

Tikkun

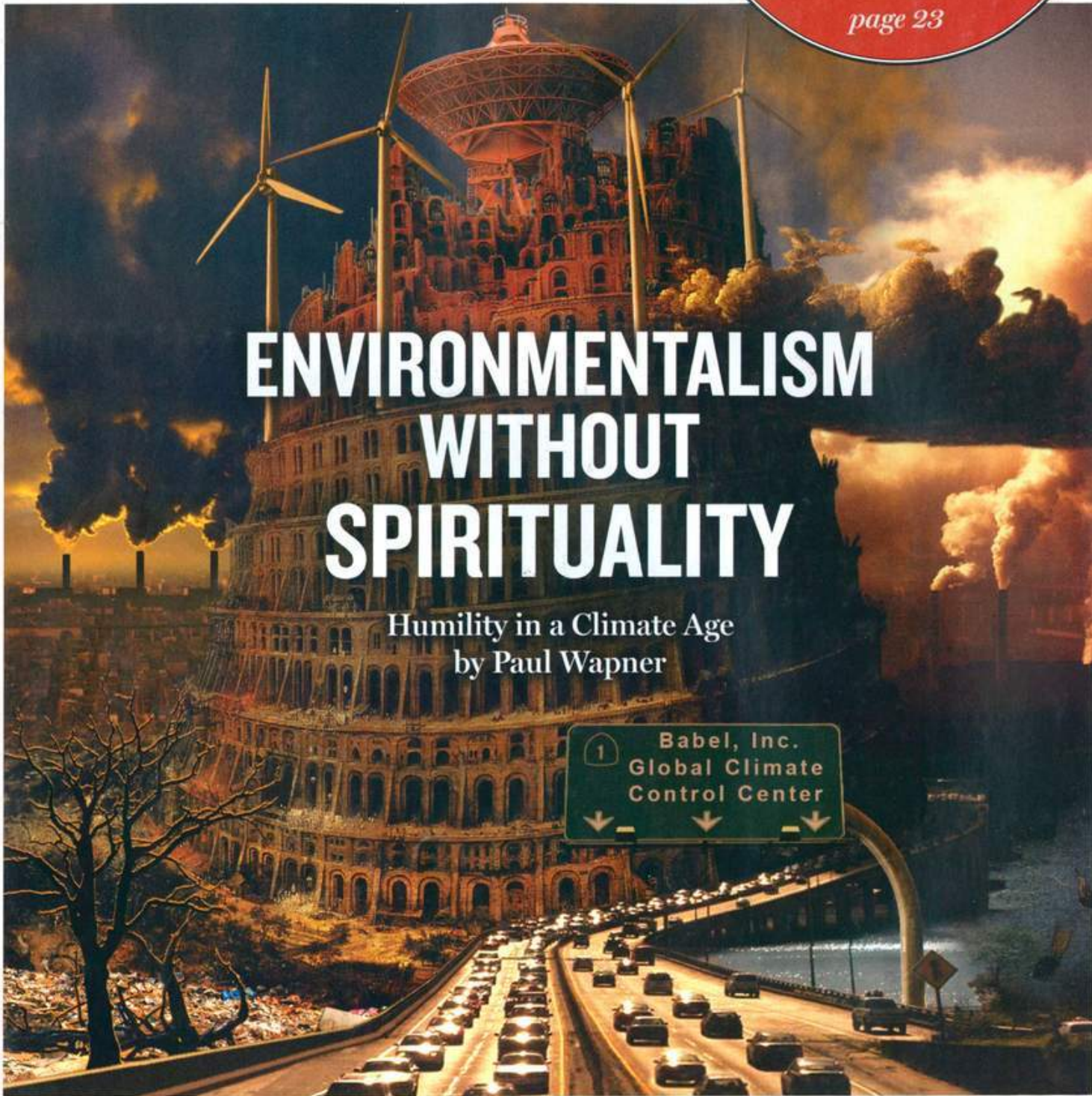
POLITICS+SPIRITUALITY+CULTURE

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

MAY/JUNE 2010

**ISRAEL
ENTRENCHING
ANTI-SEMITISM?**

page 23



ENVIRONMENTALISM WITHOUT SPIRITUALITY

Humility in a Climate Age
by Paul Wapner

\$5.95 U.S. \$6.95 Canada



Health Care: the Debate Continues | Immigration Reform Dilemma
Defending Obama | Mindful Mothering | Hip-Hop
Graveyard Detroit | Buddhist Social Transformation
Beyond Fear-Based Crime Prevention | Suspense Movies



CLEAN AIR, GOOD JOBS, & JUSTICE!

INCINERATOR PROTESTS AROUND THE WORLD



Philippines



China



Austria

In this issue four writers argue that social justice and spiritual and psychological maturity are essential to averting environmental catastrophe. We can create a better world! Two other writers take us to Detroit, an entire city enmeshed in capitalism's failures, where creative resistance is growing. This June 22-26, Detroit will host the U.S. Social Forum—a gathering of grassroots activists from around the country.

Now here's a campaign that brings all those concerns together! The Global Anti-Incinerator Alliance (GAIA) is working with *Tikkuri's* art direction team, Design Action Collective, and others to plan an action in Detroit during the Social Forum. Detroit is home to the largest incinerator in the world and touts the technology as a renewable resource because they "turn waste into energy" by burning garbage. As a result, Detroit has no recycling program and its residents breathe toxic air. GAIA is trying to link up the local campaign to shut down that incinerator with the global campaign for incinerator alternatives. This is about environmental justice, reducing waste and climate pollution, and also increasing good jobs for the community. The week after the Social Forum, the incinerator contract ends and Detroit's Mayor David Bing will be faced with a choice between renewing this contract and siding with community demands for replacing the incinerator with a recycling program.

JOIN US ON JUNE 26 FOR A RALLY, MARCH, AND MASS NONVIOLENT CIVIL ACTION TO END THE WORLD'S BIGGEST WASTE INCINERATOR

Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives • Ruckus Society • Design Action Collective
In collaboration with the U.S. Social Forum National Planning Committee

3 LETTERS

6 **THE CONTRARIAN:** The Politics of Holding on to Health Care Reform

Editorials

7 **Liberals and Progressives Need a New Strategy in the Obama Years**

10 **Immigration: Don't Let "Reform" Be an Excuse for Increased Repression**

Politics and Society

SPECIAL SECTION: ENVIRONMENTALISM WITHOUT SPIRITUALITY (PAGE 33)

34 **Humility in a Climate Age** by PAUL WAPNER

Can the ambitious new environmental geo-engineering be suffused with a humble awareness of our place within nature's complexity?

38 **Naturalism as Mastery?** by KEN CONCA

Traditional environmentalists' "humility" is overrated: we have all too often made the world's poor and powerless pay for our environmental progress.

39 **How Much Change Will the Earth Require of Us?** by ALLEN D. KANNER

We will be so much better off psychologically when we give up our dreams of mastery and come back to living within nature.

40 **Spirituality in a Time of Crisis** by MARK HATHAWAY

It's not self-sacrifice but liberation that the Tao and all deep spiritual wisdom offer us. Facing climate change, we must free ourselves or collapse.



13 **After the Reform: Aiming High for Health Justice** by MARGARET FLOWERS

Did we fail on health care? The debate is vigorous. Richard Kirsch and Lauren Reichelt respond.

19 **The Machiavellian Dilemma:
Paradoxes and Perils of Democratic Governance** by SHARON D. WELCH

Has the Obama presidency failed? No, resistance to social and political change is not a sign of failure—it's inevitable, and can be overcome.

23 **Are Israeli Policies Entrenching Anti-Semitism Worldwide?** by TONY KLUG

Critical discussions of Israeli policy are too often tarred as "anti-Semitism" and shut down. In reality, holding Israel to an ethical standard is necessary to stem a rising tide of *real* anti-Semitism.

28 **Philosophers of Catastrophe and the Last Kantian in Nazi Germany:
How Judaism Redeems Western Philosophy** by STEPHEN J. STERN

A death-camp dog knew better than many philosophers. It took Jews like Rosenzweig and Levinas to point out the flaw and the remedy.

31 **Does it Really Work? A Critique of Fear-Based Crime Prevention**

by JIM S. VRETTOS

Can we scare criminals into being good? A look into a new attempt at crime prevention.

42 **Graveyard Detroit** by ZAID SHAKIR

False dreams and false fears are all being buried in the same city.

Cover: David Bygott

Politics and Society (continued)

- 47 Invincible Hip-Hop: Slipping the Medicine In** by JOSH HEALEY
Listen up! After her Jewish childhood in the West Bank, Invincible became a rapper in Detroit. Now she's fighting for social justice in unexpected ways.

- 51 Mindful Motherhood** by CASSANDRA VIETEN
The practice of mindfulness is quite different when your life is not under normal control—as in new motherhood—but it can be vital to your well-being.

Rethinking Religion

BUDDHISM

- 54 Self Transformation, Social Transformation** by DAVID R. LOY
You can't change yourself without changing society. And vice versa. You didn't know that was Buddhist wisdom?

JUDAISM, INTERFAITH

- 58 And I, Where Do I Come?**
Experiences in Jewish-Muslim Dialogue by ZALMAN KASTEL
A Hasidic rabbi from Crown Heights, New York, builds understanding with Muslims in Australia, with the help of Christians and indigenous people. Yes, it's *Tikkun*!

Culture

BOOKS

- 61 Can Borders Bring Peace?**
Politics and Violence in Israel/Palestine: Democracy versus Military Rule by Lev Luis Grinberg
Review by OREN YIFTACHEL
- 62 Zionism's Boundaries**
Impossible Peace: Israel/Palestine since 1989 by Mark LeVine
The Making of Modern Israel, 1948-1967 by Leslie Stein
Politics and Violence in Israel/Palestine: Democracy versus Military Rule by Lev Luis Grinberg
Israel and Palestine: Reappraisals, Revisions, Refutations by Avi Shlaim
Review by ANTONY LOEWENSTEIN
- 65 Hebrew Tones in the Blues**
A Fine Romance: Jewish Songwriters, American Songs
by David Lehman
Review by RODGER KAMENETZ
- 66 Meditations on Activism**
Mosaic Orpheus by Peter Dale Scott
Review by ALAN WILLIAMSON

FILM

- 67 Suspense, Malaise, and the Movies**
The Ghost Writer, The White Ribbon, Shutter Island
Review by DAVID STERRITT
- 68 Israeli Cinema Continues to Shine**
Ajami, For My Father
Review by RALPH SELIGER

POETRY & PROSE POETRY

- 79 Formality** by DEBORAH BERNHARDT
- 80 Obama, the Tao, and Planetary Consciousness: the Songs of Penguin and Whales** by RICHARD GROSSINGER

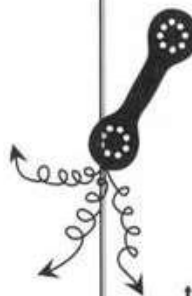
ASK THE AUTHOR!

6 p.m. Pacific Time (9 p.m. Eastern)
every Monday

Call 1-888-346-3950 for free!
Then enter this code: 11978#

May 3: Tony Klug
May 10: Margaret Flowers
May 17: Sharon D. Welch
May 24: Mark Hathaway
June 7: Paul Wapner

See full schedule and listen
to previous calls at www.tikkun.org



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.

GOD AND THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

THANK YOU FOR PUTTING together the special section on God and the Twenty-First Century in the March/April 2010 issue of *Tikkun*. The perspectives and insights of Arthur Green and several of the other contributors resonate with my own experience. They speak of deep experiences of the wonder and immensity of the whole of creation and the realization that we, personally, are integral parts of it; that what we may call God, Allah, or whatever is within all of nature and in ourselves and others. These experiences interrupt and transcend our normal day-to-day consciousness of intellectual thinking and physical doing.

In trips to the mountains I have had these experiences myself. I have been totally overwhelmed by the beauty and wonder of my surroundings and the fact of my being there. I have realized that, in spite of my imperfections, this has been given to me in a profoundly personal and real sense. Then I have realized that I have even been made *part* of this wonderful reality—the ultimate blessing beyond words.

These experiences have shaped my spiritual and personal life. It has become my aim, as is that of the authors, to find ways to help spread this way of thinking and knowing: of seeing the world and others in this light and acting accordingly. Perhaps this series will be the catalyst to start some projects I have been considering.

DAVID MCCOARD
El Cerrito, CA

RABBI GREEN IS CONSIDERED to be a leading theologian of non-Orthodox Judaism and as such, I expected to read a true mystical, nondualistic theology that, so I believe, should lead us in the future. However that is not what I found.

Of the three main universal theologies—God is separated from man/world (duality), God is within man/world (modified duality), and God and man/world are One in experience (nonduality)—Rabbi Green firmly establishes himself in the second. He accepts the scientific view of the universe as a linear process in time and space, organized according to the principle of cause and effect. He applies the term existence to the apparent world of diversity and he suggests that we see evolution as sacred.

Advaita-Vedanta (the teaching of nondualism based on the Hindu Upanishads, which conclude the Vedas) teaches us that the appearance of the world of diversity is a mental process imposed on Unity. Unity is changeless and beyond time, space and causality (which are mere mental concepts). Doing is in time (and space, unless it is on the level of thinking only) and therefore there is no doing in Unity. Creation is a constantly repeated event that is solely dependent on a waking state. (It is entirely different in a dream state).

For a nondualist, the past and future are mere mental concepts and dwelling on them is a hindrance to the spiritual attempt to be established in

Unity that is the real Here and Now.

How does the nondualist know all of that? Knowledge, according to him, is not a collection of “facts” on the level of time, space and causality. What he knows is what he experiences. Unity is that pure experience, when diversity is dropped and vanishes. It is the real Existence or Being or the true and only Reality. On the human level it is also experienced as life, love, holiness, wisdom, courage, humility, compassion, and goodness.

Indeed, as Rabbi Green has asserted, the spiritual path is a shift of perspective. A shift from the identification of the I with the mind and body (the ego) to the real I, the identification of the I with pure experience, which is Unity, known in the Western world as Truth or God.

Humans are able to have glimpses of this reality but otherwise mostly live their lives from the ego perspective. As the characteristics of the ego are fear, hate, pride, and greed, the world looks accordingly.

MORE LETTERS!

Thanks for all your letters! We receive many more than we can print. Go to www.tikkun.org/letters for an expanded version of this issue's letters, including readers' responses to:

- Arthur Green's "Sacred Evolution"
- Israel / Palestine
- The new health care legislation
- Barack Obama's presidency
- Chris Hedges and the Green Party
- The NSP conference June 11-14
- and more!

A mystic is a person with a strong and constant urge to unify. Naturally, his/her focus is not on the world of diversity but on the Unity, which is the only level where the sacred can be experienced. Worship is used as a means to reach this goal because directing one's heart and mind to this Unity is the only way to overcome the ego, which at times can be very tricky ... Coming out of this worship, he/she is filled with the presence of the Godly Unity and the thoughts, feelings, and actions that follow are in harmony with it.

Is this Jewish? All I can tell you from my experience is that I know without a doubt that if you dig hard enough through layers upon layers of Jewish texts and interpretations you will find it to be so, and when you do, you will be able to elevate your worship to unimaginable levels. In this way, when more and more are in harmony with the divine, the world will be repaired.

Of course, only a few can be mystics or sages, but the rest of us must

pray to be led by one. As the history of religions shows, the true mystics have been those who founded new religions or led needed new shifts in direction in existing ones.

CANTOR DR. AARON VITELLS
Portland, OR

ARTHUR GREEN IN "SACRED Evolution" describes himself as thinker and teacher, not activist, pursuing a radicalism with its core in the realm of a mystic's mysterious sense of an awesome presence, a deeper reality than ordinary experience. Yet, he sees us as partners of the One, in the planet's survival, concurring we cannot discover God if we are hungry, homeless, or degraded by poverty. Are Green's thoughts in conflict?

Not in Judaism's tradition.

Activist Abraham bargained with God to save Sodom; Jacob wrestled with his angels of conscience to become father of a future nation; Moses understood oppression yields nothing without a struggle. My mentally ill son survives after two decades only

because I challenge a psychiatric health care system that refused to recognize spirituality as a major component of mental distress.

I lead an Interfaith community in an agenda including jobs, education, health care, immigration, prison reform, and the death penalty. The essence of sacred evolution is the unity between our prophet's divine mysticism and today's commonplace, everyday struggle for social and economic justice. In this struggle, nothing is ordinary.

JOSEPH DuBOVY
via email

I JOYFULLY RESONATE WITH THE inspiring article by Rabbi Arthur Green, "Sacred Evolution," in the latest edition of *Tikkun*. It is time for us to reformulate the creation story that underlies the Jewish perspective of who we are, why we are here and where we are going that we have gifted to the world community. As a woman, I cannot help but believe we start by retelling the story of Eve, not

Tikkun

EDITOR	Michael Lerner
ASSOCIATE EDITOR	Peter Gabel
MANAGING EDITOR	David Belden
ASSISTANT EDITOR	Alana Yu-lan Price
ART DIRECTION AND DESIGN	Design Action Collective
POETRY EDITOR	Joshua Weiner
ASSISTANT POETRY EDITOR	Lindsay Bernal
FILM CRITIC	David Sterritt
ACADEMIC EDITOR	Akiba Lerner
LITERARY EDITOR	Julian Levinson
WEB DESIGN	Craig Wiesner and Derrick Kikuchi
FULFILLMENT	Pete Cattrell and Natalie Wollner

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Gil Anidjar, Bradley Shavit Artson, Michael Bader, David Biale, Paul Buhle, Arnold Eisen, Roger S. Gottlieb, Josh Healey, Mark LeVine, Shaul Magid, Ruth Messinger, Ben Naparstek, Or Rose, Stephen Zunes

INTERNS AND EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS

Sarah Ackley, Bob Anschuetz, Will Pasley, Vanessa Ta, Natalie Wendt, Martha Woolverson, and Sandra Yolles (editorial); Tim Rath (web); Gary Au (art); David Ehrens, Anna Faktorovich, Christina Honde, and Rebecca Wells (archive); Vilmarys Ines Pichardo (business); and Justin Decker (operations).

PUBLISHERS George & Trish Vradenburg

Articles in *Tikkun* do not necessarily reflect *Tikkun's* position on any issue. *Tikkun's* positions are presented in our editorials. To submit a manuscript or send a letter, please email magazine@tikkun.org.



Send your Letters to the Editor to letters@tikkun.org

EDITORIAL BOARD

Rachel Adler, Gar Alperovitz, Aiki Barnstone, Michael Berenbaum, Chet Bowers, Paul Buhle, Jay Cantor, Abby Caplin, David Cohen, Dan Cohn-Sherbok, Josephine Donovan, Elliot Dorff, Terry Eagleton, Duane Elgin, Leslie Epstein, Sidra Ezrahi, Lynn Feinerman, John Felstiner, Barry Flicker, Saul Friedlander, Nan Fink Gefen, Laura Geller, Ann Gleig, John P. Geyman, David N. Gibbs, Erik Gleibermann, Nancy Glock-Gruneich, Barbara Goldberg, Jill Goldberg, David Gordis, Jonathan Granoff, Arthur Green, Colin Greer, Mary Grey, Jamey Hecht, Burt Jacobson, John Kelly, David Kim, Reuven Kimelman, Linda Kintz, Richard La Brecque, Joann Locascio, Miriam Maron, Daniel Matt, Bob McChesney, Balmurli Natrajan, Elliot Neaman, David Newman, Greg Palast, Ilana Pardes, Alan Michael Parker, David Pinault, Robert Pinsky, Judith Plaskow, Letty Cottin Pogrebin, James Ponet, Douglas Rushkoff, Aviezer Ravitsky, Wade Clark Roof, Michael Sandel, David Saperstein, Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, Richard Schwartz, Chaim Seidler-Feller, Gerald Serotta, Rami Shapiro, Stanley Sheinbaum, Richard Silverstein, Uri Simon, Graeme Taylor, Emily Warn, Arthur Waskow, John Welwood, Miryam Ehrlich Williamson

ADVERTISING & PERMISSIONS

Alana Price at 510-644-1200 or magazine@tikkun.org

SUBSCRIPTIONS

1-800-395-7753 or subscribe@tikkun.org

TC OR NSP MEMBERSHIP

Natalie Wollner at 510-644-1200 or natalie@tikkun.org

Tikkun (Vol. 25, No. 3, ISSN 0887-9982) is published bimonthly by the Institute for Labor and Mental Health, a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization. © 2010 *Tikkun* magazine. All Rights Reserved. *Tikkun*® is a registered trademark of the Institute for Labor and Mental Health. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Tikkun*, P.O. Box 460926, Escondido, CA 92046. Periodical-rate postage paid at Oakland, CA and additional mailing offices by the Institute for Labor and Mental Health, 2342 Shattuck Ave., #1200, Berkeley, CA 94704. Publications mail agreement number: #1549111. Canada mail distributor information: Express Messenger International; P.O. Box 25058; London BRC, ON N6C 6A8. Subscription price for 6 issues: U.S. residents \$29.00; U.S. institutions \$40.00; Canadian residents \$39.00; all others \$43.00. Payment in U.S. dollars required. Printed in USA. ♻️ Printed on recycled paper.

as a disobedient temptress but as the courageous and intuitive energy that resides within us all, women and men. She is the archetypal energy that moves humanity's story forward into the physical plane. Retelling this poetic myth in a new voice sets the stage for unimagined possibilities and potentials in a quantum age.

Rabbi Green responds on a deeply personal level to the question "*Ayeka* /Where are you?" that calls to him from the pages of Genesis, spurring his most meaningful spiritual quest. My call comes from the pages of Exodus in which we find the awe-inspiring and limitless name of God. *Eheveh asher eheveh*—"I become that I become"—is a refrain that sings in my soul. It is the reminder of a Divinity that is constantly present and continually changing in response to our spiritual growth and maturity that enables us to ask ever-deepening and evolving questions about who we are in relation to the Oneness of Being. Created as we are in the image of the evolutionary impulse to emerge that for me is Divinity, we are being called at this moment of crisis and potential.

As a Jewish community, are we ready? Are we willing to let go of a painful past of separation and exclusivity in order to visualize a future of inclusivity and a celebration of the diversity of the human family in which we have a valued part to play? There are countless Jewish individuals already engaged in the work, who have responded to the question, "Where are you?" with the word "*Hineini*"—I am fully present and ready for the challenge. As a community are we ready to similarly respond?

HEATHER MENDEL
via email

WHAT IS THE POINT OF ARTHUR Green's God? Why praise it? Why petition it? To paraphrase Lucretius, why call this God? It's time for us to grow up and find new poetry. Instead of honestly dealing with the

consequences of scientific discovery, the way people like the brilliant Greg Epstein has done in his *Good Without God*, we have Jewish theologians still trying to build an acceptable naturalistic god out of shreds of biblical and kabbalistic poetry. Green writes, "A God who has no place in this process is a God who begins in the human mind," and then proceeds to make up a god in his human mind. In the quote-mining theistic spirit of our rabbinical forebears, he offers us Deuteronomy 4:39. What's the verse's context? That Yahweh will drive out the less deserving nations for Israel's sake. I doubt Green's mystical panentheist God would do that.

In fact, his entire thesis that evolution is a "sacred story" represents a common misunderstanding of evolution. The notion that humans are more complex or highly developed is not a scientific one. Evolution is not goal-oriented. Bacteria are just as highly evolved and complex as we are. Since 99.9 percent of all species that have ever existed are extinct, what counts is survivability, a result of successful adaptation to environment. Humans are far, far away from the success of bacteria, sponges or sharks. We have been on the edge of extinction before and we could be there again. The true next step in human development will come when we can give up our gods and religious language, no matter how scientifically compatible we fancy them to be, and start finding meaning in the real secular lives that we lead. That next step is called humanism.

