

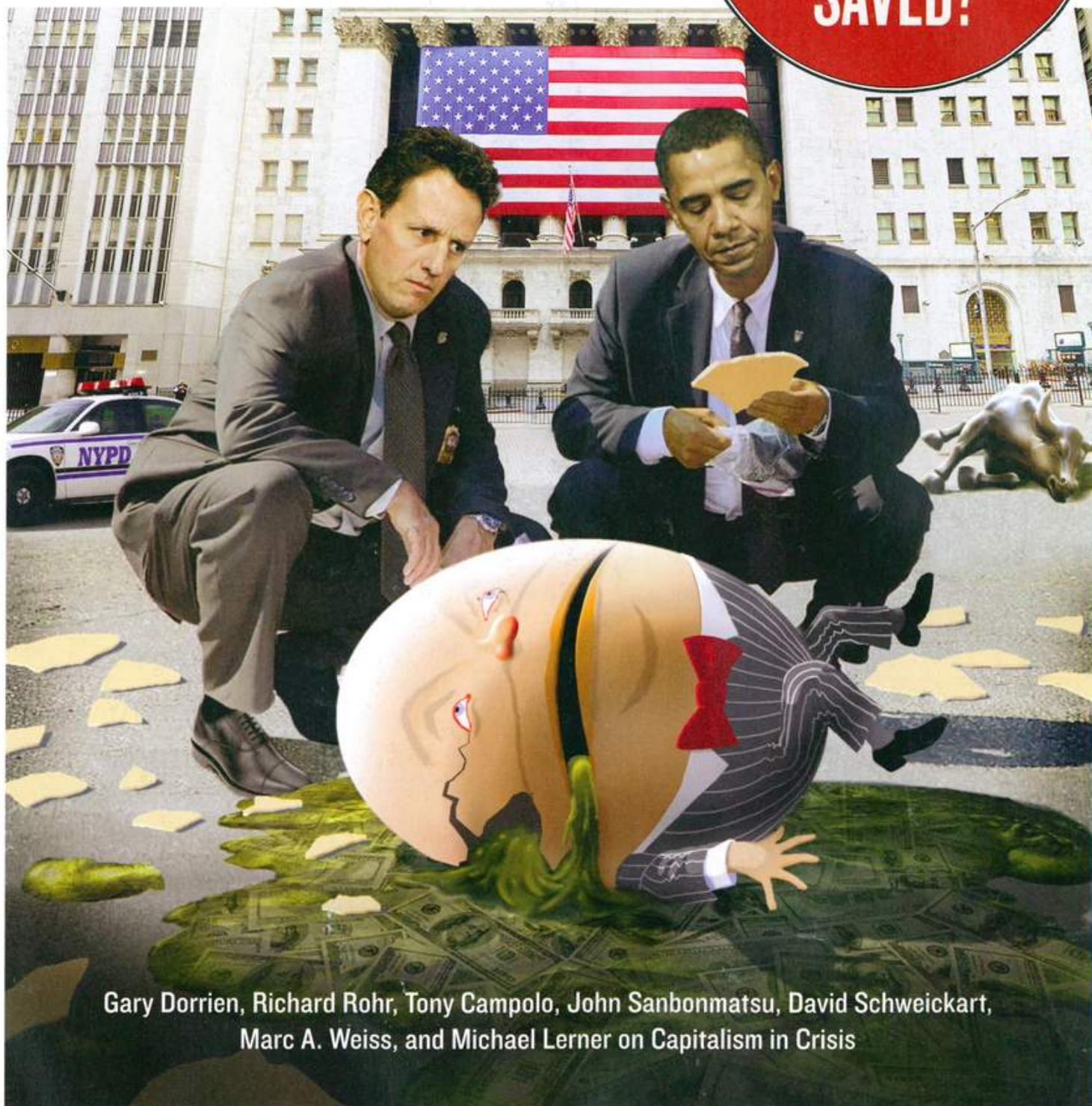
Tikkun

POLITICS+SPIRITUALITY+CULTURE

(tē·kūn) To mend, repair, and transform the world.

MAY/JUNE 2009

SHOULD
CAPITALISM BE
SAVED?



Gary Dorrien, Richard Rohr, Tony Campolo, John Sanbonmatsu, David Schweickart,
Marc A. Weiss, and Michael Lerner on Capitalism in Crisis

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Dancing Saints | Hunger and Obesity in the U.S.
Songs of Wounded Kinship | Obama vs. Torture
Hollywood's Holocaust | Stories of the Fence

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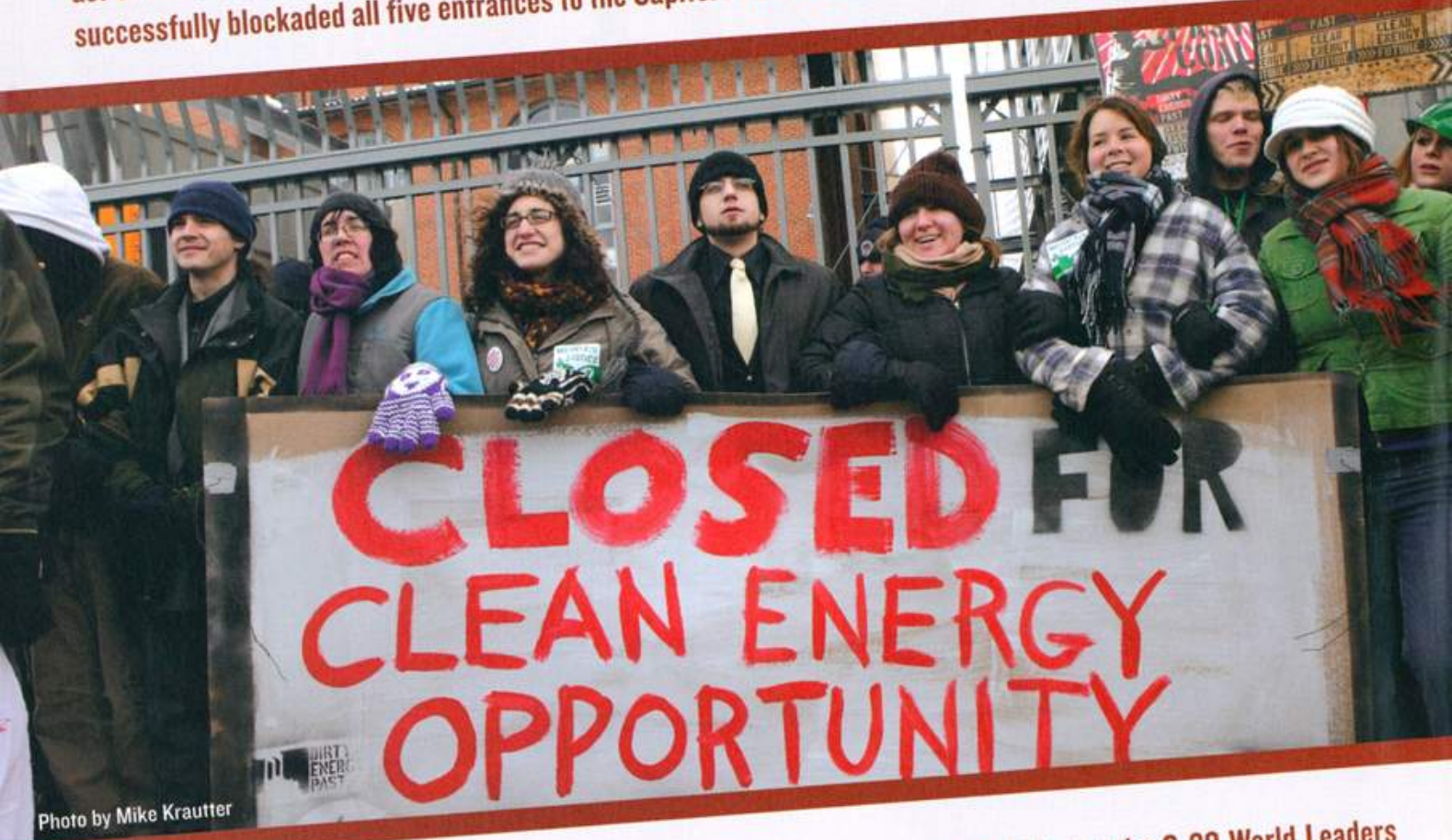


Photo by Mike Krautter

G-20 Summit Protest: On April 1, 2009, mass protests were held during the G-20 World Leaders Summit outside the Bank of England as anti-capitalist and climate change activists demonstrated in London. Protesters marched through the city demanding action on poverty, climate change, and jobs.



Sipa via AP Image



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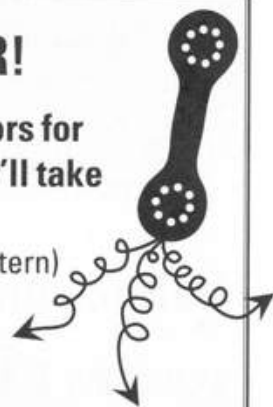
POETRY

- 80 Silence**
by MOSHE DOR,
translated with the author
by BARBARA GOLDBERG

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needed now is not more critiques, but a positive representation of what a different American economic culture might look like and how it might work. Leaders from the president on down have acknowledged that the current economic crisis is indivisible from long-held American cultural values, values that did not seem offended as thousands lost their homes, as long as someone was turning a profit. Therefore, this is a cultural crisis, and as such, it is paralyzing our abilities to think outside the box, for culture is often the box within which we think.

To the economists and social scientists who are calling for a radical change in the American economic culture I say: Paint us a picture. Help us imagine what you are imagining. How would I make my money? Where would I invest it? How would I afford a home? Just as *Tikkun* and the NSP's *New York Times* ad advocating for concrete policy shifts in the Middle East attracted attention, so might a similar ad suggesting concrete economic policy shifts. This will help

us all align our imaginations in the direction of a coherent change.

ERIN R. SILVERSTEIN

Brooklyn, NY

THE GRAMEEN BANK IS WORKING just fine, as you well know. It's based on the concept so eloquently demonstrated by Professor Muhammad Yunus, its founder. The principles required to participate as a social entrepreneurship entity can be applied to all disciplines and industries. Maybe they should be applied to all participants of the present economic crisis going forward?

TOM POE

Charles City, LA

SECLARISTS IN THE NSP

THE ARTICLE BY MITCHELL SILVER (March/April 2009) on secularists in the Network of Spiritual Progressives is very valuable to me particularly for its definition of spirituality. I've been waiting for such an article for years.

I have for the last thirty years or so considered myself to be "spiritual," despite being essentially an atheist and not believing in any form of supernaturalism. (Incidentally, I adopted for that sentence the universal application of the word supernatural, despite it clearly being a misnomer; the proper word for the typical usage is supernatural. As will be explained below, I do believe in a certain super-naturalism).

So what do I feel in trying to diagnose my sense of "spiritual"? Yes, as Mr. Silver emphasizes, I do feel very connected with all of history, all of life—past, present, and future—of family and friends and beyond that. And yes, I have enjoyed numerous "peak experiences" (in Abraham Maslow's meaning) which have seemed spiritual to me—experiences of wilderness and natural beauty, musical beauty, poetry, and even profound prose—all of which enhance that feeling of connectedness and which may well be related to my hope for social justice, equality, and a greatly

Tikkun

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Tikkun (Vol. 24, No. 3, ISSN 0887-9982) is published bimonthly by the Institute for Labor and Mental Health, a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization. © 2009 *Tikkun* magazine. All Rights Reserved. *Tikkun*® is a registered trademark of the Institute for Labor and Mental Health. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Tikkun*, P.O. Box 460926, Escondido, CA 92046. Periodical-rate postage paid at Oakland, CA and additional mailing offices by the Institute for Labor and Mental Health, 2342 Shattuck Ave., #1200, Berkeley, CA 94704. Publications mail agreement number: #1549111. Canada mail distributor information: Express Messenger International; P.O. Box 25058; London BRC, ON N6C 6A8. Subscription price for 6 issues: U.S. residents \$29.00; U.S. institutions \$40.00; Canadian residents \$39.00; all others \$43.00. Payment in U.S. dollars required. Printed in USA. ♻️ Printed on recycled paper.

Readers Respond

A NOTE ON LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

As Tikkun increases its Web presence by posting online exclusives at www.tikkun.org and spiritualprogressives.org, and by sending e-mails to anyone who asks to be placed on our list (send requests to Generosity@Tikkun.org), we are increasingly publishing responses to online as well as print articles in this section of the magazine. We welcome your responses to our articles. Send your letters to the editor to Letters@Tikkun.org. Please remember, however, not to attribute to Tikkun views other than those expressed in our editorials. We e-mail, post, and print many articles with which we have strong disagreements, because that is what makes Tikkun a location for a true diversity of ideas. Tikkun reserves the right to edit your letters to fit available space in the magazine.

ANTI-ISRAELI SENTIMENT IS SPREADING

ISRAEL IS TREATED LIKE NO OTHER country on earth, and the criticism that it gets is incommensurate to its crimes in comparison to other countries. Why is Israel expected to be saintly and act more virtuously than any other state, and when it doesn't, why is it demonized more than any other state in this world, although proportionally its "sins" do not compare? I find that leftists here in Europe (and I always considered myself of the Left, but on Israel I cannot anymore) not only are angry with Israel's original sin (its having been created) but now, because the protests against Gaza have been so powerful here, they have aligned themselves with anti-Semites and criminal elements that took advantage of the protests to express their true vile feelings: kill the Jews. These messages were communicated during anti-war protests at many rallies throughout the world, and nobody who was only anti-war protested the presence of these anti-Semites. In fact, those that dared demonstrate in support of Israel (after all, we do have free speech still, even if it's politically incorrect) were attacked.

How can this be tolerated? Isn't it obvious that those who are willing to be in the same context as anti-Semites

are morally responsible? For some absurd reason, the Europeans and other anti-Israelis (be they mostly of Arab origin or whatever) are associating Israeli policies with European Jews, and they find it completely acceptable to attack them, or insult them, or blame them for what they see as Israeli crimes.

When criticizing Israel, instead of using statements like "Israelis are criminals" (statements which obviously encourage retaliation), one needs to be responsible in the words being used. I find this to be the essence of the problem—and this is what I mean by extremists. These people, who say they are purely anti-Israeli policies, use language that is so inflammatory that it starts to be almost criminal in itself.

Some people tell me that *Tikkun* is anti-Israel. Is this true?

OLGA STEFAN
via email

Managing Editor Dave Belden replies:

OLGA, YOU ARE GOING THROUGH A great deal of pain, and I am sad *Tikkun* has been cited inaccurately in a way that has apparently added to it. Let us state it plainly, as we have many times before: we are absolutely not anti-Israel. We are full supporters of

Israel's right to exist. Please read the ad that we published as a full page in the *New York Times* in January, responding to the Gaza invasion: www.spiritualprogressives.org/article.php/gaza. As we wrote there: "We know that no political solution can work without a change in consciousness that minimally includes an openheartedness and willingness to recognize the humanity of the other, as well as repentance and atonement for the long history of insensitivity and cruelty each side has shown toward the other side."

For much deeper analysis, please read Michael Lerner's article in the May/June *Tikkun* of last year, which you can download as a PDF by clicking on "Magazine" at www.tikkun.org. If we can be labeled as "anti-Israel" after people have read that, clearly they are not thinking well. But it is the nature of heavily polarized conflicts that partisans label the people who are criticizing both sides fairly (and encouraging both sides to find their humanity and celebrating both sides when they do) as either "for" or "against." It is extremely painful to live through the demonizing that happens in these conflicts, as you are doing. There are many people working to bridge the chasm between Israelis and Palestinians, and I hope you can get together with them and find support.

ALTERNATIVES TO CAPITALISM

I HAVE READ DOZENS OF foreboding critiques of America's current capitalist economy and culture, and these critiques have generally given voice to my own frustrations with ruthless fiscal individualism. However, I feel that what is most

diminished materialism. Also over the years, I've developed a belief in a specific super-natural force, which seemed to be embodied in Darwinian evolution and particularly in those biologists and other scientists who have seen a tendency to progress (fitful obviously) in the course of evolution.

But then a few years ago I discovered a scientific (and mathematical) "theory" developed mainly at the Santa Fe Institute and mainly by Stuart Kauffman that explicitly puts "spiritual" in the field of natural science. (I think Spinoza would be thrilled.)

What Kauffman et al. have done is to formulate and prove (principally, as far as I am able to understand it, through Boolean mathematics and numerous experiments) that in evolution there is a natural law and force of self-organizing order and complexity; and that this force works as a partner with Darwinian natural selection in producing and maintaining biological (and even non-biological) evolution.

The chief book relevant to this question is Stuart Kauffman's *At Home in the Universe* (1995). The title itself hints at the significance of this science: that is, it satisfies the spiritual hunger of many secularist people for a sense of meaning in this life in their connectedness to the universe and everything in it, without having to resort to religion.

So, thanks to Mr. Silver for starting to define the word "spiritual," which is used so often, especially, I would guess, in California, by people with only a vague sense of what they mean by it.

(And may I add that an example of a non-vague, quite precise, and impermissibly narrow use of the word spiritual appears in the same issue of *Tikkun*, on page 20 in the first paragraph of the article by Debra Haffner.)

ROBERT H. POWSNER
Point Reyes Station, CA

MITCHELL: THANK YOU FOR writing this piece. I feel as though you are speaking for me (and who knows how many thousands of others).

In my own flavor of (spiritual)

secular humanism, supernatural belief systems and explanatory schemes inevitably undercut the mystery, wonder, and spiritualism intrinsic to the natural world itself (cf. Buddhist thought and belief systems of "indigenous peoples"). Understanding nature scientifically today, through evolutionary and ecological lenses, and with appreciation for the role of self-organizing systems in evolution, of which we humans are now principal drivers—all this knowledge, which is effectively hidden from popular view by supernatural perspectives—compels profound feelings of connectedness with all humankind and with the natural world. The sun, the oceans, and the forests inspire (spiritual) awe as the ultimate progenitors and enablers of our existence.

DAVID GREEN
Palo Alto, CA

IN THE LAST ISSUE, MITCHELL Silver poses the question: "Is There a Place for a Secular Person in the Network of Spiritual Progressives?" Like Mitchell, I view myself as a progressive secularist who is comfortable describing myself as spiritual, using the Silver definition. I also believe that building a broad coalition of diverse people like the NSP—united around common principles of justice, peace, kindness, and respect for the wonders of nature—is a very good thing. Mitchell makes the case that self-described spiritual secularists, like us, should be welcomed there, and I agree. But I wonder: what about our friends who share the same progressive, ethical, caring, non-violent, and nature-loving approach to life on this planet that we do, but who simply decline, as a matter of their personal sensibility, to call themselves "spiritual"? Should the network find Mitchell and me to be worthy and welcome compatriots, but not them? Perhaps the NSP could follow President Obama's lead, as recently reiterated at the National Prayer Breakfast: that all are welcome in the struggle for the greater good, believers and non-believers alike, to the extent they share

a common commitment to the Golden Rule. And maybe we should consider uniting under a new banner: The Network of Golden Rule Progressives!

MICHAEL FELSEN
Boston, MA

Editor Michael Lerner replies:

WE PRINTED THE MITCHELL Silver article precisely to assure spiritually oriented atheists that there is room for them in the NSP. But that doesn't mean that we want the NSP to become just another progressive group. Our focus on love, kindness, caring for others, and generosity might be embraced by many secular progressives who are not spiritual at all, though unfortunately we have yet to see any other progressive organization embrace the New Bottom Line we've articulated, which gives central focus to these values. But that might be because of the last part of this New Bottom Line, which calls for radical amazement at the grandeur and mystery of the universe. These are cutting-edge words—they are an essential element of a spiritual consciousness, and they refer to a way of thinking that is rarely talked about or given attention in the secular world. What is unique about the NSP, then, is not only that it has a campaign for a Global Marshall Plan and a new paradigm for homeland security (namely, following a strategy of generosity and recognizing that our well-being depends on the well-being of everyone else on the planet), but also that we want our members and our chapters to give time to developing their capacities to respond to the universe with awe and wonder at the grandeur and mystery of all that is. And by mystery we do not mean "that which science has not yet been able to explain," but rather the aspects of being that in principle can never be subject to scientific inquiry—namely, why there is anything at all, what makes ethical values possible and compelling, and what is the meaning of our lives on this planet.

Cuba—Socialism's Fading Legacy

BY GEORGE VRADENBURG

CUBA RECENTLY CELEBRATED THE FIFTIETH anniversary of the Castro Revolution. The celebration was a quiet affair. Raul Castro, Fidel's successor, made a short, uninspiring speech. Fidel was nowhere to be seen (he's alive, but suffering from what is thought to be a debilitating case of diverticulitis).

This writer recently had the opportunity to visit Cuba as part of a Council on Foreign Affairs fact-finding trip to experience firsthand this mysterious neighbor just off our Florida coast.

Anyone advocating socialism needs to visit Cuba to learn of the choking, oppressive environment it creates, so hostile to individual initiative, prosperity, innovation, and political expression.

My overwhelming impression was one of sadness. Sadness that Old Havana's marvelous Spanish colonial architecture has decayed—the pockmarked buildings are propped up with fragile wooden scaffolding. And post-Revolution construction is Soviet-style—concrete, boxy, ugly. Cars, many of them once brightly colored 1950s Chevys, are now fragile rusty remnants with Russian engines, spewing black exhaust everywhere. There is little retail enterprise since the state owns virtually all land, property, and economic activity; individual enterprise exists only at the margin. Billboards rally Cubans against a hostile United States with political slogans, not with advertisements for new products.

Sadness, too, at the loss of the possibilities the Cuban and American people would experience if our relationship were the kind one would expect of close neighbors.

Cuba is a beautiful island. Most Americans, if they recall Cuba at all, remember only the glamorous nightclubs, hotels, and beaches of a Mafia-controlled, anything-goes culture so vividly portrayed in Coppola's "The Godfather: Part II." That reality ended abruptly with the 1959 takeover by Castro. Shortly after our failed 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion, Fidel turned to a full-throated embrace of the Soviet Union and Marxist-Leninist socialism, leading the two countries to end formal ties and causing the United States to adopt a strict economic embargo. And so, for almost fifty years, our relationship with Cuba has been frozen in political and economic amber, becoming one of the few remaining relics of the Cold War.

Those who left Cuba having suffered at Fidel's hand want the United States to have nothing to do with Cuba unless and until Fidel, Raul, and the entire regime are gone. Senator Menendez of New Jersey, a vigorous opponent of change in Cuba policy, tells the story of his father, a labor organizer, who was arrested and shot by firing squad without trial when Fidel outlawed all independent trade unions.

Will the socialist regime fold following the death of Fidel and Raul Castro? Not likely, at least not soon. Simply put, the American policy of forcing regime change in socialist Cuba through political and economic isolation has failed. Socialist Cuba has proven

more economically resilient and more resistant to political change than advocates of U.S. policies had expected. Cuba now has foreign relations with over 180 nations; trading relations with Canada, Spain, Venezuela, China, and Brazil, among others; and a political system that its people seem neither interested in changing nor in a position to change, even if so inclined.

Cubans, by most measures, are poor. Yet the Cuban education and health care systems are free and universal, and literacy rates are among the highest in the world. A Cuban, on average, has the same life expectancy as an American. Amazingly, 20,000 Cuban doctors are on duty in Venezuela, providing Cuba a major injection (over \$2.5 billion annually) of export earnings. In Cuba, there is not the extreme income inequality that has generated the social and political instability found in other Latin nations.

And, notwithstanding Stalin-style political and military controls firmly rooted in every neighborhood and rural area of the country, there is a degree of religious and artistic freedom. In the stunningly beautiful Museum of Fine Art in the heart of Havana were fascinating examples of political and homoerotic art, quite unexpected in this otherwise tightly controlled environment.

The leadership of the country clearly wants to normalize relationships with the United States and to open up tourism and trade with Americans without permitting private ownership or loosening its tightly controlled political system. Open trading and travel relationships with the United States would no doubt provide some greater economic opportunity and prosperity for Cubans in the tourism and trade sectors, although the Cuban government may not appreciate the politically corrosive power of economic freedom that would result from millions of American tourists and normal business ties. But real economic prosperity is not likely until Cuba allows greater private investment in its economy, both by foreigners and by Cubans themselves.

Change is in the offing. The transition from Fidel to Raul is shifting the focus of Cuba's leadership from revolutionary ideology to economic pragmatism, a shift which, while almost indiscernible to Americans, is, after fifty years, dramatic to Cubans, 70 percent of whom were born after the Revolution. And, in the United States, Obama and many in the U.S. Congress are signaling their readiness to jettison anachronistic, Cold War restrictions on family visitation, remittances, and trade. Like our trade with communist China, this country is likely to adopt the view that open trading relationships will produce an aspiring middle class that will not long tolerate political oppression.

So, the amber in which Cuban-American relations were frozen may be melting.

And perhaps the sadness that now envelops visitors to Cuba will become a thing of the past. ■

George Vradenburg is publisher of Tikkun, and often disagrees with our editorial opinions.

Personal Note on Cancer: My surgeon believes that all the cancer in my lung was eliminated when she removed the upper lobe of my left lung. Given the 25-40 percent recurrence rate during the first five years after such surgery, she will be monitoring my health. To give me adequate recovery time, we had to postpone the *Tikkun*/NSP conference which we had publicized for the end of April (I would have been well enough to be there, but not to have engaged in the hard work of organizing it that would have had to take place in late February and early March. We will reschedule. Meanwhile, I'm giving lots of attention to the important task of healing.

The Economic Meltdown

Don't Try to Put Humpty Dumpty Together Again

WHAT A WONDERFUL MOMENT TO BE ALIVE! For fifty years I've been hearing the recurrent message that nothing fundamental can be changed in our society. Whatever problems we face can be dealt with by tinkering with existing legal and economic arrangements. For most of that period, politics was about the struggle between those who wanted the arrangements to tilt a little bit more toward the interests of those who had been left out of the great material success of the Western world and those who wanted it to tilt a little bit more toward enriching the already wealthy and powerful.

Now, all of a sudden and without much warning, the entire capitalist system is in crisis. While the media and the politicians of both parties try to focus our attention on how to repair the system with some tinkering here and there, a growing number of Americans are wondering if the whole system really should be put back together, or if we should instead be using this moment of crisis to fundamentally transform the realities that have shaped our lives for so long.

To be in such a moment and take it seriously is a true blessing. The current moment allows the human race to move from being an object in someone else's system to becoming the subject of our own history and destiny. Suddenly we have choices to make that never faced us before and we can create realities that just a few years ago would have been ridiculed as utopian or worse.

Of course, such moments come with plenty of downsides, as well. Huge numbers of people are being thrown out of work, others are losing their homes, and still others are losing their life savings. But if we truly embrace the possibilities of the moment, we can solve these problems and many more.

To embrace the possibilities of the moment means to stand outside the political frame developed by the media and the politicians. There is a growing consensus among progressive economists that the Obama administration's economic program is vastly inadequate to stop a developing global depression, even though it may bring temporary relief to some of those suffering from the economic meltdown's impact. This puts progressives in



a difficult position. On the one hand, we want to defend Obama's budget from the ludicrous attacks being launched by Neanderthal Republicans, as well as by unreconstructed neoliberals, whom the media misname as "Democratic centrists." On the other hand, we know that the fundamentals underlying Obama's economic policies are wrong even in the short run. And we fear that Obama is squandering the huge amount of goodwill he had coming into office on policies that have nothing to do with the reasons why liberals and progressives supported him in the first place.

Obama's basic error is that he has decided that saving the Wall Street bankers and investors is his number one priority. Whatever else you may say about this policy, it has nothing to do with the calls of "Yes, we can" or "Change." It's the same old trickle-down approach that has governed American politics since the New Deal fell out of favor fifty years ago. The most respected and visible progressive economist, Nobel laureate in economics Paul Krugman, details every week some of the conceptual muddles that underlie Obama's economic team, but so far Obama is not listening. In this issue of *Tikkun*, we have several articles that deeply explore this issue and specifically discuss how Obama is missing the mark. Moreover—and what a testimony this is to the possibility of transformation—Thomas Friedman, whom we have persistently critiqued for his blind subservience to the religion of the marketplace, has had an intellectual conversion away from the one-dimensionality of his earlier writings (remember his demeaning articles against those who protested the Seattle globalization meetings and his lavish awe at the efficiencies of Wal-Mart and other multi-nationals in *The World Is Flat*). He is now writing columns in the *New York Times* acknowledging that getting the old system back and running in the old way would be a disaster for the environment.

So this historical moment calls for something far more imaginative and radical than the Obama administration is likely to come up with. Some will argue that the problem is Obama himself. Obama—a very decent human being, with good civil libertarian instincts, who came into political consciousness after the 1960s—came to believe that the main problem in American politics was a lack of civility and mutual respect. (This was a reasonable conclusion for those who experienced the worst of the Left's "political correctness," which was at its height in the 1980s and early 1990s, long after the decline and disintegration of the 1960s movements that were far fresher and more alive than those dogmas would have indicated. It was also reasonable given the ruthless destructiveness of the Newt Gingrich-led Republican extremists who blocked so much of what might have happened during the Clinton administration.)

But tolerance and respect for differences of political opinions led Obama to a wrong conclusion: that ideological commitments of any sort must lead to intolerance, and hence one should not allow one's political judgments to be shaped by larger worldviews. On this account, Obama's cabinet choices, his willingness to support escalation of the war in Afghanistan, and his selection of Clinton-era economists who had participated in shaping the very economic policies that led to the collapse were all part of Obama's desire to please everyone, to show the Republicans that he could be a centrist who would accommodate their desires, that he would not be the president of the Left. Now that this approach has blown up in his face as Republicans have stood virtually unanimously against his already watered-down programs (watered-down to meet their potential objections), perhaps Obama can be weaned from that strategy and led into a broader vision that actually confronts the monumental nature of the meltdown.

There is, however, a less sanguine interpretation: that the ideology of anti-ideology is simply another face of global capitalism. The neoliberal policies that are now crumbling before us were

brilliant attempts to extend the basic underlying philosophy of capitalism—that the common good is best served when everyone pursues his or her own economic interests. Neoliberals let those policies rip without restraint so that the rich could get far richer and maybe have some of that wealth trickle down to the rest of the society.

But to be non-ideological in a world in which one out of every three people is living on less than \$2 a day is to be a champion of inequality, even when one sheds crocodile tears and throws a few billion dollars toward "foreign aid." So, even though he may not realize it, Obama is riddled through and through with the fundamental assumptions of the capitalist marketplace. He will not allow himself to see that the attractive Christian values that he adopted when under the influence of Rev. Jeremiah A. Wright actually stand in marked contrast and critique of the market values that continue to shape the worldview of his major advisers.

So spiritual progressives must move beyond the struggles of the moment (are Republicans or Democrats winning the current debate, whatever that happens to be?) and provide a different frame. We have to remind people that when the economic system was going full force not long ago, it was also on an immediate collision course with the environment. Moreover, the extremes of selfishness and "looking out for number one" that led so many of the "big guys" in the economy to loot their own firms for the sake of personal advantage were not a product of individual pathology but rather an inevitable working out of the essence of the capitalist ethos and its primary appeal (that if you focus on your own needs and maximize your own interests, without regard to the well-being of others, you can "make it" and have a very comfortable life).

In short, the system that our political leaders are trying to revive is morally bankrupt and environmentally dangerous. Plans to rev up the system so that it can return to those good old days are fundamentally irrational. Rather, we need to ask how we can create a new global economic system that promotes a New Bottom Line. We need a system under which institutions, corporations, public policies, laws, and even individual behaviors are perceived as "rational," "productive," or "efficient" not only to the extent that they produce power or money or new technologies for someone, but also to the extent that they enhance our capacities and our desire to be loving and caring, kind and generous, and ethically and ecologically sensitive. We need an economy that helps us become more capable of transcending a narrow utilitarian or instrumental approach to other human beings and to the planet. We need a system that allows us to develop our capacities for awe, wonder, and radical amazement at the grandeur of the universe and the dignity of other human beings.

This is too important a task to be left to the economists, political scientists, Washington policy mavens, journalists, columnists, and talk show hosts (though we do wish there were more like Jon Stewart and Amy Goodman). We need a grassroots movement of people meeting together in their communities in "After Capitalism" groups and discussing their own ideas about how to create a better global economy. Spiritual progressives should play a central role in stimulating these discussions—not only in every church, synagogue, mosque, and ashram, but also on college

campuses, in union halls, in professional organizations, and at town meetings. Just as the American Revolution was stimulated by “committees of correspondence” in which people met and shared their ideas about what should replace British rule, today we need a democratic mobilization for this kind of discussion.

But we are not unaware of the tremendous obstacles to creating such a movement. First, there is the Left itself, with its propensity to critique rather than to propose new options. The perceived failure of communist and socialist ideals in the twentieth century took an immense toll on the willingness of progressives to envision a new social system, and so they became most comfortable criticizing what is, rather than proposing and leading struggles for what might be.

Second, there is a deep and pervasive pessimism in the West about the possibility of ever creating a society in which people routinely act in altruistic and generous ways toward others. There is a sense that socialist hopes were naive, and that the naiveté had much to do with the idea that a new social structure could create an unselfish kind of person, or that people could rather dramatically change into unselfish people in some other way, through religious conversion, or conversion to a dream of a new socialist society. We feel sadder and wiser, more informed by psychology about how ornery we human beings are, how unconscious much of our behavior is, and how much therapy we seem to need just to treat our families or even ourselves well, let alone restructure the entire economy to run on non-monetary rewards. Animal behavior studies and evolutionary psychology have taught us that we do have a human nature: we are both cooperative and self- and kin-centered. So we can’t just *imagine* ourselves into unselfish cooperative roles: we also need cultural innovations and incentives that acknowledge and work practically with both the cooperative and selfish sides of our nature.

Much of the writing that has appeared in this magazine for the past twenty-three years—as well as in the books we’ve produced, such as *Surplus Powerlessness*, *The Politics of Meaning*, *Spirit Matters*, and *The Left Hand of God*—has been directed at showing the powerful ways that our society induces in us this sense of pessimism about ourselves and each other, while largely ignoring all the instances in which people have manifested cooperation, caring, and genuine altruism toward each other throughout history and in the past eighty years. The struggle on the part of conservatives to diminish the huge levels of cooperation that made possible the New Deal and that characterized many of the movements of the 1960s and 1970s have been successful in part because of their control over the media, the educational system, and the government.

But we can’t totally attribute to elites the pessimism that leads people away from political movements and into a frenzy of consumerism as a compensation for the absence of caring community. The economy itself fosters an ethos of “looking out for number one” that I’ve described most fully in *The Left Hand of God*—and that ethos is then massively reinforced as people bring the “common sense” of the “real world” into their personal relationships and end up treating others as instruments for their own satisfaction and needs. Our daily experience of being disappointed with others for not really being there for us when we

need them plays a major role in making people passive, even at this moment when collective action is so badly needed.

You can probably think of other things that make it hard to build a serious Left movement: the very little time most of us have for anything besides work and family, as “time-saving” devices such as computers and cell phones have extended work life into our private time; our deep suspicion of progressive leaders that leads us to chase away some of the most talented people; and the ego-tripping and insensitivity to each other that often manifests in groups where there is no agreed-upon agenda or facilitator. The good news about these is that in the past thirty years the culture around the Left has generated a much higher level of psychological sophistication, expertise in communication, and skill in running meetings and resolving disputes, and this wisdom can be brought into a newly emerging movement.

Finally, there is the absence of a spiritual dimension to progressive politics without which it is hard to sustain commitment for any kind of long-term struggle. People going to meetings of the Left often find that the organizations created on the Left may champion the ideal of caring for the victims of capitalism but rarely provide active caring for the activists themselves. And without that kind of attention, people quickly burn out and leave their activism behind.

The real question facing us today is whether the seriousness of the contemporary crisis can lead people to transcend these dynamics enough to form a coherent movement that could address the need for a vision for *after capitalism*. And that, of course, depends on your choices—nothing we can say will guarantee the creation of such a movement, and the most we can do is help provide guidance and vision.

In the last few issues of *Tikkun*, including this one, we’ve been encouraging a discussion of what the world could look like after capitalism, and we will continue that discussion in future issues. We can provide some of the vision. You can provide some of the vision, too. We invite you to send your own ideas (300 words or less) focused on specific aspects of a new global economic and political arrangement, and we’ll publish the best of them on our website.

