they have a "varying, unstable relation to meaning," which is paradoxically part of their expressiveness. That kind of loose, variable intensity is visible in the flashcard-like couplets of "Forgetting":

...Memory of so much crap, jumbled
with so much that seems to matter.
Lieutenant Calley, Captain Easy,
Mayling Soong, Sibby Sisti....

I used to wonder, what if the Baseball
Hall of Fame overflowed
with too many thousands of greats all
in time unremembered?
You'll see, you little young jerks; your
favorite music and your political
Furors too will need to get sorted in

dusty electronic corridors.

Ezra Pound praises the Emperor who appointed a committee of scholars To pick the best 450 Noh plays and destroy all the rest, the Fascist. The stand up master Stephen Wright says he thinks he suffers from both amnesia and déjà vu: "I feel like I have forgotten this before."....

Such jazzy idiomatic interplay of perspectives is typical in *Gulf Music*. It is in many ways the poetic mode of our moment, in which poetic "dislocation" is eloquent of the polyglot distraction of contemporary life. Yet, if the energy of such a poem comes from its discontinuities, its art shows itself in the precise orchestrations of order and disorder. Pinsky's disorders are ingeniously coherent. Omnivorous and discriminating at once, they veer and teeter and incorporate without melting into the chaos of the conditions they describe.

In the beautiful, more narrative poem "Banknote," the poet describes how personal and national identity, money and self, chance and fate, are woven through human life:

Behind city walls, calm rituals of exile.
The Brazilian cleaner hums and
sponges the table.
A civil quiet between us I will not
break
By chanting my gratitude in broken
Polish.
She has the courage to be my great



grandmother Ike.

Thanks to his passage a century ahead
of hers

I get to sit at this table, I write the
check.

To recite this to him through her
would be foolish.

Her only language for now is
Portuguese,

Though every week she knows more
English words....

The poem goes on to enviously describe how the Brazilian banknote carries a poem printed on it, a poem written in Portuguese about "the single diamond made of all our lives."

...The poem/ Is about a poem he
intends to write about the single
diamond made of all our lives.
From gluts, dearths. From markets,
forced migrations.
Nossas vidas formam um so diamante.

...Locked blind in the diamond, its
billion cuts and facets,
Molecules in an obdurate equilibrium
of pressures, we cannot see the
shifting fire.

A poem about a poem about a poem,
set in a city "of wilderness paved," "of privilege and deprivation," where graffiti is sprayed on security shutters: a kind of in-folded diamond itself. In such faceted im-

ages as these, Pinsky offers us a vision of our world poignant, precise, and paradoxical enough to be convincing. Pinsky's work asserts the diamond vision; we many dreamers, circulating in one large dream.

Pinsky is as omnivorous as any post-modernist, as originally strange and American, ambitious and adventurous. This brief review cannot give an idea of the textural variety or allusive richness of the poems. Pinsky's work may not be for the reader hungry for explicit anguishes of personal life. Nor will these poems necessarily appeal to readers who hunger for the wit of dislocation as an end in itself. But if the essential act of a poetic sensibility is to sense, discover and chart correspondences, then Pinsky is one of our best living American poets. In book after book, his poems have practiced a non-reductive allegiance to the We, the collective. *Gulf Music* shows this poet at the top of his form—not just lively, but also noble. ■

Award-winning poet Tony Hoagland is the author of three volumes of poetry and a collection of essays, Real Sofistakashun, all by Graywolf Press. He currently teaches in the poetry program at the University of Houston.

[FILM]

NO GOOD ANSWERS LEFT

LIONS FOR LAMBS

(Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios, 2007)

REDACTED

(Magnolia Pictures, 2007)

NO END IN SIGHT

(Magnolia Pictures, 2006)

