

Tikkun

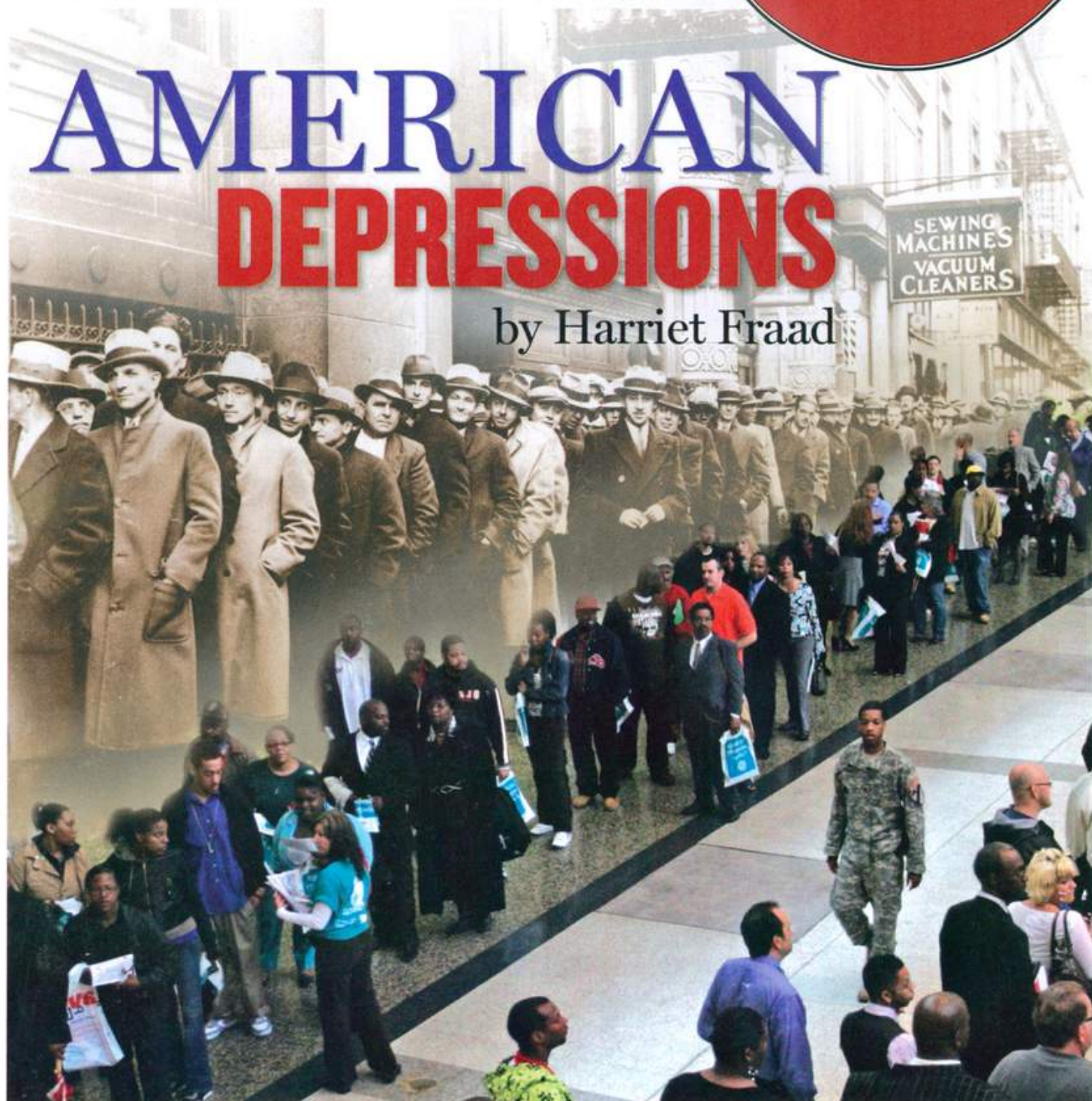
POLITICS+SPIRITUALITY+CULTURE

(tē·kūn) To mend, repair, and transform the world. JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2010

CHRIS HEDGES
ON THE OBAMA BRAND

AMERICAN DEPRESSIONS

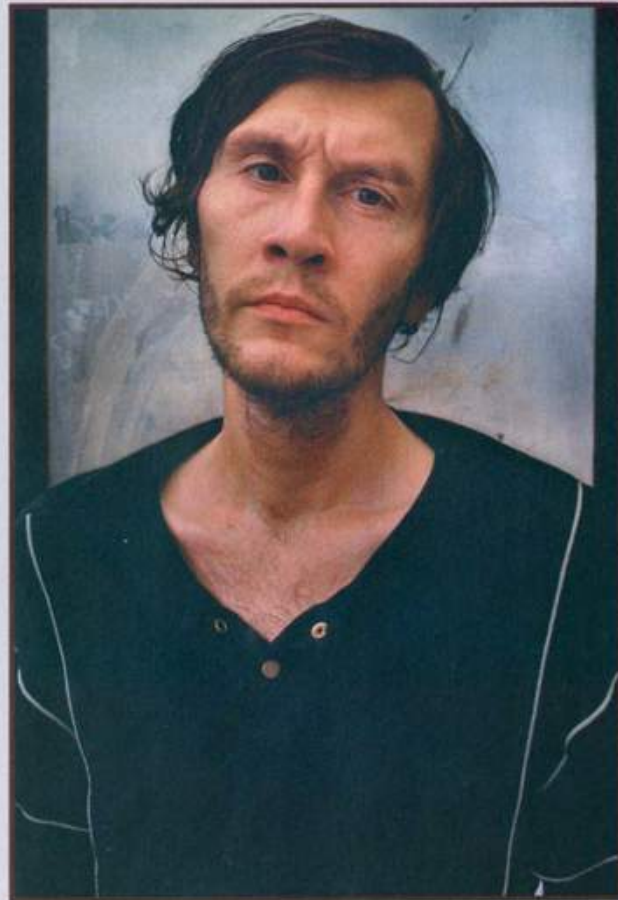
by Harriet Fraad



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Obama's War in Afghanistan | God and Neurobiology
Interview with Congressman Keith Ellison | Robert Bergman
Sunni-Shia Competition for Leadership of Global Islam
The Mystery of Forgiveness | Sephardic Religious Humanism
Christian Socialism | Student Power | A Holy Curiosity



"If there is a theme with which I am particularly concerned, it is the contemporary failure of love. I don't mean romantic love or sexual passion, but the love which is the specific and particular recognition of one human being by another—the response by eye and voice and touch of two solitudes. The democracy of universal vulnerability."

So writes poet Isabella Gardner in the epigraph of *A Kind of Rapture*, Robert Bergman's book of portraits. The portraits on this page are among the Bergman works on exhibition in New York and Washington, D.C. Peter Gabel reviews this artist's work on page 24.



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Facing Page: Robert Bergman, all *Untitled*, dated
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Readers Respond

A NOTE ON LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

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 email, 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.

THE LONG PATH OUT OF DENIAL

AS THE SON OF A PALESTINIAN farmer and landowner, never absentee, for generations growing the famous Jaffa oranges and forced, with a young family in tow, out of Jaffa in May 1948, I felt I had to write to Kim Chernin to say thank you for your lucid, self-questioning stance toward the relationship between the Jews and the Jews' Jews (in *Tikkun*, November/December 2009). The title of your book (*Everywhere a Guest, Nowhere at Home*) echoes Edward Said's (a family friend since the days of Beirut) *Out of Place* and indeed my own experience of being everywhere a guest, nowhere at home, though I have found this to be liberating rather than a burden.... We love our parents, we love our children, we have a sense of humor. We read, talk, discuss, question, and struggle with alien concepts and ideas, and only the mutual reciprocity of that acknowledgement will extract us out of the mire that is the Middle East. I do not for a moment imagine that the process has been an easy one for you, as I have struggled all my life with the "What would I do if I were an Israeli?" thought. Growing up in Beirut, I have had a firsthand experience of receiving the blunt end of the might of the Israeli army, yet this has never stopped my questing for the

"humanity" of my enemy. Hard task indeed, when you are a Red Cross worker in the fresh carnage that was Sabra and Shatila, September 1982.

I hope that your book will slowly help remove the blinkers off the donkeys in both our societies, and only then will there be a tiny glimmer of hope for a future worthy of that name. Again, thank you.

RAJA BEIROUTI
Oxford, U.K.

I WANT TO THANK *TIKKUN* FOR publishing the excerpt from Chernin's book *Everywhere a Guest, Nowhere at Home*. What sets this piece apart from other personal reckonings with the Jewish/Palestinian question that I've read is the depth of the author's honesty and the way she painstakingly tracks the slow and arduous process of learning to listen to a narrative that flatly contradicts her own, of taking in a point of view that is inimical to her own identity. The story Chernin tells of how listening eventually wins out over "loyalty to my own side" is instructive to anyone engaged in a political, ethnic, or even personal struggle in which "the other" has ceased to exist as fully human.

LISE WEIL
Montreal, Canada

REPARATIONS, NOT GENEROSITY

I ENTHUSIASTICALLY AGREE WITH almost all of Rabbi Lerner's recent article, "Just Say 'No' to the War in Afghanistan." One of my points of difference concerns Rabbi Lerner's reference to the Global and Domestic Marshall Plan as a strategy of generosity. Generosity seems to imply that there is no debt owed.

Rabbi Lerner points out our "arrogant self-interest and self-aggrandizement." These would seem to call for reparations and establishing just economic relationships with the rest of the world, as does the fact that we have been military and economic aggressors and have done great environmental damage. Not only have our wars in Iraq and Afghanistan been very destructive to the environment, we are also one of the world's greatest polluters, emitting perhaps 25 percent of the world's

MORE LETTERS!

We are getting dozens of great letters these days. Go to www.tikkun.org/letters for readers' responses to Stephen Zunes on the Goldstone Report, Tzvi Marx on Shlomo Sand, Riane Eisler on a new economics, Chet Bowers on academic freedom, Michael Lerner on J Street, and Samantha Kirby on Israel, along with those authors' replies, plus additional letters on nondualism, Afghanistan, Dr. King's God, health care reform, Alice Walker's article on Gaza and Rwanda, and more.

carbon dioxide pollution (as well as other greenhouse gases).

Internationally and nationally, we should focus less on “generosity,” with its implications of *noblesse oblige* toward those we have harmed, and more on what Rabbi Lerner correctly calls for: a “serious process of repentance.”

KAREN MITZNER
Portland, OR

PRAYER AND NONDUALITY

JAY MICHAELSON’S ARTICLE, “Prayer and Nonduality” (*Tikkun*, November/December 2009), prompts me to share a little of my own wrestling with this topic.

When I was sixteen and a beginning student of Zen, I sat on the shore of Cape Cod and disappeared. No body, no mind, no “me” at all. When I returned I knew that whatever Reality is, it has nothing to do with the isms that seek to define it. It is what is: *Ehyeh asher Ehyeh*, the

ceaseless *I sing* of birth, death, and rebirth. To speak of God and Creation was to speak of Ocean and Wave, the former greater than, but not other than, the latter. Can the Wave pray to the Ocean? I didn’t think so. I stopped praying.

Then, decades later, I began to experience *Shechinah*, the presence of God as Divine Mother. I resisted the experience as best I could, but I could not do so for long. So I began to speak to Her and to hear Her speak to me. The trouble was that this clearly dualistic encounter with the Divine violated everything I knew to be true about the nondual nature of Reality.

I was no less Her; She was no less me—and yet we spoke. What She taught me is that if God is All, God must be Other as well. Nonduality when juxtaposed with duality is simply part of a larger duality. True nonduality embraces the Other as well as the One in a greater Reality for which there are no words.

So now I pray. What do I pray? There is little in Jewish liturgy that speaks to me, but what little there is I use as mantra. I chant single lines of Hebrew, the core wisdom of the liturgy, and then I wait. What emerges from this waiting is a conversation: me pouring my heart out to Her, and She mirroring myself back to me in a way that allows me to see through the madness and move beyond it. These are moments of ecstasy unmediated by ritual and decorum. No rising or sitting; no responsive readings; no moments of mumbled pseudo-silence. Just raw, uncensored speech. Just saying “Thou.” Just hearing echoes of “I.” In time the speech gives way to silence; the Wave returns to the Ocean. I am gone. God is all.

Unlike Jay I don’t pray to be transformed. There is no static “me” at all. There is no transformation from one fixed state to another, just ceaseless *teshuvah*, endless turning from self to Self to self, again and

Tikkun

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again and again. And with each turning there is expansion: not a going round like a planet in orbit around a sun, but a spiraling out like a galaxy. And with each turn and return my heart opens wider; I am more loved and loving. I pray for nothing. The turning is its own reward.

Can this happen in a formal synagogue service? Of course, but for me it happens when I walk outside, the rhythm of my steps matching the rhythm of my breath, dancing with the rhythm of Life. Can it happen with our heads buried in a *siddur*, our mouths reciting ancient scripts? Of course, but for me it happens in the far simpler chanting of single lines, the uncensored wildness of unscripted speech, and the greater silence that ultimately engulfs them both.

Thanks, *Tikkun*, for giving us yet another opportunity to hear Jay's wisdom.

RABBI RAMI SHAPIRO
Murfreesboro, TN

THE SWEET VICTIMHOOD OF ISRAEL'S MALIGNERS

Editor's note: *The full text of this Pearl-Goldberg/Makdisi exchange, which is over twice the length we could print here, is on our website at www.tikkun.org/letters.*

DAVID THEO GOLDBERG AND Saree Makdisi, in a *Tikkun* article (September/October 2009), accuse me of "mis-characterization and fabrication" of the now-famous Gaza Symposium at UCLA (in my essay, "Dust Over Campus Life: UCLA at a Crossroad," *LA Jewish Journal*, February 18, 2009). Let me state categorically that, before writing that article, I personally interviewed five witnesses who attended that event—two students and three visitors—and I have a record of their testimonies. These people spoke to me because of a genuine concern over the increasingly intimidating atmosphere on U.S. campuses, and, based on what they had to say, we as a community should share their concern.

One of the students documented her experience in a letter to the Chancellor and wrote: "By the end, hundreds of people were chanting 'Zionism is Nazism,' and 'Israelis are murderers.' At this point, the Symposium was not a 'Civil discourse essential to the intellectual climate at UCLA.' It was not respectful, but for the first time in my life made me fear for my safety, because I am Israeli. I was sitting in the back of the room, yet I was surrounded with people showing so much hate that I truly believed they wouldn't bat an eye if someone killed me on the spot. This symposium made me feel more unsafe than I have ever felt in my life, and it was held on the UCLA campus ..."

According to those who were present, this orgy took place in the Q&A session, which, understandably, was not included in the podcasts, and which Goldberg and Makdisi dismiss as "a bit more heated and contentious."

One of the visitors was a consul general of an EU country, who described the symposium as "the dirtiest Israel-bashing and indeed full-fledged anti-Semitic hate-fest I have experienced in my two-and-a-half years in this city." Although I for one never raise anti-Semitic allegations against Israel maligners (doing so would give them the benefit of a hereditary disease), the impression that neutral outside observers received from the UCLA event should be of some concern to the campus community.

I had (and have) no reason to doubt the credibility of these and other independent eyewitnesses of the UCLA event, though one should find ample reasons to doubt the credibility of Goldberg and Makdisi, who characterize that same event as an academic symposium "meant to restore a sense of intellectual balance and historical context." Seeking the shelter of victimhood, they further write: "insinuation, accusation, and defamation have become the

weapons of first resort to respond to argument and criticism directed at Israeli policies."

The UCLA symposium, I hold, barely discussed "Israeli policies" in the conventional sense of the word. It focused instead on the sins of Israel's birth, on the stupidity of assuming that Israel may have a thing to say in her defense, on how peace-loving Hamas was provoked into this conflict, and on the irredeemable qualities of a monstrous, blood-thirsty "white settler colonialist power" obsessed with one and only one aim—the destruction of the Palestinian people and of innocent Palestinian lives.

JUDEA PEARL
Los Angeles, CA

Saree Makdisi and David Theo Goldberg reply:

JUDEA PEARL HAS SENT MORE OR less this same letter to every forum willing to print it. In not one of his countless accounts of the event that he has spent so much time denouncing has he ever attempted to (a) summarize a single argument presented by any of the speakers on the panel or (b) offer a counter-argument based on reason and backed up with evidence.... If he is interested in carrying on an exchange, one of us would be glad to meet with him in a public forum on ways to resolve the Israel/Palestine conflict, to be held at UCLA, where he can test his arguments and evidence against ours in an open, honest, public setting; we will ask the UCLA Center for Near Eastern Studies if such a forum can be arranged. If Professor Pearl does not agree to a public forum, we can only conclude that it is because he recognizes that he has no credible argument to make and no real evidence to fall back on. There would be no other explanation for why he prefers to resort to unsubstantiated innuendo and anonymous rumor that any first-year student in a course on critical thinking or practical reasoning would recognize as riven by fallacy at every turn.

(More letters on page 16)

LETTERS

(continued from page 5)

J STREET AND TIKKUN

I AM RESPONDING TO YOUR editorial (in the September/October issue of the magazine) on the rejection by J Street of your formal participation in their conference of this past October. First let me quote what for me personally were very relevant parts of the editorial [where you quote what one of the members of the *Tikkun* editorial board was told when he spoke to the J Street leadership]:

"Jeremy Ben-Ami 'acknowledged that you would bring some positives but he is convinced that your involvement would signal that this effort is not the fresh and new approach that he wants people to take as the 'brand' of their conference.' That editorial board member reminded us of how the liberals who ended the war in Vietnam often distanced themselves from the radicals who opposed the war from the start.... It was the same dynamic that led many Democrats in the 1940s to remain hostile to and label as 'premature anti-fascists' those on the Left who had in the 1930s urged the United States to actively oppose the growth of fascism in Europe when U.S. economic and political elites were still fantasizing that maybe Hitler, if left on his own, would attack and destroy communist Russia."

I was one of those early opponents of the war in Vietnam, as a student at the Yale School of Public Health marching on the sidewalks of New Haven, carrying anti-war signs, when most of the curious onlookers didn't know what "Vietnam" meant. I grew up with and was inspired by a group of "premature anti-Fascists," led by the great Dr. Edward K. Barsky. Eddie had been the Commander of the Medical Unit for the whole of the International Brigade in Spain. After the War, he was sent to jail by the McCarthyites-before-McCarthy on the House Un-American (sic)

Activities Committee for contempt of Congress because he refused to release to them the names of the contributors to the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee that he headed. What awful thing did what we knew as the "Spanish Committee" do? It sent aid to the refugees from fascist Spain who escaped Franco's death squads and were living in camps in the south of France. So I personally know whereof you speak in your editorial.

I was a supporter of J Street from the time I first heard of it. But then when I heard of their exclusion from their conference of perhaps the most authentic U.S. voice for peace in Israel/Palestine and for the relief of the decades-long suffering of the Palestinian people, I sent Jeremy Ben-Ami the following letter:

Dear Jeremy, I just want you to know that I am resigning my membership in J Street over your persistent refusal to formally seat Tikkun at your conference. You will get no more money from me. I cannot imagine just what it is that you are afraid of... I will continue to support the true pro-peace groups, but not your half-way, let's-not-get-people-really-angry-with-us, one.

Keep up the good fight, *Tikkun*! The number of truly ethical Jews is shrinking. We desperately need your continued leadership.

STEVEN JONAS
Stony Brook, NY

Rabbi Lerner responds:

LIBERAL CENTRISTS HAVE OFTEN showed more antagonism to people on their Left than on the Right, allowing right-wingers to demean those who have taken the risks for peace and justice. Steven Jonas rightly recounts some other instances of that in twentieth-century history. It will be important to watch how willing J Street is to critique the Obama administration as it backs away from putting any serious pressure on Israel to accept a Palestinian state in the

entirety of the West Bank and Gaza (with minor border modifications as envisioned in Yossi Beilin's extremely rational Geneva Accord).

It's important for us as spiritual progressives, both Jewish and not, to try to support centrists, even as we seek to push them toward more courageous positions. Those who support the peace perspective should be supporting each other, not pushing each other away. That doesn't preclude critique of ideas, but it does suggest the importance of continuing to reach out to all those who support a peace perspective. So though they refused to allow us to co-sponsor their conference, we at *Tikkun* have offered J Street representatives a regular column in *Tikkun* (as long as it contains new ideas that they haven't publicized elsewhere before our magazine comes out) and have invited Jeremy Ben-Ami to speak at our June conference in D.C. We lead by example. We haven't heard back yet but hope they accept our invitation.

CORRECTION

IN MY REVIEW OF SHLOMO SAND'S book *The Invention of the Jewish People*, I attributed to him the opinion that he offered in explanation of the lapse in Israeli historiography of the Khazars, namely "the wave of decolonization of the 1950s and 1960s drove the Israeli memory-merchants to avoid the very shadow of the Khazar past. There was anxiety about the legitimacy of the Zionist project, should it become widely known that the settling Jewish masses might lead to a broad challenge against the State of Israel's right to exist" (page 236). I understood him to share this concern that others might use that knowledge to challenge Israel's right to exist. I have now learned that Sand does not hold that view, but was merely intending to quote others who have the view. My sincere apologies to him for reading into his text something he did not intend.

TZVI MARX

Obama's Cautious Path to Education Reform

BY GEORGE VRADENBURG

THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION IS TAKING STEPS toward education reform. Given the political noise around Iraq and Afghanistan, stimulus and jobs, health care, and financial regulation, the education issue has been a mere trill note. Yet, the effort to improve the performance of our K-12 education system may have greater long-lasting impact on the quality of life of future generations.

It is now common wisdom that we live in an era of globalization. While this is true, we are only beginning to feel the economic effects of that global era. Increasingly, we will live in a world where billions of people will be consuming, producing, and trading across boundaries—where choice of work location and residence will induce massive population flows, where commuting patterns will be not just local but international, and where individual choice of where to live and work will erode the concept of national sovereignty.

In such a world, employers can and will locate wherever skilled workers concentrate; and the ability of individuals to find the high-skilled jobs essential to a high standard of living will depend more on their wits and skills and less on their family heritage or country of origin. If an individual has the education and training essential to take advantage of this global twenty-first-century marketplace, he or she can find opportunities somewhere in the world. Those without an education will be locked in place, their zip code of birth determining their station in life.

Those nations capable of offering a twenty-first-century education will draw those with a burning desire to improve their lives. The countries incapable of doing so will be left with declining standards of living, as well as a loss of creative and productive capacity. For them, Atlas will have shrugged.

It is not clear which kind of nation we will be.

For the last half of the twentieth century, we were the land of job opportunity and economic freedom, driven by a K-12 education system that was the envy of the world. But now, our high school graduation rates and quality of high school graduates are, by various international norms, ranked between fifteenth and twentieth among industrialized nations. Less than half of our urban population graduates from high school, and many of those high school graduates require remedial English or mathematics in order to do college-level work.

Part of the explanation is that women entering the workforce

after World War II found employment opportunity in K-12 education in an otherwise inhospitable workplace. Those women are now retiring. Top college graduates now go into finance or business, not education. Alternative sources of teachers, like Teach for America, can only supply a limited share of new teacher demand.

New teachers are going into highly unionized, government owned-and-operated school systems that have been resistant to competition, innovation, and accountability. In Washington, D.C., the worst K-12 performer, union teachers are evaluated as “above average or better” even as the children in their classrooms fall further behind every year. Adult considerations trump. Kids lose. Unions rule.

The Obama administration, led by Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, is seeking to reform this underperforming K-12 school sector by encouraging public charter school competition and teacher compensation linked to student test scores. And, importantly, he is extending the accountability that has resulted from the uniform national testing system mandated by the No Child Left Behind law.

At the same time, Secretary Duncan is seeking to kill innovative experimentation with school vouchers—another critical element of school reform. Modeled after the Pell Grant college scholarships offered to low-income families, school voucher programs such as the Opportunity Scholarship Program in Washington, D.C., offer low-income K-12 students in failing schools scholarships to attend private K-12 schools. With support of congressional Democrats, this innovative supplement to charter school competition is being killed by the power of status quo teachers unions on whose political support the Democrats rely so heavily.

Shame on President Obama, Secretary Duncan, and Democratic leaders in Congress. The president has chosen to send his children to a private school in Washington; Secretary Duncan has chosen to live in suburban Arlington to avoid D.C. public schools; and key Democrats in the Senate and House went to private schools.

If the choice of private school is open to these top Democrats, why is it not open to low-income kids in failing public schools? For these kids, the zip code of their birth is determining the outcome of their life. That is wrong. ■

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

Afghanistan: Obama Capitulates to the War Makers

OBAMA'S DECISION TO ESCALATE THE WAR IN Afghanistan represents a decisive endorsement of the strategy of domination. Instead of using his presidency to challenge the ideology of the war makers, Obama has become one of the most brilliant and nuanced articulators of the "war as the path to peace" worldview. It is essentially the same argument that was used to defend the Cold War, the war in Vietnam, and the projection of U.S. military power around the world for the past sixty-five years.

"We must begin," Obama told the world on December 10, 2009, while receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in Stockholm, "by acknowledging the hard truth: we will not eradicate violent conflict in our lifetimes. There will be times when nations—acting individually or in concert—will find the use of force not only necessary but morally justified."

Obama doesn't tell us why he thinks this is true, except to point to the past. Now imagine if a leader had said, "We will not eradicate ... in our lifetime" and substitute in that blank space any of the following: slavery, sexism, apartheid, segregation, hunger, environmental destruction, child abuse, cancer, Alzheimer's disease, or any other global evil. Many of us would probably say, "Whoa, you might be right—we can't know for sure—but certainly whether you are right or not on any of these issues will be affected by whether you prioritize the abolition of these problems. If our leaders start by assuming that x, y, or z cannot be abolished, they will likely put less energy into doing so than they might, so this kind of diagnosis becomes self-fulfilling."

In his Nobel Prize speech, Obama acknowledges that his position is in stark contrast to that of Martin Luther King Jr. when King was awarded the Nobel Prize. Then he jumps to the *Moral Man and Immoral Society* approach championed by Reinhold Niebuhr and subsequently used by conservatives and neoconservatives to justify the Cold War and the war in Vietnam: what is moral for an individual is not necessarily what is moral for a society. According to this view, a nation must be guided by self-interest and the need to defend its own citizens, not the self-interest of the whole planet (though in the twenty-first century our self-interest depends on the well-being of everyone else on the planet—a point that Obama does not consider). So, Obama goes on, "As a head of state sworn to protect and defend my nation, I cannot be guided by [King and Gandhi's] example alone. I face the world as it is, and cannot stand idle in the face of threats to the American people."

We recognize that the president of the United States has a special responsibility to defend the United States from attack. We have never been doctrinaire pacifists—but then again, neither



Is that a halo around Obama's head? Back in May, when this photo was taken, some people thought he deserved one. Now, if his plan gets congressional funding, he'll soon have over 100,000 troops in Afghanistan. No halos for war makers!

were King and Gandhi (both of them recognized circumstances in which they might not oppose the use of force). But we do believe that in most circumstances, the threat of force against us must be overwhelmingly clear, the danger immediate, and all other potential strategies besides war must have been exhaustively tried. None of these is the case with regard to Afghanistan.

In fact, Obama would be hard pressed to convince objective observers that there is an immediate threat to the American people that could not be resolved by ending poverty in the Middle East, from Gaza to Afghanistan. Without trying that approach, Obama is on weak ground to argue that he is applying "just war" theory.

But in Stockholm, Obama wasn't considering the strategy of generosity. The only alternative he considers is one of total nonviolence à la his caricature of King and Gandhi, and that one he dismisses by warning: "Make no mistake: Evil does exist in the world. A nonviolent movement could not have halted Hitler's armies. Negotiations cannot convince al-Qaida's leaders to lay down their arms. To say that force may sometimes be necessary is not a call to cynicism—it is a recognition of history: the imperfections of man and the limits of reason."

The Meaning of "Evil"

THERE IS SO MUCH IDEOLOGICAL BAGGAGE BUILT INTO THESE sentences it is hard to disentangle them. First, there is the religious/metaphysical belief that "Evil" exists in the world. This is a claim that has been substantially challenged by many of us, and

which I take on in *The Left Hand of God*. Many spiritual progressives acknowledge that evil acts have happened and that young children often inherit personalities, character structures, and ideological frameworks from people who have acted in evil ways or who have supported institutions or religious and secular practices that have embodied evil. First and foremost, they inherit a propensity to solve problems through violence.

Living in a world based on an unequal distribution of food, housing, and security—in a world where some of the powerful media glorify violence, and where various branches of secular and religious ideologies preach a philosophy of self-interest and domination over others—encourages us to think and act in hurtful ways. But that is very different from ontologizing Evil as an “existent reality.” For a fuller discussion of this issue, please read Erich Fromm’s 1973 classic *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*. From our standpoint, there is much to do to reduce evil actions and ideas that encourage evil practices and institutions that inflict hurt on others, but that is different from insisting that there is such an entity in the world as Evil. We can develop individual and social practices, institutions, and therapies to reduce evil actions or ideas or institutions, whereas Evil seems like a metaphysical category that cannot be eliminated, and hence provides the justification for a militarism that itself perpetuates and expands immoral and destructive violence and hurtfulness.

When Nonviolence Does Work

NEXT, THERE IS OBAMA’S REFERENCE TO HITLER, WHICH ONCE again gives Hitler the victory of allowing his existence to become the reason why we must act in similar ways to his, showering violence on innocent civilians (and yes, the United States did that extensively in Iraq; and in the past year, the Obama administration has been responsible for the murder of hundreds more civilians through its use of drones to pick out “suspected” terrorists in Pakistan and Afghanistan).

And no, it is not obvious that Hitler could not have been stopped through nonviolence and generosity. That would not have worked when he was using the German army to invade neighboring countries, starting in 1938. But it was not too late in 1924, and possibly not even in 1933 or 1934. Had the victorious allies after World War I initiated a Marshall Plan for Europe and followed through with generosity and genuine caring for the well-being of everyone affected by that war, and had progressive movements in Europe been aligned with the worldviews of a Martin Buber and a Mahatma Gandhi rather than the worldviews of Stalin, Trotsky, and nationalist-oriented social democratic parties, then yes, Hitler could have been stopped through nonviolence.

The absurdity of comparing the estimated one hundred terrorists of al-Qaida in Afghanistan in 2010 (people who have almost no weapons and no access to atomic bombs) with the power of the German army when Hitler could not have been stopped by nonviolence (namely after 1938) reeks of intellectual sloppiness, if not of dishonesty. Isn’t it time for us to recognize that not every threat to American power (or for that matter, to Israeli security) is Hitler?

A defender of military escalation could now argue, “Sure, they don’t have Hitler’s power yet, but certainly they would like to have it, and they might eventually overthrow the government of

Pakistan and get their hands on nuclear weapons.” Yes, they might. But so might China decide that in order to gain greater economic power it should use its atomic weapons against the United States. Or Israel might decide that to protect itself from the possibility that Iran might get and use atomic weapons it would be best for Israel to make a preemptive strike on Iran. In fact, the basic strategic argument for Israel’s occupation of the West Bank and its stranglehold on Gaza is that if Palestinians ever get real power, they might use it against Israel. And in fact, that was the argument used by whites to maintain power over Blacks in South Africa.

The Torah makes clear when dealing with this issue that there needs to be an act through which this “might” starts to become an “is.” It says if a person comes toward you with the intent of killing you, you have the right to kill first. But the intent is necessary but not sufficient. The person must be in the act of fulfilling his intention. The reason should be obvious: people or even the rulers of nations may have fantasies of eliminating other states, peoples, religions, or ethnic groups, but until they act to make that murder actual, their fantasies or desires are not sufficient grounds for preemptive action.

What Gives the United States the Right to Intervene?

WHAT GROUNDS DID WE HAVE FOR A VIOLENT ATTACK ON THE Taliban? The Taliban did not strike the United States but rather, according to the official story, it was al-Qaida. Al-Qaida was given shelter by the Taliban, who did not recognize the right of the United States to put al-Qaida leaders on trial. The United States then intervened militarily and put al-Qaida on the run by overthrowing the Taliban government. But it was not the Taliban who executed an attack on the United States.

True enough, the Taliban often engage in evil acts of violence, particularly against women seeking equality and rights. But so too does the government of China in regard to Tibetans; the government of Russia in regard to Chechnyans; the governments of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Syria in regard to their own populations; and the government of Israel in regard to Palestinians. In short, we can wish other countries had different systems or different leaders, but that is different from claiming that our wishes provide a sufficient justification for violent intervention. To take another example: the United States incarcerates between 2 million and 3 million people at any given time, thus denying freedom to more people than any other society on earth. Many of the prisoners’ “crimes” turn out to be motivated by a desire to feed their families in the face of stark material deprivation. Many others are incarcerated due to the application of universal standards (like anti-drug laws) in a racist manner (giving jail time to people from communities of color while providing alternative treatment modalities to whites). How would we feel if China or some other soon-to-be-powerful country someday decides that in order to bring freedom and justice to our society, it must use its most sophisticated weapons to overthrow the repressive government of the United States and stop it from abusing human rights?

Maybe there are circumstances where that could be justified. World War II was one such. The Hutu and Tutsi massacres in Rwanda were another such moment. But we’d want to see very careful limits on such interventions. They should be a product of

open democratic debate and should only occur if a majority of the people in the countries seeking to intervene are convinced of the morality of such an intervention. And military interventions should only occur after adequate and serious efforts to involve the countries of the world, and those representing a majority of the world's population should agree to such an intervention.

The United States has no right to appoint itself the policeman of the world's moral ills, particularly given our "dirty hands" with regard to past interventions. Our interventions are often motivated by economic and military-power desires that have nothing to do with the moral gloss our leaders put on these interventions. If the United States took a few years to urge other countries of the world to build an international force to protect the rights of women in Afghanistan, and if it promised to leave and let that force be the enforcers of human rights, it would have a much better case for involvement should such a force be impossible to create. But the United States has only asked the countries of the world to join under its own military ventures, and these are rightfully suspect.

President Obama has used his massive credibility with liberals to persuade a section of them to support his war. Before his speech, a majority of Americans opposed the war (please remember that in case anyone tries to tell you "Americans are intrinsically militarists"). Over 54 percent opposed the war until a supposedly progressive president made an unequivocal intellectual and policy commitment to pursuing it, and then his majority was only possible because of the many conservatives and Christian fundamentalists who have always been soft on violence against others. Now the *New York Times* has come around, largely on the basis of seeing how his Nobel Prize acceptance speech insisted that even while engaging the war against "a vicious adversary that abides by no rules," Obama claimed that the United States must remain



Palestinian kids in Rafah would be among those who would benefit from a Global Marshall Plan that begins with the Middle East—a better alternative than militarism as a strategy to beat terrorism.

"a standard-bearer in the conduct of war." This is a stretch, at best, seeing as the Obama administration has allowed "extraordinary rendition" of suspected enemy combatants, has failed to prosecute the CIA employees who allowed Blackwater thugs to murder Iraqis alongside the military, and has authorized the drones that have killed large families and civilian gatherings.

What the United States Should Do

THE UNITED STATES SHOULD TURN TO THE UN AND SEEK AN international force with the mission of a) holding an honest election in which the Taliban would be invited to participate; b) protecting institutions of civil society; and c) creating safety in the major cities of Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the United States should lend support to regional negotiations and to a broader settlement of the disputes between India and Pakistan, which continue to stoke the violence in Afghanistan. Most important, the U.S. government should launch a Global Marshall Plan with its first focus on the Middle East (from Gaza through Afghanistan), including massive humanitarian aid to the desperately poor Afghan population. The ability to deliver such aid would be enhanced if it were not perceived as intermingled with military occupation by the United States.

At the core of our approach is a recognition that "the enemy" is often a projection of our own worst fantasies on others, who in turn are projecting their worst fantasies on us. American leaders, like most political leaders on the planet, seem incapable of imagining how the world looks from the perspective of the hungry, the relatively powerless, or those who have been subjected to outsiders trying to impose their regimes, economic systems, and world-views. Obama has failed to learn the lessons of Vietnam: one cannot win a war against a population that has been fighting for many decades for its own independence. No matter what America's stated war aims, the people of Afghanistan perceive the American military presence as generating far more violence and destruction than they faced before the United States got involved. As Senator Russ Feingold put it, "I think (our presence) is increasing the extremism and increasing the resentment toward the United States."

Indeed, what Feingold predicts has already happened. According to a letter from a recent visitor to Afghanistan:

After eight years of misguided bombing raids to kill Taliban who are living in villages surrounded by civilians, we have created a new multi-headed enemy. Today the Taliban are different from the original fundamentalists who waged a war in the name of Islam. According to the director of the Peace and Reconciliation process in Kabul only about 10 percent to 15 percent of Taliban are ideologically motivated today. The rest are a combination of poor villagers angry at U.S. bombing, out of work youth, former militia, drug smugglers, plain thugs, and those from the countryside who distrust any national government, no matter whose it is.

Most of these people, observers in Kabul believe, would put down their weapons if offered money, land, jobs, and personal security.



Supporters of a Peace Committee chant slogans against U.S. drone missile strikes on Pakistani tribal areas, at a rally in Peshawar on April 27, 2009. Pakistan has called the drone strikes, which kill innocent civilians, a violation of the country's sovereignty. President Obama supports the drone attacks, and his administration has announced plans to expand them in Pakistan and Afghanistan, ensuring the murder of increased numbers of civilians, and increased resistance to the U.S. presence.

A statement from the Campaign for Peace and Democracy that dozens of peace activists and I signed in October 2009 pointed out that U.S. actions in Afghanistan and Pakistan must be viewed in the context of a global military system much more massive and far-flung than most Americans realize. Officially, over 190,000 troops and 115,000 civilian employees are stationed in approximately 900 military facilities in forty-six countries and territories—and the actual numbers are far greater. In the words of Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, U.S. military spending of more than \$600 billion a year “adds up to about what the entire rest of the world combined spends on defense.”

So it is not unreasonable to notice that the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan have been part of a comprehensive effort to assert U.S. strategic power and credibility, in the Central and South Asian region and globally—the power to control energy supplies, to overawe rivals, to intervene wherever Washington deems necessary, and to engage other countries in U.S. power projection. Since 2001, the United States has established nineteen bases in Afghanistan and neighboring countries, inserting a military presence into an area that Russia and China also seek to influence.

Women's Rights in Afghanistan

THE ARGUMENT THAT THE UNITED STATES MUST STAY INVOLVED in Afghanistan to protect women from oppressive variants of Islamic fundamentalism is compelling but ultimately not persuasive: women's situation under the Karzai regime remains horrific. President Karzai signed a disgraceful law earlier this year applying to Shia women that gives a husband the right to withdraw basic maintenance from his wife, including food, if she refuses to obey his sexual demands. It grants guardianship of children exclusively to their fathers and grandfathers, and requires women to get permission from their husbands to work. If the Karzai government in Afghanistan, bolstered by the Obama war, manages to stay in power, women will continue to face massive denial of human

rights, though better than the situation they would face if the Taliban win.

My comrade Arthur Waskow suggested—partly tongue-in-cheek, but partly to encourage thinking outside the box—that we call a conference of the independent women's organizations in Afghanistan. Organizers could offer micro-loans for grassroots economic development to any ten women who apply as a group (loans ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000). And they could offer ten revolvers and 1,000 bullets to each group of women: one gun and fifty bullets for each woman for target practice, and fifty bullets for defense against anyone who comes to assail them for being uppity. If any women's group chooses not to receive the guns but to take their chances on nonviolence, their micro-loan doubles. Then the United States leaves—generals, predators, drones, and all—except for continuing contact with the micro-loan organizations.