One place to start in this thinking is the Bible, because it is a compendium of thinking by people who believed in the importance of replacing selfishness and materialism with generosity and love. Let me take one example. The Torah explicitly forbids loaning money for interest. If we applied that idea today, we’d quickly realize that instead of trying to bail out the selfishness-oriented banks, we should instead let the market work its wonders so that those banks that fail are allowed to fail (caveat: with the FDIC protection of individual accounts, which should be insured up to \$500,000 per person). While that is happening, we should create a national bank that gives interest-free loans to anyone who can make a reasonable case that he or she will be able to use these loans to pay for education, for the creation or expansion of small businesses, for the purchase of a house at actual value, or for other worthwhile goals. The only charges should be those needed to finance the cost of the employees of the bank and the buildings in which they are located, but the national banks should not make a profit and should act as manifestations of our

collective caring for each other.

Meanwhile, what about all those losing jobs in the short run? Spiritual progressives should be calling for a five-year extension of unemployment benefits. We should also support raising the level of benefits at a minimum to a “living wage” as determined in each area of the country. Yet we should avoid the mistake of liberal politics in the past, which attended only to economic benefits without seeking to foster an ethos of a caring community. One place to start would be to provide paying jobs for the unemployed—but directing those jobs toward societal needs. The New Deal employed artists to paint, poets and writers to write, and took some steps to build a culture of caring. A dramatically expanded program for the unemployed should address the cultural and spiritual dimension of human needs.

Imagine people trained and employed by the government to visit elderly people who are confined to their homes, to provide

high-quality child care, to assist in creating caring hospitals in which patients feel that the entire community actually cares about their well-being, to rebuild housing for the homeless, to assist teachers who want to give special attention to tutoring students who have fallen behind, and to contribute to their communities in countless other ways. Instead of giving trillions to buy up questionable assets, let's start by assisting ordinary people in a way that explicitly attempts to teach people that there is a “we” here, that we can be trusted to take care of each other.

So please create an After Capitalism discussion in your community and begin this kind of thinking. Once you start this outside-the-box “unrealistic” thinking and realize how much more sense it makes than the cockeyed schemes of the Wall Street-beholden economists, you'll start to see why living in this period can be one of the best times of your life. ■

No, Mr. Netanyahu! No, Avigdor Lieberman!

Do Not Disgrace

All That Is Good in Israel

ON APRIL 1, THE DAY THAT THE NETANYAHU/Lieberman/Barak government coalition took office with fully thirty members of the Knesset appointed to cabinet and subcabinet positions, an Israeli poll indicated that 54 percent of Israelis were already dissatisfied with the coalition. It is a monstrosity cobbled together by the far Right, which will now try to present itself as “mainstream” or “centrist” or some other formulation to cover the fact that Netanyahu ran his campaign on opposition to a two-state solution, and the fact that Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman made racist attacks on Palestinians and promises to curtail their rights or even “transfer” them (we call it “racial cleansing”) to Arab states as part of his campaign. Foreign Minister Lieberman's first act was to announce that all previous agreements by Israel were no longer considered binding.

Their policies will increase the number of West Bank settlers; legitimate the demeaning of not just Palestinians outside Israel but also of Arabs who are citizens of Israel; and maintain the power of religious fundamentalists to impose religious restrictions on the lives of secular Israelis, while simultaneously refusing to acknowledge that Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, and Renewal Judaism have any legitimacy or right to do weddings or conversions. And it will be even harder for the

Israeli government to hide the fact that the primary obstacle to peace is not terrorism, but Israel's insistence on holding onto territory won through military conquest—territory that provides little security but instead intensifies the anger of the world toward Israel and toward those Jews who are willing to shut their eyes to the human rights abuses committed by Israel in order to maintain its occupation of the territories it has dominated since 1967.

But while Israelis themselves were bemoaning the workings of their own electoral system—which resulted in putting the largest vote-getter, Tzipi Livni, into the opposition, while the government emerges as a coalition of special interests, none of which actually speaks for the Israeli majority—the American Jewish community's official organizations wasted little time jumping on board. These organizations' foremost concern has been how to sell Israel's new government to the U.S. public.

The Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* interviewed the head of one of the most influential local Jewish Federation branches in the United States, who declined to be named, and who admitted that the appointment of Avigdor Lieberman is “not good” in terms of public relations. He quickly added, however, that the American Jewish community must nevertheless express support for Israel's government.

“I know Lieberman, he's not an outsider. His views have

support in Israel, even if the American Jewish community doesn't support him," the Jewish Federation leader said. "It's a problem that in the press he's been labeled a fascist, but we must tell the new [U.S.] administration in no uncertain terms: 'He's a minister, talk to him.'"

Many Jewish members of the U.S. House of Representatives have also jumped to defend Israel's new government and sympathize with the challenges faced by Lieberman in the court of public opinion.

Rep. Gary Ackerman, D-N.Y., said: "I think Israel is one of the great democracies in the world, and it just had elections, and we all should celebrate it. Bibi Netanyahu is a very smart guy. And I have a lot of confidence that the prime minister of Israel will do the right thing for the people of Israel."

Rep. Brad Sherman, D-Calif., said: "I think that Lieberman needs to design his rhetoric not only for the domestic Israeli market but for the world as well. It is one thing to say that everyone in public office must pledge allegiance to the flag, and it is another thing to say, 'This particular group, Israeli Arabs, needs to take an oath of loyalty.'"

Rep. Eliot Engel, D-N.Y., said: "The people of Israel have the right to elect any government they like, and no other country, including the U.S., has the right to criticize them or to make negative remarks when Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East." He neglected to mention that when the Palestinians elected a Hamas government, the Bush administration and the Olmert government in Israel refused to talk to them because they didn't like the outcome of that democratic vote.

AIPAC is gearing up in its early May conference to make the ultra-right-wing government appear normal rather than acknowledge, as we do, that it is an extremist rejection of many of the values that made Israel a society deserving of respect even when its policies toward Palestinians were oppressive.

Meanwhile, many on the left will feel confirmed that Israel really is the fascist government they always said it was. We don't agree, but we and the other peace-oriented groups in the United States who support Israel even as we vigorously critique its Occupation policies will be facing severe challenges from both the apologists in the Jewish community and from the more extreme anti-Israel elements on the left. That's one reason why *Tikkun* and the Network of Spiritual Progressives bought an ad in the *Washington Post* to appear just before the AIPAC conference—to remind the media and the Obama administration that many Americans, including many American Jews, do not accept the Netanyahu government as speaking for the best interests of Israel or world Jewry, and calling for the kinds of changes in American foreign policy explained in the next few paragraphs of this editorial. It's not too late to donate to help us reprint that message in other important media venues at www.tikkun.org or by calling 510-644-1200.

The Obama-Clinton foreign policy is likely to resemble that of the Clinton years, with puffed up talks, lots of diplomacy, and few results. They do desire to calm the Muslim world, and yet wish to do that without actually putting any serious pressure on Israel to end the Occupation. But pressure wouldn't be such a great idea

either, unless directed toward an appropriate goal. Worst-case scenario: Obama and Clinton push Netanyahu into agreeing to an ersatz two-state solution, namely, one in which Palestinians control a set of cities geographically separated from each other by Israeli settlements and the Israeli Army, in a West Bank crisscrossed by Israeli checkpoints and superhighways from Israel to settlements that Palestinians are prohibited from using. This scenario would still resemble the current reality, even though it would be described as a Palestinian state. It's not hard to imagine a Palestinian government so broken in spirit that it might agree to that ersatz state, with a vote in the United Nations. But such a state would be neither economically nor politically viable internally, nor would it provide a solution to the several million Palestinian refugees languishing in exile. The humiliation and



NETANYAHU



LIEBERMAN

powerlessness of most Palestinians would continue, and we'd soon see a return to violence by younger Palestinians who would say the state they got was not a good deal. They'd say the new state was not negotiated by representatives of the entire Palestinian people, and they'd be correct about that. Until we deal with the humiliation and oppression visited upon the Palestinian people, and until Israel, the Jewish people, and people in the United States can all do public repentance for our/their roles in co-creating (with the Palestinians) the current mess, all the political posturing will never reach the hearts of the Palestinian people and will hence have little lasting significance.

And here's one little thing the Obama administration should do, despite its political constraints: demand that an independent international judicial body be created to investigate the charges of human rights violations that have taken place in the Israeli/Palestinian struggle, separate propaganda from fact, and come up with a set of findings that may include indictments of human rights violators in the government and army of Israel, as well as in Hamas and Hezbollah.

Given the unlikelihood that the Obama administration would be willing to take the political risk of challenging the Israel Far Right Lobby and pushing Israel toward a viable Palestinian state, the one significant thing it might be able to do is convene an international conference of all the key players, including the twenty-two Arab states that recently reiterated their commitment to the Saudi peace proposal, which involves full recognition and diplomatic relations and permanent peace in exchange for a return of Israel to its 1967 borders. The conference should also include the European states and other major global players such as Russia, China, Japan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Pakistan, India, South Africa, Brazil, Mexico, Canada, and Iran. Such a conference could work if the United States agreed to help impose a solution on the parties to the conflict rather than allow the whole event to fail. It was the international community that gave legitimacy to the creation of Israel in 1947–48, and it is that same community that could have the moral suasion to resolve the conflict today. But to do so, such a conference would have to embody a spiritual progressive consciousness, in which reconciliation, repentance, atonement, healing the wounds of humiliation, and assuaging the terror that still dominates Jewish and Palestinian consciousness would have to be a major focus and a prerequisite for all political negotiations. Otherwise, there is a danger of the whole thing turning into a "bash Israel" event, which would be counterproductive: such an event would further freeze Israelis into the sort of reactive and fear-driven politics that produced the current reactionary government.

What are we, people who care deeply about Israel and Palestine, to do? Here's one proposal worthy of consideration as a way of forcing serious movement on the two-state solution: mount a one-state solution campaign demanding "one person one vote: let West Bank and Gazan Palestinians vote in Israeli elections." If such a campaign got sufficient energy in the West, it might push Israelis into being willing to participate in the kind of two-state solution that would be viable. But though such a campaign could have resonance in the West, it would likely be stifled by one

important fact: most Palestinians and most Israelis don't want a single state; each group wants its own state. But as a tactical move, such a campaign might put pressure on Obama to use some of his power to get real movement toward a two-state solution. We are not endorsing this strategy, rather we are calling for a larger public discussion of it within the peace forces.

Our task as spiritual progressives is different and deeper: to remind all the sides of this struggle to keep in mind that it is only when there is real compassion shown by each side toward the other that any political solution can work. So even while we put forward our critique of Netanyahu in the American media, we simultaneously insist on trying to switch the dialogue from what to pressure Israel to do to what we in the West can do. And here we have a powerful, if difficult to achieve, solution. The most powerful thing spiritual progressives could do is build a movement that changes the way Americans think about our role in the world, so that we no longer believe that homeland security must be achieved through domination. We had hoped that Obama himself might be the vehicle for that switch, but the reasoning behind his escalation of U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan is going in exactly the wrong direction. We in the spiritual progressive world must insist on a radical turnaround in American thinking, so that we realize and then teach the world that security can best be obtained through generosity (that's what the Domestic and Global Marshall Plan is all about). Imagine if such an initiative began with a special focus on rebuilding Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Sderot, and Iraq. That could happen—but only if we all become involved in building the campaign for the Global Marshall Plan.

But until we succeed in creating a national debate about the fundamental paradigm governing foreign policy, we can expect to see more of the same craziness that led the United States into Vietnam and Iraq and now into escalating in Afghanistan and Pakistan. And for the Middle East, the most likely result is that instead of forging "change" as Obama promised, the Obama team will simply slip into the existing frame of political thought. Lacking visionary strategy, the Obama administration's time will be absorbed in restraining the Israeli militarists from doing more damage; keeping them from striking at Iran, Gaza, or Lebanon; decrying their racist measures against Israeli Arabs; and dissuading them from expanding West Bank settlements. And for us who care deeply about the well-being of Israelis and Palestinians, there will be more sorrow ahead. ■

INTERNS SOUGHT FOR SEPTEMBER 2009-MAY 2010

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God is Becoming: Consolation in the Face of Tragedy

by Bradley Artson

After the death of a musician, husband, and father who was a beloved student and friend of many at the American Jewish University, Rabbi Artson found that several members of the community felt unable to comprehend how God could have let this tragedy happen; some spoke of feeling betrayed or unable to pray. He wrote the following to help some of his students regain their faith and "to understand better the way the world unfolds."

I START WITH THE BELIEF THAT WE PERCEIVE THE WORLD AS A COLLECTION OF things—mostly static, isolated objects that interact but remain separate. Being is the core of that ontology. I believe that science joins faith to demonstrate that this perception is a distortion.

The core of reality is not being (which is an intellectual abstraction) but becoming, which is the key characteristic of all, including God. The universe is a welter of endless change, as we and all around us reach the present as the result of the choices we have made, the "choices" creation has made, and the God-infused lure toward innovation, creativity, and righteousness that is always inviting us toward goodness. Process thinker Charles Hartshorne referred to that not as "ontology" but as "Hyathology," from God's dynamic name revealed to Moshe—I am becoming what I am becoming (*ehyeh asher ehyeh*).

I believe that God, in choosing to create, created us really. That means that our independence is not illusory or ephemeral. We, along with all creation, have real agency, and the choices we make are truly untrammelled, unprogrammed, and unforeseen by God. God is vulnerable to surprise and disappointment just as we are. The universe unfolds according to its own inner logic; the laws of physics operate, and God cannot/does not suspend them based on moral standards. As Rabbi Harold Kushner says, asking the universe to treat you better because you are moral is like expecting the bull not to charge because you are a vegetarian. I believe that God did irrevocable *tzimtzum* (withdrawal), creating the reality of our own autonomy and agency, along with all creation.

I believe that people misunderstand the nature of divine "power" as coercive, as omnipotence, which I regard as a philosophical mistake, a religious disaster, and a source of emotional and ethical torment. Thinking of God as having all the power leaves us rightly feeling betrayed and abandoned ("was I not good enough for God to intervene?"). It leaves theologians in the position of Job's friends—discounting our core ethical knowledge in an attempt to defend the indefensible. We do know good and evil: God infuses us with that awareness. And someone dying young, someone struggling with special needs, illness,

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"Stay" by Chris Dennis.

to find God in the steady constant lure toward good choices and responsibility. And that God did not disappoint.

One last thought: if God is the ultimate exemplar of process, of the focus on becoming rather than being, then God absorbs and is affected by all that happens, by all our choices, by the ways that nature proceeds. Our sorrows are not lost—they permanently become part of the divine. Our joys and our lives are not forgotten, they are eternally and objectively real in the divine mind. In that way, I can affirm that my student's life is not ended, although he is no longer visible to our eyes. He, too, is a process, and the process never ends.

In the face of loss and grief, I offer the affirmation that our love and prayers and heart connect us to each other and to creation—that feeling the beauty around us, smelling its scents, touching the earth and sky, connecting to others, working for justice, these are encounters with all and the All, and they offer the relationship and connection that is life's true consolation. ■

or poverty is indefensible, especially if God is omnipotent. Hiding behind "it's a mystery," or "we can't understand," or "it's all for the best" is, in my opinion, worse than unsatisfying, because it requires either blaming the victim or denying our ethical compass.

I don't think we have to abandon a conviction of a loving God. But I invite us to grow past an almighty one. If God has truly ceded to creation the ability to make choices, then God didn't kill the innocent, didn't allocate disability, didn't impose poverty. Looking for God in special effects causes us to mistake theater or science fiction for life. God is found not in the suspension of nature's laws, but in the intrusion of novelty and surprise from within fixed law, in the abiding nature of hope, and in the transforming power of love (a power that is persuasive, not coercive).

When my beloved student struggled with what became a terminal illness, I saw God being very busy throughout his struggle—in moments of laughter and song, in the strength of the relating that bound us all as a community and kept my student feeling connected through his very last minutes, in the determination to be there with and for his family throughout and beyond the ordeal. I never expected God to guarantee an outcome or suspend the natural. I did expect

What St. John Said about the Economic Meltdown

by Tony Campolo

OF ALL THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, *THE REVELATION OF ST. JOHN the Divine* always struck me as the least relevant to life in today's world—until this year. My attitude toward *The Revelation* has changed with this unfolding economic crisis. What I find in that book, especially in its latter chapters, now speaks to me and brings me under conviction.

When St. John wrote *The Revelation*, he was prescribing how Christians were supposed to understand themselves and live in the context of the ancient Roman Empire. Increasingly, they had defined themselves as a people who had their citizenship in what they believed was another kingdom, namely, the Kingdom of God. They had come to see themselves as aliens in what they more and more viewed as a sociopolitical system dominated by corrupted "principalities and powers."

"Babylon" was the code word that St. John used for the empire, so whenever we read "Babylon" in the latter chapters of the *Book of Revelation*, we should substitute in our minds, "The Roman Empire." Babylon, given this decoding, was a reference to the dominant political-economic social order wherein first-century Christians were required to live out what amounted to a countercultural lifestyle.

If we are to relate what John wrote about his Babylon 2,000 years ago to our own contemporary existential social situation, we should recognize that what he said about the Roman Empire is applicable to every societal system in which Christians are required to live out their witness. That means that in France, the French political-economic system is Babylon. In Japan, the Japanese system is Babylon. We, however, live in the United States, which means that our Babylon is the American political-economic social order. For us, what John had to say about his Babylon is relevant and revealing to what is happening in our country, especially in the face of the present economic meltdown.

First of all, we can figure out from the eighteenth chapter of *The Book of Revelation* that our Babylon, like all Babylons, is doomed to fall. What is especially revealing is that the Babylon of which John wrote falls because its lifestyle is marked by a consumerism that exhausts the resources necessary for it to be sustained. Everything is for sale in Babylon. John lists them in Revelation 18:12-13:

... gold, silver, jewels and pearls, fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet, all kinds of scented wood, all articles of ivory, all articles of costly wood, bronze, iron, and marble, cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, olive oil, choice flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, slaves—and human lives.

There is an obvious parallel in this to the American Babylon. Ours is a consumeristic lifestyle that exhausts 42 percent of the world's resources, even though Americans constitute just 6 percent of the world's population. Our consumerism, like that of the Roman Empire,

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"And they threw dust on their heads, as they wept and mourned, crying out, Alas, alas..."

Specialist Peter Mazza has a hard day at the New York Stock Exchange on February 23, 2009, when the Dow Jones average tumbled another 251 points to its lowest close since October 28, 1997.

brings down our Babylon. Whether our political-economic system collapses in the immediate future as a result of our present crisis, or at some time in the future, is hard to predict. Frankly, it sure looks like now!

When our Babylon falls, there will be two reactions. The first will be the reaction of those whom the Bible names as "the merchants." We read that they weep ...

... and cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning, "What city was like the great city?" And they threw dust on their heads, as they wept and mourned, crying out, "Alas, alas, the great city, where all who had ships at sea grew rich by her wealth! For in one hour she has been laid waste (Revelation 18:18-19).

Reading such verses brings to mind those photos on the front page of the *New York Times* that showed the brokers on the floor of the Stock Exchange, wringing their hands, with others shaking their heads as they watched the Dow Jones average drop as much as 500 points in one session. Like the merchants described in Revelation 18:11, they "weep and mourn, since no one buys their cargo anymore." We can almost hear the CEOs of Chrysler, Ford, and General Motors wailing like the merchants described in the Bible, crying, "People aren't buying our cars anymore!" Those merchants in shopping centers, unable to move the stocks of consumer goods, join the chorus and are heard to bemoan that even with sales of 70 percent off, they can't find the buyers they need to move their stock and stay in business.

But there's another reaction to the collapse of Babylon. It can be heard in the shouts of a great assembly. The shouts are coming from people who are committed to God and His Kingdom. With acclamations of praise they say, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power to our God, for his judgments are true and just; he has judged the great whore who corrupted the earth with her fornication" (Revelation 19:1b-2a).

Babylon is called a whore because, like a whore, it has seduced people. Those whose citizenship and commitments have been in Babylon have been seduced into a comfortable "dainty" lifestyle of consumerism and now are having to face the reality that this lifestyle has come to an end. They are being forced to realize:

"The fruit for which your soul longed has gone from you, and all your dainties and your splendor are lost to you, never to be found again!" ... and the sound of harpists and minstrels and of flutists and trumpeters will be heard in you no more; and an artisan of any trade will be found in you no more; and the sound of the millstone will be heard in you no more; and the light of a lamp will shine in you no more; and the voice of bridegroom and bride will be heard in you no more; for your merchants were the magnates of the earth, and all nations were deceived by your sorcery (Revelation 18:14, 22-23).

As the news of the collapse of Babylon spreads, the people of God *(continued on page 69)*

The New Saints

by Phillip Barcio

CAN SAINTHOOD BE REDEFINED IN PROGRESSIVE TERMS? FOR THE PAST DECADE, an artist named Mark Dukes has been demonstrating that it can.

Dukes recently completed a ten-year commission to create a giant, neo-Byzantine, iconographic mural titled *The Dancing Saints*, which covers the entire modernist rotunda of St. Gregory of Nyssa Church, home to a progressive Episcopalian community in the Potrero Hill neighborhood of San Francisco.

The art world is strewn with the relics of entire careers that did not span ten years.

For comparison's sake, it took Michelangelo four years and seven months to complete his work on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

The Dancing Saints commemorates ninety men and women from history, as well as several children and animals, whose stories elucidate by their example the congregation of St. Gregory's contemporary, spiritually progressive definition of saintliness. The saints are depicted hand-in-hand, smiling and dancing in a circle with Jesus of Nazareth.

This roll call of new saints may bring a smile to your face. Included are Black Elk, Cesar Chavez, John Coltrane, Charles Darwin, Fyodor Dostoevski, Albert Einstein, Ella

The Dancing Saints mural by Mark Dukes at St. Gregory of Nyssa Church in San Francisco includes many historical figures not usually thought of as saints, at least in a Christian context. Below, left to right: Margaret Mead, anthropologist and Episcopalian; Sadi, a medieval Persian Sufi poet; W. Edwards Deming, statistician and quality expert; and Sergius, one of two third-century Roman soldiers celebrated as martyrs for their Christian faith, who were described as lovers in the earliest text about them (a point not so well publicized).

Phillip Barcio is a writer living in San Francisco's Mission District. In his spare time he photographs and categorizes litter for the Real San Francisco blog (realsanfrancisco.blogspot.com).





Christ dances at the center. This view includes, counterclockwise from top right, Queen Liliuokalani, Simone Weil, Martha Graham, and Mother Lucy Wright, an early Shaker leader who developed choreographic sacred dance. The mural hall, or rotunda, is designed and used for sacred congregational dancing. To read descriptions of the many saints depicted in the mural, visit godsfriends.org/Vol8/No2/Dancing_Saints.html.

Fitzgerald, Anne Frank, Martha Graham, Abraham Joshua Heschel, Queen Liliuokalani, Thurgood Marshall, Lady Godiva, Mary Magdalene, Eleanor Roosevelt, Rumi, Shakespeare, Sojourner Truth, Morihei Ueshiba (the founder of aikido), Mohandas Gandhi, Simone Weil, and Malcolm X.

In the words of St. Gregory's founding member, Donald Schell:

In addition to our primary goal of showing an image of God's many and diverse ways of working in people's lives, our aim was to achieve a reasonable representation of men and women and a few children from different historical periods, life roles, and kinds of work. Whenever we heard or felt, "of course, we have to include ..." we paused and gave that person an extra skeptical scrutiny, trying to push our list beyond a self-evident "hall of fame" and further, beyond mainstream church consensus, stretching our thinking and enlarging our gratitude for grace overflowing in so many startling and different lives.

In this age marked by fear-mongering, divisive cultural warfare against Islam, and attacks on homosexuality and multiculturalism, St. Gregory's boldly puts forward a new, inclusive, contemporary vision of sanctity.

Beneath this powerful image is the church's altar, around which St. Gregory's member Sara Miles hosts the congregation's weekly community food pantry.

"On Fridays, our sanctuary is a vision of God's ridiculous, over-the-top abundance," Miles says. "Outside the pantry our people are gathering: A bunch of second-graders chasing each other up and down the sidewalk, screeching happily. A cluster of Moldavian refugees. A very sick prostitute and her faithful, exhausted friend, sitting together on the steps, sharing a cigarette. Some gossipy Salvadoran moms. A few tattooed ex-cons. An old woman with her Bible. We set up a table outside with pitchers of cool water and glasses, and talk with everyone. People start to go in to get groceries: some give us stacks of plastic bags, or offer to take a turn helping at the table. A few have brought food—a couple slices of birthday cake, a box of powdered milk, some extra cans of corn—to share. It takes so little to see God in this world. You just have to open the door."

As Dukes applied the finishing touches on this ten-year work of art and faith, he shared with me his personal contemplation about the power of the mural's message.





The dancing saint whose life, in Dukes's opinion, most poignantly embodies the essence of the message of the work is Malcolm X, above.

"There is a universal consensus of religious ideals," Dukes says. "Maybe not religious practice, but religious ideals. Like humility. Like peace. Like hope. That's what [the mural] is about. It's about love. God is love."

The Dancing Saint whose life, in Dukes's opinion, most poignantly embodies the message of the work is Malcolm X.

"The justification for having him here is very powerful," Dukes says. "Here is someone who was a gangster. A racist. So he went from that, and he grew. And I think that's holy, to be on that spiritual quest. No one starts out perfect, and very many people don't end up perfect either. It's the quest. He had a revelation of seeing all men as being brothers. No more, 'if you're black you're my brother, and if you're white you're a devil.'"

He adds: "We have a God of second chances and third chances. God forgives us, and God is our example. It's not about judging some certain person at a certain point in their life. It's about seeing the whole of their life. That's what the people of St. Gregory's were trying to do."

To exemplify that point, the congregation took a risk by including one person in the mural who is still among the living: South African cultural revolutionary and Nobel Peace Prize winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

"Because he's still alive," Dukes says, "the story is not finished for him. So he's the only saint who isn't depicted with a halo yet. In all likelihood he is going to maintain his sanctity and at some point, when he's gone, I am going to return and put a halo over Desmond Tutu's head."

Until then, Dukes intends to focus on his next project, an illustrated, iconic fable exploring Dukes's fictional Gospel of Saint Sambo.

"I've reached the point where I believe I want to express something about my experience of being black and thinking about meaning and spirituality in America," Dukes says. "The Gospel of Saint Sambo talks

about the anonymous sanctity of many black people throughout our American history who have endured in hope. Our spirituality hasn't only been about dignity, but also at times simply survival. America is in a place where we could use the wisdom of the African American perspective. We are in a place where we have to start making some hard decisions. Life isn't just about materialism. It isn't just about ego. We need to find another way. That's the challenge. To rein in our power in the service of good. I think that's something a lot of people in this country have been craving."

There are many facets of *The Dancing Saints*, as well as of Dukes's new work, that reflect the core message of progressive spirituality. By transcending existing notions of dogma and history, his pieces remind us that spirituality isn't just one part of our lives, it is interlocked with every aspect of our personalities, our power, and our potential.

The dancing saints call on each of us to be saintlike in our own way, to express ourselves honestly, to become participants in the movement toward love and unity, and to create our own definitions of what is possible in our emerging culture of peace. ■

Why Capitalism Shouldn't Be Saved

by John Sanbonmatsu

FROM ZURICH AND WASHINGTON TO FRANKFURT, London, and Tokyo, all the king's horses and all the king's men—bankers, economists, policy analysts, and government leaders—are trying to put capitalism back together again. But none of them has stopped to ask whether capitalism is worth saving in the first place.

Some will be tempted to dismiss the sort of thought-experiment being conducted in these pages of *Tikkun*—attempts to imagine a possible successor system to capitalism—as so much wishful thinking by a historically defeated Left. Like the boy who cried wolf, socialists predicted the end of capitalism perhaps one too many times in the twentieth century to be taken seriously in the twenty-first. Yet it would be difficult to exaggerate either the profundity of the contemporary crisis, or the importance of developing a viable alternative to the existing order.

Last September, after the United States Treasury injected half a trillion dollars into the monetary system to unthaw the frozen U.S. banking system, Ben Bernanke, the chairman of the Federal Reserve, privately informed members of Congress “that the financial system had come perilously close to collapse.” Only prompt action by the Treasury and Fed, he told them, had prevented “disaster” and “full-scale panic.” The following month, while Iceland teetered on the brink of bankruptcy and Wall Street suffered its worst one-week stock market decline ever, Nicolas Sarkozy, the French president, candidly told reporters that the world economy had indeed been poised “on the edge of an abyss.”

Since last summer, in fact, the governments of the leading industrialized countries have been engaged in an epic behind-the-scenes struggle to keep the global financial and banking system viable. So far, Germany has put up \$679 billion to stabilize its banking system; Britain has spent the



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equivalent of one fifth of its national GDP. Meanwhile, by November of last year, the United States had either spent or assumed financial obligations totaling \$7.8 trillion to stabilize the deteriorating financial sector—a staggering amount equal to half of this country's annual GDP. But even that has not been enough to stanch the blood of capitalism's hemorrhagic fever, which has raged on into the new year. In February—even as President Barack Obama (the national candidate of “hope” only months before) was bluntly warning of “catastrophe” if Congress failed to approve his \$700 billion economic stimulus package—his new head of the Treasury, Timothy Geithner, announced a new plan committing the United States to an additional \$2.1 trillion to stabilize the system. The Dow Jones plummeted an additional 4.6 percent on the news.

As of spring 2009, the leading capitalist states in Europe, North America, and Asia have thus either spent outright, or exposed themselves to financial risks totaling, well over \$10 trillion—a figure so vast that one searches in vain for any relevant historical parallel. By comparison, the entire Marshall Plan to rebuild Europe

after World War II cost a mere \$9.3 billion (in constant 2005 dollars). According to the United Nations, it would cost \$195 billion to eradicate most poverty-related deaths in the Third World, including deaths from malaria, from malnutrition, and from AIDS. So the amount of money committed by policymakers to save capitalism from itself is already *fifty times* greater than what it would take to save tens of millions of human beings from terrible daily suffering and premature death. If the wealthy nations instead invested that \$10 trillion into the economies, health systems, and infrastructure of the Third World, rather than transferring it to the world's richest banks, private financial institutions, and investors, they could usher in a new epoch in the history of the species—a world community in which every human being would be guaranteed a livable life.

That the financial bailout is a colossal misdirection and waste of public resources, however, is not the most scandalous thing about it. What is truly unconscionable is that all this money is being spent to prop up capitalism itself—a mode of economic and social life that has corrupted and hollowed out our democracies, reduced great swaths of the planet's ecosystem to polluted rubble, condemned hundreds of millions of human beings to wretchedness and exploitation, and enslaved billions of other animals in farms that resemble concentration camps.

Why Bail Out a Toxic Ship? Capitalism Leads to Poverty and Ecological Disaster

CAPITALISM IS RIGHTLY CREDITED WITH HAVING UNLEASHED ENORMOUS FORCES OF productivity and technology. But it has also reduced much of the world to ruin and squalor. After *four centuries* of triumph as the dominant mode of global development, capitalism has furnished for itself a world in which one out of two human beings lives on \$2 per day or less, and more than one in three still lacks access to a toilet. Most children in the world never complete their education, and most will live out their lives without dependable medical care. As the world economic crisis deepens, already deplorable conditions in the Third World will only deteriorate further.

Meanwhile, our planet is dying. Or rather, its flesh and blood creatures are. At the height of the financial crisis last year, a Swiss conversation group released a study showing that as many as one-third of known mammals on earth face imminent extinction, perhaps in a

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matter of decades, as a result of habitat destruction and mass killing by human beings. Yet not one of the hundreds of bloggers, news analysts, or politicians at the time thought to connect the dots between this and similar warnings of mass species extinctions and the dominant mode of development, capitalism. Yet it is just this metastatic, expansionist system that has imperiled human civilization and the natural world alike.

So severely has capitalism disrupted the world's climate (the petroleum economy, let us not forget, has been the main pillar of capitalist industrial development for the last 100 years) that even if all carbon emissions were halted tomorrow, scientists now believe that the earth's atmosphere would warm for another 1,000 years. Hundreds of millions of people, and billions of other animals, will be displaced by rising sea levels, or will starve or suffer malnutrition as a result of flooding, drought, and fire, or else will die from illnesses caused by new plague vectors opened up by sudden climate change and a gravely weakened world health system.

In 1997, a group of European academics published a book called *The Black Book of Communism*, in which they documented the brutality and mass killings committed by totalitarian Communist regimes in the course of the twentieth century. Perhaps a group of academics will one day publish a *Black Book of Capitalism*. They should. For when a mode of life that subordinates all human and spiritual values to the pursuit of private wealth persists for centuries, there is a lengthy accounting to be made. Among the innumerable sins that have followed in capitalism's long train, we might mention, for example, the hidden indignities and daily humiliations of the working class and the poor; the strangulation of daily life by corporate bureaucracies such as the HMOs, the telecom companies, and the computer giants; the corruption of art and culture by money; the destruction of eroticism by pornography; the corruption of higher education by corporatization; the ceaseless pitching of harmful products to our children and infants; the obliteration of the natural landscape by strip malls, highways, and toxic dumps; the abuse of elderly men and women by low-paid workers in squalid for-profit institutions; the fact that millions of poor children are sold into sexual slavery, and millions of others are orphaned by AIDS; the fact that tens of millions of women turn to prostitution to pay their bills; and the suffering of the 50 million to 100 million vertebrates that die in scientific laboratories each year. We might also highlight the dozens of wars and civil conflicts that are directly or indirectly rooted in the gross material disparities of the capitalist system—the bloody conflicts that simmer along from month to month, year to year, as though as natural and immutable as the waxing and waning of the moon—in places like Darfur, Rwanda, Congo, Afghanistan, Vietnam, and Iraq, where millions of wretchedly poor people die either at the hands of other wretchedly poor people, or from the bombs dropped from the automated battle platforms of the last surviving superpower. Capitalism is responsible for all this, and more besides. Yet perhaps its most destructive feature—the one that in many ways stands as the greatest single impediment to our own efforts to find a practical and creative solution to the present crisis—is capitalism's fundamental antagonism toward democracy.

Capitalism's Anti-Democratic Tendencies

CAPITALISM'S ANTAGONISM TOWARD POPULAR RULE IS STRUCTURAL—IT IS BUILT INTO THE political DNA of capitalism itself. By nature, if not by design, capitalism is a system in which



The meltdown of the 1930s and this one: same players, different faces. At top: J. Pierpont Morgan, Jr., center, stands before the Senate Banking Committee during an inquiry into J.P. Morgan and Company, June 5, 1933. The group below includes CEOs from Morgan Stanley, JPMorgan Chase, and Goldman Sachs at a House Financial Services Committee hearing on accountability for recipients of TARP bailout funds on February 11, 2009.

a small minority of individuals controls the wealth, labor, production, political power, and cultural expression of the whole of society. Under capitalism, the *demos* is permitted to exert only the mildest, most indirect of influences on the direction of state and society. All of the truly important decisions—the ones that concern what kinds of technologies and commodities get produced, what kinds of laws will be passed, and which wars should be fought (or whether any should be fought at all)—are effectively left in the hands of a small clique whose members are drawn from the ranks of what C. Wright Mills famously called “the power elite.” No matter how many finance reform laws are passed in Congress, the enactment of new laws alone will never be sufficient to neutralize the tremendous discrepancy in power between the wealthy few and the ordinary many.

Secretly, we all know this. None among us is so naive as to believe that an ordinary plumber, teacher, or transit worker commands the same respect or influence on Capitol Hill, or in the Bundestag or the Knesset, as the chief executive officer of Siemens or Bechtel. And while we may profess to be “shocked” upon learning that this or that politician (or presidential appointee) engaged in corrupt activities at the public’s expense, in truth we are seldom surprised at all. Plato warned 2,500 years ago that “in proportion as riches and rich men are honored in the State, virtue and the virtuous are dishonored,” an observation that holds as true today as it did then.

The rich will always be with us.... That phrase, rather than the more familiar one from Matthew 26, is the one that haunts us deep inside, the one we truly heed. The rich may not be like you and me, as F. Scott Fitzgerald put it, but that doesn’t keep us from identifying with them, or from feeling strangely grateful for remaining forever at their mercy. The steel worker is grateful “to have any job at all.” The waitress smiles at having received a tip. The university president is so relieved that her fawning attentions to a wealthy patron have paid off that she doesn’t mind naming the new science building after him. Like hostages taken prisoner by anonymous masked figures, we thus come to identify with our own kidnappers. Capitalism is the Stockholm Syndrome made into a universal condition of humanity.

Thus, when a coalition of progressive unions and grassroots organizations took out a full-page advertisement in the *Times* in March 2009, calling for a rally to protest drastic cuts in New York’s health and public services, the group’s sole demand was for “a modest increase for the top 5 percent of taxpayers.” As if worried that even this demand might seem too forward, the group added: “After three decades of tax cuts, it’s the fair way to avoid harsh cuts that will hurt all of us.” *All of us*—because the wealthy will also suffer when their garbage isn’t picked up, or the police respond slowly to a break-in because of cuts in public safety. Even the grassroots Left (the New York coalition included locals of such groups as the SEIU, the UAW, Acorn, and the Working Families Party) has grown so accustomed to seeing the power structure as inevitable and natural that it believes its only practical recourse lies in begging more crumbs from the tables of the wealthy.