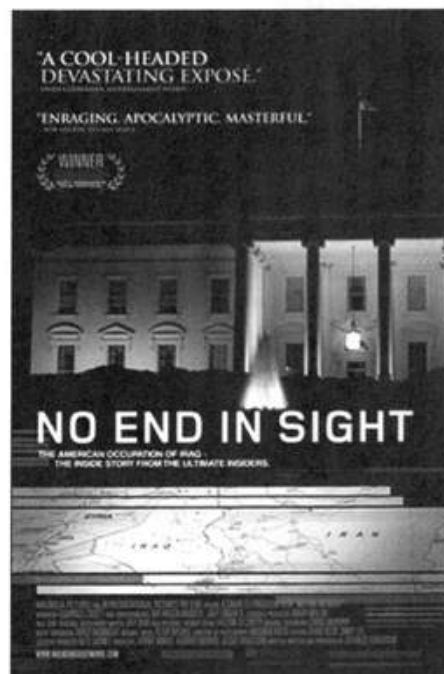
Review by Katje Richstatter

Films about war are not known for their subtlety; war itself is not a subtle act, even one as ambiguous and confounding as the "War on Terror" in Iraq and Afghanistan has been. And when filmmakers tackle

the subject, the result is generally anything but subjective. Recently, a rush of films trying to make sense of recent history have come quickly through theaters: *Rendition*, *The Kingdom*, and *In the Valley of Elah* got mixed reviews, and barely

registered in box office sales. And currently, *Lions for Lambs* and *Redacted*, the first showy with budgeted star power, the second deliberately shoestring, shot in HD video and with no actors of note, have arrived to a less-than-overwhelming welcome. Is it simply too soon to make meaning of this history? Are we as apathetic or complicit as indicted by some of the films? Or are we just weary of a war that Thomas Ricks, a *Washington Post* correspondent and author of *Fiasco*, called a tragedy in five acts, of which he believes we're only in act three. The documentary *No End in Sight* echoes this sentiment, and its recent release on DVD will hopefully broaden its audience. Whether the films are patriotic or in protest, the public seems to be covering its eyes and ears, maybe avoiding what Ricks describes as seeing that "this country collectively panicked and went down the wrong path," and not knowing the first thing about how to mitigate the damage.

Lions for Lambs, hyped to the hilt before its release, is a play-like gabfest with a confused style—mostly it feels old-fashioned, just dialogues in static settings, broken up by adrenaline-fueled action sequences in Afghanistan. The film shifts from a conversation between a conservative crocodilian senator, Jasper Irving (Tom Cruise) and a liberal, weary reporter, Janine Roth (Meryl Streep) in Washington D.C.; an apathetic but supposedly brilliant



ROBERT REDFORD MERYL STREEP TOM CRUISE



LIONS FOR LAMBS

STYLING: ROBERT REDFORD

college kid, Todd Hayes (Andrew Garfield) and his liberal, weary yet motivational Vietnam vet professor, Stephen Malley (Robert Redford) at an unnamed, Berkeley-like California University; and the combat mission of two of Professor Malley's prized former students, Ernest Rodriguez (Michael Peña) and Arian Finch (Derek Luke). Senator Jasper has called in Roth to feed her an "exclusive" about an ambitious

and ideological, speaking of our "moral obligation" against an enemy with "medieval beliefs," culminating in the chilling phrase "whatever it takes." There isn't room for discussion, the United States is tired of being humiliated, and the question—yes or no—is do you want to win the war on terror? Cruise in this role is unfortunately, given the intended message of the film, its most convincing, if most frightening, character.

Streep gets in a few good jabs, but is criminally underused; she's merely a cipher for a mainstream media that helped sell the war to the public in the first place, corporate and more concerned with web hits than truth. Her knowledge of this reads painfully on her face, along with the nostalgia for what she once was.

Cut to director Redford, in Professor Malley's book-lined office, across from a slumped post-teen he's trying to get through to. This sequence is the least affecting of the three, mostly because of the wonderkind himself—in the scenes meant to illuminate that he's the hope for his generation, he's more of a snotty devil's advocate.

And Redford delivers the film's most cringe-worthy dialogue, telling young Todd "Rome is burning, son." The classroom scenes of his former students, however, are amongst the most moving, and raise the best questions of the film. What is each citizen's responsibility? What is the nature of privilege in this country, and can education mitigate its effects? Rodriguez and Finch are not white, came from nothing, do a class project on a new model for mandatory national service, and eventually, despite Malley's protests, sign up for duty in the hope of increasing their influence once they return. The jarring cuts to the mission, in a snowy Afghanistan, are dramatic but fairly unnecessary—they add excitement and stir an emotional response, but in the end the film seems more satisfied, and actually works better, just hearing itself talk. It is interesting to see the real-time cuts between Senator Jasper's office and the field, how modern warfare happens in real time, the trickle-down from sleek suit to pixelated camouflage. The themes that emerge in *Lions for Lambs*—talk vs. action, the stubbornness of leadership, propaganda, apathy of youth and complacency of age—are all valid, but is it enough just to ask these questions, repeatedly, possibly to the choir, and without much nuance?