A similar plan has been suggested for all of Afghanistan—to offer massive financial aid to those Taliban who put down their guns and join a peaceful effort to stabilize the country. It would be far cheaper than the kind of open-ended commitment the Obama administration is making to Afghanistan. I would welcome an international intervention, sans NATO, with the sole aim of providing protection for the women of Afghanistan.

A Better Strategy for Homeland Security

ONE REASON WHY MANY SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS ACTIVISTS celebrated the outcome of the 2008 election was the perception fostered by the Obama campaign that the new president really understood that militarism and the use of force to achieve American objectives should be relegated to the dustbin of history, at least until every nonviolent strategy has been exhaustively tried. Indeed, in his private meeting with me in 2006, Obama explicitly embraced the *Tikkun*/NSP perspective that a strategy of generosity would necessarily be more effective than a strategy of domination.

The *Tikkun*/NSP strategy was given teeth by the vice chair of

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the Progressive Caucus of the House of Representatives, Keith Ellison, who has worked with us to develop a Domestic and Global Marshall Plan (DGMP). Under this plan, the United States would lead the advanced industrial societies of the world in committing between 1 percent and 2 percent of its Gross Domestic Product each year for the next twenty to end global poverty, homelessness, hunger, inadequate education, and inadequate health care, and to repair the global environment. This strategy for "homeland security" would be far more effective than the futile strategy of domination against countries that might at some future time pose a threat to the United States.

Now that Obama has decided to escalate the war in Afghanistan, many of Obama's most fervent supporters—including the many religious and spiritual progressives who believed he would turn our foreign policy away from militarism and toward creating a more caring world economic system—are expressing dismay to each other. Spiritual progressives have long known what Obama seems not yet to have absorbed in a serious way: that **the path to peace must be a path of peace**, and that you cannot bomb and kill your way to security. Obama's escalation of the war in Afghanistan has left us feeling bleak and betrayed.

The "American Depressions" portrayed on the cover of this issue of *Tikkun* are not only about the over 10 percent of the population unable to find work. They involve a psychic and spiritual depression. Having allowed ourselves to hope that the Obama administration would unequivocally commit to a new worldview, masses of Americans who supported Obama are now filled with confusion and despair.

We spiritual progressives should not allow ourselves to succumb to this depression. We must continue to help Americans (including our political leaders) to recognize "the other" as fundamentally another part of ourselves. We are one human race. The illusions of our fundamental differences that supposedly justify us in war making must be overcome. We face a major challenge in saving our planet from the consequences of our own destructiveness. War is not the way to achieve the new consciousness that is needed to save the human race, so every possible non-violent means must be used to avoid war before it has started, and to stop it now that it is being escalated. But as Congressman Keith Ellison points out in an interview in this issue of *Tikkun*, this is not a time to give in to despair. King didn't, Gandhi didn't, and we must not either.

We know full well that the military-industrial complex and the forces on Wall Street and in the media are certain to ridicule such efforts and to repress those who take them seriously. We continue to believe that deep inside Obama would like to be part of a different kind of world, but advisers have convinced him that a military path is the only "realistic one." Our task remains to provide concrete alternative ways of thinking and policy development. That's why it is so important that you come to join us at our conferences (February 15 for one day in San Francisco, and June 11-14 in Washington, D.C. For more info, visit www.tikkun.org/conference). We will continue to be a bastion of hope and a visionary advocate about how to achieve safety and security for all the people of the world and for our endangered planet. ■

Interview with Keith Ellison

IN LATE NOVEMBER, *TIKKUN* INTERVIEWED REP. KEITH ELLISON, D-Minnesota, vice chair of the Progressive Caucus of the House of Representatives, and sponsor of the Global Marshall Plan in coordination with the Network of Spiritual Progressives (NSP). Read on to hear his thoughts on President Obama, health care reform, the war in Afghanistan, Blue Dog Democrats, and the Goldstone report.

Michael Lerner: What is your assessment of what the progressive caucus has accomplished in the past year under the presidency of someone who was perceived as a progressive president?

Keith Ellison: I think the progressive caucus can claim credit for maintaining the importance of the public option in the health care bill passed by the House. Without the caucus demanding that there be a public option, I am certain that there are at least three or four times in the past six months when it would have been jettisoned. Now it is not as robust as we would like. But it is there, and it is something to build on. The caucus is also adding clarity to the right position on Afghanistan. It understands that the president is being pulled from multiple sides and that if we want the president to be able to live out his progressive instincts, then we will have to be a force for progressive social change and not simply assume that he is going to take care of everything.

ML: I know the media doesn't necessarily give us any accurate perspective on what is going on in Washington, but from the outside it appears that the Blue Dog Democrats have been far more effective, because they have threatened not to go along with any part of the president's program, unless he compromises with them. It appears as though the progressive caucus and more generally the liberals in congress have given up many of the central parts of their programs for fear that they would be blamed for destroying the possibility of anything getting through. As a result of that dynamic, the Blue Dogs appear to have had a great deal more impact in shaping legislation than the progressives.

KE: I don't think that is an accurate way to look at it. When you look at what the progressives have achieved, well, we have a public option in the health care bill, and we expect to have one all the way through. What did the Blue Dogs achieve? They tried to keep the cost of health care lower than it needed to be. They may well have weakened the bill, actually. But at the end of the day, I think we achieved our goals thus far. It is important to understand that the progressives are swimming against the interests of the health care industry. The Republicans took themselves out of the conversation. Therefore, the industry's voice is the Blue Dogs, and they have a louder megaphone than we do. But the reality is, we have still

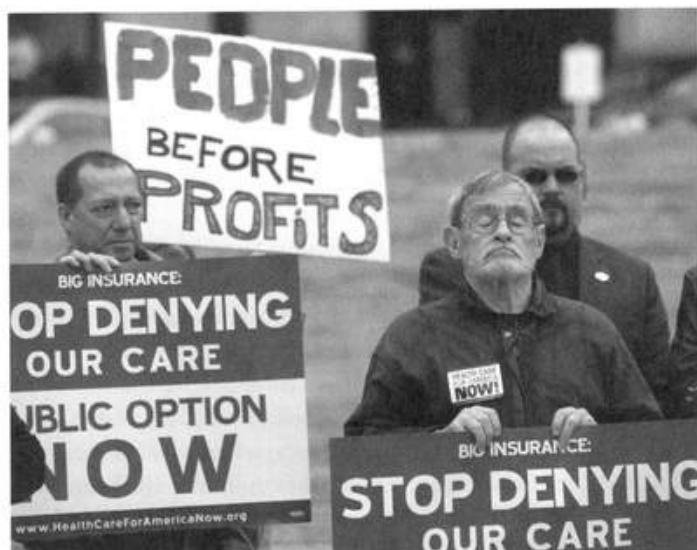
achieved our goal of maintaining a public option, and putting ample money in to address health disparities regarding people of color. We have been able to make sure that health care reforms regarding nondiscrimination—not dropping people for a pre-existing condition—are still in the bill.

The Blue Dogs, I think, have gotten a lot of help from the media, who seem to want to create sensation and controversy, but I think that the progressives have done a significant and important job moving health care along in an effective way.

ML: The perception that has come out through part of the progressive media is that the variant of the bill that would have been effective would have allowed anyone to sign up for the public option if they so chose and to give up their own private plan if they so chose. Such a public option might have attracted up to 100 million people, and that would then put tremendous economic pressure on the health industry to reduce its prices. The actual public option that has come through, some health care advocates maintain, is not likely to be available to more than two to five million people, and at that size it will be insignificant, because it will not affect the pricing for the rest of the insurance industry. So, by this argument, the bill likely to get passed will be a huge giveaway to the insurance companies since it will require tens of millions of Americans to get health insurance or face penalties, but it will not in any way demand that the insurance companies lower their prices (or prohibit them from raising their prices again and again).

KE: Well, I think that estimate of the number of people eligible for the public option is too low. I think it is significantly higher than two to five million. But I will agree that it is lower than we wanted it to be. But let me also say this. When Social Security first became law, it did not encompass the number of people it does today—the same with Medicare. What I am talking about is to shift the paradigm of health care in our country, so we can add onto and expand rights for people as time goes forward. Now, no one likes incremental politics, I certainly don't. I wish we had single-payer health care. But I do think the public option will be effective at lowering prices, increasing access, and increasing competition with private insurance. That is why [insurance companies] are fighting against it and trying to stop any public option from existing at all. And I think at the end of the day we will have a public option that will be significantly larger than five million people.

What I would say to people who are progressive in the area of health care is, "Don't be cynical, keep on fighting, keep on pushing for greater access and greater availability and eligibility, and I think we will end up there." I remind people that we all celebrate the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act, and we are right to do so, but we forget the 1957 and 1960 Civil Rights Acts, neither of which were good enough to bring forth real democracy in our country. But because people were not cynical and kept on fighting—and expanding and opening up rights for people—we ended up in a country where yes, we have societal racism, but we do have equality before the law. And we do have remedies when people's rights are violated. And we have a much, much more open and fair country than we did in the past, and perhaps much more open and fair than any other country in the world.



Ellison does not believe that watered-down health care legislation will sap the energy of activists, such as these at the Pennsylvania State Capitol in October 2009: the insurance companies will continue to gouge us and we will continue to fight back.

So we can't simply throw our hands up because everything is not as we would want it to be right now. I am committed to continuing the fight for greater healthcare access and healthcare reform. I look forward to the day when we'll see universal single-payer healthcare. But I understand that things sometimes go in steps and this is one of the things we just have to bear in mind.

ML: One of the arguments that I heard made by professor John Geyman, who is a professor of medicine at the University of Washington, is that there is reason to think that the country will say to itself, "We achieved what we needed to achieve and therefore we have done the health care thing and we will let the insurance companies continue to raise their prices." And if that happens, the public will be inspired by the counter-ideology of the Republicans that says, "See, each time governments get involved, you don't get very much in the way of benefits, but the prices continue to rise in part because of the intervention of government." So that the net outcome of this will be a reduction in trust in government rather than an increase in trust in government.

KE: The only way that argument holds is if people like the professor you cited—and all the rest of us—just cave in. As long as we continue to fight for fairness and justice in health care, then we won't fall victim to that. Look, what's more persuasive than an increase in your premium every month to tell you that you need a different way forward in terms of health care? What is more persuasive than your paycheck dwindling because of increased prices for drugs and for co-pays and everything else? I don't see this movement dwindling, I see it gaining strength. I think people now can see that within one year of electing a Democratic president we are able to make significant strides in health care. And if we keep the fight up, how much further along can we get? I think we can count on the health care insurance industry to continue to gouge people, and that alone will propel people to greater reform. So I don't agree with the professor's argument.

ML: Got it. So, now let's go to another area of concern for progressives. President Obama won the Democratic nomination

in large part by contrasting himself with Hillary Clinton and her attempt to project herself as a representative of the more militarist consciousness. Yet, once elected, the president has not articulated a significant alternative to the worldview of domination. Certainly he has not embraced the themes that you and I both endorse of a path to homeland security based on generosity, of which the Global Marshall Plan is an example. And those concerns have reached new heights with the decision of the president to escalate by tens of thousands the number of troops in Afghanistan. Can you comment on what the president is doing in that regard and what strategy the progressives in congress could pursue in response?

KE: I am extremely concerned about troop escalations in Afghanistan and also very concerned about how it will impact Pakistan. I think the only real way to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan is to help promote strength in civil society and that is not a matter of guns and bombs, it is a matter of partnering with Afghan leaders and citizens to help rebuild the country after thirty years of war. That's classroom instruction, that's court rule of law, that's things that actually increase their quality of life. That's fair elections, things like that. The real concern that I have is that we view the military option as the only option, without really understanding that it actually contributes to greater instability when we try to impose stability at the barrel of a gun.

I think the proper way forward is for us to work in partnership, with the Afghans in the lead, because it is their country, and with the world community to help bolster and strengthen civil society there. Troop escalations—particularly when we have seen the Karzai government participate in mass corruption that has shrunk the confidence of the Afghan people—are a particularly dangerous thing to do. In fact, I was in Afghanistan in November and spoke with many civil society leaders who want confidence in their elections, instruction in schools. They want water, and to be able to sell pomegranates and persimmons to other people around the world as well as to other Afghans. That is what I think we need to put our energy into, and that is what will work.

ML: Yes, but then isn't the president misguided?

KE: I think the president is caught up in the momentum that was already rolling when he came into office. Unfortunately the president, who had the right position on Iraq, in order to prove that he was tough, said Afghanistan was the "right" war for us to participate in. He fell into the trap of having to support that conflict and got caught up in the momentum of it. This is an important time in his presidency for him to pull back and reflect on what will work to stabilize that country and to get foreign troops out of Afghanistan. And when I say get foreign troops out of Afghanistan I don't mean the international community abandoning Afghanistan, I actually mean quite the opposite. To the degree that Afghans want international support—and I think they do—it should be civilian support. It shouldn't be military and at the same time I am not a proponent of precipitous withdrawal, but for expansion of civil and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. So I think the president is caught up in the momentum of the Bush administration and is struggling to find his own footing in this conflict. And I think he would be well advised to listen to Karl Eikenberry, who I think has a much clearer perspective on what is



Ellison voted against suppressing the Goldstone report. He says Israel only becomes stronger when it assists investigation of its own abuses. Here with Rep. Brian Baird, D-Wash., Ellison (left) photographs the rubble of the American International school in Beit Lahiya, Gaza, on February 19, 2009.

going on in Afghanistan than a lot of his other advisers.

ML: So do you understand those in the progressive world who feel that Obama ran on a ticket of change rather than being "caught up in momentum," and how they now feel deeply discouraged?

KE: I advise people to not be discouraged. Let's be realistic here. The president is being pulled on at multiple angles, including by people from the military who see the solution to every problem as military. The president needs help and guidance in this situation and we should be making the calls for a progressive policy in foreign affairs and specifically in Afghanistan. We should be helping to light the way for the president and offer him an alternative he can follow instead of attacking and berating him because he is following the advice of people in his administration. Let's take responsibility for helping the president find the right answer. That means writing, that means speaking out, that means having rallies, that means making our voice heard and articulating a coherent point of view. And the whole discouraged thing, I don't buy it. Was King discouraged about civil rights because some days were tough? I hope not. Maybe he was, but he never let it get him for long. People have to keep on pushing for the right thing, which is generosity and inclusion.

ML: We at *Tikkun* have maintained that because Obama failed to project a vision of a clear alternative to the thought-patterns of the Right—on the issue of militarism and of subordination of economic policy to the needs of Wall Street—many people who are described as centrist who had hoped for a significant change have now lost their enthusiasm for the president and are either not going to be voting in 2010 or are going to be open to right-wing arguments in 2010 because they have seen that they were promised a significant change and they didn't get it.

KE: What I say to those people is "eight years of Bush politics and one year of Obama politics. Give me a break here, if you are getting ready to jump off ship this quickly, you really have to look



Ellison agrees that Obama (above with White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel) did not appoint any significant progressives to his inner circle. The solution, he says, is not to tear Obama down but to build the unity, cohesion, and focus of the progressive movement.

back and ask yourself if you fully grasp the historic magnitude of the task in front of Obama. We have had rapacious economic policy for eight years, tax cuts for the wealthy, runaway abuse of economic policies on the middle class and poor. For the last eight years, militarism was lifted to unknown heights. And after one year, we are jumping off the boat?" And I think that the progressive community needs to take responsibility for guiding the president on these things. You can believe that the people who believe in militaristic solutions to these things are offering their alternatives to the president. The progressive community needs to do the same thing.

ML: Just to be fair to the progressive community, the president was totally free to appoint whoever he wanted to surround him, and he did not appoint any significant progressives to his inner circle, and almost none to the cabinet. So that he is getting a certain kind of advice is his choice, and this was a shock to many progressives. Then when he brings in someone like Van Jones on the periphery of the administration, and Jones gets attacked by the Right, he doesn't do a thing to stand up for Jones and lets Jones get pushed out of the administration.

KE: All fair criticisms. And I actually have to agree with your point there. Let me just be clear, I am not here arguing that Obama has not made mistakes. What I am saying is that I believe in the progressive movement and I believe in the movement that says that generosity, inclusion, peace, environmental sustainability, civil rights, and human rights are going to prevail. That is actually an article of faith for me. And I have felt that Obama is a product of that movement and not a cause of it. So in my opinion, Obama has made those mistakes in terms of appointments, and it is unfortunate. But at the same time we have to remember that we are much better situated to make progressive social change than if McCain had won, so let's take advantage of the moment we have and push

the president as far as we can. And do it in a relentless way. The progressive movement made Nixon sign the EPA legislation! With Obama, what could we do? The fact is the sky's the limit, but if we take our eye off the ball and think Obama is the problem, we miss a historic opportunity. The problem is apathy, the problem is that we have not organized the majority of people and convinced them we are right about the politics of generosity. That is what I am saying. The progressive movement made an Obama presidency possible and the progressive movement needs to keep it in mind that the policies we want Obama to promote are still possible: it all depends on our level of unity, cohesion, and focus.

ML: Of course, that is why we are sponsoring a conference to support Obama to be the Obama we voted for.

KE: I love that—that is exactly what we should be doing. That's what I am trying to say. We need more conferences like that ... and I intend to participate in that NSP/Tikkun conference. And it is exactly what I mean when I say that the movement pushes Obama; Obama doesn't push the movement.

ML: How are we to understand President Obama's decision to prioritize pouring hundreds of billions of dollars into the banks and not pouring anything comparable into dealing with unemployment?

KE: We are talking about a major jobs bill at this point. And the stimulus bill was focused on job creation. The problem is that in order to advance this stimulus bill he had to make some concessions to some "liberal" Republicans. That really undermined the effectiveness of the stimulus package—we ended up putting a fix for the alternative minimum tax in there. And it is also very clear that the economic tools that have the greatest cumulative effect are things like investment in infrastructure and even things like investment in food stamps, because these things feed right into the economy. But instead, these things were not placed as highly in the stimulus bill as they should have been or got cut out. So the fact is that the stimulus bill, even as expensive as it was, was not enough and was not targeted enough to stimulate the economy in order to really deal with the issue of jobs. And here we are at 10.2 percent unemployment. If you look at black men between sixteen and thirty, unemployment is above 34 percent, which is incredible.

Obama is being led by people whom he trusts but who are not looking at the well-being of the average working person but are more focused on the needs of the large interests on Wall Street. So we have to continue to push and advocate policies that are going to do something that will actually help working people. I am happy that we are about to pass a bill about a consumer protection agency (an idea by Elizabeth Warren). We passed the bill through the financial services committee of the house, so the idea is moving forward. And I expect something similar from the Senate. So there is a whole series of financial regulations moving forward now that will be in the public interest rather than in the interests of Wall Street.

Let me just say it again, this whole thing from back in September 15, 2008, really caught nearly every member of Congress by surprise. We were told on a Friday that the economy was going to crash unless we passed a bailout bill of \$800 billion. It was on the house floor that Monday. It failed, if you recall. The largest drop in the Dow Industrial Average in history took place on that same day,

and on the following Friday we ended up passing the bill with a few extras in it, like money for the IMF. So Obama did push this policy, but the truth is that the enormous bailout bill was passed on Bush's watch, not Obama's. And it happened so fast and the scare tactics were so intense and the ability to actually digest what was really going on in the economy was so little, that we ended up passing this enormous bailout bill. That was the reality of that scenario. Obama has been in office for the last ten months, and in that time, we have been moving legislation forward to try to correct that shift, but it is still very much in flux. I am on the financial services committee, and I think we will see real change in the financial regulatory system, but it has yet to be concluded at this point.

ML: Do you have any speculation as to why Obama did not make reform a condition to pouring hundreds of billions of dollars into the banks?

KE: Well, I can tell you that he wasn't the president at the time the bailout was passed. But I can tell you that ... the bill started out as a four-page bill, and it ended up as a 105-page bill with what we believed were safeguards for the public money. And still we end up with banks that received TARP funds not lending to smaller banks, and small community banks not able to receive TARP funds. Still we end up with massive bonuses for Wall Streeters who helped ruin the economy. It is a difficult set of circumstances. But what I say is we just have to dig in, get our perspective clear, and push forward in the public interest.

ML: The Congress recently passed a bill to oppose the Goldstone report that presented a *prima facie* case that both Israel and Hamas had engaged in human rights violations in the Operation Cast Lead war in Gaza. That happened after the Obama White House issued a statement saying that the Goldstone report was significantly flawed, even though it did not point out any flaws. You voted on the other side of that issue, and maybe you could tell us why.

KE: The reason I voted on the other side of the issue is because the Goldstone report really is a compilation of information that Goldstone acquired while talking with people in Gaza, and also there are twenty-six pages devoted to the war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Hamas. It is not really a judicial document. So obviously any person could probably pick it apart and find that it was not completely accurate. But to me the issue was not whether the Goldstone report was a perfect report, the issue was did it raise issues that any free democratic society should look into? And I thought it did those things.

In my opinion, Justice Richard Goldstone is a highly qualified individual—he is a well-intentioned individual. The mere fact that someone could parse that report, all 574 pages of it, and find something that is inconsistent to argue with is really irrelevant. The real issue is, should the U.S. Congress be in the business of suppressing inquiry? Should we be in the business of even taking a look at what the possible problems could have been with Operation Cast Lead and with the rocketing of innocent civilians in southern Israel? That was my problem.

Unfortunately, the issue around Goldstone has devolved into: "Do you completely agree or disagree with Goldstone? If you completely agree, maybe you aren't a friend of Israel, and if you completely disagree, than maybe you are." And I think that is just a

false choice.

In the past Israel was willing to investigate charges of human rights abuses, and doing so didn't harm Israeli society—in fact, it strengthened it. It lent greater credibility to Israel as a military power when it was willing to say that Ariel Sharon was at least indirectly responsible for the Falangist massacre of several hundred civilians in the Sabra and Shatila Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, and that the murder of those Palestinians was foreseeable. It didn't make Israel a weaker country, it made it a stronger country. It is something that the terrorists trying to destroy Israel would never do. You are not going to see any inquiries being done by Hamas, I don't think. The fact is that free democratic societies have the power to look at themselves, and they must and they should. I have enough confidence in Israel to do that, and the people who voted to suppress the Goldstone report may not agree that they lack confidence in Israeli society, but I think that they are, because they are trying to say that Israel can't withstand scrutiny, and I think that Israel can. In my opinion, it didn't make sense to try to pass a resolution suppressing the Goldstone report.

ML: Do you find that you are under special scrutiny or critique from the Jewish world, or the part of the Jewish world that believes that Israel's policies must be supported blindly regardless of their moral values, simply because any criticism of Israel is illegitimate? Do you find yourself under greater scrutiny from that section of the Jewish world because you are a Muslim?

KE: No, I don't see it that way. The Jewish community in my district in Minneapolis and I have an excellent relationship. We talk all the time. We usually agree on everything. Sometimes there are some things with certain individuals that I don't agree on, and we have a frank, open dialogue. I don't feel like I am being picked on or like a victim, or anything like that.

ML: Good. So, you are aware that the *Jerusalem Post* printed an article by Daniel Pipes identifying you and Tariq Ramadan as intellectual challengers to American values who are even more significant than the physical attack from terrorists. And I wonder if you have any response to that, or what you thought of that?

KE: I think that it is a paranoid and conspiratorial point of view and that it is absolutely devoid of any factual support. And that it should not be considered a serious observation.

Here is the thing: I believe in democracy. I believe conflict in society should be resolved through election. I believe in the rights of women and minorities. I believe in equality in front of the law for all people. These are not the views of an extremist. I believe in religious tolerance. I support interfaith dialogue everywhere. I support Israel. I support the Palestinian people and I support their aspiration for a state. I support Israel's aspiration to live in peace and security but side-by-side with that state. So Daniel Pipes's point of view is simply not accurate. I make no personal ad hominem attacks against Mr. Pipes—I don't know Mr. Pipes—and I am sure he has reasons for thinking what he thinks; I am not suggesting they are legitimate reasons, I am sure they are not. But I am sure he has justification for his thoughts. I wouldn't mind talking to the man one day because anybody so seriously incorrect really needs some time and attention with people who can help him develop a greater level of understanding. That is all I have to say about that. ■

AMERICAN DEPRESSIONS

by Harriet Fraad

AN UNNATURAL ECONOMIC AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DISASTER HAS STRUCK AMERICA. FIVE contributors, each interacting with and shaping the others, have devastated the American moral, economic, psychological, and social landscape. Each is fed by related streams, but each contributes its own force to the disaster. The American dream in which each generation surpassed the previous generation in real wages has all but disappeared, along with dreams of an intact family, a steady job, a home, and an honest supportive community.

This article looks at each of five collaborators in the crisis in order to answer the following questions: How did this happen? What forces are responsible?

Why are Americans passive as millions lose their homes, their jobs, their families, their hopes of justice, and the American dream?

Why do Americans remain disorganized at home while their European and Asian counterparts flood into the streets and strike in militant, organized protest? Why do others believe in their potential to reclaim their lives while we do not?

What happened is a result of at least five major, interrelated forces. One is a transformation of American morality, and with it the loss of belief that the social and political realms could be shaped by morality, ethics, and secular spirituality. Another is an economic depression. A third is a transformation of the family, which has been the foundation of American emotional life. A fourth is the decimation of Americans' social participation in all areas, from bridge clubs and PTAs to political parties. A fifth is the tranquilizing and numbing of the American population with psychotropic medications.

I. The Crisis in Morality and Social Ethics

LET US BEGIN WITH THE FIRST OF OUR CONTRIBUTORS: AMERICAN ETHICS, MORALITY, AND SPIRITUALITY. The same forces that decimated our economic, psychological, and social landscapes have transformed our sense of morality and social ethics. The shared dream of an ethical, moral society that dominated the United States until the 1970s has systematically eroded. In the 1960s it was common to believe that morality and spirituality include a concern for all human beings, rich and poor alike. The biggest push against those social ethics began with Reagan's presidency in 1981. It continued in Reagan's second term and was reinforced by each president until its (we hope) final act in the presidency of George W. Bush.

Reagan's basic ideology was that people are poor because they lack incentives. He claimed that poor people's noble drive to get rich is eroded by social programs that permit them to survive or, in his term, "freeload." In this framework, income tax cuts increase the incentive to work and get rich, so all are expected to benefit from them. In 1980 the highest incomes were taxed at 73 percent. In 2009 those same high incomes were taxed at half that rate, 35 percent. Of course the percentage of tax on the highest incomes is actually even lower, since the wealthiest Americans can hire tax accountants to help them evade taxes. Reagan used his famous veto power to cut a huge range of social programs from biomedical



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Top: New Jersey Governor Thomas Kean (left) and U.S. President Ronald Reagan celebrate their opposition to taxes with an oversized replica of a defaced income tax form in 1985.

Below: Malachi Harris, one of Boston's homeless, camps out in a vacant lot in 1987. Boston Mayor Raymond Flynn blamed the sharp rise in hunger and homelessness in 1987 on Reagan's policies.

The United States went from being the most egalitarian western industrialized society in 1970 to the least egalitarian in 2009.

research, to social security for disabled Americans, to clean water, to expanded Head Start. At the same time, he increased the military budget while decrying big government.

That pattern has been repeated ever since, which is how, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the United States went from being the most egalitarian western industrialized society in 1970 to the least egalitarian in 2009.

In addition, the Soviet model of socialism failed. It did not provide the kind and ethical societies that are part of a socialist vision. The mass of people believed that the Soviet Union was communism. Left-wing class analyses of the failure of Soviet Communism, such as Bettelheim's in the late 1970s or Resnick and Wolff's in 2002, were not widely read or embraced. Both of those analyses demonstrate that the USSR and its satellites exemplified class societies in which a bureaucratic class appropriated wealth and made crucial decisions affecting the lives of the mass of people. They explain that the USSR failed because it was not a communist society. It was not a society in which the people in each workplace decided what to produce, and also collected their own profits and decided together how to distribute those profits. Because these left-wing class interpretations were few and largely unembraced, a socialist or communist dream seemed doomed to end in rigid, bureaucratic, and undemocratic societies that were rejected by their own people. People lost faith in a secular dream.

Slowly there has been a transformation of our morality and ethics. Where our morality once required the United States to embody our ethics in the world and empower all citizens, it has shifted so that our morality now consists of requiring conservative personal and sexual behavior. Within that morality Clinton committed an impeachable crime by lying about having sex with an intern, while Bush and Cheney did not commit impeachable crimes by lying about the threat from Iraq and thus causing the deaths of over four thousand U.S. soldiers and hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians, or by torturing prisoners. It is not considered immoral to spend between six billion and twelve billion dollars a week on the war in Iraq while cutting school and social programs for needy families because "there is not enough money." The secular morality that made America a proudly democratic and egalitarian nation has deteriorated. We are experiencing a national moral, ethical, and spiritual crisis.

2. The Dying of the Economic Dream

A SECOND CONTRIBUTOR TO AMERICAN PASSIVITY IS THE ECONOMIC CRISIS FROM WHICH we are suffering. Let us look at our history in order to understand what happened. From 1820–1970, the United States experienced a unique period of ever-increasing prosperity. For 150 years, U.S. salaries rose together with ever-increasing worker productivity. For 150 years, each generation was able to afford a better standard of living than the generation that preceded it. That was the American dream.

Unlike their European counterparts, Americans did not enjoy working-class solidarity with other workers whose families and social organizations, unions and political parties were inflected by a history of overt class struggle fought as proudly permanent members of the working class. Europeans organized their working unions along political lines. They fought for better conditions as part of the ideology of long-term communist and socialist struggles for ownership and control of their workplaces.

The U.S. labor movement is not informed by a struggle for worker ownership of the businesses that produce U.S. goods and services. Decisions about what to produce and the right to appropriate and distribute profits are left to corporate boards of directors. Americans accepted the capitalist system in which each generation had relatively prospered. American labor fought for an increasing amount of income that would permit workers to consume more goods and services, a system in which each generation could move to jobs considered more prestigious and lucrative within the capitalist hierarchy. Blue-collar workers' children could become white-collar, and white-collar children could become professionals in the next generation (particularly if they were not just white-collar but white, period). U.S. growth permitted ever-increasing real wages and possibilities for consumption. Even in the Great Depression from 1929–1939, real wages, the amount that one could buy with one's wages, were able to rise because prices fell even faster than wages.

That ever-increasing prosperity stopped in 1970. By 1970 the introduction of computers, better telecommunications, and more efficient transportation enabled jobs to be outsourced to lower-paid workers overseas. Competing factories in Europe and Japan, which had been decimated by World War II, were now vying for U.S. markets. Then China emerged as a manufacturing giant. Competition reduced the U.S. share of both domestic and global markets. The outsourcing of American jobs to cheaper labor markets was not stopped by militant unions, which were unable to achieve the powerful "runaway shop" laws that were won in other nations. Nor did militant unions force the creation of a tight safety net to catch workers in financial distress.

For a long time, there was a relative scarcity of white male workers available for the jobs reserved for white males in America's racially and sexually segregated job markets. White male workers, who were accustomed to receiving increasing real wages and living a lifestyle of ever-greater consumption, could no longer support their families on their frozen wages. Americans' sense of self worth was in large part dependent on their net worth. They became increasingly depressed. Their sense of personal value was cut with their salaries. This happened as the advertising industry burgeoned. Advertising continuously and relentlessly sells consumption as the path to happiness. Consumption was undermined and with it stability, prosperity, and a sense of personal success.

3. What Produced the Crisis in Personal and Family Life?

ECONOMIC DESPERATION PUSHED MANY MORE WOMEN INTO THE LABOR FORCE TO increase money for the household. Previous to the 1970s, most white, nonimmigrant American women entered the labor force only in times of particular and urgent family need: upon divorce, or if a husband died, was ill, unemployed, or deserted his family. Women's labor outside the home provided some safety in times of emergency. In 1970, 40 percent of U.S. women were in the labor force, mostly part time. By the year 2008, 75 percent of U.S. women were in the labor force, mostly full time. Many women enjoyed the greater autonomy, variation, and creativity that jobs could provide. Many others were forced by economic necessity to work outside of their homes in routinized dead-end jobs with scarce assistance from governmental supports for day care, after-school programs, or elder care.

Women's work outside of the home helped to improve the standard of living for most families, but it did not compensate families for lost white male wages. Women's wage work imposes not only the obvious expenses of additional clothing and transportation, but also the costs of purchasing some of the goods and services that women previously produced at home free of charge, such as cooking, mending, cleaning, shopping, and child care. Those goods and services are crucial. Once they become commodified in the marketplace, they become expensive. The latest figures from Salary.com indicate that if a stay-at-home mother in the United States were replaced by paid domestic products and services, the cost would be \$122,732 a year. The domestic products produced and services rendered by a mom who works outside of the home would cost \$76,184 per year.

Even with women flooding into the labor force, families were still financially hurting. Working women had no time to perform full-time household labor and child care, and there was still not enough money for consumption. More money was accumulating at the top while the mass of Americans suffered from frozen wages. The wealthy then promoted the credit card to lend to Americans the money that they formerly would have earned in growing wages. Families became dependent on credit card debt. Since the interest rate on credit cards ranges from 15 percent to 25 percent, Americans descended into debt at record-breaking levels.

The living standard of Americans deteriorated psychologically as well. In American culture, women provide most of the emotional labor to make home a warm and comfortable place for men and children. It is women who usually arrange children's social lives and activities, from play dates to dental appointments. Women are usually the directors of adult social life as well. Indeed, women are usually in charge of emotional life for the entire family. The more women work outside of the home without social support in the form of child care



In 1970, 40 percent of U.S. women were in the labor force, mostly part time. By 2008, 75 percent of U.S. women were in the labor force, mostly full time. But the unpaid services women had provided their families, from home-cooked meals and child care to emotional care for the whole family, were not adequately replaced: neither men, the government, nor the commercial world did enough.

programs and domestic help, the more stressed, overworked, and emotionally unavailable they become. Overwhelmed women have less energy for the roles of social director and organizer, as well as emotional and physical caregiver. Households are hurting emotionally. When Bush took office in 2000, he cut many of the already hobbled social programs that allowed families to survive. Families are in trouble.

Women are no longer willing to work outside of the home, do the lion's share of the domestic work, and simultaneously take care of their children's and husbands' physical and emotional needs largely unaided either by their husbands or by social programs. For the first time in American history, the majority of women are abandoning marriage. Women now initiate two-thirds of divorces. Half of first marriages and 60 percent of second marriages end in legal separation or divorce. These impressive figures do not include the many people who end their marriages outside of the legal system.

When men's emotional relationships with women break down, they have little intimate emotional support. Women usually count on other women to emotionally sustain them. Women still manage to befriend and support each other on a personal level in a way that few men can. These changes in households and family life are a third tributary to America's deluge of disaster. Americans have lost both the financial dream of ever-increasing prosperity and consumption, and also the emotional family dream of a stable family connected by a present wife creating emotional connection and domestic order. In short, Americans have lost what was the comfort of home.

4. Americans' Increasing Isolation from One Another

A FOURTH DISASTER IS CLOSELY RELATED. THE FREEZE IN U.S. REAL WAGES COINCIDED WITH the beginning of Americans' increasing isolation from one another. Beginning once again in the 1970s, nearly all social connections between Americans declined. The decay in U.S. social life was an almost total phenomenon. It extended from inviting friends to dinner, to joining bridge clubs or bowling leagues, to volunteering for noncontroversial activities such as the PTA or Red Cross blood drives, to participating in more controversial activities such as working for a cause or a political candidate.

There was growth in social participation in evangelical religious groups; gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) groups; internet groups; and self-help groups. However, membership in self-help groups, America's greatest social participation growth area, was outnumbered two to one by drop-outs from bowling leagues alone, according to Robert Putnam's 2000 book, *Bowling Alone*, which I have drawn on for statistics throughout this section.

Several inconclusive theories have emerged as to why Americans have dropped out of U.S. social life and civic life.

Women dropping out of social activities because of working full time outside of the home accounts for only 10 percent of the overall dropout rate.

One might attribute U.S. social desertion to the phenomenon of busyness, but that too is an insufficient explanation. The average American watches four hours of television a day, which would be difficult to manage with an intensely busy schedule. The Internet may seem like a replacement for social interaction, but the Internet isolates people as well as connects them.

Extensive television viewing may be a culprit since more people relate to their television sets than to each other, and the heaviest viewing correlates to the least social participation. But surely this is a symptom as much as a cause of the problems that isolate Americans. I say this because extensive television viewing is reported by the viewers themselves as so unsatisfying that it leaves them "not feeling so good." Their descriptions portray it as an addiction that compels without satisfying. An overwhelming number of viewers watch for the purpose of distraction or entertainment. Television functions as an escape from loneliness, changed gender expectations, and looming economic disaster.

Perhaps the greatest reason is that Americans are psychologically and also physically exhausted. They have fewer vacations and longer workweeks than any of their Western European counterparts. Activity in society, including activity in politics, has become a luxury good for those fortunate few who have extra time and energy. The Left's natural constituency, the

mass of Americans, is exhausted, disillusioned, and in despair. To add to their despair, the tremendous wealth at the top of society has been used to fund right-wing media outlets like Fox News, to name just one example. Right-wing media promote the idea that there is no alternative to the status quo. At the same time, the skewed distribution of wealth allows vast sums to be given to politicians who advance the fortunes of those who pay their way. Immense wealth is invested in weakening the regulations against enormous giving at the top. These developments increase the conviction that ordinary people make no difference in politics. They have no voice. The force of the Left is further weakened.

5. The Drugging of America

THE FIFTH TRIBUTARY THAT HELPED TO CREATE OUR DELUGE OF DISASTER IS BOTH A cause and an effect of America's social breakdown. This is the numbing of Americans with psychotropic drugs. In 2006, Americans, who make up approximately 6 percent of the world's population, consumed 66 percent of the world's supply of antidepressants. In 2002, more than 13 percent of Americans were taking Prozac alone. Prozac is one of thirty available antidepressants. Anti-anxiety drugs, such as Zoloft, are so widely prescribed that in the year 2005, the \$3.1 billion sales of Zoloft exceeded the sales for Tide detergent.

Many of these drugs, which are also called "cosmetic drugs" or "life-enhancing drugs," are diagnosed for loneliness, sadness, life transitions, or concentration on task performance. They have been "normalized" through extensive direct-to-consumer advertising and marketing to doctors who are financially rewarded for recommending them to colleagues. Regulations that once restrained the widespread promotion and sales of these powerful drugs have been relaxed to the point of near nonexistence. The United States is the only Western nation that permits direct-to-consumer drug advertising. We are also the only nation without price controls on drugs. Psychiatric drugs are so ubiquitous that the pharmaceutical industry is the most profitable industry in America, and antidepressants are their most profitable products.

What Can We Do?

THE CURRENT DISASTER DID NOT JUST HAPPEN WITH THE RECENT BURST OF THE stock market and housing bubbles. Americans somewhere knew for a long time that we could not pay our credit card bills or our mortgages. Somewhere, unconsciously, we had to know that disaster was approaching. We responded with denial, withdrawal, depression, and dissociation accomplished with the aid of extensive television viewing and preoccupation with scandals and celebrities.