Much Has Changed Since the 1930s

NO ONE CAN KNOW HOW THE PRESENT CRISIS WILL PLAY OUT. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE United States will continue to benefit from an inflated currency, as money from around the world continues to shelter in what is still the safest investment haven around—U.S. Treasury bills. In that case, it is possible, if unlikely, that the Obama administration will be able to ride the tiger and keep things from falling apart utterly. But it is also possible that some unforeseen event or sequence of events might induce foreign investors to suddenly pull their money out of the United States. If that were to happen, the dollar could become worthless and we might see a replay of the Deutsche Mark in 1923, when ordinary Germans paid for loaves of bread with wheelbarrows of money. Either way, the structural contradictions in the world system are profound, and they are not going to go away any time soon.

Unlike in the 1930s, when the advanced industrialized nations essentially spent themselves out of depression, either through massive state investment in public works, coupled with a new social compact with labor (as in the United States, with the New Deal), or through a massive arms buildup and military expansionism at the direction of a

corporatized (fascist) and authoritarian state (as in Germany, Italy, and Japan), the capitalist states have far fewer resources at their command this time around.

First, the state sector already accounts for a large portion of the national economies of the United States, Japan, and Europe. (The United States alone already spends half a trillion dollars per annum on war-making—and that's not counting its wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.) In the 1920s, the U.S. national debt (relative to GDP) was flat and even declined, while GDP per capita grew at an extraordinary rate, ushering in higher wages, improvements in agricultural productivity, and vast improvements in quality of life for millions of Americans, including electricity in the home, increasing availability of rail travel, and the introduction of automobiles into everyday life. During the latest economic expansion, by contrast, debts public and private soared at every level of society. The national deficit grew, banks and corporations assumed mind-boggling amounts of risk (often in the form of obscure financial instruments like derivatives), and ordinary working people piled up trillions of dollars of debt in the form of home and car loans and credit card debt. At the same time, wages and quality of life *fell*. It is therefore difficult to see how the United States and other nations will be able to spend their way out of the present crisis, when, even before the collapse of Lehman Brothers last year, the population was already tapped out, and government expenditures hovered near record highs.

A second factor likely to confound policymakers this time around is what might be termed the objective natural and political limits of the system. As I have indicated, capitalism has savaged the earth, leaving billions of people without a decent livelihood, and the ecosystem in tatters. But the social and ecological costs of "doing business" are about to grow exponentially greater. Even without a world financial crisis, we can anticipate more, and more devastating, natural disasters, which in turn will mean disruptions in agricultural production, flooding of cities and entire countries, mass starvation, increasing migration pressures, and so on. All of this will in turn exact an increasing toll on the legitimacy of the liberal nation state. The late sociologist Charles Tilley described the modern nation state as functioning like a "protection racket": the state agrees to protect us from harm (most typically, from real or imaginary threats generated by the state itself), in exchange for our consent and obedience as subjects. However, as economic, political, ecological, and hence social costs mount, the state will become less and less able to protect us from harm.

As a result, the state is at risk of losing its legitimacy in the eyes of its citizens. (Already, polls have shown a steady decline in the rate of democratic participation around the world, increasing cynicism toward government, and greater openness to extreme ideologies, whether in the form of religious fundamentalism or extreme nationalism.) This in turn will compromise the ability of state leaders to muster the broad political mandate they would otherwise need to make meaningful and urgently necessary macro-level changes in the organization of society and economy. This structural problem in part explains the recent authoritarian turn of the United States under the Bush administration. Bush's seeming indifference to the effects of U.S. actions on foreign and domestic opinion grew out of the Neocons' sense that the state no longer needed the consent of the governed, whether at home or abroad. Bush was, of course, wrong—American hegemony cannot survive long without at least the *perception* of legitimacy, both at home and abroad. It remains to be seen, however, whether even as adept a politician as Barack Obama will be able to return the ship of state safely to the status quo ante—i.e., to a centrist, liberal, social democratic capitalist order—in the face of a full-blown economic hurricane.

(continued on page 70)



from destruction. Perhaps our repentance, and that of others around us, could save our Babylon. But even if our socio-economic system cannot be rescued, those of us who repent of the destructive, selfish, consumerist lifestyles that have brought our Babylon to the brink of collapse might be able to live through the hard days that lie ahead knowing that what is of ultimate significance in our lives will endure. ■

WHY CAPITALISM SHOULDN'T BE SAVED

(continued from page 25)

Regrettably, notwithstanding President Obama's otherwise admirable sympathies for the union movement and for some meaningful social democratic reforms, his administration is doing everything in its power to preserve—and strengthen—corporate monopoly capitalism, in spite of that system's moral enormities and its ever-widening structural fissures. Though the political Right has taken to vilifying the president as a "socialist," Obama has in reality surrounded himself with economic advisers groomed from the most elite ranks of capitalist finance.

Government Sachs—Then and Now

NOWHERE IS THE NEW ADMINISTRATION'S basic ideological harmony with finance capital more evident than in its close links with current and former members of Goldman Sachs, the formerly *über*-bullish brokerage house. While anti-Semitic websites have had a field day depicting Obama as the public shill for a "Zionist conspiracy" run out of Goldman Sachs's plush New York offices, Sachs's extraordinary influence on government policy in fact began in earnest with President Bush's appointment of Henry Paulson, then Sachs's CEO, to the position of treasury secretary in 2006. (Paulson involved so many former and current employees in managing the financial crisis late last year that insiders began referring to the firm as "Government Sachs.") Nonetheless, the influence of Goldman Sachs has not diminished in the early hours of the Obama presidency, perhaps because Sachs was the single

largest private contributor to Obama's 2008 campaign. When the president picked Timothy Geithner (a technocratic capitalist who had originally headed up the flagship of the Federal Reserve system, in New York) to be the new head of the Treasury Department, Geithner naturally chose a former lobbyist and vice president of Goldman Sachs to be his head of staff. But this was only one of the more conspicuous examples—many other former Sachs employees remain involved directly or indirectly at all levels of the Obama administration.

What makes the involvement of Goldman Sachs in cleaning up the current mess surreal is that of all the investment firms in the world, Sachs alone enjoys the dubious historical distinction of having played a key role in bidding up the world stock markets to unsupportable heights not just once, but twice. To be sure the most recent speculative bubble on Wall Street can be traced back to the decisions of lawmakers, beginning with Paul Volcker's decisions at the Fed back in the late 1970s, on through the Congress's repeal of Depression-era laws such as the Glass-Steagall Act in the late-1990s, i.e. in federal laws and monetary policies that collectively had the effect of pouring gasoline on already inflamed markets. Nonetheless, certain players were particularly key in fomenting this madness, and Goldman Sachs—now playing Rasputin to Obama's Nicholas II—stands out even among the many aggressive firms on Wall Street for having promoted "irrational exuberance" ceaselessly for decades. What is doubly ironic is that the firm played much the same role in the 1920s. During the Depression, when Congress held public hearings on the "culture of greed" that had led to national calamity, Goldman Sachs's chairman was one of the first to be brought to the carpet to account for his firm's ignoble role in driving the speculative frenzy. (When similar hearings were held in the Congress in 2008, Goldman Sachs was naturally excused from having to testify.)

In March of this year, Robert Reich, the former Secretary of Labor, asked rhetorically, "could it be, given these tangled webs" between the White House Branch and Goldman Sachs, "that—innocently,

unintentionally, perhaps even subconsciously—the entire bailout effort was premised on saving these companies rather than protecting the public? Or that the distinction between the two was lost, and still is?" Indeed, a few weeks after Reich penned these words, we learned that after the U.S. Treasury handed \$180 billion over to the insurance giant AIG to keep it from collapsing, the company had turned around and transferred a sizable portion of the public's largesse to the firm's counter-signing parties, the banks that had helped underwrite AIG's risky credit default swap operations. Among these were some of the biggest and richest banks and investment firms in the world, including foreign institutional giants such as Deutsche Bank, Barclays of Britain, and Société Générale of France. But topping the list was Goldman Sachs, which received the lion's share, \$13 billion, despite the fact that it was already swimming in money (\$100 billion in cash alone).

Whatever one makes of the Obama-Sachs connection, it is at least clear that President Obama and his advisers will challenge the underlying prerogatives of financial capital only with great reluctance, and as an absolute last resort. As political theorist Sheldon Wolin observes, the president's plan for rescuing the nation's banks "does not bother with the structure at all." When all is said and done, "the basic systems are going to stay in place." Ironically, however, the administration's essentially conservative handling of the crisis—its unwillingness to take on the power of the banks—may prove to be its own undoing. This spring, the liberal economist and writer Paul Krugman criticized the administration for continuing to "believe in the magic of the financial marketplace and in the prowess of the wizards who perform that magic." Citing "the failure of a whole model of banking," Krugman faulted the administration in particular for trying to preserve a model of "securitization"—i.e., the process by which banks have essentially commodified risk by carving up loans and debts and selling them as obscure instruments on the market. "I don't think the Obama administration can bring securitization back to life," Krugman wrote, "and I don't believe it

Climate Prosperity:

Why Marx Was Wrong and Mother Nature Is Right

by Marc A. Weiss

DURING THE 1840S, TWO YOUNG GERMAN SCHOLARS, KARL MARX AND FREDERICK ENGELS, APPLIED GEORGE HEGEL'S dialectical philosophy of history to economics and politics. They envisioned modern history in three distinct phases:

- Phase 1 *Economy*: agricultural feudalism and urban mercantilism
Governance: monarchy or dictatorship
- Phase 2 *Economy*: industrial capitalism
Governance: monarchy or dictatorship, with limited experiments in democracy
- Phase 3 *Economy*: industrial socialism/communism
Governance: proletarian dictatorship

While Marx and Engels later strongly supported European Social Democratic political parties and movements, they never modified their basic historical framework. They could not envision in 1848 how democratic capitalism would provide unprecedented human freedom, civil rights, and economic opportunities for millions of people worldwide by 2009. Once people taste the fruits of liberty, they never want to return to living with tyranny.

This one simple explanation, more than any other factor, accounts for the dramatic decline of communist and socialist ideologies during the past three decades, as I discovered while working in Prague after the Velvet Revolution.

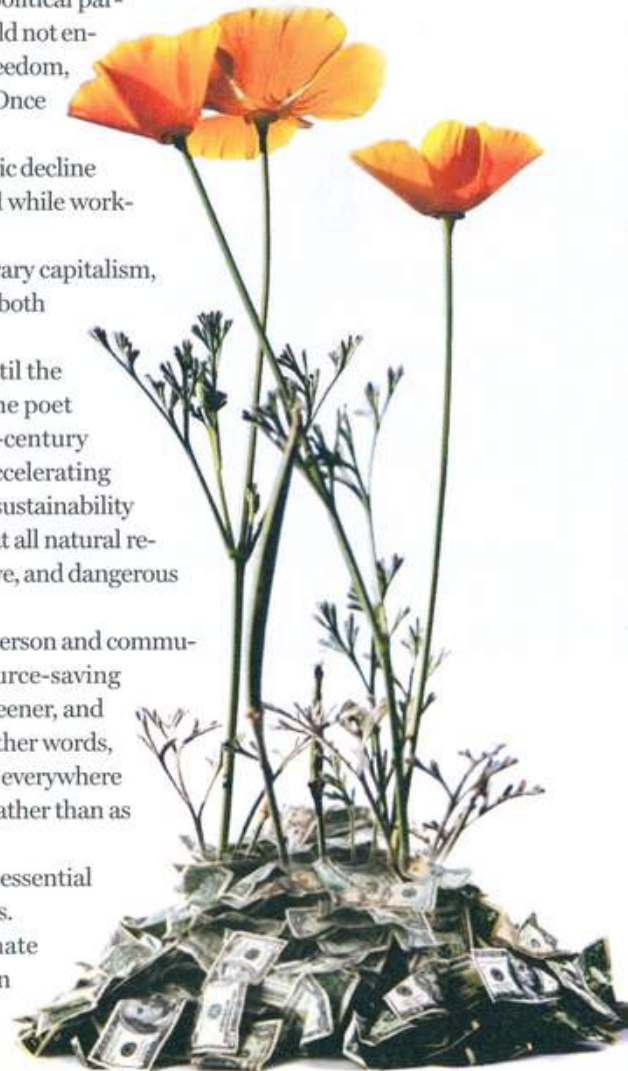
It later turned out, as we now know, that there is a big problem with contemporary capitalism, namely the massive and inefficient utilization of a wide variety of natural resources both for industrial production and for human consumption.

Resource depletion and environmental challenges were generally ignored until the second half of the twentieth century. Only a few earlier commentators such as the poet William Blake raised concerns about industrialization (Blake called nineteenth-century British textile factories "dark Satanic mills"). It took until the 1960s for rapidly accelerating physical damage, diminishing supplies, and rising costs to finally place the issue of sustainability on the global policy agenda. Climate change is really just the tip of the iceberg in that all natural resources—land, water, air, and materials—are becoming increasingly scarce, expensive, and dangerous to continue using so excessively and wastefully.

Fortunately it is not too late to create an even higher standard of living for every person and community throughout the world, by shifting from resource-wasting capitalism to resource-saving capitalism. In the twenty-first century, the only way to get richer is by becoming greener, and the only way to earn more money is by using fewer resources and reusing more. In other words, the global economy can significantly enhance prosperity and quality of life for people everywhere by treating Mother Nature as our good friend and one of our most precious assets, rather than as our enemy to be exploited and conquered.

The main challenge is for each of us to acknowledge the ancient wisdom of two essential values: 1) new is not always better than old; and 2) more is not always better than less.

Global Urban Development (the group that I lead) is coordinating the Climate Prosperity Project, whose core belief is that "innovation, efficiency, and conservation in the use and reuse of all natural and human resources is the best way to increase jobs, incomes, productivity, and competitiveness." The project's main purpose is



Dr. Marc A. Weiss is chairman and CEO of Global Urban Development, and chairman of the Climate Prosperity Project. He served as special assistant to the HUD secretary in the Clinton administration, and was a professor of urban development and planning at Columbia University.

to creatively use business sustainability concepts taken from Paul Hawken, Amory and Hunter Lovins, Peter Senge, Karl-Henrik Robert, William McDonough, Daniel Esty, and the McKinsey Global Institute, as applied by companies such as GE, IBM, Toyota, IKEA, DuPont, Google, Nike, and Apple.

This model has three key elements:

- 1) Green Savings—reducing waste and cutting costs;
- 2) Green Opportunities—expanding jobs and businesses by raising revenues and increasing market share;
- 3) Green Talent—investing in fundamental assets including technology, infrastructure, and most importantly, modern entrepreneurial and workforce skills, because people are now the world's most vital economic resource.

Through state, regional, and local Climate Prosperity Strategies, places like Silicon Valley and the State of Delaware are now using the three-part business sustainability model to promote economic development that saves money, creates jobs, raises incomes, and keeps us all safe from environmental harm. This spring the International Economic Development Council will publish the Climate Prosperity Guidebook, describing the various strategies and explaining how to develop and implement such approaches most effectively.

Currently there is talk of a Climate Prosperity Agreement that will be part of the United Nations Copenhagen Treaty in 2009, with developed countries committing to invest 1 trillion dollars in developing countries over the next decade to build renewable energy and clean technologies, enabling living standards to rise and poverty to be eliminated through sustainable innovation and resource efficiency. These investments will generate substantial economic and employment growth for every nation throughout the world.

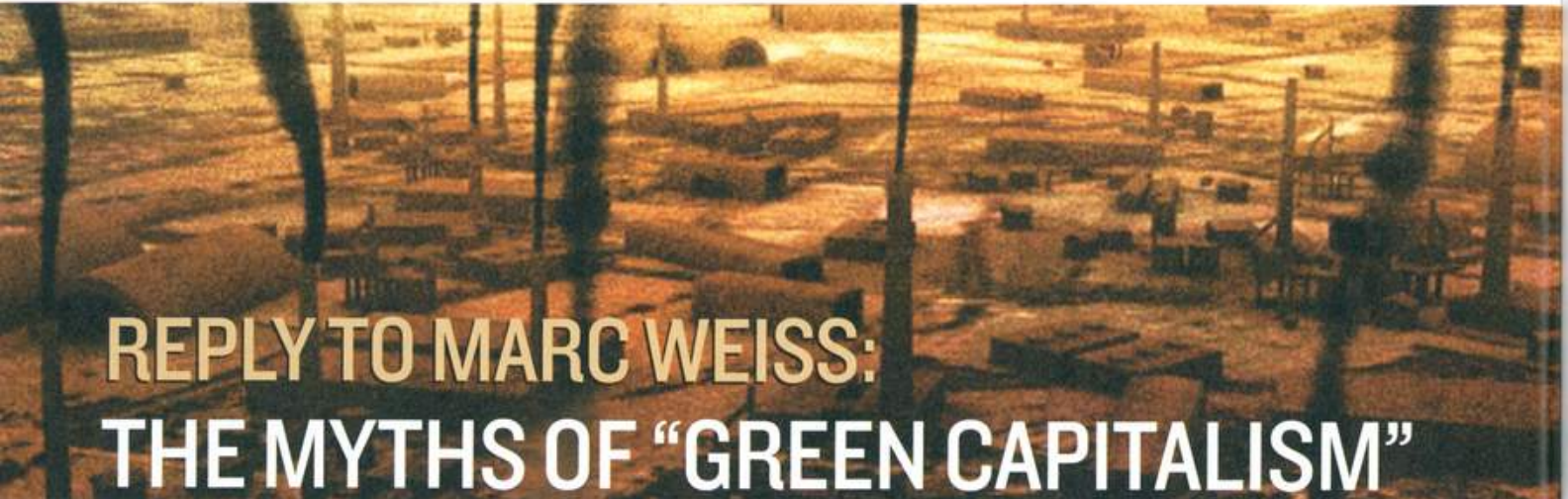
The bottom line is that Marx and Engels were wrong, because the real three-phase historical dialectic is as follows:

Phase 1 Pre-industrial sustainability

Phase 2 Resource-wasting industrialization

Phase 3 Innovative, efficient, sustainable, inclusive, democratic, resource-saving industrialism

Now that we can envision a healthier, more peaceful, and prosperous future in harmony with Mother Nature, let's all thank her for showing us the one and only path that can definitely ensure our grandchildren will thrive. ■



REPLY TO MARC WEISS: THE MYTHS OF "GREEN CAPITALISM"

by John Sanbonmatsu

EVEN AS CAPITALISM SUFFERS ITS WORST CRISIS IN DECADES, WELL-MEANING BUT CONFUSED MYTHOLOGISTS OF "GREEN capitalism" like Marc Weiss are working hard to prevent any self-reckoning by humanity that might disturb the existing order of things. Theirs is an ecstatic vision of a broken world made whole through the healing powers of paradox. They would protect nature—by more efficiently commodifying it. They would promote democracy—by "learning from" authoritarian behemoths like General Electric, Walmart, and DuPont. They would bring peace and prosperity to the suffering creatures of the world—but without disturbing a single hair on the Medusa-like head of corporate or militarized state power. And how are such paradoxes to be resolved? Through the iteration of three myths. *[Readers interested in reading Sanbonmatsu's longer reply to Weiss, including his discussion of Myths 2 and 3, can go online to the Tikkun.org website.]*

MYTH #1: The Problems of Capitalism Can be Traced to Inefficiencies in Production

ACCORDING TO WEISS, THE PROBLEM WITH CAPITALISM LIES IN ITS "MASSIVE AND INEFFICIENT UTILIZATION OF A WIDE VARIETY OF natural resources both for industrial production and for human consumption." In fact, however, production efficiencies have no

direct, intrinsic bearing on questions of environmental sustainability.

Companies have long been in the habit of reducing waste and cutting costs, at least since F.W. Taylor's efficiency studies a century ago—losses in efficiency translate into lost profits. That's why the big paper mills "recycle" their "wastage" (i.e. sawdust and wood scraps), even as they continue to clear-cut old-growth forests. Ironically, though, the problem is not that companies are too inefficient at exploiting resources; rather, they are *too efficient*. Fisheries use deadly ten-mile-wide driftnets because they are the most efficient means for commodifying ocean life. Ranchers in Brazil cut down swaths of rainforest because it is the most efficient way to graze cattle (hence to increase profits). And so forth.

The roots of the global environmental crisis are in fact to be found not in production inefficiencies, but in the way capital operates at the level of *system*. Companies cut costs in order to become more profitable, which in turn enables them to expand their operations and capture more "market share." This, in turn, enables them to privatize more profits for their shareholders, which in turn allows them to attract more investment so that they can "grow." As Woody Allen remarks in *Annie Hall*, "A relationship, I think, is like a shark, you know? It has to constantly move forward or it dies." Capitalism too has to keep moving, keep expanding, or it dies. And because logarithmic growth is in its DNA, companies can only grow on the basis of ever-increasing levels of consumption. That is why even a "green" capitalism would run roughshod over the two otherwise admirable principles Weiss extols—that the "new is not always better than old" and that "more is not always better than less." Try as one might, it is hard to imagine Toyota spending billions to convince consumers *not* to buy the latest Prius, telling them it takes more oil to produce a new hybrid than they would save by ditching their old Honda Civics (instead of driving those old cars into the ground). And it is equally hard to imagine Motorola urging its customers not to upgrade their cell phones, warning them that their old phones will end up being burned in a poor African country, releasing harmful toxics into the environment and harming local villagers. Alas, no company in the world will ever tell its consumers to cut back on the consumption of its products.

As more businesses go "green," therefore, corporate savings in energy consumption and "wastage" will only free up more capital, which in turn will encourage companies to expand their markets, to open up new natural vistas for exploitation, and to integrate more and more people into a culture of mindless consumption. The profit principle is thus at odds with the ecological principle. Car companies that promote green technologies today will lobby against public transportation alternatives tomorrow. GE will sell wind turbines to the Third World—while continuing to build nuclear warheads for the Pentagon. Agribusiness giants such as Monsanto will develop new, higher-yield grains to "end world hunger"—by addicting poor farmers to bio-engineered seeds that are both expensive and ecologically unstable. (Meanwhile, they will lobby Congress to weaken environmental standards and to overcome trade barriers.)

In cases where ecological sustainability and "enlightened self-interest" happen to coincide, everyone will be happy. But how often will that be? What is to keep a mining company, say, from concluding that it would be more "efficient" to contribute \$2 million to elect a conservative, anti-environmental Republican senator than to invest \$5 million in clean energy technologies? So long as the underlying structure and logic of capitalism remain intact—that is, so long as our economy subordinates all social and moral goods to the one "good" of profit—then any given company faced with the choice of adopting a polluting technology or an eco-friendly one will choose the one that maximizes its profits.

As I conclude in my longer, online reply to Weiss, green capitalist myths only serve to distract us from the real issue, which is that the people of the world will know neither liberty nor justice, nor will the animals enjoy their natural freedom, nor will the ecological order be saved from utter ruin, so long as capitalism as such is permitted to exist. ■



Is capitalism's amazing ability to produce goods, including "green" goods like the Priuses above, going to save us, as Weiss claims, or doom us through the system's inability to stop material growth, as Sanbonmatsu argues?

Bottom: Our consumer society has resulted in millions of dumped cell phones. Would a capitalist phone company ever persuade us not to upgrade?

What to Do When the Bailout Fails

by David Schweickart

ASK THE AUTHOR!

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DEAR PRESIDENT OBAMA,
We have never met, although we are neighbors of sorts. I live a couple of blocks from your Hyde Park home. We vote at the same polling place, Beulah Shoemith Elementary School.

My daughter Karen has met you. She took two classes from you when she was in law school at the University of Chicago. My granddaughter Lauryn has met you, too—although she doesn't remember the occasion. Karen brought her to class one day, shortly after her birth. Karen and Lauryn both attended your inauguration, ticketless but with much enthusiasm. I wasn't there, but I share their enthusiasm.

Which is why I am writing you this letter. You have somehow, against all odds, become president. You are in position to do things that few others on this planet are in position to do.

This is not a letter you'll want to show to your economic advisers anytime soon, certainly not to Paul Volcker or Robert Rubin or Larry Summers. They would find it crazy and/or hopelessly utopian, probably both. But if the policies they propose are implemented yet fail—as I fear they will—you might want to think about some of the things I'll be saying here. I'm proposing, if you will, a backup plan.

The Real Cause of the Present Crisis

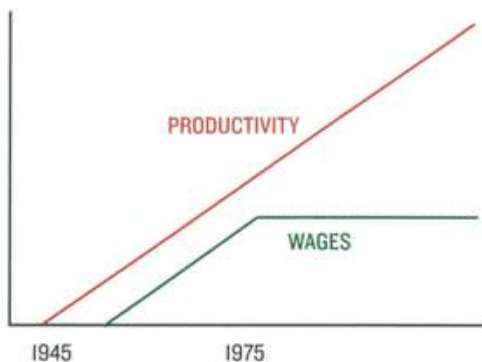
FIRST, LET ME EXPLAIN TO YOU WHY I THINK YOUR STIMULUS PACKAGE WILL FAIL, WHY THE problem may be worse than even your most pessimistic advisers think.

It is important to grasp the real cause of the present crisis. It is not the subprime lending, nor the housing bubble. It is not Wall Street greed, nor the investment managers' feckless "innovations," nor even the reckless borrowing that has characterized almost all sectors of the economy. These factors have all played a role, but they are at best proximate causes.

Let me start with a picture, cribbed from a lecture by University of Massachusetts Amherst economist Rick Wolff—a Marxist. (I warned you about showing this to your advisers).

What we have here is a (simplified) graph showing a steady growth of output per worker in the U.S. economy since World War II, due to ever-increasing productivity. The corresponding wage trajectory, you will note, rose in tandem with output until the mid-1970s, then went flat. That first period, 1945–75, is sometimes referred to as capitalism's "Golden Age." As Paul Krugman noted in *The Conscience of a Liberal*:

Postwar America was, above all, a middle-class society. The great boom in wages that began with World War II had lifted tens of millions of Americans—my parents among them—from urban slums and rural poverty to a life of home ownership and unprecedented comfort. The rich, on the other hand, had lost ground. They were few in number and, relative to the prosperous middle, not all that rich. The poor were more numerous than the rich, but they were still a relatively small minority. As a result, there was a striking sense of economic commonality: Most people in America lived recognizably similar and remarkably decent material lives.



David Schweickart is Professor of Philosophy at Loyola University Chicago. He holds Ph.D.'s in mathematics and philosophy. His most recent book is After Capitalism (2002; Chinese translation 2005; revised edition forthcoming).

This, you will recall, was the heyday of “Keynesian liberalism,” or, if you prefer, social democracy. Marx had been proven wrong. Workers were not consigned to increasing immiseration. They shared in the productivity growth that capitalist innovation produced (from publicly funded research, as well as private investment). But this “social democratic contract” expired in the mid-1970s. Please note, in the *mid-1970s*, not in 1980 with Ronald Reagan, but well before that. Why? I’ll get to that later. First let’s think about the consequences.

At first glance, it would seem that we should have gone back to what Marx predicted—a classic crisis of overproduction. With wages held down, who was going to buy the ever-increasing number of goods being produced? To be sure, we did get a nasty twenty-month recession beginning in 1980—“the most severe downturn since the Great Depression,” as it was then described—when Paul Volcker, then Fed Chief, tightened the money supply. But this was a deliberate policy move, designed to “slay the dragon of inflation.” Which it did. We came out of it during Reagan’s first term; the economy began growing again, and, apart from some fairly minor interruptions, it kept on growing—until a year ago.

But how was that possible? With wages flat, who was buying the products? Well, as you know, the rich got very much richer in those days, creating a separate country (designated “Richistan” by *Wall Street Journal* columnist Robert Frank), chock-full of McMansions, multimillion-dollar yachts, private jets, etc. (Over the past thirty years the average annual salary in America has increased only 10 percent, whereas the real annual compensation of the top 100 CEOs has increased 3,000 percent.) But those expenditures weren’t nearly enough to keep the economy on track. Ordinary people had to keep buying also, more and more. How? You know the answer to that question. We all do. By *borrowing*. Credit card debt has increased sevenfold (adjusted for inflation) since 1975, home equity loans have mushroomed, students have gone deeper into debt, and automobile loans have rocketed upward. All in all, outstanding household debt mushroomed from 47 percent of GDP in 1975 to 100 percent of GDP thirty years later.

Marx would probably have smiled, saying: “How clever those capitalists think they are. Instead of keeping up spending by raising wages (which I hadn’t counted on them doing), they decided to loan the money to the working class instead. Much better, since they can collect interest on those loans. But, of course, they neglected one small fact. When it becomes clear that these debts are never going to be repaid, lending will stop. That big crisis I predicted ... well, hang on, folks, here it comes.”

It was a long time coming, longer than one might have expected. Lots of money was made during the credit boom—more than could be loaned out again to the “real” economy—so it flowed into the stock market, setting off a bubble there, and then, later, into real estate. (The Dow Jones doubled during the Golden Age from 500 in 1956 to 1,000 in 1972, during which time wages doubled also. It increased *fourteenfold* during the ensuing flat-wage period, hitting 14,000 in 2007.) People felt richer, so they spent more and were able to borrow more against ever-rising asset values.

But what can’t go on, doesn’t. Credit lines max out, especially when compound interest and falling asset values kick in.

A Keynesian Remedy?

OK, WE’RE IN A BIND. HOW DO WE GET OUT? YOUR ECONOMIC ADVISERS CALL FOR A return to Keynesianism. Monetary stimulus: get the Fed to cut interest rates and get money to those banks that are in trouble. Fiscal stimulus: unbalance the budget (which was already badly unbalanced, but take no heed), cut taxes, and engage in direct job creation. Surely these



It wasn't FDR's job creation programs that pulled us out of the last Great Depression, it was War War II (at top, women pack bullets into machine gun belts at a U.S. Army arsenal in 1942). Will green jobs (like those at this factory producing photovoltaics for solar cells) be the economic and moral equivalent of war for returning us to full employment? David Schweickart says no, they won't. The long-term solution requires shifting our economy to one that does not depend for its health on ever-increasing consumption—a consumption that doesn't make us happier anyway.

Spiritual Politics in the Age of Obama

A Weekend Retreat with Rabbi Michael Lerner

July 31 - August 2, 2009

Americans of every political persuasion have celebrated the huge step against racism taken by the American electorate in choosing an African American to be our president. Yet that celebration could turn to despair if President Obama does not effectively develop policies guided by a deep spiritual vision. During this shabbaton, we will explore the meaning of a spiritual progressive politics, the Global Marshall Plan which has emerged from that vision, and the challenges facing anyone who wishes to support President Obama in fulfilling the hopes he stimulated during the 2008 presidential election season.

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This weekend retreat is a program of the **Elat Chayyim Center for Jewish Spirituality**, a living laboratory for the development and renewal of contemporary Jewish spiritual life at the **Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center**. Located only two hours from New York City and three hours from Boston, Isabella Freedman is a Berkshire retreat destination that provides glatt kosher dining, country lodging, miles of hiking trails and an organic farm.



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are moves in the right direction. Don't be timid. You should take Paul Krugman's advice: you need to be bolder than FDR ever was. (You should be reading everything Krugman writes—which you probably are—and acting accordingly). Let's get universal health care while we're at it. With so many people in distress, the time could hardly be more right.

Maybe this will work. Honestly, I hope it does. But, as you know, Keynesianism has been tried before, with mixed results. We're all looking back to the Great Depression these days, and the New Deal that saved the day. Except it didn't. It wasn't FDR's job creation programs, noble though they were, that pulled us out of the last Great Depression. Unemployment was at 3 percent in 1929. It had jumped to 25 percent when the New Deal began—but was still at 17 percent in 1939. It took World War II to pull us out: that vast mobilization of millions of men to fight abroad and the mobilization of many millions more to supply them with the wherewithal to do so.

It's hardly bad news that there's not going to be World War III. The technologies are far too destructive for even the most insane neocon to advocate war with China. Thanks to our twin debacles in Afghanistan and Iraq, no one has illusions anymore about our military omnipotence. As it is, we are spending more on our military than all the other countries of the world combined spend on their militaries. Massive Cold War defense spending long after World War II was over was certainly a factor in keeping the Golden Age golden, but there's not much room left now, if any, for expanding military Keynesianism.

Keynesianism came to grief in the 1970s. Unions had become strong, and the government was committed to economic stimulus whenever unemployment worsened. But if productivity doesn't increase fast enough, then those union-negotiated wage increases and the additional government spending create inflation, not growth. We got stagflation, remember, which made everyone unhappy, including the workers themselves, who saw their gains nullified. So the stage was set for a war against inflation (initiated by Mr. Volcker) that caused unemployment to shoot up to 10 percent, making labor more docile than it had been in decades. Employers went on the offensive against the unions, relocating plants to the non-union Sunbelt, and then, as deregulated globalization took hold, to anywhere else they wanted. (Why did wages flatline? The short answer involves a one-two-three punch: inflation, fierce recession, and globalization.)

If I'm right—that ultimately it is too-low wages that are the problem—well, how are your programs going to fix that? We can't raise wages, can we? Companies will just move abroad. It is that threat—by no means idle—that has kept those wages flat for so long. Yes, by all means make it easier for working people to join unions. By all means let's have worker free choice. That will help some. But as the concessions just wrung out of the UAW so that their companies could get bailout money make clear, union bargaining power is but a shadow of what it once was.

Environmental Crisis

LET ME THROW ONE MORE GRIM CONSIDERATION INTO THE MIX. Suppose I'm wrong. Suppose we do get the economy growing again—and are able to keep it growing. That will bring us face to face with a crisis of a different sort, a crisis based on the very fact of relentless, limitless growth: the environmental crisis. This one is real in a more profound sense than our current economic crisis, in that it has a *material* basis, as opposed to a "merely" structural one. We *are* running down our supply of fossil fuels,

depleting our fisheries and forests, pouring too much carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, using way too much fresh water, etc. Sure, your advisers will tell you that we can “grow” our way out of this crisis by investing in green technologies, better insulating our homes and so on, but honestly, that’s a fairy tale. You know that, don’t you? To be sure, these things are important. They help. But it should be obvious that a long-term solution requires shifting our economy to one that does not depend for its health on ever-increasing consumption—a consumption that doesn’t make us happier anyway.

Let’s be clear: the fundamental problem isn’t the consumer. If consumers were just naturally voracious, our businesses wouldn’t have to spend \$300 billion or so every year trying to persuade us to buy what we might not otherwise realize we “need.” (Firms try to persuade us to buy X rather than Y, not goods in general, but the net effect is relentless, ubiquitous propagandizing on behalf of consumption.) The persuasion works—most of the time. As the present crisis makes crystal clear, when consumers cut back their spending, the economy nose-dives—and everyone suffers. Clearly, the ecological crisis is not so much about *consumption* as it is about our mode of *production*. It would be very hard to solve it by voluntary simplicity alone, when the whole economy is built on pushing products with sophisticated propaganda.

So we are in a tight corner. Those concerned about rising unemployment urge us to spend, spend, spend, while the environmentalists scream back that our consumption-addiction is killing the planet. And both sides are right. Moreover, both sides really want the same thing: a healthy, stable, full-employment economy that treads lightly enough on our fragile planet to be sustainable. It’s what we all want, isn’t it?

A Democratic Alternative to Capitalist Crazyness

HERE’S WHERE I MAKE MY PITCH. A STABLE, SUSTAINABLE, FULL-EMPLOYMENT ECONOMY is possible. Its institutions are imaginable. It would be democratic and efficient. It would embrace market competition. There would be a place in it for entrepreneurial capitalists and for a small business sector like the one we already have. In fact, it wouldn’t look too different from what our economy looks like today—and yet it would be *very* different.

This is something I’ve been thinking, speaking, and writing about for my entire academic life. Let me sketch briefly the basic institutions of what I call “economic democracy.” (It is a form of socialism, but we might not want to use that word—not that it wouldn’t be immediately branded as such by opponents terrified that, on its own merits, it might look too good to too many people.)

Workplace Democracy

Let’s imagine a world in which most large enterprises are run democratically. They are communities—not properties to be bought or sold or “relocated” to lower-wage parts of the country or globe. When you join a firm, you get to vote for representatives who will serve on a Workers Council that serves the same function that a Board of Directors (representing shareholders) serves in a modern corporation: selecting top management, setting the terms of employment, and approving major business decisions.