If *Lions for Lambs* is a heavy hand, *Redacted* is a clenched, raging fist. Brian DePalma's film "visually documents imagined events" based on real events—it's a difficult movie to watch, and equally difficult to process afterward. From the outset, we're told that the film is woven around the rape and murder of a fourteen-year-old Iraqi girl by U.S. soldiers in 2006, the knowledge of which creates instant tension and dread, even through the tedium and banter of the first half. Contributing to the unease is DePalma's fragmented style, splicing together video diary of Angel Salazar (Izzy Diaz), footage from a fictional French Documentary called *Barrage*, news reports and internet videos, both from terrorists planting IEDs and antiwar vitriol on YouTube. The effect brilliantly mimics how we get our information today—fragmented, questionably reliable, and available in mass quantities if you're willing to search for it. The story follows a unit stationed at a

Subverting Hatred: The Challenge of Nonviolence in Religious Traditions

Tenth Anniversary Edition
Edited by
Daniel Smith-Christopher

Subverting
Hatred
The Challenge of Nonviolence
in Religious Traditions



Daniel L. Smith-Christopher
editor

Tenth Anniversary Edition

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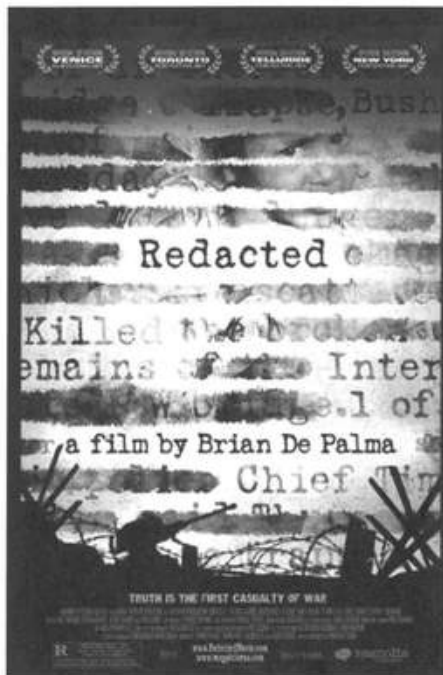
"...a plethora of religious
perspectives in a series of
creative, scholarly, and
provocative essays."

(Professor Paul Waldau, Tufts University)

Is violence really an inevitable product of religious belief?

In this updated and expanded edition of *Subverting Hatred*—perfect for a wide range of college-level courses—scholarly representatives of nine world religions offer insights into the teachings of nonviolence within their tradition, how practice has often fallen short of the ideals, and how they can overcome the contagion of hatred through a return to traditional teachings on nonviolence.

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checkpoint; their task is to stop and search all vehicles, which gives a sense of the daily humiliations Iraqis, whether innocent or insurgent, face under the occupation. The action, once it begins, is relentless—a pregnant woman is shot by Reno Flake (Patrick Carroll), and shortly after, Sergeant Sweet (Ty Jones) is killed. The men in Sweet's unit—Salazar, the upstanding Lawyer McCoy (Rob Devaney), the bookworm Gabe Blix (Kel O'Neill), and the two 'bad apples,' Flake and B.B. Rush (Daniel Stewart Sherman)—are yanked from their uncomfortable but uneventful stupor. Like the conflict itself, we're watching a series of unbelievably bad calls premeditating the crime, born out of profound damage, distress, and frustration, which complicates but doesn't absolve the protagonists or the witnesses of responsibility. While *Lions for Lambs* tells the audience what the questions are, watching the visceral *Redacted* can't help raising the questions through the action, namely, what is the role of media and art to atrocity? What is the role of the viewer, the filmmaker, those not directly involved, but not standing up? DePalma includes a photo montage at the end of "Collateral Damage," dead Iraqi civilians may go too far for many: as Lawyer McCoy says, these "snapshots are burned in my brain forever." It seems, though, that the picture that emerges is generally sympathetic to the suffering of the soldiers, but does not excuse their crimes (though it might have been more powerful to see a

shred of humanity in the eyes of the two criminals at the heart of the story). But for their evil acts, they come off as more ignorant and entitled, dehumanized by their act of dehumanizing, than truly evil.