RABBI JEFFREY FALICK
(*Jewish secular humanist*)
Miami Beach, FL

Arthur Green Responds:

I AM DELIGHTED THAT THE excerpt from my new book *Radical Judaism* (*Tikkun*, March/April 2010) has engendered such a lively and interesting conversation. [Editor's Note: We suggest you visit www.tikkun.org/letters, where this and other discussions are continuing.]

I am grateful for the accolades from some readers and am also happy to have stimulated the thinking of those who disagree.

Regarding evolution, I am trying to tread a line between teleology and intentionality. By the former I mean a sense that evolution is moving toward the goal of greater self-manifestation through increased diversity of forms. The One pours itself forth, as it were, into as many forms as its mechanisms of mutation permit. These tend toward complexity, including (but not limited to) the processes that have led to the emergence of higher consciousness. While consciousness as we know it, as well as infinitely higher frequencies of awareness, are potentially present in the One from the moment of being's inception, this does not mean that their emergence is the intended goal of a self-conscious process. Nevertheless, Y-H-W-H, the subject of my worship, embraces past, present, and future in a single unity, and thus contains them all.

A few remarks to specific readers, all of whom I thank for writing. Aaron Vitells is right in characterizing my path as a middle road on the monism/dualism spectrum, one that embraces his insight while still leaving open a channel of communication to the Western mind, including my own. I urge him to read on in my book, where I address these questions more fully.

Only "Jewish secular humanist" Rabbi Jeffrey Falick seems angry, and I am trying to understand why. "Why call it God?" he asks, and suggests that "It's time to grow up and find new poetry." I am quite grown up, thank you, and have been through a secularist phase. I returned to the language of tradition precisely because I felt that all of us heirs have a claim on the *old* poetry, with all its power and resonance of antiquity. I am not willing to abandon the tradition, including its God-language, to the literalists and primitives. "Why call it rabbi," after all?

The Politics of Holding on to Health Care Reform

BY GEORGE VRADENBURG

THE CONTRARIAN ARTICLE IN THE SEPTEMBER/October 2009 issue argued that “the perfect should not be the enemy of the good” in adopting health care reform and that “one can only hope that Congress will have the will to embrace a process of continuing improvements in the years ahead.”

And that is where Congress has come out. A dramatic and positive step toward a fairer and more just society has emerged. Yet, the substance and politics of reforming health care in America is only just beginning.

The substantive goals of health care reform were threefold: extend access, improve quality, and reduce costs.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act clearly satisfies the first goal, since it extends health care insurance/access to most uninsured Americans. Indeed, for roughly 40 percent of Americans, health care will now actually be provided through government-managed Medicare, Medicaid, or Veterans Administration programs. For the remainder of American citizens, health care insurance is now mandated by law either through individual policies available through newly formed health care exchanges or employer-provided policies. For those earning less than 400 percent of federal poverty guidelines (roughly \$88,000), the costs of that insurance will be subsidized by the government. The costs of those subsidies are, in the view of the neutral Congressional Budget Office, “paid for” by reducing Medicare costs and by increasing taxes on the wealthy. That assumes, importantly, that Congress sticks to its commitments regarding taxes and expenses (as to that, more below).

The law makes an attempt at achieving the second goal by, among other things, mandating that the costs of health care prevention be 100 percent covered by insurance, by changing reimbursement practices to reward health outcomes rather than more-fees-for-more-services, and by the very act of extending access to health care insurance. Having said that, ongoing congressional oversight that tracks health outcomes and adjusts incentives or other interventions is essential to assure that improved health outcomes actually occur.

And the law is weakest in attacking health care costs. While a number of pilots and demonstrations are authorized for tort reform (to reduce malpractice insurance costs), for coordinated care (to reduce unnecessary tests, hospitalizations, and institutional care) and for “effectiveness” research (to minimize costs on treatments not “comparatively” effective), there is no clear path to overall health care cost reduction. This is so even if one believes that the

costs of extending access is “paid for” by Medicare cost reductions and by increases in taxes on the wealthy.

So, true comprehensive health care reform is just beginning.

The first test of Congress’ willingness to execute on the promises it made in this bill will come this year (before the November midyear elections), when Congress is faced with the question of whether to adhere to a planned reduction of 20+ percent in Medicare physician reimbursements. If Congress blinks, the entire “pay for” for this bill may vanish.

And in coming years, Congress will have to be urged to revisit a number of the cost-containment provisions of this bill: the dramatic increase in taxes for those making over \$250,000; the partial elimination of the tax benefits for employer-sponsored health plans; and the rationing of treatments not considered “comparatively effective.” The recent political reaction to the determination that mammograms for women under fifty were not “comparatively effective” gives little confidence that Congress will adhere to its commitments.

Because of likely congressional backsliding on cost containment and the inexorable growth in health care costs, there is serious risk that the escalating deficits generated by Medicare and Medicaid will create overwhelming political pressure to pull back on comprehensive health care reform.

The Left has been left whimpering that health care reform did not go far enough, that we should adopt “Medicare for All.” But the claim that this bill is middle-of-the-road or too pragmatic has not found any significant public sentiment and fails in the face of the financial pressure on government. Those pressures are being created not only by Medicare and Medicaid themselves, but also by the TARP stabilization of the financial system; investments in the auto, energy, and education sectors; the weak performance of the economy; two wars; and a dramatic increase in government debt (increasingly held by foreign nations).

The political threat to the sustainability of this health care reform will thus come from the right. To sustain the momentum for health care reform, Obama cannot and should not move to the left but must rather stay in the center. He must demonstrate a continuing firm commitment to fiscal discipline and economic growth. Movement to the left will threaten the historic steps toward health care reform that have been achieved after so much effort. ■

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

Liberals and Progressives Need a New Strategy in the Obama Years

THE 2008 ELECTIONS REVEALED THE GREAT YEARNING of a majority of Americans for a world based on peace, social justice, generosity, environmental sanity, and recognition that our well-being is tied to the well-being of everyone else on the planet.

Yet many of those who spent time and energy on the 2008 campaign now believe Obama and the congressional Democrats have failed to fight for a world based on those principles. Media cheerleaders explain this as a function of Obama's personality and of his life experience as a conciliator whose highest goal has been to avoid "ideology" and bring people together. But the fact remains that Obama won much of his popular support by promising to bring fundamental change to government, to challenge the influence of corporate lobbyists, and to restore the Constitution's civil liberties and human rights, which had been violated in the Bush years.

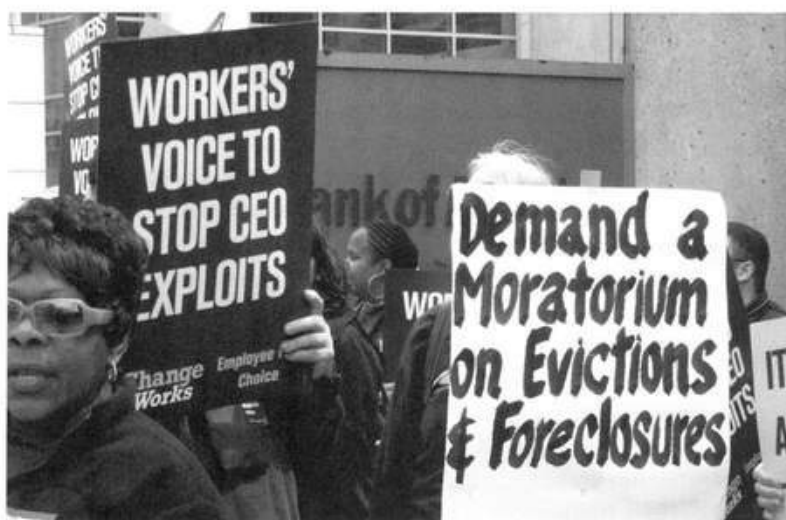
So social change activists who a year ago were pleading to give Obama "more time" have, in the spring of 2010, become less charitable. They point to broken campaign promises, from renewed offshore oil drilling and nuclear power production, to keeping the Guantánamo torture camp open, continuing the war against Iraq, increasing our military presence in Afghanistan, renewing the Patriot Act, continuing "military commission" kangaroo trials, reserving the right to torture, and continuing the NSA's "domestic surveillance" program of spying on innocent Americans' emails and phone calls. Or they mention the shock they felt when Obama and the Democrats increased the national debt by trillions of dollars to assist banks and investment companies while doing very little to help middle-income and poor people weather the worst impacts of the economic meltdown and the close to 18 percent unemployment and underemployment rate. Democrats didn't even pass legislation to prohibit banks from charging exorbitant interest rates on mortgages.

Few of these critics minimize the huge obstacles created by Republicans in Congress, who have sought to ensure that Democrats have no "victories" to point to as they enter the 2010 elections. Yet what the critics maintain is that Obama and congressional Democrats, inheriting an economy and political system in crisis after decades of ideological Republican policies committed to downsizing government and serving the tax-cutting interests of the rich and the corporate elites, blew a unique opportunity to teach Americans a new way of thinking about politics and economy.

Accommodation Isn't Working

INSTEAD OF PROVIDING A FULL-THROATED CRITIQUE OF THE MESS that the previous administration's pro-market, pro-corporate, anti-government ideology had created, the Democrats under the leadership of Obama began to offer legislation that was mostly aimed at accommodating Republicans. This legislation did little to win the hearts and minds of the majority that had elected the Democrats in the supposition that they would shift national politics to finally give precedence to the needs of ordinary people over the needs of the wealthy and the powerful. Social change activists have looked on in increasingly sharp disbelief, wondering why it wasn't obvious to all that if the Republicans were committed to their worldview and Democrats to conciliation and compromise, that the outcome would move politics from the center to the right, thereby dashing the hopes of liberals and progressives on the rocks of inside-the-Beltway pragmatism and realism. Wasn't it obvious that this approach would prevent ordinary Americans from even hearing of a serious alternative to serving the interests of the powerful?

Obama has made some powerful and even visionary statements. But, his critics point out, his actual policy recommendations have seemed not to embody them. When Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman faced harsh opposition from conservative-dominated sessions of Congress, they did not run from the confrontation by presenting legislation that was already conceding much of what their opponents wanted. They instead



Seattle taxpayers demand that Bank of America, having accepted \$45 billion in bailout funds, fire its CEO and put consumers and workers ahead of profits, April 28, 2009.

presented and fought for a legislative program that could embody significant change. So even when they lost some of it, they managed to reshape the public understanding in ways that eventually got them a majority.

The ferocity of opposition to Obama and the Democrats is not a sufficient explanation for these failures. Obama received an electoral mandate significantly greater than that of George W. Bush, and Congress had a strong Democratic majority; together they could at least have put forward bills that embodied a new vision for America, fought for them strongly, forced the Republicans to filibuster for weeks on each point and hence be shown to be obstructing “the people’s business,” and gone to the country for a new mandate in 2010. Without that kind of vigorous struggle, the conservative worldview embodied by the right wings of both major parties became the dominant force shaping public discourse in the first year and a half of the Obama administration.

Why were the Democrats so afraid? Imagine, for instance, if the Democrats had fought for Medicare for All instead of a program that sends hundreds of billions of dollars to private health insurance companies and pharmaceutical firms by legally coercing the uninsured to buy insurance? What would they have lost? Would the Republicans have filibustered? Republicans already did that for a Democratic health care plan that had no cost restraints on rising health care insurance policies! Would they have threatened to call the Democrats and Obama “socialists” or “communists” or use vile racist slurs? They already did that! Would some right-wing extremists threaten or engage in acts of violence? That happened anyway!

The cumulative impact of this disjunction between what people had believed they were going to get from an Obama presidency and what Obama and congressional Democrats fought strongly for has opened up a chasm of despair (and even humiliation) on the part of many who allowed themselves to hope for something different. So in generating this despair and humiliation, the governing Democrats have created an activist vacuum, an empty public square that has been taken over by a racist and potentially quasi-fascist movement led by Sarah Palin and Tea Party members. These reactionaries are committed to the work of the corporate elite—to downsizing government and disempowering it when it tries, however minimally, to restrain corporate avarice and protect those most hurt by the ups and downs of the capitalist market.

We view the potential ascendancy of quasi-fascistic forces as a real possibility and a tremendous threat to the humane values we espouse.

So here is the problem for progressives: we have to protect the liberals from the anger their policies and their cowardice have generated. We don’t want the quasi-fascists to take their place—and we believe that joining in the chorus of Obama-bashing only encourages the media to highlight the biggest bashers: the extremist Right. We are not in control of the media!

But it’s not just that we can’t risk giving more aid to the Tea Party. It’s that many of us still hope that the Democrats can play a valuable role. To be entirely cynical about the chances of Congress pursuing progressive policies in a money-swamped corporate age is to be exactly where the corporations want us to be: cynicism

leads to passivity, and passivity is a form of obedience.

We assert that congressional reforms that deliver movement toward a caring society are still possible. After all, the new health care legislation does insure another 32 million people and by some estimates will save as many as 30,000 lives a year. Nuclear arms are being reduced; the EPA is taking science seriously; we are no longer afraid of imminent war with Iran; and existing government services are being administered at the highest levels by people who want government to succeed, not fail. We should also credit Obama for his willingness to challenge the settlement policies of Benjamin Netanyahu’s right-wing government in Israel. Taken together ... well, by no means what we had hoped for, but not to be minimized either.

These gains, however, are not robust enough to provide an alternative to the powerful onslaught that liberal and progressive ideas continue to face, an onslaught that threatens to bring the most conservative elements in both major parties back into power. The only way we can effectively protect the liberals is to help put them back on the right path by urging them to promote policies that embody the best in liberal and progressive thought. If we are to assist them, we have to openly criticize what is misguided about their current policies, as background to putting forward visionary progressive ideas, even though those will at first be dismissed as “unrealistic” or “utopian” by the very liberals we need to protect.

Strategize With Us June 11-14 in Washington, D.C.

TO SUCCESSFULLY SUPPORT AND CRITIQUE OUR LIBERAL ALLIES will require a special kind of subtlety and sophistication on our part. We need you to come to D.C. June 11-14 to strategize with us on how best to build that progressive movement—and to say “no” to the inside-the-Beltway realists and pragmatists who have led liberals and progressives into their current mistaken and unpopular path. At that gathering we will present our proposal for a Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (ESRA). The amendment would not only overturn the Supreme Court’s Citizens United decision, which further enables corporate money to shape electoral outcomes, but would also increase democratic control of the economy and empower Congress to take more dramatic steps to protect the environment. Taken together with our previously developed Spiritual Covenant with America, *Tikkun*’s Network of Spiritual Progressives provides a plausible vision of where America should be heading in the twenty-first century (a vision not defined by what is “realistic” but by what is necessary to save human life from wars and environmental tragedy). Of course, central to our approach is also a commitment to see those with whom we disagree—even the warmakers, the racists, and the fascists—as fundamentally valuable and deserving of respect, even as we vigorously contend against their ideas and critique their public behavior. We need you there not only to give feedback on the specifics of the amendment (we’ll reshape our final version in light of what we are hearing) but also to create a sufficient presence to command media attention and give greater weight to the ideas we are advocating. If spiritual progressives are to play a role in shaping America’s future, you need to be there. You can register for the conference at spiritualprogressives.org by clicking on the picture of Obama in the left-hand column.

Bashing Obama is NOT the right strategy. Neither is keeping our mouths closed about the deficiencies in the program of the Democrats and the Obama administration. We must not let them continue down a path that is increasingly alienating the very people who are the energizers for liberal and progressive politics—and lots of others as well. Our concern is not with elections—we don't get involved in endorsing candidates or parties—but rather in averting the further discrediting of liberal and progressive ideas, about which we care a lot.

The Real Issues in American Politics

WE BELIEVE THAT BY THIS POINT EVEN THE PEOPLE WHO cheered on the Democrats' endless compromises must be realizing that their accommodationist strategy has not paid off either in new respect or in new political support. It doesn't matter how many compromises Obama and the Democrats make—none of them will satisfy the Right because the issues are not the issue.

So what is the issue? Well, let's start with this: racism, one-sided class war, disappointment with government programs and with the spinelessness of the Democrats, and finally the despair, loneliness, and fear that commercial culture promotes.

Racism

The racism is not so hard to locate. Just map which electoral districts opposed desegregation, equal rights legislation, and policies to provide equal opportunities for African Americans and you go a long way toward mapping out the core constituencies of Tea Party activists and fans of Sarah Palin. The sad truth is that racism remains a continuing element defining the political consciousness of a significant minority of Americans. The level of anger expressed at Obama is in part a reflection of that racism.

But it's not just racism.

One-Sided Class War

For the past thirty years, America's corporate elite, the media it controls, and the wealthy people whose disproportionate funding of political candidates has earned them a high level of loyalty and subservience from both major political parties have engaged in a sustained and successful struggle to redistribute wealth from the poor and the middle class to those with the top ten percent of income in the United States. Meanwhile, trade agreements supported by both parties, coupled with the growing power of multinationals (which can easily relocate to other countries in order to pay lower wages and avoid safety, health, and environmental constraints on their selfishness) have dramatically weakened unions and their bargaining power, thereby decreasing union membership and shifting unions from industrial to service industries and to those representing public employees, a much smaller percentage of the workforce. The cumulative impact has been a deepening sense of powerlessness that is reality-based.

The media have played an important supportive role in this development by labeling those who challenge the inequities and disempowering of the working classes in America as themselves generating "class warfare." Any politician who presents a full-throated populist perspective is dismissed as "not serious." Their analyses are rarely presented to the public by the mainstream



Tens of thousands of Tea Party supporters protest against the government in Washington, D.C., on September 12, 2009.

media. Instead they are dismissed as marginal before they even begin to campaign. The same applies to those who advocated for an end to war funding (which might have freed up funds for domestic projects beneficial to middle-income working people and the poor). For example, we watched the way that Dennis Kucinich's candidacy was sometimes ignored, sometimes trivialized by the *New York Times* in both 2004 and 2008, though the positions he articulated were closer to that of the Democratic majority than those politicians who were labeled "leading candidates" even before any serious campaigning had begun. Similar treatment was given to former Senator Mike Gravel in 2008 and to Governor Howard Dean and former General Wesley Clark in 2004.

There was never a better time to reverse these dynamics than during the winter and spring of 2009, when a powerful pro-working class progressive as president could have addressed this issue explicitly and refused to embrace any economic policy for saving the banks and Wall Street that did not simultaneously insist on directly and immediately benefiting America's middle class and poor.

Disappointment with Government

There is a growing skepticism about the ability of government to solve any problems, a skepticism that has legitimate foundations in the actual experience of many people.

The desire to "get something passed" through Congress and state legislatures that shaped the "realistic" and "pragmatic" policies of Democrats for the past eighty years created a series of policies and programs that were deeply deficient.

- Instead of eliminating slums and building decent housing for the poor, the government built lousy housing that made people living in feel they had been warehoused, not cared for.
- Instead of eliminating joblessness by creating an ongoing jobs program to meet desperately needed social needs (such as the need for adequate and well-trained child care and elderly care, for a rebuilding of our inner cities, for adequate alternative

forms of wind and solar energy, and for workers to carry out a Global Marshall Plan), we instead provided (often wildly inadequate) welfare or unemployment benefits that affirmed unemployment as “a fact of life” rather than a blight that could have been eliminated.

- Instead of requiring government employees’ tenure to be based in part on how well they treated the public, we imposed “productivity” restrictions on government employees that made them feel they would not be rewarded for showing American citizens that the government was put in place as a vehicle to provide the kind of caring for our neighbors that most of us couldn’t fully express because we had to make a living on our own. The public came to feel disrespected and even abused by government employees, many of whom would have been much more caring and considerate had their supervisors not pushed them to give less time to caring and more time to endless reports and paper trails (often to protect themselves from elected officials who sought public recognition through attacking government for being bloated and inefficient).
- Over and over again the liberals dismissed these larger plans as utopian, only to find that the compromises they made also generated a deep disrespect for government that is blowing up in their faces to the detriment of everyone.

Spineless Democrats

And then there is the constant capitulation of the Democrats and their liberal cheerleaders in the media to the agenda of the corporate elites, and more recently, to the desires of the national security apparatus and the military industrial complex. Whether it be in continuing to vote year after year for the needs of the American Empire (a term used more freely by commentators on the Right, who feel no need to apologize for what is obviously a reality because the United States maintains close to a thousand military bases around the world, but refuses to tell ordinary citizens or members of Congress how many and exactly where) or for the needs of the banking, investment, insurance, and health care profiteers, the Democrats have given the impression that there is little correspondence between their election-season claims to fight for ordinary citizens and the actual policies they support or fund once in office. The Obama administration’s budget freeze for the next three years exemplifies these distortions: it is increasing funds for the military and for expanding nuclear facilities while freezing spending for education, nutrition, air traffic control, and national parks.

The Loneliness and Fear Generated by a Commercial Culture

All these developments, of course, must be set in the context of the decrease in human solidarity that continues to worsen as the ethos of materialism and selfishness becomes more deeply ingrained in the behavior and assumptions of people living in this society, in which capitalism has faced the least constraints on its power. I founded *Tikkun* and the Network of Spiritual Progressives in part to raise awareness about the ideas and research done by the Institute for Labor and Mental Health. One element of that research demonstrated that the world of work encourages a meritocratic fantasy—the notion that each of us is

responsible for our own life situation, so if we are failing or insecure economically we have no one to blame but ourselves, and that we have probably not been doing a good enough job of “looking out for number one.” People come home from work believing that they are inadequate and that is why they don’t have more, own more, and feel more successful and fulfilled in their work. They come home believing that everyone is out for themselves and nobody cares about anyone else, except to the extent that people can use each other to benefit themselves. But when people bring this kind of consciousness home into their personal lives, as they inevitably do they end up weakening friendships, loving relationships, and family life. It is deeply damaging to bring home the market-generated notion that advancing one’s own self-interests is the real criterion for being a rational person, and that in “the real world” power and self-interest are all that counts, whereas love, generosity, and caring are merely utopian values that have little application to reality.

The result: people feel alone and scared, uncertain if their friends or neighbors or even their spouse and children care for them beyond a valuation of what they can do for them. These dynamics become all the more exacerbated during an economic downturn, and all the more so if the Democrats—the people who claimed to be our loyal representatives in the public sphere—turn on us and make bailing out Wall Street, the banks and investment companies, and the major industrial and profit-making institutions a higher priority than bailing out middle-income workers and those who are unable to make their mortgage payments. The Democrats never even tried to pass legislation to prohibit the banks and loan companies from charging exorbitant interest rates. No wonder people are scared!

How the Extremist Right Thrives in Such Conditions

PUT ALL THIS TOGETHER AND YOU GET THE IDEAL CLIMATE FOR the rise of an extremist Right, drawing support from a corporate-biased media. The Right covertly (and sometimes overtly) draws upon pre-existing racist themes, and upon the resentment toward failed government policies. They ridicule the spinelessness of Democrats (which leads many to doubt that those Democrats could be trusted with national security) and play to the fears of people scarred by life in this capitalist world.

So you can’t undercut the growth of the Right by winning legislative battles for severely compromised pieces of legislation that are backed not by a coherent ideological alternative to the Right but rather by pleas that “we must pass something in order to look like we’ve accomplished something.” This is a losing strategy that reinforces the distrust that many people have developed toward government and toward liberals.

It’s Standing Strongly For Something, Not Winning Everything, That Gains Respect

WHAT WOULD HELP IS IF THE DEMOCRATS AND OBAMA WERE TO adopt the theme of a Caring Society and then only back those pieces of legislation that could be justified in terms of that worldview. And what if they were to say that they are the pro-family force in the country, and that the best way to support families is to replace the competitive “look out for number one” ethos of the

marketplace with a New Bottom Line of love, kindness, compassion, and generosity? As a first step in that direction, they could insist that schools be judged successful not only to the degree that they teach reading and arithmetic but also to the degree that they generate in students a real caring for others and for the well-being of the planet? What if they were to explicitly announce that the “war on terror” is over, embrace *Tikkun*/NSP’s Strategy of Generosity and advocate a shift in spending from wars to a Global Marshall Plan (a first step being to bring to vote House Resolution 1016 introduced by Keith Ellison)? What if they were to embrace the Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (ESRA)? Though the same media that praised Obama for his centrist and nonideological approach would certainly attack these kinds of moves, the rest of the country might suddenly become reenergized by the notion that Democrats had a vision and a direction that was a real alternative!