You have a vested interest in voting for competent representatives, who will appoint competent management, since your income is tied directly to the fate of the company. You don’t receive a fixed salary. Your income is a share of the company’s profits. (Shares aren’t equal. They will vary according to whatever criteria the enterprise chooses, e.g., seniority, levels of responsibility, special skills, etc.) This gives you and every other worker in the enterprise a major incentive to work hard and effectively—and to monitor your co-workers to see that they do the same.

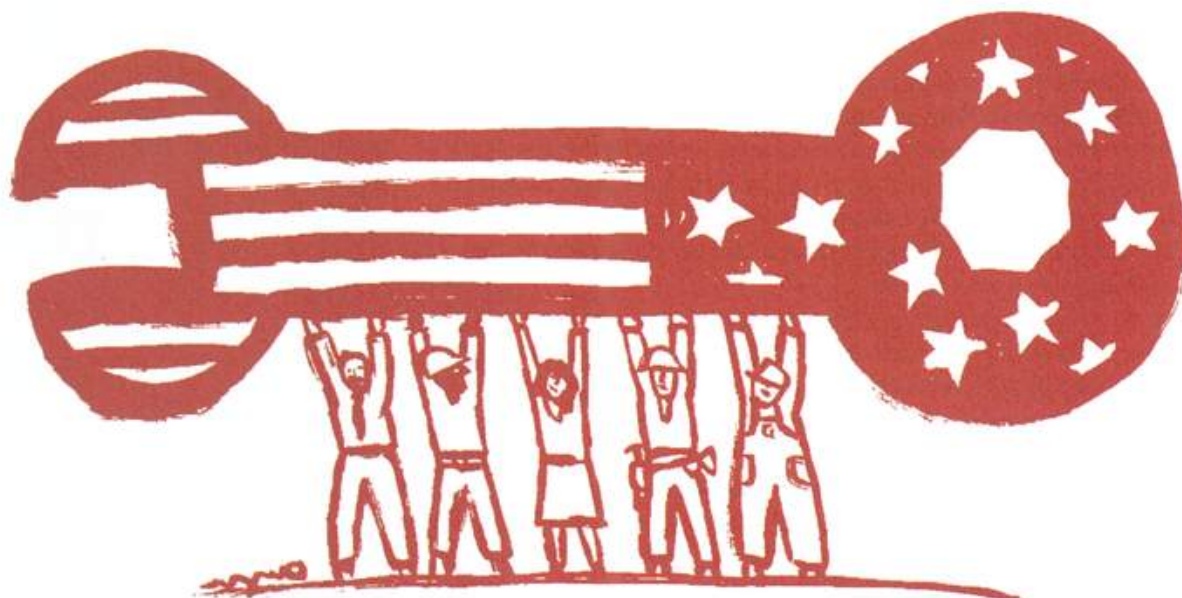
These enterprises compete for customers in a free market constrained only by familiar regulations that compensate for market externalities and protect consumers from deception and avoidable harm. These enterprises will exist alongside a public sector providing certain services, which will include health care and investment banks (see below) in addition to infrastructure, education, and security services.

(continued on page 72)



John Kefalas of Fort Collins, Colorado, campaigns for an increase in the state’s minimum wage in August 2006. Minimum wage hikes won in every state they were on the ballot that year.

When the federal minimum wage increased to \$6.55 in July 2008, it still left workers with less buying power than they had in 1997. Let Justice Roll, a national faith-community coalition, is campaigning for a \$10 federal minimum wage in 2010. Rev. Dr. Sharon E. Watkins, general minister and president of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), signed the letter in support of \$10 in 2010, saying, “National wage policies are moral documents that express the values of our country. A minimum wage closer to a living wage better reflects our values.”



A Case for Economic Democracy

by Gary Dorrien

This lecture was delivered on March 25, 2009, at Union Theological Seminary in a public forum, "Christianity and the U.S. Crisis," associated with a class co-taught by Cornel West, Serene Jones, and Gary Dorrien. It is an abridged version of a chapter in Dorrien's forthcoming book, *Social Justice in Question: Economy, Difference, Empire, and Progressive Christianity* (Columbia University Press, 2010).

TODAY WE ARE CAUGHT IN A GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRASH AND DEPRESSION, A calamity affecting every nation connected to the global economy, especially poor nations lacking economic reserves. But this crisis also puts into play new possibilities for a democratic surge, perhaps toward economic democracy.

From the perspective of Economics 101, every bubble mania is basically alike, but from the beginning, this one has been harder to swallow, because it started with people who were just trying to buy a house of their own, who usually had no concept of predatory lending, and who had no say in the securitization boondoggle that spliced up various components of risk to trade them separately. It seemed a blessing to get a low-rate mortgage. It was a mystery how the banks did it, but this was their business; we trusted they knew what they were doing. Our banks resold the mortgages to aggregators who bunched them up with thousands of other subprime mortgages, chopped the package into pieces and sold them as corporate bonds to parties looking for extra yield. Our mortgage payments paid for the interest on the bonds.

For twenty years securitizations and derivatives were great at concocting extra yield and allowing the banks to hide their debt. Broadly speaking, a derivative is any contract that derives its value from another underlying asset. More narrowly and pertinently, it's an instrument that allows investors to speculate on the future price of something without having to buy it. The words that are used for this business—securitization, insurance, diversifying

Gary Dorrien is the Reinhold Niebuhr Professor of Social Ethics at Union Theological Seminary and Professor of Religion at Columbia University. An Episcopal priest and author of thirteen books, including a trilogy on liberal theology, he has a long history of involvement in anti-imperialist and racial justice organizations.

risk—sound reassuring, but they mask that the business is pure high-leveraged speculation and gambling. Credit-default swaps are private contracts in a completely unregulated market that allow investors to bet on whether a borrower will default. Ten years ago that market was \$150 billion; today it's \$62 trillion, and it's at the heart of the meltdown. Credit default sellers are not required to set aside reserves to pay off claims, and in 2000 Congress exempted them from state gaming laws. AIG's derivatives unit was a huge casino, selling phantom insurance with hardly any backing, for which we now have to pay. The tally for the past six months: four bailouts, \$160 billion, some very hard-to-take bonus payments, and no bottom in sight for a sinkhole of toxic debt exceeding \$1 trillion.

Derivatives created dangerous incentives for false accounting and made it extremely difficult to ascertain a firm's true exposure. They generated huge amounts of leverage and were developed with virtually no consideration of their broad economic consequences.

So many plugged-in players rode this financial lunacy for all it was worth, caught in the terribly real pressure of the market to produce constant short-term gains. Speculators gamed the system and regulators looked the other way. Mortgage brokers sold bad mortgages; bond bundlers packaged the loans into securities; rating agencies gave inflated bond ratings to the loans; corporate executives put the bonds on their balance sheets; and all made fortunes off toxic products they had no business creating or passing off. The chief rating agencies, Moody's and Standard & Poor's, were supposed to expose financial risk. Instead, paid by the very issuers of the bonds they rated, they hung triple-A ratings on rubbish. There was so much money to be made that firms couldn't bear to leave it aside for competitors to grab. The banks got leveraged up to 50-to-1 (that's where Bear Stearns was at the end) and kept piling on debt. The mania for extra yield fed on itself, blowing away business ethics and common sense.

Today we are staring into an economic abyss, a global deflationary spiral. Deflation, once started, has a terrible tendency to feed on itself. Income falls in a recession, which makes debt harder to bear, which discourages investment, which depresses the economy further, which leads to more deflation. To have any chance of breaking the deflationary spiral, the Obama administration has to solve the bank problem and dispose of the toxic debt.

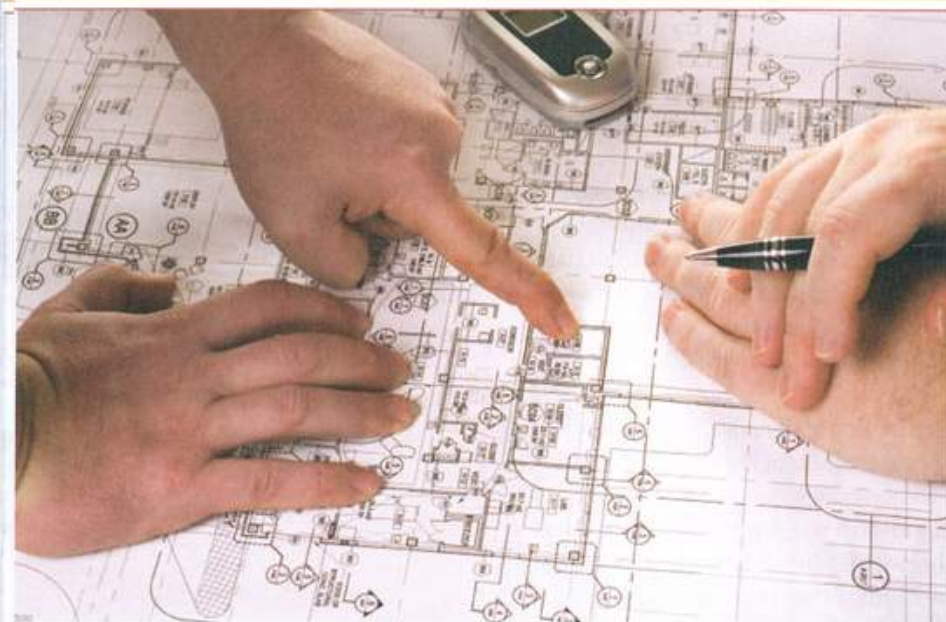
One option is Henry Paulson's original plan, "cash for trash," this time with more public accountability. Another is to ramp up the insurance approach, "ring-fencing" bad assets by providing federal guarantees against losses. But these are more-of-the-same options that coddle the banks and don't solve the valuation problem—that no one trusts anyone else's balance sheet. The banks are holding at least \$2 trillion of toxic debt. For the past six months, the banking system has been paralyzed because the big private equity firms and hedge funds are refusing to pay more than thirty cents on the dollar for the mortgage bundles and the banks can't stay in business if they book such huge losses on their holdings. In the meantime the banks are holding out for at least sixty cents and pleading for more relief.

The Latest Bailout Fad: Creating Bad Banks

THE THIRD OPTION, THE "BAD BANK" MODEL, CREATES TRANSITIONAL BANKS TO SOAK UP BAD debt. Here the risk of getting prices wrong is even greater, assuming that assets are valued immediately. If the government overpays for toxic securities, taxpayers are cheated; if it doesn't overpay and the banks take mark-to-market prices, many are sure to fail. Some advocates of the bad bank strategy say the government could stall on the price issue, waiting until values rise, but FDIC chair Sheila Bair says no, banking is not alchemy: assets can't be floated into the ether.

Bair and Timothy Geithner have settled on an aggregator bank model that blends the original Paulson plan with some elements of the bad bank topped off with an auction scheme to find private buyers for the toxic debt. Geithner wants the government to create a \$2 trillion public-private investment fund that subsidizes up to 95 percent of deals partnered with hedge funds and private equity firms to buy up the bad assets of the zombie banks. The private funds will end up owning the assets; the FDIC will do most of the partnering work; and the Treasury will hire four or five investment management firms.

Since this is apparently what we're going to do, I certainly hope it works. But this plan is by far the most cumbersome and least transparent strategy of all. It coddles the banks. It is based



Dorrien argues (on p. 76) that "the blueprint mentality is inherently problematic.

Socialists were wrong to equate socialization with nationalization. They were wrong to reject production for profit, wrong to think that state planners could replicate the complex pricing decisions of markets, and wrong in trying to organize an economy not linked by markets." The alternative to a blueprint mentality is a "willingness to expand the social market in different ways and find out which models work best in particular circumstances."

on the dubious hope of finding enough private buyers for rotten goods. It assumes that private fund managers have been wrong thus far about the real value of the mortgage bundles. It offers a taxpayer guarantee to investors to ensure they won't lose money if they get in. And it depends on convincing taxpayers to pony up another \$2 trillion for that purpose. Essentially, this is a scheme to pay fantastic bribes to private investors to buy the bad assets for more than they're worth.

Here's A Better Idea: Let's Create Good Banks!

I AM FOR BITING THE BULLET NOW. IT'S OBSCENE TO keep paying off the very people who created this disaster. It's better to take control of the situation now

than to dither for another nine or ten months while we lose 600,000 jobs per month. At some point moral fairness and accountability have to enter this picture. We should nationalize the zombie banks, transfer the bad assets to a reincarnation of the 1980s Resolution Trust Corporation, and sell off the sellable parts to new owners.

Nationalization is cleaner and more transparent than the alternatives. It takes hold of the valuation problem by finding the bottom. It cuts off the gusher of taxpayer gifts to managers and shareholders. It offers taxpayers a way of getting some of their money back. It puts an end to mergers between zombie banks, which create more zombie banks that are too big to fail.

Most importantly to me, an aggressive nationalization strategy would put into play the possibility of something more creative and constructive: establishing publicly funded venture capital banks. If we can seriously talk about creating bad banks or aggregator banks, we ought to be able to talk about creating publicly owned good banks to do good things. Public banks could finance start-ups in green technology that are currently languishing and provide financing for cooperatives spurned by traditional banks. The public banks could be financed by an economic stimulus package, or by claiming the good assets of banks seized by the government, or both.

We must push Obama for him to create anything like that, as he is surrounded by centrist corporate establishment types eager to placate Wall Street and averse to wiping out shareholders. We must also push him to stick to a social investment strategy throughout his presidency, instead of backing off from it as Franklin Roosevelt did.

A public bank that supported green technology and cooperatives would be a major breakthrough for economic democracy in this country. Economic democracy is about democratizing power and creating environmentally sustainable economies. In its full-orbed version, it features mixed forms of worker, community, and mutual fund or public bank enterprises. I am not suggesting that factors of production trump everything else. Any social justice politics worthy of the name requires a feminist, interracial, multicultural, ecological, and anti-imperial consciousness that privileges liberationist and environmental issues.

But no serious challenge to existing relations of power can ignore the factors of production. Economic justice is never dispensable. Those who control the terms, amounts, and direction of credit play a huge role in determining the kind of society that everybody else lives in. We're getting a dramatic demonstration of that today. The question of who controls the process of investment is enormously important. Gains toward social and economic democracy are needed today for the same reason that political democracy is necessary: to restrain the abuse of unequal power.

Pros and Cons of Economic Democracy

ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY, LIKE POLITICAL DEMOCRACY, IS MESSY AND TIME-CONSUMING. Democratically controlled capital is less mobile than corporate capital, and the return to

democratically controlled capital tends to be lower than in corporations, because worker-controlled enterprises are more committed to keeping low-return firms in operation. Producer cooperatives are often too slow, small, and humane to compete with corporations, and they require cooperative habits and values that cut against the grain of American individualism. In the United States, any strategy to break down concentrated economic power by expanding the cooperative sector confronts difficult trade-offs, political opposition, and cultural barriers.

But economic democracy also has pragmatic considerations in its favor. Economic losses caused by worker participation can be offset by gains in productivity made possible by it. People often work harder and more efficiently when they have a stake in the company. Worker ownership is a key option for communities threatened by runaway plants and deindustrialization. Experiments with various kinds of worker ownership increased dramatically in the 1990s, aided by a growing network of policy experts, and some unions began to bargain for worker ownership, worker control over pension funds, and worker management rights. These developments have the potential to become the building blocks of a serious movement for economic democracy.

Today there are approximately 12,000 worker-owned firms in the United States, including large enterprises such as Republic Engineered Steels, Publix Supermarkets, and Northwestern Steel and Wire. Most employee ownership plans offer shares without voting rights; most assure that employees will be kept in a minority ownership position; few provide educational opportunities to help worker/owners develop management skills; and virtually none offer programs to build solidarity or help worker/owners forge links with other cooperative enterprises or raise awareness of economic democracy issues. Worker ownership without democratic control is a nominal version of economic democracy, thwarting the real thing, and American unions have a generally dismal record in this area, reinforcing the shortcomings.

With all its limitations, however, worker ownership is a viable option, and a necessary one. The Mondragon network in Spain is spectacularly successful; in the United States, several thousand firms have converted to employee ownership, thousands of others have been launched with worker-ownership plans, and approximately 1,000 companies in the United States are fully worker-controlled.

It Begins by Building the Cooperative Sector

FULL-ORBED ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY IS OBVIOUSLY FAR OFF. ON THE WAY to something like it, economic democracy is about building up institutions that do not belong wholly to the capitalist market or the state. It begins by expanding the cooperative sector. Producer cooperatives take labor out of the market by removing corporate shares from the stock market and maintaining local worker ownership. Community land trusts take land out of the market and place it under local democratic controls to serve the social needs of communities. Community finance corporations take democratic control over capital to finance cooperative firms, make investments in areas of social need, and fight the redlining policies of banks. These strategies widen the base of social and economic power by mixing together cooperative banks, employee stock ownership plans, producer cooperatives, community land trusts, and planning agencies that guide investments into locally defined areas of need such as housing, soft-energy hardware, infrastructure maintenance, and mass transit.

But merely expanding the cooperative sector is not enough. Cooperatives usually prohibit non-working shareholders, so they attract less outside financing than capitalist firms. They are committed to keeping low-return firms in operation, so they tend to stay in business even when they can't afford to pay competitive wages. They are committed to particular communities, so they are less mobile than corporate capital and labor. They smack of anti-capitalist bias, so they have trouble getting financing and *(continued on page 75)*

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Understanding the Paradox and the Need: Taking on Hunger and Obesity in America

by Debra Kozikowski
and Miryam Ehrlich Williamson



Lenora Clark, center, picks up food at the Emergency Food Bank in Stockton, California, on May 7, 2008. Demand at food banks increased by 30 percent in 2008.

IN 1934 PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT'S COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC security drafted legislation to limit poverty among the elderly. A year later the Social Security Act became law, and in 1937 the Supreme Court affirmed its constitutionality. The first monthly payment under the newly codified law was made in January of 1940. Today America is faced with a comparable moral imperative.

The number of families in need is expected to rise sharply in the next year due to the ever-widening economic crisis. Food banks are hard pressed by an influx of new people, some of them from well-to-do suburbs, newly unemployed and shamed by their need. According to Feeding America, an organization that distributes more than 2 billion pounds of food a year, demand at food banks increased by 30 percent in 2008. And that's just the beginning. Millions more will lose their jobs this year.

More poor families means less money per family to provide food. The upsurge in poverty also means more health issues caused by poor nutrition, among them developmental challenges in children, cardiovascular problems in adults, and diabetes in both age groups. And too many of our seniors forgo the nourishment they need to stay healthy in order to pay for

the medicines they need to stay alive.

Food banks and food distribution centers across the country struggle from week to week, underfunded and in danger of shutting their doors. We must achieve a higher level of awareness and advocacy to provide public pressure when it comes to feeding the hungry.

It's an old, sad story: the poor, trying to stem hunger pangs on the cheap, turn to high-calorie, low-nutrient foods. Filler-uppers, our grandparents used to call them. Too many starchy belly bloaters, not enough fresh fruits and vegetables—a dietary disaster that makes our most vulnerable citizens, poor children especially, look overfed when, in fact, they are malnourished.

The old adage, “You are what you eat,” is true. There is no ailment that cannot be made worse by poor nutrition, and few that cannot be made better by its opposite.

While school nutrition has made some progress since the Reagan years, when the government declared ketchup was a vegetable, nutrition standards for school meals were not established until 1994. And public health advocates say those standards have failed to keep up with scientific research. Intended to nourish 60 million children, school nutrition programs often rely on staples such as government-subsidized pizza, high-fat hamburgers, fat-laden french fries, and chicken nuggets. It can be hard to distinguish an elementary school cafeteria from a fast-food restaurant.

Childhood obesity is at epidemic levels. This is the first generation whose members may be expected to have shorter life spans than their parents. Recognizing—and acting upon—the need for

*Debra Kozikowski is cofounder of RuralVotes, a rural advocacy organization based in Chesterfield, Massachusetts. See www.ruralvotes.com. Miryam Ehrlich Williamson is the author of *Blood Sugar Blues* (2001), the first book to show how the USDA's food pyramid contributed to the epidemic of diabetes and obesity.*

readily available, fresh, locally grown food is at the crux of the mission we must accomplish for the future of our nation's health.

Crowds of inaugural revelers lingered on the national mall as the U.S. Senate confirmed former Iowa Governor Tom Vilsack to head the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The new secretary of agriculture has said he will put "nutrition at the center of all food-assistance programs," a hopeful signal to anti-hunger groups that he will get personally involved when Congress moves to reauthorize the nutrition programs supporting school breakfasts and lunches, as well as summer feeding programs for children.

With Vilsack's leadership, the Obama administration has the opportunity to stave off hunger and encourage better nutrition for millions across our nation by playing an active role in shaping the reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act and other food security programs.

Senator Tom Harkin, a Democrat from Iowa, chairs the Senate Agriculture Committee, which is also responsible for nutrition and forestry. This committee will draft the legislation, as it did with the reauthorization of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, commonly referred to as the Farm Bill. It's really the *food* bill: its initiatives include the Healthy Snack Program for school children, the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program for elders, and the Community Food Project. The committee's job will not be easy.

The inclusion in H.R. 1, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, of \$500 million for the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) feeding program (\$400 million for benefits and \$100 for state administrative costs) gives reason to hope that the new administration understands the importance of better-than-adequate nutrition. The Child Nutrition Act and the Women, Infants, and Children Act are both set to be reauthorized later this year. Every dollar in the stimulus bill means one less dollar that must be fought for in the omnibus budget bill, bringing WIC a step closer to full funding. Public health and anti-hunger advocates are actively seeking stricter standards for school breakfast and lunch programs, based on recommendations from the Institute of Medicine, a branch of the National Academies.

The links between hunger and obesity can be confusing and complex. In November 2004, a one-day roundtable brought together close to fifty researchers, national anti-hunger and anti-poverty advocates, and government agency representatives to exchange information and strategies about the connection between food security and obesity. The result was a paper describing the challenge we face as a nation in providing optimum nutrition to those who are financially disadvantaged. The paper can be found at www.frac.org/pdf/proceedings05.pdf; pages 9-12 summarize the discussion.

Unfortunately, despite publication of this seminal paper, obesity rates, especially for America's children, continue to rise, and most people still do not understand the relationship between food insecurity and obesity. Many anti-hunger advocates and policy makers are still not fully invested in the idea of a more healthful approach to their efforts and interventions. Recently, however, national television news programs have begun exploring the subject more often, and local newspapers have begun paying attention with articles focusing on local efforts to promote better nutrition.

And yet, another recent study indicated that traditional nutrition education practices have failed. It doesn't take a national study to determine why. What our schools need is an innovative approach to nutrition education, including student gardens and family food projects such as the one that exists in Chicopee, Massachusetts, where school nutrition director Joanne Lennon implemented an after-school program in which children prepare healthy snacks. The children also take home recipe cards to share with their families.

The Chicopee initiative is one of many hope-inspiring efforts taking place right now.

Another inspiring group is the Wholesome Wave Foundation, which is working to make locally grown food more available to low-income mothers and seniors. In the spring of 2008, the group, led by Connecticut chef Michel Nischan, launched programs in Connecticut,



Students at Idaho Falls High School in Idaho look over the selection of items available at the express window during lunch hour, January 2006. Many students prefer the finger food items to the traditional lunch served in the cafeteria.



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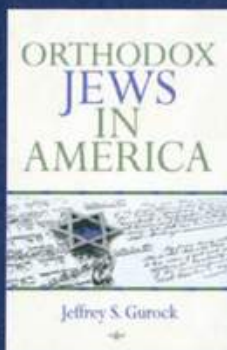
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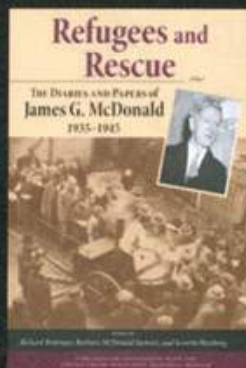
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REFUGEES AND RESCUE

The Diaries and Papers of James G. McDonald, 1935–1945

Edited by Richard Breitman, Barbara McDonald Stewart, and Severin Hochberg



Compelling new evidence challenges widely held opinions about Franklin D. Roosevelt's views on the rescue of European Jews before and during the Holocaust, disclosing the struggles of leaders to transfer many of the otherwise doomed.

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Massachusetts, and California, doubling the value of food vouchers used at farmers markets. The project was a great example of rural-urban partnering.

Last fall, in Brooklyn, New York, young teachers Meghan Milewski and Christine Zappella began to prepare an overgrown courtyard at the Juan Morel Campos Junior Senior High School for a school garden project. They hope to provide their eighth-grade students with an understanding of food and economics that will interest them in better nutrition while demonstrating that math and science skills are more than paper and pencil applications. Hands-on learning is fun and effective—a little creativity goes a long way in turning around the failure of our nutrition education programs.

Programs promoting first-rate nutrition, with emphasis on consumption of locally grown fruits and vegetables, will have an economic benefit to our nation as a whole, as well as to the health of the individuals who are encouraged and enabled to eat well. Farm to School programs will have a direct financial benefit to local farmers. In its first six months, Wisconsin's "Buy Local/Buy Wisconsin" grant program yielded \$2 for every \$1 invested.

Energy savings are often another benefit. In the United States, supermarket produce travels an average of 1,500 miles between where it was grown and where it is consumed. About 40 percent of the fruit we buy comes from overseas. Broccoli can be found growing within 20 miles of most American homes, yet the broccoli in stores can travel as much as 1,800 miles to the point of purchase. Bringing food and its consumers closer together can mean a significant saving in fuel consumption, lowering the environmental cost of what we eat. By one estimate, miles traveled per unit of food at the grocery store can be as much as 27 times higher than the miles traveled of food from local sources. We should not oversimplify: weighing up the ecological costs and poverty-reduction benefits of different kinds of food production is a surprisingly complex issue. For example, poor farmers in developing countries may not lose every argument with American "localvores." But good nutrition itself is not as hard to assess.

Think of the costs of illness demonstrably caused by faulty nutrition. Diabetes is a major example. The disease is particularly vicious in the complications it causes—everything from heart attack and stroke to amputations and dementia. Three of five people with diabetes have at least one health problem associated with the disease. A 2006 report issued by the American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists estimated the cost of treating diabetes complications at \$22.9 billion, averaging \$10,000 per person, with the patient paying \$1,600 of that amount.

These are costs our nation can avoid by promoting good nutrition.

At his confirmation hearing, Secretary Vilsack said government should encourage the production and consumption of locally grown produce, not just in rural areas but also nationwide. He said the United States Department of Agriculture must ensure the availability of high-quality foods for school meals. Nutrition activists and anti-hunger advocates, unsure of the direction in which he would take the USDA, may find his words heartening. In a recent *New York Times* interview, First Lady Michelle Obama said locally grown foods taste better and are more likely to encourage youngsters to enjoy healthier eating. Our new Secretary of Agriculture indicates that he gets it and our new First Lady embraces the idea; add to that our active support, and we can make great strides toward a healthier America. ■

A Crisis of Prosperity: Could Small Again Be Beautiful?

by Richard Rohr



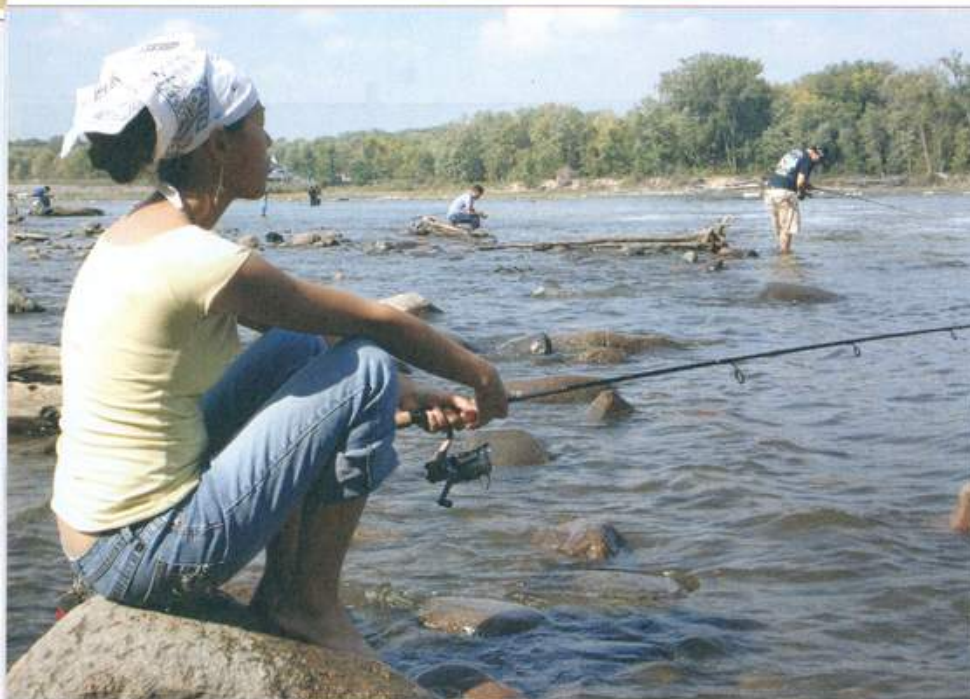
Shannon Runyon, 17, shows off all her belongings in the front yard of her house in Des Moines, Iowa.

A FRIEND CLEVERLY CALLED WHAT WE ARE FACING “A CRISIS OF PROSPERITY.” COMPARED to most humans who have ever lived on this planet, most of us Americans are still quite comfortable, quite secure, and quite healthy—even amazingly so. But the worldview that formed most of us for the last forty years was one where there were no limits to our growth, our achievement, and the earth’s resources. We now and suddenly know better. It is a shock that is still sinking in slowly and with great resistance.

Things that were luxuries for even kings and queens throughout most of history have become commonplace for most of us in developed countries. Easy availability soon became expectation, then eventually habituation, and finally entitlement. *Wasn't life always this way?* we came to imagine. *Isn't this the way it is supposed to be?* we assumed. It is surely hard to go backward once you have taken something for granted and it has become the norm.

Most humans since the beginnings of humanity have lived with a clear sense of limits. Scarcity has been part of the deal. Somehow there was wisdom and enforced maturity by living inside of boundaries. Small was the norm. It also made many people security-obsessed and driven toward violence and control, with no time left for art, literature, leisure (“the basis of culture”), higher education, or even the daily skills of communication and relationship. It kept many in history from the fullness of their own humanity, less capable of love and union with others, with themselves, with creation, and with God. I think we can say that God’s plan was surely not penury, nor were human lives supposed to be “nasty, brutish, and short” as Thomas Hobbes complained. Yet many lives have been exactly that.

Father Richard Rohr is a Franciscan priest of the New Mexico Province and founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque. For more information please visit www.cacradicalgrace.org.



We swung to the other extreme and created a prosperity gospel, a religion of “Cadillac faith,” and limousine liberals (and conservatives!) who saw no conflict between the Gospel and amassing huge personal fortunes for their private lifestyles, despite the rather clear warnings of Jesus and the prophets against precisely that. I could gather extensive quotations, but I realize we have compartmentalized and denied these clear teachings for so many centuries that our resistance and denial is strongly in place. We just cannot hear what we cannot hear. Our ears are stopped and dulled, as Isaiah predicted (6:10).

In the last forty years, it became possible to be easily “rich,” and so it soon felt ethical to be rich, even in the presence of so much poverty, oppression, and even desperation on this earth. Again, the rich man is ignoring Lazarus (Luke 16:19-

31), as if Christians had never read the story.

Most of human history connected money with actual work, effort, and sacrifice. For the first time in human history, on a very broad scale, money and success became associated with money and success themselves. Financial incest spread, but this incest was unrecognized as abuse. Where were the watchmen that Ezekiel said were necessary and obligated? (33:6)—the making of money was itself *the work* and even the most admired and envied work by many! Let’s be honest, on some level many, if not most, of us believe that “greed is good.” In our form, it is called capitalism.

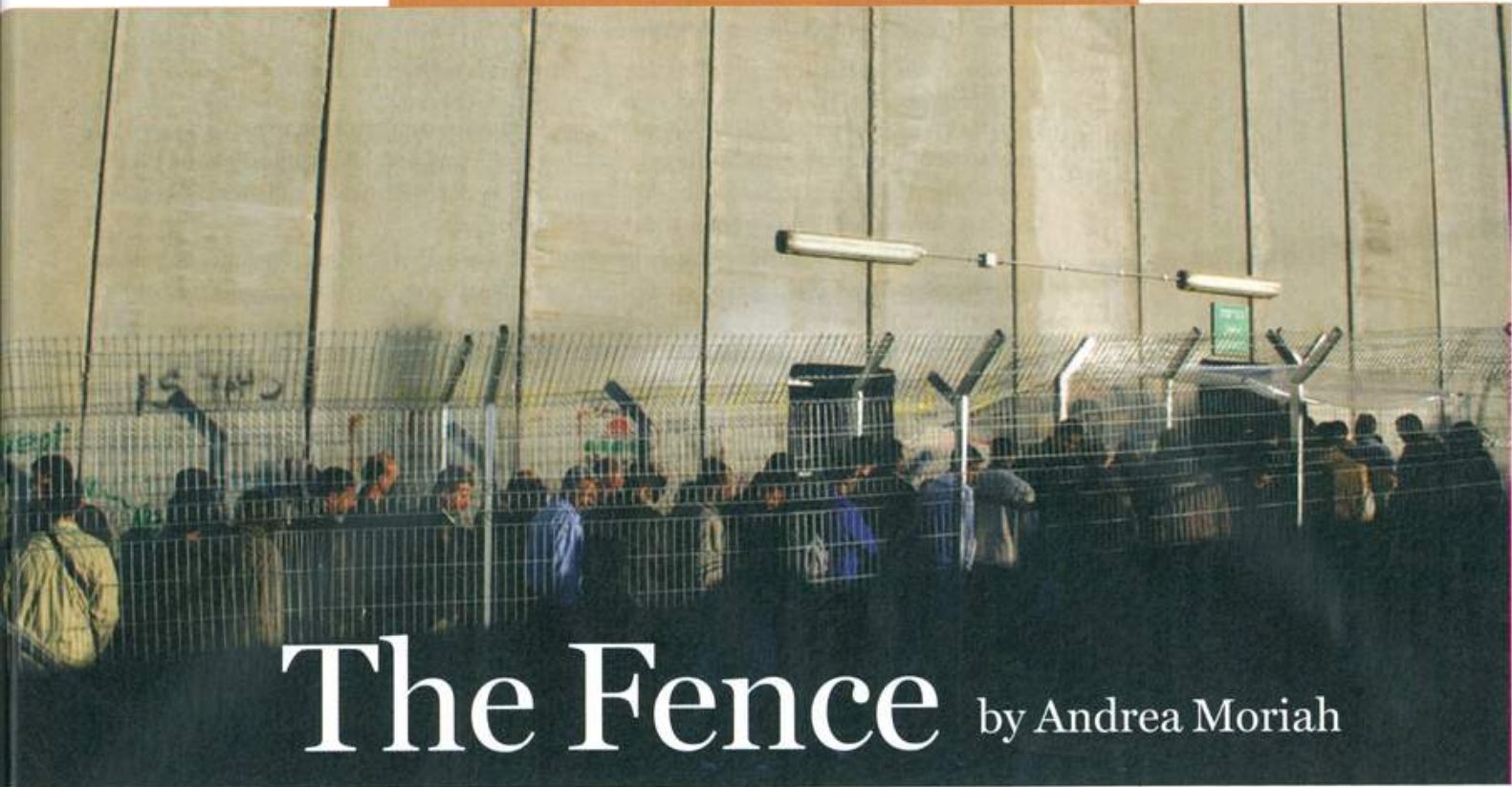
Yet I would say that our real failure is not so much greed (although it is that, too) as *self sufficiency, arrogance, and superficiality*. Inner depth, compassion, and community died in many of us. We might call the thing that died a capacity for simple presence—presence to ourselves, to others, to the moment, and to inherent joy. That is the death of the soul for sure, and eventually of society.

Surely this is a moment of invitation, for a very new framing, for utterly new possibilities. Only a small number will probably do this, but that is all that is needed. We need to imagine our world, our economies, and our lifestyles in whole new ways. *How can we get back to the way it was in recent years?* is the question many commentators are asking, or worse, *How can we restore the wealthy, the banks, and the corporations, so their largesse can again trickle down to us?* These questions show the spiritless and sad way in which we have not-imagined a better world.

We surely cannot imagine Moses, the prophets, or Jesus thinking in such a way. They moved toward the crowds, the common good, not the protection of elites. Now, by some strange legerdemain, we dismiss this program as “socialism,” with believers themselves some of the major dismissers. It is so ironic that we must protect the bonus contracts of executives as “legally binding,” and yet the contracts of the ordinary worker can be easily dropped for the “survival” of the corporation. We are back into the divine rights of kings, and dare to call it democracy or free market, or even capitalism. It is “big government” protecting big government.