Finally, Charles Ferguson's documentary *No End in Sight*, recently released on DVD, is an impassioned but even-handed look at how we got to where we are in Iraq. Focusing on the U.S. occupation after Bush's declared victory in 2003, the film chronicles the many policy blunders that have plunged Iraq into chaos, lawlessness, and ever-increasing sectarian violence. There is nothing superfluous to this film: the interviews are with major players in the military, intelligence, and academic communities, as well as with Iraqis and former U.S. soldiers. The footage shows the aftermath of a poorly planned occupation; it's noted that the occupation of Germany during WWII was planned two years in advance, the occupation of Iraq, sixty days. The film isn't explicitly antiwar or partisan—it's a mistake-by-mistake guide to all of the terrible decisions: the hermetic decision-making process that disregarded all intelligence and military advice, the exclusion of Iraqis in the interim government, and the disbanding of the Iraqi army. The last is blamed for creating the insurgency, namely the jaw-dropping stupidity of firing and angering 500,000 armed men with access to unguarded weapons caches. Again, the powers that be were supposedly warned of this outcome, but refused to listen. As the events roll on, interspersed glimpses at Bush and Rumsfeld come off as callous and cavalier—Rumsfeld's "stuff happens," Bush unbothered to even read the prepared summaries. This contrasts with the thoughtful, well-spoken accounts by former deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, Ambassador Barbara Bodine, Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson, the former Chief of Staff to Colin Powell, and General Jay Garner, among others, visibly frustrated that they couldn't have done more. The full tragedy of Iraq is on display, and it is as compelling as it is distressing.

There is something brave about realizing a project that is unpopular at every turn: it makes studios nervous, right-wingers furious, and moviegoers averse.

Bill O'Reilly, before actually seeing *Redacted*, denounced it as anti-American, and demanded that it be pulled from theaters. This typically flippant use of 'Anti-American,' particularly in relation to art, is appalling, used when any critical viewpoint clashes with a limiting 'with us or against us' mentality. And for all of the flaws of both *Lions for Lambs* and *Redacted*, the very nature of these flaws illuminate just how difficult it is to make sense of the chaos that surrounds us; the truth itself is often fragmented, contradictory, and confusing. *Lambs* invites us to think more, *Redacted* forces us to feel. And *No End in Sight* should be mandatory viewing, a primer shown in schools, discussed around dinner tables. The collective guilt of knowing can't be enough to make us turn away from, or throw our arms up over, the truth of the present situation, and the one shaping our future. ■

Katje Richstatter is a fiction and culture writer whose work has appeared in the *Utne Reader*, *Punk Planet*, *SOMA*, the *SF Bay Guardian*, and *Tikkun*. She is on the editorial board for *Turning Wheel*, the magazine of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship.

MORNING IN AMERICA

Morning in America. Elsewhere too, most likely. Other countries still exist beyond the borders of our geography. But the capital of Is is Us.

Outside the great metropolis, species chat in languages for which we lack translators. Those who speak these other tongues, can they be trusted?

Felt-tip black against a patch of unredacted blue, crows patrol our borders. Caw-caw! they cry, calling up the rows of corn that march like Round-Up-Ready Minute Men.

War a rooted word, implicit now in every root and fiber as the crow flies black against the blue above the marching corn: another morning in America dawning, dawning on you.

—Jon Swan

[BOOKS]

LEWIS LIPS
SINKS SHIPS

CRACKING UP:

AMERICAN HUMOR IN A TIME OF CONFLICT

by Paul Lewis,

University of Chicago Press, 2006

Review by Larry Mintz

HOW MANY *TIKKUNS* DOES it take to heal and transform the world? One, but it has to be really, really funny.