Each of the five tributaries flowed together to drown the mass of Americans in debt, family dissolution, isolation, and drug-induced apathy. In response to the original questions that inspired this article, we now need to ask another question: what can we do about it? Americans may now be looking for change. They elected a president who promised change. That change has not happened. Where else can we look?

Capitalism needs and breeds consumerism. We are surrounded by advertisements for products. Ubiquitous advertising has a blighting side effect. The presentation of all human connection now carries a price tag for a branded product. Scenes of connection with a group of friends include, for example, Budweiser beer. The devoted mother is washing your clothes with Tide. The sexy woman, whom men want and women want to be, seems to come with the sleek Toyota. Ads appear whenever we turn on our computers or read newspapers or magazines. Product placement is present in almost every film. Television, America's mass entertainment, embraces product placement and explicit advertising directed to all ages. Capitalist consumerism conveys the message that relationships happen with and through products. There are too few scenes of people trying honestly to connect and surmount their real economic, social, and emotional problems through honest discussion and negotiation. We need more images of people who enjoy their connection and work through the difficult times involved in creating close, mutual, nurturing relationships. How do we manage to effect change within this environment? Where are the contradictions that create openings?



TV and Prozac: When are they valuable to us and when do we use them to numb ourselves?



Now is the time to come together around noncommercial values: we can learn from evangelicals (bible study at top) and activists (workshop at the 2007 U.S. Social Forum in Atlanta).

A Time When Noncommercial Values Are Attractive

ONE OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE HAS EMERGED DUE TO THE RECENT CAPITALIST collapse, which has intensified American suffering. People can no longer afford the brand-name products seen on TV. Their economic woes reveal the relentless hustling of now unaffordable consumer products. They try generics, unknown brands, and less consumption, and often find them just as good. This presents us with an opening to question. New, noncommercial values can form.

Since Americans are hooked on the mass media, and the media loves anything new, the Left can create media-attracting new actions. The anarchist group that formed around a book called *The Coming Insurrection* got full media attention when a well-publicized group jumped on stage at Barnes & Noble in New York for a spontaneous reading that began, "Everyone agrees it's about to explode." The action was widely covered for its novelty.

We can look to the four areas that have grown in the current social drought. They are, in order of their growth, self-help groups, internet groups, evangelical church groups, and GLBT groups.

Self-Help Groups

THE LARGEST SELF-HELP GROUPS ARE ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS AND NARCOTICS Anonymous. Alcohol and drugs have proved to be a personal and social disaster for millions of Americans, who cannot function on the job and suffer havoc in their personal lives due to these substances. Huge alcohol and pharmaceutical lobbies push these substances on individuals desperate for relief from their problems. The individual solution of self-medicating with drugs and alcohol—promoted so efficiently by capitalism—failed terribly. In the face of that failure, millions join together in small groups where they share their pain and suffering within a supportive, nonjudgmental collective that operates without salaries, advertisements, or financial charges. These twelve-step groups give the Left a window of possibility. We can add a thirteenth step to their twelve-step programs. We can add a step to organize against big pharmaceutical and liquor advertising, which profits on false promises. The Left desperately needs to address people's despair and give them support. We can learn to incorporate nonjudgmental personal and political support, as well as psychological and political dimensions, to Left groups where both nonjudgmental attitudes and psychological support have been sadly lacking. The Left has tried too hard to focus on being correct and not enough effort on reaching people where they are hurting. We need to listen to people without judgment as they do in twelve-step programs.

The GLBT Movement

WE CAN ALSO STUDY THE CONTRADICTIONS THAT HELPED TO PRODUCE GLBT ORGANIZATIONS. Advertising creates omnipresent images of happiness accessed through products that relate to sexual attractiveness. The sexy woman rides in the man's sleek new car. The virile man drives a big truck and smokes Marlboros. Multibillion-dollar industries such as the diet, cosmetic, and fashion industries promote products to enhance sexual attractiveness. Popular culture celebrates heterosexual coupling and family as ultimate happiness while avoiding mention of collective joys or homosexuality.

The GLBT movement works to include those in their identity group who are excluded from the grand celebration of personal couple happiness built around sexual pairing. The very pressure to channel complex desires into heterosexual coupling helped lead GLBT people to, as a group, articulate collective visions of resistance and envision new possibilities.

Since most families and relationships are breaking down, American people desperately need connection. Organizing creates connection. Collective dreams have a chance to replace the individualistic desires cultivated in capitalist America.

What We Can Learn From Evangelicals' Failures ... and Successes

CONSERVATIVE EVANGELICAL GROUPS CREATE A COLLECTIVE VISION AND CONNECTION while celebrating capitalist success as God's blessing. They provide some of what people

desperately need and the Left ignores, such as strong verbal support for important work in the home and a focus on the hard work of child rearing. Conservative evangelicals manage to accomplish this while sex role stereotyping that labor, as well as opposing every form of non-church-based material support that actually allows families to stay afloat. They typically oppose single-payer health plans, Head Start for all, sex education (unless abstinence-based), family planning, maternity and paternity benefits, minimum wage hikes, etc. In the end they cannot deliver the support that families need. The savior they pray to has not saved them from financial and personal desperation and divorce.

Evangelicalism's reduction of morality to personal morality and particularly sexual morality has an embarrassing side effect. Googling "evangelical scandals" results in 3,729,000 hits in five seconds. Evangelical scandals have resulted in reduced credibility. There is now an opportunity for the wider ethical spiritual morality of the community associated with *Tikkun* and left-leaning evangelicals connected to *Sojourners* who develop their social, economic, personal, and political morality, and who see political activity as an expression of morality taken into the world. We on the Left have an opportunity to champion our own moral, ethical, and spiritual vision to Americans who desperately need both morality and hope for a better world. Evangelical promotion of the centrality of personal connection and family gives the Left an opening to advocate material and psychological support for all kinds of families. The Left urgently needs a family program to address the mass breakdown of U.S. homes and families.

The evangelical groups can, ironically show us what we are missing. The failure of evangelical morality, which excludes social, economic, and political morality, may create an opening for a much-needed left-wing program of social, political, economic, and personal ethics and morality for which many hunger.

Internet Organizing

THERE ARE EXPLICITLY POLITICAL POSSIBILITIES AFFORDED BY THE NET. MOVEON.ORG and other political groups organize and mobilize through the Web. In Iran, members of the opposition evaded censors, communicated with each other, and aroused national and international support through Twitter and Facebook. The Facebook account of Neda Soltani's murder focused Iran and the world on the violent repression of Mousavi's supporters. That possibility exists here.

The four social growth groups springing up in America's desert of political opposition point out possible avenues for a Left that desperately needs direction. Let us return to our original questions:

Why are Americans passive as millions lose their homes, their jobs, their families, and the American dream?

Why do Americans remain at home, disorganized, while their European counterparts flood into the streets in militant, organized protests? How did this happen? What forces are responsible?

We can see that the cycles of capitalism with its relentless need for consumer spending and capital accumulation at the top have devastated America. We can also see that unbridled capitalism has created mass suffering and then turned the rage of those who suffer against all who need governmental assistance and against additional scapegoats such as homosexuals, feminists, liberals, socialists, and immigrants. We can create new roads to reclaim this nation by organizing and activating the mass of Americans who know that the ostensible "recovery" will never return what they have lost. We dared to elect a president who championed change verbally, who campaigned on unity and respect for all, and who preserves the structures that destroyed our lives. En masse, we have turned to self-help groups, evangelists, pharmaceutical drugs, and sexual identity politics, which do not solve the multifaceted crisis in which we are drowning. America needs another way. Perhaps we can provide it? ■

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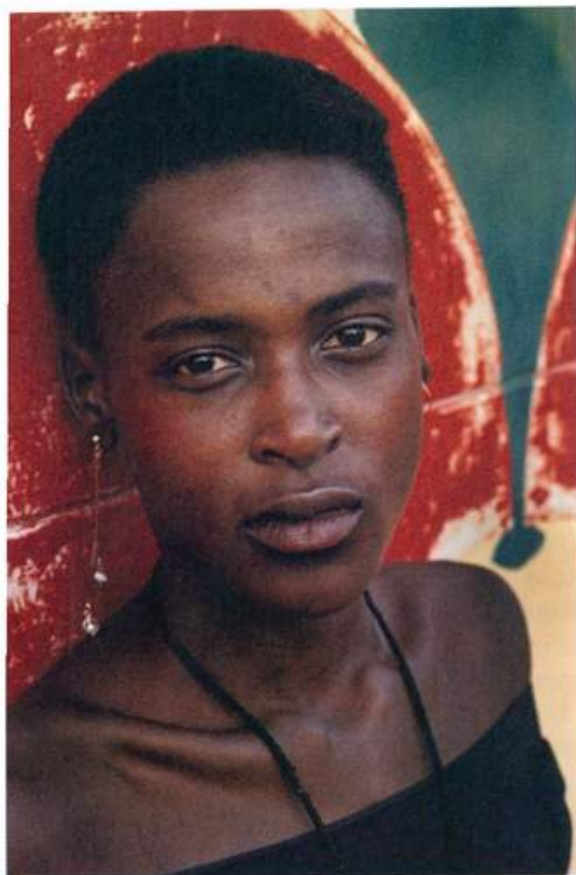
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Robert Bergman

by Peter Gabel



Robert Bergman
Untitled, 1990
Inkjet print, printed 2004
Approx. image size 24" x 16"
Courtesy of the
National Gallery of Art

WHEN WE SAY WE SEEK *TIKKUN OLAM*—TO HEAL THE WORLD—WE implicitly refer to a reservoir of human goodness, a wholeness from which we are alienated and which we call upon each other to restore or even to make manifest in a more complete way for the first time. We don't mean that the world must be fixed, like a fence, but that there is a truth within us as social beings that has become distorted and masked from our own awareness, and yet that can be felt, intuited, and known, and therefore healed from its present fallen state. But to make the case for a *tikkun olam*—to really convince ourselves and one another that this convulsive social healing is possible and is therefore the necessary moral project of our lives—we need decisive reminders that we absolutely do know what we're talking about, that we are referring to something real within and between us that calls upon us to resolve the social illness that separates us and makes us unwell.

The photographic portraits of Robert Bergman—currently on display at the National Gallery in Washington, D.C., at the Museum of Modern Art's P.S.1 art center in Queens, and at the Yossi Milo Gallery on West 25th Street in Manhattan—provide a decisive reminder of this kind. These breathtaking works of art, of which we offer one example on this page, bring us face to face with other human beings. But unlike most face-to-face encounters in which the outsides of two faces are visible to each other from within each viewer's subjective isolation booth, the encounters made possible by Bergman's photos provide sudden moments of the discovery of mutual Presence, in which we are pulled out of our customary withdrawn state, the key symptom of our illness, and into a sacred contact with the humanity of the other behind and through the image of the face itself. I call these works breathtaking because they unfailingly cause an interruption or disturbance of my breathing as I experience the shock, and the relief, of being brought into an experience of mutual recognition with one after another of the human beings Bergman portrays—and I believe they will do the same for anyone

who contemplates them at full size in the gallery. In each case the trappings of a social identity are there that convey a definite impression of a particular life's circumstances—of one or another legacy of suffering and solitude and also of resilience, determination, and effort—but the accumulation of past influences is in every case transcended by an uncanny illumination, a manifestation of the Holy Spirit that conveys a sense of universal vulnerability and at the same time invincible spiritual strength.

The aesthetic of postmodernism is at odds with the spiritual activism of the *Tikkun* community because it celebrates irony, the glancing blow, a "quotation mark" approach to the social world that seeks to evade being trapped in false representations of the self, and in so doing participates in the Fear of the Other that is the source of our problem in the first place. Bergman's art rows mightily in the other direction. Like postmodernism, Bergman takes on the false world masquerading as real, but he does so by making present our inner authenticity and our longing for social redemption through the act of recognition of who we really are. Instead of stranding us in our own isolation through clever facade-puncturing deconstruction, Bergman pulls us straight through the world of appearances and, by making who we really are manifest, shows us in our hearts that healing to become this who-we-really-are is our moral destiny, is what we're supposed to be doing with our lives.

The portraits are up only until January 10 at the National Gallery, January 9 at the Yossi Milo Gallery, and January 4 at P.S.1. So start the New Year right and get out and see them if you're able. We will ourselves exhibit Bergman's portraits on our online art gallery from January 6. For the *Tikkun* Daily Art Gallery, go to www.tikkun.org/daily and click on "Art Gallery." ■

Peter Gabel is a law professor and author, and is associate editor of Tikkun.

Waking Up from Denial

by Jordi Pigem

HOW FAR DOES THE CRISIS REACH?

I believe the current crisis has hit more than the core of neoliberalism and even capitalism. What now has fallen into crisis is the whole worldview of *economism*: the belief that the key element of society is the economy, which is conceived of as a purely abstract, quantifiable, and self-sufficient system, aloofly independent of the biosphere that hosts it. This goes hand in hand with the belief that material welfare is the key to human fulfillment. Economism is common to both capitalism and Marxism. To see the economy as the key to everything may have seemed common sense to many of us, but it would have been regarded as a preposterous delusion in most other human cultures, which generally saw the key of their universe in more intangible elements—cultural, ethical, or religious.

But not only economism is in crisis, because the current crisis is systemic, not just economic. It has an obvious ecological dimension (biodiversity loss, destruction of ecosystems, pollution, climate change), and it also affects our culture, our goals and values, and our personal lives.

We are in a systemic crisis that we managed to ignore because we were under the spell of the alluring figures of economic growth, and because the pleasures and promises of consumerism were bribing our consciousness. Our economy was like a somnambulant giant, crushing communities and ecosystems under its feet while immersed in the reverie of an outdated worldview. Now the mirage of unlimited economic growth is vanishing and we suddenly realize we cannot carry on neglecting the ecological crisis, the cultural crisis, the crisis of values. We have mountains of data, hundreds of theories, and many answers, but most of them are of little use for the new questions that are being asked. What is now in crisis is the whole modern worldview, which is suddenly out of date, desperately crying out to be replaced.

This crisis, therefore, is not only an opportunity to move forward into economic and social arrangements that are more just, sustainable, and meaningful. It is also an invigorating cold shower, a wake-up call, an opportunity to rise out of denial. Welcome to the real world.

Economics as if the World Mattered

AS KARL POLANYI EXPLAINED IN *THE GREAT TRANSFORMATION*, IT IS UNPRECEDENTED that a whole culture would be under the sway of the economy. Indeed, in all human cultures until not so long ago, the economy occupied a limited area within the bounds of ethical, social, and religious considerations. Through some magical trick, we've now inserted society into the economy, instead of having the economy as a part of society. The global economy claims to be above all things, and yet it is only a franchise of the biosphere, without which it would have no water, no air, and no life.

Keynes is back, we hear. But John Maynard Keynes, possibly the foremost economist of the twentieth century, was already—three generations ago—criticizing the trend to reduce everything to economic values: “We destroy the beauty of the countryside because the unappropriated splendours of nature have no ‘economic’ value. We are capable of shutting off the sun and stars because they pay no dividend.”

In his late years, Keynes pointed to a young German economist as the best candidate to



Whether sleepwalking or, as here, upbeat, the dollar-driven giant is “crushing communities and ecosystems under its feet while immersed in the reverie of an outdated worldview,” the author writes.

Jordi Pigem is a Catalan philosopher who has taught at Schumacher College and at the University of Barcelona. His latest book is *Buena crisis: Hacia un mundo postmaterialista* (Good Crisis: The Coming Age of Postmaterialism).

take on his mantle—someone who, according to Keynes, was able to make figures sing. That was E. F. Schumacher, who in the early 1970s published a classic of ecological economics, *Small Is Beautiful*—a critique of the modern obsession with giantism and acceleration that called for “economics as if people mattered.” Schumacher knew that any economic theory is based on an underlying view of the world and of human nature. And still today, in the twenty-first century, in spite of quantum physics and transpersonal psychology, mainstream economics is based on a nineteenth-century worldview: it is a reductionistic and fragmenting approach that regards the world as a random sum of inert and quantifiable objects and tends to pit human beings against each other and against nature. Back in 1973, Schumacher diagnosed that “the modern economy is propelled by a frenzy of greed and indulges in an orgy of envy, and these are not accidental features but the very causes of its expansionist success,” adding that nowadays we are “too clever to be able to survive without wisdom.”

Bioeconomists and ecological economists were aware that the quest for economic growth had turned into a race against the biosphere and against common sense, and quite a few of them had seen this crisis coming since the pace of economic globalization speeded up. Others seem to have foreseen it much earlier. In *Money and Magic*, the Swiss bioeconomist Hans Christoph Binswanger looked at Goethe's Faust as a critique of the Faustian modern economy, ahead of its time. Money—our favorite substitute symbol of immortality—becomes so addictive that we give away our souls for it. In the fourth act of the second part, Faust defines his deepest yearning in this way: “Property and power I shall gain.” Foreshadowing our hyperactive society, he adds, “Action is everything.” Alchemy has been replaced by financial speculation: the point is to make artificial gold that can grow endlessly out of nothing. About 98 percent of economic transactions in today's world do not correspond to the real economy but to a craving for profit that moves swiftly in abstract realms, cut off from real assets and from ethical, social, or ecological criteria.

The Cognitive Bubble

IN OTHER CULTURES THE ULTIMATE PURPOSE OF HUMAN LIFE WAS TO HONOR GOD OR THE GODS, TO flow in harmony with the world, or to live in wisdom and peace. Yet in our society the ultimate purpose of life has been to increase GDP forever and ever. On the altars of this creed, everything else has been sacrificed, including the sense of the divine, respect for all creatures, and inner peace. Our economy has been the first truly universal religion. The *ora et labora* (pray and work) of medieval monks was replaced by another way to paradise: producing and consuming. As David Loy has noted, “The discipline of economics is less a science than the theology of this new religion.” It's a religion that has something of an opiate of the masses (Marx), a belief system that is hostile to life (Nietzsche), and a childish delusion (Freud). For decades the economic system managed to deny the evidence about the limits to growth and about the environmental and social disruption it was generating. Now the economic system has started to collide with the physical limits of reality. It is time to account for the denial it has been based on.

Let's imagine that tomorrow at noon an unforeseen solar eclipse occurs. Professional astronomers would have failed us, but we could not blame them personally. It would signal the need in astronomical theory for a paradigm shift, such as the one with which Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo overturned medieval cosmology. Instead of patching up the old astronomical theory with more epicycles, scientists should completely transform it. In 1989 it was said that all political scientists should resign, given that none had foreseen that the Berlin Wall was about to collapse. It has also been said that most professionals in economics should resign for not having foreseen the scope of the current global crisis. Other than Nouriel Roubini (originally regarded as an eccentric), no major conventional economist seems to have been aware enough of it. No less worrying than the crisis of the economic system is the collapse of conventional approaches to economics that reality has completely overridden.

There is a much older and bigger bubble than the financial and the property ones: it is the cognitive bubble—the bubble that sustains the worldview of economism. In this (continued on page 66)



Justice in Jerusalem: No More Spinning Our Wheels

by Josh Healey

I'M GONNA BE REAL WITH YOU—I WAS EXCITED THAT J STREET ORGANIZERS invited me to the group's founding conference. Excited to be part of the conversation of progressive, peace-seeking Jewish Americans that had found a new, stronger voice in Washington. Excited to push conference attendees toward language and policies of real justice and human rights for Palestinians, not just a "peace process" that perpetuates Israeli supremacy. And excited to be pushed back; to challenge others; to debate how best to change American foreign policy, how to build multi-ethnic coalitions, and how the hell we can resolve this conflict before we've all lost what humanity we have left.

So when J Street capitulated to a right-wing smear campaign and disinvited a fellow poet and me because we had poems questioning the moral purity of Israel, I was disappointed. But not surprised. The more I learned about J Street, the more I realized that their leaders were more conservative than their own energized members, who had been wooed with promises of "hope" and "change." Sound familiar?

Now, I voted for Obama, but I also didn't expect him to usher in any transformative era unless independent social movements maintained strong, vocal pressure. So when J Street kicked us out, Kevin Coval (the other poet, who has a long, illustrious record of being censored for his solidarity with Palestine) and I wrote a public response and decided to continue our event as planned, and to open it to the community. The event was organized in three days, and the place was packed: artists, activists, youth, elders, Jews, Palestinians, and a number of J Street conference attendees who left the official gathering to join the planned-then-banned dialogue.

The event itself was brilliant. Laila Al-Arian, the amazing Palestinian journalist and organizer whose father became a political prisoner after September 11, moderated and brought a much-needed perspective to the space. I did my set, followed by Kevin Coval. During the Q&A, an Israeli army veteran offered his support and encouraged solidarity with the refuseniks who won't serve in the occupation. A Palestinian woman urged us to write more about Palestinians as diverse, complex individuals rather than a uniform



Josh Healey performs poetry questioning the moral purity of Israel, which got him disinvited from the J Street national conference.

Josh Healey is a writer, an organizer, and the author of Hammertime: Poems and Possibilities. Featured by the New York Times, NPR, and Al-Jazeera, he lives in Oakland, California, and works with Youth Speaks to empower young artists and activists.

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To hear Josh perform one of his more controversial poems, go to www.tikkun.org/healeypoem.

"Palestine." Medea Benjamin of Code Pink made a call to action for the Gaza Freedom March this December. For all these calls, there was response. There was respectful, lively debate. "Culture as a Tool for Social Change" was the title of the original event. Yes! This is what we do!

The most prescient moment for me was with a young Jewish student in town for J Street. He'd been in sessions all day, talking about the Middle East in a very policy-wonkish way. Hearing our poems, he told us, was the first time he'd ever cried in a conversation about Israel/Palestine. "I'm not sure what that means," he said. "But I think it's a good thing."

Since our voices had been removed from the conference, he asked us what message we wanted him to take back to those activists gathered down the block. Now that was a great question. I told him what my own plan is: To support J Street when they're right and criticize them when they're wrong. To build ties with other critical supporters, because we are stronger as a bloc, and leaders will always try to marginalize dissent. And to build coalitions with other organizations and communities whom we *need* if we are going to move toward peace and reconciliation.

As for the actual J Street conference, I followed some of it online, and it was interesting to see their next public controversy unfold. Apparently the student caucus, dubbed J Street U, decided to take the "pro-Israel" out of its official slogan, so it was just "pro-Peace." I totally understand the students' reasoning: for any progressive organizer to call a campaign "pro-Israel" (especially if you don't add "pro-Palestine") on a college campus these days is political and ethical suicide. And this is the challenge: how to build the movement on the campuses and streets of Wisconsin and New York, of Ramallah and Tel Aviv, and not just in a fancy hotel in Washington.

Roberto Rivera, a hip-hop educator and friend of mine, likes to tell progressive activists, "We don't need to reinvent the wheel ... we just need to put some spinners on it." Translation: rather than acting in a vacuum and constantly starting organizations that end up repeating the same mistakes, let's recognize that there is good work already going on, and that we should improve on (and yes, critique) that work in new, creative ways. This is where I'm at when it comes to the Middle East. I'm down for fresh dialogues and tactics: free speech debates inside Hillels nationwide; Israelis and Palestinians fasting outside checkpoints on Yom Kippur; and yes, a strategic campaign targeting the occupation with boycotts, divestment, and sanctions.

If that work is being done in J Street, or Jewish Voice for Peace, or the International Solidarity Movement, or all of the above, then let's roll. If not, then how can we make it happen? I am honored to join *Tikkun* as a contributing editor in pursuing a progressive middle path that seeks resolution and reconciliation for both sides. Organizations often come and go all too quickly, yet *Tikkun* has been a consistent, cutting-edge voice for equal justice in the Middle East.

Even within the American Jewish left, however, there is a generational divide that is as much about style as it is about content. One of my goals with *Tikkun* is to provide space for more young writers, artists, and activists to be heard. If we can't have dialogue between the Bob Dylan generation and the Invincible generation (an Israeli-born political emcee—look her up!), how can we expect dialogue between IDF soldiers and Palestinian stone-throwers?

Discourse is fundamental, but we—and more importantly the people of Palestine and Israel—cannot afford to spin our wheels aimlessly any longer. The status quo is displacement and disenfranchisement for millions of women, men, and children. Let us stand for justice for all the people of Jerusalem. Let us put some spinners on our wheels and get moving. ■

An American Peace Initiative

(Is there a nice way of saying “an imposed solution”?)

by Gershon Baskin

ELEVEN MONTHS HAVE PASSED SINCE THE OBAMA administration took over. President Obama's impact on the entire world has been dramatic and impressive. But it seems that the issues that confront the president on every front are much more complex than hoped for, and, as we say in Hebrew, “as large as the expectation—the size of the disappointment.”

There is an opportunity here and now to make a strategic change in Israeli-Palestinian relations, despite the fact that it cannot be done by traditional means.

There is close to zero chance of a bilateral negotiated Israeli-Palestinian agreement at this time, given the political constellations in Israel and in Palestine. It is a waste of time and even dangerous to try to resume a negotiated process that will lead to open-ended negotiations with no real progress.

In this region, we have already proven over and over again that we love to negotiate. We love peace processes. What we don't like is making tough decisions. Another set of bilateral negotiations is a waste of time. There is nothing that can be added to the equation that was absent in the past. There is no chance of agreement at this time, and even getting to the negotiations will demand the full-time attention of Middle East envoy George Mitchell. Both sides speak of no pre-conditions and both sides have put down pre-conditions that cannot be easily bridged. It is dangerous, because, as we have seen in the past over and over again, a failed and frustrating negotiation process can easily end up with another round of violence.

The current economic growth in the West Bank is viewed by many as a sign of stability, and it creates the illusion that there is no real pressure to move forward with a political peace process. There is new investment and new building, employment is on the rise, young people are out every night in Ramallah, a cinema opened in Nablus, and a new passage for cars has opened in the Jenin area. At the same time, perhaps a bit less obvious to most Israelis, the territories are percolating with political activity. The popular resistance campaigns all around the territories are on the rise, and with them continued confrontations with the Israeli army. The Palestinian campaign to boycott Israel is gaining support, and a conference held in November was widely attended by Palestinian officials as well. The newly elected bodies established by the Fatah conference are working, organizing, and consolidating support for the future, including for a future uprising.

It is important to remember that both the first and the second Palestinian intifadas erupted at times of great economic growth and hopes. The territories are ripe for real movement forward on the peace agenda. At the same time, they are also ripe for a new explosion. The continued settlement growth and the failure of Mahmoud Abbas to achieve a settlement freeze, coupled with the great disappointment that Palestinians already feel about the



There is more liveliness today on the streets of Ramallah (above) and in the West Bank in general—a new energy that presages either real movement forward on the peace agenda or a new explosion of violence. Gershon Baskin lays out what Obama needs to do to help ensure it is the former.

Gershon Baskin is the founder and Co-CEO of the Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information, as well as a member of the Leadership of the Green Movement Political Party, and is presently in the process of founding the Center for Israeli Progress.



Another nonevent. Alleged peacemakers make no progress. Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, President Obama, and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas meet in New York on September 22, 2009.

Obama administration, are the ingredients of discontent and serve as the fertilizer for a new uprising.

The Middle East is often likened to a car with two gears: forward and reverse. There is no neutral gear; there is no standing in place. In this region, if we are not moving forward toward peace, we are moving back to violence. The walls and fences will not stop the violence if it erupts. The last intifada brought thousands of casualties and no political achievements. It destroyed the dwindling Israeli peace camp and led to the complete reoccupation of the West Bank and Gaza. The reverting back to violence is a real possibility, even though it seems that everyone here is tired of this conflict. All too often, rationality and knowing

what is good have too little to do with what actually happens.

I have just returned from a cross-country speaking tour in the United States that concluded with several days of meetings in Washington. I had the opportunity to meet with officials and nonofficial experts in Washington. My meetings included people from Mitchell's team and a White House official. I also met with several of the leading Middle East think-tank experts and the head of J Street. One of the unfortunate conclusions I drew from my visit to Washington is that, unless there is a rapid and substantive change in the way that the Obama administration is handling the peace process, we are heading for a dead end or worse.

Aside from the obvious fact that the Israeli-Arab peace process is not the highest issue on Obama's agenda (he's focused first on the economy, health care, wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and only then, maybe, the Israeli-Arab peace process), it seems to me that the almost complete reliance on Mitchell and the methodology he employs is where the problem lies.

At the same time, the Obama administration has actually done quite a bit of damage to the peace negotiations' chances of moving forward. Under Palestinian and Arab pressure, the Obama administration adopted the position of trying to achieve a full Israeli settlement freeze prior to reaching negotiations. This was a grave error, not because a settlement freeze is not important, but because it is first of all a tactical issue and secondly it is not achievable. The settlers had no reason to cooperate with Netanyahu, even if he supported it, and they certainly had an interest in embarrassing President Obama. Netanyahu rejected outright the demand to include Jerusalem in any settlement freeze, and that is where most of the building today is taking place. Knowing that settlements are not popular among Israelis, Netanyahu strategically maneuvered the debate to the issue of Jerusalem, where there is far greater public consensus behind his position. Even if a settlement freeze could be achieved, nothing would change on the ground. The issue is not the settlement freeze; the issue is the border between Israel and Palestine. This is a strategic issue, and as such it should have been taken up by the new U.S. administration.

The Obama-Netanyahu-Abbas summit in New York was a failure. Obama backed down from the call for a full settlement freeze. Abbas was forced to meet Netanyahu under conditions that he said publicly he would not agree to, and Netanyahu came out on top. Obama's position was weakened because he appeared to give in to Netanyahu on this critical issue and wasted diplomatic ammunition in forcing the parties to come together without gains of any substance. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton furthered the folly when she declared that Netanyahu had made unprecedented progress in freezing settlements, only to withdraw that statement a day later at her meeting with Arab Foreign Ministers in Morocco. From the Middle East, this kind of political behavior looks amateurish, nonstrategic, and clearly like a step in the wrong direction.

So for the past months, George Mitchell and his team have been shuttling back and forth

between various Middle Eastern capitals, negotiating on negotiations. I have deep respect for Mitchell, and no one can take away from him the huge amount of credit due to him for his past achievements. The problem is not the man, but his approach. As far as I can determine from my discussions with players in Washington, Mitchell is a deep believer in "the process" itself. And while people have tried to assure me that Mitchell has no intention of leaving the parties sitting at the table by themselves without his presence as an active mediator, his main objective now is to get the parties back to the table. This is a futile exercise. How could the current government of Israel and the PLO reach a comprehensive agreement on all permanent status issues? How could the government of Israel and the government of Syria reach an agreement ending that conflict? It is almost impossible for this to happen. By focusing on "process" (meaning renewing negotiations) rather than on "substance" (meaning the principles of permanent status or the parameters of the agreement), we now find ourselves back in the well-known Middle Eastern trap of negotiating about negotiations. Nothing could be more futile and frustrating. The Middle East is not Northern Ireland. In Northern Ireland there is no endgame, there is only process. In the Middle East we have had eighteen years of process and little or no real substance, and in the Middle East the endgames are quite well known.

On both tracks the parameters of agreements are more or less known. The needs, interests, threat perceptions, and means to answer them are known on both tracks. But the prospect of the negotiations accomplishing their purpose seems light years away if the actors rely on the standard classical negotiating process (the kind of process that George Mitchell believes in).

Eventually, the sides must be brought back to the table, but that should happen only when the United States and the other members of the Quartet that created the road map (the European Union, UN, and Russia) place something of substance on the table. We don't need to wait for the parties to the conflicts to produce that substance.

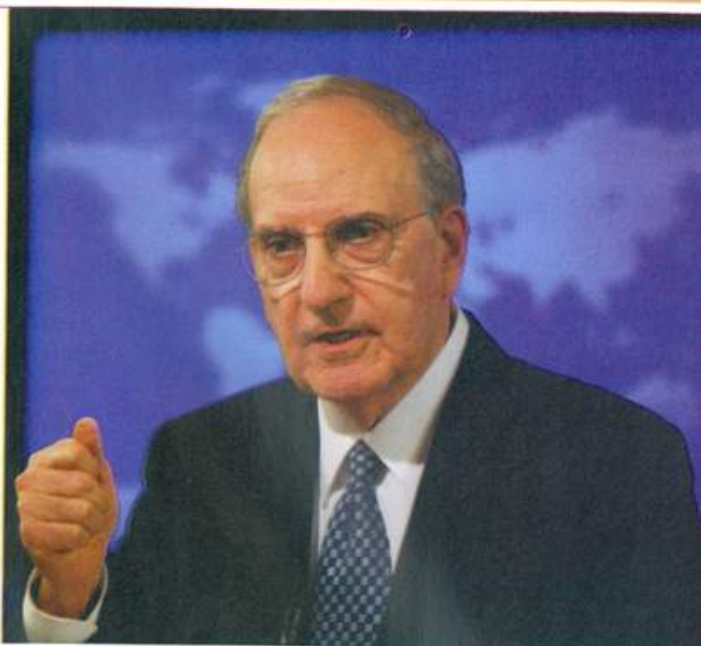
There needs to be an immediate course change, before it is too late. The techniques of the course are somewhat different for each context, mainly because the Israeli-Palestinian track is much more complex and significantly more sensitive than the Israeli-Syrian track.

The need for the course change is based on these facts:

1. The parameters of the Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement are well known.
2. There is global consensus on the parameters of that agreement.
3. A majority of Israelis and Palestinians would be willing to make the concessions necessary to reach peace if they believed that there were a credible partner willing and able to meet its obligations (and if backed by international guarantees).
4. The resolution of this conflict is a U.S. national strategic interest (and an international strategic interest as well), which means that **the old formula stating that "the parties have to want it more than we do" is no longer true. The parties no longer have the right to veto peace and to allow the conflict to endanger the security of the region and the whole world.**
5. The Quartet led by the United States (henceforth referred to as just "the Quartet"), must not be held hostage by domestic politics associated with the United States, Israel, or the Palestinian Authority.

The following is what I propose for the Israeli-Palestinian track:

1. The Quartet should ask the parties to provide answers to the following questions within three months:
 - What are the difficulties and obstacles that you face in implementing a "two states for two peoples" solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?
 - What are the primary concerns that you would face (including but not limited to



Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George Mitchell has achieved great things in the past, but his focus on process puts us back in the well-known Middle Eastern trap of negotiating about negotiations. Instead we need international pressure on both sides to come to agreement.

domestic concerns) in implementing this solution?

- What are the primary threats that you will face as a result of implementing the solution?
- What mechanism/means would you propose to monitor, verify, and ensure the compliance of obligations undertaken within a peace agreement by the other side?

If one or both parties fail to respond to the request, the Quartet should inform the parties that their part of the exercise will be undertaken by a group of private experts. Noncooperation will not be rewarded and will not prevent the process from advancing. The Quartet needs to plan in advance its response to noncooperation in this exercise.

2. The objective of this exercise is for the parties to detail the specific difficulties they would face within the parameters of the well-known solutions to the conflict, without letting them put their maximalist positions on the table.
3. After receiving the answers from the parties, the Quartet should spend the following three months developing detailed answers in response to the threats and difficulties spelled out by the parties. A major emphasis within the Quartet plans must be on the role of credible third parties and third-party multinational forces (military, police, and civilian forces led by the United States but without U.S. soldiers on the ground). The plans should not rely solely on the parties themselves to deal with those threats unilaterally or even bilaterally (which they have proven over the years incapable of doing).
4. The Quartet's response to these difficulties should entail the expansion of its "diplomatic tool box," which should contain both carrots and sticks. The Quartet must be willing to provide detailed answers (including statements about its own commitments) about how to meet the real needs of both parties, as presented by the parties and not by the Quartet. These specific responses to possible threats and obstacles can serve as carrots. In other words, the Quartet should not suggest that any one of the threats or obstacles presented by the parties is not real. All threats must be treated with the utmost sincerity, and the answers provided must be based on real commitments. Likewise, the diplomatic toolbox must contain sticks: the consequences backed by commitments that the Quartet is willing to enforce if the parties fail to cooperate.

Once the Quartet has designed the package aimed at providing answers and solutions to the obstacles, difficulties, and threat perceptions presented by the parties, and once it has specified the mechanisms by which it will handle the monitoring, verification, and enforcement of implementation of treaty obligations, the Quartet should place on the table for the parties the draft of the full peace agreement (in the format of a Declaration of Principles) including all of the permanent status issues:

- Palestinian statehood and sovereignty
- Delineation of borders
- Security regimes and cooperation
- Jerusalem
- Refugees
- The link between the West Bank and Gaza
- Economic relations
- Water and environmental issues
- International regimes/forces
- End of conflict, end of claims
- UN Security Council Resolution

The Declaration of Principles would state that the agreement relates to all of the area (including Gaza) that will be included in the implementation of the treaty as soon as the political situation enables such an implementation. The declaration would contain the following elements:

- a. "Two states for two peoples" based on the June 4, 1967, lines with *(continued on page 66)*

Celebrity Culture and the Obama Brand

by Christopher Hedges

BARACK OBAMA IS A BRAND. And the Obama brand is designed to make us feel good about our government while corporate overlords loot the Treasury, armies of corporate lobbyists grease the palms of our elected officials, our corporate media diverts us with gossip and trivia, and our imperial wars expand in the Middle East. Brand Obama is about being happy consumers. We are entertained. We feel hopeful. We like our president. We believe he is like us. But like all branded products spun out from the manipulative world of corporate advertising, this product is duping us into doing and supporting a lot of things that are not in our interest.

What, for all our faith and hope, has the Obama brand given us? His administration has spent, lent, or guaranteed \$12.8 trillion in taxpayer dollars to Wall Street and insolvent banks in a doomed effort to re-inflate the bubble economy, a tactic that at best forestalls catastrophe and will leave us broke in a time of profound crisis. Brand Obama has allocated nearly \$1 trillion in defense-related spending and the continuation of our doomed imperial projects in Iraq, where military planners now estimate that 70,000 troops will remain for the next fifteen to twenty years. Brand Obama has expanded the war in Afghanistan, increasing the use of drones sent on cross-border bombing runs into Pakistan, which have doubled the number of civilians killed over the past three months. Brand Obama has refused to ease restrictions so workers can organize and will not consider single-payer, not-for-profit health care for all Americans. And Brand Obama will not prosecute the Bush administration for war crimes, including the use of torture, and has refused to dismantle Bush's secrecy laws and restore habeas corpus.

Brand Obama offers us an image that appears radically individualistic and new. It inoculates us from seeing that the old engines of corporate power and the vast military-industrial complex continue to plunder the country. Corporations, which control our politics, no longer produce products that are essentially different, but brands that are different. Brand Obama



Celebrity as idolatry: Michael, Brangelina, Oprah, and Britney.

Chris Hedges is a Pulitzer-prize winning reporter who spent two decades as a foreign correspondent, most of them with the New York Times, in Latin America, the Middle East, Africa, and the Balkans. The son of a Presbyterian minister, he has a Master of Divinity from Harvard Divinity School and a Ph.D. from Starr King School for the Ministry. He has taught at Columbia University, New York University, and Princeton University.



*The media gives us all
distorting lenses.*

does not threaten the core of the corporate state any more than did Brand George W. Bush. The Bush brand collapsed. We became immune to its studied folksiness. We saw through its artifice. This is a common deflation in the world of advertising. So we have been given a new Obama brand with an exciting and faintly erotic appeal. Benetton and Calvin Klein were the precursors to the Obama brand, using ads to associate themselves with risqué art and progressive politics. This strategy gave their products an edge. But the goal, as with all brands, was to make passive consumers confound a brand with an experience.