One wonders and hopes if this crisis of prosperity cannot return us to a re-admiration of *smallness*? Is it possible that we could join E.F. Schumacher’s shout and plea that “small is beautiful”?

I trust, I believe, I hope, and I even know that the New Imaginers are out there! This crisis of prosperity is an opportunity to again love the small, the local, the human scale, the human over the corporate, the soulful over the successful, and the common good over private advantage. This alone will offer us a future worthy of spiritual and wise human beings. ■



The Fence by Andrea Moriah

Summer

THE SKY IS MUSTARD YELLOW. THE KHAM SIN THAT BLOWS OUR WAY OUT OF THE Arabian Desert chokes the air out of your throat and stuffs it instead with sand. You can't live on sand, but all of us here do. Issa, with his blondish hair, dark skin, and dissatisfied eyes, sits with me on the half-done stone wall he's building for us, and we look out over the fence at his village and then strain to see through the yellow air to the sea. I love this land, I say. I love these stones. Issa's genuinely surprised. You weren't born here, were you?

The day afterward he stands at my gate, telling me how his mother needs passion fruit to control her diabetes and asking can I get some for him. I don't know if Issa's mother needs the fruit because she can't get to the doctor in Ramallah, or because the medical care there stinks, or because they've run out of insulin in the territories, or because she's too superstitious to go to a doctor. I don't ask him. The same way I don't ask him how he, an Arab, got blond hair. Or why he keeps fathering children, even though they are always girls and never the sons he wants. Or why he keeps living in the village even though he hates being among people who don't want anything but what they've got. It's not something one asks. It's too hot anyway.

The passion fruit that is scarce in the territories is plentiful here. I buy it in the north of the country, and by the time I make my way back to the hills around Jerusalem, the sun is already a dirty gray and falling into the sea, and Issa's on the other side of the fence and can't get back over. I call him on his cell phone. He can get to the fence if I'm willing to drive down and throw the sack of fruit over it. I am. Issa's there when I get there, and we find a place where I can get close enough to the fence to chuck it over, and he can get close enough to catch it. He smiles thanks. I smile no problem. Ten seconds later a security guard appears on my side asking me, what's he doing here? His mom needs passion fruit for her sugar, I say. Well, he can't

Andrea Moriah was born and raised in the great Midwest of the United States and now lives in the rolling hills outside of the Holy City of Jerusalem with her husband, Avner, who is a painter, and their dog, MeJulie. They have two sons, Nir and Tal, and a daughter, Michal, who has just entered the Israel Defense Forces.

come up to the fence after hours. Issa says that's why he won't bring his wife through the fence to visit us. He says he won't subject her to the indignity.

Winter

SA'ID MARRIED HIS FIRST COUSIN MAJD AGAINST THE FIERY ADMONITION OF THE QUR'AN AND THE good advice of his family. His brothers tell us that it is because of this insubordination that the couple's first baby boy is so sickly. The doctors in the hospital in Ramallah said there was nothing they could do and sent the boy home with his mother to die.

Sa'id's brother the builder comes to us as he always does, uneasy, with his downcast, ground-colored eyes, a lit cigarette cradled in a half smile. Can we help the family get the baby to a hospital in Jerusalem?

On the day they cross over, the sky is cold steel blue, the wind without motion, and the air sharp and clear as glass. Rocks, houses, sheep, hills, and trees stand stock quiet still in the landscape, outlined in black as I wait chilled at the fence for Majd and her child.

Two specialists are already there to examine the child by the time we get to the hospital. A third makes his way toward us through Jerusalem's jigsaw roads. Majd speaks only Arabic. She is shy and apprehensive, so I stay with her when she goes in to show the two specialists her baby and tries desperately to get it across to them that her son is dying and no one will help her. They say it would be better to talk to the third specialist—he will be here soon—and leave us alone in the room to wait. Majd holds the baby in her arms, trying to spoon sustenance into its small, open mouth. I try not to move so Majd doesn't have to acknowledge my presence. Time passes and harsh sunlight spills into the room, enveloping mother and child. Majd pulls her neat white scarf over her eyes; the baby does not even blink. The third specialist arrives breathless from running up the stairs, his eyes blue smoke encompassed by exhaustion. He wears a yarmulke on his head and looks like a settler. He slides in behind the desk across from the delicate young mother and leans forward: Majd, tell me what is wrong with your baby. And he asks it in Arabic.

Words fly from her mouth. She is in such a hurry to explain in her own language. My Murad was born healthy and fine, but at six months he began to be sick and now he barely eats. Now he hardly moves at all. Here, I have brought all his papers, written in English, from the doctors in Ramallah. The specialist listens to her words. He asks her if the baby is sleeping well. If he keeps down the little he does eat. Does he react to movement? To light? To your smile? She shakes her head no to all of his questions. Then the specialist reads, slowly, all that the doctors in Ramallah have written. He asks, Majd, may I examine your baby?

The baby needs to be hospitalized immediately. His life is in grave danger. But the authorities in Ramallah will not approve the hospitalization. They think the baby is a lost cause. We take Majd and Murad back to the fence. The sky is bitter and black when they cross over to the other side.

Fall

YUSEF'S SONS SMILE WHILE THEY WORK. ALL THREE HAVE THE SAME EYES AS THEIR FATHER, SET far apart and wide open. They've walked through the fence to spend the day on their knees laying our stone floors. We joke with them and bring them tools and mint tea. In a few days there will be elections in the territories and we ask them if they are going to vote. The father grunts and the sons smile.

It's just past dawn and the air, still cold from the night, feels thin and brittle and ready to shatter. Already there is trouble at the fence. The security guard is taking his time getting there and the waiting men, their tools heavy across their shoulders, are growing angry. The guard arrives surly, cursing. He opens the first gate. The men crowd forward, crushing him up against the inside gate. The guard calls for backup, and backup comes, wearing an anxious frown and carrying a gun. Everybody go home. No work today. The men disperse, get into their cars, and drive home to explain to their wives why there won't be any money today, maybe not tomorrow either. The guard's a Druse, the workers confide to me later. A Jew wouldn't treat us that bad.

The old men in the Mukatah in Ramallah have sent younger ones with harsh faces and AK-47 assault rifles to the villages. They are there to pressure the men to stay home from work or gather at the fence and shout slogans or come with them to extend the anger to places where there isn't any

yet. The next day it's in the news that the fence between us and the villages will be closed until further notice.

In a few days the fence is opened again and the men come through it to work. Yusef's sons come, but Yusef is not with them. He's lost his working privileges. Talk circulates that he's been arrested—some say by authorities on our side of the fence and some say by authorities on the other side. I ask his sons if they would like something to drink. No, thank you, they smile. We are fine.

Spring

THEY ARE STROLLING THROUGH THEIR VILLAGE IN THE WARM AIR: AHMED, HIS WIFE, THEIR TWO small sons, and little Samia. A leader of one of the armed groups on the other side has been targeted by our army. Somehow the army knows where he will be at any given moment, and at this moment he is being driven through the open-sewered streets of Ahmed's village in a brand new, curtains-drawn, black Mercedes Benz. His bodyguard is with him. A helicopter carrying an experienced sniper buzzes through the sunlit sky to kill him.

The midday news informs us that a very dangerous terrorist has been killed in the territories and some civilians killed and others wounded. The army is very sorry about the civilians. The government is very sorry. The country is very sorry. I am sorry, too, although I don't think about it much.

Ahmed's wife and one of his small sons are among the dead civilians. Shrapnel has cut through his daughter Samia's spinal cord. On its return trip, the army helicopter that targeted the terrorist flies Samia and her father high over the fence to a rehabilitation center in Jerusalem, a place that has become expert in putting together bodies that have been blown apart. Ahmed's remaining son stays in the territories to be looked after by an aunt and uncle.

I've come to the rehabilitation center to visit the teenage daughter of a friend who was injured many months ago. A suicide bomber had somehow slipped around the fence and blown himself up in a crowded cafe. It was Sivan's bad luck to have been there laughing with her friends at the same moment that the bomber entered, looked around, decided it was a good-sized crowd, and pressed the button. Now I see that her body has been expertly put back together, her wounds have healed, and her hair is growing back over the scar where they peeled back the skin in order to extract her facial bones from her brain. She makes no sound. She makes no voluntary movement. She is not aware that I am here. She never is. Her large gray eyes stare straight ahead at nothing, and the doctors say there is little chance they will ever see anything other than that again. Her friends come to tell her that she is missed at school. They lean over her and speak softly into her ears and brush aside her hair to peer into her eyes. She yawns. They are shocked to see she has lost all her teeth. They tie Get Well balloons on her bed frame and leave. Sivan's mother and father take turns spending the days and nights with her. They are frightened to death that she will never wake up. And they are frightened to death that she will.

In the same room Ahmed crouches by the closet at the foot of Samia's bed, folding her clothes. He is the only one from the family allowed to cross the fence to be with Samia in the rehabilitation center. But he is not allowed to go anywhere else without permission. So he stays with her twenty-four hours a day, bathing her, changing her, cleaning out the pipe that brings oxygen from a small cylinder and pumps it into a hole in her neck. Every morning he dresses her in a bright new outfit that he has received from people on this side who are sorry for his tragedy. Today he sits her in a wheel chair and too roughly combs out her hair and ties it up tightly in a rubber band. I catch his eye and he smiles. I am not her mother, he apologizes. I don't know how to do these things.

I kneel by him while he puts the folded clothes back into the closet. I touch his shoulder and look into his eyes. I notice for the first time a scar where the shrapnel that destroyed his family barely scraped his cheek. I am so sorry Ahmed about your baby girl. Yes, he says. He tilts his head up toward the ceiling. It is my gift from Allah for the rest of my life. The hospital has done all they can for her. I must take her home. But who will care for her there? I have to go to work. What if she needs further treatment or a new treatment becomes available for her and I cannot bring her back through the fence to get it? Isn't there someone who can help you, I ask.

There is khamsin today, and Ahmed looks out through the hospital windows at the swirling dust, tilts his head again and rolls his eyes upward toward the yellow sky. It's in Allah's hands now. ■

Healing and Reality in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

by Rafael Reuveny

IN 1905, NAGUIB AZOURY, AN OTTOMAN OFFICIAL TURNED ARAB NATIONALIST, proclaimed: "Two important phenomena ... are emerging at this moment in Asiatic Turkey. They are the awakening of the Arab nation and the latent effort of the Jews to reconstitute on a very large scale the ancient kingdom of Israel.... [They] are destined to fight each other continually until one of them wins." Years later, the late Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin observed in the 1993 signing of the Oslo Accord in Washington, D.C., that Israelis and Palestinians had been traumatized by a "hundred-year war." The Oslo process, however, failed, and the fighting has continued.

Facing a conflict with no end, one can easily despair. Still, I believe there is hope. The Tikkun Community has also not lost hope. Facing the recent flare-up in violence in the Gaza Strip in January 2009, it published a one-page ad in the *New York Times*, asking President-elect Obama to call for an immediate cease-fire and convene an international peace conference. Can this resolve the conflict? I believe the conflict can be resolved, only the two sides have lost the ability to do so on their own; they need help. The United States can provide meaningful help, in light of its world status and its acceptance as a broker by both sides. But—given that all previous U.S. efforts since 1967 have led nowhere—if we are to reject Azoury's prediction that the conflict will not end until one side is defeated, then we must conclude that something critical has been missing in the previous attempts. This article outlines what I believe that missing element to be.

My thesis begins by referring to things as they are: Israel has been a colonialist state since 1967. Most readers will probably find this statement offensive and inflammatory, but please bear with me; this article is not about criticizing Israel per se, but rather about suggesting a way to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I grew up in Israel and served many years in the Israeli Defense Forces. I now live in the United States, but Israel commands a special place in my heart. My thesis is empirical, and my argument only applies to the period since 1967. I do not reject the existence of the state of Israel; nor do I see its creation in 1948 as a fundamentally colonial enterprise.

Aware of the status of *Tikkun's* editor in chief, Rabbi Michael Lerner, I discussed my thesis with him at length in 2008. He rejected it. Referring to his 2003 book *Healing Israel/Palestine*, he argued that Israeli-Palestinian conflict resolution should emphasize healing wounded spirits on both sides. Would a peace movement, he asked, use the term "colonialism" to build support in Israel or the United States? How can blaming one side help resolve the current conflict? These are, of course, very important questions, and I will return to them in due course.

My article is motivated by and reflects our lengthy and stimulating discourse. I analyze the question of conflict resolution against a backdrop of historical colonialism. This methodology has rarely been used in the non-antagonistic manner I employ here. The

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benefit of my analytical approach is that, by placing the conflict in a historical comparative perspective, it reveals that the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not, after all, unique. The lessons from colonial history about how to bring freedom to a colony to the mutual benefit of both sides are actually applicable to Israel today. I admire the Tikkun Community's call for a mutual change in consciousness, repentance, atonement, and healing on both sides, but I believe that this fundamental and important spiritual change cannot begin before Israel decolonizes to its 1967 border. My thesis, as we shall see, will indicate how to bring about this *tikkun olam*.

From Inter-Communal Conflict to Colonialism

BECAUSE COLONIALISM IS A LOADED TERM, A COLONIAL INTERPRETATION OF THE Israeli-Palestinian conflict—in which the Palestinians are the colonial or native people, Israel is the metropole or colonial ruler, and the Territories are the colony—must be empirically substantiated. It is useful to first discuss whether historical Zionism was colonialist and whether Israel was, in its origins and pre-1967 actions, a colonialist state.

About 3,000 years ago, the Zionists' ancestors, the biblical Jews, conquered the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean, also known as Palestine or biblical Israel. Years later, they lost control to Rome. In the first and second centuries CE, the Jews revolted; Rome prevailed and exiled them. In the seventh century, the Arabs conquered Palestine. When the Zionists began immigrating to Palestine in the 1880s, they met the ancestors of the Arabs and the local non-Jewish residents, the Palestinians, who inhabited this part of the Ottoman Empire.

The Zionists practiced colonization without colonialism, as they immigrated to Palestine as private individuals, not in the name of any state, and purchased land from Palestinians instead of forcefully seizing it. Within a few years, they began clashing with the Palestinians, but even then the conflict was not colonial; rather it was a clash between two communities claiming the same land. In 1918, the British took over, but the Zionist-Palestinian conflict continued.

The term "colonialism" is also not appropriate in describing the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. The Zionists accepted the United Nations-brokered two-state solution in 1947, but the Palestinians rejected it and demanded all of Palestine. By 1948, the conflict had escalated to an all-out war. As a result of that war, the Zionists won control over 78 percent of Palestine and formed the state of Israel. Jordan and Egypt won control over the remaining 22 percent and essentially ignored the Palestinian aspirations for independence. Some Palestinians became Israeli citizens, but most became refugees in Arab states.

After 1949, Israelis accepted the borders of their new state. Only a minority longed for the remaining 22 percent of biblical Israel, the Territories, and even their zeal for this land was fading. The young state of Israel discriminated against its Palestinian citizens in various ways, all in the name of national security, but it did not cancel their voting rights. This system, which resembled internal colonialism, was vanishing in the late 1950s and was dismantled by Israel in 1966. The next Israeli colonial drive would prove much more intense and resilient. (For empirical support and historical sources see my 2008 article in *The Independent Review: A Journal of Political Economy*, 12:325-374).

Historical colonialism typically involved states expanding intentionally beyond their borders. The Israeli case belongs to a smaller set, in which colonialism started almost accidentally, as a result of war. In 1967, facing threats by its Arab neighbors, Israel fought Egypt, Syria, and Jordan and occupied the Territories (and other lands). Israeli colonialism advanced incrementally until 1977, when Israel openly claimed the Territories, turning them into a settler colony.

In the last 500 years, there were several forms of settler colonies. In one form, settlers were a minority. Aided by the metropole, they heavily discriminated against natives and



Reuveny argues that religious Israelis' narrative about their reclamation of holy land is not unique in colonial history. The French in North Africa saw themselves as reclaiming formerly Christian lands from Islam. The Pilgrims (top) saw themselves as crossing the Jordan (the Atlantic) to settle the Promised Land. The Afrikaners (below) on the "Great Trek" of 1836 described the following British army as Pharaoh's, the African people as "Canaan-ites," and their success as proof that God had delivered them out of the hands of their enemies into the Promised Land.



Tough Love—the United States has forced its allies to decolonize before: the Dutch in Indonesia in 1948, the French in Indochina after 1954 (top: French and Vietnamese troops in 1954), and the South African Apartheid regime after 1986 (middle: South African police action 1985). The author asks: Why shouldn't the United States urge Israel to decolonize today? (Bottom: U.S.-made helicopter at the Ramon Air Force base in southern Israel).

seized their lands and resources, as in French Algeria; Portuguese Angola and Mozambique; The Dutch East Indies (Indonesia); British South Africa, Rhodesia, and Kenya; German Southwest Africa (Namibia); and Italian Libya. This form of settler colonialism applies to Israel after 1967.

As with other colonial powers, the state of Israel promoted colonization in the Territories, providing its settlers benefits such as subsidies, loans, grants, housing, low taxes, transport, and land. The state also employed the settlers and developed their infrastructures, defended them, and fought their wars against the Palestinians. Historically, settlers typically came to colonies to find riches or promote metropolitan interests. Most Israeli settlers came to the Territories for similar reasons.

One particular group of settlers, the religious Zionists, came to the Territories in the name of God, believing God sent them to their promised land. This group is also not unique historically. Religious motivations for settlement were also observed among the early English settlers in North America, the Boers and the Afrikaners in South Africa, some of the Dutch settlers in the East Indies, the white settlers in Rhodesia, and the French settlers in Algeria and Tunisia. All of these settler societies said the land they colonized belonged to them in the name of God, and God had sent them there. Some identified the land with the biblical Promised Land. The French in North Africa saw themselves returning to reclaim lands held by Christians long ago.

Similar to other settlers throughout history, Israeli settlers have exerted high influence on Israeli politics. As in the case of French Algeria, they have voted and served as Knesset members and ministers in the metropole. Their population has grown over time, reaching about 500,000 today, on par with the number of settlers in Portuguese Africa. But as in all settler colonies in Asia and Africa, they have remained a small minority in the Territories.

The situation in the Territories has standard colonial attributes, including social segregation; separate laws for settlers and natives; settlers interacting with natives only economically, employing them in menial, low-paying jobs; settlers and other Israelis looking down on natives; and Palestinians having few rights, requiring Israeli permits for daily affairs. As with other colonial societies, there is a high settler-native income inequality in the Territories. Israeli settlers typically live in spacious villas or nice apartments and control disproportionately large shares of local waters and lands, while many Palestinians live in wretched conditions. There is also frequent settler-native violence in the Territories, where the two sides attack each other, and some settlers seize native lands and ruin local properties. The Israeli authorities generally employ a relatively soft hand against settler violations of Israeli law and offenses against Palestinians.

Like all metropolises, Israel has invested little in the local economy of its colony, which has evolved to serve Israel's needs and become dependent upon it. Seeking to reduce the cost of controlling their colonies, many metropolises offered colonized subjects a semblance of self-rule but promoted native leaders thought to be amenable to the metropole's influence. Israel has done so as well.

Unlike the historical Zionists who legally purchased land from Palestinians, Israel has turned primarily to seizure as a tool for acquiring land and water for the settlers in the Territories. Like most other colonial rulers, Israel has ruled the Territories as separate administrative units without formally annexing them. In time, the military administration set up in 1967 has turned into a civilian one, introducing the usual colonial routinization of daily life. While in 1947 the Zionists accepted a Palestinian state, between 1967 and 2003 Israel formally rejected the Palestinian right of political self-determination. Even now it is

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unclear whether the Palestinian entity that Israel has in mind will be fully sovereign. This too, we shall see next, has historical parallels.

Colonial Revolt and Partial Decolonization

REGARDLESS OF WHY THEY CAME TO COLONIES, SETTLERS THROUGHOUT HISTORY TRIED TO create a reality in which they, not the natives, would call the shots. Only a few colonial settler communities succeeded in meeting this goal (e.g., those in North America, Australia, and New Zealand), but all the native societies rejected the transformation and often revolted. Before 1945, colonial revolts were typically localized and were subdued relatively easily. After 1945, they turned into long and bitter general uprisings, which initially took metropolises by surprise. The Israel-Palestinian violence since 1967 has mirrored this pattern.

Before 1987, there were pockets of Palestinian anti-Israeli violence, but Israel easily subdued them. In 1987, the resentment felt by Palestinians exploded into a general revolt, surprising Israel. The violence has essentially continued since 1987. Through this, Israel has continued colonizing, as did most twentieth-century colonial powers, which continued expanding settlements until the last days of their control of settler colonies after 1945.

Historical colonial revolts exhibited common attributes. Facing a much stronger opponent, rebels resorted to guerrilla warfare against settlers and soldiers and, when feasible, attacked metropolises, as in the Irish and Algerian cases. Settlers demanded strong responses and attacked natives. From time to time, colonial rulers launched large military campaigns against rebels, who would then vanish into friendly local masses, preparing to fight another day. Seeking to stem the mass support, all rulers used collective punishments, including roadblocks, checkpoints, blockades, curfews, destroying properties, rough questioning, and fences. The Israel example also exhibits these attributes.

Colonial wars divided both the colonized and colonizer societies. Seeking to improve their lives, some natives became informers and even joined colonial armies, as in Algeria, Angola, British America, and Indonesia. The Palestinian example is similar. As the colonial revolt went on, the rulers faced a dilemma. Staying meant an endless war and inevitably crossing ethical lines. Settlers and their supporters rejected the option of leaving, while other citizens in the metropole pushed for decolonization. Ultimately, tensions grew, pushing metropolises to the brink of civil war. Israel has experienced similar social strife.

Historically, colonial conflicts in settler colonies ended in four ways. First, settlers killed many natives and seized most of their land and resources. With continued settler immigration and a shrinking native population, the settlers eventually became the majority and won statehood from the metropole, often following a war (e.g., Spanish and British America). Settler states continued to fight natives, but years later granted equal rights to the remaining few, forming a joint state controlled by the settlers (e.g., the United States). Second, the metropole annexed its colonies, but the new state eventually broke into many states (as in the former USSR). Third, settlers formed a state that excluded the native majority, as in South Africa and Rhodesia. The natives revolted, and the settlers gave up control, leading to a joint state controlled by the native majority. Fourth, the native majority rebelled. The metropolises and settler minorities resorted to the use of force but eventually decolonized, most settlers left, and the natives formed a state (e.g., Algeria, Indonesia).

Which of these end games applies here? Unlike the settlers in the first end game, Israeli settlers have not used extreme demographic methods against Palestinians, who have remained the large majority in the Territories. While some Israeli politicians have called to transfer the Palestinians to neighboring countries, the idea has never caught on. The Palestinians also own much of the land in the Territories, despite the Israeli land seizures. The options of forming a joint Israeli-Palestinian state, as in South Africa, or an Israeli-Palestinian federation dominated by Jerusalem, as in the USSR, are also not relevant, as both sides reject them. Thus we must consider the fourth end game: decolonization.

Decolonization was always the result of a huge, partly subconscious cost-benefit analysis. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the analysis was quite simple: metropolitan rulers were kicked out by settlers. After 1945, decolonization became

complex. The natives demanded independence and revolted when rulers rejected their demand. In the metropolises, more people began to believe that colonialism was unethical and/or too expensive to sustain. Abroad, people came to reject colonial norms. In the end, metropolitan fatigue, defined as the sum of these forces, grew, leading to decolonization.

These forces are also evident in the current conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians. The Palestinians revolted in 1987 and 2000. The world community has called on Israel to cease the occupation. At home, many Israelis have called the occupation unethical and a waste of resources, and some even refused to serve as soldiers in the West Bank. Slowly, Israeli officials have begun taking steps to dismantle colonial control. In 1994, Israel formed a Palestinian Authority (PA) and granted it several enclaves. In December 2000, Prime Minister Ehud Barak agreed to withdraw from most of the Territories. In late 2003, Israeli and Palestinian officials signed an informal accord in Geneva, calling on Israel to leave the Territories. Shortly thereafter, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon called the occupation immoral and accepted the idea of Palestinian statehood, and in 2005, he dismantled four settlements in the West Bank and evacuated the Gaza Strip, all steps he had rejected in the past. The following government of Prime Minister Ehud Olmert held talks with the PA, reportedly offering it most of the West Bank, and the largest Israeli political party, Kadima, supports a two-state solution.

Still, Israel has only partially decolonized, insistent on keeping a foothold in the Territories and the Palestinian entity, and this position seems to have hardened following the 2009 general elections. Israeli colonialism remains for three reasons: Palestinian fatigue, support from some Israelis, and, as we shall see shortly, implicit U.S. support.

In recent years, Palestinian fatigue seems to have grown after years of violent struggle, and their general revolt seems to have subsided. However, historic examples, the continuation of sporadic attacks in the West Bank and within Israel's pre-1967 borders, and the recent flaring of large-scale violence in the Gaza Strip suggest the Palestinians could revolt again.

Israelis have intensely debated the fate of the Territories since 1987. The debate intensified in the early 1990s, leading to the killing of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995, and peaked again on the eve of the 2000 Camp David Summit and 2005 evacuation of the Gaza Strip. The settlers and their supporters have rejected a pullout from the Territories and, as occurred in other colonies, a few have threatened to use arms to prevent it. Haunted by an old claim attributing the loss of biblical Israel to disunity facing Rome, many Israelis fear that a pullout will break Israel, so they insist on maintaining a presence in the colony. This conduct too is not unique: some historic metropolises were also deeply attached to their colonies. For example, to the French people, Algeria was part and parcel of France; to the Portuguese, Angola was an overseas province; and to the Dutch, Indonesia was considered vital. Facing settler and right-wing domestic opposition to decolonization, these colonial rulers, like Israel, refused to fully let go, while the natives, like the Palestinians, rejected partial decolonization.

The readers of this article would probably accept the empirical essence of my analysis, but as Rabbi Lerner explains, the most important criterion in evaluating the usefulness of a certain framing of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should be whether it contributes to conflict resolution. In the remainder of this article, I show how my analysis contributes to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, beginning with the *tikkunish* idea of healing.

Healing and Decolonization

IT SHOULD NOW BE CLEAR THAT SINCE 1967 THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN RELATIONSHIP HAS exhibited virtually all aspects of the settler colonialism witnessed previously in Africa and Asia. These colonial situations ended only following decolonization. Rabbi Lerner argues that the decision of a dominant society to let go requires healing wounded spirits on both sides. In letting go of power, the dominant society needs to feel secure that the formerly colonized will not attempt to wipe out their former colonizer. The changes in (continued on page 77)

Obsessed with Defamation and Slander by Zaid Shakir

THIS PAST SEPTEMBER, 28 million copies of the anti-Islamic propaganda documentary *Obsession* were distributed free of charge in what were considered the “swing” states in the past presidential election campaign. This effort was clearly designed to leverage the idea in the minds of some Americans that Senator Barack Obama is a Muslim (he is not), seeking to identify him with the images and statements of Muslims portrayed in the video. These portrayals give the impression that Islam is a fanatical, bloodthirsty religion, whose adherents are hell-bent on destroying America. By implying a connection between Senator Obama and “radical” Islam, the film sought to prove that Obama was too anti-American to be seriously considered for the highest office in this land.

The film is propaganda that relies in some instances on distorting the truth and in others on blatant lies or vile innuendos. The film points to some extreme doctrines that the overwhelming majority of Muslims readily condemn, implying that “radical” Islam is the new fascism and that it poses an existential threat to the United States. This allegation is false and dangerous. To support this allegation, the film’s producers juxtapose scenes of Nazi marches and other forms of political imagery with corresponding Muslim images. I have previously discussed the exaggerated nature of the Islamic threat (see newislamicdirections.com). There I wrote (in September 2008):

In recent days, surrogates of one of my opponents have been distributing, free of charge, a disturbing DVD entitled *Obsession*. This film attempts to portray the maniacal rants of a minuscule fringe of deluded Muslim fanatics as an existential

“... one of the most powerful, expertly crafted and undeniably important films I’ve seen this year ...”
Michael Medved
“Eye on Entertainment”

**AS SEEN ON CNN AND FOX NEWS
BY MORE THAN 20 MILLION VIEWERS WORLDWIDE**

“... required viewing for everyone.”
Howard Gordon
Executive Producer
“24”

The massively distributed *Obsession* DVD was classic war propaganda, attempting to prevent the election of Barack Obama and to promote the “war on terror” as a war on Islam, which it portrayed as a fanatical, bloodthirsty religion.

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ROLL OF SHAME

High-circulation newspapers that distributed the "Obsession: Radical Islam's War Against the West" DVD to some of their readers in certain "swing" states during the 2008 presidential election:

THE DENVER POST

The Miami Herald

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

The New York Times

The Charlotte Observer

The Oregonian

HONOR ROLL

Newspapers that refused to distribute the "Obsession: Radical Islam's War Against the West" DVD during the 2008 presidential election:

Detroit Free Press

NR NEWS-RECORD.COM
Greensboro • High Point • Burlington • Asheville • Eden
North Carolina

THE PLAIN DEALER

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

threat to the United States that must be combated by the full might of the United States' military and society. It tries to deceive you into believing that "Radical Islam" and "Islamofascism" is the twenty-first-century equivalent of Hitler's Germany. Both history and contemporary reality belie that claim. Nazi Germany was an industrialized state that had military means that rivaled or surpassed those of America. Had circumstances proved more favorable for the Germans, they could have well developed an atomic bomb before America. Similarly, under more fortuitous circumstances, Germany's ballistic missile program, which produced the deadly V2 Rocket, and its fighter aircraft program, which introduced the Messerschmitt 262, the world's first tactical jet fighter, could have given Germany a tactical advantage that could have turned the tide of the war in Hitler's favor.

As a result of their combined military strength, combating the fascist threat of Hitler's Germany, Mussolini's Italy, and Hirohito's Japan would require the military service of 16.1 million American troops and cost 406,000 American lives. What has been the cost of containing the so-called "Islamofascist" threat? First of all, there is only one real front in the so-called "War on Terror": Afghanistan. There, the remnants of al Qaeda and the Taliban, the latter of which has not been implicated in a single terrorist act against the United States, have been held in check by 34,000 American troops currently on the ground, at a cost of 519 American lives, even though the conflict there has endured longer than World War II. The number of troops committed, and the number of lives sacrificed gives you a clear indication of the true extent of the nature of the threat posed by Radical Islam.

The shameless allegation that Islam is the new fascism would be bad enough were it presented in isolation. However, it is coupled with allegations that Muslims supported Hitler and the Nazis during World War II. Such allegations are a foul misrepresentation of the historical record and serve to dishonor the memory of all of the courageous Muslims who selflessly fought and died in defense of the European democracies, even though many of their own lands were still suffering under the yoke of European colonization.

At the heart of these baseless and base allegations is the fact that the Palestinian Mufti of Jerusalem, Al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni, had close ties to the German leader Adolf Hitler, and even spent part of the war in Berlin. While this much is true, al-Husayni's sentiments were not those of the overwhelming majority of the Palestinians, to say nothing of the rest of the world's Muslims. To use al-Husayni's ties to Hitler as a means to defame and discredit Islam and Muslims as fascists is misleading and has to be challenged.

In fact, there were several Palestinian brigades and tens of thousands of Palestinians in the British Army who actively fought the spread of fascism. The existence of these Palestinian brigades was more indicative of the mood of the Arab and Muslim masses than al-Husayni's misguided actions. Therefore, when al-Husayni issued his call for a Muslim jihad against the allied forces his plea was largely ignored. The fascist jihad never materialized. The reason for that is simple. It had no significant support from the masses of Muslims.

The Palestinian Muslims were not alone in terms of their participation in the anti-fascist effort. Hundreds of thousands of North and West African Muslims assisted in the liberation of France from the German occupation and the French Vichy government. As many as half of the free French forces that landed in southern France in 1944 were Africans, the overwhelming majority of them Muslims. Among their ranks was a group referred to as Senegal's Secret Soldiers, a group of Senegalese Muslims who played a significant role in the liberation of France from Nazi occupation.

One of this country's staunchest Muslim allies in the struggle against the fascist menace was the Moroccan king, Muhammad V. He not only worked strenuously to insure that Moroccans supported neither the French Vichy government nor the Nazi effort in North Africa, but he also courageously supported Moroccan Jews during the war years, saving

them from extermination at the hands of the Vichy regime. Muhammad V's efforts were so heroic in this latter regard that the Moroccan Jewish community has initiated an effort to have him become the first Arab to receive Yad Vashem's "Righteous Among the Nations" award.

Farther east, hundreds of thousands of Muslims enrolled in the British Indian Army. On January 1, 1945, there were 447,580 Punjabi Muslims in the British Indian Army. This number constituted 32 percent of the army's troop strength, a percentage tremendously greater than the percentage of Muslims in the overall population. These Muslim soldiers were deployed in all of the major theaters of battle in the fight against the Axis powers and performed admirably. They were firmly supported by the political leader of the Muslims in India, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, a staunch critic of Hitler.

The claim of widespread Muslim support for Hitler is further belied by the fact that Turkey, at that time the strongest independent Muslim nation, maintained strict neutrality for most of the war. When the Turks did enter the war they did so on the side of the Alliance. The Turks broke all diplomatic and economic relations with the Germans in August of 1944, and declared war against Germany, February 23, 1945. These moves were instrumental in the defeat of fascism. Besides the political importance of Turkey's declaration of war against the Axis forces, its entrance into the war on the side of the Alliance deprived Germany of one of its major suppliers of chromite, an essential element in steel production.

Perhaps the greatest testimony to the Muslims who actively opposed fascism is the work of the Paris Mosque in protecting Jewish children from the Nazis, who were sending French Jews—men, women, and children—to perish in the death camps of Eastern Europe. The mosque itself was built by the French government in appreciation of the 500,000 Muslims who had fought for France during World War I, with 100,000 losing their lives in the trenches. It is estimated that the mosque helped to save over 1,700 Jewish children, by providing them with shelter, transit, and Muslim names. A pamphlet that circulated among Algerian Muslims in Paris at the onset of the Nazis' campaign against the Jews in France stated:

Yesterday at dawn, the Jews of Paris were arrested. The old, the women, and the children. In exile like ourselves, workers like ourselves. They are our brothers. Their children are like our own children. The one who encounters one of his children must give that child shelter and protection for as long as misfortune—or sorrow—lasts. Oh, man of my country, your heart is generous.

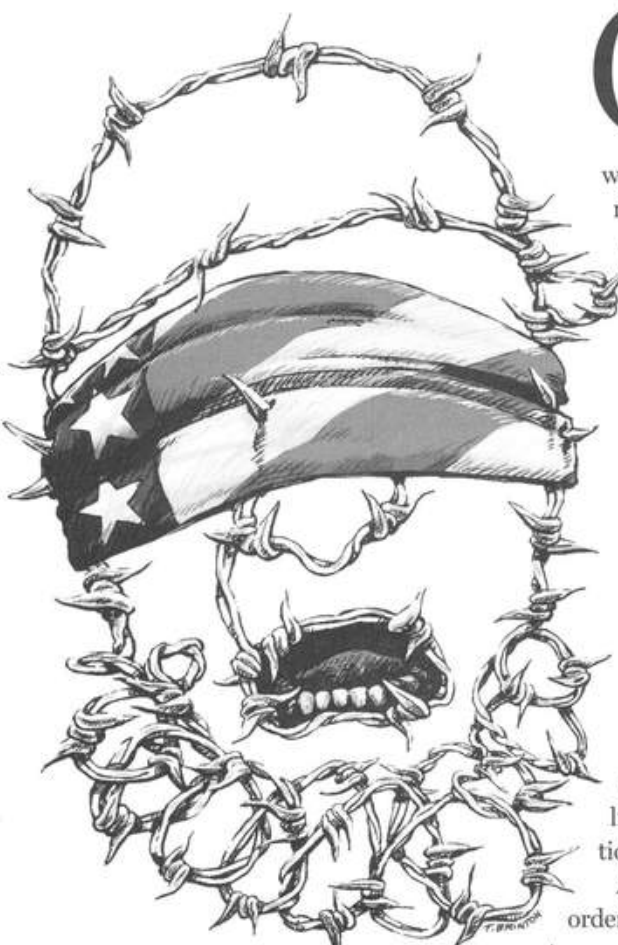
It is a great shame that sinister propaganda like *Obsession* was freely disseminated in this country. Similarly vile hatemongering would never be allowed were it directed at Jews, African Americans, gays, or other segments of the American population. It is a greater shame that supposedly reputable newspapers such as the *New York Times* have participated openly and actively in that campaign by distributing the DVDs as inserts. However, the greatest shame is for us Muslims to sit back and do nothing. We have to shed light on the truth. We have to organize to disseminate the truth, and to inform the citizens of this land of who we are as Muslims, the truth about our religion, and our history. Most importantly, we cannot allow the honor and dignity of our innocent coreligionists, whose sacrifices have enriched humanity, to be trampled on and violated by individuals who have placed themselves in the service of a sinister and nefarious agenda. ■



During World War II, the Paris Mosque helped to save more than 1,700 Jewish children, by providing them with shelter, transit, and Muslim names. Here Abdelkader Aoussed, a representative of the mosque, honors Muslim World War I soldiers at the cemetery of Ablain-Saint-Nazaire in northern France on April 7, 2008. The previous night, vandals had inscribed 148 graves with anti-Islam slogans.