Paul Lewis sets out to explore the role of humor in the contemporary American zeitgeist. This is no easy task since there is no clear understanding, even among scholars who study humor, of what it is much less of its motives and functions. Susan Sontag wrote that any definition of so varied and complex a phenomenon as humor would necessarily be reductive or so broad as to be useless. Nevertheless Professor Lewis knows what it is when he sees it, knows when it's been bad or good, and knows what it means for the zeitgeist. He relates it to the current culture of conflict and crisis (that is in contrast to the eras of tranquility and harmony that have preceded it).

Lewis is not the first observer of the state of comedy to relate it to cultural climate. Much has been written about the "golden age of comedy" circa the 1920s, the similar period of comic centrality around the 1970s, and recently, Stephen Kercher has examined superbly liberal social and political satire in the 1950s and 1960s. Lewis is also not alone in worrying about a mean, cruel, nasty streak in contemporary humor. This reviewer presented a conference paper entitled "W(h)ither Humor? The End of Laughter in the Nasty 90's." Christopher Lasch included our humor in the narcissistic popular culture that anguished him, and professional comedians in every era are quoted as failing to understand the ugly and obscene comedy appreciated by current audiences.

Cracking Up identifies a key paradox. We think of comedy as associated with pleasant phenomena, with smiling, laughing, and with framing experience in a light, amusing, painless point of view. Yet we also know that it is associated with aggression, hostility, ridicule, and other less sunny dispositions. There is a simple explanation, which, like most simple explanations, will satisfy no humor maven (i.e., every reader of *Tikkun* and everyone related to every reader of *Tikkun*). Humor involves a transfer of frame from serious to not serious, resulting in a relief of tension that is often, though not always, manifested in laughter or smiling. The catch is that one has to accept the transfer to find anything funny. If it is still serious—to you—it is not funny. There is no such thing as something being funny but not appreciated as such.

If you do not find it funny, it isn't. If you find it funny, it is.

So what is with all the nasty stuff that some people find funny? We know some laughter has always been what seems to many of us (including Lewis) to be cruel. The original stand-up comedians were actual defectives in the medieval courts, genuine fools and grotesques who eventually gave way to clever professionals who hid behind the license awarded to the "naturals" and yes, from this they made a living. American humor and modern humor have always had violent tendencies. Lewis examines a number of related phenomena including laughing at pop culture horrors such as Freddy of fright films fame, and to my mind more significantly, to the large number of commercials that feature meanness, cruelty, and selfishness. Whatever happened to friends sharing a case of beer selflessly hauled all the way to the deserted beach? Now they devise clever ways to hurt anyone trying to get near a brew in their fridge, or associate the cold one with pain inflicted on dogs, dates, themselves, and anyone else the creative department can involve.

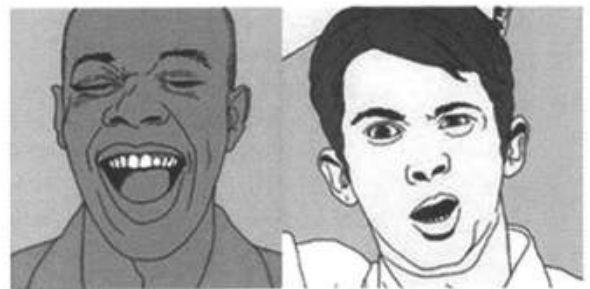
What in the name of Freud is going on



CRACKING UP

PAUL LEWIS

AMERICAN HUMOR IN A TIME OF CONFLICT



here? Sure there is still benign humor around, and Lewis digresses with an extraneous chapter dealing with the humor consultants, gurus, and therapists who will cure all that ails us. There is a lot of innocuous comedy in film, comic strips, television, and other media, that Lewis properly ignores here. But increasingly, or so it seems at least, our humor is of the darker sort. Is it laughing to keep from crying (an ethnic specialty)? Perhaps. There is certain bravery, or at least bravado, in choosing to face the horrible, the absurd, the grotesque, and even the unthinkable (unthink "Dr. Strangelove") with laughter rather than tears or screams. Alternatively, dark humor might be a way of the cynic and the skeptic dealing with true believers, idealists, and optimists, real or feigned, who are in need of a rose-colored glasses removal service.

But the readers of *Tikkun* wouldn't know anything about that. ■

Larry Mintz recently retired after thirty-seven years on the faculty of the University of Maryland. He lives in North Carolina where he writes, lectures, teaches, and consults on the popular arts and entertainments, especially humor.