We admit that progressives are in a difficult position. There is a real danger that corporate forces, aided by their de facto allies in the Sarah Palin-style Tea Party or some successor to them, will manage to win power and dramatically escalate the undermining of civil liberties, democratic processes, and human rights, thereby returning the world to some form of a contemporary feudalism. That speaks for progressives standing in solidarity with the Obama administration against the racist and irrational attacks on it.

The threats from the Right are too important to indulge in self-righteous critique of Obama unless it is accompanied by a plausible strategy for what those in power now could actually do. That alternative strategy is the focus for our conference in D.C., and we really need you to be there (or at least to donate to help others offset the costs of coming to D.C.—a cost that is a significant issue for many who are still suffering from the Bush-era economic meltdown). Please click on the conference icon (Obama’s picture)

at www.spiritualprogressives.org, where you’ll find the sliding-scale rates and the tentative agenda. Register there or by calling 510-644-1200 during normal work hours Pacific Time, Monday through Friday. And don’t miss our demonstration outside the White House on June 13—our effort to strongly but respectfully bring these ideas to the attention of the current administration.

Healing Our Own Psyches

WE DO NOT BLAME ANYONE WHO REMAINS ANGRY AND ALIENATED in face of the betrayals that they’ve experienced from Obama and the Democrats in the past year and a half. But to be politically effective, we need to get beyond those feelings. That “getting beyond” can’t happen unless we first allow ourselves to experience our feelings fully. So we recommend that you give yourself a week or two to be fully enraged at the ways that we have all been let down or betrayed. Get yourself to a safe space and yell out your anger and frustration. Let your tears and sadness get fully expressed. Don’t let anybody tell you that you have no right to feel that way. Go into the feelings fully. We do not for a moment believe that people who are outraged at the continued murdering of Afghani and Pakistani civilians by drones commissioned by the Obama administration (to take one example among many) are somehow mistaken. So please don’t misunderstand—we too have had to go through these feelings to get to the other side.

But the goal must be to get to the other side of those feelings, so that we can do our best together to develop a rational and successful strategy. And the world needs YOU to get to that point with us, and then work with us to renew our own energies and those of millions of others who know that America needs a deep healing, repair, and transformation (*tikkun*) and at the moment doesn’t have any leadership that can help us organize in a sensible direction. So please join us in D.C. or donate to help others to get there! ■

Immigration:

Don’t Let “Reform” Be an Excuse for Increased Repression

THE DEEPLY FLAWED PLAN FOR IMMIGRATION REFORM put forward by Senator Chuck Schumer of New York and Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina (and backed by Obama) is not a positive place to begin the discussion.

While the nation’s media attention was focused on health care reform, hundreds of thousands of immigrants and their supporters massed on Washington, D.C. They rejected the notion that reform should prioritize a portrayal of Democrats as “tough” on illegal immigrants by placing harsh enforcement strategies at its heart. Yet that is what Schumer and Graham seem to agree on. As the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights points out, the Schumer/Graham plan “emphasizes increases in worksite and border enforcement as an apparent tradeoff for a ‘tough but fair’ legalization program.” And it relies on the idea of providing temporary worker visas to

lower-skilled immigrants who are apparently expected to send their money home, providing American farmers, agribusiness, and other employers with a source of cheap labor that can depress the wages of other laborers. These temporary workers can easily be exploited and may even soon become a new group of undocumented workers.

The National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights calls for a different approach based on core reforms:

- Suspend detentions and deportations while humanitarian policy alternatives are being put in place, and reinstate due process.
- Support legalization without the onerous hurdles of past proposals that will limit applications.
- Uphold family reunification as a core principle of immigration policy.

- Expand and expedite legal immigration.
- End the criminalization of immigrants by repealing employer sanctions, stopping the militarization of the border, and ending local police collaboration with such programs.
- Strengthen labor law enforcement for all workers, regardless of citizenship or immigrant status.
- Ensure immigrant access to social services.

This is just one of many attempts to refocus the policy debate on humane principles. Yet when we state the underlying principles, we immediately run into a political roadblock: the fear that residents of the world's richest country have of being overrun by others seeking our wealth and taking our jobs. While in the short run this fear is not well-founded, it has a logic to it—would we really allow everyone who could figure out a way to cross our borders to become citizens? If not, what should we do to help make their lives at home in their own countries more attractive to them? Isn't that a smarter alternative than further arming our borders? These questions are rarely answered persuasively, even by those who speak to the deeper level of problems facing immigrants.

To its credit, the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights acknowledges that immigration is tied to policies that create displacement and forced migration. It calls for policymakers to support policies that promote sustainable economic development, livable environments, job creation, and peace “so that migration is an option and not a last resort for economic survival.”

We spiritual progressives need to enter the national debate with an ever more forceful insistence that immigration reform should include a commitment to the Global Marshall Plan (GMP) developed by the Network of Spiritual Progressives and introduced this January as H.Res.1016 by Congressman Keith Ellison. The GMP is the only coherent answer to the legitimate fear that fair treatment of illegal immigrants could bring tens of millions more to our shores in the next few decades. The answer is ending global poverty, homelessness, hunger, inadequate education, and inadequate health care (i.e., implementing our proposed Global Marshall Plan). If we make these long-term reforms, people en masse will have a far greater incentive to stay in their home countries.

But what about those who do want to come, even when a GMP has eliminated global poverty and put the rest of these changes in place? The simple and consistent answer from the standpoint of a spiritual progressive should be: LET THEM IN! OPEN OUR BORDERS!

Spiritual progressives take seriously the moments in the Torah where God responds to the “realists” who warn that the elimination of debts every seven years, and the return to the original equal distribution of land every fifty years called for by the Jubilee, can't possibly work. God's response: “The land belongs to me.” Which is another way of saying the land doesn't belong to us and we have an obligation to share what we have. It belongs neither to the humans who were first there, nor to the people who took the land by conquest, nor to the people who later bought it, an understanding shared by many indigenous people who found it difficult indeed to wrap their minds around concepts of “ownership” brought by Western colonialists. Spiritual people need to teach this message: we humans don't have a “right” to any part of the earth, but only an



Tens of thousands of immigrants and activists rally in Washington, D.C., on March 21, 2010, calling for legislation this year to give legal status to millions of immigrants.

obligation to care for it and share it with all other human beings and with the animals and plant life.

Take that seriously and you can immediately see what a crime it is against God, spirit, Gaia, the unity of all being, the consciousness of the universe, or what our ethical commitments ought to be when people stand on the borders with guns and kill, wound, torture, imprison, or deport others who want to come to live with us.

“Well,” you may argue, “that position is so utopian for the current period we'd better not even put that into public discourse.” And our response is this: It's no more utopian than to think that you can get people to treat undocumented immigrants with respect and decency in a society that believes that: 1) we have an absolute right to the earth or the part of it called the United States, 2) we have the right to use violence against those who want to come here illegally, and 3) that if we don't use that violence but instead treat undocumented immigrants humanely we will be overrun by even more who will abuse our “generosity” by using our health care, social services, and educational systems, which are already under-financed, over-used, and requiring more and more of our tax dollars to keep running.

So, take your pick about which utopian fantasy you want to go with. For spiritual progressives, it ought to be the one that reflects our fundamental commitment to generosity and caring for others, and that means that we should be insisting that anyone who talks about immigration reform should simultaneously be talking about the goals of the Global Marshall Plan, even as we fully embrace the proposal of the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, remembering the love that the Bible instructs us to show toward not only our neighbors but also to “the stranger.” ■

PAID JOB AT TIKKUN: Personal Assistant and Go-fer
for Rabbi Lerner at *Tikkun* and Beyt Tikkun Synagogue
Details: TIKKUN.ORG/JOBS

After the Reform: Aiming High for Health Justice

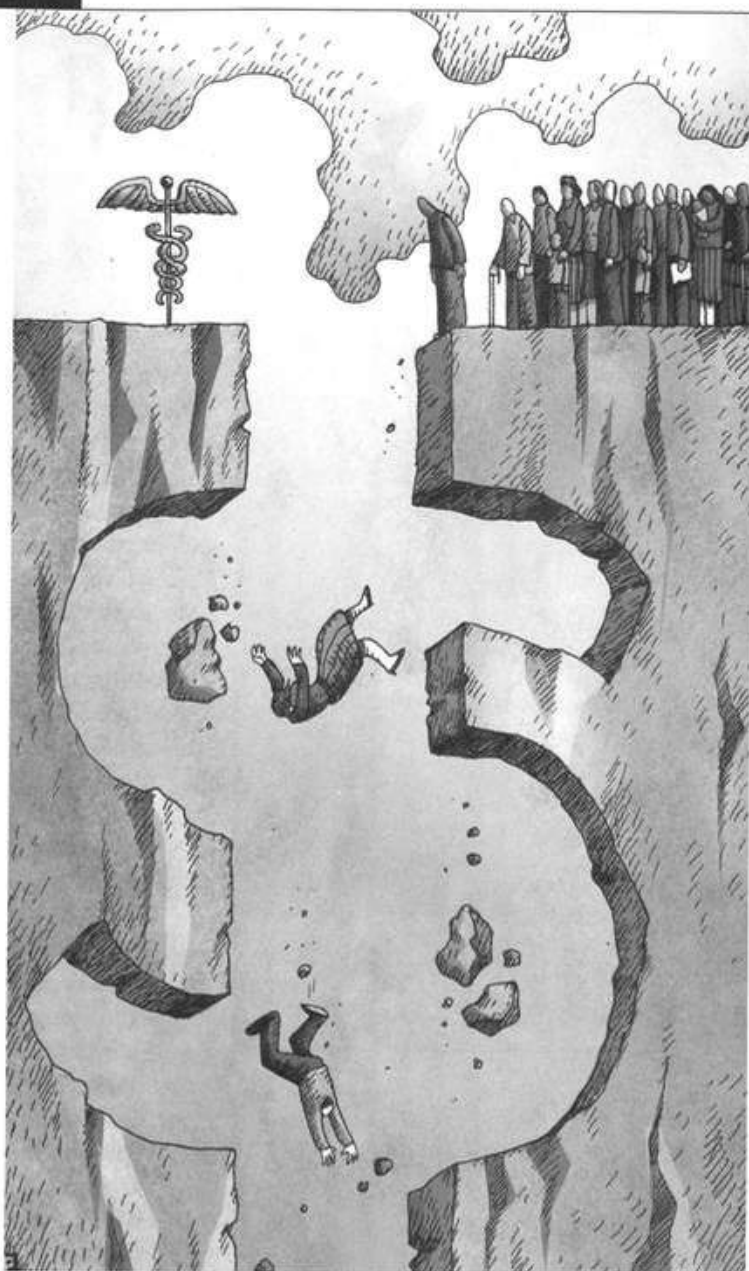
by Margaret Flowers

AS WE SIT HERE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE RECENT health reform process, we have an opportunity for reflection. There were many times during the past year and a half when passage of a health bill seemed unlikely. However, in the end, the White House and Democratic leadership joined forces and converted the last holdouts with scare tactics of electoral turnovers and even a trip on Air Force One in order to muscle a bill over the final hurdles. The mere fact that any bill was passed at all was hailed as the great accomplishment, because no honest proponent of health reform could call the final product a solution to our nation's serious health care crisis.

This entire health reform process occurred under the shadow of the previous attempt to pass significant health legislation. President Obama made this his signature issue, and so for his administration failure was not an option. He surrounded himself with many of those who were traumatized by their participation in the last go-round. Thus, the resulting strategy was based more on fear of the opposition than on sound health policy. An opportunity for an honest debate about the needs of our people was squandered for backroom deals with industry giants and the photo ops so reminiscent of the previous administration. And for the most part, the resulting legislation benefits the very industries that profit most from our current situation more than it benefits the people of America.

Pros and Cons of the Legislation

THERE ARE SOME PROVISIONS WITHIN THE BILL THAT ARE POSITIVE STEPS: COMPARATIVE effectiveness research; funding for demonstration projects to improve care; a new emphasis on prevention, wellness, and public health; increased funding for community health centers; and incentives for primary care providers. These are all necessary provisions, but they do not offset the harm done by other provisions in the bill, such as the individual mandate to purchase private insurance with penalties for noncompliance and the \$447 billion in public dollars being used to subsidize such purchases. The bill will omit



As long as profit is prioritized over care, there will be unequal access to health care. The new legislation still leaves a dollar gap that millions will fall into when they should be lining up for medical services.

Dr. Margaret Flowers is a pediatrician who serves as the congressional fellow for Physicians for a National Health Program and is on the board of Healthcare-NOW! She is one of the "Baucus 8."

ASK THE AUTHOR!

Margaret Flowers

6 p.m. Pacific Time

(9 p.m. Eastern)

Monday, May 10

Call 1-888-346-3950 for free!

Then enter this code: 11978#

**ALSO SPEAKING AT THE
NSP CONFERENCE**

June 11-14

spiritualprogressives.org/conference



at least 23 million people from having any coverage. And the requirement to accept people with pre-existing conditions will most certainly increase premiums such that they become unaffordable, or people will purchase policies with skimpier coverage. This will likely result in a larger population of underinsured people—those who risk bankruptcy from medical debt should they develop health problems.

And none of the positive steps turn us in the direction of creating a national health system such as there is in every other advanced nation. Rather, on the whole, this legislation, which was written with heavy input from private health insurance and pharmaceutical lobbyists, further privatizes the financing of our health care and further enriches and empowers the very industries that are the problem. We know from experience both in the United States and abroad that market-based financing of health care is both the most expensive model and the most unjust, providing only as much health care as the patient can afford.

The Public Option Was Ruled Out at the Start

FROM THE BEGINNING OF THIS PROCESS, IT WAS CLEAR THAT THE ADMINISTRATION AND leadership had developed a strategy based on an outcome they believed they could achieve. The path was predetermined. All of the steps along the way, from the house parties that started during the winter of 2008 to the hearings, to the media spin, were planned so that the resulting “debate” was a drawn out performance of political theater. In order to disarm the corporate interests, the health industries that had opposed previous reforms were included on the inside. In order to disarm the Right, bipartisanship was at the forefront. In order to disarm the supporters of a single-payer plan, who are the majority, a campaign was developed around a promised “compromise,” the public option, and given tens of millions of dollars for organizing and advertising. The public option succeeded in splitting the single payer movement and confusing and distracting it with endless discussion about what type of public option would be effective.

Despite all of the attention, the public option was never meant to be part of the final legislation. As early as March 2009, Senator Baucus admitted that the public option existed as a bargaining chip to convince private insurers to accept increased regulation. And a year later, Glenn Greenwald and others confirmed that the public option had been privately negotiated away, although members of Congress continued the charade and “fought” for it.

Toward the final vote, supporters of the public option were hearing the same excuses that single-payer advocates have heard for decades. We are always told that single-payer is not politically feasible. However, we know that political feasibility can change. We are told to be pragmatic, yet we know that the reform being passed was not practical, in that it failed to guarantee health care to everyone and to be financially sustainable. We are told we are asking for too much and should accept incremental change. However, we know that the smallest effective step we can take in health reform is the creation of a publicly funded health system. Beyond that, there is much more to do in order to create a health system that raises us into the top ten in the world.

Profit-Driven Insurers Cannot Prioritize Care

WHILE POLITICIANS CLAIM THAT WE HAVE FINALLY ACHIEVED COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH reform and that now all Americans will have guaranteed affordable health care, we in the single-payer movement experience a sense of déjà vu. We have seen the same scenario occur at the state level from Oregon to Maine to Tennessee, and most recently in Massachusetts. Every state that has passed a health reform package has made these claims, only to find that within a few years they were unable to cover the number of people they had hoped to cover and that their health care costs exceeded their budget. The reason for this is that every state, and now our federal government, ignored the data showing that we cannot achieve universal and affordable health care as long as we retain private insurers as an integral part of health care financing. This truth has been

documented both in practice and in numerous economic studies.

We cannot control health care costs, without severe rationing, as long as we retain multiple private insurers, because this model wastes at least a third of our health care dollars on areas that have nothing to do with direct health care: marketing, high CEO salaries, profits, and administration. We cannot guarantee that patients will be able to afford needed care using private insurers because the private insurance model is profit driven. These corporations profit by avoiding the sick and denying and restricting payment for care. Their bottom line is profit, not improved health. And no amount of industry regulation to date has been successful in changing that bottom line. Likewise, the new federal legislation is full of loopholes that will allow private insurers to continue to skirt the regulations.

The White House and Congress claimed throughout the process that we must retain private insurance because Americans desire choice, and this has been framed as choice of insurance. However, this is a false concept. No person can anticipate what their health care needs will be or which insurance will be best. Health care needs change the day a patient has a serious accident or is diagnosed with a serious illness. We all need the same health insurance: one that covers all medically necessary care when and where we need it. Those of us who travel and listen find that people in America desire choice of health care provider and choice of treatment: the two choices that private health insurers restrict.

So what are the White House and Congress really saying when they claim that we must retain a private insurance model? That they are unwilling to take on these powerful industries, and so we, the people, must be willing to compromise and work within their framework. Mohandas Gandhi said:

All compromise is based on give and take, but there can be no give and take on fundamentals. Any compromise on mere fundamentals is a surrender. For it is all give and no take.

When it comes to health reform, compromise on the fundamentals is unacceptable because the human costs are continued preventable deaths, continued suffering as patients fight for needed care, and continued bankruptcy from medical debt as families struggle to pay for deductibles and uncovered services. In a study published in *Health Affairs* in January 2008 that looked at the top nineteen industrialized nations, the United States ranked the worst—we have the highest number of preventable deaths (101,000 each year) because we lack a health system. All of the other industrialized nations have health systems based on the principles of health care as a human right: universality, equity, and accountability.

Why We Failed

WHY HAVE THE AMERICAN PEOPLE BEEN DENIED THIS SAME RIGHT? AS I LOOK BACK AT THE health reform process, I see three serious errors: a willingness to compromise, a lack of clarity about what we require, and a fear that failure to pass reform will have electoral consequences. These are the areas we must address as a people if we want to see real change in this nation, not just in health care but also in many areas that affect our ability to survive on this planet.

The willingness to compromise has occurred repeatedly at the state level. As a result, fewer people have access to care, and health care costs continue to rise; the fundamental problems are not corrected. This willingness to compromise is based on a real sense of desperation. We see real suffering. We want to do something. We are told that this reform, whatever it is, is the best we can get this time. We accept that and tell ourselves that it is something, it is a step.

As the congressional fellow of Physicians for a National Health Program, I saw this desperate attempt to pass something, anything, rise to the surface in the final weeks of the



**COME TO THE TIKKUN/NSP
CONFERENCE!**

Washington, D.C., June 11-14
spiritualprogressives.org/conference

reform process. Patients and their families were brought into Congress to tell their stories of abuse at the hands of private insurers. Well-meaning legislators looked them in the eye and told them that this reform would change that. When I challenged the truth of that response, I was told, often in heated tones, that they (the legislators) had to do something and that at least this reform would help some people. I could only think of those who would not be helped. What about them?

The lack of clarity was grounded in the belief that if we simply advocated based on principles such as access and affordability, then the legislation would meet those principles. Legislators and pro-reform groups were content to speak based on principles as long as they were not challenged about whether those principles were being met. We must go beneath the surface of simple principles, educate ourselves, and define what is acceptable and what isn't. If we don't know exactly what we are asking for, we won't get it. And we mustn't be afraid to ask for what we require. As a people, we have become willing to accept crumbs when we require so much more than crumbs.

The final mistake was to pin the results of the upcoming elections to the success or failure of passing reform. Those who were reluctant to support the legislation were forced to support it in the end or risk being blamed for possible electoral consequences. As has often happened in past campaigns, people were forced to vote for the lesser of two evils instead of for what they truly wanted.

We Can Still Create a National Health Program!

SO WHAT DO WE DO NOW THAT A HEALTH BILL HAS BEEN SIGNED? NOW THAT THE CLAMOR has quieted, it is time for a civilized discussion of what our health needs are and how best to meet them. This discussion is unlikely to occur in a mainstream media dominated by advertising dollars from health insurance and pharmaceutical corporations. We will need to have this discussion at a more personal level and through independent sources of media. We must educate ourselves and those around us about what is possible to achieve in this nation.

It is possible to create a national health program in which every person living in this country is able to receive the same high standard of medical care whenever and wherever they need it, without fear of financial consequences. We call this health security. Other advanced nations have achieved this goal. The United States has not, and is currently ranked thirty-seventh in the world for health outcomes. We spend more per capita on health care than every advanced nation, yet leave a third of our population either completely on the outside or vulnerable to financial ruin should they have a serious health problem.

Physicians for a National Health Program, founded in 1987, educates and advocates for a health system that will improve our health outcomes and provide health security based on the evidence of what has worked in our nation and what is effective in other advanced nations. We envision a lifelong universal health system—much like traditional Medicare—that is nationwide. We envision a system that allows patients to choose where they receive their care, permits caregivers and patients to determine the best course of treatment with assistance from evidence-based data, controls costs in a rational way through simplified administration and negotiation of fair prices, and is progressively financed. Its publicly funded nature would make it transparent and accountable. Because it would be privately delivered, it would allow caregivers to compete based on quality of care provided. Private health insurers would be relegated to a position of offering supplemental plans and possibly providing administrative support.

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. taught us that to witness an injustice and not work to correct it is in itself an act of violence. As a physician and an advocate for nonviolence, I cannot ignore the injustice of the great health inequality that exists in our nation or ignore those in need who cannot afford medical treatment. We have delayed this struggle for too long. Alice Walker said, "We are the ones we have been waiting for." So, let's do it. We have the resources. Now we must create the political will. Together, we can create a health justice movement, educate ourselves, speak with clarity, and organize independently of any political party. Please join us. You can learn more at www.pnhp.org or join the grassroots movement at www.healthcare-now.org.

Two Takes on the Health Care Act: Responses to the Patient Protection And Affordable Care Act (P.L. 111-148) with amendments included in the Health Care And Education Reconciliation Act Of 2010 (H.R. 4872)

FACTUAL SUMMARY FROM KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION VIA HOUSE DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP

COMMENT FROM PHYSICIANS FOR A NATIONAL HEALTH PROGRAM

COMMENT FROM HEALTH CARE FOR AMERICA NOW

Individual mandate: Beginning in 2014, U.S. citizens and legal residents must purchase qualifying coverage or pay penalty that starts at 1% income and increases annually (2.5% income by 2016); certain people can receive waivers from the mandate.

Implementation delayed four years, which will result in tens of thousands of people with continued suffering and preventable deaths.

Start date delayed due to 1) time needed for implementation and 2) savings and financing offsets require time to phase-in.

Employer requirement: Beginning in 2014, Employers with 50 or more employees must offer insurance or pay fine for employees who must purchase subsidized insurance through the exchange. Employers with 200 or more employees must enroll employees in health plan; employees can opt out. Certain employers will be required to offer a voucher for employees who purchase insurance through the exchange.

Maintenance of employer-sponsored coverage saps businesses of finances and resources that could be better spent growing their businesses; if an employee doesn't like the plan offered, he or she must keep it unless certain financial criteria are met.

Employer requirements should be strengthened over time, particularly with regard to fully including part-time workers.

Medicaid expansion: Beginning in 2014, all individuals except undocumented immigrants with incomes at or below 133% of Federal Poverty Level become eligible for Medicaid; increase reimbursement to primary care physicians in 2013 and 2014; maintain current income eligibility rules for Medicaid and CHIP until 2019.