Life After Torture and Torment

by Lynn Feinerman



ON JANUARY 22, 2009, TWO DAYS AFTER HE WAS SWORN IN AS president of the United States, Barack Obama signed an executive order revoking Bush regime directives, orders, and regulations concerning detention and interrogation.

He commented, "We believe that ... we can abide by a rule that says we don't torture, but that we can still effectively obtain the intelligence that we need. This is me following through on not just a commitment I made during the campaign, but I think an understanding that dates back to our founding fathers ... that we are willing to observe core standards of conduct, not just when it's easy, but when it's hard."

The issuance of this executive order was Obama's first act as president of the United States. It could be seen as evidence of his desire to return the United States to a condition of moral rightness. It should be seen as a signal to the United States that facing what we did in the name of "fighting terror" during the debacle of the Bush years is of paramount importance.

But it is clear that if President Obama and his fellow citizens wish thoroughly to correct the United States' moral deviance and ethical aberrations, which manifested as rendition, detention, and torture, then our work is far from finished. There are many potential dangers and obstacles on the path to properly understanding and learning from this ugly chapter in our nation's history.

We are already grappling publicly with some of those dangers and obstacles. Just recently, under pressure from a civil lawsuit brought by the American Civil Liberties Union, the CIA admitted that it had destroyed ninety-two videotapes of interrogations conducted according to the lawlessness of Bush policy. It is likely that the CIA will hide other evidence about Bush regime rendition, detention, and torture. This is a serious obstacle.

Among the most serious of the dangers is something contained in the executive order itself. The order calls for the formation of a Special Interagency Task Force on Interrogation and Transfer Policies. It details the membership of that Task Force, and therein lies a very serious problem. The membership consists of the attorney general, the director of national intelligence, the secretary of defense, the secretary of state, the secretary of homeland security, the director of the CIA, and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

This group of people includes no one who is qualified to serve as a moral advocate for those who have been renditioned, detained, and tortured. In fact, Defense Secretary Gates participated at a high level in the crimes of the Bush regime with regard to these issues.

Lynn Feinerman is a San Francisco Bay Area independent media professional, whose company, Crown Sephira Productions, has emphasized ecology, peace, and social justice. Her recent writings have appeared online at Common Dreams and UFPJ.

Attorney General Holder has of late been quoted as saying that the Guantanamo detention center is a well-run, professional facility that will be difficult to close. Meanwhile attorneys for detainees still imprisoned at Guantanamo report that beatings and other abuses have in fact increased substantially since December 2008, when it was clear that the victorious presidential candidate would close the Guantanamo facility. Holder publicly stated: "I did not witness any mistreatment of prisoners. I think, to the contrary, what I saw was a very conscious attempt by these guards to conduct themselves in an appropriate way." What did he think they'd do while the attorney general was there, pull out a prisoner and waterboard him? Surely he must know that they are on their best behavior for him!

Then there are the suggestions by the nominee for director of the CIA, Leon Panetta, who has begun floating the idea of maintaining the practice of rendition, of sending detainees to other countries, where they will surely be tortured. Is that how the president wants it to be, that we can say "we don't torture" while leaving the dirty work to others?

It seems the inner circle, the Beltway insiders who compose this task force, are already trying to raise the flag of denial over the entire terrible story.

I suggest that we citizens of this nation must not allow ourselves to salute that flag of denial. We must keep the discussion about renditions, detentions, and torture transparent and thorough. We will be supported in our efforts by members of Congress. Congressman John Conyers has already called for a truth and reconciliation commission to deal with issues including torture. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi has gone a step further, to suggest that the "Commission of Inquiry" should not give immunity from criminal charges to those who testify before it.

We must support these efforts to keep the review of our behavior honest. And we must resist efforts to prod the country to move on and not look back. We must look back. We must, as Senator Leahy said, "read the page before we turn it." I recall reading Alan Bullock's *Hitler: A Study In Tyranny* as a teenager. Whole pages of that book still emerge clearly in my mind. Our own voyage into tyranny, our descent into torture, is a page out of our history that we may wish to turn quickly. But is it then really behind us?

I suggest that one of the things blocking us in our understanding of this sorry chapter is our insistence on viewing our behavior as rational, on emphasizing first and foremost the "effectiveness of human intelligence gathering," which Obama cited before speaking of "safe, lawful, and humane treatment" of human beings in U.S. custody. We are still pretending that the behaviors practiced in Guantanamo, Bagram, Abu Ghraib, and elsewhere had something to do with rationality, with sanity. We are still pretending that we were really trying to get some "human intelligence" in order to vouchsafe our security.

Panetta recently said he thought the Bush regime officials were considering the possibility of another 9/11-style attack, and maybe they couldn't be bothered with legalisms. He said their concern was about security. But the outcomes were clearly, and predictably, negative for our security. We drastically compromised our security by making masses of people hate us worldwide when the Abu Ghraib photos came out—and more join the chorus of hatred every time those imprisoned in the hell holes we dub "prisons" report in detail about how they have been treated. Our suspension of habeas corpus threatened the freedom and individual security of our own citizens, as well as the freedom of those victimized by the Bush regime's torture policy. We have little idea what we mean, in truth, when we use the word "security."

But we can be fairly certain that, if policy is left to the Beltway insiders selected in the president's executive order, a comfortable emphasis on a chimerical "effectiveness of human intelligence gathering" will trump a deep examination of our obligations with regard to "safe, lawful, and humane treatment" of individuals in U.S. custody. Evaluations of strategic gains and losses will trump human rights.

I say this with certainty because, if the Obama administration only devotes one little task force to this problem, the process of self-searching that this nation needs will never happen.

I suggest that we must keep looking back, because we have not yet deeply understood, publicly, the moral depravity to which we sank in the past decade. We are still making excuses for our having tortured, still pretending that we were trying to extract "actionable intelligence."

We must face squarely our having tortured—cynically, callously tortured.

In *Torture And Truth*, Mark Danner describes us as having tortured with "exotic brutality so painstakingly recorded." His words accurately imply the sadistic sexuality that permeated so much of the torment inflicted on prisoners in Abu Ghraib, Bagram, and Guantanamo: from the sexual assaults, to the forced masturbations, to the parades of nakedness, to the photographs of men leashed by women. There is the sickening smell of rape in all of this activity, and the message is the following: We are the United States, we have the power of life and death, and we are the only people who matter. You victims are simply objects of our narcissistic, sadistic gaze, and we don't have to feel any compassion for you at all. You are objects in our little "snuff" photos and videos, only we keep bringing you back to be snuffed again.

And yet recently on *Democracy Now!* Danner stated: "I think that Bush did it for reasons that he thought were important to the country. I don't think he did it out of sadism or evil or anything else ... I think that he thought he was acting in the best interests of the citizens of the United States." If this kind of statement is supposed to point out how deluded Bush was about how to serve his country, it may be fair comment, though it dismisses much other speculation about Bush's motivations, from his desire to grab Iraqi oil and reward his business cronies in the process (read Naomi Klein's brilliant book *The Shock Doctrine* to better understand the aggressive capitalist milieu in which Bush was acting), to possible issues with his father. But if it is used in any way to make excuses for his conduct, it is not fair comment. When were the supposed good intentions of a torturer ever considered justification for torture? Certainly not at the Nuremberg trials or upon the creation of the Geneva Conventions.

Indeed, is torture ever *simply* a result of misguided rationality? Is it not more of a piece with the swaggering stupidity evidenced in Bush's "dead or alive" and "bring it on" bravado? The Bush regime has provided no overriding evidence that it is logical to "exploit" torture for "actionable intelligence." That there even might be such logic is a lie covering a sickness in our military and in our national soul. This sickness has plagued us for a long time. We saw it in Vietnam, and we have seen it every time the United States has ventured outside of its borders to take what we want, without thought of the needs of those whom, indeed, we are "exploiting."

Unless we face this about ourselves, our military, and our foreign policy—unless we face the part of us that is narcissistic, predatory, and "exotic" in our brutality, it will seize us again. We are perilously close to repeating this nastiness in Afghanistan.

And in fact, as thousands of extra U.S. troops are sent into Afghanistan, a \$60 million expansion will double the capacity of the "Bagram Theater Internment Facility"—theater of the much worse than absurd.

There is much talk about accountability now, coming from activists and government alike. But we must strive harder to understand what true accountability means in the context of our having detained, renditioned, and tortured. We cannot do the right thing about torture *and its aftermath* until we face what we have done to human beings—individual human beings, whom we set out to ruin, to murder mentally, emotionally, culturally, and socially.

We must face ourselves, our nation, and the full implications of our deviant behavior. We must achieve the state of contrition that is necessary for us to choose the correct response to our criminality. We must. If we have any shred of faith in principles of human behavior, in the goodness of this nation, we must do the right thing.

We must also make ourselves acutely aware of what has happened, what is happening, to those whom we tortured and then released. We must learn to care in tangible ways for their well-being. We must revisit the people whom we tormented. We must face these

victims of our cruelty, as some courageous Germans chose to face the victims of their monumental cruelty in World War II.

When we do that, here is some of what we will learn:

Most of those imprisoned in Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, Bagram, and CIA secret sites worldwide in the past decade—and previous to that—were either rounded up as “the usual suspects,” picked up as political prisoners, or were actually sold to the United States. In Afghanistan and Pakistan in particular, the U.S. military offered \$5,000 each for the betrayal of the unfortunate individuals who landed in these places.

It is now clear that the vast majority of detainees at Guantanamo prison were found to be innocent of any wrongdoing. Most of the approximately 1,000 people calculated to have been detainees at Guantanamo have been released. Of those, only seventeen were actually charged with a crime. Only two were convicted.

Think of it for a moment. These detainees were, for the most part, not “enemy combatants” because they were not soldiers; they were not actively engaged in hostilities of any kind. Yet they were ripped from their lives, from their loved ones, and tormented.

We must summon in ourselves real care, real concern about the fate of those who have been, and will be, released from Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib, Bagram, and wherever else they are being held.

We must cease, absolutely cease, to demonize these released prisoners, character assassinating them after we’ve violated them, blaming our victims, fearmongering about what they’ll do or about what organization they’ll join to take revenge on us.

Until 2008, no one publicized an examination of what happened to detainees once they left U.S. custody. It appeared that no one cared. But in 2008, Boalt Hall’s International Human Rights Law Clinic at the University of California, UC Berkeley’s Human Rights Center, and the Center for Constitutional Rights released a joint study based on direct interviews with sixty-two former detainees. Their findings are heartrending.

After their harrowing experience, detainees are released under what is termed “the stigma of Guantanamo.”

“The presumption to the public eye is that they are dangerous men,” says Laurel Fletcher, director of Boalt Hall’s International Human Rights Law Clinic. “They’re being shunned by their friends, their communities, and in some cases their families.” More than half of the detainees are unemployed; only one in ten had a stable job.

One detainee, a pariah to his family, carries all his belongings in a plastic bag and sleeps every night in a different mosque. This is happening to him after he endured the emotional effects of being imprisoned in a chamber of horrors despite his innocence. Really, how does one quantify that? How does one try to understand that? Yet our thoughts turn to how the United States is supposed to bring some of these unfortunate people to trial; in what sort of court is their torment to continue? Evidently it isn’t enough that we have worked to destroy these people—we have to make certain that their reintegration into society is made more difficult by stigmatizing them as they are released. Have we forgotten that they were all found innocent of any misdoing?

I ask you this: to what depths of denial will we allow ourselves to sink, and how will this denial of our cruelty poison our future judgment, our future policy, our destiny?

I refer readers to Jon Jefferson’s article in Boalt Hall’s *Transcript*, the Fall-Winter 2008 issue, titled “Life After Gitmo,” for more information about detainees who have been released from Guantanamo. Included there is a deeply troubling interview with former detainee Moazzam Begg.

In his inaugural address, President Obama stated that the United States “will not apologize for our lifestyle.” But we do need to apologize for our crimes against humanity, and for not protesting those crimes to the utmost of our abilities. Laurel (continued on page 79)



Culture

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[MUSIC]

Songs of Wounded Kinship

ASWAT: CELEBRATING
THE GOLDEN AGE OF ARAB MUSIC
Concert performance by Simon Shaheen
and the Aswat Orchestra

Town Hall, New York City, March 7, 2009

Review by David Shasha

POET AND SCHOLAR AMMIEL Alcalay once appropriated the apt phrase “wounded kinship’s last resort” in describing the role that music has played in maintaining what little connection is left

between Arab Jews and their Middle Eastern compatriots. The place of the master musician Simon Shaheen in this complicated and contested relationship cannot be underestimated. Not only has Shaheen recorded many albums of classic Arabic music, as well as contemporary readings of the tradition, but he has also participated in many of the musical events that have over the years taken place in the Brooklyn Sephardic community. In private homes and synagogues, we have become familiar with the magical art of Simon Shaheen’s mastery of this brilliant musical tradition.

Early this spring in New York City, at a concert devoted to the most beloved songs of the twentieth-century Arabic musical tradition, Shaheen brought back the hallowed tones of the great composers, singers, and musicians of the Middle Eastern world. Organizing the program after a request from the Kennedy Center in Washington for its current series on Arab culture, Shaheen developed the “Aswat” concert concept



Simon Shaheen (center, with violin) leads the Aswat group in celebrating classic Arabic melodies, which reviewer David Shasha recalls from the Jewish liturgy of his childhood.

in order to restore the grandeur of the great musical past that was shared by all members of Middle Eastern society, regardless of religious affiliation.

This music enriched the classical palette of Arabic music by incorporating Western motifs and styles into the tradition. Early twentieth-century figures like Sayyid Darwish and Da’oud Husni were the progenitors and the inspiration for the acknowledged giant of twentieth-century Arabic song, Muhammad Abdel Wahhab. Abdel Wahhab’s collaboration with the Egyptian diva Um Kulthum electrified the Arab world, where Abdel Wahhab’s place as a songwriter was akin to Gershwin, Berlin, and Porter, and where Kulthum was the Sinatra, Presley, and Ella Fitzgerald of her age. The monthly concerts of Um Kulthum, broadcast on the radio all over the Arab

world, quite literally became required listening, with millions of people stopping what they were doing to sit by their radios and hear the performances.

The Arab world was treated not only to the art of these two legendary figures, but also to the works of singers such as Farid al-Atrash, Wadi al-Safi, Asmahan, Fairuz, and Leyla Mourad. This rich and glittering tradition of song was the foundation of Shaheen’s Aswat program.

After many years of touring with his world music fusion group Qantara, it was wonderful to see Shaheen turn back exclusively to the classics. The Aswat concept enabled Shaheen and his expert orchestra to work with master vocalists from the contemporary Arab world, such as Ibrahim Azzam, Sonia M’Barak, Khalil Abonula, and Rima Khcheich, and thereby reproduce the rich and

intoxicating swirl of this great music.

The intuitive assimilation of these musical traditions was taken for granted by those of us who grew up with Arabic-speaking grandparents. As scholar Mark Kligman has recently pointed out in his excellent study, *Maqam and Liturgy: Ritual, Music, and Aesthetics of Syrian Jews in Brooklyn*, the link between Arabic music and Jewish liturgy in the contemporary Sephardic world is both sacrosanct and definitive. The auditory memories that have been generated in our synagogues and during happy occasions are defined by the sounds of the Middle East in the period we are discussing.

For those who are not familiar with this liturgical tradition, the songs known in Hebrew as *pizmonim*, written by the cantors and rabbis of the community, were adaptations of the melodies of songsmiths such as Abdel Wahhab. Many of the songs of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq appear in the contemporary Syrian Jewish liturgy—except in the liturgy, the songs' Arabic words are replaced with sacred texts in Hebrew composed by poets such as Refa'el Antebi Tabboush, Moses Ashear, and Ezekiel Hai Albeg.

At the feet of my grandmother, I personally imbibed this music, and it became for me—as for many of my peers—a critical part of my cultural identity. There was little sense of a divide between the Arabic originals and the Hebrew adaptations. The only way to understand and appreciate this music was to go back to the originals—and that meant listening to the recordings of Um Kulthum, Abdel Wahhab, Farid al-Atrash, and the others who sang this music in the Arab world.

In his between-song patter, Shaheen explained to the audience how many of these songs were originally performed in Egyptian films. He recalled his discussions with the legendary Stanley Rashid, a Brooklyn fixture whose family business, Rashid Sales, was responsible for bringing this great music to America. Rashid imported these movies and arranged to have them screened at the

Brooklyn Academy of Music. Older members of my community told of the same films being screened at a local Bensonhurst movie theater on Friday evenings. Sabbath observers wishing to see the movies prepaid for tickets and were joined by members of the Christian Arab community of Bay Ridge, who would make the trek to 18th Avenue and 65th Street to assuage their homesickness. It was a shared world of culture that was once a central part of the Brooklyn Arab community.

The Aswat concert brought back rich and resonant memories of this world, which is now in the process of being eroded in our communities. On the one hand, the musical traditions, like food traditions, are alive and well; but in the larger cultural sense, the ongoing acrimony between Jews and Arabs in the Middle East has served to break the harmony between individuals native to the region. While Arabic music remains a central part of religious life for many in the Sephardic community, antipathy toward Arabs themselves has increased to the point where there is little, if any, human contact between non-Jewish Arabs and the Jewish community.

So this evening's performance was a timely reminder of the world that our grandparents—those wiser than us—inhabited. As might also be known, this music has become antiquated in the Arab world as well. Shaheen's project is that of reclamation and the evoking of a world now passed. His role in the Arab world is similar to that of the great Wynton Marsalis regarding jazz here in the United States. Part curator, part archivist, part activist, part rabble rouser—such artists restore for us older artistic visions and provide the riches of a noble musical tradition to a new generation of listeners.

Sitting in New York's Town Hall, one could summon to memory the great concert halls of Beirut, Cairo, and Damascus. As if transported on the proverbial magic carpet, the audience sat enraptured listening to precise and inspiring performances of the classic songs like Kulthum's legendary "Intizarak" and

Asmahan's "Layali l-Unsi fi Vienna." The instrumental backing was never less than expert, bringing the larger orchestral elements together with the earthiness of the percussion and the gorgeous sounds of the ubiquitous oud and qanoun.

The blending of the Eastern and Western elements was typical of the classic school created in many ways by Abdel Wahhab. The singers—who brought their own unique artistry to these classic songs—brilliantly interpreted the material. I did not envy the female singers who had to take on the Um Kulthum material—such a task is indeed Herculean, but in the end, all the vocalists acquitted themselves wonderfully.

After many years of listening to Simon Shaheen's recordings and attending his many performances in New York concert halls, as well as his events in the Brooklyn Syrian Jewish community, Aswat was a revelation. Never had Shaheen's dedication to this great musical tradition affected me so intensely. As the orchestra's sound swelled to crescendo, I found myself welling up and becoming extremely emotional, recalling the moments when I sat with my late grandmother listening to these songs—the 78 RPM records played on an old Victrola that I would crank up on her instructions. When music becomes so much a natural and organic part of our most intimate being, the emotional resonance of its timbres strikes a deep chord within us.

What I have learned over the years in remaining true to my grandmother's vision of the world is that this music is not merely a static part of my life, but, as the phrase "wounded kinship's last resort" indicates, it is a cultural force that reflects a symbiosis that we are now told could never have existed because "Jews were never Arabs."

This destruction of a cultural identity, what I have called "The Levantine Option," is marked by the ways in which the Arabic musical heritage has been used and abused in our times. Many in the Sephardic community who love, honor, and cherish this music are now also

bearers of anti-Arab sentiment due to their inability to adopt the larger setting of Arabic civilization in their own lives.

What Simon Shaheen has so successfully done is to bring the varied strands of Arabic culture into a unified whole. By tirelessly bringing this music to the larger world—a world that often marks Arabs as uncivilized and barbaric—he has instilled in the contemporary artistic universe an appreciation for a culture that has been wrongly stigmatized. And while the inroads that have been made have not completely broken the cultural prejudices in certain corners of our culture, the *Aswat* concert provides a glorious reminder that the Arab world has produced much that is of great worth for us in the West.

For those of us who grew up with this music, this discovery is no surprise. What is important about the recovery of the Arabic musical heritage for us today is its ability to bridge the divides that separate us. *Aswat*, an Arabic word meaning “voices,” articulates the genius and glorious past of an Arab culture that can inspire and astonish us today. These voices can humanize and civilize what has now become an intractable series of conflicts that have created only hate and violence. In these great songs of our conjoined past, we luxuriate in the memories of a life better lived, a life in which people treated one another with respect and kindness.

For this reason, the art of Simon Shaheen, our greatest expositor of this musical heritage, is a critically important component of the current dialogue over issues that are plaguing our world. It is through the sounds and visions of the old Arabic masters that we can better understand who we are today and what we might become in the future. ■

For more information on the *Aswat* tour, see www.aswatontour.com.

David Shasha is the director of the Center for Sephardic Heritage in Brooklyn, New York. The center publishes a weekly e-mail newsletter and promotes lectures and cultural events. He can be reached at davidshasha@aol.com.

[FILM]

HOLLYWOOD'S HOLOCAUST

THE BOY IN THE STRIPED PAJAMAS,
Miramax Films, 2008

THE READER,
The Weinstein Company, 2008

DEFIANCE,
Paramount Vantage, 2008

ADAM RESURRECTED,
Bleiberg Entertainment, 2008

Review by David Sterritt

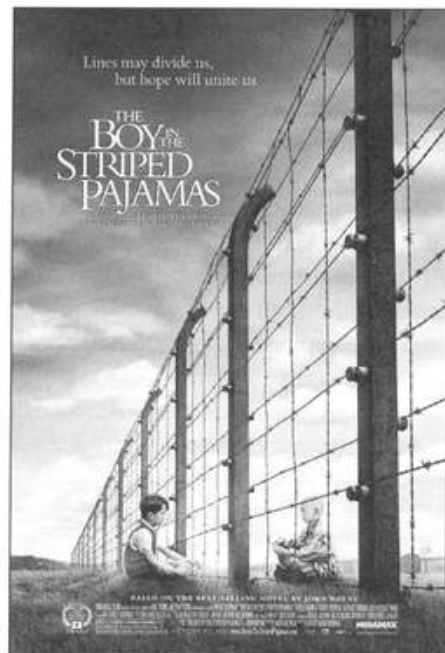
JUDGING FROM RECENT MOVIE listings, the world remembers the Holocaust and remains hungry for new perspectives on it. But judging from the actual movies, the verdict is different. They arrive with coy, unrevealing titles like *The Reader* and *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* and *Good*, or more melodramatically, *Defiance* and *Valkyrie*. My unguided tour through several of them turned up one original and intelligent picture, *Adam Resurrected*, and three—*The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*, *The Reader*, and *Defiance*—that turn historical evil into Hollywood-style entertainment. After discussing them I'll share some thoughts on the larger issues they raise.

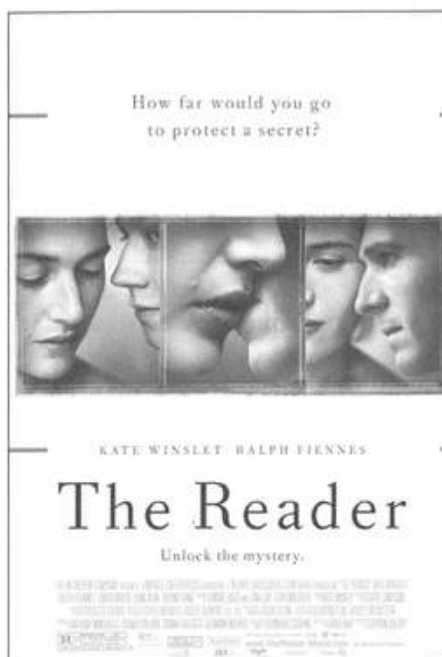
The Boy in the Striped Pajamas is a U.S.-British coproduction based on a children's book by Irish author John Boyne, which has racked up more than 4 million sales internationally. The film centers on a German eight-year-old named Bruno whose father is a concentration-camp commander. Unbeknownst to his parents, Bruno forms a secret friendship with a Jewish boy in the camp named Shmuel, who hangs around the back fence every day while the grownups work. The climax occurs when Bruno sneaks into the camp to help Shmuel look for his missing father, whereupon they're caught in a group being herded to a gas chamber. Both boys perish just before Bruno's horrified parents arrive to bring him home.

Where does one begin to discuss the phoniness of all this? According to Miramax Films, the picture is a “fable” meant to show “the effects of prejudice, hatred, and violence on innocent people, particularly children, in wartime.” In wartime—does this mean the Jewish genocide was simply a World War II campaign? That's what Bruno's father says when his wife speaks up against his job: he's a “soldier” and death camps are “a vital part” of the military machine.

Next let's talk about children, starting with eight-year-old Shmuel, skillfully played by a talented little boy. And let's contrast Shmuel with real Holocaust children, who—if they weren't immediately slaughtered—were starved, brutalized, violated, experimented on, and worked to death in places so horrific that you would *not* invite a friend to visit, as Shmuel does with Bruno in the film. Shmuel is thin and has bad teeth; real Holocaust children, in one witness's report, were “without muscles or fat,” festered with “ulcerated wounds,” and often “swelled to shapeless bulks which could not move” while diarrhea “dissolved their irresistible bodies until nothing remained.” Nowhere in that description do I see Shmuel and his striped pajamas.

In sum, the movie is sheer counterfactual fantasy, right down to Shmuel's presence in the camp—“probably the area





where fiction and truth separate the most in our film," one of the producers admits in the production notes, "because [children] were generally taken straight from the transport into the gas chambers, and Shmuel's story therefore requires a suspension of disbelief." At a time when historical memory can hardly be called robust, asking us to "suspend disbelief" in a fabrication seems like a peculiar way to honor the Holocaust, but this doesn't appear to have bothered the filmmakers. Nor did it occur to them, apparently, that the emotion-drenched finale would come across as a disgraceful exercise in misplaced sentimentality—that soliciting tears for a Nazi parent's loss is hardly the best way to end a film about Nazi genocide. The mind reels.

The Reader

THE READER IS BASED ON BERNARD Schlink's popular novel, the first German book to hit number one on the *New York Times* bestseller list. This movie doesn't have children, but it has something that sells tickets even better—large quantities of sex, held just shy of NC-17 by split-second film editing. The story begins after World War II, when a German teenager named Michael has a summertime affair with a thirty-something streetcar conductor named Hanna, who loves to listen while he reads aloud to her. Years later

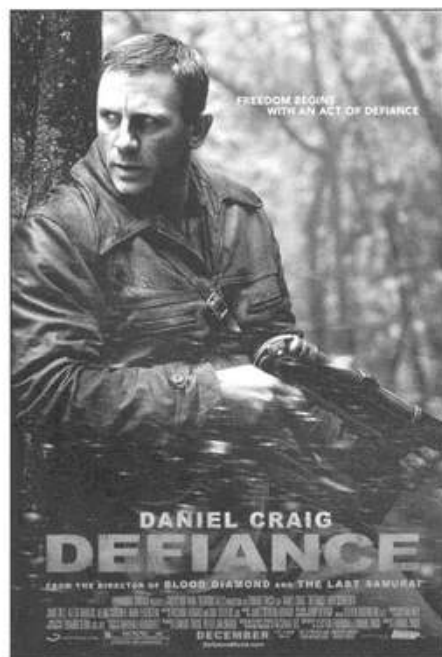
Hanna goes on trial with several other women for an atrocity they committed as SS guards: refusing to unlock the door of a burning church so 300 female Jewish captives could escape. Attending the trial, Michael belatedly learns of Hanna's past and also realizes for the first time that she is illiterate—a fact she's concealed from the world and won't admit even now, although it would clear her of having written an incriminating report about the atrocity, thus sparing her a long prison term.

The movie, like Michael, sympathizes with Hanna all the way—she was just following orders, she didn't write the report, she's really embarrassed that she can't read and write. But to swallow this, you have to swallow the notion that it's more shameful to be exposed as an illiterate than as a *war criminal* who caused innocent Jews to die horrific deaths. You also have to swallow the movie's fascination with Hanna's private psychodrama at the expense of the evils she's associated with. The picture pays lip service to solemnity, even sending Michael on a field trip to Auschwitz where he thinks melancholy thoughts next to an oven. But the deaths in the burning church—and the entirety of the Holocaust, for that matter—weigh less in the film's psychological scale than Hanna's personal travails, culminating in the suicide scene that helped Kate Winslet triumph on Oscar night. Morally, it's *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* redux: we all feel bad about the Shoah, but hey, Nazis have problems too.

Defiance

AMONG THE HUNDREDS OF MOVIES accounted for by Annette Insdorf in her classic book *Indelible Shadows: Film and the Holocaust*, only a handful deal with Jewish resistance. This is why *Defiance* stands apart from the crowd. Its heroes are the real-life Jewish brothers who led the eponymous Bielski Brigade, a guerrilla band that opposed German forces and saved hundreds of Jewish men, women, and children in Byelorussia during the Nazi occupation.

But if the subject matter of *Defiance* frees it from standard Holocaust-movie



clichés, filmmaker Edward Zwick makes up for this by cramming it with standard war-movie clichés. It's utterly conventional stuff, plugging into all the usual formulas of combat pictures; the best that can be said of it is that Daniel Craig, Liev Schreiber, Jamie Bell, and George MacKay give forceful performances as the Bielskis, and Zwick keeps the action moving at a good clip. Nowhere does it offer what could have made it valuable and inspiring—insights as to why *this* particular place and time gave birth to robust and sustained Jewish resistance.

Adam Resurrected

LEST WE THINK WORTHWHILE HOLOCAUST films are a vanished breed, the intense and eccentric *Adam Resurrected* keeps hope alive, if only for moviegoers willing to open their eyes and imaginations uncommonly wide. The title character is a Jewish entertainer (Jeff Goldblum) who is saved from extermination on the condition that he move in with a concentration-camp commander (Willem Dafoe) and amuse him by pretending to be a pet dog. After the war Adam takes up residence in a mental institution for Holocaust survivors in the sands of the Israeli desert. Living by his ever-ready wits and going AWOL whenever he feels like it, he's a poster boy for high-spirited lunatics who take over their asylums. But he enters a new and



disorienting psychological spiral when he encounters a mysterious new patient with a similarly bizarre past—a boy who was raised as a dog and has yet to realize that he’s actually a person.

Based on the 1971 novel by Israeli author Yoram Kaniuk, and directed by Paul Schrader with nonstop energy, *Adam Resurrected* is too overstuffed with incidents and ideas for me to unpack them here. I doubt if any two people would interpret its metaphors and symbols in quite the same way, and I’m not even sure the movie adds up to a fully coherent whole. I am certain, however, that its fragmented structure and kaleidoscopic view of historical subjectivity are dazzlingly effective means of reclaiming Holocaust cinema from the hackneyed formulas that currently encrust it.

Pulling back from individual films to look at the big picture, I have to repeat how bitterly disappointing I find most of today’s Holocaust-related movies. That said, however, I don’t think their effects in the cultural marketplace are entirely bad. *Defiance* is a trite combat picture, to be sure, but it’s also a rare reminder that there *was* such a thing as Jewish resistance to the Nazi genocide. And while there’s no excusing the confusion of Jewish suffering with Nazi distress in *The Reader* and *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*, at least these films implicitly call into question the trap

of simplistic black-and-white morality—what Avraham Burg calls “the fatality trap: us, ‘the good,’ against ‘them,’ the demons ... the absolute evil,” with whom “every conflict is a war to the death [and therefore] all is justified in our eyes” (see *The Holocaust Is Over; We Must Rise from Its Ashes*).

The negative sides of these movies still loom large, however. Their shallow storylines and skin-deep psychology (except in Schrader’s film) deprive the characters of interior lives and buried motivations that we might ponder, analyze, and puzzle over as a way of deepening our own understanding of humanity’s intricate nature. A longtime consensus vis-à-vis the Holocaust holds that the perpetrators were essentially “puppet-like actors, mere pawns whose inner world ... beliefs and values ... need not be investigated,” as Daniel Jonah Goldhagen writes (see “The Paradigm Challenged: Study of the Holocaust” in *Tikkun Reader*). To view responsible persons as puppet-like stereotypes is to forfeit any genuine understanding of historical forces; yet cardboard figures are precisely what these one-dimensional films present us with, especially where Nazi characters such as Hanna and Bruno’s father are concerned. Endlessly recycling their familiar behaviors does nothing to respect the Holocaust.

What is a good way to show such respect? There’s no single answer to that question, but one profoundly intelligent solution appears in Claude Lanzmann’s epic *Shoah*, released in 1985 and still the mightiest of all Holocaust films. One of its visual motifs is a gradual journey along the railway tracks leading to the Auschwitz gate. Mounted on a railroad car, the camera moves steadily toward the gate, getting closer each time the motif returns. Finally it passes through the gate—but no, it does *not* pass through the gate. As critic Fred Camper noted when the film was new, Lanzmann keeps the camera on the outside, no longer moving it physically along the track but switching to a zoom lens that brings us *visually* inside without actually taking his equipment *through* the entryway.

Why does this matter? Because, in this

eight-and-a-half hour film that includes not one frame of archival “atrocious footage,” Lanzmann is suggesting that we who are not camp survivors cannot *spiritually* pass through this gate, even vicariously by motion pictures. I hasten to add that Lanzmann is emphatically *not* suggesting that the Holocaust is a sacred or other-worldly event that lies outside the ken of human understanding and judgment. Exactly the opposite is true—his camera lens *does* peer beyond the gate, his interviews with survivors and eyewitnesses *do* testify to humanity’s capacity for comprehending the causes, experiences, and meanings of the Holocaust, and his film serves that end by giving viewers a stream of historical facts, psychosocial analyses, and spiritual intimations. What his camerawork conveys is an *attitude* of humility and awe toward the vastness of his historical subject, and this is the antithesis of the entertainment-mongering found in mainstream Holocaust cinema. It should be mandatory viewing for anyone who thinks of approaching the Shoah on film. ■

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[BOOKS]

A TERRIBLE BOOK ...

POISONED PROFITS:
THE TOXIC ASSAULT ON OUR CHILDREN
by Philip Shabecoff and
Alice Shabecoff
Random House, 2008

Review by Roger S. Gottlieb

THIS IS A TERRIBLE BOOK—AND I mean that literally. As you read it, you are filled with terror and other painful emotions. That’s why there are an awful lot of reasons not to read it.

For one thing, if you have children or

grandchildren that you care about, or ever expect to have, it will make you very frightened. For example, in one chapter the authors walk you through a typical day for a typical child and describe the toxic threats that beset the child from every side. In the bedroom, there's formaldehyde in the wall-board, unnoticeable fumes from the paint, and flame retardants shedding from the mattress. In the bathroom, there are chemicals in the bathwater and the toothpaste. Typical breakfasts include pesticides in the orange juice and antibiotic residue in the eggs. Then there is the carpet in the living room and the lawn chemicals sticking to the dog's fur. Don't forget the air (indoor air is now often more polluted than outside air), the fumes on the school bus, and the toxic cleaners used in the school itself. And this horrifying recital ignores the toxins in the womb that lead kids to be born with over a hundred toxic chemicals *already* in their bodies, not to mention the PCBs, DDT, mercury, and lead in mothers' breast milk.

The Shabecoffs offer this bleak summary: "Trillions of pounds of tens of thousands of toxic chemicals pour into the environment and into the products in our homes, workplaces, and schools.... No child can escape exposure... no matter how wealthy their parents, how large their homes, how exclusive their schools." Most of these chemicals have never been tested singly, and virtually none for the synergistic manner of real life exposure. Many are known carcinogens, endocrine disrupters, and threats to immune system or neurological functioning. Further, kids are biologically much more vulnerable than adults, live closer to the floor, chew on things they shouldn't, and therefore take in far too much of the toxic substances we have decided make life easier, more convenient, and fun.

This chemical onslaught has disastrous consequences for our children's health. Nearly one in three of our country's approximately 73 million children suffer from chronic, often debilitating, sometimes deadly illnesses. The "new pediatric morbidity" includes asthma, autism, cancer, severe allergies, birth defects, mental retardation, cleft palate, and disordered

endocrine systems. This modern industrial assault means—in the words of a Harvard researcher—that a "whole generation of kids has been trashed by causes that are preventable." Cancer among children alone, which used to be a "medical rarity," has gone up 67 percent between 1950 and 2001.