Obama, who has become a global celebrity, was molded easily into a brand. He had almost no experience, other than two years in the Senate, lacked any moral core, and could be painted as all things to all people. His brief Senate voting record was a miserable surrender to corporate interests. He

was happy to promote nuclear power as "green" energy. He voted to continue the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. He reauthorized the Patriot Act. He would not back a bill designed to cap predatory credit card interest rates. He opposed a bill that would have reformed the notorious Mining Law of 1872. He refused to support the single-payer health care bill HR 676, sponsored by Reps. Dennis Kucinich and John Conyers. He supported the death penalty. And he backed a class-action "reform" bill that was part of a large lobbying effort by financial firms. The law, known as the Class Action Fairness Act, would effectively shut down state courts as a venue to hear most class-action lawsuits and deny redress in many of the courts where these cases have a chance of defying powerful corporate challenges.

Obama's campaign won the vote of hundreds of marketers, agency heads, and marketing-services vendors gathered at the Association of National Advertisers' annual conference in October. The Obama campaign was named *Advertising Age's* marketer of the year for 2008 and edged out runners-up Apple and Zappos.com. Take it from the professionals. Brand Obama is a marketer's dream. President Obama does one thing and Brand Obama gets you to believe another. This is the essence of successful advertising. You buy or do what the advertisers want because of how they can make you feel.

Celebrity culture has leached into every aspect of our culture, including politics, to bequeath to us what Benjamin DeMott called "junk politics." Junk politics does not demand justice or the reparation of rights. Junk politics personalizes and moralizes issues rather than clarifying them. "It's impatient with articulated conflict, enthusiastic about America's optimism and moral character, and heavily dependent on feel-your-pain language and gesture," DeMott noted. The result of junk politics is that nothing changes — "meaning zero interruption in the processes and practices that strengthen existing, interlocking systems of socioeconomic advantage." Junk politics redefines traditional values, tilting "courage toward braggadocio, sympathy toward mawkishness, humility toward self-disrespect, identification with ordinary citizens toward distrust of brains." Junk politics "miniaturizes large, complex problems at home while maximizing threats from abroad. It's also given to abrupt unexplained reversals of its own public stances, often spectacularly bloating problems previously miniaturized." And finally, it "seeks at every turn to obliterate voters' consciousness of socioeconomic and other differences in their midst."

The old production-oriented culture demanded what the historian Warren Susman termed "character." The new consumption-oriented culture demands what he called "personality." The shift in values is a shift from a fixed morality to the artifice of presentation. The old cultural values of thrift and moderation honored hard work, integrity, and courage. The consumption-oriented culture honors charm, fascination, and likeability. "The social role demanded of all in the new culture of personality was that of a performer," Susman wrote. "Every American was to become a performing self."

The junk politics practiced by Obama is a consumer fraud. It is about performance. It is about lies. It is about keeping us in a perpetual state of childishness. But the longer we live in

illusion, the worse reality will be when it finally shatters our fantasies. Those who do not understand what is happening around them and who are overwhelmed by a brutal reality they did not expect or foresee search desperately for saviors. They beg demagogues to come to their rescue. This is the ultimate danger of the Obama Brand. It effectively masks the wanton internal destruction and theft being carried out by our corporate state. These corporations, once they have stolen trillions in taxpayer wealth, will leave tens of millions of Americans bereft, bewildered, and yearning for even more potent and deadly illusions, ones that could swiftly snuff out what is left of our diminished open society.

Empire of Illusion

OBAMA IS A PRODUCT OF A DEEPER CULTURAL REALITY THAT I DESCRIBE IN SOME DETAIL IN my book *Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle*.

In the contemporary world, celebrity worship increasingly encroaches on reality. And this adulation is pervasive.

The frenzy around political messiahs, or the devotion of millions of women to Oprah Winfrey, is all part of the yearning to see ourselves in those we worship. We seek to be like them. We seek to make them like us. If Jesus and *The Purpose Driven Life* won't make us a celebrity, then Tony Robbins or positive psychologists or reality television will. We are waiting for our cue to walk onstage and be admired and envied, to become known and celebrated.

"What does the contemporary self want?" asked critic William Deresiewicz, adding:

The camera has created a culture of celebrity; the computer is creating a culture of connectivity. As the two technologies converge—broadband tipping the Web from text to image; social-networking sites spreading the mesh of interconnection ever wider—the two cultures betray a common impulse. Celebrity and connectivity are both ways of becoming known. This is what the contemporary self wants. It wants to be recognized, wants to be connected: It wants to be visible. If not to the millions, on *Survivor* or Oprah, then to the hundreds, on Twitter or Facebook. This is the quality that validates us, this is how we become real to ourselves—by being seen by others. The great contemporary terror is anonymity. If Lionel Trilling was right, if the property that grounded the self in Romanticism was sincerity, and in modernism was authenticity, then in postmodernism it is visibility.

We pay a variety of lifestyle advisers—Neal Gabler calls them “essentially drama coaches”—to help us look and feel like celebrities, to build around us the set for the movies of our own lives. Martha Stewart built her financial empire, when she wasn't insider trading, telling women how to create and decorate a set design for the perfect home. The realities within the home, the actual family relationships, are never addressed. Appearances make everything whole. Plastic surgeons, fitness gurus, diet doctors, therapists, life coaches, interior designers, and fashion consultants all, in essence, promise to make us happy, to make us celebrities. And happiness comes, we are assured, with how we look and how we present ourselves to others. There are glossy magazines such as *Town & Country* that cater to the absurd pretensions of the very rich to be celebrities. They are photographed in expensive designer clothing inside the lavishly decorated set pieces that are their homes. The route to happiness is bound up in how skillfully we show ourselves to the world. We not only have to conform to the dictates of this manufactured vision, but we also have to project an unrelenting optimism and happiness.

THE SWAN WAS A FOX REALITY MAKEOVER SHOW. THE TITLE OF THE SERIES REFERRED TO Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale “The Ugly Duckling,” in which a bird thought to be homely grew up to be a swan. “Unattractive” women were chosen to undergo three months of extensive plastic surgery, physical training, and therapy for a “complete life transformation.” Each episode featured two “ugly ducklings” who competed with each other to go on to the Swan beauty pageant. “I am going to be a new person,” said one contestant in the opening credits.



What does it mean to grow up watching TV shows like *The Swan*, where supposed flaws are identified in young women's faces and then “made good” with plastic surgery? Here, an artist plays with her own face.

(Cross-processed photo layered with thin tissue paper, colored pencil, and permanent marker.)

In one episode, twenty-seven-year-old Cristina, an Ecuador-born office administrator from Rancho Cordova, California, was chosen to be on the program.

"It's not just the outside I want to change, but it's the inside, too," Cristina told the camera mournfully. She had long black hair and light brown skin. She wore a baggy gray sweatshirt and no makeup. Her hair was pulled back. We discovered that she was devastatingly insecure about being intimate with her husband because of her post-pregnancy stretch marks. The couple considered divorce.

"I just want to be, not a completely different person, but I want to be a better Cristina," she said.

As a "dream team" of plastic surgeons discussed the necessary corrections, viewers saw a still image of Cristina, in a gray cotton bra and underwear, superimposed on a glowing blue grid. Her small, drooping breasts, wrinkled stomach, and fleshy thighs were apparent. A schematic figure of an idealized female form revolved at the left of the screen. Crosshairs targeted and zoomed in on each flawed area of Cristina's face and body. The surgical procedures she would undergo were typed out beside each body part. Brow lift, eye lift, nose job, liposuction of chin and cheeks, dermatologist visits, collagen injections, LASIK eye surgery, tummy tuck, breast augmentation, liposuction of thighs, dental bleaching, full dental veneers, gum tissue recontouring, a 1,200-calorie daily diet, 120 hours in the gym, weekly therapy, and coaching. The effect was suggestive of a military operation. The image of a blueprint and crosshairs was used repeatedly throughout the program.

Cristina was shown writing in her diary: "I want a divorce because I think that my husband can do better without me. And it would be best for us to go in different directions. I am not happy with myself at all, so I think, why make this guy unhappy for the rest of his life?"

At the end of the three months, Cristina and her opponent, Kristy, were finally allowed to look in a mirror for "the final reveal." They were brought separately to what looked like a marble hotel foyer. Curving twin staircases with ornate iron banisters framed the action. A crystal chandelier glittered at the top of the stairs. Sconces and oil paintings in gold frames hung on the cream-colored walls.

The "dream team" was assembled in the marble lobby. Massive peach curtains obscured one wall.

"I think Cristina has really grown into herself as a woman, and she's ready to go back home and start her marriage all over again," said the team therapist.

Two men in tuxedos opened a set of tall double doors. Cristina entered in a tight black evening gown and long black gloves. She was meticulously made up, and her hair had been carefully styled with extensions. The "dream team" burst into applause and whoops.

"I've been waiting twenty-seven years for this day," Cristina told host Amanda Byram tearfully. "I came for a dream, the American dream, like all the Latinas do, and I got it!"

"You got it!" cheered Byram. "Yes, you did!"

Reverberating drumbeats sounded. "Behind that curtain," says Byram, "is a mirror. We will draw back the curtain, the mirror will be revealed, and you will see yourself for the first time in three months. Cristina, step up to the curtain."

Short, suspenseful cello strokes were heard. There was a tumbling drumroll.

"I'm ready," quavered Cristina.

The curtain parted slowly in the middle. An elaborate full-length mirror reflected Cristina. The cello strokes billowed into the Swan theme song.

"Oh, my God!" she gasped, covering her face. She doubled over. Her knees buckled. She almost hit the floor. "I am so beautiful!" she sobbed. "Thank you, oh, thank you so much! Thank you, God! Thank you, thank you, thank you so much for this! Look at my arms, my figure ... I love the dress! Thank you, oh! I'm in love with myself!"

The "dream team" burst into applause again. "Well, you owe this to yourself," said Byram. "But you also owe it to these fantastic experts. Guys, come on in."

The crowd of smiling experts closed in on their creation, clapping as they approached.

At the end of each episode, the two contestants were called before Byram to hear who

would advance to the pageant. The winner often wept and was hugged by the loser. Byram then pulled the loser aside for “one final surprise.” The double doors opened once more, and her family was invited onto the set for a joyful reunion. In celebrity culture, family is the consolation prize for not making it to the pageant.

The Swan's transparent message is that once these women have been surgically “corrected” to resemble mainstream celebrity beauty as closely as possible, their problems will be solved. “This is a positive show where we want to see how these women can make their dreams come true once they have what they want,” said Cecile Frot-Coutaz, CEO of FremantleMedia North America, producer of *The Swan*. Troubled marriages, abusive relationships, unemployment, crushing self-esteem problems—all will vanish along with the excess fat off their thighs. They will be new. They will be flawless. They will be celebrities.

In the Middle Ages, writes Alain de Botton in his book *Status Anxiety*, stained glass windows and vivid paintings of religious torment and salvation controlled and influenced social behavior. Today we are ruled by icons of gross riches and physical beauty that blare and flash from television, cinema, and computer screens. People knelt before God and the church in the Middle Ages. We flock hungrily to the glamorous crumbs that fall to us from glossy magazines, talk and entertainment shows, and reality television. We fashion our lives as closely to these lives of gratuitous consumption as we can. Only a life with status, valued physical attributes, and affluence is worth pursuing.

Hedonism and wealth are openly worshipped on shows such as *The Hills*, *Gossip Girl*, *Sex and the City*, *My Super Sweet 16*, and *The Real Housewives of...* series. The American oligarchy, 1 percent of whom control more wealth than the bottom 90 percent combined, are the characters we envy and watch on television. They live and play in multimillion-dollar beach houses and expansive modern lofts. They marry professional athletes and are chauffeured in stretch limos to spa appointments. They rush from fashion shows to movie premieres, flaunting their surgically enhanced, perfect bodies in haute couture. Their teenagers throw \$200,000 parties and have million-dollar weddings. This life is held before us like a beacon. This life, we are told, is the most desirable, the most gratifying.

The working classes, composed of tens of millions of struggling Americans, are shut out of television's gated community. They have become largely invisible. They are mocked, even as they are tantalized, by the lives of excess they watch on the screen in their living rooms. Almost none of us will ever attain these lives of wealth and power. Yet we are told that if we want it badly enough, if we believe sufficiently in ourselves, we too can have everything. We are left, when we cannot adopt these impossible lifestyles as our own, with feelings of inferiority and worthlessness. We have failed where others have succeeded.

We consume countless lies daily, false promises that if we spend more money, if we buy this brand or that product, if we vote for this candidate, we will be respected, envied, powerful, loved, and protected. The flamboyant lives of celebrities and the outrageous characters on television, movies, professional wrestling, and sensational talk shows are peddled to us, promising to fill up the emptiness in our own lives. Celebrity culture encourages us all to think of ourselves as potential celebrities, as possessing unique if unacknowledged gifts. It is, as Christopher Lasch diagnosed, a culture of narcissism. Faith in ourselves, in a world of make-believe, is more important than reality. Reality, in fact, is dismissed and shunned as an impediment to success, a form of negativity. The New Age mysticism and pop psychology of television personalities and evangelical pastors—along with the array of self-help bestsellers penned by motivational speakers, psychiatrists, and business tycoons—all peddle a fantasy. Reality is condemned in these popular belief systems as the work of Satan, as defeatist, as negativity, or as inhibiting our inner essence and power. Those who question, those who doubt, those who are critical, those who are able to confront reality, and those who grasp the hollowness of celebrity culture, are shunned and condemned for their pessimism. The illusionists who shape our culture, and who profit from our incredulity, hold up the gilded cult of us. Popular expressions of religious belief, personal empowerment, corporatism, political participation, and self-definition argue that all of us are special, entitled, and unique. All of



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us, by tapping into our inner reserves of personal will and undiscovered talent, and by visualizing what we want, can achieve (and deserve to achieve) happiness, fame, and success. This relentless message cuts across ideological lines. This mantra has seeped into every aspect of our lives. We are all entitled to everything.

AMERICAN IDOL, A TALENT-SEARCH REALITY SHOW THAT AIRS ON FOX, IS ONE OF THE most popular shows on American television. The show travels to different American cities in a "countrywide search" for the contestants who will continue to the final competition in Hollywood. The producers of the show introduced a new focus, in the 2008–2009 season, on the personal stories of the contestants.

During the Utah auditions, we meet Megan Corkrey, age twenty-three, the single mother of a toddler. She has long, dirty-blond hair and a wholesome, pretty face. A tattoo sleeve covers her right arm from the shoulder to below the elbow. She wears a black, grey, and white dress reminiscent of the 1950s, and ballet flats. She is a font designer.

In an interview Corkrey says, "I am a mother. He will be two in December." We see Corkrey with a little blond boy, reading a book together on a beanbag chair. Breezy guitar music plays. "His name is Ryder." We see Corkrey kissing Ryder and putting him to bed. "I recently decided to get a divorce, which is new." The guitar music turns pensive. "The life I had planned for us, the life I'd pictured, wasn't going to happen. I cried a lot for a while. I don't think I stopped crying. And Ryder, of course, you can be crying, and then he walks by, and does something ridiculous, and you can't help but smile and laugh." We see Corkrey laughing with her son on the floor. "And a little piece kind of heals up a little bit."

The montage of Corkrey's life fills the screen as the rock ballad swells. "I can laugh at myself, while the tears roll down ..." sings the band. We see Corkrey and her son looking out a window. She holds her son up to a basketball hoop as he clutches a blue ball.

"It was kind of crazy, I found out *Idol* was coming to Salt Lake, and I'd just decided on the divorce, and for the first time in my life it was a crossroads where ANYTHING can happen! So why not go for what I love to do?"

Corkrey enters the audition room. The judges—Simon Cowell, Paula Abdul, Randy Jackson, and Kara DioGuardi—are seated behind a long table in front of a window. They all have large red tumblers with "Coca-Cola" printed on them. They seem charmed by her exuberant presence. She sings "Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man" from *Show Boat*. Her performance is charismatic and quirky. She improvises freely and assuredly with the rhythms and notes of the song, beaming the whole time.

"I really like you," says Abdul. "I'm bordering on loving you. I think I'm loving you. Yeah, I do. Simon?"

"One of my favorite auditions," Cowell says in a monotone.

"Yes!" grins Corkrey.

"Because you're different," continues Cowell, sternly. "You are one of the few I'm going to remember. I like you, I like your voice, I mean, seriously good voice. I loved it."

"You're an interesting girl. You have a glow about you, you have an incredible face," says DioGuardi.

The judges vote.

"Absolutely yes," says Cowell.

"Love you," says Abdul.

"Yes!" says DioGuardi.

"One hundred percent maybe," smiles Jackson.

"You're goin' to Hollywood!" cheers DioGuardi as the inspirational rock music swells.

"YES! Thank you, guys!" Corkrey screams with delight. She runs out of the audition room into a crowd of her cheering friends. The music plays as she dances down the street waving her large yellow ticket, the symbol of her success.

Celebrities, who often come from humble backgrounds, are held up (*continued on page 69*)



"You're goin' to Hollywood!" they told Megan Corkrey of Sandy, Utah, age twenty-three, the single mother of a toddler and a finalist on "American Idol." Here she shows off her tattoos at the American Idol Top 13 Party in Los Angeles, March 5, 2009.

This article was in part adapted from *Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle* (Nation Books, 2009).

Wanting Fully Without Attachment

by Miki Kashtan

The origin of suffering is attachment.

– The Buddha

The Talmud tells us that in the world to come, everyone will be called to account for all the desires they might have fulfilled in this world but chose not to. The things we desire—the desires themselves—are sacred. Who put them in our hearts if not God? But we have been taught to be ashamed of what we want; our desires become horribly distorted and cause us to do terribly hurtful things.

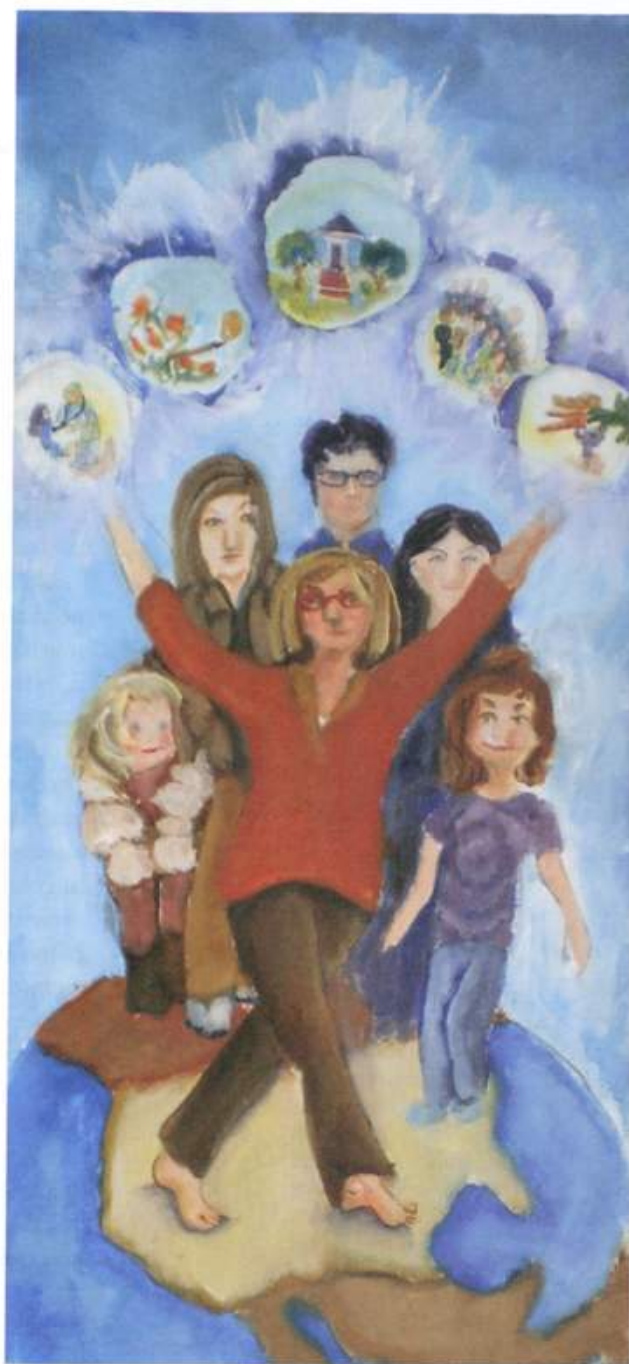
– Alan Lew, from *This is Real and You are Completely Unprepared*.

IF YOU HAVE HAD A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE OR HAVE EXPERIENCE WITH personal growth workshops, you have no doubt heard many times that letting go of attachment increases happiness and well-being. The principle is simple, but exactly what does it mean to let go of attachment, and what do we do to get there?

Sometimes it appears as if spiritual traditions suggested that the only way to let go of attachment is to give up on what we want. But is this the only way to interpret the old traditions? Is wanting really inseparable from attachment? Or is it possible to want what we want with full passion without the constriction of being attached? Can we remain genuinely relaxed about whether or not we get what we want? And if we can do this in our *personal* lives, what about as *social and political beings*, as we relate to the state of the world? Why would we even *want* to release attachment when our passion is for the world—be it for social justice, peace, sustainability, or any other cause?

The challenge arises primarily when we experience tension between what we want and what is or what seems possible. We frequently respond in one of two ways. Externally, we might try to force what is to conform to what we *want* by outright coercion and threats or by using more subtle forms of demands. Internally, we might try to suppress or give up on what we want. Both of these strategies lead to suffering. Neither of these paths engages with life openly. In both we are forcing others or ourselves instead of being in a dialogic relationship.

What follows is an attempt to outline a new path, different from forcing or giving up; a path that affirms who we are and accepts what is; a path that allows creative strategies to arise from a quality of connection that recognizes and affirms our own and others' needs, aspirations, and dreams.



Miki Kashtan, certified trainer with the Center for Nonviolent Communication and co-founder of Bay Area NVC, offers NVC workshops and retreats, mediation, facilitation, coaching, and organizational training internationally. For more information, visit www.baynvc.org or email nvc@baynvc.org.



Above: We are at least familiar with the ideal of "wanting fully without attachment" in sports, where we are taught that fair play in a hard fought, enjoyable game is more important than who wins. A fine example this year was the graciousness with which Elena Dementieva (left) conceded defeat to Serena Williams in the Australian Open semifinal in January.

Previous page: Suzanne Sherman, artist and mother of four, imagines herself holding her family's needs with joy, without being so attached to outcomes that she represses her own desires or pressures others to comply with her demands.

And what about social transformation? you may wonder. To begin with, if we are unable to tolerate the world as it is, we will be at war with the world, putting ourselves in danger of re-creating the very same structures we are seeking to transform. The path of wanting without attachment supports our work for change in two key ways. Internally, as we grow in our capacity to want without attachment, our inner peace increases. Externally, our capacity to release attachment and continue to want and work toward our deepest dreams provides a foundation for an entirely different approach to working toward change in the world: we can then work without urgency, with less burnout, with more capacity to dialogue with those we encounter along the way, and with a sense of clear vision instead of opposition.

Accepting Our Humanity

THE PREMISE AT THE HEART OF THIS PATH IS THAT EVERY HUMAN ACTION OR REACTION IS an expression of some human need that's shared by us all; that everything we do in this life has a need at its core; that all of us have needs; and that the needs are always there, underneath all our thoughts and actions. This path is an invitation to grasp *experientially* and become comfortable with the radical notion that needs are not a "problem" that will eventually go away if we work hard enough, but rather a deep expression of life.

Our choice is not whether or not to have needs. Our choice is only about how we relate to our needs and make choices about our thoughts, words, and actions. When we fight our needs, they are more likely to run us unconsciously, leaving us with less choice. When we own our needs in full and embrace them not just as unhappy, unavoidable experiences but as core expressions of our humanity and aliveness, we find more self-connection and have the freedom to make choices that attend to our needs as well as to the needs of others.

What can we do to find a way to deepen our understanding and experience of the role of needs and to overcome the obstacles to owning and embracing our needs? We start, as so much spiritual practice suggests, with the truth of where we are. Ask yourself: What images does the word *need* evoke in you? When you think about yourself having needs, what is your reaction? When you think about others having needs, what is your reaction?

Most of us have internalized a few core messages about needs. One is the equation of needs with powerlessness, vulnerability, and lack, and of the appearance of not having needs with strength, power, safety, and wholeness. Another, related theme is that having needs creates dependence, which is often frightening, while appearing not to have needs is more aligned with independence and self-sufficiency. On a deeper level, having needs carries a sense of shame for many people. That shame has at its core a fundamental question so many of us wrestle with: "Do I matter?" And so we learn to attempt to ignore, deny, override, or in some other way suppress our needs.

Because needs are the stuff of life, they cannot go away. Consequently, when we don't allow ourselves to have a need, what we lose is freedom. We lose access to conscious choice about how to meet this still-present but unacknowledged need.

Ultimately, at whatever cost, we will continue to act based on our needs. The cost of suppressing needs can be internal—a sense of exhaustion, isolation, or despair—or it can be external and lead us to act in less caring ways toward others, even as we try to hide our needs because we believe they are shameful. Think about it: When have you recently screamed your need instead of expressing it? Did you try to suppress your need for some time leading up to the scream? Is part of the scream at the other person actually a scream at yourself for not having expressed yourself sooner?

Owning a need means experiencing relaxed comfort and acceptance about having the need, without any attempt, however subtle, to distance ourselves from the need, pretend that we don't have it, be harsh with ourselves for having it, tell ourselves that we *should* be different, or in any way hold any negative judgments about ourselves, even when we don't

like our actions.

When we work toward change in the world, we often neither suppress nor own our needs. Instead, many of us de-personalize our needs. We speak about what a government *should* do instead of talking about what we want; we use the language of what *must* happen instead of talking about our pain at what is happening and our longing for a different world. This approach, too, is rooted in a distance from our needs. "It's not about me," we say! We act as if taking personal ownership of what we want would diminish the strength of our message, or as if we would be taken less seriously if we brought our hearts into our work. Wanting, having a need, is still implicitly seen as weak, not strategic, shameful.

To reach full inner freedom, we are called to walk through the shame about having needs, about having a particular need, and about possibly having too much or too little of that need in relation to what we or others believe we *should* have. The goal is to live in peace with whatever needs we have in the exact form that we have them. Think about it: If you are not going to be you, who will?

The capacity to get grounded in the truth that lives inside us is a profound internal resource that leads to inner freedom. Even if others indeed don't accept us, even if no one takes our passion seriously, we can still make the choice to honor our needs. Each time we do that, we increase our freedom.

At the same time, if needs are, indeed, universal, then whenever we experience a need, we have something in common with all the people who also have that need. Although we may make different choices about strategies to meet the need, the experience of the need itself is common and similar to all of us. Every experience of having a need can be an opportunity to be in unity with the rest of humanity.

Moreover, needs are the basic unit, if you will, of life itself. Needs have an element of pure movement energy in them: motion toward life. When we can tune in to this aspect of our needs, sometimes we can experience a larger unity with life itself—a melting into the spaciousness of all that is. If *wanting* is life, then any attempt to give up on wanting, even if motivated by the attempt to cultivate non-attachment, is a form of interfering with life.

From Need as Lack to Need as Life

WANTING FULLY WITHOUT ATTACHMENT REQUIRES US TO STRETCH OURSELVES IN TWO ways: toward wanting and toward non-attachment. Letting go of attachment is, in the end, about changing our relationship to, and experience of, wanting. There is a kind of wanting that is contracting and grasping and is about coming to *take* something from life. And there is a kind of wanting that is expansive and is about coming forward to *meet* life. Shifting from the former to the latter is what makes it possible to stay comfortably in the wanting. When we let the wanting be, we can experience ourselves as more alive, regardless of outcome.

Attachment interferes with goodwill, with creativity, with effectiveness, with care—with almost anything. We then live in a world without options, thus in actuality closing the door to inner freedom. The first step toward living without attachment is to overcome a deeply ingrained habit of seeing our preferred strategy as indistinguishable from our need. If we separate the two and let go of a particular strategy as the outcome, we usually see more options, in the form of a variety of strategies to meet our needs, and are thus *more* likely to have what we want. Even if not, we can still experience a release of attachment that is not about giving up and contracting. Rather, it's about expansion and liberation, because we are no longer limited by having only one possibility.

The next step is when we can fully inhabit the experience of the need without attachment to outcome, without attachment to having the need met at all. But this may seem confusing. After all, isn't the very essence of having a need that we want to have it met? Did we not just learn how to want? What now?

This confusion is the heart of the paradox of non-attachment. Wanting and attachment are not the same. Non-attachment does not mean giving up on what we want. It only means letting go of attachment. Then we can grow and grow in our capacity to want. Then the



The artist here pictures herself in the two modes Miki Kashtan says we all adopt too often: pressuring others to do what we want and repressing our own desires. Suzanne says: "The recession has hit us hard. My husband and I are both seeking employment and in fear of losing our home. I agree with the author that when I become attached to the outcome, I invite fear and become immobilized, and when I let go and do my best each day, I have hope and more direction and the love of my family to guide me."

experience of wanting softens our hearts and opens us up to life. Then we also grow in our strength, in our capacity to *ask* for what we want, and in access to imaginative directions for working toward what we want.

The attachment to having the need met often shows up in the form of a *should*. For example, in talking about her struggle with her ex-husband, a workshop participant said, "He is not spending as much time with my daughter as he should." As long as she holds a *should* in relation to the needs, she will remain contracted and her ex-husband will continue to pick up the demand energy and resist being with the daughter. The woman had little difficulty identifying the need at the heart of her struggle—love! However, she had immense difficulty staying with the need and simply connecting with the movement in her heart. Instead, she kept being pulled into the idea that her ex-husband *should* spend more time with their daughter. Only with effort was she able to let go of all the notions surrounding the need (fairness, compassion, what he will do, what she will do) and simply be with her need for love, regardless of what was or was not going to happen. Once she was able to do that, her tension released and she experienced immense relief.

The pure experience of the need itself is just the movement of wanting that comes from our heart. We can expand into just wanting, a wanting that has neither joy nor pain in it. The point is not necessarily to be more comfortable. The point is to experience more freedom and choice by being present with what *is*, inside and outside. This capacity to sit with the need is one way to touch the ground of non-attachment. In this non-attachment, we can rediscover the beauty of being the human that we are, and of life being just what it is.

Interacting with the World

IF YOU ARE AN ACTIVIST OR IN SOME OTHER WAY ENGAGED WITH WORKING TO transform external reality, you may wonder whether this path would ultimately lead to apathy or lack of engagement with the world. What about children's need for food or safety, for example? How can we not insist that these needs be met? Yet, even in this acute example, we can still see the difference between giving up and letting go of attachment. It is not about giving up on the hope for all the children in the world to be safe and have sufficient food. Nor is it about giving up on working to eliminate hunger and violence. Rather, it is about being able to tolerate internally the possibility—which is also the current reality!—that it just may not happen that all the children in the world will be safe and have sufficient food. If we cannot tolerate the possibility, then how can we have space inside to interact with life as it *is*? What will keep us from trying to *force* a solution? We have all seen so many historical examples of revolutions that turned into a new regime of horror. How will we ensure that we can sustain our vision and openness if we cannot tolerate what is happening and those who are supporting what is happening? To protect ourselves, we often turn away from

the dual horror we need to experience to keep our hearts open. We protect ourselves from the horror of knowing that one child under five years old dies *every six seconds*, or almost 18,000 daily, from malnutrition and related causes (not to mention the effects of wars of all kinds). And we protect ourselves from the fear of succumbing to the anger and desperation that lead to re-creating domination and horror. Without the tools to keep our hearts open, many of us do, indeed, shut down and tune out the plight of the children so that we can even manage to continue with our own personal lives.

If, however, we remain open to the possibility that no solution will arise and *at the same time* continue to bring our heart and attention and action to working toward a solution, our work takes on an entirely different flavor. We work toward our dreams, we embrace the vision and our needs in full, and we remain open in the face of what is happening. In doing so, whether or not we have external success (and so far as I know, none of us knows how to move the world from here to where we want it to be), our work itself becomes a modeling of what the world could be. ■

PRACTICE: MEDITATING ON NEEDS

If you have ever participated in meditation of any kind, you probably know that most forms of meditation involve returning attention to an object of focus whenever attention wanders. Some meditation practices focus on the breath (many forms of Buddhist and Yogic meditation), some on certain bodily sensations (some forms of Vipassana meditation, for example), some on specific words (mantras in transcendental meditation), and some on specific sequences of ideas and images (some forms of Jewish meditation).

In an entirely similar manner, you can develop a meditation practice that focuses on connecting with needs. The object of focus is the line "I have a need for ____." Just as with any other form of meditation, your mind will likely wander. You will likely hear internal responses, such as: "But this need cannot be met; why bother?" or "Yeah, but this person is not going to change," or "I should just grow up and get over this petty wish of mine," or "This is not just about some personal need of mine. This is about everyone's right to dignity." The aim of the practice is to bring your attention back to the need you are meditating on—without harshness. Rather than punishing yourself for wandering, just gently bring your attention back.

Encountering and connecting with needs is different from naming them as checklist items. Whenever we do this practice, we can take a moment to breathe, to really experience the flavor of that need being inside of us—exactly what it feels like, what the sensations of having this need are, and what this need means to us.

In My Flesh I See God:

A Neurobiological Perspective on Being Human

by Joachim Bauer and Tsvi Blanchard

IS THE SEARCH FOR A CARING SOCIETY NAIVE AND MERELY utopian? THE ideological structures of contemporary Western society make this a complicated question to answer. The present economic crisis may have moved us in part past a devotion to “looking out for number one.” It has not, however, strengthened our trust in empathy and mutuality as part of “human nature.” We still tend to think of competition and aggression as innately human. America’s dominant ideology still presents society as primarily a constraining force that assures “fairness” and “safety” in the unavoidable aggressive competition that is human social, political, and economic life.

Traditional Jewish thinking also sometimes imagines an “evil impulse” as necessary for the growth of society. This “impulse” (a code word for erotic narcissism) guarantees human reproduction and the development of economic and political institutions. However, it is also suggested that this very same impulse can and should be used for good. To understand this seeming paradox, we must remember that “eros” is the generative force that joins and unites people. Even in an explicitly competitive society, success in business, politics, and reproduction depends on effectively bringing people together. What is worth noting is that this very same impulse would work equally effectively in a society that defines itself as caring and mutually supportive.

The Jewish esoteric tradition—interpreting Job’s “in my flesh I shall see God”—suggests that we might look to the biological structures and processes of the human body for insight. Why not then turn to contemporary neurobiology? To be sure, neurobiological perspectives cannot claim primacy when tackling the fundamental anthropological question “What is human nature?” They can only add their piece to a mosaic to which numerous other disciplines also contribute, perhaps most prominently among them, philosophy. Nonetheless, although unwelcome, biology indeed pervades, sometimes quite unconsciously, the varied anthropological views found in contemporary culture. We need only think of the German, and for that matter American, reception of Charles Darwin’s ideas that revolutionized thinking between 1880 and 1930: for example, Richard Weikart’s *From Darwin to Hitler: Evolutionary Ethics, Eugenics, and Racism in Germany*. Such fundamental anthropological convictions showed a tendency to become implicit—and thus predominantly unconscious—certainties in Western late capitalist ideology.

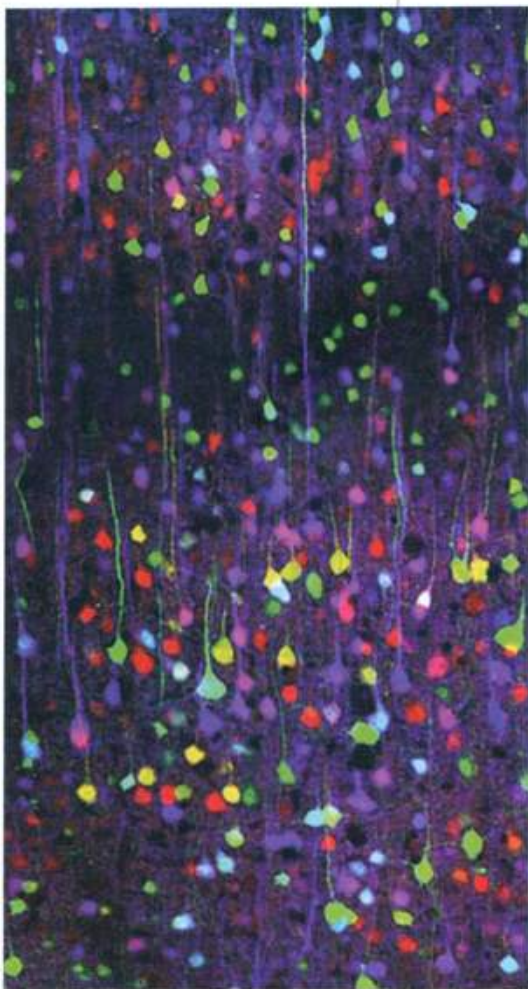
Selfish Genes or Communicative, Cooperative Genes?

MODERN SOCIOBIOLOGY SPURRED A FUNDAMENTAL REVIVAL OF THE CONVICTION THAT humanity is driven in its innermost by primary aggression. A key representative of this trend



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The online version of this article will include a bibliography. For footnotes, email dave@tikkun.org.



A "rainbow" of part of a mouse's cerebral cortex. This new technique for picturing neurons helps neurobiologists create a wiring diagram of the brain, and shows us the beauty hiding in "gray matter."

COURTESY OF JEFF LICHTMAN;
CONFOCAL IMAGE BY FAMILY WEISSMAN

is the book *The Selfish Gene* by the British zoologist Richard Dawkins. The book was very influential all over the world. The question then became: if our genes are already "selfish," then aren't all other human tendencies epiphenomena at best? This thinking is not merely pernicious—since these untenable and pseudoscientific sociobiological dogmas have actually become widespread conviction—but also dystopian.— This is ideology in the worst sense, that is, thought used only as a justification of the current dominant global economic system.

What do we really learn from current neurobiological research? During recent years the insight that genes are not "selfish," but rather are communicators and cooperators, has become ever clearer—in great part due to the complete sequencing of numerous genomes. Genes constantly change their activities in reaction to signals from the environment. What's more, signals that arrive during sensitive phases of an organism's development can leave a sort of biological "fingerprint" by exerting a long-lasting effect on the responsiveness of a gene, a phenomenon called "epigenetics." The fact that genes always depend on cooperative interactions with numerous other molecules to become activated, read, or duplicated is reason enough to call genes communicators. Since experience and the behavior of the human body operate several system levels above what defines humans in terms of the mechanisms and function of their genes, one cannot draw conclusions on the nature of humans from the gene level.

A biology-centered view of the human being as a sentient, integrated organism requires a perspective that goes beyond genes. It has been only a few years since neurobiology realized that the human brain possesses a specific neuronal system to experience "drive," "vitality," and "motivation." The brain's "motivation system" is located in the midbrain and owes its name to the fact that the nerve cells residing there have the potential to produce and release messenger substances whose effects are the biological correlate of those psychological states that humans experience as "motivation" and "vitality."

Our Brains Reward Us for Being Social

THE MOTIVATION SYSTEMS DO NOT BECOME ACTIVE SPONTANEOUSLY BUT depend on stimuli that reach the system from the outside. Initially, neurobiological research knew only that addictive substances are potent stimuli of this system. Drugs owe their potential for addiction exclusively to the fact that they directly stimulate nerve cells of the motivation systems to release dopamine and endogenous opioids. This is why the motivation systems are sometimes called "addiction systems." Only during recent years—predominantly through the use of non-invasive methods such as functional magnetic resonance imaging—could the *natural* stimuli of the motivation systems be elucidated: interpersonal affection, (joyful) movement, and music. Casually put, the human brain turns psychology into biology: experiences of interpersonal relationships are perceived through our five senses, evaluated in the so-called limbic system (a sort of system for emotional intelligence), and translated into biological signals.