Dear Swami

"Where Swami answers your questions, and you will question his answers."

BY SWAMI BEYONDANANDA

Dear Swami:

Well, it's holiday time, and once again I will find myself at too many parties and family gatherings where I inevitably end up eating too much. Then it's months and months of trying to get myself back in shape...and pretty soon it's next holiday season and the same thing. Any tips for getting off this vicious cycle, and getting back into shape this January?

Dinah Bunch
Hartford, Connecticut

Dear Dinah:

I've often said, when you find yourself on a vicious cycle, stop peddling. So the first step in easy weight loss is, don't put it on in the first place. That's why I never go to any holiday gathering without my eating glasses. They magnify everything on my plate by a factor of ten, so you feel fulfilled before you get filled full. But even if you eat like a horse and end up feeling like a full filly, no problem. You've heard of Weight Watchers? I've discovered something even better—Shape Shifters. They promise to help you shift from shapeless and shiftless to ship shape without diet or exercise! What's their secret? Photoshop. You'll be virtually slender in no time.

Dear Swami:

It's amusing for me to see so many people worrying about the state of the world and trying to figure out what to do about it. For those of us who are already saved, we know where this world is going—straight to hell! Meanwhile, the righteous will be lifted up and taken from this God-forsaken planet to dwell in the House of the Lord forever. So stop wasting your

time and energy and know there is only One Way. The signs are everywhere Swami!

Benton R. McGedden,
Lynchburg, Virginia

Dear Benton:

Congratulations on buying a condo in the afterlife! I own some of that unreal estate myself. Being a swami who believes in reincarnation, I didn't even have to pay cash. I just put it on my Ascended Mastercard and billed it to a future lifetime. So maybe I'll run into you at the Ascended Masters Golf Tournament one of these epochs.

Re: your recent spiritual transaction, I hope you read the fine print. While our Father's Mansion has many rooms, apparently before they let you actually occupy one, they rightly want to make sure you're not going to trash it. And apparently, they check the record on how we've treated the planetary home we now occupy as an indicator of what kind of tenants we're likely to be in the afterlife.

And here's more bad news. Remember back in elementary school when the entire class had to stay after school just because of a few troublemakers? Well, apparently our entire species is on the verge of flunking third dimension, and that would be sad indeed. We've been on this physical plane for millennia and you'd think by now we'd have learned how to fly it. I mean, come on. Where's our species pride?

As for the "signs" you've been seeing, if your "one way" is anything other than the one way of love, I say "do not enter." You are obviously going the wrong way.



Dear Swami:

As someone getting older, I've heard that you can extend your life by eating less. Is that true? And if I were to limit my food intake, do you know of any food that would provide maximum nourishment to an older person?

Jerry Attricks,
Phoenix, Arizona

Dear Jerry:

Well, as someone growing older—you have a lot of company. As for eating less, you may not actually live any longer but it will certainly feel that way. Now I'm no nutritional expert, so I'm just going to have to rely on common sense here. If there is one food that seems like it's absolutely made for older folks, it would have to be elderberries. ■

Swami Beyondananda is the comic alter ego of Steve Bhaerman and can be found online at www.wakeuplaughing.com.

POLITICS OF PAST EVIL

Daniel Philpott
University of Notre Dame Press, 2006

BEYOND WAR

Douglas P. Fry
Oxford University Press, 2007

HERE ARE TWO BOOKS THAT OFFER AN optimistic alternative to the depressive impact of daily news headlines. Douglas Fry teaches at the University of Finland as an expert on conflict resolution, and his book argues for "the human potential for peace," based in powerful empirical and historical research. He shows how unnatural and rare war has been through most of human history, challenging the common-sense assumption derived from the competitive marketplace that conflict has always been the driving force of human existence. Daniel Philpott's collection on "religion, reconciliation, and the dilemmas of transitional justice" presents a convincing theological and empirical case for the power of forgiveness and reconciliation in human affairs, and provides a beautiful foundation for the Strategy of Generosity that has become a major focus for *Tikkun* and the Network of Spiritual Progressives. It's an important contribution to social theory, legal theory, and spiritual progressive politics.