Another reason not to read this book is that it will make you very, very angry. Want to remain calm, compassionate, and forgiving at all times? Then this is not for you, because the toxic chemicals are produced by people who should know better, and who often hide what they know by refusing to test their products or by using legal means to keep test results secret. The profits made from these substances are defended by publicity flacks hired to obscure the truth and to create doubts where none should exist. And the corporations that produce them are allowed too much free rein by regulatory agencies and politicians who value their jobs, their campaign contributions, and (God help us) the "free market" over health and safety. To take just one pretty irritating example: in the late 1990s, the chemical industry created an organization to study new and (presumably) safer ways to produce chemicals. Of the organization's budget of \$13 million, almost \$2 million went to the work itself, and the rest, more than five times as much, went to telling the public about all the great changes that were being made. (In the environmental world, we call this "greenwashing.")

The authors do an excellent job of describing the economic and political mechanisms that allow all of this to continue to take place, even though some forty-five years have passed since Rachel Carson warned of the potentially disastrous effects of human-created chemicals on human (as well as

non-human) life. And if we needed any more reasons to be absolutely furious at the eight-year Bush administration, *Poisoned Profits* provides them, as well: it describes how the Bush crowd mounted a systematic assault on already inadequate regulatory processes and on scientific research procedures and testimony. If it is your child who coughs all night, or cannot look people in the eye, or is receiving chemotherapy, you must be particularly full of rage.

But it is not just corporations and politicians who have created this situation—it is *us*, and probably *you*, as well. So the Shabecoffs lead us not just to feel fear and rage, but also guilt and shame. Did we really think that all the "conveniences" had absolutely no price tag? Did we really think all the stuff we take for granted—all the plastic, the gadgets, the paint that doesn't peel, and the cheap lumber that doesn't splinter, all this *stuff* that defines us (God help us again) as "modern" and "advanced"—came with no cost? Virtually every educated person knows, in some



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typically suppressed part of the mind, about toxics, and environmental causes of cancer and endocrine disrupters, and that pesticides in foods aren't very healthy. What have we been doing with that knowledge?

But we are all so busy, and the powers-that-be seem so, well, powerful. And probably the EPA or the Sierra Club or *someone else* will take care of it. After all, we have our careers, marriages, divorces, and spiritual lives to think of. And if we are parents, there are the things that just can't wait: PTA meetings, tutoring in math, getting our children into top private schools, making sure the computer is up-to-date, finding a good therapist.

And so it goes. This book is not only a clearly written, well reasoned, carefully researched, and devastating critique of modern industrial practices and their protectors in government, it is also a direct challenge to the moral and spiritual value of our entire way of life. In a chapter appropriately entitled "Values," the authors explore the question of what really is important to us, and why our children's health seems so low on the list. And then along with the *personal* guilt and shame, there arises a simple, appalling question: who are we to tell anyone what is right and wrong anymore? The writers for *Tikkun* (certainly including myself), our nation's priests and rabbis and philosophers and political theorists, all the candidates for all the political offices, newspaper editorialists, new-age teachers—we all share the endlessly repeated conviction that people ought to listen to us, that we know what's right, what's important, what's true. If we

do, why do we continue living this way? Why don't we put down our portfolios, our latest book project, our need to get little Sammy into Princeton, and make all this stop?

If we did we would find that we are not alone. As the last part of this critically important book makes clear, a number of people—housewives and doctors, courageous public servants and ordinary citizens, innovative chemists turning chemistry (of all things) green, and employees of underfunded little NGOs tracing the toxic trail—have been fighting this good fight for some time now. The stories of these likely and unlikely heroes can give us some pride in the human spirit and some inspiration about what we should be doing ourselves. So even if it hurts to read this book, read it anyway. Face the truth, take the example of the courageous souls who are resisting, and act. ■

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SPIRITUAL DEMOCRACY BEYOND CONSCIOUSNESS AND CULTURE

THE PARTICIPATORY TURN: SPIRITUALITY,
MYSTICISM, RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Edited by Jorge N. Ferrer

and Jacob H. Sherman

State University of New York Press, 2008

*Review by Ann Gleig
and Nicholas G. Boeving*

THE QUESTION OF WHETHER OR not we can preserve the ontological integrity of religion, spirituality, and mysticism without sacrificing the integrity of modern critical scholarship lies at the heart of *The Participatory Turn*. This exciting

new collection brings together several of the most robust currents in the field of Religious Studies to pose some of the most pressing and provocative questions asked within and of the discipline. Can we, in our contemporary pluralist climate, accommodate not only different religious claims but also other forms of competing contemporary discourse? Can we be religious without being naive, as well as critical without being reductive? Can we find a middle ground between the absolute foundations of traditional religion and the dizzying groundlessness of a relativistic postmodernity? Can we, in other words, integrate our premodern, modern, and now postmodern worlds?

Editors Jorge N. Ferrer and Jacob H. Sherman make a strong case we can. Their basic project is the integration of religious experience and practice with modern critical thinking and postmodern epistemological insights about the constructed nature of human knowledge. What emerges from this "both/and" endeavor is "a pluralistic vision of spirituality that accepts the formative role of contextual and linguistic factors in religious phenomena, while simultaneously recognizing the importance, and at times even centrality, of nonlinguistic variables (e.g., somatic, imaginal, energetic, contemplative, and so on) in shaping religious experiences and meanings, and affirming the ontological value and creative impact of spiritual worlds and realities."

The participatory turn, therefore, is simultaneously methodology and ontology. As a dialectical methodology, it integrates the linguistic latticework that postmodernism has shown us underlies and creates all of human experience with the profound ontological disclosures of religious phenomena. This integration allows for recognition of how culture and language shape religious phenomena without reducing both spiritual experience and the real ontological worlds it reveals to their cultural components. As a participatory ontology, it approaches religious phenomena as co-created

events that arise from the encounter between the entire range of human capacities for knowing (including but certainly not limited to critical rationality) and the radically open and creative “mystery” that always exceeds our attempts to map or limit it. In including both the ontological and contextual forces that shape, but never circumscribe, the varieties of religious expression, the participatory turn also offers a new response to the challenge of religious diversity that does not succumb to the explicit or implicit privileging of a favored religious tradition that hinders current positions.

In order to arrive here, the editors, from the opening line (which tellingly is a question) expertly guide us through the often disorderly, sometimes contentious, and always lively field of Religious Studies. The superb introduction is that rare textual marvel that captures and clarifies, in the space of some forty-nine pages, the entire history of a field and somehow leaves the reader feeling as if nothing essential has been left out. The editors helpfully divide the discipline into two distinct paradigms: the philosophy of consciousness and the philosophy of the sign. The first of these originates in the Romantic attempt to protect the sacred from the rationalist-empirical critique of the Enlightenment by casting aside its metaphysical trappings and locating it in the private realm of human consciousness. Dominating the field through the writings of Friedrich Schleiermacher and Mircea Eliade, this position holds that the true essence of religion is to be found not in the secondary overlay of religious doctrine or tradition but rather within a universal human subjective experience of the sacred.

Are spiritual experiences nothing but language and culture?

FOLLOWING WIDER TRENDS IN THE humanities, the discipline of Religious Studies succumbed to the more tyrannical turn of radical contextualism, which resulted in the rise of the “cultural-

linguistic paradigm.” The major argument here is that language is not only expressive but is constitutive of all human experience. The various perspectives under the cultural-linguistic rubric are united by an insistence that the proper function of Religious Studies is the analysis and interpretation of religious languages and their relationship to other linguistic frameworks. Rather than consciousness or experience, language itself is the crucial and only fulcrum, here, collapsing ontology into nothing but the sign itself. The result is a “linguistification of the sacred” that contextualizes, relativizes, and reduces the sacred to linguistic expression.

It is this reduction of the sacred and spiritual experiences to *nothing but* language and culture that the participatory turn seeks to redress. This does not mean, however, a return to the earlier philosophy of consciousness that, as the editors rightly note, is equally unsatisfactory. That earlier philosophy posits a supposedly universal consciousness that is, in actuality, disembodied and ahistorical. Isolating the sacred within such a decontextualized consciousness removes it from the world of gendered bodies, relationships, and culture.

In its attempt to move beyond the limitations of both consciousness and culture, *The Participatory Turn* draws on seven of the most vigorous contemporary trends within the field. The book's editors claim that such strands, when woven together, constitute an emerging academic ethos that recovers ontology without sacrificing the advances of critical scholarship. A brief glance at each of the strands hints at its contribution in combating the shortcomings of both problematic predecessors:

1) *The postcolonial re-evaluation of emic epistemologies* (emic: as described by non-Western people in the language of their own culture) targets the employment of Western scientific and philosophical categories of knowledge, particularly critical rationality, as the ultimate arbiter of what counts as legitimate knowledge.

It recognizes the validity of a multiplicity of non-Western cultural and religious ways of knowing.

- 2) *The postmodern and feminist emphasis on embodiment and sacred immanence* affirms an immanent spirituality that dwells within and not above or apart from the world; celebrates the body, emotions, and sensuality; and resacralizes everyday life as the site of spiritual growth.
- 3) *The “pragmatic turn” in contemporary philosophy* establishes philosophy as a transformative activity in which interpretation is always bound up with action.
- 4) *The resacralization of language* undermines the modern split between language and ontology by recognizing the sacred nature, dimensions, and potentials of religious languages and poetic writing.
- 5) *The renewed interest in the study of spirituality* indicates both culturally and academically the hunger for a deeply lived religion.
- 6) *A focus on the question of truth in postmetaphysical thinking* anchors the theoretical axis of the participatory turn.
- 7) *An emphasis on the irreducibility of religious pluralism* helps account for the diversity of religious expression without reproducing the hierarchical rankings and privileging that have dominated past frameworks.

The sixth and seventh strands merit special attention. In the sixth, Ferrer and Sherman challenge the dominance and unquestioned assumptions of neo-Kantian epistemological frameworks in the contemporary study of religion. The basic premise of Kant's hugely influential theory of knowledge is that we can never directly experience things as they truly are, as unconditioned “noumena.” Rather we can only encounter them through the filter of certain a priori categories inherent to our intellect and through the mediation of our senses as conditioned “phenomena.” The editors correctly point out that the modern and postmodern reduction of all metaphysical claims to

conditioned discursive contexts reveals a normative allegiance to neo-Kantian frameworks that either bracket (as inaccessible noumena) or deny the existence of any supernatural sources of religion. To deny that religious phenomena can ever have extralinguistic or transcultural referents, however, assumes an ethnocentric materialistic metaphysical perspective that dismisses various contemplative traditions' claim that one can experience unconditioned dimensions of reality.

This tension is expressed in the long-standing perennialist-constructivist debate about mysticism. Perennialists are united by their belief that behind a variety of different mystical accounts lies the same underlying ultimate reality or "common core." Put simply, perennialists argue that different mystical paths lead to the same unconditioned ultimate reality that is then interpreted according to the mystics' particular culturally conditioned tradition. Asserting that *all* knowledge is conditioned by linguistic and cultural forms, constructivists adamantly counter, however, that the mystical experience itself, and not just its interpretation, is fully determined by the mystics' conceptual apparatus. Even if an unconditioned reality exists, constructivists insist that we can only encounter it indirectly mediated through our culturally conditioned framework.

As Ferrer and Sherman perceptively point out, however, both sides remain hostage to Kantian assumptions in accepting a dualism between a constructed framework and an unconditioned reality. They alternatively propose that a **religious event is neither a purely objective unconditioned discovery nor a merely subjective construction but rather a participatory or co-created phenomenon** that undoes the very distinction between subjectivism and objectivism or conditioned and unconditioned. They claim that religious phenomena are participatory—in other words, the phenomena emerge from the interaction of all the different human ways of knowing (such as the rational,

imaginal, somatic, aesthetic, contemplative, and so forth) and a real non-determined creative spiritual power. Ontological veracity, in other words, is not inherently at odds with a contextualist sensibility. To acknowledge that humans do not only discover but also shape and co-create spiritual landscapes does not annul the metaphysical reality of such religious worlds.

Is there one spiritual reality 'out there,' or many?

BRINGING TOGETHER ONTOLOGICAL veracity and a contextualist sensibility affords us a new perspective on the seventh strand, the *irreducibility of religious pluralism*: if we relate but not reduce ontology to a contextual framework, we can affirm a plurality of mediated but ontologically existing religious worlds that can, in turn, account for the diversity of religious expression without reproducing the hierarchical rankings and privileging that afflicts, in varying degrees, the current responses of universalism, exclusivism, inclusivism, and ecumenical pluralism. As Ferrer correctly notes, all of these proposed solutions to religious diversity either explicitly or implicitly endorse the exclusive or ultimate truth of their preferred tradition. Universalism's search for a single essence behind the multiplicity of religious expressions was motivated by the attempt to secure a favored spiritual tradition as that ultimate essence. Similarly, exclusivism ("my religion is the only true one"), inclusivism ("my religion is the most complete; the others are only partially true"), and ecumenical pluralism ("there are real differences between religions but all lead to the same [which conveniently happens to be my] spiritual goal") all promote the superiority of a particular religious tradition.

Approaching religious diversity as the result of the interaction between the multidimensional cognitive components of human beings and the radical openness and inexhaustible creativity of an indeterminate mystery affords us an alternative response. It affirms the participatory

enactment of an indefinite number of not just spiritual paths but spiritual goals and ultimate realities. This liberates religious thinking and interreligious dialogue from the tyranny of a single static ultimate reality against which all forms of religious diversity are evaluated. In short: there is no one ultimate metaphysical referent; religious diversity reflects the reality of the plurality of ontological ultimates.

With these seven strands, then, the editors issue a clarion call to move beyond the intellectual idolatry of the text and to bring ontology, now forged in the fires of critical scholarship, back to the field of Religious Studies. The participatory turn recognizes that ontology is constructed, but that it is also "out there" too. It is not out there in the static sense that the perennialists would have us believe, as a single ontological ocean with many epistemological shores, but as a dynamic, excessive, and radically plural mystery that we can never definitively chart or circumscribe. Far from any grand unified theory—such a colonizing and confining project being one of its main targets—it is an orientation or sensibility that others are invited to recover in our religious pasts, discover in our religious presents, or creatively flesh out for our religious futures.

The next two sections of the anthology are worthy responses to this invitation. Part One, "Participation and Spirit: Classical and Contemporary Approaches," offers three sophisticated but accessible essays by Sherman, Kelly, and Ferrer, which develop further the issues raised in the introduction and provide some solid theoretical and historical context. Sherman's concise and detailed genealogy of participation guides us through the corridors of classical, medieval, and modern philosophy to uncover three historic forms of participation: formal, existential, and creative. Implicit in all three is the invitation to think in terms of a noncompetitive logic of intrinsic, constitutive relationality that, in turn, allows an acknowledgment of a person's contribution to a mystical event without

reducing its ontological status. Sean Kelly usefully distinguishes between embedded and enactive modes of participation and shows how the French systems thinker Edgar Morin can add sophistication to contemporary participatory approaches. And Ferrer, persuasive and passionate as ever, discusses what his vision of participation can contribute to the challenges of religious pluralism. In disclosing a radical plurality not only of spiritual paths but also of spiritual liberations and spiritual ultimates, his account overcomes the problematic privileging and hierarchical rankings inherent to prevailing models and expands the range of authentic spiritual choices open to us.

Part Two, "Surveying the Traditions: Participatory Engagements," uncovers, recovers, and applies a participatory sensibility to a variety of ancient and contemporary religious, esoteric, and philosophical traditions ranging from Sufism to Western Esotericism, Christian mysticism to Engaged Buddhism. Of the seven chapters offered here, some are more convincing than others in resonating with the contemporary participatory turn, but all exert sufficient analytic pressure on self-sufficient or independent models of ontology. To give a taste: G. William Barnard convincingly establishes French philosopher Henri Bergson as a useful resource for the participatory turn. In highlighting the centrality of the body and the gendered nature of knowledge in the embodied and intimate mysticism of Teresa of Avila, Beverly J. Lanzetta emphasizes the political and cultural co-constructed dimensions of mysticism. William Chittick nominates the Sufi mystic, Ibn al 'Arabi, as uncontested champion of a participatory approach discussing how his work explicates the range of human participation in the divine with unmatched detail and profundity.

Deepening the Participatory Turn: Participation and Spiritual Democracy

WITHIN THE RICH TAPESTRY THAT IS THE contemporary participatory turn, one thread is muted: democracy. After all, the notion of participation is fundamental to democracy, which is essentially a political system in which all members of the population may participate.

Implicit in the participatory turn is an extension of democracy from the political to the ontological realm. Here we extend the thought of social theorist Anthony Giddens, who has traced the growth of democracy from the political sphere to the world of family, relationships, and sexuality. The latter have been radicalized through what Giddens calls a "democracy of the emotions." This denotes how the traditional concept of marriage as an economic contract constituted by an inherent gender inequality has been replaced by the "pure relationship," which is characterized by equality, intimacy, and communication. Pointing out that all of these qualities are inherently democratic, Giddens illuminates the striking parallels between the pure relationship and public democracy.

There are similarly striking parallels between political/emotional democracy and a participatory sensibility. As noted, the participatory turn is fundamentally a rethinking of the relationship between the human and the metaphysical. In this approach, a top-down authoritarian model of divinity is replaced by a more intimate and equal partnership and democratic redistribution of creative power. Also, just as the rejection of prescribed and oppressive gender roles is central to a democracy of the emotions, so the feminist stress on sacred immanence, wholeness, and relationality is central to the participatory turn. Ontological hierarchy—whether in the theistic guise of God as Lord and Father or an elitist perennialism—has too often reflected, generated, and justified social and political systems of domination. While the radically democratic dimensions of the participatory turn have been celebrated by John Heron and Jeffrey J.

Kripal, a further exploration of its democratic influences and implications will support the full manifestation of its liberative promise.

Hence, just as Giddens calls for a further democratizing of political democracy, we call for a deepening of the ontological democracy implied within a participatory ontology. Included in this call is the question of who is admitted to, as well as left out from, the ostensibly round ontological table to which Ferrer and Sherman invite us. Those of us lucky enough to share our lives with animal companions don't need to read the latest groundbreaking research "proving" the authenticity of their inner emotional lives to know that they have them. They, like us, are conscious beings with an awareness of others. And consciousness, inasmuch as it participates in the mystery our editors invoke, is the crux upon which this model rests. So, to put it rather bluntly: what happens when they die? The problem of atheism is equally ignored. After all, what does the spiritual path (ultimate) look like when spirit itself is denied? It's not that Ferrer and Sherman's model can't account for animals or atheists; it potentially could, but they simply don't go there. One hopes that in the future such quandaries will be afforded greater attention, as these are the kinds of theoretical knots that, once unraveled and reworked, only strengthen a model and lend it greater appeal and explanatory power.

Thinking about the participatory turn as a type of ontological democracy also sheds light on other ethical dimensions. Far from weakening family duties and obligations, Giddens insists a democracy of the emotions fosters and demands more responsibility. The same applies to participatory ethics: the move from a monarchical to a democratic ontology also necessitates a re-envisioning of ourselves from children *under* the Lord/Father to individuated adults in relationship *with* the mystery. Many will undoubtedly decry this as Promethean and hubristic. As Ferrer recognizes, to claim that human creativity influences

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the nature and workings of the mystery may sound arrogant or inflated. Yet with power comes responsibility. And foremost among our responsibilities, Ferrer declares, is to evaluate the different co-constructed religious worlds: "because such [worlds] are not simply given but involve us as agents and cocreators, we are not off the ethical hook where religion is concerned but instead inevitably make cosmo-political and moral choices in all our religious actions."

Are some religions better than others?

ON WHAT GROUNDS THOUGH DO WE make such choices? If we discard the very notion of ontological veracity as a measuring stick and reject all models of spiritual hierarchy, how do we discriminate between the radical plurality of religious ultimates, goals, and routes to salvation? Ferrer, wisely in our perspective, opts for the ethical. Ontologies are ultimately evaluated and legitimated by their ethical and transformative effects and here he offers, with certain qualifiers, two major guidelines: (1) *the ego-centricism test*: to what extent does a spiritual tradition free its practitioners from narcissism and self-centeredness? And (2) *the dissociation test*: to what extent does the spiritual tradition foster the integrated blossoming of all dimensions of the person?

In the ever-contested relationship between the mystical-ethical, therefore, this book—clear heir to William James's pragmatic perspective that mysticism is to be judged by its fruits rather than its origins—comes out firmly on the side of the ethical. In light of such events as the "fall of the Western guru," that is, the various financial and sexual scandals that rocked a number of North American Asian communities in the 1980s and proved that profound mystical insight can coexist with psychologically and ethically disturbing behavior, such a position is prudent. However, it will fail to convince those religious practitioners for whom religious commitment always transcends ethics; a perspective exemplified most dramatically perhaps in

Abraham's near-sacrifice of his son Isaac. For such thinkers, privileging the ethical over the ontological will be unsatisfactory.

Are all unseen religious realities connected?

A SECOND QUESTION TO ASK ABOUT THE radical plurality model is how to unite what otherwise threaten to end up as an indefinite number of isolated and isolating monadic spiritual universes. Metaphysically this is effected through rejecting both complete identity and total separation in favor of a relational ontology that preserves unity while respecting difference. Utilizing the metaphor of the "healthy family," Ferrer translates this relational metaphysics into a cosmopolitan vision of a human community populated by individuated spiritual practitioners who are unified through their common roots in the mystery. Yet like all families, this one is culturally specific and needs to be acknowledged as such. Ferrer's healthy family dovetails perfectly with the developmental ideal of contemporary American psychoanalytic theory in which psychological maturity is defined as the supplementation of autonomy with intimacy thereby allowing for connection without the loss of individuality. Revealing the psychoanalytic lineage of this model does not, of course, delegitimize it. Yet rendering its cultural location transparent will afford more clarity on why this wider vision of community will resonate with certain spiritual groups and be less appealing for others.

What is the place of ethics in interreligious dialogue?

FOR FERRER, THE DEVELOPMENT OF A nonabsolutist and contextually sensitive global ethics is crucial in fostering respect and communication between different spiritual traditions. In a review of Ferrer's earlier work on transpersonal theory, Jeffrey Kripal cautioned against a "moral perennialism" sneakily succeeding its ontological cousin. In response, Ferrer has further problematized the framing of

traditional religious or spiritual communities as moral resources. Acknowledging the historic rarity of a fully embodied or integrative spirituality, he states that a global ethics cannot be grounded in our past spiritual history; rather, it must be forged in critical reflections on such a history in context of our present ethical concerns. Past and present remain in critical tension in the text but ultimately the values and ideals that inform it are very much of the present: maturity, individuation, embodiment, integration, and autonomy-with-intimacy.

And these are contemporary cultural values that we may wish to claim and celebrate. Ontological democracy places the ethical onus squarely on us to collectively create the best of all possible worlds: ontological and cultural. Once we recognize the radically creative power of our consciousness, we are not only empowered to renovate the problematic authoritarian and oppressive aspects of historical religious forms, but also to sculpt entirely new forms of spiritual expression and ultimates. Are we ready for such responsibility? Are we ready to bring our ontological and cultural worlds into alignment? Are we ready to fully deepen democracy, for what Kripal calls a true Spirit of Democracy? As Rainer Maria Rilke reminded us, the essential thing is to "live our questions now" and in the very posing of such questions, this brave and hopeful book offers much not only to the future of Religious Studies but also to the future of religious expression and interreligious dialogue. As such, perhaps the most fitting accolade one could bestow upon it is that from beginning to end it is like the very mystery it is rooted in: a beautiful, unbounded, beguiling question mark. ■

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ST. JOHN

(continued from page 16)

are not dismayed. This is because they were never allured by it in the first place. They were a people who had been "seeking, first and foremost, the Kingdom of God" (Matthew 6:33). These people of faith, following the instructions of their Lord, had not laid up for themselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, but had, instead, invested themselves in the Kingdom of God—a kingdom that will last forever (Matthew 6:19-20).

In the face of the collapse of our American Babylon, we have to ask how much we have been a people whose lives and resources have been invested in God's Kingdom, so that the collapse of our political-economic system does not threaten us. In the context of the collapse, with whom will we stand? Will we be with the merchants, and weep because our lives and resources have been invested in Babylon; or will we be able to join with those who shout "Hallelujah" because the seductive Babylon and all of the evils that go with her seduction are no more?

As our economic system collapses, I am coming to realize for the first time in my life that Jesus's words in the Sermon on the Mount are the most sensible words ever spoken. He said:

No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But

if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear?" For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.

I must confess that I had previously thought these words were for the likes of saints such as St. Francis or Mother Theresa. As I read these words, I understood why the Darbyites, with their *Scofield Reference Bibles*, tried to assign this way of life to some future dispensation, as if it were not viable for this present age. But now, as my retirement funds evaporate while the stock market plummets, I wish I had taken Jesus's words seriously and "taken no thought for the future" as to what I would eat and how I would live. Living more by faith and trusting less on Mammon now seems like the wisest course of action, and the one I should have taken.

I increasingly feel a regretful kinship to that man I read about in the Bible, who built a barn and filled it with those things that would provide for his retirement (Luke 12:16-20). He then reflects, perhaps in light of inflation, that he ought to tear down that barn and build a bigger barn to provide even more security for his future. As he is about to launch into a life of leisure, the Lord says, "Thou fool." Having worked hard to set up 401Ks and IRAs, I can hear the Lord saying the same thing to me as I watch these funds evaporating daily. Over the years, I thought I had been a generous giver to the poor. Now I wish I had given far more!

There is some good news that comes from the Bible, and that is that it's never too late to repent. Jonah was surprised that the last-minute repentance of the people of Nineveh led to that city being delivered

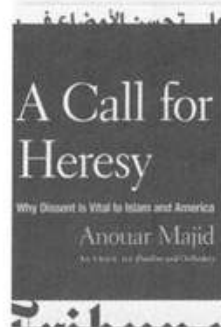
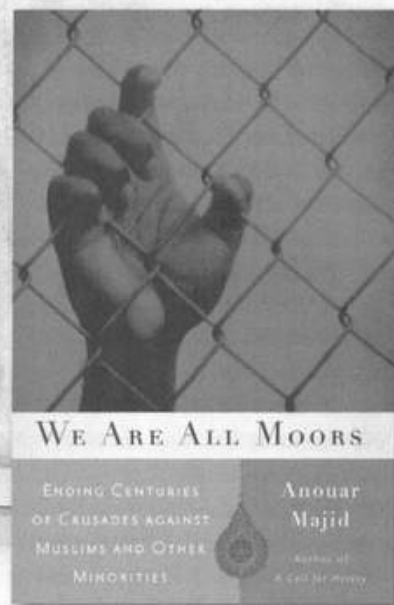
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should try."

What Krugman and others fear is that the administration's temporizing maneuvers may only end up creating the conditions for an even bigger economic collapse later on. As Marx noted a century and a half ago, capitalist elites typically deal with severe economic crises "by paving the way for more extensive and more destructive crises, and by diminishing the means whereby crises are prevented." Just as the Reagan administration's monetary policies sowed the seeds for the storm we are reaping today, the Obama administration's failure to grapple with the structural contradictions of capitalism may be sowing the seeds for an even more cataclysmic day of reckoning in the future.

The Failure of the Liberal Intelligentsia

WOLIN SUGGESTS THAT WHILE OBAMA may be "well meaning ... he inherits a system of constraints that make it very difficult to take on these major power configurations." The forces resisting change appear to be "too powerful to be challenged." While that is true, it is still only an appearance. These forces could be overcome—if only there were sufficient pressure from the grassroots to do so. The question, though, is whether anyone is challenging the defenders of the status quo at all.

Certainly conservatives aren't—they would like to see less government regulation of the market, not more. Nor, however, are liberal intellectuals, who as a body have taken pains not to call into question the fundamental structures of the existing order. Even Paul Krugman, notwithstanding his aforementioned call for an end to securitization, has called for only modest reforms, urging the Obama administration to rally to the call of a kinder, gentler capitalism—chiefly by adopting a new New Deal, a Keynesian strategy of massive public investments infrastructure and education, coupled with the imposition of more stringent regulatory controls on the financial sector. The economist Robert J. Shiller, similarly, writes that the "best thing that ... Obama can do is to set up permanent new structures to harness the innovations of finance to

improve people's lives on Main Street."

What is more surprising, perhaps, is that even more radical thinkers on the left have said little about the need for an alternative to capitalism. In a recent article for the radical economics journal *Dollars and Sense*, for example, economist Marie Duggan argues that we need to "fix the financial sector," not do away with it. "Yes," she writes, "the United States needs a functioning financial sector so that small businesses, students, and even GM have access to credit. But not one as large as it was before the crisis." Similar perspectives have echoed throughout the alternative media—a willingness to reform the tax code, or to increase government regulation, or to reform the Federal Reserve, but not to challenge the true prerogatives of the powerful, nor to question the basic division of the world into owners and workers, haves and have-nots.

In fact, the Left has yet to organize a single significant conference on what a successor system to capitalism might look like. Nor has anyone begun to make the case for why such an alternative is desirable to the public at large. In 1982, the Nuclear Freeze movement inspired 1 million people to march against nuclear war in Central Park. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the National Organization of Women and other liberal feminist groups sponsored pro-choice rallies in Washington that regularly drew hundreds of thousands. During the ramp-up to the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, millions of people staged anti-war rallies around the world. But where are the demonstrations today against the bailout of the banks and brokerage firms, let alone against the capitalist system that is ruining our planet? Who is out there trying to build a vibrant, broad-based socialist movement? Ironically, the unfolding crisis directly or indirectly encompasses every conceivable social movement issue the Left could ever care about—war and peace, individual liberties, feminism, ecology, labor, and animal rights. Yet the Left as such is dead—or might as well be. As Sheldon Wolin laments: "The left is amorphous ... I despair over the left. Left parties may be small in number in Europe but they are a coherent organization that keeps going.

Here ... we don't have that. We have a few voices here, a magazine there, and that's about it. It goes nowhere."

What's Ahead

ALAS, THE DISAPPEARANCE OF VIBRANT social movements from the field of history could not come at a more tragic time: for the first time in seventy years, after decades of unquestioned supremacy over every aspect of human and natural life, capitalism is beginning to suffer its own "legitimacy crisis." The German philosopher Georg Hegel famously wrote that the Owl of Minerva would only take wing at dusk. That is, only at the end of history would Reason and divine Spirit at last come to be reconciled, in human self-consciousness, human self-knowledge. Today, however, as the Marxist James O'Connor has ironically remarked, the Owl of Minerva folds its wings at daybreak—closing up shop, as it were, just when things at last start to get interesting.

Antonio Gramsci, the great Italian theorist, observed that severe economic disruptions can "lead in the long run to a widespread skepticism" toward the existing order as a whole. When that happens, even the most seemingly entrenched political and social arrangements can disappear overnight. In 1997, when foreign traders suddenly pulled the plug on the "Asian miracle," devaluing currencies such as the Thai bhat and Indonesian rupiah, mass protests and riots spread through the region overnight. Within a year, the democracy movement had toppled the authoritarian government of President Suharto in Indonesia, a nation of over 200 million. A year after that, the East Timorese at last overcame decades of repression by the Suharto regime by declaring their national independence. The traumatic economic dislocations of the 1920s and 1930s, by contrast, prepared the ground for even more intensive and extensive social upheavals. When Gramsci spoke of popular "skepticism" toward an older regime, he knew of what he spoke, having himself been thrown in jail by the fascist leader, Benito Mussolini. If fascism and world war were the products of the last depression, what will the next

one bring?

As the world economy deteriorates, as hundreds of millions of people lose their jobs, and as the state scales back on social welfare and public services, we may see a widening crisis of confidence in the economic and social order as such. That worry seems to have been on the mind of George W. Bush last autumn, when he felt compelled to defend the capitalist system by name. ("The crisis [is] not a failure of the free-market system," he insisted, "and the answer is not to reinvent that system.") Nicolas Sarkozy, the French president, offered up similarly fervent demonstrations of his faith in capitalism. But Germany's finance minister, Peer Steinbrück, struck a more ominous tone. In a revealing interview with *Der Spiegel*, Steinbrück warned that the corporate and banking scandals that had plagued Europe and the United States in recent years had threatened to undermine faith in the system as a whole:

We have to be careful not to allow enlightened capitalism to become tainted with questions of legitimacy, acceptance, or credibility. This isn't merely an issue of excessive salary developments in some areas. I'm talking about tax evasion and corruption. I'm talking about scandals and affairs of the sort we have recently experienced, although one shouldn't generalize these occurrences. But they are the sort of thing the general public understands all too well. And when they are allowed to continue for too long, the public gets the impression that "those people at the top" no longer have to play by the rules. There have been times in Germany when these elites were closer to the general population. Some things have gotten out of control in this respect.

Steinbrück, a leading light of the conservative Christian Democratic Union party, stunned his interviewer by invoking the spirit of Marxism to explain what was occurring in the international markets. "Overall," he said, "we have to conclude that certain elements of Marxist

theory are not all that incorrect." The reporter from *Der Spiegel* objected, "And you, of all people, are saying this?" Steinbrück replied: "Every exaggeration creates, in a dialectic sense, its counterpart—an antithesis. In the end, unbridled capitalism with all of its greed, as we have seen happening here, consumes itself."

If capitalism is indeed beginning to consume itself, the same way it devoured the minds, bodies, and labor of countless human and nonhuman beings over the course of centuries, then for the first time in generations, perhaps ever, we may have a brief opening, a caesura in the long, breathless tale of capitalism and its violence, in which to imagine and to set the terms for a new way of organizing human society and economy. In 1940, not long before he was driven to his death by the Gestapo, the Jewish philosopher Walter Benjamin wrote:

It is well-known that the Jews were forbidden to look into the future. The Torah and the prayers instructed them, by contrast, in remembrance. This disenchanted those who fell prey to the future, who sought advice from the soothsayers. For that reason the future did not, however, turn into a homogenous and empty time for the Jews. For in it every second was the narrow gate, through which the Messiah could enter.

Benjamin was reflecting on the temporality of socialist revolution—on the way that systemic crises open up unexpected utopian fissures in the seemingly impenetrable rockface of modernity. Such a historic rupture, a "narrow gate" through which those who envision a better world might suddenly pass, may be opening up beneath our own feet today. If so, we have come to the threshold of Hope.

But we cannot wait to find out. The dangers are incalculable. Should we squander this historical moment through inaction or despair, it may soon be too late for us to do anything, except to watch from the sidelines as world events spiral out of control. ■

WHEN THE BAILOUT FAILS

(continued from page 33)

Social Control of Investment

Enterprise governance is one key structural difference between economic democracy and capitalism. The other concerns finance, specifically the mechanisms that generate, then allocate, funds for new investment. The "free market" has proven itself inadequate to the task of performing this function efficiently—to put it mildly. (Can any economist these days use the term "efficient markets hypothesis" with a straight face?)

There are two parts to our reform. The first involves the source of funds. Let's break the connection between saving and investment. We won't rely anymore on private savings, which, apart from pension funds, come overwhelmingly from the wealthy. Relying on this segment of society makes the whole economy hostage to their "animal spirits"—to use Keynes's term. How much societal investment we need, where and in what enterprises these funds should be invested—these decisions are vital to the long-term future of everyone. They are too important to be left to the hunches and intuitions of a small segment of the population that is largely invisible and wholly unaccountable to the general public.

People can still save. We'll have Savings and Loan Associations in our economy, where modest interest is paid on deposits, which are insured by the federal government. These regulated S&Ls will serve as source for home mortgages and other consumer loans—as they once did, in pre-deregulation days.

Business loans, however, are another matter altogether. We'll raise all the funds for business investment publicly, the way we raise funds now for public investment—namely, from taxes. Let's abolish the corporate income tax (which few corporations pay anymore anyway), and substitute a capital assets tax—a flat-rate tax on the value of an enterprise's tangible property. As it is now, we tax labor, via the payroll tax, but not capital. (As all economists know, but few bother to mention,

this distorts the efficient allocation of resources, making labor more expensive than it need be, thus giving incentives for automation and making production more capital-intensive than it ought to be.) This tax redresses the balance.

Under the new system, the revenues from this tax are kept separate from general tax revenues. All go into the "investment fund." All are plowed back into the economy, as loans to existing businesses wanting to expand production or upgrade their technologies, or to individuals wanting to start up new businesses. (Just as payroll taxes are specifically earmarked for social security payouts, the capital-assets taxes are specifically earmarked for business investment.)