The surprise finding that affection, "being seen," and appreciation are biologically potent stimuli of those motivational systems that had been dubbed "addiction systems" led the current director of the National Institutes of Mental Health, the neurobiologist Thomas Insel, to ask the following question in *Physiology & Behavior* #79: "Is social attachment an addictive disorder?" Astonishingly, Insel himself believed it was. If one goes by the findings garnered on the motivational systems of the human brain, social acceptance is among the central, biologically anchored aspirations of humans. This led American brain researchers to coin the term "social brain."

The basic drive for social acceptance also leads along a neurobiological path to the phenomenon of aggression. Arbitrarily inflicted pain is one of the most reliable triggers of aggression, not only among humans but also in all other mammals. From an evolutionary perspective, the significance of aggression should thus most likely be to protect the organism from pain and from damage to its physical integrity. From a neurobiological perspective, nothing supports the notion that acting out aggression is a primary drive. Experiments show that nontraumatized, average, healthy humans react to the suffering of others with an

empathic reaction that is biologically mediated by the system of mirror neurons. The human motivational systems cannot, per se, be stimulated by the prospect of being allowed to act aggressively (this changes only when aggressive acts earn the aggressor social acceptance). Both phenomena—fear and aggression—are neurobiological and psychological triggers: they help us to identify and fend off dangerous situations. From today's perspective, aggression, like fear, is also not a "drive" in psychologically healthy humans but a biology-based program that can be activated when needed (nobody would think of talking of a "fear drive").

What helps us understand the dynamics of human aggression better than before are recent neurobiological experiments that show that the pain centers in the brain are activated not only when an individual experiences physical pain but also when the individual experiences social exclusion. If pain is a potent elicitor of aggression, and if social exclusion is equal to experiencing physical pain "from the brain's perspective," then it becomes clear why both physical pain and social exclusion work as potent triggers of aggression. More recent studies from social research have investigated the factors one can identify as predictors of violent behavior in juveniles. They showed that personally experienced violence (physically inflicted pain) and social exclusion (lack of bonds) did in fact have the highest predictive value.

The Neurologically Anchored Feeling of Social Fairness

BIOLOGY IS THE WRONG PLACE TO GO FOR ANSWERS TO THE QUESTION OF WHETHER humans are "good." The discipline has an a priori lack of competence in this question; in addition, it is incapable of giving a "yes or no" answer. Only one thing can be shown experimentally: humans have a biologically founded sense of social fairness. One such experiment consists in giving a fixed amount of money (let's say €100) to (continued on page 72)

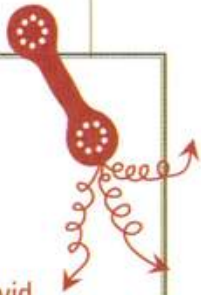
Sunni-Shia Sectarianism and Competition for the Leadership of Global Islam

by David Pinault

A TRADITIONAL STRENGTH OF ISLAM AS IT EXPANDED BEYOND THE ARAB Middle East in the premodern era was its syncretistic adaptation to local religious traditions, whether in Africa, the Indian subcontinent, or the islands of Indonesia. For centuries, Islamic practice was regionally based, a landscape-oriented faith linked to saints' caves, Sufi tombs, and sacred trees (notwithstanding protests by pious-minded mullahs).

But worldwide socioeconomic changes after World War II profoundly affected Muslim communities. In a rapidly globalizing economy, farmers and other rural workers abandoned the countryside to find work in capitals such as Teheran, Cairo, and Jakarta. The suddenly wealthy Gulf emirates and Saudi Arabia drew labor migrants from throughout South Asia. Thus—to take one example—hundreds of thousands of Pakistanis migrated to the Arabian peninsula in the 1970s and 1980s in search of jobs. They returned with their earnings not to their villages of origin but to urban centers such as Karachi and Lahore. These migrants no longer found so appealing the old regionally based Islam they had once known. Deracinated Muslims, facing the challenges of modernity in unfamiliar city settings, were susceptible to evangelizing by the missionaries of a revivalist and universalist Islam, an Islam based on

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Qur'anic scriptural authority rather than the charisma associated with local saints' tombs or Sufi shrines. The preachers of this revivalist Islam were quick to condemn the traditional folk rituals of the countryside as—depending on the locale—Hindu-tainted, Christian-derived, or simply pagan.

Much of the funding for such preaching came from oil revenues at the disposal of Saudi Arabia's Wahhabi Salafists. These are followers of a dichotomizing mentality that divides the world into *mu'minin* (believers) and *kafirs* (infidels, who are to be either converted or combated as enemies). Saudi Arabia's religious authorities have long regarded themselves as the natural leaders of global Islam, citing their role as guardians of the *haramayn* (the "sacred cities" of Mecca and Medina). The Saudi government, as host of the *hajj*-pilgrimage to Mecca that draws millions every year, has used this opportunity to proselytize fellow Muslims, seeking to shape a unified and standardized Islam that will place all believers under Wahhabi leadership.

But since the late 1970s and the Iranian Revolution, Saudi Arabia has faced ever-increasing competition from a religious ideology long loathed by the Wahhabis and many other Sunnis. I can best illustrate the depth of this loathing via an anecdote from Pakistan.

Several years ago, while visiting the University of Peshawar in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province, I was asked by a group of professors about my religious identity. Given that I was scheduled to give a guest lecture to their students on Sunni-Shia relations, they thought it appropriate to find out if I was Muslim. "No," I replied. "I'm a Christian."

Silence for a moment. I sensed disappointment. "Well," said one of my hosts, breaking the tension, "at least you're not Shia."

I recall this incident because it reflects a prejudice I've encountered surprisingly often in Pakistan and elsewhere among Islamic communities—the notion that Shias (who make up some 15 percent of the world's 1.6 billion Muslims) are *kafirs* who really aren't Muslims at all. This religious bigotry isn't new, but in recent years anti-Shia propaganda has circulated among Sunnis with renewed virulence. The reason for this phenomenon has to do, I believe, with a struggle for dominance of the *ummah* (the global community of Islam).

Thirst, Suffering, Martyrdom: Sacred History and Shia Identity

TO GAIN PERSPECTIVE ON THIS STRUGGLE, IT'S HELPFUL TO KNOW THE HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF Islamic sectarianism. Shiism arose in the seventh century because of a political dispute over leadership of the *ummah* after the death of the prophet Muhammad in 632. Most Muslims (those who ultimately became known as Sunnis) supported the principle of election in selecting the caliph (the political title of the prophet's successor). But a minority insisted that the caliphate should be reserved for Ali ibn Abi Talib (Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law) and for the offspring of Ali and his wife Fatima. Such individuals were known as *Shi'at Ali*, "the adherents of Ali." These Shias resented bitterly those Muslim leaders who tried to block Ali's bid for the caliphate. In particular Shias condemned Abu Bakr and Umar, the first and second caliphs, who are revered by Sunnis as *al-shaykhayn* (the two elders). Shia partisans claimed that Abu Bakr and Umar conspired to rob Ali of his rightful throne.

Ali did manage to take power and rule as caliph for five years, only to be murdered in the year 661. Further tragedy befell his descendants. According to Shia sources, Ali's elder son Hasan was poisoned by order of the reigning caliph. Thereupon the title of imam passed to Hasan's younger brother, Husain ibn Ali.

The term "imam" is important for understanding doctrinal differences between Sunnis and Shias. All Muslims use the term to mean "prayer leader," someone who leads a congregation in worship. But most Shias (especially those belonging to the *Ithna-Ashari* or "Twelver" denomination, which is by far the most common form of Shiism, as well as the state religion of the Iranian Islamic Republic) also use the term in a more restricted sense, to refer to the rightful spiritual leader of the entire *ummah*. Twelver Shias insist that this global imam must be from the prophet's immediate bloodline, and that he be both *ma'sum* (sinless, perfect, and divinely protected from error) and *mansur* (chosen by Allah as leader, thereby avoiding the vagaries of any human electoral process). The first such imam, say Twelver Shias, was Ali; the third was his

younger son, Husain.

In the year 680, at the urging of Shia partisans in Kufa, Husain set out from Arabia to Iraq to organize a rebellion against the reigning caliph, Yazid ibn Mu'awiyah. Husain was accompanied by the women and children of his household and only a small number of bodyguards and servants.

He never reached his destination of Kufa. Yazid's soldiers intercepted Husain near the river Euphrates at Karbala, which today is revered as Shiism's foremost pilgrimage site. Not wanting Husain to become a martyr and rallying point for further Shia resistance, Yazid ordered his soldiers to force Husain to surrender and offer the caliph *bay'ah* (an oath of allegiance). So the soldiers besieged Husain and his family, preventing them from reaching food or water. Husain and his family suffered torments of thirst under Iraq's pitiless desert sun. Shia preachers recount these sufferings in vivid detail during annual observances of Muharram, the Islamic month during which the siege of Karbala occurred.

In the end, Husain chose death rather than surrender. On Ashura, the tenth day of Muharram (the high point of the liturgical calendar of lamentation for Shias today), Husain died in combat against Yazid's forces. This effectively put an end to Twelver Shia hopes for reclaiming the caliphate.



Muharram is deeply emotional for many Shia Muslims. Here, Turkish women at an Ashura ceremony in Istanbul, 2009, commemorate the long-ago death at Karbala of Imam Husain. Shia emotionality is a significant element in the growing Sunni-Shia rivalry to provide an attractive universalist version of Islam to Muslims who have been uprooted from their traditional local observances by globalization and the modern economy.

The Usefulness of Revulsion: Blood and Lamentation

BUT IT WAS PRECISELY THIS POLITICAL FAILURE THAT GENERATED THE RISE OF SHIISM AS A distinctive theological tradition within Islam. Shia theologians argued that Husain had foreknowledge of what would happen at Karbala but voluntarily sacrificed himself for the good of the ummah. In exchange, Allah granted Husain the power of *shafa'ah* (intercession on behalf of sinners). Preachers I encountered in Pakistan and India recounted legends about how Fatima continues to lament her martyred son even while she resides in paradise, and about how she is comforted whenever mourners gather here on earth to remember the Karbala Martyrs. Husain will exert his power of *shafa'ah* on behalf of anyone who joins his mother in mourning and sheds tears in remembrance of Karbala.

Such mourning rituals are referred to by the term *matam*. During Muharram, preachers recount the sufferings of the martyrs, with the express purpose of moving their congregations to tears and loud wailing. Each year, in the days leading up to Ashura, Twelver Shias hold processions in which they chant *nauhajāt* (lamentation poems in honor of Husain and the other Karbala Martyrs) and mark time by rhythmically slapping their chests. In countries such as Pakistan and India, many *matami guruhān* (Shia lamentation associations) go further, arranging public processions in which hundreds of men perform *zanjiri-matam* (self-flagellation involving knives, flails, or chains).

This ritual bloodshed is both controversial and popular. Theologically, *matam* earns practitioners intercession; but from a sociological perspective, it's worth noting that, wherever possible, Shias tend to perform such rituals publicly. One gains access to Husain's favor by having the courage to stand up and be identified as a Shia via conspicuously distinctive rituals. (Under Saddam Hussein's secularist-Baathist regime, public Muharram processions were prohibited, but since his fall from power, Iraqi Shias have fervently embraced the public performance of self-scourging.)

Nevertheless the bloody forms of *matam* generate widespread revulsion, both among Sunnis and even among some Shias (as will be discussed below). Spurting blood is normally classed in Islamic law as *najis* (ritually polluting), and the extravagant weeping and displays of grief associated with *matam* offend Islamic notions of decorum and self-restraint. Of course it is precisely this offensive quality of *matam* that makes (continued on page 73)

Commonwealth Economics: Christian Socialism as Tradition and Problem

by Gary Dorrien

FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY, CHRISTIAN THEOLOGIANs HAVE DREAMED OF A transformed economic order based on democratic empowerment and the common good. A century ago the Social Gospel movement reverberated with calls for economic democracy. In the 1930s, after global capitalism crashed spectacularly, theologians stressed the necessity of finding an alternative to capitalist boom and bust. In the 1970s, the rise of liberation theology resurrected the dream of a transformed economic order.

But the dream failed, and today capitalism prevails in more global and predatory forms than ever. Today the idea of a fundamental alternative seems quaint at best, even though global capitalism has crashed again. The idea of a systemic alternative has lost its coherence in a world of megabyte monies zipping across the planet at the speed of light, de-linked from real production. There is no major movement to replace the predatory impulses of capitalism. There is only the necessity of creating one, recognized by thousands of disparate organizations and communities. For the very problems that gave rise to socialist movements still exist, still matter, and persist among new problems threatening the survival of the planet.

Almost every important theological movement of the past century called for a different future, especially liberal theology, the Social Gospel, Barthian neo-orthodoxy, Catholic social teaching, early Niebuhrian realism, ecumenical social ethics, liberation theology, progressive evangelicalism, and radical orthodoxy. The Social Gospel expounded a vision of decentralized economic democracy or, sometimes, democratic socialism. The Barthian movement was explicitly socialist, though it usually tried to keep theology and politics in different compartments. The papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891) introduced the idea of a "solidarist" third way between capitalism and socialism in Catholic social teaching, which was expounded explicitly in *Quadragesimo Anno* (1941). For decades the ecumenical movement kept alive theology helped to push the World Council of Churches further to the left on political economy. Liberation theology advocated a revolutionary Marxist or, sometimes, democratic socialist vision of liberation from structures of oppression and dependency. More recently the "Radical Orthodoxy" group associated with John Milbank has combined socialist politics with classical high-church theology. Twentieth-century theologians and social ethicists repeatedly dreamed of an economy based on human need and the common good.

In every case, the social mission of Christianity had something to do with replacing capitalist selfishness and inequality with something better. Virtually all of the Progressive-Era Social Gospelers spoke an optimistic language of progress and social evolution, even if they were radical socialists. The more radical Gospelers couched their views in third-way terms that kept their politics from sounding scary. Reform-oriented progressives such as Washington

This article is forthcoming in Gary Dorrien's book, *Economy, Difference, Empire: Social Ethics for Social Justice* (Columbia University Press, 2010).

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Gladden, Francis G. Peabody, Shailer Mathews, and Catholic ethicist John A. Ryan favored a third way between capitalism and socialism, advocating cooperatives and guilds, while radicals such as Walter Rauschenbusch and Harry F. Ward struggled to make Christian socialism not seem dangerous.

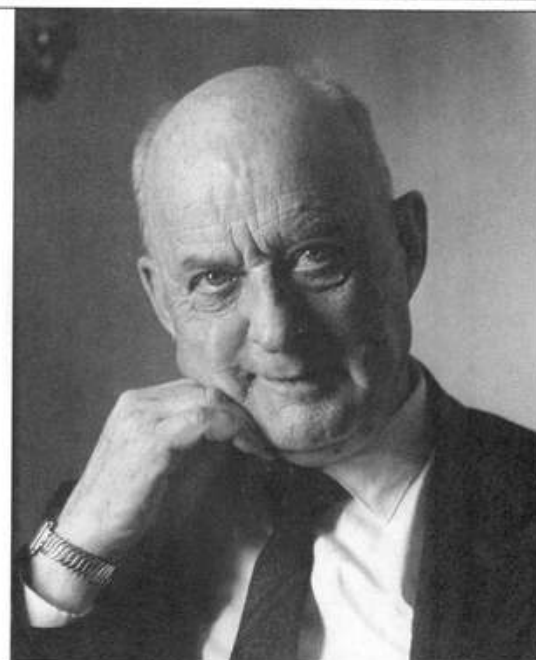
The Great Depression yielded a sterner kind of Christian radicalism that spurned third ways, speaking a binary language of revolution versus barbarism. There was no third way between state socialism and reaction; for Reinhold Niebuhr and his followers, economic democracy was serious only if it stood for a revolutionary state control of the economy. In the name of realism and relevance, the Niebuhrians of the 1930s and other radical socialists propounded a host of bad ideas, rejecting markets and production for profit, claiming that state planners could replicate the pricing decisions of markets, and equating socialization with nationalization.

On these issues Rauschenbusch ended up looking better than the radicals that panned him for being too idealistic. He contended that democratic worker control was the heart of the matter and that markets cannot be abolished in a free society. He had a strong concept of personal and collective evil, coupled with an overcoming message of social salvation. On the other hand, even Rauschenbusch recycled the totalizing rhetoric of state socialism, embraced the Marxist theory of surplus value, claimed that prices under socialism would be based entirely on services rendered, and trusted too much in the overcoming tide of social idealism.

To the major theologians of the Progressive Era and the Great Depression generation, the capitalist devotion to individual self-interest was plainly hostile to Christian teaching. Some who were far from being Marxists were unsparing about the predatory immorality of capitalism. Christian Socialists usually acknowledged, like Marx, that capitalism marked a great leap forward, and that capitalist accumulation and industrialization were necessary preconditions of a desirable social order. To Barthian theologian Emil Brunner, however, capitalism was not a prelude to anything except moral and social catastrophe. In *The Divine Imperative*, he pronounced that capitalism "is that system in which all that we can see to be the meaning of the economic order from the point of view of faith is being denied: in which, therefore, it is made almost impossible for the individual to realize, in any way through his economic activity, the service of God and his neighbor. This system is contrary to the spirit of service; it is debased and irresponsible; indeed we may go further and say it is irresponsibility developed into a system."

Anglican bishop William Temple pressed similar feelings about capitalism into a theory of guild socialism. In 1941, shortly before he was named Archbishop of Canterbury, Temple called for an excess-profits tax to create worker and community-controlled enterprises. The following year his book *Christianity and the Social Order* enlisted natural law against the spirit and logic of capitalism. Production naturally exists for consumption, Temple argued, but capitalism reversed the natural order of things by making consumption depend on production, while production depended on finance. Temple's alternative put a higher value on fellowship than profits, calling for withering capital investment, mutual export trade, economic democracy, a socialized monetary system, and the social use of land. He observed: "It is important to remember that the class-war was not first proclaimed as a crusade by Marx and Engels; it was first announced as a fact by Adam Smith. Nothing can securely end it except the acquisition by Labour of a share in the control of industry. Capital gets its dividends; Labour gets its wages; there is no reason why Capital should also get control and Labour have no share in it."

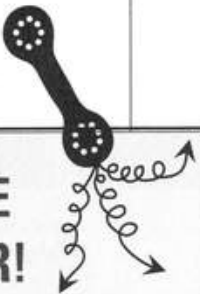
One of the ironies of modern theology is that the American Social Gospelers of the 1930s and 1940s are nearly always treated as naive idealists, because many of them were pacifists, while Niebuhr is treated as the hero of the story. Yet Niebuhr was wrong about the New Deal, and the Social Gospel progressives were right. The Social Gospelers supported the Emergency Banking Act of 1933, which allowed the new Reconstruction Finance Corporation to buy bank equity. Over the next year, the RFC bought more than \$1 billion of bank stock, about one-third of the capital invested in U.S. banks. The Social Gospel progressives, speaking through the Federal Council of Churches, called for "subordination of speculation and the profit motive to



In the 1930s the great American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr (1892–1971) opposed the Social Gospel and the New Deal as too accommodative with capitalism. He called for revolutionary state control of the economy. But in the 1950s, disillusioned with such radicalism, Niebuhr retreated to welfare state reformism and the liberal Democratic mainstream.



Walter Rauschenbusch (1861–1918) was the leading exponent of the Social Gospel. Gary Dorrien writes that while Niebuhr is the more celebrated of the two, it was Rauschenbusch who actually got it right: he saw a middle way between outright revolution and barbaric capitalism.



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the creative and cooperative spirit" and "social planning and control of the credit and monetary systems for the common good." They supported mortgage restructuring, social security, public works employment, and selective nationalization, while Niebuhr replied that these were mere Band-Aids to make middle-class moralists feel better, and that the New Deal was a form of quackery.

The Social Gospellers told a story about the necessity of gradually democratizing society; Niebuhr told a more dramatic story, that history would either move forward to socialism or move backward to barbarism. There was no third way. Radical socialism, communism, and fascism were supposedly more realistic than the tame progressivism of the social democratic, Social Gospel, and New Deal movements. But the radical alternatives crashed and burned, and afterward Niebuhr retreated to welfare state reformism and the liberal Democratic mainstream.

Ecumenical social ethics in the 1950s, taking a similar tack as Niebuhr, decidedly trimmed its sails, with notable exceptions such as Walter Muelder and Martin Luther King, Jr. But in the 1960s and 1970s, socialist idealism made a comeback in social ethics and theology through the rise of German political theology, Third World liberation theology, Black theology, and feminism. German theologian Jürgen Moltmann described democratic socialism as the historical form that Christian hope had to take, "given the present poverty of capitalism and its democracies as well as socialism and its dictatorial governments." Peruvian liberationist Gustavo Gutierrez proclaimed that Christian theology needed to speak "of social revolution, not reform; of liberation, not development; of socialism, not modernization of the prevailing system." Argentine liberationist José Míguez Bonino declared that the struggle for socialist transformation "concretely defines my Christian obedience in the world."

African American social critic Cornel West positioned himself to the left of democratic socialism, embracing the neo-Marxist councilism of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Korsch, while feminist theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether advocated "a democratic socialist society that dismantles sexist and class hierarchies, that restores ownership and management of work to the base communities of workers themselves, who then create networks of economic and political relationships."

Visions of this sort were commonplace in the theologies of the 1970s and 1980s. Many theologians explicitly advocated democratic socialism, notably Harvey Cox, Gregory Baum, Leonardo Boff, Robert McAfee Brown, Beverly W. Harrison, Kenneth Leech, Johannes Metz, Arthur McGovern, Delores Williams, Ronald Preston, Dorothee Soelle, Franklin Gamwell, Phillip Wogaman, Gibson Winter, Daniel Maguire, and Joe Holland. Nearly all of them stressed that good socialism had little or nothing to do with communism. American Social Gospeler Harry Ward and English Anglican dean Hewlett Johnson were cautionary figures in this area, having ruined their reputations by fixating on the star of Soviet Communism. At its best, Christian socialism also held out against state socialist ideology.

For decades the central policy proposal of most Western socialist parties was centralized government ownership of the major means of industrial production. "Socialism" meant top-down government planning, economic nationalization, and what the British Fabians called the rationalization of society—that every act of collectivization furthered the socialist cause of rationalized economic planning. The best versions of Christian socialism replied that exalting state power was not the answer. The Anglican socialism of Temple, Charles Raven, R. H. Tawney, and Charles Gore was rooted in the pre-Marxist Anglican cooperativism of F. D. Maurice, Charles Kingsley, and John Ludlow, just as the American decentralized socialism of W.D.P. Bliss, Justin Wroe Nixon, and Walter Muelder was rooted in the economic democracy of the Social Gospel. Eminent theologian Paul Tillich shared the Christian socialist aversion to state collectivism. Warning against the "bureaucratization of the economy," he took for granted the necessity of market discipline and contended that only the market knew how to get prices right.

The debate that advocates of decentralized economic democracy always wanted was the one between themselves and state socialists; communism was a perversion of anything deserving to be called socialism. But after the Soviet Union imploded, decentralized socialists

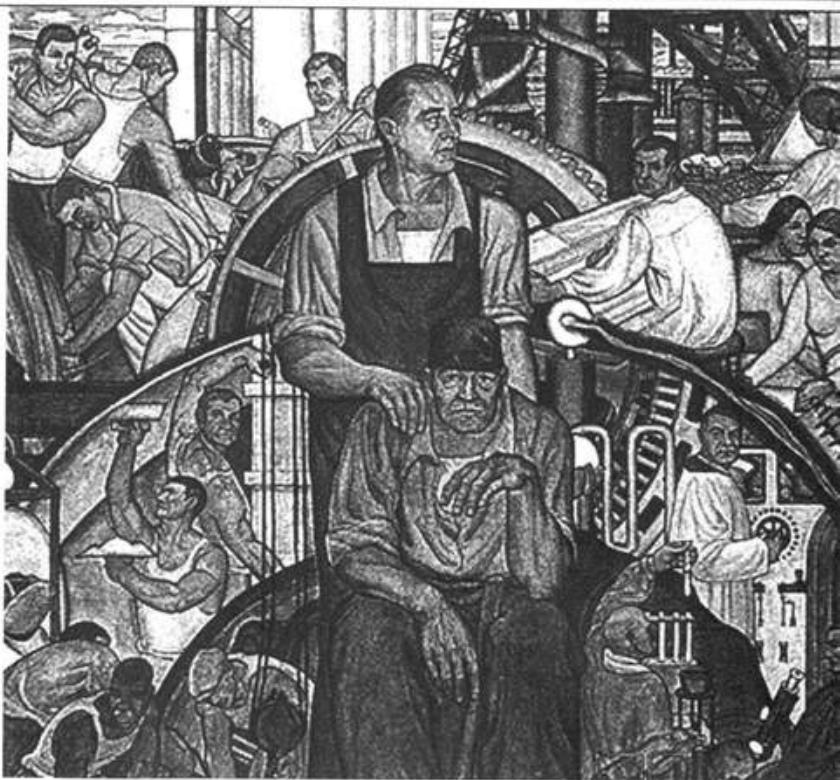
did not get the debate they wanted. The differences between the various democratic socialisms seemed irrelevant in a world seized by the manic logic of capitalism. Economic globalization pushed aside socialist concerns about equality and humane community. Nations crawling out from decades of Communist rule in the former Soviet bloc did not aspire to democratic versions of anything smacking of socialism, which raised the question whether anything was left of Christian socialism. How much of the vision of a democratized social order could be saved or reconstructed in a political culture in which "socialism" mostly conjured up repulsive images of state authoritarianism? How was it possible to reclaim the social Christian vision of democratized economic power at a time when corporate capitalism was turning the planet into a single economic market?

For some Christian ethicists, the dream of economic democracy was exhausted and refuted. Lutheran neo-conservative Robert Benne challenged social ethicists to admit that their tradition had been wrong to support democratic socialism. Neo-liberal realists Max Stackhouse and Dennis McCann agreed, urging that the death of Communism bore unavoidable implications for Christian social ethics. Stackhouse and McCann observed that "the Protestant Social Gospel, early Christian realism, much neo-orthodoxy, many forms of Catholic modernism, the modern ecumenical drive for racial and social inclusiveness, and contemporary liberation theories all held that democracy, human rights, and socialism were the marks of the coming kingdom." But liberal Christianity was wrong about socialism: "The future will not bring what contemporary theology said it would and should." According to Stackhouse and McCann, the verdict of history had come down not only against the Communist mistake, but against even the forms of democratic socialism that militantly opposed communism. Socialism was dead, which marked the end of liberal Christianity's attempt to give it a human face.

For neoconservatives and some Niebuhrian realists, the project that remained for Christian social ethics was to apply the chastening lessons of Niebuhrian realism to the economic order. Neoconservative social critic Michael Novak flatly opposed breaking down concentrations of economic power. Noting that Niebuhr failed to press his political realism into a critique of social democratic economics, Novak declared that neoconservatives like him completed this essential Niebuhrian task by repudiating the progressive Christian tradition of economic democracy: "Niebuhr did not give much attention to economic issues. Precisely in Niebuhr's neglect, I found my own vocation. Surely, I thought, the next generation of Niebuhrians ought to push some of Niebuhr's deeper insights into the one major area he neglected."

Novak's assumption of this neglected task drew him deeply into the political Right, where, in the 1980s, he became a Reagan supporter and a chief mythologist of American capitalism. To apply Niebuhr's realism to the economic realm is to relinquish the progressive Christian dream of democratizing economic power, Novak argued. The values and legitimizing principles of democracy are pertinent only to the political sphere. To face up to modernity is to exclude democratic tests of legitimacy, equality, and accountability from the economic realm. Realism emphasizes wealth creation and allows the market to take care of distribution. It opposes government regulation of the financial sector and assures that wealth creation at the top will eventually trickle down to middle-class and working-class communities. It accepts and celebrates the triumph of corporate capitalism. Neoconservatism became a powerful political movement by taking that option, advocating capitalist ideology, waging culture wars, and espousing a foreign policy of American global domination.

As I argued in two books, *Reconstructing the Common Good* (1992) and *Soul in Society: The Making and Renewal of Social Christianity* (1995), however, there was (continued on page 75)



When asked about his philosophy, Franklin Roosevelt once said, "Philosophy? I am a Christian and a Democrat—that's all." In this mural, The New Deal, Roosevelt in overalls stands benignly protecting labor. Conrad Albrizio's fresco is not overtly a work of the Social Gospel, but it evokes the feeling of the movement, especially given frescoes' historic association with sacred spaces.

Married to Calvin: For Better or For Worse

by Tony Campolo



Protestant Reformer John Calvin (1509–1564) had a vast influence on the creation of modernity. The idea that Calvinism was a critical impetus to the growth of capitalism is better known than the contributions of Calvinism to science, democracy, and environmentalism, and its baleful encouragement to European anti-Semitism.

IT HAS BEEN FIVE HUNDRED YEARS SINCE THE BIRTH OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMER John Calvin. This controversial theologian changed the faith of countless numbers of Christians. His teachings also influenced the values and ethos of the Western world. Developments in the fields of economics, politics, the physical sciences, and environmentalism over the past five centuries all provide witness that Calvin's theology has profoundly conditioned our contemporary worldview.

Calvinism and Economic Behavior

THE RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT THAT CALVIN INITIATED IS BEST KNOWN FOR ITS INFLUENCE over our economic thinking and behavior. Sociologists and economists such as Max Weber, R.H. Tawney, and Talcott Parsons have made us aware of what they call the "functional fit" between Calvinistic beliefs and capitalism. Neither Weber in his essay *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, nor Tawney in his book *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, clearly established a nexus between Calvinism and capitalism, but the followers of these respective schools of thought, as well as most social scientists, seldom question the idea that there is a symbiotic relationship between Calvinism and capitalism.

Weber, on the one hand, tried to demonstrate that Calvinism may have helped to create what he called an "elective affinity" for capitalistic development, while Tawney, a neo-Marxist, argued the reverse. Tawney believed that the emerging capitalistic societies of Europe adopted Calvinist theology because it provided ideological justification for economic practices that hitherto had been considered morally questionable, such as charging interest for money lent to the poor.

Weber recognized that Calvinism provided a necessary alternative to the prevailing Catholic belief that poverty was what marked the character of truly righteous Christians: Calvinism provided positive value judgments on the accumulation of wealth. Following Jesus's words, the Catholics taught that it would be "harder for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle" (Mark 10:25). Obviously, such beliefs about wealth had to be negated if capitalism, which is dependent on the accumulation of wealth for capital investments, was to thrive. Calvinism did just that. Whereas the saints in the Catholic Church were noted for their vows of poverty, Calvinists came to consider economic prosperity as evidence of being chosen by God for special blessings.

A major theological emphasis with Calvinists was, and is, their doctrine of divine election. They believe that those whom God has predestined for salvation will materially prosper. According to their understanding of "the foreknowledge of God" (Romans 8:29), the eternal destiny of each and every one of us is determined before we are even born. Some of us, according to the Calvinists, are predestined to be saved. By implication, they also believe that those who are not among "the elect" are predestined, even before their birth, for damnation. While Calvin himself may have made room for more free will than his followers did, there was, nevertheless, the prevailing belief among early Calvinists that humanity was divided into

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two groups of people—those chosen for salvation and those who, by default, were chosen for damnation.

This dichotomy separating “the saved” and “the lost” posed a very serious problem for Calvinists because they needed a means for determining who among them were saved and who were lost. They needed to come up with some means of establishing who the elect might be. For them, the answer to that question emerged in a belief that those people whom God had chosen for salvation would economically prosper. They argued that the Bible teaches that those chosen to be “the bride of Christ” (as Calvinists defined those who made up the membership of the church) would be showered by God with material blessings.

Calvinists found support for their beliefs about prosperity for the elect in the Hebrew Bible. They argued that whenever the people of Israel were in right relationships with God, they prospered. But when Israel followed after gods other than YHWH, lived lives of spoiled affluence, and neglected the needs of the poor and the oppressed, God brought upon them famine, pestilence, and conquests by their enemies. If you discern in this kind of thinking the rudiments of what has become the “prosperity theology” so often marketed by some television evangelists, you are absolutely right. Also, it’s easy to see why this kind of thinking could provide an ideology for capitalism.

Perhaps even more important than the religious significance that Calvinists gave to the accumulation of wealth was the redefinition and meaning that they gave to work. Whereas Catholicism had established a clear delineation between secular and religious vocations, Calvinism did not. In Catholicism, if Christians wanted to be wholly committed to doing the will of God, they were required to leave their “worldly vocations” and seek service to their Lord in “religious vocations” by becoming nuns, monks, or priests. Calvinism, however, changed all of that by teaching that *every* vocation should be viewed as a calling from God. The differentiation between sacred vocations and secular vocations so well established in Catholic teachings was obliterated by Calvinistic theology.

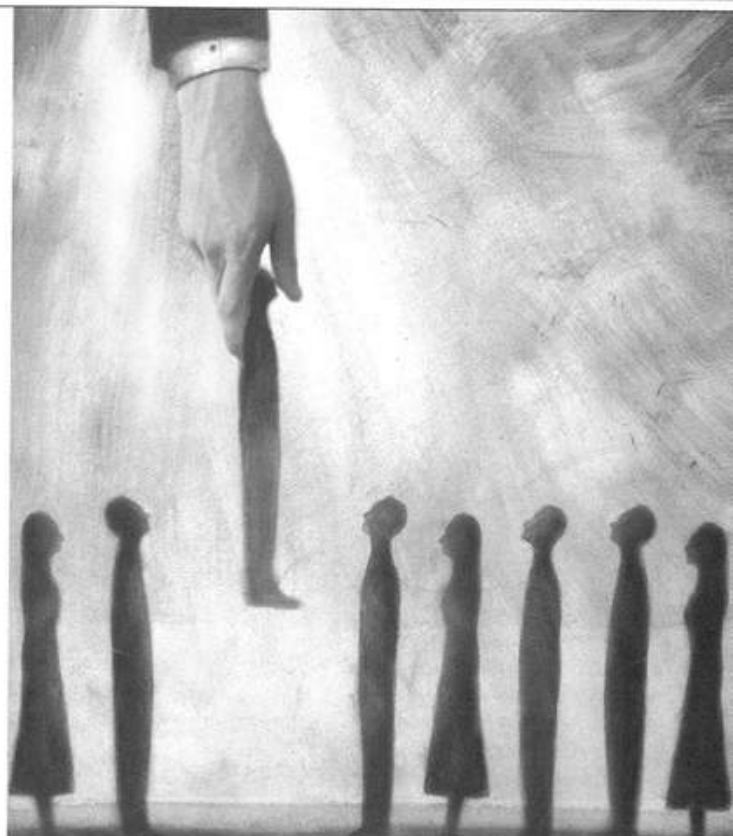
It has been said that Calvin did away with monasteries only to make the entire world into a monastery. Under the impact of Calvinistic teachings, every man and woman, regardless of vocational calling, was taught to understand that his or her work was an assignment from God. In accord with Colossians 3:23, they declared whatever work a Christian undertakes should be done “heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men.”

It doesn’t take much imagination to recognize that if people in their workplaces believe that their respective vocational activities are ministries rendered as the service of God—and that God is always watching them, even when their employers are not (according to their interpretation of Ephesians 6:6)—that they will be intensely diligent in their labors. This, contended sociologists such as Max Weber, caused people to adopt “the Protestant work ethic.”

Calvinism and the Development of Modern Science

WHILE IT IS COMMON TO ASSUME, IN LIGHT OF THE TRIAL OF GALILEO, THAT RELIGION generally has retarded scientific progress, there are sociologists who contend that Calvinists have actually provided a strong impetus for scientific research and development. Robert Merton, one of the former deans of American sociology, in his definitive work, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, carefully assembled evidence from the records of the British Royal Academy of Science that the work ethic generated by Protestantism in general, and from Puritan Calvinism in particular, had much to do with advancements in the physical sciences within the United Kingdom. In a carefully worked-out evaluation of the inventions and discoveries made by the members of the Royal Academy, it became evident to Merton that scientists of note who were Protestants, and especially those who were Calvinists, disproportionately outnumbered those who were Catholics.

Merton surmised that those whose scientific worldview had been molded under



Calvinists' belief in predestination created a problem: how to tell who was saved? Their answer—that prosperity and success proved one was chosen—likely stimulated the growth of capitalism.



In this 1766 painting, Joseph Wright of Derby captures a moment when people's sense of awe and wonder about the universe shifted from a religious to a scientific frame. As the subjects watch a demonstration of the solar system, their faces resemble the phases of the moon. For the Calvinists, no such shift occurred: they believed that to study the universe scientifically was to reveal the glory of God's creation.

Calvinistic Puritanism viewed their work as researchers as a way of serving their God. Such scientists, he argued, viewed their work as commitments to religious vocations. Consequently, these scientists engaged in their research with high levels of dedication, and their commitment to the tasks of scientific inquiry as an expression of the Protestant work ethic advanced the development of modern science.

Still another contribution to their zeal for scientific research, Merton pointed out, was the Calvinistic belief that all knowledge pointed to one truth—the truth of God. For Calvinists, it was not just theological knowledge that pointed to God. They believed that all knowledge provided insights into the nature and character of the Creator. Astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology, and mathematics were all considered, by the Calvinists, to be capable of yielding divine revelations. Imbued with Calvinistic zeal, they believed that in the

discoveries they made, they were adding to humanity's understanding of God every bit as much as did biblical scholars. Geniuses such as Isaac Newton had no doubt in their minds that they were engaged in a holy quest as they explored the laws of nature and formulated mathematical postulates that demonstrated the harmonies of God's creation.

Calvinism and Political Theory

CALVINISM WAS ALSO A SOURCE FOR THE FORM OF GOVERNMENT THAT MARKS OUR SOCIETY. Most novices in the field of political science have a tendency to assume that American political structures were copied from the British. Since so much of the American way of life has been derived from our brothers and sisters in the United Kingdom, it is easy to understand that our constitutional system of government was copied from the British. Indeed, there is little doubt that the writings of Thomas Jefferson were highly influenced by the insights and ideas of the likes of John Locke and other philosophers from the United Kingdom. The reality is, however, that if we stop and compare forms of government, we will be led to conclude that we are much more indebted to the governing ideas nurtured by Calvinism than we are to those of the British Isles.

Pulitzer Prize winner Marlynne Robinson, in her book *The Death of Adam*, makes the case that tendencies toward popular government, as evidenced in New England, can be traced back to 1528, when representative government was established in Geneva, Switzerland. Robinson points out that, as a result of the uprising in Geneva that overthrew the control exercised by the House of Savoy, Calvinists established, in place of the autocratic rule, the model of popularly elected city council members. This new form of government, she claims, was carried along with Calvinists' religion to the Netherlands, and from there the Puritans brought it to America. Robinson deduces that it was the thinking and ways of the Calvinists that really provided the impetus for New England's politics, with its town meetings and representative government. It was from emancipated Geneva that the Dutch, and later those in New England, learned the polity of free elections.