Creates a financial burden on states in a time of budget crisis; increased reimbursement is limited and not guaranteed at the time when Medicaid rolls will expand, making it difficult for patients to find providers.

Federal commitment under Medicaid greatly expanded. Full federal funding for newly eligible Medicaid recipients in early years and then 10% state match required from 2019, much less than the 43% average state match under current Medicaid coverage. Need to extend the increase of Medicaid rates for primary care services to Medicare levels beyond 2014.

Cost-sharing and subsidies for individuals: Begins 2014, sliding-scale premium credits available in the exchange tied to second lowest cost silver plan for incomes up to 400% Federal Poverty Level, expected cost of premium for the individual ranges from 2% to 9.5% income, subsidies cannot be used for coverage for abortion services.

For families and individuals in the 200–400% FPL range, subsidies and out-of-pocket costs may be insufficient so that patients cannot afford co-pays and deductibles required to get care and will still risk medical bankruptcy.

Dramatic change from current law, with premium assistance and caps on annual out-of-pocket costs for low-to-middle income families.

Subsidies for employers: Beginning in 2010, certain employers with less than 25 employees will receive tax credits for coverage. A temporary reinsurance program for employers providing health insurance coverage to retirees over age 55 who are not eligible for Medicare will begin in 2014.

Incentive to choose plans with high deductibles/co-pays that place burden of health care costs on the individual or hold wages down in order to meet eligibility criteria.

Assistance under law primarily targeted to individuals, with assistance for employers limited to smallest firms. Need to improve benefit standards required of employers.

Tax changes: Beginning in 2018, premium excise tax on plans that exceed \$10,200 for individuals and \$27,500 for families of 40% of value of the plan that exceeds the threshold (threshold increased under certain circumstances); in 2011, increase tax on Health Savings Accounts and Medical Savings Accounts; in 2013, limit contributions to flexible spending accounts; in 2013, increase Medicare part A tax on earnings over \$200,000.

Taxing expensive health plans will increase the costs to those who are of a greater age and/or who have greater health care needs; employers may change to lower benefit plans that are just under the tax threshold.

Initial proposal for an excise tax on high-cost plans reduced by more than 70% in final bill. Excise tax will ultimately hit greater numbers of plans and families as threshold for tax is not indexed to medical inflation.

Insurance pooling mechanisms: Beginning in 2014, states will be required to set up exchanges for purchase of insurance with four tiers of coverage from Bronze to Platinum and a catastrophic plan for those under 30 years, separate exchanges for individual plans (AHBE) and for small businesses (SHOP); variation in premiums based on age is 3:1 and for tobacco use is 1.5:1; no coverage for abortion services available through exchange; in 2013, offer funds to assist organizations in set-up of co-ops. Essential benefit plan covers at least 60% of medical costs with annual out-of-pocket caps at \$5,950/individual and \$11,900/family.

The creation of multiple exchanges with multiple plans further increases the administrative costs and complexity of our health care. We could save at least \$400 billion per year by creating a single risk pool—enough to provide comprehensive health care to those who are currently uninsured or underinsured.

Effectiveness of new insurance exchanges is dependent upon state-based implementation. Need to ensure premium regulation is effective. With defined benefit packages, plan options should provide understandable choices for consumers. Abortion coverage IS available through the exchange if paid for with a separate check (states may opt out of this provision). Lack of a public health insurance option needs to be addressed in subsequent legislation.

Private insurance changes: Beginning in July 2010, temporary national high-risk pool for individuals with pre-existing conditions and uninsured for six months with 4:1 age rating; extend dependent coverage to age 26; no lifetime limits or rescissions except in cases of fraud; in 2010, end pre-existing condition exclusions for children; in 2010, internet website with information on coverage options; in 2014, limit waiting periods for coverage to 90 days.

There are currently high-risk pools in 35 states, yet only 200,000 patients are enrolled nationwide because of the high cost of the premiums; waiting six months for the right to buy insurance for those with serious medical conditions may be a death sentence.

Substantial reform with complete elimination of pre-existing condition exclusions in 2014. In the interim, the \$5 billion initial funding for the high-risk pools may not be sufficient for the entire 2010–13 period.

Health Reform: Two Responses to Dr. Flowers

Comment from Richard Kirsch,

National Campaign Manager for Health Care for America Now:

While the new health care law is far from ideal, there is absolutely no question that we should welcome the law as a major step toward social justice in our nation. As Dr. King said, "Of all the forms of injustice, inequality in health care is the most shocking and inhumane." The new law will, when implemented, provide coverage to about 32 million people who would have been uninsured, saving some 30,000 lives a year. It will end or diminish crushing medical debt and even bankruptcy for millions of Americans every year. It will establish as law that government has an obligation to make health coverage affordable, which will fundamentally change the way Congress has to approach the issue. Every year the president and Congress will have to debate how to fulfill this obligation. And we will fight to improve the new law, just as Social Security was vastly improved over the years.

For those who would say that it's not good enough, that it is so flawed that it is not worth passing, that we need to hold out until single-payer is passed, I have one question: are you willing to give up your private insurance and join the ranks of the uninsured until we get single-payer? My wife is a cancer survivor whose care was paid for by private insurance. I would not deny anyone the opportunity to get the care they needed because I didn't approve of the insurance system. Surely there could not be a more basic test of Rabbi Hillel's golden rule than this.

Comment from Lauren Reichelt,

Director of Health and Human Services for Rio Arriba County, New Mexico:

Like many single-payer advocates, Dr. Margaret Flowers assumes that had the president initially considered nationalized health care, we would have produced a better bill. In fact, it is possible we would have produced no bill. The for-profit insurance and health care industries employ millions of middle-class Americans who, if threatened, will fight to preserve their livelihoods. Conversely, few Americans have lived abroad or positively experienced government-run health care.

The average American most frequently encounters government at the state and local levels. While few of us interact with the federal Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), most have tried to negotiate our children's way through the failing public school system. In this era of steeply declining state budgets and services, the idea of trusting the state Department of Health to provide my health care frightens *me* (and I am a single-payer advocate!).

Americans were horrified by the bungled federal response to Katrina. From a practical perspective, it does not matter if small-government Republicans are primarily responsible for the decrepit state of our public schools and health services. A great deal of progress must be made both in terms of public perception and actual infrastructure development before Americans will entrust health care to the feds.

There are several examples of effective public-private hybrids in Europe with the government serving as regulator. If we extend access to high-quality, affordable health care through a hybrid model, we will have expanded the universe of individuals who have positively experienced government involvement in health care, and will thus have moved the "Overton window" (public perception of what is acceptable) to the left. Harry Reid has promised to bring the public option to the floor for a vote. If it becomes law and works for a few, others will want it. Envy is an extraordinary political motivator.

Evaluation is another tool we can use to progress. However, in order to use it, we must have reform to evaluate. Rather than issuing dire statements about what might happen, we should evaluate what *does* happen, using data to systematically improve function. Continuous evidence of improvement through data, along with the actual *experience* of improvement, will encourage the public to support further reform.

A Zen *koan* warns us to not fixate on the finger pointing at the moon, but to look at the moon. Single-payer is but a finger. Access to high-quality, affordable care for every U.S. resident is the moon. ■

The Machiavellian Dilemma:

Paradoxes and Perils of Democratic Governance

by Sharon D. Welch

ON AN UNSEASONABLY WARM FALL EVENING IN November 2008, I joined thousands of people in Grant Park, cheering the win in each state, and relishing the grand collective jubilation of shouts, dancing, cries, laughter, and hugs when the polls closed at 11:00 p.m. and we knew that we had done it. A year and a half after that momentous election, however, there is a complicated mix of satisfaction, frustration, and confusion. How have the joyous cries of "Yes, we can!" become the painful realities of lowered expectations and blocked and only partial changes in political processes and policies?

Before the vote on health care reform, some analysts went so far as to pronounce the failure of the Obama presidency, and more than a few progressives agreed, many even expressing profound disillusionment with electoral politics and the existing democratic process as a venue for significant social change.

Both the analysts and the activists were undoubtedly too hasty in their verdict. What was it, though, that made the struggle for even modest changes in health care policy so difficult and so deeply contentious? What has occurred since President Obama was elected is indeed unsettling and sobering, but it is also predictable and unsurprising to those who know the complexities of institutional change.

It is a painful fact that caring passionately about justice—understanding thoroughly the contours and dynamics of oppression—does not mean that we are equally skilled in the task of coordinating and managing human and natural resources justly, creatively, and in a way that lasts for the future. As an activist, I have seen the impact of speaking truth to power: the inspiration and sense of identity evoked by clarion denunciations of injustice and faithful witness to ideals of justice and peace. As we take up the task of using power truthfully, however, we recognize that the work is not done when the protests are heard. Rather it is here, it is now, that another type of work begins.

The move from knowing what *should* be done to actually getting it done is as great a shift ethically and philosophically as is the move from *is* to *ought*.

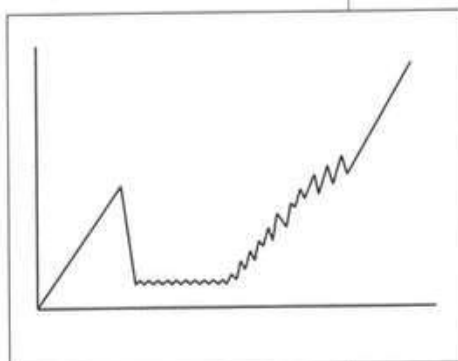
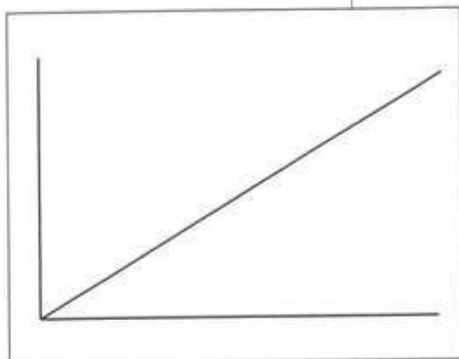
For here, as we move from *ought* to *how*, we encounter a paradox.

Not only does work for constructive social change take significant amounts of time, but there are also intrinsic differences between prophetic critique/vision and democratic leadership. We may critique alone and we may even envision alone, but to implement that vision, to build on that critique, requires the cooperation of other people—other people to actually carry out the work on a daily basis, other people to judge, refine, and critique new systems and processes. And, as you may have noticed, other people tend to have different



After the euphoria of Obama's victory (shown above in Grant Park, Chicago, November 2008), disillusionment has set in for many who voted for him. But Sharon Welch argues it is far too soon to make such negative judgments.

Dr. Sharon D. Welch is provost of Meadville Lombard Theological School (Unitarian Universalist), member of Global Action to Prevent War, and author of Real Peace, Real Security: the Challenges of Global Citizenship (Fortress Press, 2008).



Institutional progress isn't linear (top). Successful innovations typically start out well, lose support, and then gradually climb back to favor (bottom).

ideas—not only different ideas of how to meet shared goals, but possibly better ideas about the most fitting, concrete ways to administer health care or to support ecologically sustainable forms of energy production.

Furthermore, as we implement new forms of social organization, there is one type of response that can be reasonably expected and anticipated, the ubiquitous Western resistance to social change. Professors at Booth, the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business, teach courses in which leaders in corporations, nonprofit organizations, and educational institutions grapple with the complexities of institutional change. We often expect that a successful innovation will follow a steady trajectory, gradually and inexorably moving from obscurity and slight acceptance to being taken for granted as the way things are done. The researchers at Booth, however, found just the opposite in their study of successful business practices. While lasting innovations had an initial rush of success, this was followed by a dramatic decrease in support and a long period of intense resistance and uneven movement toward acceptance and implementation.

Their conclusion: resistance cannot be prevented, but it can be overcome, and it can possibly even serve as a catalyst for greater insight and creativity.

There are indications that this may well be a long-standing pattern in Western culture. The words of Machiavelli, in *The Prince*, are instructive:

And it ought to be remembered that there is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things. Because the innovator has for enemies all those who have done well under the old conditions, and lukewarm defenders in those who may do well under the new. This coolness arises partly from fear of the opponents, who have the laws on their side, and partly from the incredulity of men, who do not readily believe in new things until they have had a long experience of them. Thus it happens that whenever those who are hostile have the opportunity to attack they do it like partisans, whilst the others defend lukewarmly ...

Machiavelli certainly helps us understand why the supporters of health care reform have been relatively silent in contrast to those who fiercely resist any reform. And yet, it could be that the relative lack of passionate support for change is grounded as much in reason as in incredulity. In addition to known limits, any course of action may have devastating unintended consequences. It is in light of this reality that ecologists such as Anna Peterson (in *Being Human*) and Wes Jackson call us to a fallibility-based worldview: an acknowledgement that all that we know—whether through the resources of reason, imagination, intuition, or compassion—is partial, always vastly exceeded by that which we do not know. For example, we can only ever have partial knowledge of the long-term impact of our agricultural and industrial practices, the ripple effects of changes in social and economic policies, and the unpredictable consequences of our attempts to nurture and sustain the generations that depend upon us.

Let us return to the question with which we began. Has the Obama administration failed? Are there any other strategies that could have insured greater success? If Machiavelli and the researchers at Booth are right, it is unlikely that any other strategy would have gone more smoothly, or that any tactic would have assured success. In fact, what many see as a particular failure of one administration is giving us essential lessons in the very nature of Western political practice. As we acknowledge the complexity of institutional change, we encounter a paradox: *a fundamental lack of parity between the moral certainty of our denunciation of existing forms of injustice and our ethically reasonable uncertainty about the justice and feasibility of our cherished alternatives.*

In short, these are the challenges of leadership, for which we need resilience and practical curiosity:

- While we can reasonably expect significant challenges to any innovation, we can predict neither the reasons for the resistance nor the identity of the bearers of resistance.

- We cannot know in advance which visions will spark the imaginations of others, nor which plans will prove to be plausible and energizing.
- We can neither predict nor control the actual impact of our efforts.

Here, then, is our challenge as activists: it is easy to mobilize political will against a common enemy and for certain goals. As Nelson Mandela stated: "It is a relatively simple proposition to keep a movement together when you are fighting against a common enemy. But creating a policy when that enemy is across the negotiating table is another matter altogether." We have yet to learn how to mobilize political energy when we acknowledge that even we, the "righteous vanguard," are flawed, and while our goals of common flourishing are unambiguously clear, the means of attaining those same goals are intrinsically ambiguous and fluid.

In spite of these obstacles, there is change in corporate life. And in spite of these obstacles, there can be change in political life. These changes happen, however, only when we succeed in learning what the educator Lisa Delpit, in *Other People's Children*, calls the "codes of power," which enable us to move from solitary or minority critique and vision to vital collective action. In this process of mastering change, some analysts urge us to forego truth in the interest of success. Rosabeth Moss Kanter, for example, states in *The Change Masters* that there is often a clear disjunction between the institutional memory of change and the process of change itself. While the memory of successful changes in the past focuses on clarity, certainty, and consensus, the process of change as it occurs is characterized by conflict, risk, errors, and confusion. Kanter writes:

- Where there is apparent consensus, there was often controversy, dissent, and bargaining.
- Where the ultimate choice seems the only logical one ... there were often a number of equally plausible alternatives that might have fitted too.
- Where clear-sighted strategies are formulated, there was often a period of uncertainty and confusion, of experiment ... and there may have been some unplanned events or 'accidents' that helped the strategy to emerge.

According to Kanter, those who master change must know and understand the conflictual, ambiguous process of change, and they must create and utilize dualistic myths that deny that very ambiguity. She argues that "change masters" create myths in which "conflicts disappear into consensus," in which "accidents, uncertainties, and muddle-headed confusion disappear into clear-sighted strategies," and in which "the champions of an idea have to look unwaveringly convinced of the rightness of their choice to get people to accept the change." Kanter assumes an inevitable hierarchy that puts those who engineer change above those affected by it. As Kanter states, "those who master change know that they can never tell the 'truth,' but they also know what the 'truth' is."

Many of us are committed to another path, one that combines honesty and persistence, and in this journey we have much to learn from the longstanding political leadership of former Congressman Ronald Dellums. Dellums warned against compromising too soon and taught what was required to make transformative compromise possible.

In *Lying Down with the Lions*, Dellums recounts the history of his work in politics and the commitments and strategies that have shaped his work, a career grounded in two factors: an ongoing openness to listening to the stories of injustice and hope of those who were marginalized and exploited, and an astute understanding of the nature of the democratic process.

Although affirming the "moral certitude" and "righteous rage" of those who are oppressed, Dellums' own political engagement led him away from denunciations of other people and social structures. Dellums recounts that he had to make a choice early on: was he going to be a "rhetorical activist" or "an effective legislator committed to securing social change through the process of governance?"

Dellums learned the importance of these principles early in his political career. In a speech in Milwaukee in 1971, he referred to colleagues in the House of Representatives as "mediocre prima donnas ... with no real understanding of the pain and human misery being visited



Who experienced better than Nelson Mandela the difference between leading a long struggle in opposition and building the dreamed-of society once in power?

upon our people." Back on the floor of the house, Rep. Wayne Hayes verified that the statement was accurate, and then asked Dellums, "I just wonder if you then want a bunch of mediocre prima donnas to pay more serious attention to your amendment?"

As Dellums states, "The lessons here were clear":

I had not come to Congress to attack and alienate my colleagues; I had come to challenge their ideas. I needed to step back from the personal ... I had to return to the educative role that Dr. King had laid out in his challenge to leadership. I needed to become better informed, to understand my opponents and be able to best them in open debate. I had to bring them along with me, not demand that they reject themselves ... I could not be content with a role as the radical outsider if I wanted people to pay heed to our radical ideas. I needed to develop arguments that my fellow legislators could take home to *their* constituents and imagine articulating at *their* constituents' day meetings.

This is a lesson that many progressives have yet to learn. As we have moved from the stance of critical outsiders to empowered insiders, we may have thought that the mandate of the Obama presidency was greater than it actually is. The oft-repeated statement that the Democrats have a majority in both Houses is both factually true and practically irrelevant. Given the great divides within the Democratic Party on every issue of importance, from health care reform to military policy to reproductive choice and marriage equality, it has been as difficult to garner consensus among Democrats as it was in the past to gain accord between Democrats and Republicans.

This is as much a challenge for progressive activists as it is for members of the Obama administration: how can we find arguments that are persuasive to independents, to conservatives, to those fearful whites who are drawn to the polarizing and violent rhetoric of the Tea Party movement? We know how to create forms of public witness that denounce what is wrong—demonstrations, boycotts, sit-ins. What is harder, however, is finding the means of providing energizing and compelling public support for what *may* be right. How do we show support for the messy and ambiguous process of change? How do we symbolically and collectively express a fallibility-based worldview and delight in imperfect, impermanent creativity?

While certainty may at times be a creative delusion, uncertainty is the inescapable matrix of all our problem-solving efforts. In fact, the illusion that there could be strategies that guarantee ultimate victory is itself the product of injustice. My work as an activist, administrator, and ethicist has been profoundly shaped by the womanist critique of dominant ethics. The problem is that what counts as "responsible action" for the Euro-American middle and upper-middle class is predicated on an intrinsically immoral balance of power. We assume that to be responsible means that one can insure that the aims of one's actions will be carried out. We are challenged by African American women and men—such as Katie G. Cannon, Karen Baker-Fletcher, Toni Cade Bambara, Dwight Hopkins, Paule Marshall, Stephanie Y. Mitchem, Toni Morrison, Anthony B. Pinn, Mildred Taylor, and Emilie Townes—to find the resources to see clearly both the imperative of action and the limits of our political insight and strategic power.

Has, then, the Obama presidency failed? Has it succeeded? It is too early to tell, for its work, our work, has just begun. Our role is not only to support policies that we cherish, but also to find ways to bring others along. As we do this work, conflict and resistance may be experienced not as obstacles to be bemoaned, but as realities to be accepted, even played as the ingredients of greater creativity.

To seek the fitting response, not the definitive response, places us in the good company of those who, to use the words of Patrick Chamoiseau, "know through which vices to rifle in order to stumble upon virtue." In our work as leaders, stumble we will, yet create we may, evoking the beauty and justice to be found in a group, a situation, a moment in time. This is our great challenge, our rich legacy, and our sustaining and empowering hope. ■

ASK THE AUTHOR!

Sharon D. Welch

6 p.m. Pacific Time
(9 p.m. Eastern)

Monday, May 17

Call 1-888-346-3950 for free!

Then enter this code: 11978#

**ALSO SPEAKING AT THE
NSP CONFERENCE**

June 11-14

spiritualprogressives.org/conference



Are Israeli Policies Entrenching Anti-Semitism Worldwide?

by Tony Klug

EVEN POSING THE QUESTION IS PAINFUL, for after all the suffering anti-Semitism has caused the Jewish people over the centuries, the last thing we need or deserve is to have it become a permanent state of affairs. Nonetheless, the proposition that the State of Israel, which was conceived as a way of normalizing relations between Jews and all other peoples, might instead be normalizing anti-Semitism is not one we can simply close our eyes to in the forlorn hope that it will go away of its own accord.

I realize I may be stepping near the knuckle here. As Lady Bracknell in *The Importance of Being Earnest* might have said, "To take on one controversial topic may be regarded as a misfortune; to combine two controversial topics looks like carelessness." However, to my mind, the two topics (Israeli policies and anti-Semitism) are not separate and unrelated but ineluctably converging—an inference I draw reluctantly from my forty years of engagement on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian divide. I believe that the danger signals are flashing and that it is important to be candid about these matters at these uncertain times.

The Other Alleged Culprits

OUR STARTING POINT—REGRETTABLY NOT A CONTROVERSIAL ONE—IS THAT THERE HAS been a disturbing rise of anti-Jewish sentiment around the world in recent years. Reports of this rise may occasionally be exaggerated or distorted, but they are not invented out of thin air. But why has this come about?

Some say it is the fault of extremist Muslims, or of large-scale Muslim immigration to Europe and other Western countries, or even of Islam itself and its holy book, the Qur'an. Others widen the net of fault to blame "spineless" Western governments and their smug, predominantly Christian populations who, they say, have always harbored anti-Semitic feelings anyway. Yet others accuse human rights groups of betraying their mission and developing—along with almost the entire NGO sector, the mass media, the trade unions, and the universities—an almost exclusive obsession about Israel, the "stand-in collective Jew."

Finally, there are the alleged "self-hating Jews"—Jews accused of being ashamed of their origins and of turning their backs on their people in order to ingratiate themselves to others. The accusation is facile and commonly offensive, as many Jews who are on its receiving end—a constantly expanding number, apparently—draw largely on such traditional Jewish



Are Jews who protest Israeli policies necessarily "self-hating"? Or do their ideas offer Israel its best hope for survival? Here students at Tel Aviv University in Israel protest against the war in Gaza, January 19, 2009.

Dr. Tony Klug is a veteran commentator on Middle East affairs. His Visions of the Endgame (Fabian Society, 2009) proposes an international strategy to bring the Israeli-Palestinian conflict swiftly to an end.

ASK THE AUTHOR!

Tony Klug

6 p.m. Pacific Time

(9 p.m. Eastern)

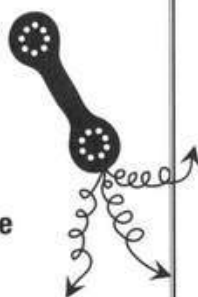
Monday, May 3

Call 1-888-346-3950 for free!

Then enter this code: 11978#

See full schedule at

www.tikkun.org



values as justice, peace, truth, human dignity, and rightful treatment of the stranger (“for you were strangers in the land of Egypt”) for their inspiration. These values—with which I am quite familiar as they were daily drilled into me at the orthodox Jewish school I attended between the ages of five and eighteen—are trashed virtually every time the “self-hating” accusation is leveled. In most cases, the accusation (whatever it is supposed to mean exactly) is made not because there is any basis for it, but because it meets the self-serving purpose of enabling the accuser to deflect mounting inconvenient realities.