Once collected, these investment funds are allocated to a network of regional and local banks, each region getting its *per capita* share. (Congress can readjust this allocation, but since the allocation is a zero-sum game, any deviation will need solid justification.) Every year, each region of the country gets its *fair share* of the national investment fund. Regions don't compete for capital. They don't have to offer tax breaks and other incentives to attract investors. Citizens don't have to pick up and move from capital-starved regions to those into which the capital is flowing. Capital flows automatically to where the people are. Community stability is thus greatly enhanced.

Enterprises within regions *do* compete for capital. The investment banks are public institutions. Loan officers are public officials charged with allocating society's resources efficiently. Profitability is a major criterion of success, although a community might want to add some others—employment creation, for example, or the fostering of green technologies. In any event, the allocation process is open and transparent because these banks are public institutions loaning out public money. Loan officers whose portfolios perform well will be rewarded; those whose portfolios do not may lose their jobs. Thus we have incentive structures in place appropriate to the efficient allocation of capital in accordance with democratically decided

priorities.

These are the basic institutions of economic democracy: a competitive market for goods and services, widespread workplace democracy, and what I call "social control of investment."

There are a few supplementary policies that an economic democracy should also adopt; full employment, "capitalism within socialism," and socialist protectionism.

Full Employment

We need the government to serve as the employer of last resort. Every person wanting to work should have a job. No market economy, capitalist or socialist, can guarantee full employment. The government has to do that. Every citizen should enjoy a genuine "right to work." These jobs will not be high paying, but they should involve decent, socially useful work. Involuntary unemployment is a scourge, a deepening, terrifying global trend that must be addressed head on. (To be unable to find work is a terrible thing. It's as if society is saying, "There is *nothing* you can do that we need. We may deign to keep you alive, but make no mistake: you are a parasite, living off the labor of others." Is it any wonder that unemployment breeds social pathologies?)

Capitalism within Socialism

Economic democracy does not require that *every* business be democratically run. Small businesses need not be. Nor larger businesses either, no matter what their size, so long as the entrepreneurial founders are still actively involved. Economic democracy values entrepreneurial ability. Society as a whole profits from the exercise of such talents. If capitalist incentives are useful in fostering such abilities, they should be retained.

Our economy will feature an entrepreneurial capitalist sector. Anyone who wants to can start a business, hire as many workers as she wants, introduce as much or as little worker-participation and profit sharing as she sees fit. *However*, when the entrepreneur wants to retire or move on, and the business exceeds a certain size, she or he must sell the business

to the state, which will then turn it over to its workers to be run democratically. The entrepreneurial capitalist sector thus serves as an important source of democratic firms. Such capitalists play a valuable role in our socialist economy and are duly honored therein.

Socialist Protectionism

One final policy: economic democracy values healthy competition—competition among producers to find out and produce what consumers really want, to use their resources efficiently, and to innovate. But not all forms of competition are healthy. Wage competition is not. We do not want workers competing with one another to see who will work for less. This is race-to-the-bottom competition. In particular, we do not want our enterprises competing with those enterprises in poor countries whose competitive advantage derives from the fact that their workers earn substantially less than ours do. For this reason we should adopt a policy of "socialist protectionism."

The protectionist part: we will charge a tariff on goods imported from poor countries to bring the selling price of the goods up to what they would be if labor costs in the exporting countries were comparable to our own. We are thus protecting our workers from "unhealthy" competition.

The socialist part: we rebate the tariff back to the country of origin. This money may go to the government if we deem it progressive enough, or to labor unions or NGOs working to upgrade working conditions there. In effect, our consumers are paying higher prices for their imported goods than the price the free market would set, and this difference is going to the poor country. That is to say, we believe in *fair* trade, not *free* trade.

Economic Democracy, Stability, Sustainability

MR. PRESIDENT, I'VE PROVIDED ONLY A bare sketch of an alternative economic order. I won't try to defend here the claim I defend elsewhere, namely that economic democracy is not only economically viable, but it would also be

vastly more democratic and egalitarian than our current economic system. I do want to say a few words, though, about the crises I discussed in the first part of this letter.

The first conclusion we can draw is a large one: economic democracy is not vulnerable to the kind of economic crisis we are now experiencing. The basic reason is simple. There are no private financial markets in economic democracy. Markets for goods and services remain, but there are no stock markets, bond markets, hedge funds, or private “investment banks” concocting collateralized debt obligations, currency swaps, and the myriad other sorts of derivatives that preoccupy investment bankers today. Hence, there is no possibility of engaging in financial leveraging and other forms of speculative gambling.

In particular, the kind of housing bubble we’ve just experienced, fueled by the massive demand for mortgage-backed securities couldn’t happen, for there are no such securities to buy or sell. Mortgages stay with the Savings and Loans of origin. To be sure, if the demand for homes should rise, individuals might gamble that prices will keep going up, and hence buy in order to resell—but the S&Ls are well positioned to scrutinize loan applications. An individual S&L might make some bad loans, perhaps so many as to force it into bankruptcy, but there is little danger of contagion.

It is interesting to note that Krugman, in spelling out his own plan for economic recovery projects, admits, “it will come close to full temporary nationalization of a significant part of the financial system”—though he is quick to add, “This isn’t a long term goal, a matter of seizing the economy’s commanding heights: finance should be reprivatized as soon as it is safe to do so.” He doesn’t say why the reprivatization is necessary. (Why not seize the economy’s “commanding heights” and *democratize* them?) Clearly, he wants to reassure everyone that he is not a closet socialist—for nothing could be worse than failing to do what is necessary out of fear that acting to save the financial system is

somehow ‘socialism.’”

Immunity to speculation is not the only strength of economic democracy. Even more important: it is not vulnerable to that *deep problem* confronting every capitalist economy, which I discussed above, namely insufficient effective demand, due ultimately to the fact that wages are a cost of production. (It is rational for each capitalist to keep his workers’ wages down, and yet the wages of working people constitute the major source of consumer demand. Ideally, a capitalist would like to keep the wages of his own workers down, while those of all other workers remain high—but he has control only over what he pays his own workers. Individual rationality leads to collective irrationality—a classic collective-action problem.)

Wages are not a cost of production in a democratic firm. Workers get a specified share of the firm’s profit, not a wage—so all productivity gains are captured by the firm’s workforce.

What about the environmental crises, which derive from the fact that a capitalist economy must constantly grow to remain healthy? I’ve argued that contemporary capitalism is in a bind. If the economy doesn’t grow, we get an economic crisis; if it does, we get an ecological crisis.

Economic democracy is not so immune to environmental crises as it is to economic crises, but it is far better positioned than capitalism to achieve sustainability.

It is a fundamental fact about a democratic firm, long recognized in the theoretical literature, that it lacks the expansionary dynamic of a capitalist firm. The reason is structural. Democratic firms tend to maximize profit-per-worker, not total profits. That is to say, doubling the size of a capitalist firm will double the owners’ profits, whereas doubling the size of a democratic firm leaves everyone’s per-capita share the same. (Doubling the size of the firm means doubling the size of the workforce.) Thus, democratic firms are not incentivized to grow. Unless there are serious economies of scale involved, bigger is not better.

Moreover, since funds for investment

in an economic democracy come from the capital assets tax, not from private investors, the economy as a whole is not hostage to “investor confidence.” We need not worry that an economic slowdown will panic investors, provoking them to pull their money out of the financial markets, triggering a recession. For there aren’t any financial markets. Economic democracy can be a healthy, sustainable, “no-growth” economy, whereas capitalism cannot be.

Labor, Leisure, Virtue

ACTUALLY, “NO-GROWTH” IS A MISNOMER. Productivity increases under economic democracy will more likely translate into increased leisure than increased consumption. The economy will continue to experience “growth,” but the growth will be mostly in free time, not consumption. So we might be able, at long last, to slow down, spend time with our family and friends, read books, listen to music, see the films we’ve long wanted to see. We might even find time to smell the flowers. Keynes himself mused about such a state of affairs, when thinking about our vastly increased productivity and its bearing on the “Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren”:

We shall use the new-found bounty of nature quite differently than the way the rich use it today, and will map out for ourselves a plan of life quite otherwise than theirs.... What work there still remains to be done will be as widely shared as possible—three-hour shifts, or a fifteen-hour week.... There will also be great changes in our morals.... I see us free to return to some of the most sure and certain principles of religion and traditional virtue—that avarice is a vice, that the extraction of usury is a misdemeanor, and the love of money is detestable, that those walk most truly in the paths of virtue and sane wisdom who take least thought for the morrow.... We shall honor those who can teach us how to pluck the hour and the day virtuously and well, the delightful people who are capable of taking direct enjoyment in things.

ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY (continued from page 37)

Keynes wrote these words in 1930, at a time when “the prevailing world depression, the enormous anomaly of unemployment, the disastrous mistakes we have made, blind us to what is going on under the surface.” He was wrong, of course. The “rentiers” have not suffered euthanasia, as he had thought they would. The grandchildren of his generation may have lived in a post-war social democracy that looks good to us, mired as we now are in an anxiety-laden, ever-deepening recession, but they were still far from the Promised Land.

Keynes was wrong—or was he? The essay’s title notwithstanding, he was not referring literally to his grandchildren. His projection was for “a hundred years hence,” i.e., 2030. Might he be right after all? Might there be things “going on under the surface” right now, to which we are blind, that could bring us to a sustainable, democratic, human world?

I’m thinking of my own granddaughter now. She’s eight years old, right between Sasha and Malia. What kind of a world will she inherit? It’ll be the same world your daughters will inherit.

I’ve sketched an “economic possibility.” Will we move toward something like that? Your presidency will likely shape the future as few other presidencies ever have. The world is going to be very different eight years from now.

Many of your programs are pointing in the direction of that “promised land.” You are creating jobs. How about a job for *everyone*? You are nationalizing banks. This could serve as an opportunity for radical restructuring. You are bailing out the auto industry and will doubtless be called upon to bail out other troubled businesses. You could begin insisting on some workplace democracy.

Who knows how all this will turn out? It is important to realize that there does exist a viable, desirable, sustainable alternative to the current system. It has become suddenly, tantalizingly, visible on the horizon. That gives me hope. It might give hope to many. ■

advice from capitalist banks. They tend to maximize net income per worker rather than profits, so they tend to favor capital-intensive investments over job creation. And because cooperative owners often have their savings invested in a single enterprise, they tend to avoid risky innovations.

These problems can be mitigated with productivity-enhancing tax incentives and regulations. Cooperative economics and ecological sustainability are naturally linked by the necessity of creating structural alternatives to the capitalist fantasy of unlimited growth. The kind of economic development that favors the needs of poor and disenfranchised communities and does not harm the earth’s environment requires a dramatically expanded cooperative sector consisting of worker-owned firms rooted in communities, committed to survival, and prepared to accept lower returns.

But worker ownership does not do enough for equality, especially in the highest-yielding cooperatives, which nearly always have high entry fees. Rather than allow members to sell out to the highest bidder and take their capital gains, most cooperatives require members to sell out to the company. This policy guards against reverting to traditional capitalist ownership, but in cooperatives with high share prices, one has to be rather well off or very determined to apply. One might address the equality problem by universalizing co-operation, but that would ruin a mostly good thing. If everyone had to belong to a cooperative, the entry fees would be waved and many enterprises would fail.

Better Social Ownership Models

WE NEED FORMS OF SOCIAL OWNERSHIP that facilitate democratic capital formation, have a greater capacity for scaling up, and are more entrepreneurial. Specifically, we need forms of economic democracy featuring public banks and mutual funded holding companies. This approach can take a variety of forms, but the essential idea is to establish competing banks or holding companies in which ownership of

productive capital is vested. The companies lend capital to enterprises at market rates of interest and otherwise control the process of investment, including decision-making power to initiate new cooperatives and shut down unprofitable firms. Equity shareholders, the state, and/or other cooperatives own the holding companies or public banks.

Unfortunately there is a lot more theory on this subject than concrete examples of it. The theorists include Peter Abell, Raymond Plant, Alec Nove, Saul Estrin, David Miller, John Roemer, Robert Dahl, Joanne Barkan, Gar Alperovitz, Radoslav Selucky, Otto Sik, Thomas Weisskopf, and David Winter. The biggest experiment thus far was the Meidner Plan in Sweden, named after German economist Rudolf Meidner, which was enacted in 1982 by the Social Democratic government. It called for an annual 20 percent tax on major company profits to be paid in the form of stock to eight regional mutual funds. Worker, consumer, and government representatives controlled the funds, and as their proportion of stock ownership grew, these groups were collectively entitled to representation on company boards. If fully carried out, this experiment would have rendered effective control over profitable firms in Sweden to the worker and public organizations. But the Social Democrats made little effort to educate the public about it or win popular support for it. For eight years Sweden’s corporate class railed against it constantly. The Meidner Plan’s term expired in 1990, and especially after the Swedish banking crisis of 1992, the Social Democrats lost their enthusiasm for it. That made political sense for them at the outset of second-wave globalization. It may prove to be the death knell for large-scale experiments in full-orbed economic democracy.

But less ambitious forms of economic democracy have succeeded in many places, and the scale question rests on politics and culture more than economic viability. Public bank theory takes seriously the failures of state socialism, the limitations of worker ownership, and the necessity of building up highly capitalized forms of economic democracy. The distinct advantage of this approach is that it diversifies forms of risk

sharing and promotes greater efficiency by forcing firms to be financially accountable to a broad range of investors. Essentially, it is a solution to the entrepreneurial deficiencies of worker ownership, addressing conflicts of interest between cooperative owners and profitability that cause cooperatives to miss market signals.

There Can Be No Socialist Blueprint or Magic Wand

THIS APPROACH DOES NOT REST ON idealistic notions about human nature and it should not be the next progressive blueprint. Economic democracy is a brake on human greed and domination; the whole point of it is to fight the universal propensity of dominant groups to hoard social goods and abuse disenfranchised people. Neither should progressives absolutize any particular model of economic democracy, for the blueprint mentality is inherently problematic. Socialists were wrong to equate socialization with nationalization. They were wrong to reject production for profit, wrong to think that state planners could replicate the complex pricing decisions of markets, and wrong in trying to organize an economy not linked by markets. Not all Socialist traditions made these mistakes, but the blueprint mentality was deeply ingrained in virtually all of them.

From a democratic perspective, the key problem with the mutual fund model is that it weakens workers' power at the firm level. To the extent that the holding companies are granted supervisory control over their client enterprises, worker control is diminished. To the extent that the holding companies are kept in a weak position, the advantages of the mutual fund model are traded off as the enterprises essentially become cooperatives.

I have a theory about how to deal with that problem—it's a circular scheme modeled on Mondragon's "second degree" cooperatives that upholds the authority of the holding companies—but more important than any particular theory or model is the willingness to expand the social market in different ways and find out which models work best in particular circumstances. The tradition of Christian social ethics and progressive theology to which I belong has an ample history on this subject. The father of

the social gospel, Washington Gladden, believed that profit-sharing industrial partnerships would put an end to the class struggle, until he lived long enough to see otherwise. The founder of social ethics, Francis G. Peabody, shared the conviction of most social gospelers that cooperatives were obviously the progressive Christian solution. The greatest social gospel, Walter Rauschenbusch, believed that a combination of state and cooperative ownership would create a good society. Archbishop of Canterbury William Temple developed a type of guild socialism featuring a Meidner-like plan for worker-controlled collective capital funds. Reinhold Niebuhr stood for radical state Socialism before opting for the welfare state. Many liberationists and social ethicists have promoted "socialism" without describing what it is.

Most of this tradition wrongly operated with unitary ideas of capitalism and socialism, as though each were only one thing, culminating in the liberationist tendency to condemn "capitalism" categorically while employing "socialism" as a magic wand. The latter approach is too vague, monolithic, and evasive, but neither should social justice movements embrace any particular model as the next sign of the divine commonwealth.

The Better Way: Organic, Pluralistic, Pragmatic, Voluntary

ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY MUST BE A project built from the ground up, piece by piece, opening new choices, creating more democracy, building an economic order that allows for social contracts, common goods, and ecological flourishing. Economic democracy nurtures and sustains social trust: social capital that no healthy society can do without. It is a project that breaks from the universalizing logic of state socialism and takes seriously that there are different kinds of capitalism. Social theorist Roberto M. Unger calls for "alternative pluralisms," step-by-step constructions of alternative political and economic institutions. Abstract concepts of a monolithic "capitalism" or "market" obscure the variety of possibilities within existing capitalism and markets. So-called "capitalism" is always the product of particular historical configurations, contingencies, and

struggles.

The tests of any experiment in economic democracy are pragmatic. To impose something like the Mondragon network on a capitalist society would require coercion over workers who don't want to belong to cooperatives. The U.S. Pacific Northwest has a network of long-standing, highly successful plywood cooperatives. Some plywood workers choose to work in conventional firms instead of the cooperatives. No political economy worth building would force them into a different choice.

The issue of choice, however, is the key to a better alternative. A politics that expanded the cooperative and social ownership sectors would give workers important new choices. The central conceit of neo-classical economics could be turned into a reality if meaningful choices were created. The neoclassical conceit is that capitalism doesn't exploit anyone, because labor employs capital as much as capital employs labor. But in the real world the owners of capital nearly always organize the factors of production. To expand the cooperative and other social market sectors would give choices to workers that neoclassical theory promises, but does not deliver. It would show that there is an alternative to a system that stokes and celebrates greed and consumption to the point of self-destruction.

The earth's ecosystem cannot sustain a U.S.-level lifestyle for more than one-sixth of the world's population. The economy is physical. There are limits to economic growth. Global warming is melting the Arctic ice cap at a shocking pace. It is melting large areas of permafrost in Alaska, Canada, and Siberia, and destroying wetlands and forests around the world. The manic logic of corporate capitalism pays little heed to communities and the environment, and none to equality. Corporate giants like ExxonMobil succeed as businesses and investments while treating the destructive aspects of their behavior as someone else's problem.

For thirty years one had to be a stubborn type to sail against the religion of the market. Now one only needs to be awake. If the stubborn types can seize this terrible moment as an opportunity to build a better social order, we may actually do it. ■

HEALING AND REALITY IN THE MIDEAST

(continued from page 50)

South Africa, he says, could not have occurred without Nelson Mandela, whose moral authority enabled blacks to emphasize healing and reconciliation, assuring the whites they would not be kicked off the land once the blacks gained power.

I agree that the willingness of the blacks to emphasize healing and reconciliation played a role in South Africa, but unlike their South African counterparts, large majorities of both Israelis and Palestinians reject a joint state, reducing the importance of healing and reconciliation in this case. In fact, after 1945 these forces played a minor role in decolonization in Asia and Africa, as colonizers and colonized parted. Even in South Africa, the healing and reconciliation came later, and it may not have ended the conflict yet.

By the 1960s, violent resistance by blacks intensified in South Africa, leading the white regime to declare a state of emergency in 1985. In 1986, the U.S. Congress imposed severe, compulsory sanctions over a presidential veto, overturning President Reagan's "constructive engagement." White South African fatigue grew, and many came to reject apartheid, forming the National Democratic Movement in 1987. Facing these pressures, South Africa began to remove restrictions even as violence continued. In 1990, the government released Mandela from his prison in South Africa, and the healing began.

Today, the large majority of blacks in South Africa still live in poverty. South Africa is the world's most economically unequal country, ridden by one of the highest crime rates. Whites still hold the majority of fertile land and wealth. Blacks press the government to seize lands whites took from blacks. In May 2008, the underlying rage led to black violence against black migrants, blaming them for taking jobs away from residents. If the healing model stumbles in South Africa, the one colonial case supporting it, taking this approach without fixing the colonial distortions seems

futile in our case.

More broadly, consider the role of healing and reconciliation in addressing crime. Our system of law does not mandate the offended side to "make nice" so that the offender feels secure in stopping the offense; we force offenders to stop their offense. Healing and reconciliation sometimes come later.

Bringing about Conflict Resolution

ASSUMING MY ANALYSIS IS CORRECT, how could a tikkunish American peace movement help to bring about conflict resolution? Colonial logic suggests Israel has not decolonized because the level of its metropolitan fatigue has not crossed a certain threshold. Thus, an American peace movement should work to promote Israeli metropolitan fatigue, but this raises questions surrounding *how* to promote fatigue. Recalling that after 1945 metropolitan fatigue was driven by colonial, domestic, and international forces, should our peace movement promote a new general Palestinian revolt? Should it attempt to foster Israeli support for decolonization? Should it attempt to foster international support?

Promoting a new Palestinian general revolt would defeat the purpose of conflict resolution. Fostering support for decolonization in Israel also is problematic. Israelis would likely reject any reference to what they do in the Territories as colonialism. In contrast, working from the outside might work. Israel is at the point where the colonial rulers facing revolts after 1945 were on the eve of their own decolonization. They too sought to keep a foot in the colony. What made the difference was yet another force: the United States.

When colonized societies revolted after 1945, the United States faced a dilemma. Colonialism negated its core values, but the colonizers were its allies in the Cold War. At first, the United States supported its allies, but then changed its policy, concluding that colonial rule did not serve its own interests. For example, the United States granted the Netherlands development aid after World War II and the Dutch used American-made weapons in Indonesia.

When in 1948 it became apparent that the new Indonesian government would be anti-Communist, the United States forced the Dutch to decolonize, threatening to cut all Marshall Plan and military aid. By the early 1950s, the United States funded most of the French war effort in Indochina, but in 1954 the United States refused to answer the French cry for help to save France's stranded garrison in Dien Bien Phu, concluding that assisting the French in Vietnam was too risky and even unnecessary, thus effectively ending the French rule. As another example, the United States adopted a soft approach toward South Africa, but in 1986 it concluded the costs outweighed the benefits and enforced severe sanctions, essentially bringing about an end to apartheid.

Similar to its initial approach to the European colonialism and South African apartheid in the post-1945 era, the United States has shielded Israel from international pressures to leave the Territories, granted it more than \$150 billion in aid since the late 1960s, and supplied most of its arms. The U.S. government plans to grant Israel \$3 billion per year during the next decade, putting Israel at the top of the list, by far, of states receiving U.S. aid, excluding the special case of Iraq. This aid is effectively fungible. Had these funds not been available, Israel would have had to cut other expenses to finance the colonization, causing it difficulty and probably weakening domestic support for this project. Despite U.S. insistence that Israel not spend its aid in the Territories, the United States has essentially helped Israel to finance its colonial project.

If an American movement that seeks Israeli-Palestinian conflict resolution will focus its effort on compelling Israeli decolonization, can it bring about a change in U.S. policy? I believe the answer is yes. To begin with, the history of colonialism suggests the United States may fundamentally change its approach to the West Bank. When the United States changed its policy in the past, it concluded that colonial rule no longer served its interests. Our case may be similar, for it is unclear whether the

benefit to the United States from implicitly supporting the Israeli presence in the Territories outweighs the cost. Whereas the United States-Israel relationship seems special, I believe that many Americans are not fully aware of what the U.S. policy enables Israel to do in the Territories.

Equally important, many Americans may not be aware that the United States' implicit support of the Israeli colonial project is in fact putting Israel at risk. Today there are already almost as many Palestinians as Jews in the land lying between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean. In a decade or two, there may well be more Palestinians than Jews, turning the land into a mini version of South Africa under apartheid, should the colonial status quo continue. From then on, pressures to form a joint Israeli-Palestinian state would become insurmountable. While in theory such a state could be stable and is in fact a noble idea, in practice it would likely exhibit endless intense bickering over land, property, retribution, and power sharing. Indeed, as noted, large majorities on both sides do not seek to form a joint state.

I believe a concerted and persistent effort to foster support in the United States for Israeli decolonization will contribute to conflict resolution. The effort I have in mind goes far beyond calling on the United States to affirm its support for the two-state solution or convene yet another peace conference. What we need is to bring about an American change of heart, recognizing the Israeli enterprise in the Territories as colonialist and employing a policy similar to that it employed after 1945 for other colonialists. In short, what I have in mind is tough American love that will literally force Israel to decolonize to the 1967 border, much along the lines of parents forcing their kid to stop an improper behavior.

Will Israel comply? There are ample examples of Israeli compliance with U.S. wishes. Nixon forced Israel to stop attacking the besieged Third Egyptian Army in the 1973 war. Nixon and Ford

pushed Israel to leave parts of the Sinai Peninsula and Syria. Carter prevailed upon Israel to withdraw from the Sinai and admit that the Palestinians deserved political rights. Reagan convinced Israel to let PLO forces retreat from Beirut. George H.W. Bush prompted Israel to open talks with the Palestinians. Clinton compelled Prime Minister Netanyahu to sign agreements with the PA. George W. Bush compelled Prime Minister Sharon to accept a Palestinian state, and President-elect Barack Obama apparently pressed Israel to stop its recent military operation in the Gaza Strip before his inauguration. In each case, the Israeli government did as it was told.

Should the United States pressure Israel to decolonize, Israel would most likely comply. In fact, it might have no choice but to comply. A country that receives most of its arms, including virtually all of the planes of its celebrated air force, and approximately \$3 billion a year from another country, which also shields it from international sanctions, is not truly free to make independent decisions.

While the conflict since 1967 is firmly grounded in the history of colonialism, it does have some unique features (like all conflicts). For example, geography presents the two sides with an option, which was much harder to implement in other colonial episodes. Since the colony and metropole are adjacent, the two sides might decide it is in their best interest to swap certain land areas. This exchange may provide Israel with a way to lessen settler opposition to decolonization by allowing some settlements to stay in place.

The issue of the Palestinian refugees provides another example. Although moral arguments favor their return to the areas they left, which are now within the pre-1967 Israeli borders, Israelis strongly reject it, in line with their rejection of a joint state. The issue lies outside our colonial perspective, for the war of 1948, which caused it, was not colonial. One practical solution seems to be that in return for Israeli decolonization and

acceptance of some responsibility for the problem, the Palestinians would settle the issue by accepting financial compensation and returning to their own state. This could begin the process of healing, but, again, it is predicated on decolonization.

Can the settlers be brought home without a civil war? Public opinion polls suggest that the great majority will leave the settlements if offered compensation and assistance with relocation. The remaining religious and right-wing hardliners may attempt some physical or even armed resistance, but they will be no match for the police and IDF. The polling data suggest they do not have the necessary numbers to prevail. There may be some deaths. But if the Israeli government pursues decolonization with great resolve, as Prime Minister Sharon's government did in the summer of 2005, there will probably be no deaths, or the deaths will be much fewer than many fear.

The idea of decolonization has considerable support in Israel, but all in all it seems that only the United States could make it happen. I believe that pro-Israel Americans are best positioned to bring this policy about by pressing the president and congress to do so. I know that this is not an easy thing to ask; we all feel a strong urge to assure that Masada will not fall again, but Israel is really not Masada—it is a militarily strong and advanced country, and decolonization does not threaten its existence. On the contrary, in the grand scheme of things, tough American love, forcing Israel to return to the 1967 border and accept a Palestinian state in the Territories, would be a much more valuable gift than the billions of dollars the United States grants Israel every year. It would consign Israel's colonial project to its final resting place in the annals of history and deliver the Sons of Israel to freedom. ■

Rabbi Lerner responds: *The use of the term "colonialism" about Israel freezes discussion among people who'd otherwise listen, without adding necessary analytic clarity.*

TORTURE AND TORMENT
(continued from page 57)

Fletcher has called for the "creation of an independent, nonpartisan commission," adding that the commission "needs to have subpoena power, needs to have access to critical documents and be able to compel testimony, and it should have the authority to recommend criminal investigations, if that's where the evidence leads."

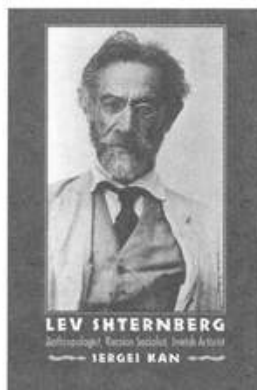
Torture needs its own truth commission. And the reconciliation must happen between the United States and the victims of its crimes.

We need to be certain that all of the human beings detained and destroyed in Guantanamo and elsewhere have been identified, that not one of them is forgotten, whether in West Asia and the Middle East, Latin America, Europe, Africa, or elsewhere. We must rescue them all. We must account for them all.

Section 4a of President Obama's executive order on detention and torture instructs the CIA that it shall "close as expeditiously as possible any detention facilities that it currently operates and shall not operate any such detention facility in the future." Americans must know, in addition, where these CIA sites were, and what went on in these sites. No claim of national security should cover up the crimes we have committed.

The United States must also be prepared to make reparations to those it has harmed, whose lives have been destroyed by our foray into "the dark side" of national and international relations. The shadow of that dark side is hanging over us—as it hangs over those whom we have tormented.

We must realize that it is crucial for us to take the high moral road vis-à-vis what we have done. The nation owes this honesty, this dignity, to itself, as well as to those it has harmed. Life after torture and torment is not only vital to them. It is vital to our national soul. ■


Lev Shternberg

Anthropologist,
Russian Socialist,
Jewish Activist

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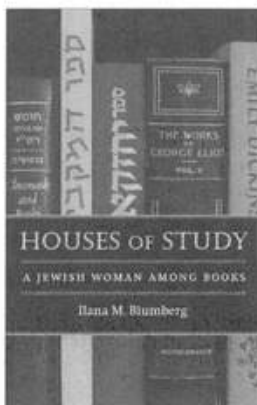
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SILENCE

We grew up on silence. Because of the oath
sworn over the gun, an orphan candle flickering

in the dark. Because we were a new generation,
praised for holding back, clenched mouths, keeping

emotions under wraps. Reared on lofty sentiments
we created ourselves out of fury, severing

our umbilical cords with our own teeth. I was dry-eyed
when a city boy, my only friend, drowned in the irrigation

pool of the kibbutz; when she whose name is erased
from my memory mocked my burning, puppy love;

and not one whimper escaped my bitten lips when Yoel,
my high school classmate, the one who gave me his copy

of *The Prisoner of Zenda*, was killed in the naval
commando raid that gold-and-blood summer, the first

of our independence; and no tears when clever Yehiel
left our table on the second floor of the café for good;

and none at the tombstones marking the graves
of my dreams' casualties, overgrown with cacti, fenced

by rusty barbed wire in the cemetery of my life.
We grew up on silence, hard and dark as basalt

and if my eyes seem moist to you today—it's the north
wind scorching them with icy fingers. Indeed, let the wind

be blamed for that sound coming from my direction, that
howling like a wounded beast, tired unto death.

- Moshe Dor

translated by Barbara Goldberg with the author

**REASON, FAITH, AND REVOLUTION:
REFLECTIONS ON THE GOD DEBATE**

Terry Eagleton

Yale University Press, 2009

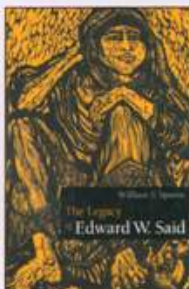
EAGLETON IS ONE OF THE MOST PROLIFIC AND insightful Marxist critics of culture and literature writing today. For years he was the most provocative voice coming out of Oxbridge, and he is now teaching at the National University of Ireland. Here he makes mincemeat out of the anti-God crew of Christopher Hitchens, Richard Dawkins, and other "new atheists" who have been dominating the lecture circuit ever since Bill Maher's talk show, "Politically Incorrect," popularized the notion that you have to be stupid to be religious. Eagleton shows that these new culture heroes have "won" their debates by presenting crude distortions of the religions that they are mocking. Without denying that Christianity itself is primarily responsible for the intellectual sloppiness of its critics, Eagleton recaptures what is so powerful about its revolutionary foundations in the teachings of Jesus. This small book is a treasure—and any serious atheist should be urged to read it, as should most religious people who've forgotten what is so challenging to the status quo about taking Biblical religion seriously.

**THE LEGACY OF EDWARD W. SAID**

William V. Spanos

University of Illinois Press, 2009

DESPITE SPANOS'S PESKY ATTEMPTS to reconcile Edward Said to the kind of poststructuralist hermeneutics that Said himself explicitly critiqued, this book does provide a very insightful opening to the works of one of the great social and literary theorists of the past decades. Said may be most famous for his powerful presentation of his own life as a Palestinian refugee who managed to become a respected professor at Columbia University and a member of the Palestine National Council, but for many his most important act was blowing the academic cover for the American imperialism that still shapes what most Americans are taught in colleges and universities. His exposé of orientalism helped create the whole arena of post-colonial studies and cultural studies. His legacy is worth careful study today, now that we've entered an era in which African Americans in the U.S. government sometimes serve as public champions of American imperial domination and cultural suppression of alternative ways to understand the world.

**THE BEATS: A GRAPHIC HISTORY**

Edited by Paul Buhle

Hill and Wang, 2009

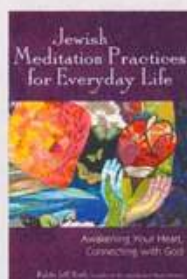
THE COUNTERCULTURE OF THE 1960S DREW some of its imaginative juices from 1950s beatniks, poets, and authors who sought to disengage from the emotional and spiritual deadness of the American mainstream. *Tikkun* cultural author Paul Buhle does a great job of providing a sense of the breadth of this anti-movement movement. One wonders if Buhle's book is the prelude to graphic history taking the place of written history—it feels like it has that potential.

**JEWISH MEDITATION PRACTICES FOR EVERYDAY LIFE**

Rabbi Jeff Roth

Jewish Lights, 2009

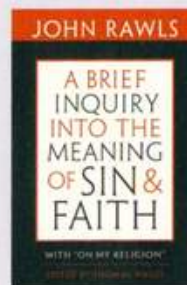
RABBI JEFF ROTH WAS AN EARLY DISCIPLE OF Jewish Renewal founder Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and spent many of his creative years immersed in dealing with the plumbing, mosquitoes, and other issues that arose at Elat Chayyim, the retreat center he founded (now merged with the Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center). Now Roth has come into his own as a profound teacher of Jewish meditation practices. The subtitle of his book accurately describes what readers can get from it: "Awakening Your Heart, Connecting with God." Though presented in a Jewish frame, Roth's approach has deep roots in Christian and Buddhist meditation wisdom, as well, and Roth's teachings are as applicable to spiritual but not religious people as they are to people in traditional religious communities. It is a fine initiation for those not yet into meditation and also has much to offer to those of us who have been practicing for decades!

**A BRIEF INQUIRY INTO THE MEANING OF SIN AND FAITH**

John Rawls et al.

Harvard University Press, 2009

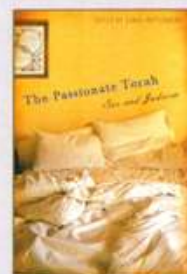
WHAT A PLEASURE TO READ JOHN RAWLS'S senior thesis at Princeton, which he submitted in 1942, long before his book *A Theory of Justice* (1971) established him as America's most respected liberal philosopher of law. Rawls's later writings are as *pareve* (neutral) as could be—they have no hint of the religious passion and wisdom that permeates his senior thesis. Robert Merrihew Adams has a long accompanying essay reviewing what is most exciting in Rawls's thesis. "Johnny, we hardly knew ye."

**THE PASSIONATE TORAH: SEX AND JUDAISM**

Edited by Danya Ruttenberg

NYU Press, 2009

RUTTENBERG HAS ASSEMBLED AN ALL-STAR cast of writers in this anthology of Jewish thinkers, including Rebecca Alpert writing on "solitary sex" (didn't we used to call that masturbation before Phillip Roth and Portnoy's liver brought it down a notch in public esteem?), Aryeh Cohen on sexual boundaries, Elliot Dorff on birth control (the Pope should read this), Esther Fuchs on intermarriage in the Hebrew Bible and its relationship to the Israelite conquest of the land, Gail Labovitz, Melanie Malka Landau on good sex and power relations, Jay Michaelson on homosexuality, Naomi Seidman on how orthodox forms of separation of the sexes can heighten eroticism, and Arthur Waskow on Eden for grownups. A fun read!

**THE SCENIC ROUTE**

Binnie Kirshenbaum

Harper Perennial, 2009

MIDDLE-AGED, DIVORCED, AND UNEXPECTEDLY unemployed? Sound familiar? Well, so too is much of Binnie Kirshenbaum's latest novel, an engaging story of a woman who is as screwed up and psychologically impaired as most of us on the planet. Kirshenbaum's novels elicit our compassion not only for her characters but also for our own lives as we see them reflected in her stories.



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Write an article in response to one of the questions at www.tikkun.org/under25contest. They include:

- What does the economic meltdown mean to you and your life, and how would you go about fixing it?
- Imagine a global economy based on solidarity, love, and ecological sustainability. How would it work?
- Do students still love Obama on campus—and why?
- What would it take for your life to be dedicated to *tikkun olam* (healing and transforming the world)?
- Do you have a religious or spiritual life that has energized you into social action? What and how?
- Imagine you were president—what would you do?
- What would a National Service Corps have to be like to excite you enough to volunteer two years of your life to become part of it?
- And many other questions on our website.

Deadline: June 15, 2009

Article length: 700-1000 words

Submission guidelines: www.tikkun.org/under25contest

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