Robinson cites the eighteenth-century American Puritan, John Wise, who wrote in his diary that New England's Congregationalism was a product of Calvinism and, in consequence, established democratic thinking. It was the democracy that was manifested in the Congregational forms of church life established by Calvinistic Puritans that nurtured what has come to be our republic. Robinson claims that Puritans such as John Wise promoted democracy, which they viewed as an outgrowth of Calvinistic Congregationalism as a practical and stable form of government suited to "the natural prerogatives of human beings."

The southern states, which were settled by Christians of the Anglican Church rather than by Calvinistic Puritans, tended to be more inclined toward the policies of British government. It is no surprise to Robinson that the South, unlike New England, established a sharply stratified society that shared the British beliefs that lent legitimacy to the practice of slavery.

Just and Unjust Criticisms of Calvinism

AS ENVIRONMENTALISM HAS COME MORE AND MORE TO THE FORE, THERE ARE THOSE SUCH as Lynn White who have blamed Protestant Christianity, and more specifically Calvinism, for an orientation toward nature that has led to the ecological disasters we now face. In a now famous article published in 1967 in *Science* magazine, White claimed that Calvinism developed what he called a "utilitarian view of nature." Put simply, White declared that it was the Calvinists who taught that the only value that nature has is in the use that we humans might find for it. White believed that Calvinism propagated the idea that God has given human beings *dominion* over nature and that it is our right to exploit nature to satisfy our needs. He pointed out that Calvin wrote in his commentary on the Book of Genesis these words:

We infer what was the end for which all things were created; namely that none of the conveniences and necessities of life might be wanting to man. In the very order of creation, the paternal solicitude of God for man is conspicuous because He furnished the world with all things needful and even with an immense profusion of wealth before He formed man.

It is from such statements that White draws his negative conclusions about Calvinism.

Personally, I choose to argue just the opposite. If we go to Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, his classical *magnum opus*, we will find that John Calvin makes a strong case for environmental responsibility. Consider these words from the *Institutes*:

Let him who possesses a field, so partake of its yearly fruits, that he may not suffer the ground to be injured by his negligence; but let him endeavor to hand it down to posterity as he received it, or even better cultivated. Let him so feed on its fruits that he neither dissipates it by luxury nor permits it to be marred or ruined by neglect ... Let everyone regard himself as a steward of God in all things which he possesses. Then he will never conduct himself dissolutely, nor corrupt by abuse those things which God requires to be preserved.

Granted, Calvin, as a son of the Renaissance, developed a rational orientation toward nature, lacking that mystical disposition toward God's creation that was so evident in the attitudes and words of St. Francis of Assisi. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that a fair reading of Calvin would cause those who follow the thinking of this great reformer to take care of the natural world as a religious vocation.

Calvinism and the Holocaust

ANOTHER SERIOUS CRITIC OF CALVINISTIC THOUGHT IS FOUND IN ERICH FROMM. IN HIS book *Escape from Freedom*, Fromm suggests that Calvinistic thinking contributed to a mindset that allowed for the Holocaust that took the lives of more than six million Jews. Calvinism, along with doctrines promoted by Martin Luther, made much of the claim that, apart from the spiritual regeneration resulting from the saving work of Christ, persons are "totally depraved."

The belief that there can be nothing righteous in anyone apart from Christ was one of the consequences of what most Calvinists believe about "original sin." Calvinists declare that since the time of Adam and Eve and the disobedience to God's will, all humanity has been rendered devoid of God's goodness. "The Fall," as they call it, resulted in the obliteration of anything that was good in human beings, and apart from what Christ can impart to those who surrender to Him, all humanity is damned to eternal punishment. There are some who will argue that this is an extreme distortion of Calvin's teachings. They may be right, because in reality Calvin did say that there is such a thing as "venial grace," which imparts worth to even those who may be deemed "spiritually unregenerate." Nevertheless, Fromm does not concern himself with what Calvin actually said as much as he concerns himself with what the Calvinists have thought he said. That, he contends, is what led many Christians in Germany to view Jews as totally depraved persons, and to view throwing six million of them into ovens at (continued on page 76)

A Broken Frame:

Sephardi Occlusion and the Repairing of Jewish Dysfunction

by David Shasha

AT PRESENT, JEWISH LIFE IS MARKED BY A SERIOUS DIFFICULTY IN DEALING WITH the outside, non-Jewish world and by an equally difficult internal series of intractable conflicts waged within the Jewish community. These conflicts, internal and external, bespeak a particular and insular vision of Judaism that judges the external as problematic. Too often, other approaches to Jewish life are ignored, even though they evolved from the same biblical and rabbinic antecedents.

In the centuries following the production of the Babylonian Talmud, an acculturation took place in the Middle Eastern and Mediterranean Jewish world, a world that was linked by a dynamic and creative rabbinical culture with its roots in the old Levant. This acculturation eventually led to what scholars have called "Arabization." As rabbis and Jewish laypeople of the Mediterranean basin and Near East adopted the Arabic language in the wake of the Islamic conquests, tumultuous changes took place that culminated in the achievements of Moses Maimonides (1138-1204), a figure who traveled from Spain in the West across North Africa to Egypt.

Historians have distorted Maimonides's historical influence in a desperate attempt to misread the immediate developments in the European Jewish world relating to his teachings and value system.

Religious Humanism

TODAY THE SUPREMACY OF MAIMONIDES IS OFTEN TAKEN FOR GRANTED, WHEREAS HIS ACTUAL teaching has been occluded. Maimonides developed a Judaism typified by the Religious Humanism that had been articulated by Middle Eastern thinkers in a polyglot form of Arabic culture. This Humanism infused the various sacred texts and traditions of the region's monotheistic religions with Greco-Roman science and rationalism.

Religious Humanism is a critically important category that is rarely articulated in its precise sense and is even less understood as a basis for Jewish self-understanding. These ideas integrate the parochial values of religion with the universal aspects of human civilization.

A fairly representative example of what this concept signifies can be found in the following two passages, the first of which comes from Maimonides himself and the second from Moses Angel:

It was not the object of the Prophets and our Sages in these utterances to close the gate of investigation entirely, and to prevent the mind from comprehending what is within its reach, as is imagined by simple and idle people, whom it suits better to put forth their ignorance and incapacity as wisdom and perfection, and to regard the distinction and wisdom of others as irreligion and imperfection, thus taking darkness for light and light for darkness. The whole object of the Prophets and the Sages was to declare that a limit is set to human reason where it must halt (*Guide of the Perplexed* 1:32).

Then, charity, which in the doctrine of abstract faith, means love for universal mankind, shall cease to be what concrete religion made it, love only for self and self's imitators. Then,

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man shall acknowledge that true God-worship consists not in observance of any particular customs, but in the humble, zealous cultivation of those qualities by which the Eternal has made himself known to the world. The members of one creed shall not arrogate to themselves peculiar morality and peculiar salvation, denying both to the members of other creeds; but they shall learn that morality and salvation are the cause and effect of all earnest endeavors to rise to the knowledge of revelation. Men shall cease to attempt the substitution of one set of forms for another set of forms; they shall satisfy themselves with being honest and dignified exponents of their own mode of belief, and shall not seek to coerce what heaven has left unfettered—the rights of conscience. They shall strive to remove all obstacles to the spread of God-worship, by showing how superior the happiness, the intellectuality, the virtue of its professors; but they shall stop there, not even for the sake of securing their object preferring their own faith for that of another. This was the original combination under which Christianity was called into existence; this was the power which enabled it to survive the shock which had destroyed all else, and to this must it return before its mission can be perfectly accomplished. What the teachings of Sinai were to the children of Abraham, the teachings of the other mount were to be to the rest of the world; one was not to supersede the other, but to render it accessible (*The Law of Sinai and its Appointed Times*, 288–289).

Religious Humanism is the place where our traditional religious tenets meet with the universal aspects of science and rational culture. The teachings of Maimonides represent for Judaism a significant efflorescence of Religious Humanism, and the struggle against Maimonides was a major attempt to suppress it.

The Maimonidean Controversy

AT THE OUTSET OF ANY DISCUSSION OF RELIGIOUS HUMANISM, WE HAVE WHAT HAS become known as “The Maimonidean Controversy,” which, though accepted as axiomatic, is also murkier to us today than it was when it first emerged.

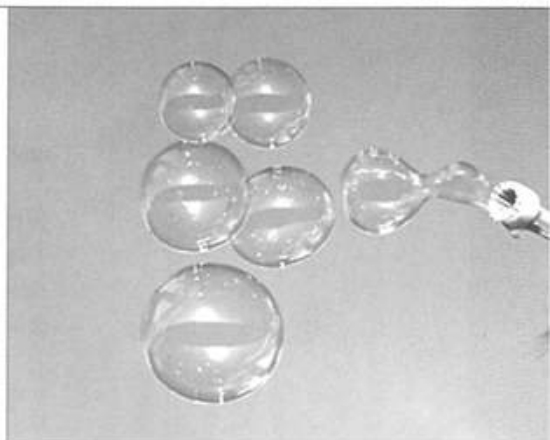
What was at the root of this controversy, and what transpired in its wake?

Central to the problem were the clashing Jewish visions of the two different rabbinical traditions that emerged fully in the wake of the various bans and counter-bans that rose up after the Maimonidean oeuvre was published.

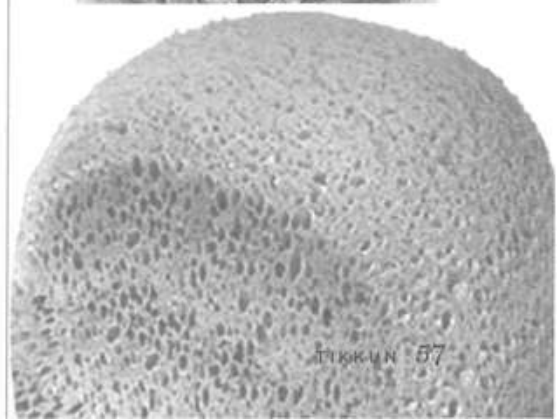
In the century before Maimonides's ministry, an Ashkenazi rabbinical school was founded by Rashi (1040–1145) and built up by Rabbi Jacob Tam (circa 1100–1171) and the members of his Tosafist group. The following basic principles were central to the teachings of the school: a fierce sense of talmudic essentialism, which sought to replicate behaviors, concepts, and beliefs of the ancient talmudic society; an interpretive methodology known as *pilpul*, which adapted this talmudism to the socio-cultural needs of the community; and a hermetic system that sealed rabbinical study off from outside influences and marked talmudic interpretation as an exclusive system that eschewed the modalities of non-Jewish concepts or philosophies.

The emergence and acceptance of the new Maimonidean system in the Sephardic world reverberated in Ashkenazi communities and led to dramatic responses. A cross-cultural penetration of Ashkenazi thinking into Christian Spain in the thirteenth century led to fierce battles on the front lines of the new Maimonidean culture. While rabbis in the Rhineland and Northern France were by and large immersed in their own religious world, the Jewish communities of Spain were deeply impacted by the new learning of Maimonides and his school—a school whose illustrious progenitors included Se'adya Ga'on (882–942), Bahya ibn Paquda (circa eleventh century), Samuel ibn Naghrela (993–1056), and Solomon ibn Gabirol (circa 1021–1057).

Within the new learning was a proclivity to seek wisdom from many different sources. Sephardic learning was not insular like its Ashkenazi counterpart, but took what it needed from any source that could contribute to a better understanding of God's creation.



How do we picture the contrast between a system hermetically sealed off from outside influences, and one that is in constant exchange with the outside world: as a bubble vs. a sponge? On this spectrum, David Shasha locates Sephardic Judaism at the pluralist end symbolized by Maimonides, below. Pre-modern Ashkenazi Judaism, he says, is on the insular end (symbolized by Rashi, above).



We must not follow the current practice of minimizing the impact of the Maimonidean Controversy on subsequent Jewish life. The Maimonidean Controversy led to developments in Jewish law and Jewish thought with which we continue to struggle.

Pre-Modern Ashkenazi Insularity vs. Sephardic Pluralism

THE BINARY TEMPLATE OF THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES SET OUT TWO VARIANT FORMS OF rabbinical Judaism. One was based on an open-ended form of Religious Humanism, while the other laid the seeds for a fundamentalist Judaism.

This binarism lay dormant in Jewish history for many centuries. While Ashkenazi talmudism remained relatively static, as it was exclusively tied to ritual matters and legal theory, Sephardic literary production remained consistently pluralistic and dynamic. Ashkenazi writers worked on talmudic novellae and works of Responsa that often acted as intellectual exercises rather than practical case studies and court rulings. In contrast, Sephardic writers produced works of literature (religious and secular), philosophy, science, ethics, biblical interpretation, history, Hebrew grammar, and many other diverse intellectual studies that spoke to the fundamental centrality of Religious Humanism in the culture.

Religious Humanism sought to link the parochial concerns of the Jewish ritual and liturgical tradition (the element that made Judaism unique among other cultures and faiths) with a concern for what could best be described as the old Greek *paidea*: that form of humanistic learning characteristic of an educated person in the ancient world.

This form of *paidea*, in Arabic called *adab*, became a central part of Jewish learning in the early medieval period and reached its high point in Maimonides's seminal achievements. The various bans and attacks on Maimonides had to do with his Religious Humanism. In the most famous—and egregious—case of this, we see a rabbinical ban on the first book of the Mishneh Torah—*Sefer ha-Madda*—which incorporates humanistic concepts and learning into a discussion of ethical and intellectual principles in Jewish thought and practice. The anti-Maimonidean reaction to this Religious Humanism was swift and decisive. It would forever stigmatize the “humanist” side of Religious Humanism and try to beat back what its detractors saw as alien influences in Jewish life.

Orthodox Insularity vs. Reform Pluralism among Modern Ashkenazim

AS THE MODERN ERA UNFOLDED, EUROPEAN JUDAISM STRUGGLED WITH THE PROBLEMS THAT such rejectionism placed on its ability to adapt to the ways of the world. So long as European Judaism remained locked into ghettos, the matter of acculturation was not seen as a decisive issue. But once Europe began to change and provide to Jews the ability to integrate into their societies, deep conflicts arose in the Jewish world.

Some very basic trends began to emerge in the European Jewish world of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: stirrings of a movement for Reform clashed with the old talmudic schools in Eastern Europe. Moses Mendelssohn (circa 1727–1786), a seminal figure and an observant Jew, was initially seen as a possible danger to the pristine hermetic faith, much as Azariah de Rossi (circa 1513–1578) was seen by an earlier generation. Mendelssohn provided his own take on Religious Humanism by reading some of the new European learning into the Jewish sources.

The confusion created by Mendelssohn's teaching led to a renewed effort in rabbinical circles to refuse any connection with the outside culture. In the long run, Mendelssohn became an icon to the reformers and rejected by what would become known as Orthodoxy. Orthodoxy, a movement created in reaction to the establishment of Reform Judaism, soon closed ranks against the attempt by rabbis to incorporate humanist culture into Judaism.

Such was a repetition of the Maimonidean Controversy that led to new fissures and conflicts in Ashkenazi Jewish culture.

The Balance Shifts

THE CONTINUATION OF MAIMONIDEAN THINKING AMONG THE SEPHARDIC ELITE IN THE EARLY Modern age found brilliant rabbinical figures such as Saul Morteira (circa 1596–1660),

Menasseh ben Israel (1604–1657), Isaac Abendana (circa 1640–1710), David Nieto (1654–1728), and others articulating a Judaism that was comfortable engaging with the new European learning and consistent with the old Maimonidean school and its adherence to the pluralistic values of Religious Humanism.

Massive upheavals shook the early modern Jewish world as many in the Sephardic world embraced the mystical frenzy of Sabbatianism and its anti-rational mystic tendencies. Nevertheless, many Sephardic sages continued to study and promote the old curriculum in places such as Amsterdam, London, Venice, Salonica, and Fez.

During this same time period, a demographic imbalance began to develop between the Sephardic and Ashkenazi worlds. Socio-cultural changes weakened the old Sephardic world and empowered the Ashkenazim. Europe emerged as a major global force, and the power of the Ottoman and Arab worlds waned in the wake of colonialism and the international power politics that crested in World War I. The process culminated in the destruction of the Ottoman Empire and the occupation of the Levant and North Africa by the European powers. Thus would the Jews of Europe rise in the context of Jewish life the world over.

To take but a single example of this phenomenon, we have the figure of Adolphe Cremieux (1796–1880) in France, who reached out to his “less fortunate” brethren in North Africa and drew up a decree to provide Algerian Jews with special protections afforded by the French government. This example shows us the complicated ways in which Europe’s Jews took the lead in world Jewish affairs. And with this change came the emergence of new and often perplexing developments in Judaism and Jewish life.

At the very dawn of the twentieth century, new developments were taking place in the Jewish world that would have a decisive impact on future events.

The Ascendancy of the Ashkenazim, and their Denominational Schisms

A MASSIVE WAVE OF IMMIGRATION BROUGHT EASTERN EUROPEAN JEWS TO THE United States, where they eventually overwhelmed the previous Jewish immigrants, many of whom were Sephardim. A gradual transition took place in American Jewry, from a cosmopolitan Atlantic Judaism (a community that stretched from London to Livorno to Gibraltar to Jamaica to Charleston, Newport, Manhattan and Philadelphia, led by seminal figures such as Isaac Leeser, Sabato Morais, and Henry Pereira-Mendes) to a more complex amalgamation of the diffuse and often warring Ashkenazi Jewish groups that brought to America the conflicts that had been waged in the old country.

It should be remembered that a crucial American figure such as Isaac Leeser (1806–1868), himself an Ashkenazi, acculturated to the Sephardic model in order to work as a rabbi in this country. Just as Rabbi Saul Morteira, an Ashkenazi by birth as well, had adapted to the Sephardic Jewish society of seventeenth-century Amsterdam, so too did the nineteenth-century Jewish Americans adopt the old Sephardic model.

In America, the European immigrant Reformers and the Orthodox were joined by those who sought to remove themselves from the Jewish fold and start a new life in a new world. Jewish unity was not the watchword of the Eastern European immigrants. Replicating the models of the old world, the immigrants broke off into separate factions that reproduced the acrimony of the shtetl world and its tense relationship to the modern age.

A glance at the biography of Sabato Morais (1823–1897) reveals the difficulty in the conferral of names, identities, categories, and concepts on American Jewry. Morais was a major presence in American Jewish life in the second half of the nineteenth century. But today his name is barely known, and those who do mention him often seek to identify him in denominational terms. Both Orthodox and Conservative writers have sought in vain to identify Morais as one of their own.

And yet Morais himself, as was consistently the case among the *(continued on page 76)*

It is time that we
paid respect to the
Sephardic tradition
of pluralism,
tolerance, and
inclusion.

A Holy Curiosity:

The Synergy of Reason and Emotion

by Bradley Shavit Artson

WHEN PEOPLE CONSIDER WESTERN THOUGHT, THEY TEND TO FALL INTO two main camps.

The first camp consists of people who single out logic and reason, and who regard that mode as the core of human identity, as the pinnacle of human achievement, and as the mark of our uniqueness as a species. They hold logical thinking to be in opposition to emotion, which they view as tied to animal existence and an inferior state of being.

The second camp consists of emotionalists who are upset by this exaltation of reason. Members of this group insist that it is passion and feeling that liberate our artistic sensibility, imagination, and deepest ability to connect to the world around us, and that reason is somehow sterile, still-born, not really fully human.

The greats of history line up on one side or another of the divide. Let me share with you the names and views of some people who weigh in on this one:

- Pythagoras, the great Greek mathematician, says, "Reason is immortal, all else is mortal."
- Sophocles, in his brilliant tragedy *Antigone*, writes, "Reason is God's crowning gift to man."
- Cicero, the Roman politician and senator, notes, "He only employs his passion who can make no use of reason." Emotion is a fallback.
- And then we have the French weighing in, of course, on the other extreme: Blaise Pascal teaches, "The heart has its reasons, which reason knows nothing of."
- Rabbi Yisrael Lipkin Salanter, the father of the Mussar movement, teaches, "Man is freed by his imagination, but bound by his reason."
- Felix Frankfurter, Justice of the United States Supreme Court, says, "Fragile as reason is and limited as law is as the institutionalized medium of reason, that's all we have between us and the tyranny of mere will and the cruelty of unbridled, undisciplined feelings."
- The last voice I want to share, who doesn't agree at all with Justice Frankfurter, is Albert Einstein. One might expect him to weigh in on the side of logic and reason, but he does not: "I am enough of an artist," Einstein says, "to draw freely upon my imagination. Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited; imagination encircles the world."

Apparently we must make a choice as to who we want to be in the world. We can identify with Mr. Spock, the guy with pointy ears from *Star Trek*. We can struggle to sublimate our human tendency to emotion and embrace our Vulcan commitment to dispassionate reason. In Jewish tradition the person that comes closest to this ideal is Acher, Rabbi Elisha ben Abuya, who—we are told in the *Gemara*—has the capacity to reason so brilliantly that no other sage could understand what he was teaching; who—even as a heretic—could out-logic the Halachic thinking of Rabbi Meir, his student, who was by far the most brilliant *posek* (authority on Halachic law) of his time. And what does that extreme commitment to reason lead Acher to? Nothing but the charge of heresy!

The other choice is to identify with Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, a brilliant, juvenile, impulsive

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jerk who gives in to his emotion, produces fabulous music, and screws up every life he touches, including his own. In our tradition, that emotional extreme is represented by Samson, the jock who is able to bring the house down, but who could not contain himself in the presence of a Philistine skirt.

A commitment to unadulterated reason and logic (which views imagination and emotion as somehow degraded and a betrayal of the highest heritage of being human), or a commitment to the exclusive rule of passion (the idea that giving in to one's fantasy and emotions is the best and surest way to connect to the world around us, paired with the view that reason is somehow a paranoid defense against honest feelings): these two commitments seem to be the options that Western and Jewish tradition present us. My job is to make that dichotomy problematic.

The Explosive Tale of Phineas Gage

LET'S TRAVEL IN TIME BACK TO VERMONT IN 1848. THE SEASON IS summer, and a man named Phineas Gage is a foreman on a railroad construction project for the Rutland and Burlington Railroad. His job is to supervise the blasting away of the rock by drilling a hole into the rock, pouring gunpowder into the hole, tapping sand over the gunpowder, and then striking the mix with a three-foot-long, thirteen-pound iron peg with sufficient force to ignite the gunpowder. Because the sand is tamped down hard, the explosion is forced down into the rock, rather than up toward the laborers.

On this fateful day, Gage is in the process of pouring the gunpowder when someone calls his name. He turns around and, without thinking, rests the iron rod in the gunpowder. Witnesses report that they heard a powerful explosion and saw a cloud of smoke, and then a metal projectile soaring through the air. This projectile was the iron rod—now a missile—that had pierced under Gage's chin, ripped through his cranium, and then soared high into the air. Gage was found lying down after this escapade, but sat up, talked, had a drink, sat on the back of a cart, and drove on the back of the cart into town to see the doctor, who was surprised to see a man with a hole in two parts of his head where none had previously existed. Gage's coworkers gathered the iron rod and brought it to the doctor, thinking he might find it significant somehow. From that point on and through the rest of his life, Gage refused to part with the iron rod; he carried it with him everywhere.

Gage was fine, ruled the doctor. He was able to speak, he was able to move, he was able to taste, touch, and smell. He was able to engage in rational conversation. He seemed to be OK. Within two months the wounds had more or less healed, and then people noticed something odd about the man. His friends said, "Gage is no longer Gage." This man, who had previously been hardworking, started to lose one job after another. This man, who had formerly been temperate and kind, was now irascible, obscene, and given to such profanity that women were counseled to stay out of his presence. He spent the rest of his life unable to form relationships, alienated from his friends, and unable to hold a job. For a while he was even part of a "freak show" at the circus.

In a brilliant book titled *Descartes' Error*, Neuroscientist Antonio Damasio from the University of Southern California considers this case and many others. He points out that in case after case in which people's brain injuries somehow tamper with their ability to process emotions, even when their reasoning seems unimpaired, the result is that their logical capabilities are diminished. They are not able to use emotion to guide their decision-making. They are no longer able to reach conclusions. It turns out that the view that logic and emotions are separate and opposing faculties is biologically false. Thought requires the input of emotion. Emotion requires the input of thought. These are two different facets of one integrated process.

So What Does the Blend of Emotion and Logic Mean for Us?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT LOGIC AND FEELING ARE INTEGRATED IN A SINGLE MENTAL process? Recall, please, that the purpose of higher learning is not (continued on page 78)



Phineas P. Gage (1823–1860) holds the tamping iron that passed through his brain. Gage appeared to be rational, but his reduced ability to process his emotions made it hard for him to act on his rationality. The author cites this case as evidence that “the view that logic and emotions are separate and opposing faculties is biologically false.”

Culture

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[BOOKS]

Student Power

FREEDOM'S ORATOR: MARIO SAVIO AND THE RADICAL LEGACY OF THE 1960s by Robert Cohen
Oxford University Press, 2009

Review by Bettina Aptheker

JUST BEFORE THANKSGIVING 2009, regents of the University of California, in defiance of unanimous faculty and student opposition, voted to raise fees for admission to University of California schools by 32 percent. Even with financial aid programs proposed by the UC President's Office, this fee increase will force many students to withdraw from school and many others to never seek admission. As is so often the case in such situations, it is students of color who will be particularly impacted in a state in which 57.4 percent of the population—an absolute majority—are people of color. The regents' actions precipitated rolling waves of protests, including sit-ins, by thousands of students on five campuses. At UC Berkeley, police in full riot gear were particularly and gratuitously violent, and several students were seriously injured.

Students in today's protests draw upon a rich history of student activism in the 1960s, some of which is described in this excellent biography of Mario Savio, who led the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley in 1964. This biography could not be more relevant or more prescient in its historical sweep and in the issues galvanizing student activists a generation ago.

On December 2, 1964, more than a thousand students under the leadership of the Free Speech Movement occupied Sproul Hall, the administration building at the University of California, Berkeley. They were protesting restrictions on freedom of speech that the regents had enforced to prevent student participation in the civil rights movement, especially in the San Francisco Bay Area. The previous spring, students had successfully mobilized massive protests against the widespread racial

discrimination in hiring practices in the hotel industry, auto sales, and banking. Within two weeks of the December 2 sit-in, the regents reluctantly passed a resolution stating that henceforth their regulations "would not go beyond the purview of the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution." They were forced to do this after an overwhelming majority of UC Berkeley faculty voted to support the Free Speech Movement, and graduate students and staff went out on a strike sanctioned by the Labor Council. Twenty thousand students attended the consequent victory rally.

The Free Speech Movement sent shock waves through campuses across the country and the world, resulting in changes in university regulations and educational access, teach-ins against the war in Vietnam, and (within three years) the historic, pro-democracy student uprisings in Paris and Prague, Mexico City and Santiago. Among the UC Berkeley students who led and participated in the Free Speech Movement were Jack Weinberg, who is now an international leader of Greenpeace; Jackie Goldberg, who until her recent retirement was a member of the California State Legislature; Rabbi Michael Lerner, now editor of *Tikkun*; and Susan Griffin, feminist author of a dozen best-selling books. Hundreds of others, steeled in the movement's fires, have gone on to distinguished professional careers in every imaginable field and have become partisans for progressive and radical social change. Although this was very much a collective, democratic movement fashioned after the participatory democracy of the Southern Civil Rights Movement, our acknowledged leader was Mario Savio, a twenty-one-year-old philosophy major and veteran of the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer Project.



Mario Savio (center), Bettina Aptheker (right), 1964.

In this book Robert Cohen has written a definitive biography of Mario Savio. He accomplishes the complex task of interweaving Mario's personal story with that of his political engagements, and deftly ties both to the history of the peace and social justice movements that followed. Among Cohen's many strengths as a biographer is his almost uncanny ability to understand Savio's motivations, to see the goodness of his heart, and to honestly consider the psychological demons Savio worked so hard to overcome.

Mario was wounded in childhood by, among many things, sexual abuse. He stammered so badly that he required years of speech therapy. He was a lapsed Catholic who had left the church but deeply believed in the compassion of Jesus and the most radical traditions of liberation theology. As Cohen accurately shows, Mario shunned ideological dogma and celebrity and rebuked administrative incompetence and arrogance during his leadership of the Free Speech Movement. He went on to become a brilliant theoretical physicist for whom a theorem was named. He was a loving husband, an adoring father, and a devoted friend. He died tragically and prematurely in November 1996, well before his sixtieth birthday, while campaigning to stop a proposed hike in student fees at Sonoma State University, where he was a lecturer in mathematics, physics, and philosophy.

In courageously discussing issues of child sexual abuse, Cohen exemplifies a feminist awareness of the ways in which the personal and the political are intertwined. And when Savio engaged in a political or personal struggle, as Cohen demonstrates, he studied relevant experiences, spiritual practices, theories and laws, legislative mandates, and university regulations all

with uncommon attention, perceiving the logic behind them and analyzing their personal, political, economic, and social implications. Mario's eloquence, his belief in goodness and redemption, his personal horror at the suffering he saw in pictures of the Holocaust from his post-World War II childhood, and that he witnessed in the Mississippi in the 1960s, Vietnam in the 1970s, Nicaragua in the 1980s, and Latino/Chicano immigrant communities in California in the 1990s, shaped his life. Cohen includes one hundred pages of Mario's speeches and writings, and we come to appreciate them as a model of passionate intelligence. They also educate us so that we can see the ways in which systems of domination, hierarchy, greed, and aggression are intertwined.

Robert Cohen's biography of Mario Savio is earnest, comprehensive, and written as a compelling narrative that does justice to its subject. For this we can all be profoundly grateful. ■

Bettina Aptheker co-led the Free Speech Movement as a member of its steering committee. She is Distinguished Professor of Feminist Studies and History at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Her most recent book is a memoir, Intimate Politics: How I Grew Up Red, Fought for Free Speech, and Became a Feminist Rebel. (Seal Press, 2006).

THE MYSTERY OF FORGIVENESS

BEYOND REVENGE: THE EVOLUTION OF THE FORGIVENESS INSTINCT

by Michael McCullough, Jossey Bass, 2008

NO ENEMY TO CONQUER: FORGIVENESS IN AN UNFORGIVING WORLD

by Michael Henderson
Baylor University Press, 2008

Review by Roger S. Gottlieb

REMEMBER THAT NERVOUS feeling you have after a fight with your spouse and before you've made up. Or the hidden relish you feel at the thought of payback for some coworker who complained about you to the boss. These are not

emotional quirks or moral failings. Such deep attractions to both forgiveness and revenge are, psychological researcher Michael McCullough tells us, hard-wired aspects of our brain and personality. They are experiential and behavioral tendencies created by evolutionary selection that have proved beneficial in the long-term struggle to carry our genes from one generation to the next.

McCullough confronts head-on the widespread idea that revenge is some kind of disease, for which forgiveness is the proper cure. Rather, both revenge and forgiveness are necessary aspects of human development and, in many cases, the development of other animals, as well. The threat, even the practice, of revenge keeps aggression in check and motivates individuals to take equal responsibility in their groups' tasks and dangers. Forgiveness promotes close ties among families, animal groups, and human communities—ties necessary for mutual support in the fight for survival. McCullough supports his account with various types of evidence, describing how certain Latin American fish have strategies to encourage each other to take equal risks in scouting out predators, or how some of the higher primates are more likely to engage in reconciliation activities like hugging, kissing, and grooming after a conflict than before. He also refers to ingenious computer simulations of the outcomes of various strategies of forgiveness and revenge: a cautious program that allows for the judicious use of each is the most successful in the long run, according to these simulations. Finally, he cites neurological studies that associate feelings of revenge and forgiveness with particular parts of the brain.

Beyond Revenge also targets what McCullough calls the "myth of social science"—the idea that human behavior is totally determined by culture, education, and social pressure, and that we have no hard-wired determinants of how we act. Over the course of the book, he compiles evidence to refute this myth.

The irony of McCullough's position is his conclusion: since we are hard-wired to both forgiveness and revenge, it turns out

that social, cultural, and historical contexts determine which will predominate. If the context leads us to the three necessary steps of forgiveness—seeing former enemies as people who are worthy of care and with whom we can empathize; feeling that they are no longer a significant threat; and witnessing some kind of apology or self-abasement from them—then forgiveness can arise. If the context doesn't meet these conditions, forgiveness is unlikely to arise. In practice then, both with and without the idea that forgiveness and revenge are built in, the context is all-important.

McCullough's book is intriguing and well written, but at times I wonder if he is really confronting the problem of forgiveness as we face it in real life. While he pays a little attention to social conflicts like the one in South Africa—where the truth and reconciliation commissions seem to confirm some of his claims about the necessary stages of forgiveness—the vast majority of his examples come from animals who try to discipline group members or experimental subjects who, for example, get insulted by an experimenter.

Are these kinds of examples really germane to understanding the dynamic of forgiveness in dreadful flare-ups like the recent Israeli incursion into Gaza, with its attendant nearly 1,500 deaths; or the less publicized but clearly much more severe violence between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria, with more than 50,000 deaths; or the civil wars in Lebanon, El Salvador, and Guatemala with over 100,000 deaths in each; or ethnic strife in Darfur, with over 300,000?

Extreme situations like these are the subject of *No Enemy to Conquer*. And in fact many of the narratives in Henderson's serious, thoughtful, and at times compelling book

confirm McCullough's positions, but they also include some important elements that McCullough ignores.

As Henderson himself makes quite clear, his approach is story oriented rather than theoretical, and the heart of his presentation are graphic descriptions of situations in which, after almost unimaginable brutality, some kind of forgiveness and

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reconciliation arise. His book is also something of a collaborative effort, including short, powerful, and widely varied essays by eleven other “forgiveness activists,” including Desmond Tutu, British Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, the late Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, former Ugandan cabinet minister Betty Bigombe, and a number of committed, engaged academics.

Henderson’s book leads us to ask: What will allow us to see our enemies in a new light that will make forgiveness possible? How can a member of an ethnic or political group who raped your sister or murdered your son become someone “worthy of care,” even if he is no longer a threat? For example: how did Judea Pearl, father of the beheaded-for-the-camera journalist Daniel Pearl, commit himself to public action against the kind of “hatred that took the life of my son,” working with a Muslim peace activist in public settings?

From Henderson we know that there are some common points along the journey.

First, there must arise a kind of fundamental revulsion at the process and effects of violence. The broken bodies, families, and communities to which these conflicts give rise must cease to be attractive. An essentially moral horror at the “fruits” of revenge must take precedence over the (evolutionarily based, McCullough insists) pleasure of getting even. Judea Pearl was clear in his assertion that “hate” killed his son, and it was hate that he was opposing.

Only after this kind of perceptual change can empathy arise—a sense of commonality between our grief, frustration, and oppression and that of our enemies. Talking about Ahmed Akbar, his Islamic partner in opposing hatred, Pearl said: “Ahmed was the only Muslim author I read who had expressed empathy for the sense of siege Israelis feel. Empathy is the essence of understanding and the prerequisite to dialogue.”

Third, in order for the transformation of select individuals like Pearl or Akbar to have any public effect, an enormous amount of work is necessary, work that involves listening to the horrific stories of survivors, establishing credibility in

warring communities, and accepting a host of inevitable setbacks.

Many of McCullough’s generalizations, and those of Henderson as well, describe these processes. For those of us who wonder if Palestinian and Israeli, Irish and English, or other warring groups can ever have peace, Henderson’s inspiring examples make clear that any groups, no matter what their history, can be reconciled, if something like the combination of factors described so far occurs.

Yet how do particular *individuals* who themselves have taken part in the violence (and forcefully encouraged others to do so in many of the examples Henderson offers) turn their backs on conflicts that take tens or hundreds of thousands of lives, and come to embrace each other as comrades in the long attempt to heal their common wounds? What gives a person the courage to reject self-righteous hatred and embrace empathy and humility? How can we recognize our own moral weaknesses as well as those of the other side and see that, under comparable conditions, we might act the same way? How do we convince ourselves, on a spiritual and psychological level, that the certainties of conflict are more destructive than the uncertainties of peace, or that love is less painful and more fulfilling than rage and bitterness?

I don’t know, and neither do these authors. They can show some of the conditions under which such shifts in attitude take place, both theoretically and as historical narratives. But no one knows why some people make the necessary changes and others don’t. Despite these authors’ serious attempts to make forgiveness comprehensible, the human heart remains a mystery to us all. Yet at least these books tell us that the changes are possible for us as human beings and have many times, against all expectation, actually occurred. That alone makes both of them very much worth reading. ■

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POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE IMAGINATION

WAR BIRD by David Gewanter

Phoenix Poets: University of Chicago Press, 2009

Review by Sean Enright

WHERE DOES THE IMAGINATION live, and what are its politics?

In David Gewanter’s poem, “American Incognito,” a wounded Afghanistan veteran emails home to say, “As a state ... / Afghanistan is next to Mars.” And in “Hamlet of Merano: The Lotus Eaters,” Gewanter plays with the roles of tour guide and literary historian, knotting together a poem from strands of history and literature, even as he makes something new of the aggrandizing narcotic of the place itself. In both cases the reader can live in a verbal space greater than physical perception or emotional recognition, in the fires sparked by juxtaposition.

A town in the Alps between Italy and Germany, Merano is not only a geographic border, but also a cultural and historical one. Gewanter’s poem is an extraordinary guide to a Merano not in any record, one that hides in imagination’s untouchable shadow, ideal and replete. Pound wrote part of *The Cantos* in Merano; Kafka went there as a cure for tuberculosis (“even Kafka, scowling like Bogart / came to Merano once, for the waters”). This line about Kafka is a wondrous quoting of *Casablanca* that captures the film’s droll irony, as Rick says to Captain Renault, “I came to Casablanca for the waters,” and Renault replies, “The waters? What waters? We’re in the desert,” to which Rick replies, “I was misinformed.”

In the poem’s present tense, undergrad tourists (“the ox-eyed / girls of Appalachian College (study abroad) / stretch for the castle’s champagne grapes, / or play hacky sack in short-shorts ... / O to be a grape underfoot—”) are subordinated to the history of the place. Gewanter summons the Lotus Eaters of Homer, Herodotus, and Tennyson, and the mystical plant that Homer’s sailors eat, which kills their desire to return to the ship and

keeps them locked in their dreams: "The eye sees what it remembers, / the imagination dreams its rut / is fresh, not tragical-comical-historical ... / Who, pocketing the chilly grapes, would not / name himself king here, / and forget who is king?"

We're used to reading political philosophy, history, and cultural objects as themselves first—that is, as definite "non-fiction" texts that revel in linearity and objectivity. Journalism lassoes a topic at best with a fine sprinkling of detail. Gewanter uses politics, history, and culture, but not objectively: he proclaims his poems; character or setting lead, and develop in tone from the set of a character's mouth, the suggestive atmosphere or shape of a landscape. His diction and associations trip us up and force us back to chaotic juxtapositions built within, or by, sentences; his syntax creates a history of his imagination, which we read as an imagining of our history.



In "1972: The Battery," the weather, adolescent political feelings, and sexual maturation ("the battery hums along the leg") conspire with the first hints of adult ennui in the American summer of the Cambodian incursion. Two high school boys, the "Billboard Bandits," are electrocuted during one of their pranks, and their school becomes a battleground. When the bombing in Cambodia begins, the radical students want to leave the flag at half-mast, their private grief for the Billboard Bandits mutating into a public outcry over the political decision. At end, the hippies and the football players face off in an American political contest in miniature, over keeping the flag down in shame or up high in pride.