A novel recent addition to those labeled as members of the “self-hating” community are the Israeli government officials responsible for overseeing Prime Minister Netanyahu’s partial construction freeze, whom disgruntled West Bank settlers have greeted as “anti-Semites.”

Altogether, this adds up to a large number of people supposedly out of step. With so many alleged anti-Semites around, is it any wonder there are Jews who feel paranoid? But, then again, are we not primed to see ourselves as the perennial victims when, at the annual Seder table, we recite the passage from the Pesach Haggadah that warns, “Not just one alone has risen against us to destroy us, but in every generation they rise against us to destroy us”? If we take this adage to heart—as a statement as much about the present and future as about the past—are not all the above groups just bit players merely acting out their scripted parts?

It’s not that there is nothing to any of this. Indeed, the Jews have had more than their fair share of adversity since time immemorial, and there are still plenty of authentic anti-Semites around, doubtless rather enjoying the moment. But maybe some introspection on our part is also warranted. Is it possible that we ourselves have in some way contributed in recent times to the overt rise in Jewish unpopularity? It’s a tricky question, as minority groups throughout history have habitually been accused of causing the prejudice from which they suffer, a slur the browbeaten Jews of Europe, among others, stoically endured over many generations. Yet, again, in the contemporary reality, it’s a question we cannot simply shield ourselves from on the back of a convenient, if often legitimate, principle.

Definition Creep: Are We Changing the Meaning of “Anti-Semitism”?

IF BY ANTI-SEMITISM WE MEAN AN IRRATIONAL HATRED OF JEWS, OR AN UNDERLYING prejudice or contempt for all things Jewish, can there be such a thing as an antipathy to Jews or Jewish causes that is not irrational—even if some Jews find it upsetting? The answer would be “no, never” only if we define antagonism to virtually any Jewish endeavor—let’s say Jewish schools in the educational sphere—as *necessarily* a form of “anti-Semitism.” Such a generalization would clearly be stretching the meaning of the term too far.

In the political arena, pertinent examples could range from disparaging the policies and practices of the Israeli government, through contesting Zionism as a political ideology, to questioning the legitimacy of a Jewish state. Such challenges, in particular the latter two, are bound to make many supporters of Israel feel uncomfortable, even outraged. That’s understandable, but are the critics necessarily driven by anti-Semitism? To corral them into this fold by slapping on the prefix “new”—as in “new anti-Semitism”—is not only simplistic and muddling, but it also risks trivializing past Jewish suffering, as well as genuine instances of anti-Semitism today, and it generally debases the currency.

Not only this, but many Jews, religiously observant or secular, within Israel and without, would suddenly find themselves on the wrong side of this “definition creep.” So too, retrospectively, would past luminaries of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, leading figures of which, prior to the establishment of the Israeli state, were outspokenly anti-Zionist. Should they therefore now be deemed anti-Semitic, or newly anti-Semitic?

As with any phenomenon, stretching the definition of anti-Semitism is bound to make it appear more prevalent than it really is by inflating the figures and expanding the fear factor. More ominously, it can obscure the real situation. Worse still, it can pervert it, as we saw in November last year when certain Zionist circles in Britain courted two far-Right members of the European Parliament, one from Poland and the other from Latvia, who had been accused of blatant neo-Nazi associations in the past and of distinct anti-Semitic proclivities

more recently. This tendency was again in evidence the following month when two right-wing Hungarian politicians, who had made very disparaging comments about their country's Jews, participated in the annual Global Forum to Combat Anti-Semitism in Jerusalem, sponsored by the Israeli Foreign Ministry. There was a time when Jews and official Jewish bodies would not go near such people with a bargepole. However, their records as "friends of the Jews" have been defended partly on the ground that their political parties can be relied on to take Israel's side on resolutions at the European Parliament. (Why they do this is a matter of debate, although it may have something to do with many modern-day fascists apparently hating Muslims more than they hate Jews and seeing them as the greater threat.)

There may be a parallel here with the posture of the chairman of the far-Right British National Party, Nick Griffin, who, when he appeared on BBC Television's Question Time in October 2009, disavowed his anti-Semitic past by claiming that his party was "the only political party which, in the clashes between Israel and Gaza, stood full square behind Israel's right to deal with Hamas terrorists." In all of these cases, professed support for Israel or Israeli actions is employed to relieve the charge of anti-Semitism, even by an avid anti-Semite with a record of Holocaust denial.

Among Israel's most impassioned partisans on the other side of the Atlantic are members of the ardently pro-Zionist, evangelical Christian Right in the United States. For them, *aliyah* (immigration of Jews to the holy land) should not let up until every Jew lives in Israel, and settlement building in "Judea and Samaria" should not cease until the entire West Bank is colonized by the Jewish people. Then the conditions would be right for the "rapture," at which point all Jews would have to choose between conversion to the true faith of Christianity or perishing forthwith. Ultimately—quite literally—this creed is deeply anti-Semitic. But its purveyors are sought out and serenaded by many of the influential pro-Zionist Jewish lobbies in America and by the Israeli government. They are, after all, through their ostensible support for even the most outrageous Israeli policies, proven "friends of the Jews."

To summarize, it now seems that it is the stance that groups and individuals take toward the Israeli state and the policies of its government of the day, that is becoming, bit by bit, the standard by which anti-Semitism is measured and assessed, steadily replacing the former gold standard of enmity toward the Jews *qua* Jews. Traditional anti-Semites are no longer—necessarily—anti-Semites. They may even be regarded as philo-Semites. Their place has been taken by people who have no quarrel with Jews *qua* Jews but do have a problem with the behavior and the policies of the political leadership in Israel, particularly with regard to its actions in occupied Palestinian territory. Some of them may even have a problem with the whole idea of a Jewish state. They, in this worldview, are fast becoming the new anti-Semites.

Unquestionably Genuine Anti-Semitism

NONE OF THE ABOVE IS TO SAY THAT ANTI-ZIONISM OR HOSTILITY TO ISRAEL IS NOT sometimes used as a cover for anti-Semitism or, in some cases, that it does not spring from similar impulses, whether on the part of the far Right or the far Left or elements in between. This was the blatant motive of the neo-Nazi National Front, a forerunner of the British National Party, when it latched on to the "anti-Zionist" crusade in the 1970s, using all the familiar anti-Semitic imagery and gobbledegook. A similar motive was quite transparent when the Polish Communist government launched a campaign against so-called Zionists in the wake of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war that robbed many of the comparatively few remaining Polish Jews of their livelihood and party membership and coerced thousands of them into leaving the country, to settle—not in Israel in most cases—but in Scandinavia!



If supporting or opposing Israeli policies is accepted as the new criterion for whether one is anti-Semitic or not, does that make current supporters of Israel like Nick Griffin (above)—the anti-Semitic, far-Right, British National Party leader and Holocaust denier—somehow a friend of the Jewish people?

INTERNSHIPS AT TIKKUN

June–August 2010 or
September 2010–June 2011
in Berkeley, California.
Info: tikkun.org/jobs

Nor is it to say that it is not absurd to see a clutch of despotic human rights abusers sitting in sanctimonious judgment of a nation that, despite its own serial transgressions, is not in their league. One only has to leaf through the range of reports produced by such illustrious organizations as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch to gain an idea of the scale of the tyranny elsewhere.

And it is certainly not to say that we should not be concerned about the propensity of some anti-Zionist jargon to propagate, wittingly or inadvertently, many of the familiar, sinister anti-Semitic tropes, such as Jewish power, Jewish money, Jewish control of the media and governments, Jewish vengeance, or even the idea of Jews as child-murderers.

Now that Jews Are in Power in One Country ...

WHILE ALL THIS IS DEEPLY TROUBLING, THE CONCERN SHOULD NOT CAUSE US TO LOSE A SENSE of proportion: the “objective” situation of the shtetl Jew in Mittel Europe in past centuries—when anti-Semitism was often official state policy and authentic blood libels were common currency—and the “objective” situation of the modern-day state of Israel, bear no resemblance to one another. In this respect, Zionism has succeeded in spades. But many Zionism-adherents seem not to have noticed.

The Jewish reality has changed dramatically since the end of World War II, with the establishment of a Jewish state and the entrenchment of equal citizenship rights in most if not all countries that Jews inhabit. Whichever way you look at it, there simply is no comparison in reality between past trumped-up accusations of abusive power leveled against a downtrodden, defenseless community that time and again was made to pay a heavy price for these baseless smears, and the current accusations of improper use of power against an advanced, nuclear-armed state which, for the past forty-two years, has enforced a harsh military rule over the lives of another downtrodden, dispossessed people, while relentlessly colonizing their remaining land.

Drawing parallels is treacherous territory, and I normally keep off it. But if there is any sort of parallel with the Mittel Europe of centuries past, the more compelling one is not between the subjugated Jew of then and the powerful, occupying state of Israel today but between the Jew of then and the occupied Palestinian of now. This is the parallel that much of international public opinion instinctively perceives, and it goes a long way to explaining the global switch of sympathy. To the extent that the Jewish world remains in denial, it is dislocating itself from the rest of the world.

And, whether we like it or not, and whatever our personal views may be, as Jews we are all implicated in Israel's actions, good or bad. While the audacious claims of successive Israeli governments to speak on behalf of Jews the world over may highlight the association—Prime Minister Olmert, for example, opined that Israel's ferocious war with Lebanon in 2006 was “a war that is fought by all the Jews”—the general perception is rife even without the explicit claim.

Herein, I believe, lies the key to the conspicuous increase in anti-Jewish sentiment in a range of countries, most strikingly among Arabs and Muslims. What has triggered it is no more of a mystery than what lies behind the simultaneous upsurge in anti-Muslim and anti-Arab feeling among Jews. It's the conflict, stupid. More particularly, it's the Occupation. And at the core of the Occupation is the invasive settlement project and the whole hideous infrastructure—segregational and intensely oppressive—that has proliferated on its back.

What If the Jewish State Had Been a Hindu or Buddhist State?

SHORN OF THE HYSTERIA, AND WITH EXCEPTIONS, A LOT OF THE OPPOSITION TO ISRAEL'S actions has little or nothing to do with it being a Jewish state. Had it been a Hindu or a Buddhist state, for example, the Palestinians would have been no less embittered if the state in question had dispossessed them and then proceeded to dispossess them further. And it would still have attracted the opprobrium of people around the world, plenty of Jews included, who held a commitment to basic justice and fairness and the right to self-determination—the very attributes that, at an earlier point in time, underpinned widespread sympathy for a Jewish state.

Moreover, if Hindu or Buddhist diaspora communities ostentatiously demonstrated from far-away lands their solidarity with a militarily powerful, modern Hindu or Buddhist state which, albeit under horrendous provocation, eschewed the diplomatic path and mercilessly pounded—to

international revulsion—an impoverished, entrapped people, from land, sea and air, causing widespread death and destruction, it would hardly be surprising if such communities found themselves on the receiving end of rising negative sentiment in the countries they inhabited.

The Hindu/Buddhist diaspora communities themselves—parading ostensibly under a banner of wanting peace for everyone—would doubtless see it all very differently and express their indignation at the very idea that they were condoning human rights abuses or that they were in denial about them. Accordingly, any manifestations of hostility toward them could only be explained in terms of inveterate anti-Hinduism or deep-seated anti-Buddhism. But such cognitive dissonance would not be to their benefit. On the contrary, its most likely consequence over time would be a self-fulfilling prophecy, deepening the antagonism toward them. This is where the real danger lies.



A Malfunctioning Moral Compass

DEEPENING ANTAGONISM FROM GLOBAL ONLOOKERS IS NOT THE ONLY DANGER. THE diaspora associated with the occupying state may also be in danger of losing its moral direction. There may be some individuals who know that the latest military assault is merely the most recent in a rolling sequence of onslaughts that have pounded towns and villages in neighboring countries and in the occupied territories in preceding years, but who find themselves barely batting an eyelid at the widespread devastation. They have become inured to it. Some may go further still and celebrate the carnage, taking leave of their moral compass altogether. One of the problems with occupation regimes is that, irrespective of their national identity or religious or other affiliation, they tend to brutalize the occupier as well as the occupied.

The processes at work are not hard to fathom. If there is one cast-iron law of history, it is probably that occupations and other forms of colonial rule are sooner or later resisted, and when that point comes, the occupier has a straightforward choice between leaving and allowing the native population to exercise its independence and self-determination—or staying. When the time came, Israel made the disastrous decision to stay. The rest was predictable.

As the Palestinians stepped up their resistance, Israel stepped up its colonization of their territory and the harshness of its retaliation—if only to keep order. The charge of “brutal occupier,” while plainly unjustified in the earlier years, turned out to be prophetic. In consequence, the moral appeal of Israel’s case started to weaken, alongside the fading memory of the Nazi Holocaust. While the country’s level of international support began to drain away, it simultaneously firmed up in the organized Jewish diaspora, through a form of heightened tribal solidarity. The sharpening polarization increasingly isolated Jewish opinion and led to a steady upsurge in anti-Jewish feeling.

I say all this was predictable because, in essence—although in the future conditional tense—I first mapped out this very sequence in a Fabian pamphlet in the mid-1970s, a relatively calm period in the Palestinian territories. But it wasn’t intended as a prediction, as I felt sure that Israel, in its own self-interest, would have the good sense to leave the occupied territories in the near future and help foster a Palestinian state. It was more of a hypothetical warning of what might happen in the decades ahead in the unlikely event that Israel failed to come to terms with the imperative of withdrawal. Unfortunately, Israel lost its way and the scenario I described thirty-five years ago has since played itself out.

At the time of my writing, there were fewer than 5,000 settlers in the territories captured by Israel in the 1967 war. Today, there are around 500,000. Israel (*continued on page 71*)

An armed Israeli settler and Palestinian shepherd argue about the shepherd’s right to graze sheep in a valley near an Israeli settler outpost. Today there are around 500,000 Israeli settlers in territories captured by Israel in the 1967 war. In the end, occupations are always resisted by the dispossessed.

This article is adapted from a presentation to Limmud, an educational organization in the British-Jewish community, Warwick University, U.K., December 30, 2009.

How Judaism Redeems Western Philosophy

by Stephen J. Stern

AFTER CLASS, A GROUP OF US OFTEN FOLLOWED THE EMINENT PHILOSOPHER Emil Fackenheim to his bus stop outside Hebrew University, stretching our brains to find a smart question to ask him. When he boarded the bus, everyone walked their separate ways—everyone, that is, but me. I jumped on the bus, pretending my stop was after his, oblivious to robbing him of his after-class downtime and to the patience he extended to me. On one ride, as I was in the midst of asking lots of questions about Martin Buber, he stopped me and said: “Buber is smart, very smart. But if you want to read a truly great Jewish philosopher, read Franz Rosenzweig.” I thought, “Who? How can this guy be great if I haven’t heard of him?” It turned out Rosenzweig’s gates would soon open me to a richer, more livable Judaism.

I immediately went out and bought Rosenzweig’s *Star of Redemption*. I loved the first page—still do—but didn’t understand a word after that. It took me years to navigate the text. But unbeknownst to me, Fackenheim had planted a seed. From that day on, I would find myself drawn to philosophers—like Rosenzweig—who emerged from the greatest catastrophes of the twentieth century. Perhaps it’s not a coincidence that many of these philosophers came from Jewish backgrounds.

Two to emerge from horrors are Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1929) and the French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (1905–1995). Although they never met, each devoted himself to Jewish education after experiencing catastrophe. In their own ways, each shows Judaism’s power to redeem broader Western conversations. Perhaps more importantly, they help redeem European Judaism from its near disappearance in the nationalism manifest in the political Zionism of Theodore Herzl and in the Nazi Judeocide.

Rosenzweig and Levinas were not only critical of the nationalism, social ideologies, and other factors that gave birth to the murderous fields on which they fought and found themselves enslaved; they were also critical of the tradition that intellectually trained them: Western (Hellenic-Christian) philosophy.

Their critique was not part of the cannibalistic tradition of Western philosophy, a movement that argues and feeds on itself without much input from other traditions or civilizations. Rather, Rosenzweig and Levinas critiqued from their embrace of Judaism.

Rosenzweig’s Mistrust of Nationalism

ROSENZWEIG GRIPS ME WITH HIS PASSIONATE WRITING, HIS EMPHASIS ON COMMON SENSE, and his focus on living life, not for an afterlife, but for the ordinary moments of this life. Emerging from the trenches of World War I, Rosenzweig introduced what is arguably his most powerful work, *The Star of Redemption*, which ends with an upside-down pyramid made of words. The last sentences of the book read:

Stephen J. Stern is an assistant professor of religious studies and Judaic studies, as well as affiliate of the Department of Philosophy at Gettysburg College in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

I am deeply grateful for the insightful editing of this essay provided by my colleague Steven Gimbel.

— Stephen J. Stern

To walk humbly with thy God — the words are
 written over the gate, the gate which
 leads out of the mysterious-
 miraculous light of the divine
 sanctuary in which no man
 can remain alive. Whither,
 then, do the wings of
 the gate open? Thou
 knowest it not?
 INTO LIFE.

Here one closes the book, finding oneself directed away from the text, where philosophers often exile themselves, into life. How to live an authentic Jewish life became Rosenzweig's concern.

After the war, he went on to start the *Lehrhaus* (Free Jewish House of Learning) in Frankfurt, where he devoted himself to educating assimilated Jews. The school was filled with names that would become pillars of both the Jewish intellectual world and the Western academy: Martin Buber, Walter Benjamin, Eric Fromm, Leo Baeck, Gershom Scholem, Nahum Glatzer, Theodore Adorno, and many more.

Rosenzweig's concerns were large, and he feared the totalizing ideologies found in national movements that so easily turn those outside the ideology into unworthy objects to be killed or ignored. His concerns extended to the nationalism of Herzlian political Zionism. He indicated in his letters that he was not anti-Zionist but worried about what would become of Jewish ethical traditions if Jews became nationalists *like other nations*. This was not a mere intellectual problem for him. Rosenzweig had just come out of a war fought in the trenches of chemical weapons and mass death. The result of nationalist ideologies betrayed his Jewish ethical sensibility.

Nationalism is often opportunistic, readily manufacturing and participating in a totalizing force that can blind one to others; it is pursued often at the expense of human life. In pursuing national goals, Rosenzweig wondered, will political Zionists turn their backs on ethics? What a prophetic insight, to say the least, especially for American Jews born and raised after the Holocaust and the re-creation of the State of Israel.

Rosenzweig's concerns predicated the construction of my own Jewish identity. I, like many others, grew up hearing and chanting, "Never again. Long live Israel." I lived those concerns. But Rosenzweig was right. My national aspirations as a Jew deafened me, like many others, to the "ethics of our fathers" (and mothers). I was not versed in Jewish history, biblical studies, Talmud, rabbinic concerns, or a study of how Judaism learned to live in the midst of other nations while maintaining Jewish life. I didn't even know that there are thirty-six biblical injunctions to care for the stranger, or why gossip is talmudically discussed as a form of murder, or what we mean by "eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth." Like so many others, my Judaism was largely found in remembering those who perished in the Holocaust and the felt sense to keep Israel secure.

Israel has succeeded at creating a Jewish homeland. We no longer truly debate its *right* to exist. It exists, not easily, but it's here, and we exercise a felt obligation to ensure its continued existence. But Rosenzweig's work insists that this is not enough, Judaically speaking. Sadly, in our nationalistic concerns and our fight in securing the rights accorded to most nation states, many of us have lost sight of one of the greatest Jewish ethical themes manifest in Rosenzweig's thought: redemption. Redemption, as Rosenzweig teaches, is found in exercising one's responsibility/obligation for others, such as performing the mitzvot to care for the stranger, a principle that drives many talmudic discussions.

Which Are More Important: Rights or Responsibilities?

TALMUDIC DISCOURSES ARE NOT BASED ON OR DIRECTED BY THE ENLIGHTENMENT'S NOTION of a rights-based legal approach to ethics. The engine is responsibility for the other. How am I responsible for the other? What are my obligations to others? How do I perform them? *Rights* are



Would Kant (above) or others trained in the Western philosophical tradition have been able to recognize the humanity of those the Nazis saw as less than human?

legally grounded in governmental institutions and they are (ideally) guaranteed, distributed, and protected by one's government. Rights may exercise obligations, but they are institutionally bound up. One's *responsibility* for the other precedes the institutions of legal rights and exists when those institutions are eclipsed by or disappear because of sociopolitical forces. Responsibility, unlike a rigid system of rights, is dynamic, interpersonal, situational, and always vulnerable to the distractions of self-interest.

These ancient normative, ethical Jewish concerns over responsibility, where we find redemption with a focus on this life, are a necessity for Jews living as aliens in so many nations without a land of their own. It's in exercising our obligations for one another—in our relations—that we find redemption. Rosenzweig writes, "For what is redemption other than that the I learn to say Thou to the He." We are obligated to see the other, the stranger, the competitor, the enemy as the person she or he is. This is where redemption resides. In other words, I am Judaically obligated to acknowledge you and your moral needs when made aware of them.

When World War I ended, Rosenzweig rejected the world of philosophy to focus on educating assimilated Jews. But his concerns still found their way into the Western philosophical tradition. In ways perhaps unimaginable to Rosenzweig, who died in 1929 of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis at the age of forty-three, Emmanuel Levinas creatively extended and smuggled Rosenzweig's concerns into the world of Western philosophy.

Levinas's Judaic Ethics Expose Philosophy's Failure

EMERGING FROM A NAZI CAMP, EMMANUEL LEVINAS ACCUSES WESTERN PHILOSOPHY OF betraying the other in its self-absorbed two-thousand-year struggle to logically define, explain, or "know" the individual. Philosophy was blind and deaf to the actual—rather than theoretical—suffering bodies begging for life in the face of Nazism. The ironies abound for this (in)humanistic tradition.

Nazism stormed out from the land of the greatest philosophical ethicist, the eighteenth-century German philosopher Immanuel Kant. The philosopher who had argued so cogently that ethical maxims must be universalized to apply to all people had apparently minimal effect on the behavior of his own people's descendants, including some who were well schooled in philosophy itself. Levinas's philosophical hero, Martin Heidegger, became Europe's most celebrated twentieth-century philosopher ... after joining the Nazi Party. Can you believe this? Here is a philosopher in a camp whose philosophical hero—the man who gave him the foundation of his early work—became a Nazi. And then Levinas's Judaic ethics betray, redeem, and transform a discipline that historically colored Judaism as irrelevant, unnecessary, dead.

Levinas exposes philosophy's failure in a two-and-a-half-page midrashic reflection on his Nazi imprisonment. In "The Name of a Dog, or Natural Rights" (available in *Difficult Freedom*, 1990, translated by Sean Hand) he writes:

We were beings entrapped in their species; despite all their vocabulary, beings without language. Racism is not a biological concept; anti-Semitism is the archetype of all internment. Social aggression, itself, merely imitates this model. It shuts people away in a class, deprives them of expression and condemns them to being 'signifiers without a signified' and from there to violence and fighting. How can we deliver a message about our humanity which, from behind the bars of quotation marks, will come across as anything other than monkey talk?

And then, about halfway through our long captivity, for a few short weeks, before the sentinels chased him away, a wandering dog entered our lives. One day he came to meet this rabble as we returned under guard from work. He survived in some wild patch in the region of the camp. But we called him Bobby, an exotic name, as one does with a cherished dog. He would appear at morning assembly and was waiting for us as we returned, jumping up and down and barking in delight. For him, there was no doubt that we were men.

... This dog was the last Kantian in Nazi Germany, without the brain needed to universalize maxims and drives. He was a descendent of the dogs of Egypt (*continued on page 73*)

Does It Really Work?