LESS SAFE LESS FREE

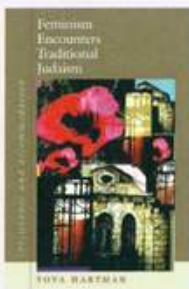
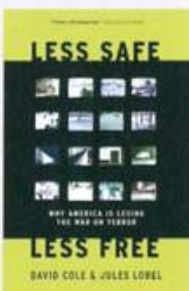
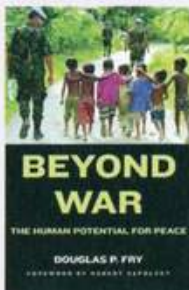
David Cole and Jules Lobel
New Press, 2007

THOUGH SUBTITLED "WHY AMERICA IS LOSING the War on Terror," this very smart book by Georgetown professor of law David Cole and University of Pittsburgh professor of law Jules Lobel goes far beyond the predictable Bush-baiting that pervades too much of the progressive world, and provides a hard-nosed look at rational responses to terror. While acknowledging that even the most enlightened foreign policy cannot totally eliminate the threat of terror any more than an enlightened police force can eliminate all crime, they emphasize that our foreign policy is partly at the root of terrorist grievances. They also make a persuasive case against having rules that justify torture in "exceptional circumstances."

FEMINISM ENCOUNTERS TRADITIONAL JUDAISM

Tova Hartman
Brandeis University Press, 2007

TOVA HARTMAN IS A LECTURER AT BAR ILAN University and the organizer of an Orthodox women's *minyan* (prayer quorum) that holds Shabbat services in Jerusalem. Her new book presents a radical perspective on being a modern Orthodox Jewish feminist. She confronts every difficult issue for a feminist in



Jewish practice, locates the issues in universal terms informed by the latest feminist scholarship as well as by a deep knowledge of Jewish texts, and presents innovative perspectives that are important for anyone who wishes to maintain a religious commitment and still be intellectually and spiritually honest. This book is also a powerful reminder that the debates in Halachah (Jewish law) retain their appeal to many because they are intellectually exciting even when one doesn't accept the Orthodox premises from which they begin.

HEALING AND THE JEWISH IMAGINATION

Rabbi William Cutter
Jewish Lights Publishing, 2007

A TOUCH OF THE SACRED

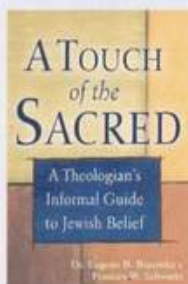
Dr. Eugene Borowitz
and Frances W. Schwartz
Jewish Lights Publishing, 2007

FOR ANYONE WHO THOUGHT THE INTELLECTUAL energies of Judaism had dried up, these two books (and indeed the whole enterprise of Jewish Lights Books) are a powerful cure. Borowitz & Schwartz subtitle their book "A Theologian's Informal Guide to Jewish Belief," and they touch on topics from "Seeking the Sacred One" and "Doing Holy Deeds" to "Innovation in Judaism" and "Jewish Beliefs About Evil." Amazingly, they lack any discussion of the sacred dimension of *tikkun olam* or any serious discussion of politics. Cutter's collection is about practical *tikkun*: spiritual and practical perspectives on Judaism and health. Some of American Jewry's most significant thinkers contribute, including Arnold Eisen on American Jews and the quest for healing, Arthur Green on the mystical sources of the healing movement, Elliot Dorff on Judaism and the Disabled, Rachel Adler on the Bible's mysterious *tzara'at* sickness, and Tamara Eskenazi on reading the Bible as a healing text.

THE GREAT AWAKENING

Jim Wallis
HarperOne, 2008

JIM WALLIS IS THIS COUNTRY'S MOST FAMOUS and influential spiritual progressive, and even though he eschews any terms that might identify him with the Left and seeks greater influence within the growing evangelical Christianity that nurtures his soul, his social justice and ecological agenda locate him squarely in the middle of liberal/progressive social change movements. This book helps our common quest to show those with deep Biblical values that they can no longer make common cause with the elites of wealth and power and the corporate culture of materialism and selfishness that they have produced. Embracing the progressive pro-family agenda that *Tikkun* pioneered two decades ago through our critique of values-free sexual ethics, while speaking in a language easily accessible to a mass audience, Wallis is truly our best evangelist and he is likely to be the voice that the next Democratic president listens to most seriously when trying to convince Americans that s/he understands religious concerns.



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