"American Incognito," a startling, longer poem, unites wounded Iraq war veterans at Walter Reed hospital; the discovery of the spine of a prehistoric beast found in Washington, D.C., in 1898; and a primer on breeding hawks. It's an anguished political howling. A wounded vet who once burned poppies in Afghanistan now finds comfort and forgetfulness only in his morphine treatment ("gorked on pain relief cocktails"). And in the momentous year 2001 when the poem is

set, the future that did happen wasn't "monkeys talking" as in *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Rather, history stepped ahead all over our dreams for it, ridiculously (in the honoring of a Capitolosaurus dinosaur which never really was), politically (in the confused, negating tenure of George W. Bush), and tragically (in a chilling September 11 reference to the moment "when Mohammed Atta decides he cannot date a waitress"). Soldiers patrol in a dust storm in Iraq, a scene crosscut with George W. Bush's DUI and Laura Bush's "vehicular manslaughter" conviction in high school ("the car found guilty").

Gewanter shows great range to superb effect: from "Baudelaire's Day Book (September, 1993: The Cauliflower)"—an imagistic prose-poem of a death-bed vigil—to "War Bird: A Journal," a mad riffing on the 2003 poets' anti-war rally at the White House, in response to Laura Bush's politically minded cancellation of a poetry "salon." Then there's "Desaparecidos: The Unspeakable," a playful poem about modern critical poetical thinking that is also a moving elegy for the silence real grief imposes when language fails us.

The poems are funny, vicious, and swirling. Many are politically motivated, their ironic language lobbying for connections between strata of meanings. How do politics and history and culture sound in the subjective, as something spoken by the poet who cares about the texture of language, the privileged placement of sound and sense, above a layer of "meaning?" Gewanter's history feels personal, a history he creates consciously in the present, as a preparation for the future. We want some of our poems, at least, to be beyond knowing, larger than plot-driven, not necessarily lessons in how to feel or what to see, but voices we catch and chase, like a drowsy consciousness drifting toward sleep, suddenly sharply awake, enlightened or puzzled by possibility. ■

Sean Enright is a poet, novelist, and playwright. His latest play, Home for the Holocaust, is a black comedy about domestic terrorism, and his most recent novel manuscript is The Playboy of Hoboken. He lives in Maryland.

[MUSIC]

QUIET ECSTASY

THE HIDDEN ONE (HANE'ELAM):
JEWISH MYSTICAL SONGS

by Richard Kaplan, Five Souls Music, 2009

Review by Jonathan Seidel

RICHARD KAPLAN'S NEW CD, *The Hidden One (Hane'elam): Jewish Mystical Songs*, presents a powerfully evocative musical dance between the "hidden" and the "revealed," as heard in poignant, immediately haunting silences and in the sparse, understated *nigunim* (melodies without words) found in subtle doses throughout the album.

Vocalist and cantor Kaplan, accompanied by an ensemble of stellar musicians and singers, has created a prayerful gem of a CD that I (as one who deeply resonates with Sephardic and Hasidic music) believe will become a classic. It's as if he were channeling the primordial music of a barely known, esoteric kabbalistic sect, situated somewhere in the spaces between Haim ben Attar (the famous Sephardic mystic who influenced the birth of Hasidism) and the Ba'al Shem Tov. I felt I had somehow heard this music before, perhaps in a previous *gilgul* (incarnation), when we were engaged with a paradigm-shifting Sufi/Sephardic/Hasidic/Proto-Jazz community.

To devotees of Jewish music, this CD is a love song, sung with and without words, sung in Hebrew and Aramaic from the classic liturgy and *Zohar*, or sung to the words of traditional and newly composed *piyutim* (para-liturgical sacred poetry). It is a love song addressed to "You," the very immanent and personal Divinity that so often remains hidden when we create rigid and imaginary boundaries, which rob us of the mystical encounter. The Hasidic/Sufi trajectory present in these recordings beautifully expresses (continued on page 79)



The Hidden One: Jewish Mystical Songs is available at
www.cdbaby.com/cd/richardkaplan2

WAKING UP FROM DENIAL

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sense, the crisis of the economic system ultimately arises from a crisis of perception. The solution to the economic crisis cannot come solely from economics.

A Rite of Passage

A CRISIS LEAVES EVERYTHING WIDE OPEN. It is like a journey through the spaces analyzed by chaos theory, in which a slight fluctuation can result in unexpected and lasting developments. And so in times of crisis our actions can have a much deeper effect than in times of stability.

Until yesterday, economic and material growth seemed to have no limits. We thought progress would never cease to speed up and would bring us ever more prosperity and fraternity. We now know that our ways are not sustainable in economic, energetic, ecological, or psychological terms. As long as the economy was growing we were able to brush aside growing inequalities and ecological degradation. Not anymore. The cognitive bubble is beginning to burst: the real world is here and is knocking hard at our doors—showing up, for instance, as climate change or as declining resources. The interrelated crises of today's world place us at the door of an unprecedented rite of passage, at both a personal and a planetary level.

In traditional societies, rites of passage used to mark the crossing of the threshold between adolescence and adulthood. Our society is now due to cross that threshold. Our contemporary world embodies, in a number of ways, a kind of immature rebellion and hyperactivity: rebellion against the biosphere nurturing us and against a cosmos from which we feel estranged, and hyperactivity in consumerism and in the acceleration that drives us away from the present, making us yearn for fulfillment in a future that never arrives. The crisis as a rite of passage challenges us to reach a contented and sustainable maturity that rediscovers the gift of being in the here and now.

Happy Crisis

CRISIS COMES FROM GREEK *KRINEIN* (to distinguish, to decide, to choose), which is also at the root of *critical* and *criterion*.

During a crisis it is essential to use our best criterion. *Krisis* was the noun used by Hippocrates to describe the turning point in the course of a disease, for better or worse. This medical sense is the only one that *crisis* had in Latin and in most Western languages until the early seventeenth century. The political sense of *crisis* came later, when what had been a matter of the human body was metaphorically applied to the social body. Over the centuries physicians and laypeople spoke naturally of the *good crisis*, the *favorable crisis*, or even the *happy crisis* that leads to the curing of a disease (the expression "happy crisis" was already used in a medical text in 1625). In its original sense, a crisis is an opportunity for healing. In our case the patient is the system: our global crisis is therefore an opportunity to heal an obsolete system, the pathologies of which have until now been hidden behind the false screen of economic prosperity.

The coming years are likely to mark a rite of passage for humanity and the earth, a turning point in the long path of human evolution. We may find ourselves taking part in radical transformations, in luminous dawns and dazzling sunsets. The collapse of the material and ideological structures with which we tried to rule the world shall open spaces for more meaningful ways of being.

In this rite of passage at the end of the modern age, a bad crisis would increase our craving for control, our colonization of nature and of each other, and our gnawing unease. A good crisis would usher us into a postmaterialistic age, reintegrating our economy into the cycles of nature and putting it at the service of personal and social growth. In this postmaterialistic economy, life would be aimed at creating and celebrating rather than at competing and consuming, and consciousness would not be regarded as an epiphenomenon of an inert world, but as an essential feature of a living and intelligent reality in which we fully participate. If in our rite of passage we find ways toward a saner, wiser, and more ecological society, and toward a more meaningful world, it will have been a good crisis. ■

PEACE INITIATIVE

(continued from page 32)

- agreed-upon territorial exchanges. The territorial dimension is the 22 percent and 78 percent formula regarding land between the Jordan River and the sea.
- The majority of settlers would find themselves in the areas annexed to Israel; others would be repatriated to Israel proper or to the annexed areas; and others could remain in the Palestinian state as law-abiding Palestinian citizens.
 - Jerusalem would be the capital of both states (based on the Clinton parameters). In the Old City, either there would be an international regime, or the Jewish quarter would be under Israeli sovereignty and the other quarters under Palestinian sovereignty. Israel would control the Kotel, and the Palestinians would control the Temple Mount/Haram al Sharif. Both sides would agree not to excavate, tunnel, build, or damage the Holy compound without mutual agreement. Jerusalem would be an open city.
 - Palestinian refugees wishing to return would return to the Palestinian state, receiving financial compensation. Israel would acknowledge its part of the responsibility for their refugee status.

The majority of Israelis and Palestinians agree to the above solution and want the conflict to end, but they do not believe that there is a real partner for peace on the other side. If there were a real chance of ending the conflict on the above terms, the majority of Israelis and Palestinians would rally around it, even against their own political leaderships. The Obama administration has the support of the international community to use international diplomatic tools that have never been used before in this part of the world.

What If the Parties Do Not Cooperate? Or What If They Oppose this Plan?

THIS INITIATIVE IS AIMED NOT ONLY AT THE governments concerned but also at civil society in Israel and Palestine. The Israeli peace camp is almost nonexistent. One of the reasons for its disappearance is that a majority of its supporters have become "peace skeptics." In their hearts, they want peace with the

other side; they simply have lost faith that there is a partner for peace. The same reality exists on the Palestinian side, as well. Objectively speaking, there is no reason why Israelis and Palestinians should trust each other or believe that there is a partner for peace on the other side. Both sides have systematically and substantively breached every agreement signed. The second intifada and the continuation of the launching of Qassam rockets into Israel's civilian population after the disengagement from Gaza dealt a fatal blow to the Israeli peace camp. How can you convince Israeli citizens that giving territory back to the Palestinians will gain them peace and security? The Palestinians also cannot be convinced that there is a partner for peace in Israel because every government since the beginning of the peace process has continued with massive settlement building. Israel effectively occupies all of the West Bank, including the cities where the Palestinian Authority is supposed to have full control; indeed, Israel continues to prevent the Palestinians from having any control over some 60 percent of the West Bank.

An effective and realistic international plan backed by the United States and the Quartet would enable the civil societies on both sides to rebuild public support for peace. Realistic and definitive solutions for Israel's security dilemmas proposed by the United States in this initiative would enable civil society to convince the public that Israel's welfare and security would be better served by cooperating with the United States than by continuing the occupation, which compounds rather than relieves Israel's security needs.

The Israel-Syria Track

IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT MORE THAN 80 percent of this track has already been negotiated. The agreements and disagreements have been carefully mapped out by previous U.S. administrations. Over the years, various political leaders and think tanks have floated possible solutions to real threats and to anxieties about perceived threats.

There is little need for the shuttle diplomacy of George Mitchell and his team between Jerusalem and Damascus, or for proximity talks. The issues and the solutions are well known. The United

States should use all known data to draft a model Israeli-Syrian peace treaty and suggest bridging proposals to close the existing gaps. On the basis of the proposed treaty, the U.S. president should invite the Israeli prime minister and the Syrian president to negotiations.

The U.S. proposal must be comprehensive and must relate to all of these issues:

- The Golan Heights
- Security arrangements including demilitarization, peace-keeping forces, observers, early warning detection technology, etc.
- A timetable for withdrawal and demilitarization schedules
- Repatriation of Syrian citizens to the Golan
- Border regimes
- Normalization of relations, such as the exchange of ambassadors, tourism, and economic and other forms of cross-border cooperation
- Water issues
- Syrian relations with Hamas and Hezbollah
- Syrian relations with Iran
- Issues concerning the future of Lebanon-Israel relations that concern Syria
- The Shaba Farms and Raghar—the Alawite village on the Syria, Lebanon, Israel border

The parties should be called to convene in Washington with the United States, and the Quartet should be ready to provide the assurances and mechanisms to guarantee

the full implementation of the treaty and address all of the required security-related proposals.

On both tracks, once the U.S.-led Quartet proposals are on the table, the United States with its mediator at the table would be in a position to put additional bridging proposals in place, with the international community willing and ready to provide for whatever guarantees and assurances are necessary to monitor, verify, and ensure compliance.

Now Is the Time

ONE COULD DEVISE OTHER PROPOSALS—this is only one example. The main point is that there is little time to wait for events to play themselves out. The Obama administration must call for an immediate “time out” to re-think the U.S. strategy for advancing Middle East peace. The Obama administration can, however, push forward with a strategic plan to change the reality on the ground and move the process forward with great speed.

Other Possible Scenarios and Strategies

ALL OTHER POSSIBLE SCENARIOS AND strategies are also based on a process laid down from the outside. These include:

1. The Obama parameters: a revisiting of the parameters put forth by President Clinton on December 23, 2000, less than one month before the end of his administration. Those parameters set the positive course of discussions that were held in Taba, Egypt, in January



A Syrian woman walks past a billboard that says, “The identity of Golan is Arabic Syrian,” in Qunetira, Syria, July 2009. That month, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s top policy adviser said Israel would not meet Syria’s key demand for a peace deal—namely withdrawal from the entire Golan Heights. Gershon Baskin argues that international pressure is needed to force a deal.

2001, and which were stopped ten days before the elections that brought Ariel Sharon to power and ended an Israeli-Palestinian negotiation process. The Obama parameters would be based on Clinton's, with the addition of the regional elements provided in the Arab Peace Initiative.

2. Coordinated unilateralism, based on the plan of Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Dr. Salam Fayyad to build the infrastructures and institutions necessary to create a Palestinian state de facto within two years. This, coupled with the Palestinian plan to gain full UN membership, would advance the creation of the Palestinian state without negotiations.

The government of Israel under Netanyahu has threatened to take unilateral actions against the Palestinians if they advance statehood without negotiations. This is, of course, a serious mistake. Israel has always complained that the Palestinians do not take responsibility for themselves, that they don't have initiative, or that they don't learn from the Zionist model of creating facts on the ground. Now, the Palestinians are proposing to disprove those claims. The Salam Fayyad plan is a Palestinian version of the Zionist enterprise and should be embraced by Israelis and by the government of Israel because the Palestinians are proposing one of the fastest tracks to relieve Israel from the occupation and from the danger of reaching the end of the viability of the two-state solution—meaning the end of the Zionist enterprise.

In order for Palestinian unilateral strategies to work, the United States would have to agree not to use its veto on the Israeli-Palestinian question against the will of the entire international community.

I started presenting in detail on the idea of Palestinian membership in the United Nations in March 2009, and briefed the Middle East envoy to the European Union, Marc Otte, on this idea a couple of days before European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana discussed it publicly in the U.K. The membership strategy is based on changing perceptions of reality and thereby changing reality itself. The “two states for two peoples” solution has been determined.

Even if the government of Israel may be reluctant to recognize this reality and it is hard for the prime minister to utter the words, there is no other solution to this conflict. This is the solution that the United Nations proposed on November 29, 1947 (Resolution 181). On that basis Israel's first Prime Minister Ben-Gurion declared independence; he even based Israel's international legitimacy on that UN Resolution. It is time to go back to where it all started—the United Nations. It is time to implement the principles of that very same resolution.

After floating the “balloon” of membership in the UN for the State of Palestine and receiving swift negative responses from the United States and the European Union, the PLO is now clarifying its position: it is calling for a UN Security Council Resolution to preserve the “two states for two peoples” solution.

The following is a draft of a possible resolution that I sent to the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in April 2009:

Proposal for a New United Nations Security Council Resolution on the Two-State Solution

Expressing its continuing concern with the grave situation in the Middle East, **Emphasizing** the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in which every State in the area can live in security,

Emphasizing further that all Member States in their acceptance of the Charter of the United Nations have undertaken a commitment to act in accordance with Article 2 of the Charter,

Affirms that the fulfillment of Charter principles requires the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, which should include the application of both the following principles:

1. **Withdrawal of Israeli armed forces** from territories occupied in June 1967;
2. **The establishment of the State of Palestine** on the basis of the June 4, 1967, borders, in the areas of the West Bank and Gaza including East Jerusalem;
3. **Termination of all claims or states of belligerency** and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political

independence of **the State of Israel and the State of Palestine** in the area, and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force;

4. The governments of the State of Israel and the State of Palestine will enter into **immediate negotiations between them on the exact borders** between them based on the June 4, 1967, borders with agreed-upon territorial exchanges of equal size and quality. The guiding principle in the determination of the borders is that the State of Palestine will be composed of 22 percent of the territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea and the remaining 78 percent of the territory will be the State of Israel.
5. This settlement will establish **Palestine as the Palestinian homeland**, just as **Israel is the homeland for the Jewish people**. Both states are free to maintain their own immigration policies allowing for the return of nationals to each state respectively. The issue concerning the rights of Palestinian refugees will be dealt with in negotiations between the parties seeking to reach a just and agreed-upon solution that will put an end to the decades of suffering of the Palestinian refugees.
6. The issue of the **rights of Jewish refugees from Arab and Islamic countries** will be dealt with in the framework of bilateral negotiations between Israel and the second parties directly involved.
7. Accepting this Resolution:
 - 7.1 Israel must immediately demonstrate support for the creation of a prosperous and successful Palestinian state by removing unauthorized outposts and ending settlement expansion.
 - 7.2 The government of the State of Palestine must demonstrate that its state will create opportunity for all its citizens, govern justly, and dismantle the infrastructure of terror. It must show that a Palestinian state will accept its responsibility and have the capability to be a source of stability and peace for its own citizens, for the people of Israel, and for the whole region.

8. **In accordance** with the principles laid down in UN Resolution 181 from November 29, 1947, both states will respect the rights of national minorities within their borders and grant them full equality under the law and in practice.
9. **The Security Council recognizes the City of Jerusalem as the capital of both states** and calls on the governments of the two states to negotiate the modalities for application of such in the city.
10. The Security Council recognizes the importance of the Holy Sites in Jerusalem to all three religions and proposes that they be placed under an **international guardianship** guaranteeing free and open access to all people who respect the sanctity of the sites, or under any other acceptable arrangement reached by agreement of the parties.
11. **The Security Council empowers the Quartet** to work with the governments of the State of Israel and the State of Palestine to conclude negotiations on the permanent borders of the two states within one year, including the modalities for the City of Jerusalem. The Quartet will report back to the Security Council on progress of those negotiations on a quarterly basis.
12. In accordance with Chapter VI and Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, the Security Council announces its **readiness to deploy peacekeeping troops** to the State of Palestine to assist and to facilitate the withdrawal of Israeli security forces from the territories of the State of Palestine.
13. The Security Council calls on the General Assembly to act in discharge of its functions under Article 4 of the Charter and rule 125 of its rules of procedure, to:
 - 13.1 Decide that the State of Palestine is a peace-loving state that accepts the obligations contained in the Charter and is able and willing to carry out those obligations;
 - 13.2 Decide to admit the State of Palestine to membership in the United Nations.

Yes, this is a form of imposed solution, but it is the agreed-upon solution that the

entire world supports and the majority of the people here in Israel and the Palestinian territories support. There must be a public “buy-in” on both sides, but that is only possible when both sides can see the endgame clearly placed in front of them. The United States must commit to use its influence and political might to provide the international guarantees for the security of both states and both peoples.

There is no doubt in my mind that the moderate states of the Arab league in the region will fully support this process and provide their financial and political backing for it. The European Union is very likely to support the process with real financial resources and to provide personnel (military, police, and civilian) on the ground to back up the process with the mechanisms and modalities necessary to monitor and secure borders, as well as to prevent importation of explosives and weapons. Russia, China, Turkey, Japan, and other important nations are also likely to provide their backing and support. The United States should further provide concrete and visible positive results of the process stating that once the process is set into motion, the United States will open its embassy to both states in Jerusalem, and it should call on all of the nations of the world to do so as well. Israel would finally have a recognized capital in Jerusalem!

This issue needs leadership, ingenuity, creativity, boldness, and determination. This is what we expect from the Obama administration. We don’t want more of the same. We want and need a real change. This is the moment for making history. ■

CELEBRITY CULTURE

(continued from page 38)

as proof that anyone, even we, can be adored by the world. These celebrities, like saints, are living proof that the impossible is always possible. Our fantasies of belonging, of fame, of success, and of fulfillment are projected onto celebrities. These fantasies are stoked by the legions of those who amplify the culture of illusion, who persuade us that the shadows are real. The juxtaposition of the impossible illusions inspired by celebrity culture and our “insignificant” individual achievements, however, eventually

leads to frustration, anger, insecurity, and invalidation. This juxtaposition results, ironically, in a self-perpetuating cycle that drives the frustrated, alienated individual with even greater desperation and hunger away from reality, back toward the empty promises of those who seduce us, who tell us what we want to hear. We beg for more. We ingest these lies until our money runs out. And when we fall into despair we medicate ourselves, as if the happiness we have failed to find in the hollow game were our deficiency. And, of course, we are told it is.

Human beings become a commodity in a celebrity culture. They are objects, like consumer products. They have no intrinsic value. They must look fabulous and live on fabulous sets. Those who fail to meet the ideal are belittled and mocked. Friends and allies are to be used and betrayed during the climb to fame, power, and wealth. And when they are no longer useful they are to be discarded. In *Fahrenheit 451*, Ray Bradbury’s novel about a future dystopia, people spend most of the day watching giant television screens that show endless scenes of police chases and criminal apprehensions. Life, Bradbury understood, once it was packaged and filmed, became the most compelling form of entertainment.

The moral nihilism of celebrity culture is played out on reality television shows, most of which encourage a dark voyeurism into other people’s humiliation, pain, weakness, and betrayal. Education, building community, honesty, transparency, and sharing are qualities that will see you, in a gross perversion of democracy and morality, voted off a reality show. Fellow competitors for prize money and a chance for fleeting fame elect to “disappear” the unwanted. In the final credits of the reality show *America’s Next Top Model*, a picture of the woman expelled during the episode vanishes from the group portrait on the screen. Those cast aside become, at least to the television audience, non-persons. Life, these shows teach, is a brutal world of unadulterated competition. Life is about the personal humiliation of those who oppose us. Those who win are the best. Those who lose deserve to be erased. Compassion, competence, intelligence, and solidarity with others are forms of weakness. And those who do not achieve celebrity status, who do not win the prize

money or make millions in Wall Street firms, deserve to lose. Those who are denigrated and ridiculed on reality television, often as they sob in front of the camera, are branded as failures. They are responsible for their rejection. They are deficient.

In an episode from the second season of the CBS reality game show *Survivor*, cast members talk about exceptional friendships they have made within their “tribe,” or team. Maralyn, also known as Mad Dog, is a fifty-two-year-old retired police officer with a silver crew cut and a tall, masculine build. She is sunning herself in a shallow stream, singing “On the Street Where You Live.” Tina, a personal nurse and mother, walks up the stream toward her.

“Sing it, girl! I just followed your voice.”

“Is it that loud?”

“Maralyn, she’s kind of like our little songbird, and our little cheerleader in our camp,” Tina says in an interview. “Maralyn and I have bonded, more so than I have with any of the other people. It might be our ages, it might just be that we kind of took up for one another.”

We see Tina and Maralyn swimming and laughing together in the river.

“Tina is a fabulous woman,” says Maralyn in an interview. “She is a star. I trust Tina the most.”

Maralyn and Tina’s tribe, Ogakor, loses an obstacle course challenge, in which all the tribe members are tethered together. If one person falls, the entire team is slowed. Mad Dog Maralyn falls several times and is hauled back to her feet by Colby, the “cowboy” from Texas.

Because they lost, the members of Ogakor must vote off one of their tribe members. The camera shows small groups of twos and threes in huddled, intense discussion.

“The mood in the camp is a very sad mood, but it’s also a very strategic mood,” says Tina. “Everyone’s thinking, ‘Who’s thinking what?’”

The vote is taken at dusk, in the “tribal council” area. It resembles a set from Disney World’s Adventureland. A ring of tall stone monoliths is stenciled with petroglyphs. Torches flicker above. A campfire blazes in the center of the ring. Primitive drums and flutes accompany the scene.

The Ogakor team arrives at dusk, each

holding a torch. They sit before *Survivor*’s host, Jeff Probst.

“So I just want to talk about a couple of big topics,” says Probst, who wears a safari outfit. “Trust. Colby, is there anyone here that you don’t trust, wouldn’t trust?”

“Sure,” says Colby.

“Tell me about that.”

“Well, I think that’s part of the game,” says Colby. “It’s way too early to tell exactly who you can trust, I think.”

“What about you, Mitchell? Would you trust everyone here for forty-two days?” asks Probst. “I think the motto is, ‘Trust no one,’” answers Mitchell. “I have a lot of faith in a good number of these people, but I couldn’t give 100 percent of my trust.”

“What about you, Mad Dog?” asks Probst. “These all your buddies?”

Maralyn looks around at her team members. “Yes,” she says unequivocally. “Yes. And, Jeff, I trust with my heart.”

“I think friendship does enter into it at some point,” says Jerri. “But I think it’s very important to keep that separate from the game. It’s two totally different things. And that’s where it gets tricky.” Jerri will say later, as she casts her vote, “This is probably one of the most difficult things for me to do right now. It’s purely strategic, it’s nothing personal. I am going to miss you dearly.”

“Jeff,” Maralyn breaks in. “I’m *conjoined* with Tina. She is a constellation. And, the cowboy [Colby]! The poor cowboy has dragged me around so many times [during the obstacle course challenge]. I appreciate it.”

“I’d do it again,” laughs Colby broadly.

“Hey, you hear that? He’d do it again!” says Maralyn.

It is time to vote. Each team member walks up a narrow bridge lit by flaring torches, again looking like something out of Disney’s Enchanted Tiki Room, made of twisted logs lashed with vines, to a stone table. They write the name of the person they want to eliminate and put it in a cask with aboriginal carvings. Most of the votes are kept anonymous, the camera panning away as each person writes. But as Tina, Mad Dog Maralyn’s best friend and “constellation,” casts her vote, she shows us her ballot: Mad Dog. “Mad Dog, I love you,” she says to the camera, “I value your friendship more than anything. This vote has

everything to do with a promise I made, it has nothing to do with you. I hope you’ll understand.” She folds her vote and puts it in the cask.

“Once the vote is tallied, the decision is final, and the person will be asked to leave the tribal council area immediately,” says Probst.

Five people of the seven voted to eliminate Maralyn.

“You need to bring me a torch, Mad Dog,” says Probst. She does so, first taking off her green baseball cap and putting it affectionately on Amber, who sits next to her and gives her a hug. The camera shows Tina looking impassive.

“Mad Dog,” says Probst, holding the flaming torch Maralyn has brought him, “the tribe has spoken.” He takes a large stone snuffer and extinguishes the torch. The camera shows Maralyn’s rueful face behind the smoking, blackened torch. “It’s time for you to go,” says Probst. She leaves without speaking or looking at anyone, although there are a few weak ‘byes from the tribe.

Before the final credits, we are shown who, besides her friend Tina, voted to eliminate Maralyn. They are Amber, who gave Maralyn a farewell hug, along with Mitchell, Jerri, and Colby, Maralyn’s “cowboy.”

Celebrity culture plunges us into this moral void. No one has any worth beyond his or her appearance, usefulness, or ability to “succeed.” The highest achievements in a celebrity culture are wealth, sexual conquest, and fame. It does not matter how these are obtained. These values, as Sigmund Freud understood, are illusory. They are hollow. They leave us chasing vapors. They urge us toward a life of narcissistic self-absorption. They tell us that existence is to be centered on the practices and desires of the self rather than the common good. The ability to lie and manipulate others, the very ethic of capitalism, is held up as the highest good. “I simply agreed to go along with [Jerri and Amber] because I thought it would get me down the road a little better,” says young, good-looking Colby in another episode of *Survivor*. “I wanna win. And I don’t want to talk to anybody else about loyalties—don’t give me that crap. I haven’t trusted anyone since day

one, and anyone playing smart should have been the same way."

The cult of self dominates our cultural landscape. This cult shares within it the classic traits of psychopaths: superficial charm, grandiosity, and self-importance; a need for constant stimulation; a penchant for lying, deception, and manipulation; and the inability to feel remorse or guilt. This is, of course, the ethic promoted by corporations. It is the ethic of unfettered capitalism. It is the misguided belief that personal style and personal advancement, mistaken for individualism, are the same as democratic equality. In fact, personal style, defined by the commodities we buy or consume, has become a compensation for our loss of democratic equality. We have a right, in the cult of the self, to get whatever we desire. We can do anything, even belittle and destroy those around us, including our friends, to make money, to be happy, and to become famous. Once fame and wealth are achieved, they become their own justification, their own morality. How one gets there is irrelevant. Once you get there, those questions are no longer asked.

It is this perverted ethic that gave us Wall Street bankers and investment houses that willfully trashed the nation's economy, stole money from tens of millions of small shareholders who had bought stock in these corporations for retirement or college. The heads of these corporations, like the winners on a reality television program who lied and manipulated others to succeed, walked away with hundreds of millions of dollars in bonuses and compensation. In his masterful essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Walter Benjamin wrote, "The cult of the movie star, fostered by the money of the film industry, preserves not the unique aura of the person but the 'spell of the personality,' the phony spell of a commodity."

According to C. Wright Mills, "The professional celebrity, male and female, is the crowning result of the star system of a society that makes a fetish of competition." Mills added:

In America, this system is carried to the point where a man who can knock a small white ball into a series of holes in the ground with more

efficiency and skill than anyone else thereby gains access to the President of the United States. It is carried to the point where a chattering radio and television entertainer becomes the hunting chum of leading industrial executives, cabinet members, and the higher military. It does not seem to matter what the man is the very best at; so long as he has won out in competition over all others, he is celebrated. Then, a second feature of the star system begins to work: all the stars of any other sphere of endeavor or position are drawn toward the new star and he toward them. The success, the champion, accordingly, is one who mingles freely with other champions to populate the world of the celebrity.

Degradation as entertainment is the squalid underside to the glamour of celebrity culture. "If only that were me," we sigh, as we gaze at the wealthy, glimmering stars on the red carpet. But we are as transfixed by the inverse of celebrity culture, by the spectacle of humiliation and debasement that characterizes tabloid television shows such as *The Jerry Springer Show* and *The Howard Stern Show*. We secretly exult, "At least that's not me." It is the glee of cruelty with impunity, the same impulse that drove crowds to the Roman Colosseum, to the pillory and the stocks, to public hangings, and to traveling freak shows.

Celebrity is the vehicle used by a corporate society to sell us these branded commodities, most of which we do not need. Celebrities humanize commercial commodities. They present the familiar and comforting face of the corporate state. Supermodel Paulina Porizkova, on an episode of *America's Next Top Model*, gushes to a group of aspiring young models, "Our job as models is to sell." But they peddle a fake intimacy

and a fantasy. The commercial "personalizing" of the world involves oversimplification, distraction, and gross distortion. "We sink further into a dream of an unconsciously intimate world in which not only may a cat look at a king but a king is really a cat underneath, and all the great power-figures Honest Joes at heart," Richard Hoggart warned in *The Uses of Literacy*. We do not learn more about Barack Obama by knowing what dog he has bought for his daughters or if he still smokes. This personalized trivia, passed off as news, diverts us from reality.

In his book *Celebrity*, Chris Rojeck calls celebrity culture "the cult of distraction that valorizes the superficial, the gaudy, the domination of commodity culture." He goes further:

Capitalism originally sought to police play and pleasure, because any attempt to replace work as the central life interest threatened the economic survival of the system. The family, the state, and religion engendered a

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variety of patterns of moral regulation to control desire and ensure compliance with the system of production. However, as capitalism developed, consumer culture and leisure time expanded. The principles that operated to repress the individual in the workplace and the home were extended to the shopping mall and recreational activity. The entertainment industry and consumer culture produced what Herbert Marcuse called 'repressive desublimation.' Through this process individuals unwittingly subscribed to the degraded version of humanity.

This cult of distraction, as Rojeck points out, masks the real disintegration of culture. It conceals the meaninglessness and emptiness of our own lives. It seduces us to engage in imitative consumption. It deflects the moral questions arising from mounting social injustice, growing inequalities, costly imperial wars, economic collapse, and political corruption. The wild pursuit of status and wealth has destroyed our souls and our economy. Families live in sprawling mansions financed with mortgages they can no longer repay. Before the meltdown, consumers recklessly rang up Coach handbags and Manolo Blahnik shoes on credit cards because they seemed to confer a sense of identity and merit. Our favorite hobby, besides television, used to be—until reality hit us like a tsunami—shopping. Shopping used to be the compensation for spending five days a week in tiny cubicles. American workers are ground down by corporations that have disempowered, used, and now discarded them.

Celebrities have fame free of responsibility. The fame of celebrities, wrote Mills, disguises those who possess true power: corporations and the oligarchic elite. Magical thinking is the currency not only of celebrity culture, but also of totalitarian culture. And as we sink into an economic and political morass, we are still controlled, manipulated, and distracted by the celluloid shadows on the dark wall of Plato's cave. The fantasy of celebrity culture is not designed simply to entertain. It is designed to keep us from fighting back. ■

IN MY FLESH I SEE GOD (continued from page 45)

player A and asking her to split this amount with player B—whom she has not known until now—at her own discretion. The instructions given to both players are as follows: If player B agrees to the mode of distribution chosen by player A, both players take home their share. Should player B refuse to agree, the entire amount is collected by the experimenter rather than the players. Both A and B are then dismissed; no second chance is granted (this is why the experiment earned the name "Ultimatum Game").

How do "normal" humans behave in the "Ultimatum Game"? As we might have already guessed intuitively, player B agrees to a 50:50 distribution offered by player A 100 percent of the time. The agreement rate changes only insignificantly if player A chooses a 60:40 or 70:30 distribution in her favor, but decreases rapidly from an 80:20 ratio on. This is the case even though just €20 (or only €10) would be an advantage for player B compared to the alternative of going home without any money at all, assuming that humans behaved like "homo economicus." Yet we rightly feel that player B will generally not behave as a *zweck-rational* (objective-rational) decision-maker." So what happens in player B's brain when player A makes him an unacceptable (since deemed unfair) offer (e.g., 90:10)? Analysis based on functional magnetic resonance imaging shows that disgust centers are massively activated. These networks of nerve cells in an area of the "insula" brain region would also become active if player B were to smell a disgusting substance.

To summarize, current-day brain research can offer three central statements to add to the anthropological mosaic:

1. Human beings are geared toward social acceptance in their innermost neurobiological drives and motivations. This is the reason why we are willing to take pains to receive the appreciation of our fellow humans.
2. The brain experiences social exclusion or humiliation as it would physical pain. As a result, it responds with aggression

(or depression), as it would respond to inflicted pain.

3. Humans have a physically (neurobiologically) anchored feeling of social fairness.

When considering these points, it's important to note that, on the one hand, human beings vitally rely on social acceptance, but on the other hand, humans are not equipped with the natural automatisms (instincts) necessary for sufficiently pro-social behavior. Evolution has dropped us off, so to say, "halfway there." For humans, closing the gap between our pro-social biology and our actual social behavior is a task, a project. Culture is what bridges that gap.

We Are Wired for the Rabbinic Dream of a Caring Society

WHAT ARE THE RAMIFICATIONS—SOCIAL, economic, political, and spiritual—of this deeper look into our "flesh"? We'd like to touch on this, even though a full discussion would require far more space than we have here.

First, recent brain research undercuts the claim that our present economic, political, and educational systems are the only realistic option. There are naturally satisfying alternatives to legal, economic, political, and educational institutions built on aggressive competition and/or the humiliation of others.

We need to strongly qualify the ideologies that, in support of such institutions, assert the inherently aggressive nature of human beings. We need to recognize that aggressive and/or destructive forms of competition derive from specific types of interpersonal behavior, as well as from the institutional structures that assign social roles and mediate the distribution of material, emotional, and intellectual resources. We are not trapped in an innately antagonistic biology.

Second, while only abundance promises the complete elimination of competition for resources, it is cooperation and mutual recognition that will give us the greatest satisfaction as we work out how we will share resources, whether scarce or abundant.

This means that the rabbinic notion of true strength as manifested not in dominating others but in caring for them and protecting them is not merely a utopian dream. We are in fact wired for it. We can build our culture on the notion that we are here to care for and support each other. We need only rethink, not eliminate, our notions of glory, honor, triumph, winning, achievement, etc., so that humiliation of others is eliminated.

Third, the spiritual and the biological are friends, not enemies. The search for positive "interconnectedness," a fundamental component of all human spirituality, is biologically essential to human happiness. But this satisfaction does not come from assimilating the individual person to a group. It comes from mutual recognition. Buber was right: despite the inevitability of I-It relationships, the deepest spiritual and biological fulfillment, even reality, lies in I-Thou relationships. ■

SUNNI-SHIA SECTARIANISM (continued from page 47)

such rituals socially useful, as a means of defining and demarcating a minority community and safeguarding it from being absorbed by a dominant majority.

The "Hidden Imam" and the Purging of the World

ONE OTHER DISTINCTIVE ITHNA-'ASHARI practice should be noted in this context: veneration for the twelfth Imam. Ithna-'Ashari Shias believe that in the ninth century, Muhammad al-Muntazar, the twelfth Imam, was on the point of being murdered by the reigning Sunni caliph. Allah intervened, however, and protected the Imam by causing him to enter *al-ghaybah* (occultation): he became invisible and hidden from his persecutors. The twelfth Imam is still alive but will return to usher in Judgment Day, fill the earth with justice, and execute *intiqam* (vengeance or retribution) against all those who have made Shias suffer.

While looking forward to this retribution, Shias are permitted to practice *taqiyyah* (protective dissimulation) by

pretending to be Sunnis and disguising their religious identity for survival's sake while residing among a potentially hostile non-Shia population. To this day, Shia congregational prayers include invocations to *Sahib al-zaman* (one of the Twelfth Imam's titles: "the lord of time" or "lord of the age"). When this Hidden Imam returns to earth, he will bear the title *al-Mahdi* ("the one who is divinely guided").

Khomeinist Politics and Iran's Bid for Leadership of Global Islam

THE HISTORY AND RITUALS NOTED ABOVE are worth knowing about because they figure in the increasingly fierce sectarian polemics linked to the Iranian Islamic Republic's bid for leadership of global Islam. The regime in Teheran, fully aware of the widespread hostility to Shiism among Sunni populations, has pursued a policy—dating back to the reign of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini—of downplaying its Shia identity in international pronouncements directed to the general Muslim public. Hence Iran's support for the militant group Hamas; hence Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's frequent televised appearances featuring maps of Palestine and photos of Jerusalem's Dome of the Rock. Support for Palestinian militancy constitutes an attempt to gain popularity among Sunni Arabs by focusing on shared objects of revulsion: Israel, Zionism, and America.

Saudi-based Wahhabi Salafists, eager to derail Iran's drive for leadership, have been reminding Sunnis of precisely those sectarian differences that are most likely to keep anti-Shia sentiment alive. The first of these differences (and one that Sunni informants referred to angrily, in interviews I conducted in Yemen and Pakistan) involves the centuries-old Shia practice called *sabb al-sahabah* (reviling the companions). As noted above, Shias to this day fault those companions of Muhammad who blocked Ali ibn Abi Talib from the caliphate; particular blame is focused on the first two caliphs, Abu Bakr and Umar. Since Sunnis revere these two figures as "rightly guided" Muslim leaders, this is a particularly sore point. Partly because of this issue, Shias are sometimes derided with the term *Rafidi* (rejectionist or renegade), a pejorative that recurs in present-day anti-Shia polemics.

The Dangling Corpse: Sectarian Politics in the Thousand and One Nights

"REVILING THE COMPANIONS" HAS A LONG pedigree that can be discerned even in the celebrated medieval collection of stories known as the *Kitab al-faylah wa-laylah* (the Book of the Thousand and One Nights). The story I have in mind features the famous Abbasid caliph Harun al-Rashid and comes from a nineteenth-century Arabic edition of the Nights published in Egypt (a country with an overwhelmingly Sunni population).