A Critique of Fear-Based Crime Prevention

by Jim S. Vrettos

THE MASS MEDIA ARE BUZZING ABOUT THE “FRESH twists” that contemporary criminologists are putting on their field’s classical deterrence paradigm. Both conservatives and liberals are finding reasons to praise CUNY professor David Kennedy, the patron saint of the new thinking about deterrence, for creating a new approach to crime that stresses individual choice and moral accountability without relying on draconian prison sentences.

Kennedy’s operational framework is disarmingly simple: offenders are told to stop their misbehavior and, if they don’t, they and everyone in their gang will feel the consequences (the stick). In other words, a gang member commits a crime and all members of the gang will face charges. Variations on this model are constructed to fit whatever group the offending individual is involved in. The social service part (the carrot) is then put into possible play as genuine offers of help are presented to change lives, but only if the offenders accept the terms of the possible consequences.

It’s clearly important to counter the trend of mass incarceration in this country. But the criminal justice models being proposed by Kennedy and his colleagues are hardly the panacea they’re being made out to be.

The problem? These interventions, like previous interventions grounded in classical criminology, still offer a narrow, fear-based, one-dimensional view of life that rules out the incredible complexity of human interaction and the awe and wonder of the human mind as it relates to the mysteries and vagaries of people trying to transform, change, and become “better” people or those who are struggling to see the world through different eyes. Spiritual progressives, secular humanists, liberal reformers, curious intellectuals, and the mass public should all take a critical second look before embracing this latest twist on criminology. One way to develop a critical perspective on these new developments is to take a closer look at the historical premises and aims of the criminological tradition on which contemporary scholars are building.

European and American sociology and criminology have been mesmerized since their inception by the possibility of uncovering the ultimate scientific explanation for crime and “deviance” (behaviors that violate cultural norms). Following in the footsteps of their older and more respected big brothers—the biologists, physicists, and chemists who were uncovering the natural laws of the natural universe—the founders of sociology dreamt of doing the same for the social universe: finding that one all-encompassing law, pattern, variable, or cause that would account for and explain all crime and deviance.

Following the scientific method and trying to be as rational, logical, and objective as possible, these largely inductive thinkers went out into the world to collect data that would empirically lead to the social truths waiting to be found and mined by the right person using the



David Rothenberg (above) founded the Fortune Society in 1966 to help offenders transform their lives. The photos behind him document early success stories from a program called “Thru These Doors Walked,” which continues to change lives today. Programs like these are proven to work. So why is the media so enthused about a new round of fear-based crime prevention programs instead?

*James S. Vrettos has taught sociology, criminology, and criminal justice at the City University of New York for twenty years. He coauthored the critically acclaimed text *The Elementary Forms of Statistical Reason* and has facilitated New York City’s Tikkun Community organizing group.*

"right" scientific research methods and statistics. It was important to them to remain naturalistic—they were committed to keeping their beliefs (if any) in God or religion private and argued that one should not bring God or some other supernatural being into an explanation of what was causing events in the social world.

They believed that this secular humanist, scientific approach would result in obvious prescriptions for programs and policies that politicians, policy makers, and the general public would see as logical and happily institute, satisfactorily "solving" the problem of crime.

Contemporary American criminologists have continued to champion and add to classical criminology—an eighteenth-century philosophy that attempts to understand crime in terms of rational action and to base the administration of criminal justice on the rational, deterrent power of punishment. Originally conceived as a humane alternative to arbitrary and unjustly severe sentencing and punishment of offenders, this approach was an attempt to achieve administrative uniformity; a scale of punishments proportionate to the objective harm caused by the offense; and support for the idea that the aim of punishment is deterrence, not retribution. According to this worldview, the rational individual enters into a social contract and by breaking it (the laws of society) is demonstrating his or her free will and rational choice. This must be met by appropriate punishment on behalf of society, in order to deter others. Criminology posits that people are most likely to obey the law when they're subject to punishments perceived as legitimate, fair, and consistent.

The mass media typically promotes attempts by criminology's contemporary "pioneers," presenting their innovative, attention-grabbing, anti-crime programs as if they actually held answers to the problem of crime. Whether in the *New Yorker's* "Don't Shoot: A Radical Approach to Gang Violence" (June 22, 2009), the *Guardian's* "Crime and Group Punishment" (July 29, 2009), the *New York Times Sunday Magazine's* "Prisoners of Parole" (January 10, 2010), or *Newsweek's* "The Battle of the Anti-violence Gurus" (January 6, 2010) and "Always on My Mind" (February 9, 2009)—where professor Kennedy is pictured prominently with dark sunglasses and shoulder length hair as he walks calmly past a graffiti-laden wall of gang scrawls and symbols—the subliminal and not so subtle message is that the answer to our crime and criminal justice problems is here and walking among us. From reducing gang violence to lowering homicide rates, from fighting terrorism to shutting down open-air drug markets or becoming a model for national parole reform, the criminologists' approach is portrayed as a cure-all that will be embraced by all those who rationally look at the data.

As the *New York Times* piece explains, these scholars have added a fresh twist to the classical criminology paradigm in their attempts to establish the legitimacy of the criminal justice system in the eyes of those who have run afoul of it or are likely to. Kennedy (an anthropology professor at CUNY's John Jay College) describes his breakthrough moment and major innovation as focusing on increasing the legitimacy of law enforcement in the eyes of the group—a departure from the classical deterrence theorists' focus on threatening individuals. He enlisted what he calls the "community's moral voice" and set out to deter the most dangerous young gang members by persuading their friends and neighbors to pressure them into obeying the law.

Even if the approach that Kennedy and others are proposing has underlying roots that are not inherently humanistic or moral, it does provide a kind of "less suffering" approach to criminal justice that has been played out in some significant reductions of crime and violence. The paradigm seems to be working, and even the many liberals and progressives who are not naturally attracted to it are hard-pressed to know what to make of it.

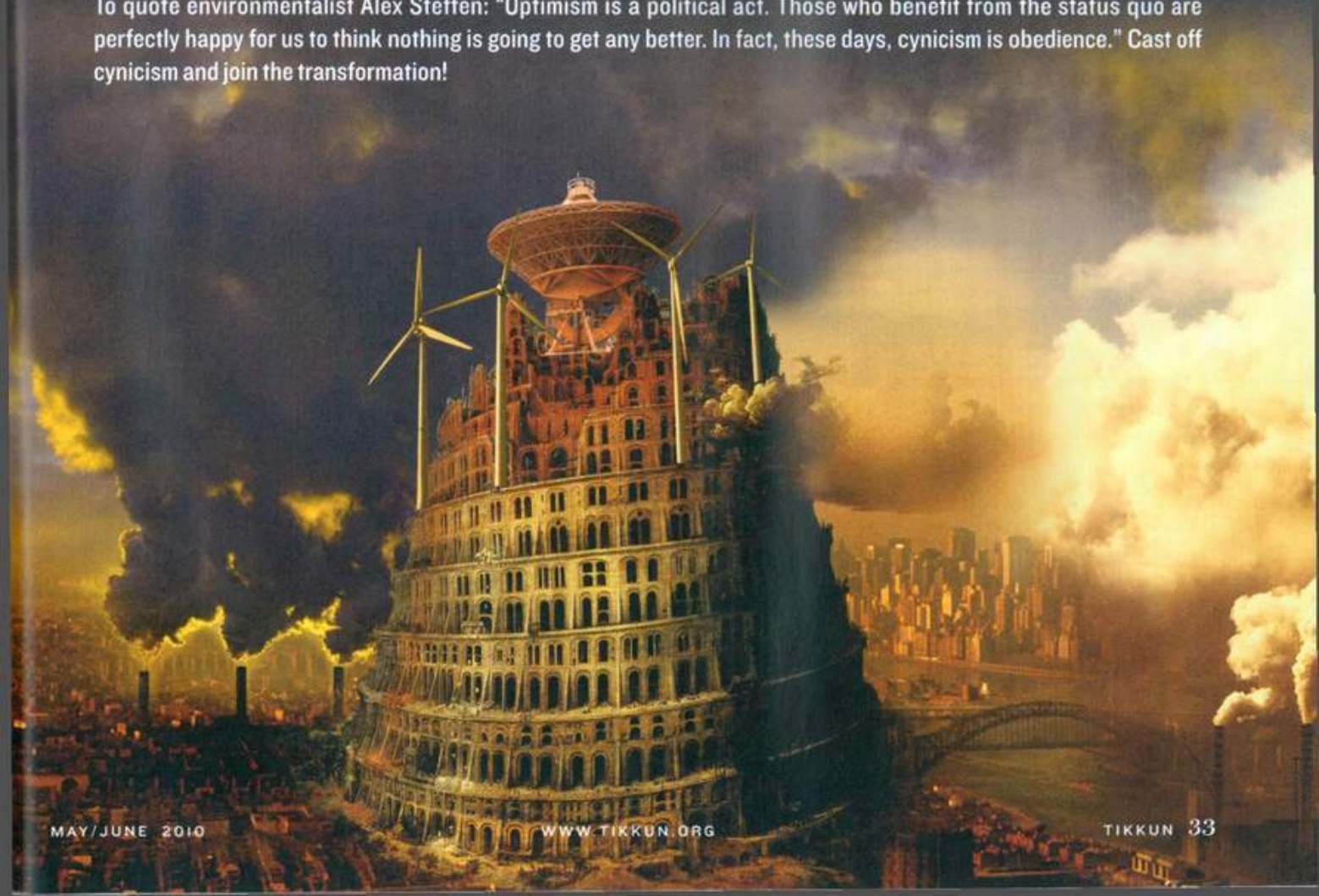
The problem, however, is that the "new" deterrence paradigm is still rooted in a "get them before they get us" plan of never-ending fearful vigilance, counter-attacks, and threats of preventive and preemptive force. This is the true depressing destructiveness of the paradigm. Even if for a brief historical moment some measure of "success" (such as lower rates of gang delinquency) is achieved, force or the threat of force is ultimately seen as the vehicle to carry the day. To let up or trust in any other design risks all-out destruction. Bleak as this never-ending war of vigilance is, by this paradigm it's all that we have to stem off universal disorder and chaos, increased levels of crime, terrorism, and other forms of social deviance. It closes off other (continued on page 75)

ENVIRONMENTALISM WITHOUT SPIRITUALITY

For the scientifically well-informed, there's a seriously bleak quality in the air around global warming and other environmental threats. To avert the multiple foreseen catastrophes will require heroic measures. But which measures have a chance of working? Should we throw ourselves into extreme geo-engineering projects to "hack the planet" or give up all those dreams of controlling nature and finally learn to live within it? Complex engineering or simple living? Mastery or humility? Paul Wapner lays out those apparent opposites and then asks, is it not necessary and possible to do both?

Must it all be about today's rich or at least relatively comfortable people sacrificing their excellent way of life, or is there a much *better* life on offer both for the affluent and for the world's currently poor and hurting, a way of life that would also be sustainable? Ken Conca argues that social justice is critical to our environmental plans. Allen Kanner tells us that with a deep connection to nature we will be better off psychologically. Mark Hathaway promises we can be truly liberated on a Taoist path, and there will be no ecological recovery without such spiritual transformations. Move on to the Rethinking Religion section, and David Loy's Buddhist perspective reinforces the idea that personal and social-structural transformation can only be successful in tandem.

To quote environmentalist Alex Steffen: "Optimism is a political act. Those who benefit from the status quo are perfectly happy for us to think nothing is going to get any better. In fact, these days, cynicism is obedience." Cast off cynicism and join the transformation!



Humility in a Climate Age

by Paul Wapner

*Take your well-disciplined strengths
and stretch them between two opposing poles.
Because inside human beings
is where God learns.*

—Rainer Maria Rilke

THERE IS A BATTLE GOING ON FOR THE SOUL OF environmentalism. How it plays out will determine our ability to respond to a whole host of environmental dilemmas, especially climate change. All of us are partners in this struggle, since battle lines are being drawn not simply on the street or in policy debates but also inside each of us. We are torn between two visions of how to relate to the earth. Much depends on how we negotiate our way through the conflict.

One vision sees *Homo sapiens* as merely one of many species, and thus subject to the same biophysical constraints as other creatures: Like the rest of life, we evolved over millennia, and depend fundamentally on the biophysical gifts of the earth. From an environmental perspective, this means that we should try to harmonize ourselves with the natural world—we should use only so many resources and produce only so much waste, and generally strive to fit ourselves into the web of ecological interdependence.

The other vision sees humans as the exceptional species: Yes, we are subject to nature's laws, but these are not inviolate. We

can outsmart, work around, or otherwise rise above them by employing our reason and technological abilities. From an environmental perspective, our exceptionalism calls on us not to harmonize ourselves with nature but to rework the natural world in the service of human betterment.

The first view can be called the urge toward *naturalism* whereas the second can be called the urge toward *mastery*.

For decades, environmentalists have primarily expressed the first view in their political orientation and campaigns. They have tended to confront their critics along the naturalism-mastery divide, offering a counter-narrative to the predominant, hubristic attitude of lording over nature and trying to instill a sense of species-humility in the face of growing environmental challenges.

Environmentalism is changing, however, especially in light of the climate crisis. Many are now toning down or outright abandoning a naturalist sensibility for one leaning toward mastery. We see this in the attraction to technological fixes as evident in the resurgence of support for nuclear power, the popularity of carbon sequestration, and the embrace of "green" consumption.

Paul Wapner is associate professor and director of the Global Environmental Politics program at American University. His most recent book is Living Through the End of Nature: The Future of American Environmentalism (MIT Press 2010).

Today, some staunch environmentalists are even proposing earth-altering actions to protect ourselves from the dangerous buildup of greenhouse gases, seeking to change the atmosphere itself to accept more carbon dioxide or at least deflect climate change dangers. Proposals include putting up orbiting sunshades to block sunlight, fertilizing the oceans with iron to grow more phytoplankton to absorb carbon dioxide, and pumping sulfur dioxide into the atmosphere to impede solar radiation. Many environmentalists have come reluctantly to recognize that there is simply no way that societies are going to cut back, restrict their imprint on the earth, and otherwise live lightly on the planet enough to mitigate climate change. Too many people need energy and are unwilling to deny themselves the pleasures of material consumption for an orientation of naturalism to take hold widely enough to make a difference. At this stage, they reason, we should ramp up our abilities to outsmart and manipulate nature in the service of protecting ourselves from climate catastrophe. Put differently, many environmentalists are now admitting that global capitalism, incessant technological innovation, endless consumption, and pervasive anthropocentrism are here to stay. Rather than continue to battle against these dynamics in the service of living more harmoniously with the natural world, many argue that it is time to embrace them and align ourselves with their power.

There is much promise to the "new environmentalism." In the shadow of Copenhagen's failed negotiations, we are all grasping at straws for insight, and the notion that technological fixes could enable us to surmount climate change dangers within the

existing world order (and with our lifestyles intact) appears particularly attractive, especially to the privileged among us.

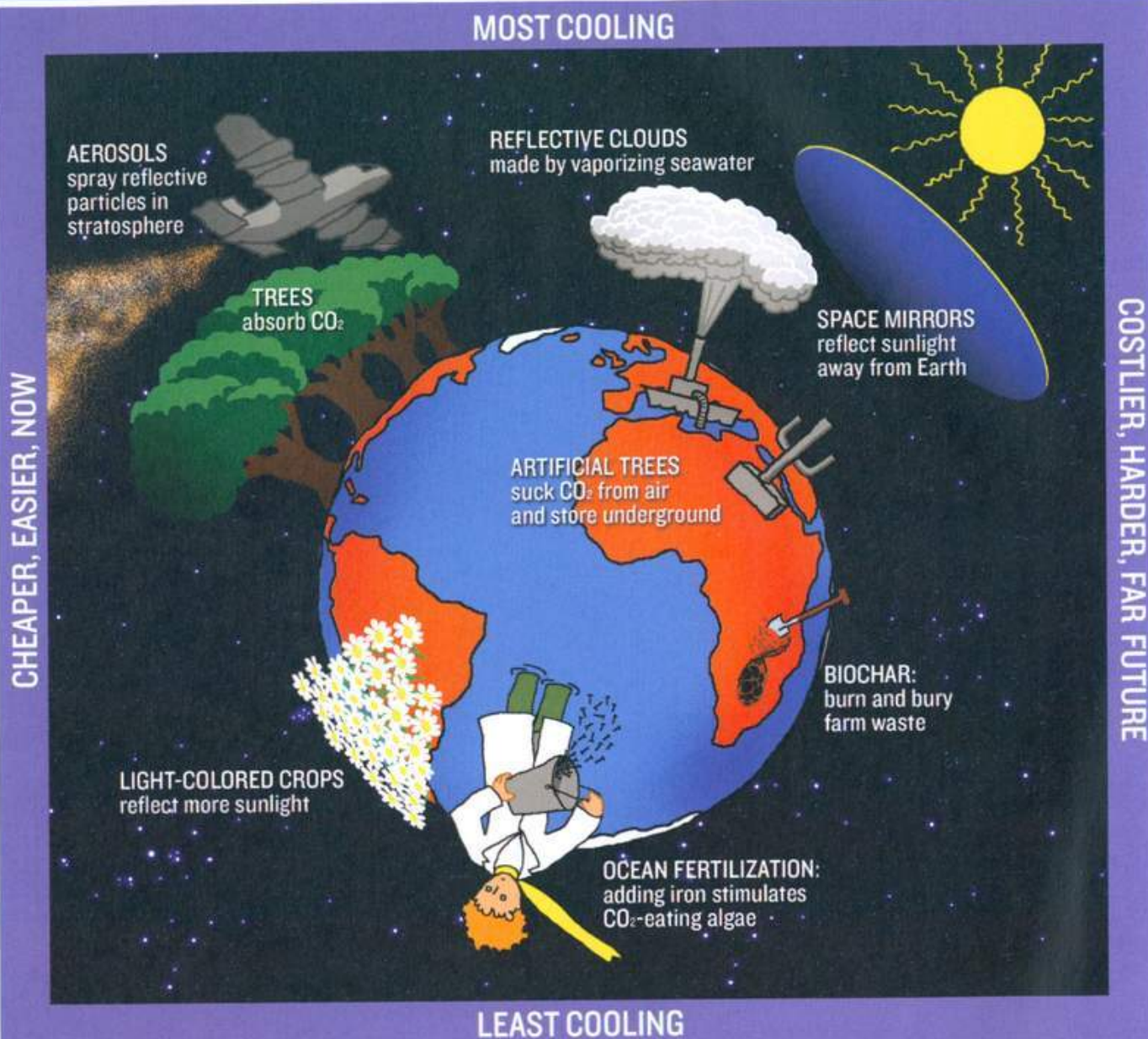
And yet, for all its promise, the new environmentalism raises significant questions. Is it really forward-looking, or will it simply reinforce and accelerate the forces that got us into the climate crisis in the first place? That is, can it usher in a new energy future or will its promise of technical solutions distract us from the difficult work of realigning our lives? Is it so compatible with current economic and social systems that it will merely diversify our energy choices without fashioning a genuinely different orientation to our energy lives? More generally, we need to ask where the new environmentalism will lead us. Will it take us into a technocratic future animated by the type of design and technological optimism associated with Promethean thought that has long animated environmental skeptics, or will it prefigure a more naturalized world, more in line with the precautionary sensibility that has long guided the environmental movement?

There are no easy—and certainly no definitive—answers to such questions. We cannot evaluate the new environmentalism in either/or terms, as if it were *either* helpful *or* not in ushering in a sane climate future. Rather, the effects of the new environmentalism turn on how we translate it into practice. Key to such translation is recognizing that the impulse behind the new environmentalism needs to be in productive tension with conventional environmentalism and the urge to naturalism. As we move deeper into the climate age, we need to revive and embolden the impulse toward naturalism to rein in our hubristic tendencies. Our humanity depends on it.



At least 30,000 people marched through Copenhagen during the Climate Conference in December 2009, calling on world leaders to declare war on the greenhouse gases that threaten future generations with hunger, poverty, and homelessness.

The Little Geo-Engineer



Traditional environmentalism taught us to live humbly within nature's limits. A new environmentalism, which assumes we can't learn fast enough to live humbly, embraces geo-engineering ideas as our main hope for cooling the planet.

The Moral Character of the Two Environmentalisms

ENVIRONMENTALISM IS MANY THINGS. AT ITS CORE, HOWEVER, it is an ethical movement. As political theorist Leslie Thiele reminds us, it is about extending moral consideration across space, time, and species. It involves caring about the needs and well-being of our fellow human beings, future generations, and the more-than-human world. Addressing climate change is a moral act to the degree that it involves protecting each other and other creatures from climate catastrophe, and ensuring that future

human beings will inherit a livable planet. In many ways, the new environmentalism does represent this moral sentiment. Its embrace of technological capability, economic growth, and instrumental rationality represents a commitment to addressing the climate crisis and thus making the world a better place for all living creatures, including future generations.

There is, nonetheless, something unsettling about the moral character of the new environmentalism, especially to the degree that it ignores naturalism. Its promise to deliver a world in which we may continue to indulge all our appetites, desires, and customary

practices simply by altering material structures seems morally thin. Such a vision involves technologically engineering the world so individual, environmental decision-making becomes irrelevant. It strives to ensure that we conduct ourselves in an environmentally sound fashion through designed systems of social life. This raises ethical concerns to the degree that it relieves individuals of having to clarify their moral commitments or take deliberate actions to limit themselves in the service of others' well-being.

Ethical action involves deliberation and the conscious choice to restrict acting on one's desires in deference to the welfare of others. The new environmentalism promises gadgets and systems that will absolve us of the need for such reflection and consideration. Most ethical action also entails a sense of humility about oneself and, by extension, the human species. At least since Aristotle, ethicists have considered humility a virtue whose practice deepens the human character and heightens one's moral sensitivity. The new environmentalism dispenses with this to the degree that it calls on us not to respect nature's limits and adjust ourselves to them, but to outsmart and plow through nature's biophysical character with the aim of crafting sustainable lives without requiring, or indeed permitting, the exercise of choice. Humility is thus a casualty of the new environmentalism.

This is not to say, of course, that the new environmentalism is immoral or even amoral. As mentioned, its proponents care deeply about protecting the environment and ensuring that humanity survives and flourishes in the face of grave environmental challenges. Rather, it is to suggest that the new environmentalism is *incompletely* moral. The new environmentalism needs the ethical bearings that sensitivity to naturalism can provide. It needs the sense of humility and the appreciation for the more-than-human world that conventional environmentalism has long valued and championed. This is especially the case at this point in history.

Since the dawn of modernity, the balance between naturalism and mastery has been increasingly weighted toward mastery. Our attempt to decipher nature's ways and manipulate them in the

ASK THE AUTHOR! Paul Wapner

6 p.m. Pacific Time (9 p.m. Eastern)

Monday, June 7

Call 1-888-346-3950 for free!

Then enter this code: 11978#

**ALSO SPEAKING AT THE
NSP CONFERENCE**

June 11-14

spiritualprogressives.org/conference

service of human betterment has been accelerating for centuries and shows few signs of abatement. Indeed, we seem continually committed to run roughshod over the nonhuman world. Given this imbalance, this is simply not the time for fully embracing the new environmentalism but rather reviving naturalism,

which at its core expresses diffidence concerning human frailty, and the human condition more generally. Naturalism conveys the understanding that we—as individuals and as a species—are not at the center of the universe but simply occupy a distinct place in the order of things.

In many ways, it has been our self-centeredness—our placing ourselves at the core of existence and our willingness to do whatever it takes to advance our interests—that has been the cause of our environmental dilemmas. It is time to regenerate a cautionary attitude toward this sensibility and put it in its proper place. If checked by humility, the new environmentalism can offer wonders without veering off in dangerous and ethically troubling directions. Couched within an effort to balance naturalism and mastery, the new environmentalism can take its rightful place in the evolution of the movement. It can offer promise toward addressing climate change by urging us to explore our technological, scientific, and “economistic” tendencies and capabilities. It will fail us, however, if we don't balance these proclivities and capacities with the moral compass of knowing that, while we may be unique as a species, we are not exempt from nature's laws and imperatives, and we live less than full lives when we forget this. This recognition, paired with the realization that there is more to the cosmos than humans, provides the antidote to the hubris of the mastery narrative—and to our collective ability to address climate change.

The tension between naturalism and mastery is as important to environmentalism as the paradoxes that wrack human life are to human experience. We live best when we refuse to collapse such paradoxes. Likewise, we will live most humanely through the climate age by keeping alive the long environmentalist tradition of harmonizing with the natural world rather than lording over it. ■



The road to hell is paved with good intentions. We've tried to fix the environment before, with some successes and notable failures. Even introducing one species to an ecosystem can cause more problems than it solves. Above (left to right): mongooses in Hawaii threaten native bird populations; the apple snail in Asia carries harmful parasites; cane toads in Australia threaten native predators; the Rhinocyllus conicus weevil in the U.S. attacks native plant life; and kudzu in the American South outcompetes local agriculture. Geo-engineers be warned.

Naturalism as Mastery?

by Ken Conca

PAUL WAPNER IS RIGHT TO POSE CRITICAL QUESTIONS about a new environmentalism rooted in technical innovation and the human mastery of nature. As he suggests, it seduces us with the possibility of avoiding constraints, limits, and the difficult moral choices they entail.

Tellingly, the instinct to mastery overstates our knowledge and control not only of the natural world but of the human one, as well. When the Carter administration's *Global 2000* raised the alarm about global trends in resource use and environmental degradation, its crafters wildly overestimated how much water the world would use in the year 2000. They failed to anticipate how farmers, industry, and cities would adjust to conserve usable water as it became scarcer and more expensive in many places around the world. Unable to imagine that today we would still tolerate a world where one billion people lack reliable drinking water and more than two billion lack a decent water-based sanitation system, their models also wrongly assumed that all human needs for water would be fulfilled. The report writers' twin errors are a cautionary tale for the designers of techno-rational environmental salvation.

Some naturalist humility is, as Wapner suggests, an essential counterpoint to mastery. But is naturalism, as historically practiced, in fact rooted in humility? At the species level, perhaps it is—insofar as we have attempted to reduce our own species' negative impact on nature—but social adjustments are never carried out at the species scale. If we ask not how the human species relates to the environment, but rather how people relate to one another when reducing eco-harm, we see that naturalism in practice has often been just another form of mastery. The protection of wilderness areas and the biodiversity they contain may express naturalist principles of precaution and accommodation. But when implemented with barbed wire, armed guards, and the destruction of local livelihoods and identities, these protection endeavors are hardly an act of humility from the vantage point of those who are expelled from the forest. Too often, pursuing the naturalist aims of environmentalism has entailed the exportation of the costs of environmental protection onto those who are less powerful and less visible—another form of avoiding the moral commitments that Wapner urges. Unpacking the human “we,” what passes for humility at the species level reveals itself as another form of mastery, of some human purposes toward nature over others.

Naturalism can also be *too* humble, supplanting collective action at the core of the problem with individual action at its margins, as we see in the rise of green consumerism. The idea of



If we clean up our neighborhood at the expense of someone else's, we are practicing “mastery,” not environmental humility. For example, low-paid workers without safety protection, like these in Bangladesh, now break up our old ships for scrap and get exposed to the asbestos, PCBs, and other toxics in the ships. It is “too expensive” to do this work in rich countries that require thorough protection for workers and the environment.

shopping better to save the world can be, as Wapner suggests, an expression of the new green mastery, optimizing one's efficiency as a consuming unit through the latest clever devices. But it may also be the worst instinct of a depoliticized naturalist humility: a desire to live more humbly and lightly on the planet at the individual level, joined with an acceptance of unjust political and economic systems at the social level. Hang up that used towel at the hotel, feel good about the water and energy saved—but what if a minimum-wage laundry worker's job loss is the principal mechanism of adjustment? To suggest that shopping is one's principal form of moral agency is to pit victim against victim in our consumerist monoculture; we struggle—individually, unequally, and ineffectually—to find seemingly green alternatives at the tail end of global commodity chains we neither control nor understand.

Perhaps what naturalism and mastery both share in practice is a lack of faith in the power of free people to build and nurture sustainable communities. We should be humble about our ability to control nature, and wary of the desire to do so. But when it comes to the human injustices that accompany environmental harm and that too often accompany environmental protection, humility is hardly a scarce resource. ■

*Ken Conca is a professor of government and politics at the University of Maryland. His books include *Governing Water: Contentious Transnational Politics and Global Institution Building* and *Green Planet Blues: Four Decades of Global Environmental Politics*.*

How Much Change Will the Earth Require of Us?

by Allen D. Kanner

WHEN PAUL WAPNER raises the issue of mastery vs. humility as a central environmental dilemma, he is asking

how extensive a change would be necessary for humanity to adopt a humble stance toward nature. Many believe that such a shift would require a transformation of all spheres of society, from the political and scientific to the spiritual, psychological, and cultural. They wonder if our species, as a result of the powerful technologies now at its disposal and the global scale of its activities, has come to a day of reckoning with its dark side—its violence, oppression, and greed. In order to achieve long-term sustainability, do we now have to grapple with these shadowy proclivities as never before, or failing to do so, risk extinction?

This is apocalyptic stuff. It might be a vast overreaction, one in which a branch of the environmental movement is projecting its utopian desires onto the current ecological challenges. But the truth is, we are in uncharted territory, and people who believe they *know* what is going to happen are refusing to acknowledge the gaping uncertainty of our planetary future. That said, there are a number of compelling reasons to seriously consider the need for a global transformation of consciousness. Here I will touch on three.

First, the anti-globalization and environmental justice movements have documented in great detail how, almost without fail, ecological degradation is complexly intertwined with the abuse of one group of people by another. This is most dramatically illustrated by the Global North's exploitation of the Global South's natural resources. I agree with Ken Conca that since we are in the grip of a worldwide crisis that requires worldwide cooperation, an unprecedented level of social justice may very well be necessary for humanity to restore the ecological balance of the planet.

Second, a shift in individual and personal identity may need to occur that builds on our deep past. For much of our species' existence, societies and individuals formed intimate bonds with their local habitats—with *that* mountain, river, or forest—that were so strong that the land was experienced as part of the self. Embedded in such an identity is a sense of responsibility for the local environment that is as intense as a person's loyalty to her or his family.



In sharp contrast, in modern society neither cultural nor personal identity incorporates the natural world, except perhaps as property. Instead, the cultural stance toward nature is one of superiority, emotional distance, and a sense of entitlement that assumes human domination of the planet as a birthright.

In an essay I wrote in 1998 for *The Humanistic Psychologist*, I identified the narcissistic themes that underlie this attitude, calling them "Mount Rushmore Syndrome":

So striking is the Memorial that the presidential profiles overwhelm Mount Rushmore itself. The onlooker is swept up in human grandeur—dazzling technological prowess, artistic magnificence, the imagination and daring of the project itself, and a stunning attention to detail down to the gleam in each president's eye produced by strategically placed granite shafts.

In much the same way, the United States has imposed its human face onto the nation's countryside, overriding nature's presence with monumental cities, insatiable suburbs, extravagant pollution and a national ego to match. The result is an overdeveloped landscape that, like Narcissus absorbed by his reflection in a pool of water, mirrors back to Americans only themselves.

Narcissistic individuals are compelled to control and subjugate those around them, and a narcissistic society is ill equipped to form an intimate relationship with its habitat based on respect and cooperation. Yet just such a humble bond may be essential to maintaining a viable relationship with the planet.

The relentless pursuit of mastery is responsible for the remarkable fact that most of modern life is environmentally destructive. Here's why: We design our technologies to force nature to obey our will, rather than to work in harmony with the environment. These mastery-driven inventions are then introduced into exceedingly complex and subtle ecosystems about which we have little knowledge. Inevitably, the systems rebound—global climate change being an obvious example—in ways that are far beyond our

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

ability to control. Our culturally arrogant response is to intervene with even more disruptive technology, as seen in proposals to fertilize the ocean's phytoplankton with iron to absorb carbon dioxide or launch orbital sunshades to block sunlight. Such interventions will likely accelerate the crisis. Thus, for sheer pragmatic reasons, humanity's technological genius needs to be guided by a humble and cooperative approach to the natural world.

Third is the question of motivation and, more specifically, what might ensue if we act primarily out of fear of climate change, resource depletion, and the like. Global environmental laws, treaties, and institutions built on chronic anxiety regarding environmental catastrophe will ultimately unleash a backlash that will include resentment, cheating, and even rebellion, as

well as a hatred of nature. Love is a far more sustainable source of motivation than fear (although both may be necessary at this juncture). The more ecological actions emerge from feelings of awe, joy, and compassion for the natural world, the more durable our commitment to the land will be. Our institutional structures and spiritual practices, therefore, may need to be fundamentally overhauled so as to foster a rich and vibrant connection to nature that deepens over the course of a lifetime, as well as from one generation to the next.

Will the earth require a qualitative reduction in human aggression, oppression, and greed? We won't know for some time. The wisest course at present is to keep this question constantly before us, to befriend it, and to turn to it as a warning, a guide, and a beacon. ■

Spirituality in a Time of Crisis

by Mark Hathaway

READING PAUL WAPNER'S ARTICLE, I FOUND MYSELF sympathizing with those environmentalists who believe that we need to do something *now*—whatever might be possible—to avert catastrophic climate change. Yet, like Paul, I am convinced that technology alone can never get to the roots of the crisis nor provide a lasting solution unless we also fundamentally realign our lives and values.

Like Ken Conca, I agree that we need to go well beyond a kind of naturalism that creates a false dichotomy between “protecting the environment” and satisfying authentic human needs. We are called to address both the ecological crisis and the huge injustices that perpetuate poverty and inequality in our world. Indeed, both crises share the same root: the exercise of power as domination and exploitation that destroys living ecosystems and oppresses human beings to accumulate wealth for a privileged few. To create genuine alternatives, we need to find ways to empower people to create and nurture authentically sustainable communities.

What role might spirituality play in overcoming the ecological crisis and in mobilizing communities to work for change? How might it help us to realign our lives and our values? And how can the wisdom of our religious traditions—along with new insights from science—guide us as we seek both inspiration and practical solutions?

An Opportunity for Awakening

IN *THE TAO OF LIBERATION: EXPLORING THE ECOLOGY OF Transformation*, Leonardo Boff and I endeavor to answer those questions. We come to the conclusion that the current challenges we face—poverty and inequality, ecological devastation, and the continued threat of militarism—are the reflection of a deeper spiritual

and ethical crisis. Together, these crises have the potential to destroy not only a specific culture or a particular region of the world, but also the complex diversity of our planet's web of life. Not only present—but also future generations—of the Earth community are threatened.

Yet, despite the gravity of our situation, there is also very real room for hope. It is not as though a giant asteroid were hurtling toward our planet and we were powerless to stop it. The very fact that these crises are of our own making means that it is possible for us to address them in a meaningful and effective way—at least if we act in a timely manner with sufficient energy and wisdom.

We cannot rely on technology alone to solve the crises we face, although certainly technology—especially innovative approaches that mimic natural systems—will have an important role to play. Even with vast improvements in energy and resource efficiency, there is simply no way for six billion people to live at the levels of consumption typical in North America and Europe. We will need to radically change the way we live on this planet if we are to create truly just and sustainable communities in harmony with the greater community of life.

We will not be successful if we try to motivate people to change by instilling guilt or fear. While we need to acknowledge the gravity of the crises we face, playing on fears may drive us to despair, while guilt can move us to denial. We may also seek to escape from the painful reality we face through addictions, be they to work, sex, drugs, or consumerism. All these dynamics deaden our souls and limit the possibility for transformative action.

Yet, our pain for the world, when shared with others, can help us to reawaken to compassion and reconnect us to the living Earth community. We suffer because—at a deep level—we care. At the

*Mark Hathaway is an adult educator who facilitates events exploring the interconnections between ecology, justice, spirituality, and cosmology. He co-authored *The Tao of Liberation* (taoofliberation.com) published in late 2009.*



Solutions to climate change depend on our developing a collective spiritual maturity. Above: Copenhagen Climate Conference attendees make a "climate pilgrimage" to Jewish, Buddhist, Muslim, and Christian houses of worship.

same time, by becoming more attentive to the beauty of our planet and our love for those around us, we can overcome the deadening effects of denial, despair, and addiction and find a potent source of energy to renew and sustain us. In doing so, we discover a spirituality that goes beyond an abstract "connection to nature" to one that becomes a source of motivation and creativity for transformative action.

Toward Liberation

WE CAN FRAME THE SPIRITUAL CHALLENGE OF OUR TIME—NOT primarily in terms of renunciation or self-denial—but rather as a journey toward *liberation*. Liberation calls us to move toward enlightenment or self-realization, breaking through the nets of delusion that deaden our souls and ensnare us. At the same time, liberation invites us to work together to free ourselves from an economic, cultural, and political (dis)order that perpetuates social inequalities and impoverishes the life-sustaining community of our planet.

Ultimately, we need to understand liberation as the process of moving toward a world where all humans can live with dignity in harmony with the greater community of life, a journey calling us to repair the terrible damage we have inflicted—or *tikkun*. To do this, we will need to reinvent ourselves as a species so that we transform from being a destructive force endangering the web of life to instead become increasingly conscious participants in the great, unfolding story of creation and evolution itself in its movement toward ever-greater communion, differentiation, and creativity.

In undertaking this journey, we can find both wisdom and inspiration in the creative energy evident in the unfolding dynamics of the universe, and particularly the story of our living planet. We can understand this in terms of the ancient Chinese word *Tao* (or *Dao*), often translated as "the Way." The Tao is an embodied, "walking" wisdom leading us to harmony and right relationship. It is both the way the universe works and the flowing fabric of the cosmos that can never be fully described—only tasted. To the extent that we open and align ourselves with this innate potentiality

for harmony and transformation present in all of creation, we are empowered to move toward authentic liberation.

A Fourfold Path

THERE ARE FOUR BASIC KINDS OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICES OR "paths" that form the foundation for a spirituality that can help realign our lives and values—and even reframe our perceptions—as we seek authentic liberation.

The first can be described as the path of *invocation*, the way of opening ourselves to the guiding energy of the Tao, of reconnecting to the Source and our communion with all beings, of celebrating and praising the goodness of creation. This path is closely related with finding our place and feeling at home in the cosmos—not as masters but as creative participants—as well as with sensing the sacredness of life.

It is perhaps easiest to do this by starting with experiences of beauty, awe, and reverence. These spontaneously lead us into greater mindfulness. On a collective level, work around "Earth literacy" can serve as a doorway to this kind of awareness, especially if the kind of learning involved transcends the realm of information to truly serve as an experiential awakening to the beauty and wisdom of our local ecosystems.

Further still, we can open ourselves to the great story of the cosmos itself, a story of ongoing creation and evolution more mysterious and wonderful than any we could have imagined. As we come to see the universe not as a giant machine but as a living being continually birthed into being, a deep sense of gratitude awakens within us. We also come to understand more clearly our own part in this great story and begin to consciously participate in it, seeking to broaden diversity, strengthen communion, and deepen our creative participation in the self-organizing dynamics of emergence.

Yet, we can never fully open ourselves to beauty and awe unless we also clear away the cobwebs of delusion and create space for the Sacred to dwell. We can describe this path in terms of *letting go* or *embracing the void*. On one level, this means becoming aware of the ways that despair, denial, and addictions have deadened our souls. In an attempt to block out pain, we build walls that also cut us off from the wellspring of energy that can motivate and inspire us as we work for change. Joanna Macy's "work that reconnects" provides excellent examples of the kind of collective practices that can help us to let go of delusion and begin to awaken anew to both interconnection and compassion.

Meditation practices are also ways of experiencing and embracing the void—a void that is not empty but is, as both mystical traditions and modern quantum physics suggest, a vast sea of energy, pregnant with possibility.

The third path, of *creative empowerment*, helps us to reconnect with the embodied energy of the Tao in a way that combines both intuition and compassion. Science teaches us that living systems can change in rapid and often surprising ways through the process of emergence. In this perspective, the key to effective action is not brute force but rather finding the right action for the right place and right time.

To the extent, then, that we can awaken our intuition—both as individuals and communities—the potential exists for liberating change that goes well beyond what we might have first imagined. The importance of vision also comes into play here. As we expand our imaginations to conceive of new ways of (continued on page 78)

ASK THE AUTHOR! Mark Hathaway
6 p.m. Pacific Time (9 p.m. Eastern)
Monday, May 24
Call 1-888-346-3950 for free!
Then enter this code: 11978#
See full schedule at www.tikkun.org

Graveyard Detroit

by Zaid Shakir



THE WORD "GRAVEYARD" DOESN'T APPLY JUST TO PLACES WHERE PHYSICALLY dead bodies are interred. Figuratively, it means a place where worn-out or obsolete equipment or objects are kept. Its meaning can be stretched to connote a depository of worn-out ideas.

Recent events have conspired to render Detroit, Michigan, a graveyard. This historic American city hasn't always been a place of endings. From its humble roots as a French trading post in the early eighteenth century, Detroit grew to become one of the largest cities in the United States. It was nearly burned to the ground by fire in 1805, and was scorched by the flames of race riots in 1863, 1943 and 1967. During the twentieth century, its fate has waxed and waned with the rise and fall of the American auto industry. Despite its travails, the city has displayed resiliency and had witnessed a comeback of sorts in recent years with the renewal of its downtown and riverfront areas, at least before the great financial meltdown of 2008.

Today, however, Detroit represents the end of worn out, expired, and discredited ideas. This is the city that puts to rest the idea that for African Americans the North represented an improvement over the conditions that prevailed in the South. It puts to rest the idea that major American corporations, despite their firm commitment to the bottom line, are the engines of economic growth and prosperity for the masses of working people. It puts to rest the idea that there is an inherent "Islamic" threat that challenges the hegemony of a militarized American state. And it puts to rest the idea that extremist "Islamist" violence can possibly secure any good whatsoever for Muslim people and their causes.

The Myth of the Promised Land

NEAR THE BEGINNING OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, MANY AFRICAN AMERICANS VIEWED the North as a mythical "promised land." The racist terrorism of the Ku Klux Klan, the Red Shirts, the White League, and similar groups, which was almost omnipresent in the South,

Imam Zaid Shakir is scholar-in-residence and lecturer at Zaytuna Institute, where he teaches courses on Arabic, Islamic law, history, and Islamic spirituality. His essays have been collected in Scattered Pictures (Zaytuna Institute, 2005).

was absent from the large cities of the North. Furthermore, factory work promised relatively high-paying jobs, free from the vagaries of the oppressive farms of the South, where work often amounted to legalized slavery. For many black folks, Detroit epitomized the promise of the North. They found plentiful work in the burgeoning factories springing up around the city's auto industry. As a result, through the middle decades of the twentieth century, an expanding black middle class would gradually leave a widening imprint on the social, cultural, and political life of the city.

Detroit's black middle class would contribute intellectual giants such as Reverend C. L. Franklin to America's civil rights struggle. Individuals such as the boxer Joe Louis, Franklin's daughter, Aretha, and the many recording artists of Barry Gordy's Motown Records became American cultural icons. The prosperity of Detroit's black middle class in the 1940s and 1950s was symbolized by Paradise Valley and its scores of black-owned establishments such as the elegant Gotham Hotel.

However, the overwhelming majority of black folks migrating to Detroit did not find heaven in the North; they found hell. They were housed in dirty, dilapidated slums as racially segregated as any southern neighborhood. Fluctuating economic cycles and the gradual exodus of manufacturing jobs led to high unemployment rates that would exacerbate tensions between the new arrivals and more established white workers. Tens of thousands would never find meaningful employment or decent housing.

The harsh economic realities of life in the North were exacerbated by harsh social realities. Crammed into dilapidated ghettos, cut off from the safety net of their extended southern families, denied access to higher education that was available in the historical black colleges and universities that had been established in the South—Howard, Morehouse, Fisk, Tuskegee, etc.—many sought refuge in alcohol and readily available drugs such as heroin or cocaine.

The highways built in the 1950s facilitated the massive white flight of the 1950s and 1960s from Detroit to newly accessible distant suburbs and the flight of the black middle class from the inner-city areas to the abandoned white neighborhoods. The construction of Interstate 75 led to the bulldozing of Paradise Valley.

These developments, culminating in the destructive riots of 1967, in which over 2,500 structures were destroyed, rendered Detroit the symbolic graveyard of the "Promised Land" idea that had attracted so many black folks to the North. Its tombstones are the blocks of burned-out and ravaged buildings and homes. Many of these areas have been abandoned and they give those parts of inner-city Detroit the look and feel of Berlin or Tokyo after the fire-bombing of those cities.

The obituary of that buried dream was twice written, both times in Detroit, in July 1984 and a decade later in August 1994. In 1984, Reverend C. L. Franklin, who had fallen into a coma after being shot during a robbery of his home five years earlier, died; in 1994, Rosa Parks, whose heroic defiance had ignited the even more heroic African American civil rights struggle, was robbed and beaten in her Detroit home. The dream they represented was no longer deferred. In Detroit, it was dead.

As GM Goes, So Goes the Nation

THE DETROIT AUTO INDUSTRY REPRESENTED A DIFFERENT TYPE OF DREAM FOR ANOTHER set of people: the white middle class. Karl Marx posited that capitalism, and the bourgeoisie it disproportionately benefited, would collapse in the face of a massive worker-led or proletarian revolution brought on by the systematic expansion and impoverishment of the laboring class and the equally systematic shrinking and enrichment of the owning class.

The emergence of the Detroit auto industry in the early years of the twentieth century, catapulted by management and production techniques introduced by Frederick Winslow Taylor and Henry Ford, led to levels of proficiency and scales of production that facilitated the popularization of easily affordable automobiles and the attainment of unimagined profits. During the middle decades of the twentieth century, increasingly large shares of those profits found their way into the pockets of laborers, owing in large part to the unionizing efforts of the



There was once tremendous hope in African American communities in Detroit. Reverend C. L. Franklin, a migrant from the South, built one of the great Detroit churches, and achieved fame and influence as a preacher, gospel singer, civil rights leader, and activist for African American auto workers. He is seen here with his daughter Aretha, "the Queen of Soul."

**COME TO THE TIKKUN/NSP
CONFERENCE!**

Washington, D.C., June 11-14
spiritualprogressives.org/conference

AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations) and its sometimes estranged sister, the UAW (United Auto Workers).

The unionized auto industry, largely serving a white constituency, would never know the kind of revolutionary upheavals Marx and others had predicted. The white middle class emerging in Detroit escaped the collective misery Marx had envisioned for workers, and the automobile and its associated mobility, lifestyle, and restructuring of urban and rural space led to the creation of an entirely different and deceptively enticing way of life: suburbia.

It is not coincidental that suburbia and the deeply fragmented, alienated, compartmentalized, and racially segregated lifestyle it encouraged would be most startlingly illustrated in the vicinity of Detroit, home of the auto industry that literally drove white flight nationwide. From suburbia emerged "Whitopia," a mythical land where home ownership became the signal designator for attaining the American dream; where the poverty of menacing black folks, and the perceived or real criminality it breeds, was a distant reality left for others to deal with; and where consumerist passions, fueled by the salaries won by workers after decades of unionizing, could be freely engaged, first in the strip malls that littered the suburban landscape, and later in huge self-enclosed mega-malls.

Unfortunately, labor's victory proved ephemeral. The auto industry, colluding with big oil, paid little heed to fuel efficiency. When global economic conditions led to exponential increases in fuel prices, American gas-guzzlers could not compete with far more fuel-efficient and increasingly better-made foreign cars, especially Japanese ones. The rising strength of the Japanese and European auto industries and the ever larger slices of both the American and global markets they were able to win from their American rivals led to declining profits and accelerating layoffs and plant closures in the States.