Harun wrongly suspects the story's hero—a young man named 'Ala al-Din—of a crime, has him arrested, and orders him killed. Unknown to Harun, the hero escapes and another prisoner is hanged instead. Thereafter the caliph announces a desire to see 'Ala al-Din's corpse hanging from the gallows. Accompanied by his vizier Ja'far, Harun goes to the execution ground but becomes suspicious when he sees the dangling corpse.

"Then," we are told, "Harun ordered the corpse to be brought down from the gallows. When they brought it down, he found inscribed on the bottoms of its feet the names of the 'two sheikhs' [that is, Abu Bakr and Umar]. Then Harun said, 'O vizier, 'Ala al-Din was a Sunni, and this fellow is a *Rafidi*!'"

Inscribing these names on the bottoms of one's feet is a way of reviling Abu Bakr and Umar with every step one takes. The assumption underlying this episode, of course, is that only a Shia "rejectionist" would dishonor the first two caliphs like this. The fact that the storyteller doesn't bother to explain this suggests how widespread among the Sunni audience of the Nights this perception of Twelver Shia attitudes and behavior was. The story may also dramatize Sunni impressions of the doctrine of *taqiyyah*: as a crypto-Shia, this *Rafidi* outwardly appeared to be an orthodox Sunni, but concealed beneath his feet was his contempt for the "two sheikhs."

"Standardized Islam" and Exporting the Iranian Revolution

THE SECOND SECTARIAN ISSUE THAT appears frequently today involves matam lamentation rituals during the annual Muharram season. Since 1994, Ali

Khamenei, Khomeini's successor as supreme leader of Iran, has issued fatwas forbidding the public performance of self-flagellation. Khamenei's stated justification? "It is not a question of individual or physical harm," he has argued, "but of great injuries linked to the reputation of Islam." In forbidding the public performance of bloody *matam*, he's claimed that outsiders might point to this ritual in order to "present both Islam and Shiism as an institution of superstition."

Khamenei's fatwas represent a trend currently discernible among competing Shia and Sunni missionaries: the attempt to eradicate traditional, regionally based forms of Muslim worship and replace them with a standardized and homogenized version of Islam—a global Islam that would be easier to supervise from one centralized source.

These fatwas have encountered considerable resistance. Shias I have visited since the 1990s in Muslim locales in Pakistan and India continue to stage spectacularly bloody public performances of *matam*. They express resentment at what they see as attempts by Iranian outsiders to meddle in local affairs. Sunni polemicists, for their part, regard Khamenei's decrees as a ruse to disguise Shiism's inherently unorthodox and un-Islamic character and as a tactic to further the Khomeinist policy of *tasdir al-thawrah al-iraniyah* (exporting the Iranian revolution).

Rushing to the Apocalypse? Ahmadinejad and the Theology of the "Hasteners"

THE THIRD SECTARIAN DIFFERENCE THAT has drawn attention in recent years involves devotion to the twelfth Imam. Insurrectionist and militant movements have often invoked this figure. An example is Muqtada al-Sadr's Iraqi Shia militia known as *Jaysh al-Mahdi* (the Mahdi Army).

Among the more notorious devotees of the Mahdi in recent years is Iran's Ahmadinejad. For centuries many Shias have favored a theological stance known as *intizar* (awaiting, expectation): rather than wage war against tyrants and other earthly incarnations of injustice, faithful Shias avoid political confrontations and adopt a quietist position, piously awaiting the

Mahdi's appearance among us. But Ahmadinejad belongs to a sect known as the *Ta'jiliyan* (those who bring [something] about quickly, or the "Hasteners").

This sect claims that believers can, through their actions, "hasten" the twelfth Imam's apocalyptic return. An October 2009 BBC broadcast noted that Ahmadinejad ended a speech he gave at the United Nations with a prayer for the Mahdi's appearance: "O mighty Lord, I pray to you: hasten the emergence of the promised one, that perfect and pure human being." The BBC noted that Ahmadinejad has supervised the rebuilding of the Jamkaran Shrine in southern Teheran (from which the Mahdi will one day arise, according to Twelver belief) and that Iran's president claims to be in personal contact with the Hidden Imam.

Ahadinejad's version of "Hastener" theology was explored at the 2009 Herzliya Conference, an annual gathering on Israeli security issues, in a presentation by the researcher Shmuel Bar. Bar remarked that "Ahmadinejad's declared objective ... is to hasten the appearance of the Hidden Imam. This is to be accomplished through the precipitation of a clash of civilizations between the Islamic world and the West."

It should be noted that Iran's political-clerical leadership is divided on this issue. Nevertheless, in light of Iran's drive to acquire nuclear capability, and the very real possibility that the Islamic Republic will develop nuclear weaponry, Ahmadinejad's Hastener devotionism is—to put it mildly—not reassuring. This prospect, of a nuclear-armed and ever-more influential Iran, has spurred Saudi Arabia's Wahhabi Salafists to do whatever they can to lessen their adversary's prestige by portraying Iran as "Persian" and Shia, and hence as alien and heterodox in the eyes of Sunni Arabs.

Sunni-Shia Polemics, from the Palestinian Territories to Yemen

SECTARIAN POLEMICS HAVE ALSO ARISEN in intra-Palestinian politics (despite the fact that almost all Palestinian Muslims are Sunni). Members of Fatah have taken to taunting their rivals in Hamas by calling them "Shia"—a derogatory reminder of the support given Hamas by Teheran.

Competition between Sunnis and Shias has also become manifest recently in the realm of religious conversion from one denomination to another within Islam. A current arena for such competition is Yemen. The target: a segment of Yemen's population known as the Zaydis. Zaydi religious teachings, although historically derived from Shiism, occupy a doctrinal position that shares features of both Sunnism and Shiism. Zaydis I interviewed in Sanaa (Yemen's capital) in May and June 2009 acknowledged that since the abolition of Yemen's Zaydi Imamate in 1962 and the subsequent diminishment of Zaydi political power, many young Zaydis are ideologically adrift and uncertain of their own communal identity.

Saudi-funded missionaries have succeeded in converting some Zaydis to Wahabi puritanism. Other Zaydis, however, are drawn to Iran's Khomeinist propaganda. Government sources in Yemen accuse Iran of funding the Houthi rebels in northern Yemen's Saada province, along the Saudi border (the Houthis are militant Zaydis whose leadership comes from the family of Badr al-Din al-Houthi). The Houthis deny that they are funded by Teheran, and they repudiate the claim made by many Yemeni Sunnis that Houthis have secretly converted to the Twelver Shiism that is Iran's state religion.

But Zaydis I met in Sanaa told me that Houthis take inspiration from Iran and Hezbollah and that they like the feeling of joining a worldwide movement, a universal struggle against what are perceived as satanic forces at loose in the world. A Houthi apologist recited for me the Houthi slogan: "*Allahu akbar al-mawt li-Amrika al-mawt li-Isra'il al-la'nah 'ala al-yahud al-nasr lil-islam*" ("Allah is great. Death to America. Death to Israel. May the Jews be cursed. Victory belongs to Islam.")

Internet web postings offer further perspectives on the situation in Yemen. Twelver Shia missionaries refer to individuals who convert to their form of Islam as *mustabsirun* (those who have become endowed with insight). The Arabic-language website of the pro-Shia *Markaz al-abhath al-'aqa'idiah* (Office of Doctrinal Research) offers the personal testimony of

former Sunnis and Zaydis who are now listed as mustabsirun.

Their backgrounds are varied. One is a journalist; another, a highly educated attorney with wide travel experience. A third is presented as a one-time Wahhabi; a fourth, as an anti-Shia zealot who originally set out to write a book refuting Twelver doctrine. But they have something in common. The website portrays them all as restless spiritual questers, who independently did research on Twelver Shiism and became so impressed with what they learned that they spontaneously became mustabsirun.

When I mentioned the mustabsirun phenomenon to a Sunni mosque-leader I met in Sanaa, he rejected any notion of the sincerity of their conversion, insisting that such individuals were no more than pawns in a Teheran-based plot to take control of Yemen secretly. "The Iranians," he said, "will use these converts as part of their conspiracy to rule our country from afar."

Yemen, it seems, offers a storm-warning of what is to come: increasingly polemical competition between Sunni and Shia ideologues for the leadership of global Islam. ■

COMMONWEALTH ECONOMICS

(continued from page 51)

something terribly strange about claiming that the death of Communism somehow discredited the vision of social and economic democracy. Democratic socialists were the original anti-communists. For seventy years nothing was more galling to them than to be lumped with their communist opponents. Consistently, militantly, and through decades of up-and-down political fortunes, social democrats warned that communism was suffocating and ultimately unsustainable.

To them it was incredible to be told, afterward, that the death of Communism somehow marked the end of their relevance. The ravages of unfettered capitalism and imperialism that produced socialist movements in the first place had not diminished with the triumph of a more corporate and globalized capitalism. To call the entire tradition of seeking an economic alternative

a mistake was to resign Christian ethics to a status quo politics that preserved the privileges of the wellborn and fortunate. It was to pretend, wrongly, that concentrations of economic power could be ignored without undermining political democracy and without doing harm to the poor and vulnerable. And it was to assume, wrongly, that the planet's ecosystem, a finite reality, could withstand another century of unlimited-growth "modernization," much less the manic logic of post-Cold War capitalist globalization.

William Temple is another figure who, like Rauschenbusch, has emerged looking better with time. A child of privilege and of British sentimental imperialism, both of which left their mark on him, he yet produced some of the most creative Christian socialist thinking of his time. Temple worried that "socialism" was already indelibly associated with Left-authoritarian politics. Communism was a factor in that judgment, as was the centralizing tendency of social democracy. He opposed state socialism while appreciating that for most people, socialism meant economic nationalization. Thus Temple eschewed the language of socialism in making his case for decentralized economic democracy. As he explained in *Christianity and the Social Order*, he hoped that all Christians would accept his arguments for economic democracy, even though few Christians outside the trade unions and the political left embraced socialism.

Temple took no interest in bolstering a suspect ideology with the prestige of Christian faith. What mattered was for religious people to be involved in the struggle for social justice in their own way. He appropriated guild socialist ideas in discerning and practicing the prophetic meaning of Christianity, but he did not reduce the social ethical meaning of the gospel to his politics. For him, socialist ideology was a barrier to the Christian ethical aim of democratizing social and economic power. Temple promoted economic democracy as a Christian ethical project while eschewing the progressive Christian tendency to sanctify socialist ideology.

The difference is crucial. Progressive Christianity has to stand for social justice, but the ideology of socialism is dubious and

unitary. It smacks of one-size-fits-all dogmatism even when modified by democracy, cultural difference, and pluralism. Too much of the liberationist tradition and other radical theologies have done what Temple feared, undercutting the moral influence of progressive Christianity by clinging to socialist ideology. Progressive Christianity today needs to be more pluralistic, contextual, and pragmatic than that, standing for radical democracy and decentralized economic democracy in ways that suit particular social and cultural contexts.

The social vision of economic democracy cannot be imposed or transplanted. It can only take shape over the course of decades, as hard-won social gains and the cultivation of cooperative habits and knowledge build the groundwork for a better society. Such a project does not call for large-scale investments in any particular economic model. It does not rest upon illusions about human nature. It does not envision or require a transformed humanity. Reinhold Niebuhr's epigrammatic justification of democracy suffices for economic democracy: The human capacity for justice makes democracy possible, but the human inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary.

Niebuhr did not deny that the human capacity for fairness is often moved by genuine feelings of compassion and solidarity, but to him it was obvious that all such feelings are mixed in human nature with more selfish motives. The crucial point was that democracy is necessary precisely because virtually everyone is selfish. Because human beings are so easily corrupted by the attainment of power, democracy is necessary as a restraint on greed and the human proclivity to dominate others.

By the time that he elaborated this argument in *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness* (1944), Niebuhr was no longer inclined to press it as a case for economic democracy. Having belatedly given up Marxism, Niebuhr gave up on Christian socialism a few years later. In the early 1940s he did not explore the possibilities of a politics that democratized and decentralized economic power. For Niebuhr, there were only three serious possibilities—free market capitalism, socialism, and New Deal capitalism—and socialism meant

economic nationalization and state-planned production for use. He supported the Delta Farm Cooperative movement, but there were never enough experiments of this kind for him to take them seriously as prototypes of an alternative politics. Realism compared liberal capitalism with existing historical alternatives, not a fantasized economic democracy.

That remains a plausible verdict. Whether it is the only serious verdict depends largely on the viability of decentralized, social market alternatives that Niebuhr did not seriously consider. To persist in struggling for the democratization of social and economic power is to hold out for a battered, marginalized, increasingly counter-cultural vision of the common good that is deeply rooted in the history of American progressivism and progressive Christianity, and which has chapters yet to be written. ■

MARRIED TO CALVIN

(continued from page 55)

Auschwitz and Dachau as much less than the horrendous evil that it was.

Those of us who are spiritual progressives and, at the same time, Evangelical see infinite worth in every person, regardless of who they are or where they are coming from religiously. Our belief in the sacredness of every human being is at the core of our convictions and is the basis for our concerns for justice on behalf of the poor and oppressed. The preciousness of life is the basis upon which *Tikkun* magazine is grounded. Michael Lerner has made it clear that his spiritual commitments have led him to believe that the infinite worth of persons has been established by God. There is much to be discussed about Calvin and Calvinism, but we cannot give ground to any who would denigrate the dignity of persons.

It must be left up to the reader to evaluate the positive and negative dimensions of Calvinism on our contemporary society. This, however, is not up for question: Calvinism has played a major role in the thinking of the Western world and continues to have an impact on how many of us behave, even in these

present times. As we remember John Calvin on this five-hundredth anniversary of his birth, the vast scope of his influence cannot be overlooked if we are to understand those Americans who have absorbed, perhaps somewhat unconsciously, the ethos he helped create. He is with us, and will be with us for a long time. ■

A BROKEN FRAME

(continued from page 59)

Sephardic rabbis, refused the Eastern European nomenclature. Preferring instead to mark Judaism as a single construct that was inclusive of many ideas and values, a true Religious Humanism, Morais and Pereira-Mendes founded their Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City as a repository of traditional Sephardic values that were grounded in the ancient *paidea*. After Morais's death, his seminary would sadly fall victim to the denominational maladies of the Ashkenazi world.

As the twentieth century dawned, fewer and fewer Sephardic rabbis and leaders could count themselves as part of the American Jewish elite. Indeed, Morais's own Philadelphia community was populated by many individuals of Ashkenazi origin who supplanted the old Sephardic leadership.

Nevertheless, those Ashkenazi students, peers and colleagues of Morais, people like Marcus Jastrow (1829–1903), Cyrus Adler (1863–1940), Isaac Husik (1876–1939), and many others who would become great Jewish scholars and teachers, continued to set American Jewish scholarship on a resolutely Sephardic course. At the Dropsie College, founded by the Philadelphia Sephardi Moses Aaron Dropsie (1821–1905), we could see this Sephardi-centrism well into the 1950s. In *Landmarks and Goals*, a volume of collected addresses and essays published in 1953, Dropsie College president Abraham Neuman (1890–1970) concentrated on the Spanish Jewish experience as determinative in Jewish history. Such a philo-Sephardic attitude would lamentably become rarer as the years passed.

Indeed, the very elementary Jewish categories, the way in which we are currently

able to process Judaism, are exclusively Ashkenazi.

Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Hasidic and the rest are all products of the schisms inherent to the Ashkenazi Jewish experience and are most definitely alien to the Sephardic tradition.

Going back to the Maimonidean tradition, we can see that the Ashkenazi schismatic groups marked their distinctiveness by picking apart and separating the disparate elements of Sephardic Religious Humanism.

This fixation on categorization has balkanized Judaism; rather than strengthening Jewish life today, it has served to tear it apart.

It is thus critical for us to mark Jewish trends and developments in precise terms so that we can better appreciate the problems that we now face.

The adoption of the term "Orthodoxy" and the attempt to make use of it in a "modern" context is just one of many hazards that we now face. As we have seen in religious movements all over the world, the trend toward exclusion and fundamentalism is quite pronounced and gaining strength.

The Orthodox trend in Judaism was a reaction to nineteenth-century Jewish Reform and Enlightenment. Orthodox Misnagdim and the Hasidim dropped their prior internal Eastern European battle in order to combat the new ideas and groups. Today, a resurgent Hasidic messianism that looked as if it might once again separate Orthodox and Hasidic groups is being suppressed in Israel, where elements of the religious Orthodox community seem to have made common cause with Lubavitch messianists in order to support an extremist form of Zionist identification.

The Erosion of Sephardic Religious Humanism

FOR A LONG TIME SEPHARDIC JUDAISM remained outside the frame of this internecine Ashkenazi battle. It continued well into the twentieth century to articulate its own traditional Religious Humanism, despite the pressures inflicted by demography and socio-cultural exclusion. From Moses Angel, the headmaster of the Jews' Free School in London as well as a brilliant

educator and author of the Religious Humanist classic *The Law of Sinai and its Appointed Times*, from which we quoted earlier, to the Italians Sabato Morais and Elijah Benamozegh, to the last Hakham Bashi of the Ottoman Empire Haim Nahum Effendi, to the Alexandrian Chief Rabbi Bekhor Eliyahu Hazzan, to Palestinian Chief Rabbi Ben-Zion Uzziel, and on to more contemporary figures such as Hayyim David Halevi, Yitzhak Dayyan, Matloub Abadi, and the contemporary academic Jose Faur, we find the leading lights of the most recent epoch of Sephardic rabbinical humanism now almost completely lost to us.

Given the occlusion of the Sephardim and their Religious Humanism within the majority Ashkenazi culture, these names are now more or less unknown—not just to Ashkenazi Jews but also to Sephardim themselves. A critical part of the Sephardi acculturation to the new Jewish world has been a process of de-Sephardification and the adoption of the new insular models and frames of reference.

In my own Brooklyn Sephardic community we can clearly see—after some fifty years of profound cultural erosion—the complete absence of the old ways and the adoption of the new ways.

We now have Modern Orthodox Ashkenazi rabbis in the community who have expressed a profound antipathy to the Sephardic tradition, while at the same time, we have seen an explosion of Lithuanian-style Yeshivas that have paradoxically claimed the mantle of the old Sephardic traditions.

It is equally clear in Israel, given the emergence of the SHAS party and a full-fledged Haredization of important sectors of the community there, that the post-Sabbatian rejection of Religious Humanism in the name of a more pronounced mystical bend has done a great deal of damage to the organic values of Sephardic Religious Humanism, whose roots, as we have seen, extend back many centuries.

Ultra-Orthodox Insularity and Intolerance Today

GIVEN THAT THE SEPHARDIC OPTION HAS been made unavailable even in the Sephardic communities, the Ashkenazi

schisms that affect the wider Jewish world have continued apace. Attempts to integrate non-Jewish learning into an Orthodox context have been met with hostility and outright rejection by an ever-expanding Ultra-Orthodox world with massive global tentacles.

Pronouncements by less extreme Orthodox rabbis are met with derision by what has become known as “Da’as Torah,” which stems from a robust and all-powerful rabbinical leadership connecting Borough Park, Monsey, Bnei Brak, Gateshead, and various other places. It now seems clear that this rabbinic power base has consumed Orthodoxy.

But in the Sephardic terms that I have examined in this essay, it is the very nomenclature that is the problem. Any attempt at moderating Orthodoxy is profoundly antithetical to the original construct and vision of the movement.

Orthodoxy itself, as its Greek roots indicate, is primed to express a single, unwavering truth determined by its rabbinical leadership. All previous attempts at having Orthodox leadership take into account the non-Jewish world have been met with rejection and failure.

There is no reason to think that as Orthodoxy continues to garner more power and influence in the Jewish world—at least in that part of the Jewish world that continues to use the talmudic law as its foundation—it will compromise its rigid stance and its almost complete rejection of the outside world. Orthodoxy builds its rejection into the very linguistic foundation of the nomenclature. As its name indicates, what we are dealing with is a form of Jewish monolingualism eerily reminiscent of an exclusionary Hellenism that did not tolerate aliens.

To cite a relevant example of the inherent complexities of this problem, we can point to the acknowledged leader of Modern Orthodoxy, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, and the continued difficulty he had with the matter of defining the movement in pluralistic terms.

In his seminal 1965 essay “Confrontation,” Rabbi Soloveitchik asserted that the outside world—here represented by Christianity—is off-limits in terms of religious discussion and dialogue. Such a

stance is consistent with the Orthodox belief that the outside world has nothing to offer us in terms of Jewish self-understanding or in terms of asserting ourselves as a community in the world.

Indeed, since the death of Rabbi Soloveitchik, there has been an ongoing tug-of-war between moderate Orthodox forces and the more extreme elements to claim his legacy as their own. His very biography has been combed for definitive proof of his ideological predilections and leanings. But in the end, it is all of little matter as the struggle exemplifies the larger battle for the soul of Orthodoxy—a battle that the extremists will inevitably win. I say “inevitably” because Ultra-Orthodoxy is the most perfect manifestation of Orthodox thinking and its proclivity for exclusion and intolerance. Again, exclusion and intolerance are built into its very nomenclature.

Restoring the Model of Sephardic Religious Humanism

SO IT IS NOW MORE THAN WORTHWHILE for those who continue to do battle with Ultra-Orthodox forces, as well as the schisms of the reformers and assimilationists, to take seriously the nomenclature of Sephardic Religious Humanism and the manner in which it has been passed over in contemporary Jewish life.

Eschewing the many problems inherent in the Ashkenazi construction of Judaism as different denominations, it is time that we paid respect to the Sephardic tradition of pluralism, tolerance, and inclusion. The existence of different denominations is not necessarily a mark of strength and good health, but can just as equally indicate a profoundly troubling dysfunctionality.

Attempts to appropriate the Sephardic model without naming it will not effectively transform Judaism and address the current situation we face. Names have meaning, and behind those names are some difficult histories that we must face if we are to move forward.

In truth, the Maimonidean Controversy continues to seethe, and the anathemas against foreign ideas and learning remain a central part of the tension in contemporary Jewish life. Exclusionary visions of Jewish identity have now extended to the state of Israel itself, where the rejection of the

model of Levantine Religious Humanism, what I have called "The Levantine Option," has made of Israel a Middle Eastern ghetto, which has turned the old shtetl mentality into a national matter.

A siege mentality now pervades many parts of the Jewish world. In religious, socio-cultural, and political terms, Jews continue to suffer from an inability to make peace internally and with the outside world. Where people stand on these issues depends on the Jewish group with which they are affiliated.

The old model of Sephardic Religious Humanism brings together a seriously committed yet moderate form of halachic observance with a liberal attitude toward an outside world that is definitely not deemed *treif* (unlawful) and that will not lead to the rejection of talmudic standards.

Maimonides stood firm in his belief that Judaism must not be an insular culture and for this was anathematized by those rabbis who stand as the model for today's Ultra-Orthodox. He counseled Jews to live in the world as equal and proud members of the human family. It was this Jewish pride that resonated in the Sephardic world throughout the centuries and that has now been lost to the Jewish community.

Such a broken frame calls out for repair and rearticulation.

To repair it, we need to identify the forces that rejected such Religious Humanism and that have suppressed it as a force within Judaism. We cannot bring the Jewish body to proper health unless we can correctly identify the illness from which it suffers. Attempts to sidestep this part of the process will inevitably lead us to failure because of the continued confusion over the conceptual framework and the proper understanding of the categories in which we are functioning.

But the identification of the problem is only half the process.

We must restore the vision of Sephardic Religious Humanism and, with it, the standing of the Sephardim in the larger Jewish world. The grave historical injustices that have been inflicted on the Jews of the Mediterranean and the Middle East in recent times are deeply complex,

yet brutally obvious to all who calmly investigate the matter. We must identify and expunge the Ashkenazi Jewish ethnocentrism that is a critical part of the current problematic from our communities. Such an exclusionary racism is not limited to Ashkenazi Jews per se, as many Jews of Sephardic origin have themselves taken on such a viewpoint, thereby generating a self-loathing that is just as dangerous a problem as that of Ashkenazi prejudice.

Once we look to restore the model of Sephardic Religious Humanism to the Jewish community, we will see the formation of exciting new possibilities for the promulgation of a healthy and robust Jewish identity. Rather than breaking Jews off into separate groups, the Sephardic model of Religious Humanism would enable Jews of all ethnic origins to unite under the rubric of an inclusive and tolerant culture that seeks entente and rapprochement with the world at large, while holding the primacy of Jewish *shalom bayit* as its ultimate aim. ■

A HOLY CURIOSITY

(continued from page 61)

merely the memorization of large bodies of facts. It is not merely the confident rehearsal of complex behavior. The purpose of higher learning, to quote Ralph Waldo Emerson, is to formulate "an original relationship to the universe."

Forging an original relation to the universe means we do not rely simply on the relationship that others have already established, but instead we fashion our own way—a way that is informed by the best judgments and insights of those who have trod the path of life before us and those who walk it with us. But ultimately, what our education seeks to do is offer us the capacity to craft our own honest relationship to the cosmos, to the world, to God: a heightened sense of wonder and a persistent commitment to each other, to all humanity, to all living things, to the world. In that endeavor, the false opposition of thinking and feeling betrays both efforts, producing instead a caricature of education in which we either resist book-learning, as though that were something somehow separable from living

itself, or so venerate book-learning that we train ourselves to stop seeing the people in front of us and the world of which we are a part.

Neither extreme represents the best of feeling or thinking. It is as Rabbi Abraham Ha-Kohen Kook wrote in *Orot Ha-Kodesh*:

The fierce power of imagination is a gift from God. Joined with the grandeur of the mind, the potency of inference, ethical depth, and the natural sense of the divine, imagination becomes an instrument for the holy spirit.

Imagination and mind together become an instrument for the *ruach ha-kodesh*, the holy spirit. We are called, then, both as Jews and as living beings, to integrate what we feel with how we think, to recognize that logic is so permeated with emotion, and feeling is so intimately connected to analysis, that the two are inseparable and indispensable. Such an enriched notion of thinking/feeling means cultivating both poles as expressions of our truest humanity. Such an integration means honoring the discipline of learning and scholarship as an indispensable contributor to the emotional depth, self-awareness, critical judgment, and moral clarity that being a functioning adult (not to mention a good Jew) requires. And, finally, this enhanced thinking/feeling means honoring the dance of imagination as the indispensable root of character, vision, hope, initiative, and love.

In his book *Surprised by Joy*, the Christian theologian C.S. Lewis recounts a time when he referred to philosophy as a subject that he loved. His companion responded to him, "To Plato, philosophy was not a subject, it was a way." That response seems so Jewish to me! Philosophy as a *derekh*! As a *dao*! What would it mean for us to approach our learning, not as a conglomeration of subjects, but as a *derekh*? To be able to train ourselves to walk on the way, and to grow to walk in wholeness on that way, is the challenge that a fuller learning offers.

Goads Along the Way

WE NEED TO BE WILLING TO ENGAGE IN the disciplined learning that educated

emoting requires. The Mishnah *Zavim* (1:6) tells us, "Not everyone who leads to answer is praiseworthy, except if they give the reason." The authors of the Mishnah are not disputing that the person who jumps to the answer (Call on me! Call on me!) is right. But what matters most is the *process* of reasoning that allows everyone else to join in the steps of learning. The process of integrated reasoning empowers participation.

In *Massekhet Berakhot* (6b) we are told, "The reward for a halachic discussion lies in the reasoning." Reasoning. Ours is not a tradition that distrusts logic. To the contrary, we revel in a disciplined mind, and what can only be discovered by using the mind. But I will hasten to insist that to be able to engage in logic well, to be able to utilize reason soundly, requires a great deal of prior learning. When I was a junior in high school, I enrolled in an Advanced Placement course in American history. The teacher, Saul Taischoff, a wonderful pedagogue, stood up and said: "This class is not a discussion; it is a lecture because at this point I know something about American history, and you don't. You will spend a year listening to my lectures and reading the assignments. At the end of the year you will then know something about American history, and at that point anyone who wants to come into my office and have a discussion about anything about American history will be welcome to do so." Turns out that Jewish tradition says more or less the same thing, "Learn first, and then reason" (Shabbat 63a). Reason unaided by hard, factual knowledge is fantasy. To be able to reason responsibly requires great learning first.

But detailed learning is not enough. After putting in the hard time sitting, memorizing, learning, practicing, rehearsing, drilling—I'm talking here about grammar, vocabulary, concepts, facts, and techniques—and lavishing the time to master these critical tools, dare to imagine! Learning is not simply the compilation of facts. Make plans to soar! Cynthia Ozick tells us "to imagine the unimaginable is the highest use of the imagination." Dream! As you walk on the path, think about what once was and is no longer; think about what might have been, but

isn't; think about what ought to be. Then muster your prodigious learning in the service of the dream, in the assertion of the hope!

Above all, cultivate curiosity. Find the world infinitely fascinating. Let the questions spawn yet more questions, so that for each new answer you unveil, a thousand new questions emerge in their shimmering radiance. Find the people you are with, the communities you touch and serve, the books you study, the authors you read, find them all endlessly fascinating, inspiring, and energizing. I quoted Albert Einstein once, and I'm going to quote him again:

The important thing is to not stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing. One cannot but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery every day. Never lose a holy curiosity.

During the period of the Days of Awe and Sukkot, when we recite Psalm 27, we ask, "Teach me, Holy One, your ways." Learning is not a subject; it is a way. It is not something that one does, it is a process for transforming who we are, for bringing succor and uplift to our broken, hurting world.

As you sit in your sukkah (ritual tent), muster the courage to drink deeply of the learning that the world offers you. Dream wildly. Make of your logic a passion, and of your emotions, a logic, such that in this new year we can bring ourselves and our battered world one step closer to the kind of wholeness, the kind of nurturing, and the kind of holiness that can only result from human beings unfettered.

Never lose a holy curiosity. ■

QUIET ECSTASY

(continued from page 65)

this intimacy with the Divine, which as the Qur'an has it, is "as close as our jugular veins" or as accessible as the memory of a beloved departed *bubbe* or *nona* (Yiddish and Ladino for "grandmother"). Kaplan is

remarkably in touch with this most subtle of proximities.

Those who know Kaplan's previous CDs, *Tuning The Soul and Life of the Worlds*, are familiar with his uncanny ability—shared with musical and poetic luminaries such as Israel Najara of the sixteenth century—to marry melodies from non-Jewish locales (even Mongolia, in this recording!) with Jewish mystical poetry. He also creates new Latvian/Lithuanian-influenced tunes for pouring out the heart, and performs a stunning Eastern European wordless song meant to accompany the dying process. The CD reconnects me to my ancient Ashkenazic roots while expanding upon them with several exquisite "neo-Hasidic" musical creations composed by Kaplan.

And be prepared for a few tracks that reflect the mournful pathos and longing of the Diasporic experience (perhaps best understood as a universal state of profound spiritual disconnection). You may cry a little—OK! I, however, actually find this melancholy (or better yet, "deep soulfulness") very appealing.

From a little-known *nigun* of Reb Nachman of Breslov, to melodies preserved by the modern musical adept Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, to Turkish, Moroccan, and Spanish chants, Cantor Kaplan has produced an array of quietly ecstatic songs and original compositions that give life to the term "Jewish Renewal." Kaplan's jazzy riffs, supported by *ney* (cane flute), *'ud* (lute), *tar* (frame drum), *cimbalom* (hammer dulcimer), and more seemingly incongruous instrumentation, are set to revelatory and inspiring verses that send me right into the lap—or before the throne, as it were—of the Mystery of Mysteries. It is a very cool album with great aural warmth, clearly derived from the embers of the Kabbalah's overriding intention of *tikkun*. If you are searching for a collection of songs with which to focus your meditation and Jewish contemplative life, this is truly it! ■

Rabbi Jonathan Seidel, Ph.D., is the spiritual leader of Or haGan Jewish Community of Eugene (www.orphagan.org), rabbinic chaplain at Lewis and Clark College, and adjunct faculty at University of Oregon/Portland State University.

Bird

I have been losing a battle with a bird
every morning, although the battle
is with myself, so say my 27 therapists, the bird a reminder
sent by whatever I don't believe
to remember what I keep forgetting
because I wake up so damn early, 5:30

every morning, when my battle
feels an unfinished reminder
that I understand less than I believe.
This morning, I thought to fool the bird into forgetting
and so last night I put on my giant bird suit at 5:30,
giddy as a commuter swimming in a huge martini, like a bird

in another's nest. The sky felt lighter: I had to remember
not to fly, to be a believer
but not a fool—think *Icarus*—and never to forget
my basic humanity. But all night until 5:30,
at times awake, I was a bird.
All night the worms were huge, every battle

a belief
in living more. If you're a bird you never forget
what eating means, and if you're a worm, 5:30
after a little rain means waking into hell, the bird
supping and you're the sup. But I wasn't battling
myself for once, or remembering

my obligations—although I did try to nest in bed, forgetting
my wife, that was awkward—until just before 5:30
I rose to meet the bird
bird to bird, a Battle
Royale. I chanted to remind
myself of the huge advantage I had in size, a belief

in Nature's equanimity. At 5:30,
then, we met in the wet grass, the bird
a nondescript robin, not a warrior, not the battle
I expected. What did I expect? A reminder
suitable for my forgetting every morning, for my belief
the bird was singing to make me forget.

I have not forgotten. The ill-fitting bird suit
wears like a belief, a reminder
of my humanity at 5:30, in the battle for my dreams.

— Alan Michael Parker

ESSENTIAL PLEASURES

Robert Pinsky
W.W. Norton & Co., 2009

ROBERT PINSKY'S VARIED ROLES IN OUR LITERARY CULTURE MAKE HIM UNIQUE among anthology editors: while foremost a poet, he also serves as critic, teacher, advocate, and civic leader in the arts. *Essential Pleasures*, his fifth and most recent book, is the truest volume yet to reflect his work on the Favorite Poem Project, which recorded people from all walks of life reciting their favorite poems. With an equally pronounced emphasis, *Essential Pleasures* is not a collection of "essential poems" drawn from any school curriculum, but poems Pinsky feels convey an essential vocal quality through an essential verbal action: "the course of pleasure in hearing a poem" (the book comes with an audio disc of Pinsky reading twenty-one choice selections). Thus, this collection of "poems to read aloud" reaches across an impressively broad range, ancient to contemporary, organized into different shapes of sound, from short lines to long, love songs to poems that tell stories. As welcome are poems that tell jokes and insults, celebrations and complaints. Every kind of human sound in shaped lines of poetry is represented here, to provide us an essential pleasure that is essentially ours, a great gathering of evidence of what it means to be human.

A RETURN TO HEALING

Len Saputo, MD, with Byron Belitsos
Origin Press, 2009

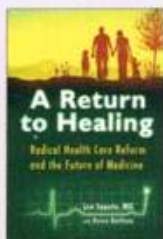
THE CANCER GENERATION: BABY BOOMERS FACING A PERFECT STORM

John Geyman, MD
Common Courage Press, 2009

MORE AND MORE DOCTORS ARE RETURNING TO their original calling as healers, and with that new consciousness we are getting a set of books that expose the shame and outrage of America's profit-driven medical system and the deep limits of the Western model of health care. Yes, decent health care is partly a matter of who gets access, and yes, single-payer reform would go a long way toward changing that. But both these books reveal deeper problems, as well. Dr. Saputo's insider's account demonstrates the corrosive effects that health care profiteers have on the quality of care, even in the most respected health care facilities. The best hospitals boast of relying on evidence-based treatments, but the studies on which those treatments are based are often funded by those who profit from their use. More natural food and preventive approaches that cannot yield profits do not get funding for the big clinical tests that could provide the "evidence" for alternatives in health care. Saputo's book is a treasure chest of concrete ideas for a health-oriented medicine.

But health cannot be separated from the overall manner in which we organize our society, and John Geyman's book on cancer, describing the dramatic rise of the disease and asserting that, as his subtitle suggests, we are going to see a significant rise in cancer as the social realities that many thought were only going to affect others actually produce an epidemic of suffering for millions of Americans. A society that fosters selfishness and materialism everywhere should not be surprised when those values create a physical and psychological environment that increases the incidence of cancer.

Geyman's and Saputo's/Belitsos's books should be in the hands of everyone facing health problems in the coming years!



NOTES FROM THE FORTUNE-TELLING PARROT: ISLAM AND THE STRUGGLE FOR RELIGIOUS PLURALISM IN PAKISTAN

David Pinault
Equinox Publishing, 2008

USING A SERIES OF ENGAGING STORIES ABOUT HOW politicians in Pakistan seek to undermine the rich diversity of local Islamic (and sometimes leftover Hindu) practices in order to foster a single version of Islam, Associate Professor of Religious Studies (at Santa Clara University) David Pinault throws light on the efforts of local citizens to manifest cultural resistance to uniformity, even though they risk being attacked as blasphemous or even enemies of Islam. Pinault uncovers a common theme of struggle for religious pluralism in a society that Westerners know far too little about, despite our increasing military and political involvement in that region. The stories he tells are both intellectually stimulating and just plain fun to read, and they provide us with a window onto Islamic society that is neither romanticized nor ideological. A must-read for anyone interested in the varieties of religious experience or the cultural background to Islamic politics.



THE OTHER WITHIN—THE MARRANOS: SPLIT IDENTITY AND EMERGING MODERNITY

Yirmiyahu Yovel
Princeton University Press, 2009

THE MARRANOS WERE JEWS OF THE IBERIAN PENINSULA who over centuries of Christian oppression converted to Christianity outwardly but tried to maintain their Judaism secretly. Yovel argues that this split between public and private helped create modernity. In religious life, the Marranos learned to value religious truth residing in the depth of the mind rather than in outer acts and behaviors, thus creating the idea that what really counts is the inner life—inner conscience and the single self that bears it—which serves as a deeper and higher authority than conventional behavior in community. Authentic religion for them was deinstitutionalized and privatized, thus foreshadowing the widespread shifts that would later become crucial in the development of Protestantism and in the idea of the autonomous individual, which became central to capitalist ideology. Yovel demonstrates how, as Marranos spread around the world, their way of understanding themselves and the world had a growing impact on every society where Christianity flourished. Yovel believes that the Marranos were the paradigm of separation between Jewish existence and Jewish religion, enabling Jewish nationalism, assimilation, secularization, and Zionism.



THE ASSASSINATION OF FRED HAMPTON: HOW THE FBI AND THE CHICAGO POLICE MURDERED A BLACK PANTHER

Jeffrey Haas
Lawrence Hill Books, 2009

FRED HAMPTON WAS A CHAIRMAN AS WELL AS THE MOST creative organizer of the Black Panther Party of Chicago, and this book tells the sad story of how he was murdered by the FBI and Chicago police. Hampton talked not only of Black power, but also of power for each race and ethnic group. And this is also the story of Jeffrey Haas, a Jew who grew up in Atlanta, and the small group of lawyers who fought for Hampton, and then after his death fought to get the truth of his assassination known, in the process helping to reveal the FBI's Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO), which was directed at disrupting the Panthers and other sections of the New Left of the 1960s and early 1970s. For anyone who doesn't believe that the Panthers were driven to violence by the assaults on them by the police and the FBI, or who doubts the existence of government conspiracies to destroy dissidents, this is an indispensable read. And it will be a source of inspiration for young people who still imagine using law as a path toward social justice.



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Americans did not vote for more war, capitulations to the pharmaceutical and health-industrial complex, continued incarceration at Guantanamo and the extension of human rights-denying policies, compromises on the environment and food safety, huge bailouts for banks that still foreclose on home mortgages, and only modest support to the unemployed or underemployed. Americans voted for fundamental change. Or so they thought.

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