During the 1980s and 1990s, unions were forced to give back many of the hard-earned benefits they had garnered for workers. Those workers who still had jobs in the auto industry found themselves struggling to make ends meet. Meanwhile, the Detroit-based automakers were seduced by the influx of bogus wealth into the American financial system during the late 1990s and the first few years of the twenty-first century in the aftermath of the liberal policies of Bill Clinton—policies epitomized by his gutting the Glass-Steagall Act. As a result the automakers banked on the continued popularity of energy-inefficient but highly profitable sports utility vehicles. However, in the wake of steadily rising fuel prices beginning in 2003 and the financial meltdown of 2008, the demand for SUVs collapsed and with it the vestiges of the Detroit-based American auto industry.

That twin collapse, both automotive and financial, was a deathblow to the "Whitopia" surrounding Detroit. Thousands of homes were sold at a loss as their owners packed up and headed south. Thousands of others fell into foreclosure as their owners walked away, abandoning their properties to the rapacious banks that had encouraged their purchase through levels of manipulation and mendacity not witnessed in this country since the era of the nineteenth-century robber barons.

With the collapse of the Detroit auto industry and the refusal of a government that had given trillions of dollars to "bail out" the banking and financial sector to save it, the idea that big business would be the engine pushing the prosperity of the American, mostly white, middle class has died. Like the African American dream of a promised land, its graveyard is Detroit. Its tombstones are the rusting factories in and around the city; the acres of abandoned parking lots spotted with weeds cracking through the lonely blacktop deserts they have become; and the vacated, puddle-splattered, unfinished concrete foundations and weed-filled lots of distant suburban developments started at the height of the lively housing bubble in 2005-2006, now given up for dead.

The Menace of "Islamic" Terrorism

DETROIT IS ALSO THE GRAVEYARD OF THE FABRICATED IDEA OF THE MENACING ISLAMIC ENEMY. That there is a miniscule threat of deranged, alienated, suicidal, or sinister Muslims engaging in acts of mindless terror that threaten the lives of an even more miniscule percentage of Americans is undeniable. However, the idea that there is a strategically significant Islamic threat possessing any significant resources that can be translated into the kind of power that can threaten a militarized America or its global financial empire is a baseless fiction.

The killing of Imam Luqman Abdullah, a Muslim activist in one of the poorest neighborhoods in Detroit, exposes that fiction. Imam Luqman was allegedly the leader of a group of radical,



Diego Rivera,
"Detroit Industry"
(North Wall), 1932-33.
Detroit Institute of Arts.

separatist-minded Muslims whose perceived menace led to the infiltration and surveillance of their mosque. Imam Luqman's group was eventually entrapped in an elaborate scheme involving stolen property and finally the staged ambush and brutal slaughter of the Imam.

The entire operation exposes the fictitious and empty nature of the "Islamic threat" from Muslims in the United States. While it is true Imam Luqman was known to engage in fierce anti-American rhetoric, what actual capabilities did he and his followers possess? Their mosque, in one of the poorest sections of Detroit is in serious disrepair and threatened with foreclosure. The state of the mosque alone begs the question, "How could a group so poor that they could barely afford to operate a small mosque in one of the poorest neighborhoods in America overthrow the United States government or establish a separate state anywhere on American soil?" The answer is obvious except to those whose minds are so poisoned by their narrow, self-serving racist agenda that they cannot see reality for what it is.

Hence, when Imam Luqman was gunned down by a fusillade of bullets unleashed by who knows how many agents, the real nature of the threat he represents was exposed. Even if he did possess a single firearm, as it is alleged, what threat did he represent in the face of the fully automatic high-caliber arsenal in the hands of the bulletproof-vested, shielded, numerically superior forces arrayed against him? None. Extrapolate from that situation to the global confrontation between America and "radical" Islam and you will understand the true nature of the "Islamic" threat. Granted, if al-Qaida-type terrorists were able to deliver a nuclear or dirty bomb to a U.S. city, that would be far from trivial, but even that most unlikely event would not of itself lead to a takeover of the U.S. state. In the name of such wild fears, U.S. wars have been launched that have led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Muslims in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, fueling immense, justifiable anger against the United States.

With the brutal murder of Imam Luqman, Detroit is once again a symbolic graveyard. In it is buried the idea of the existential Islamic threat. Its tombstones are the tiny mosque Imam Luqman once headed and the cold warehouse in nearby Dearborn where he was gunned down and left to die like a rabid dog, while Freddy, the Belgian Malinois FBI dog he allegedly shot, was flown by helicopter from the scene.

The Glorious "Jihad"

FINALLY, DETROIT IS A GRAVEYARD FOR THE IDEA THAT ISLAMIC TERRORISM CAN SECURE ANY benefit for the Muslim people. That idea fizzled as surely as the bomb allegedly hidden in Farouk Abdul Mutallab's underwear fizzled—an unexploded, unspectacular, unmitigated disaster.

In the aftermath of that disaster we are left to ask, "What benefit would have accrued to Muslims had that bomb exploded, murdering three hundred unsuspecting, innocent passengers in American airspace on Christmas Day?" None! Instead, an exponentially larger number of unsuspecting, innocent Muslims than those already experiencing American-style justice would have bombs and rockets raining down on their towns, hamlets, and villages. An exponentially larger numbers of innocent Muslims than those already herded into dungeons scattered around the world would be hauled off to



Demonstrators stand outside the Dearborn, Michigan, police station to protest the death of Imam Luqman Ameen Abdullah, who was shot twenty-one times during an FBI raid on October 28, 2009.

be tortured and brutalized into confessing their membership in phantom organizations or their complicity in crimes they have no knowledge of.

Had that bomb exploded, the heroic actions of everyday Muslims resisting the occupation of their lands, the usurpation of their resources, and the murders and humiliation of their countrymen and women would be callously dismissed as wanton terrorism by even formerly sympathetic Americans. Onlookers would be rendered insensitive by the coldblooded action of a clearly disturbed stranger with no connection to those Muslims left to bear the consequences of his act of unenlightened self-negation.

There are deeper questions one can ask concerning the nature, targeting, timing, and efficacy of the violence of the CIA-created “jihad” movement, but we will leave those for another time. For now we will just state that the idea of any benefit accruing to Islam as a result of “Islamic” terror died December 25, 2009, aboard Detroit-bound Northwest Flight 253. Its tombstone is in the Detroit-area dungeon into which Farouk Abdul Mutallab has been thrown.

Lessons from Graveyard Detroit

SO WHAT IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THESE DISPARATE IDEAS BURIED IN Graveyard Detroit? African Americans, most of whom are still waiting for the deposit of the funds to back up the bad check Dr. King referred to in one of his speeches; the white middle class, whose homes, retirement and pension funds, jobs, and sense of security have been stolen by the latter-day robber barons; and Muslims, along with others whose lives and lands have been or will soon be laid waste by the American war machine, must see that they are being brutalized by the same globalized corporate hegemon. That being the case, they must find ways to unite, if their resistance to those corporate forces is to have any efficacy or meaning.

African Americans must not see Latinos who are “stealing all of the jobs” as the enemy. They must understand that the system that forces campesinos from their land through unjust and inequitable agricultural policies and sends them flowing desperately northward is the same system that criminalizes young African American men and then profits from their incarceration. It is also the same system that is responsible for 50 percent unemployment rates among black youth and directs more of those youth toward prison than toward a university classroom.

Disenfranchised white folks must understand that Islam is neither their enemy nor a threat to their existence any more than the Vietnamese in the 1960s or Latin American leftist organizations in the 1980s. All of our enemies du jour are just desperate people trying to the best of their understanding and ability to preserve their land, culture, and resources against the rapacious appetite of a global empire. It is not the Muslims who have closed down U.S. workers’ factories, eliminated their jobs, stolen their retirement funds, devalued their homes, and burdened their children with a mountain of debt by bailing out the banks, insurance underwriters, and finance houses.

Furthermore, the white middle class has to stop the mindless game of political musical chairs, alternately blaming the incumbent party, be it Democratic or Republican, for the ravages of a pathological system. The problem is not the Democrats or the Republicans when both parties have sold out to the corporate interests whose army of lobbyists floods Capital Hill, shelling out money to the quislings of both parties who in turn sell out the voters they pretend so hypocritically to serve. The problem is a system that facilitates such pernicious nonsense.

The mounting frustrations of the white middle class against the failures and excesses of the political system will not be solved by Tea Party protests or the scapegoating of hapless groups such as Muslims or Latino immigrants. Only united and focused nonviolent political movement will lead to any lasting change in this country. What we need is a movement bent on undoing the oppressive structures that advance what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., referred to as the evil triplets of poverty, racism, and militarism. The white middle class, or its surviving vestiges, must be an integral part of such a movement.

For their part, Muslims must have the wisdom, insight and sagacity to realize that the current wars being visited upon Muslims are not evidence of an American or Jewish-led crusade against the faithful, any more than the Vietnam War or the invasions of Panama or Grenada were crusades. They are all geostrategic conflagrations fueled by an outdated Machiavellian logic that ultimately transcends religion.

Muslims must also realize that in some instances poor people in America are brutalized by the police, prison guards, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers, and other agents of the state in ways that make many poor neighborhoods in America microcosms of occupied Muslim lands. The validity of this comparison is reinforced by the image of Blackwater mercenaries prowling the streets of New Orleans to keep the "refugees" in check in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Muslims must also understand that there are many American groups and individuals, including Jewish ones, who are working tirelessly to reverse the policies that demonize Muslims and direct bombs and missiles towards their lands. Furthermore, Muslims must see that only by forming bonds of solidarity with those oppressed groups in America will they gain the critical mass needed to begin addressing their grievances and meaningfully alleviating their suffering.

There is no group that alone can undo the dangerous policies and politics of a global empire that in many ways threatens the very existence of our planet. Opposing that oppressive force will require a globalized resistance that has the ability to replicate monstrous corporations and their surrogates in their ability to transcend national boundaries. That resistance must have the insight to engage in a deep level of analysis that looks beyond the superficial categories presented by corporate-sponsored pundits and ideologues to see the underlying causes of our collective problems, the structures that unite the disparate groups that suffer as a result of the policies that facilitate the corporate dominance of the world, and the strategies that will be needed to move forward.

If Graveyard Detroit can teach us anything, it is the degree to which our lives have become intertwined. Whites, African Americans, and large numbers of Arabs, many of them Muslims—Lebanese, Iraqis, Yemenis and others—live in and around Detroit. Globalizing economic forces have brought them together, and despite the periodic traumas and great stresses that threaten to tear them apart, they have been able to form a civic community, which had begun, prior to the 2008 financial meltdown, to come together to rebuild the city. If these communities are able to regroup and cross the lines that divide them, perhaps their example will inspire a world in desperate need of a new direction—perhaps Graveyard Detroit can become a place of resurrection. ■

Invincible Hip-Hop Slipping the Medicine In

by Josh Healey

EVEN IN A GENRE AS DIVERSE AND CONTROVERSIAL AS HIP-HOP, INVINCIBLE stands out—and not just for her lyrics. Born Ilana Weaver, she is known as one of the top underground female emcees in the country, despite her famous line, "I wanna be known as the best rapper, period / not just the best with breasts and a period." Growing up in a Jewish family between Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Israel/Palestine, Invincible began making music as a sort of medicine against the ills of

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.



IT
DONT
EXIST



Invincible, above, draws on her experiences as a Jewish child in Israel-occupied Palestine and as a white hip-hop emcee in Detroit to make connections between gentrification and occupation, fighting for justice on both issues.

gentrification and occupation in her respective homelands. Not confining herself to the stage, she is active in local movements for justice, especially in her current home of Detroit. After being called "every A&R's worst nightmare" due to her reputation for turning down corporate record deals (A&Rs find and nurture artists for music labels), she created her own path to success with her label Emergence Music and now contributes to progressive projects such as the annual Allied Media Conference. I recently talked with Invincible to get her opinion on hip-hop, Detroit, white privilege, and what it means to "boycott Israeli injustice."

Josh Healey: So, you're a popular artist, an outspoken activist, a multimedia journalist. Let me ask you this, especially for those readers who aren't avid Davey D followers: why hip-hop?

Invincible: Hip-hop is one of the main ways I learned English. When I was seven, I wrote down the lyrics to my favorite songs, looking them up in the dictionary and then memorizing them. I had just moved from Israel-occupied Palestine to Michigan. Not only did hip-hop teach me language, but it also introduced me to social justice history and movements that are not widely taught in schools or spoken about in most mainstream media; so I would also look up the names people dropped such as Assata Shakur, Malcolm X, and Shirley Chisholm. By age nine, I was penning my own lyrics.

JH: Going off that, why make music at all? Why did you start? Did you always have the intention of combining your art with political activism, or did you start by wanting to be the freestyle champ of the neighborhood?

Invincible: I started taking music seriously when I was fifteen. I would freestyle daily and sometimes battle too. I met a local DJ who had access to some abandoned buildings in Ann Arbor and we converted the buildings into all-ages venues [open to youth under twenty-one]: my graffiti writer friends painted murals on the walls, we covered up all the windows with black fabric, and set up temporary sound systems. I fell in love with the whole culture and practice of hip-hop.

That same year was when I got involved with my first organizing campaign as well. The KKK was planning to speak in Ann Arbor, on the roof of City Hall at that, so I helped organize a rally against them. After that, I continued writing lyrics that spoke about the injustices I opposed. Since I started working with Detroit Summer [a multi-racial, inter-generational collective], I have been able to connect with more effective organizing projects that address the issues I rhyme about. The music and skill comes first, but the content raises awareness and inspires action. I call that approach "slipping the medicine in."

JH: You rep Detroit as hard as anyone. What does it mean to love a city that is now the poster child for perpetual urban crisis?

Invincible: One of my favorite sayings about Detroit is, "Detroit is what the world has to look forward to." I think it specifically applies to any industrialized area. This was the first city to have an assembly line, highways, suburbs, white flight, automation, outsourcing, and total disinvestment. It was the first city to fully experience post-industrialization. Now it is the poster child for the failure of industrial capitalism, which causes urban crisis. But in that crisis is also an opportunity for people to develop community-led solutions. Not because gardens are cute but out of necessity: there is not a single chain supermarket in the city, so it is hard to find fresh produce. With each crisis, where the government is too broke, or bogged down by bureaucracy and corporate interests to fix it, it provides an opportunity out of necessity for the community to find creative solutions to its own problems.

JH: Your song "Locusts" is basically a documentary-music video about gentrification in Detroit. What does gentrification look like in a city that is 80 percent black? And what does your anti-gentrification work look like as a white activist?

Invincible: My perspective on displacement is shaped by my experiences as a person with both U.S. and Israeli citizenship, because with both places I was raised, my living there was a direct result of someone else's displacement. Gentrification is one form, and while it doesn't happen on the same scale as colonization, the outcome is still devastating. I've created an online project called Emergence Travel Agency that shows these connections.

Detroit is facing a unique type of gentrification: first of all there are tons of developers who are speculating land, meaning they buy low—multiple properties—and just sit on them, waiting until the value goes up so they can sell high. Many of the properties they buy are recently foreclosed.

As a person with white privilege living here, I make sure my role is to amplify the voices of Detroiters most impacted by these issues. When people from the city organize against gentrification and displacement—for example, when they are moving someone back into a house that was foreclosed, or turning an old lot in their neighborhood into a garden—I support them in any way I can. I am not a key decision maker or spokesperson, but instead I intentionally use my art and workshops to highlight the work being done in the community, by the community, and do my best to practice accountability every step of that process.

JH: The U.S. Social Forum (USSF) is taking place in Detroit this June. Are you involved with that at all? Do you see the forum as a potential game-changer for the Left in the United States, or as just another big meeting?

Invincible: The Social Forum will definitely be a learning opportunity for people from around the country to see the incredible work happening here in Detroit, and for local movements to learn from models in other cities. I will definitely attend with Detroit Summer, the organization I work with. We are also involved in planning the Allied Media Conference, a grassroots movement-building gathering that happens in Detroit annually and will take place in the days prior to the USSF this June. The Allied Media Conference is very hands-on and about leaving with practical skills, and I know the USSF will apply some of those same values since many local organizers I trust and love are involved in planning it.

JH: Let's go international now. You were born in Israel, and your family moved to the U.S. when you were a kid. You're a strong critic of the Israeli government, especially with last year's war on Gaza. Why? What was the turning point for you, if there was one, in your thinking on Israel/Palestine?

INTERNSHIPS AT TIKKUN

June–August 2010 or
September 2010–June 2011
in Berkeley, California.
Info: tikkun.org/jobs

Invincible: I was actually born in the U.S., but moved to Israel-occupied Palestine when I was one and lived there until age seven. When we moved to Michigan, many of my classmates were from Arab backgrounds, and one particular friend in middle school was Palestinian. She told me about her uncle, who was a nonviolent resister who was imprisoned and tortured by the Israeli military. Ever since then I've been seeking out accurate information, to unlearn the miseducation I received in Israeli schools, as well as U.S. Jewish schools, about Israel. I especially search for Palestinian perspectives on the matter, to better understand the injustices they experience as a direct result of the Zionist project and the Israeli military. Often Jews unintentionally reinforce the racist dismissal of Palestinian voices by only speaking to other Jews about the issue, or even centering the voices of Jews who speak out against Israel. My focus is to support and amplify Palestinian voices and add mine when it makes sense. Gaza has been occupied, isolated, and cut off from resources for decades prior to last January and continues to be under siege to this day. Last year's attack was a horrifying, magnified example of the injustices Palestinians experience on a daily basis under Israeli occupation, so the world could see more clearly.

JH: In the video for your song "The Emperor's Clothes," which was filmed at a protest outside the Israeli consulate in San Francisco during the attack on Gaza, your chorus calls for "boycotts, divestments, and sanctions" (BDS) against the Israeli government. What does BDS look like to you? And why do you, an Israeli living in America, support that tactic?

Invincible: The call for boycott, divestment, and sanctions of Israel was put out by Palestinian people who were inspired by the boycott of South Africa in the apartheid era, and will continue until Israel tears down the apartheid wall, gives Palestinian residents of Israel full rights, and supports Palestinian refugees' right to return to their homes. The BDS campaign looks slightly different wherever you are. I think the most powerful local campaigns connect injustices happening in our communities to the injustices committed by Israel. For example, in New York, BDS activists are targeting Lev Leviev, who is not only a settlement builder in the West Bank, but also a gentrifying developer in Brooklyn, as well as a diamond jeweler who sells blood diamonds from Angola. They are now forging relationships with people in Angola who oppose his practices as well.

As an artist [BDS] not only means not performing in Israel or doing events sponsored by Israel, it also means supporting Palestinian artists. One of the most important aspects of the boycott campaign is actually to *support* Palestinian economies that are often choked by Israel. BDS is potentially the most effective way that everyday people can take action, organizing in their community against Israeli apartheid and military occupation.

JH: You've partnered with the Palestinian hip-hop group DAM on various projects and tours. What has that been like? Where do you see any hope for real change and justice in the Middle East?

Invincible: I met DAM through my friend Jackie Salloum, who directed "Slingshot Hip Hop." By helping out with the film, I was able to connect with the growing Palestinian hip-hop movement. It has been incredibly inspiring and a great reminder of the purpose of hip-hop, which is to tell the stories of oppressed and impacted communities who would not otherwise be heard. DAM in particular are the pioneers of that movement in Palestine. Suhell Nafar (of DAM) and Abeer both partnered with me on the song and docu-music video "People Not Places," which speaks about the importance of Palestinian right of return, in contrast with the unjust Israeli law of return promoted through "Birthright" tours.

My hope is that as more people begin to understand that Israel is unsustainable and has been from its founding—it is completely reliant on billions of dollars annually of foreign military aid, it requires daily destruction and oppression for its so-called safety, and it is environmentally destroying the land—they will start to take action toward real change and justice. All we can spend our time and energy on is supporting Palestinians and others impacted by the Zionist project to develop alternatives that are sustainable for the long haul.

For more on Invincible, visit emergencemusic.net or detroitsummer.org. ■

Discover the Magic and Mystery
of Bolivia: Amazon and Andes
Visit, Live and Share with
Native Communities

- Community Tourism in the Amazon with a Tacana Community
- Community Tourism in the Andes with an Aymara Community
- Intensive Shamanic Training
- Live in Native Communities
- Socially Responsible Tourism
- Retreat Centers
- Yoga Courses
- Eco-Lodges
- Adventure
- Therapies
- Cultures
- Rituals
- Tours



www.bolivianmystica.com - info@bolivianmystica.com - (591) 720-02055

Programa Financiado y Apoyado por:



www.boliviantravel.com

Mindful Motherhood

by Cassandra Vieten

THERE IS PERHAPS NO TIME, WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF FACING death, that greeting “things as it is” as Suzuki Roshi once put it, is more called for than during pregnancy, childbirth, and early motherhood. Facing the birth of a child is a frontier—complete with all the excitement, challenge, and adventure that confronting any unknown territory brings.

And while motherhood is a source of great joy for most women, recent data suggest that up to 18 percent of women are depressed while pregnant, and as many as 19 percent of first-time mothers experience some form of depression in the first three months after delivery. Other perinatal challenges include mood disorders (12 percent), PTSD (8 percent), and anxiety disorders (7 percent). A robust scientific literature links postpartum depression to impairments in mother-infant bonding. In addition, a large body of empirical evidence in both animal and human studies indicates that stress and mood disturbance experienced during pregnancy increases the risk for preterm birth and other pregnancy-related complications, and may adversely affect the developing fetus, and the child's long-term development.

Despite the potential for far-reaching benefits, relatively little research has focused on developing interventions to reduce stress and improve mood for mothers during the perinatal period. In response to the need for a brief, low-cost, nonpharmaceutical intervention to reduce stress, improve mood, and decrease the effects of stress and distressed mood on mother-infant bonding, and based on our own experiences as parents, my colleagues and I developed the Mindful Motherhood program.

Though small, our pilot study showed that it was possible to learn mindful awareness during pregnancy and early motherhood (even with baby in tow!), and that women who engaged in mindfulness training during pregnancy had fewer negative emotions and less anxiety during pregnancy compared with women who did not participate in the training. There were also trends toward reduced symptoms of depression and increased positive emotion.

An Embodied, Down and Dirty, Sensual Practice

MINDFUL MOTHERHOOD, THE WAY WE TEACH IT, IS FOCUSED ON BEING PRESENT, IN YOUR body, and connected with your baby no matter what is happening. It's being aware of your experience from moment to moment, as it is happening, without pushing it away, trying to make it stay, or judging it as bad or good. It is meeting each situation as it is and, over time, more and more often, approaching whatever is happening with curiosity and compassion.

Mindful motherhood is a way of approaching the good, the bad, and the ugly of



Cassandra Vieten, Ph.D., is a psychologist, director of research at the Institute of Noetic Sciences (noetic.org), and associate scientist at California Pacific Medical Center Research Institute. Visit mindfulmotherhood.org for more information.

motherhood to the largest extent possible, with open eyes and an open heart. Whether those experiences are internal (like thoughts, feelings, or body sensations) or external (like relationships, workplace situations, or the situations in your environment), mindful motherhood is about increasing the capacity to be with whatever is happening, no matter what it is. Exactly like mindfulness practice in any other situation. But motherhood demands a special kind of practice.

For one thing, mindful motherhood requires a person to be mindful in *relationship* with another being. This most often ends up being true of general mindfulness practice—it's no mistake that loving-kindness practice is the ultimate conclusion of most retreats. But in this situation, relationality defines the practice. Silence, solitude, retreat, refuge—the lone-wolf style of "I'm going to sit here quietly with my mind until I see clearly," is very rarely an option in early motherhood.

Second, in mindful motherhood one can forget the aspects of mindfulness that are of the transcendent/detached/observing-with-great equanimity variety. Mindful motherhood is a practice that is living, embodied, down and dirty, sensual, centered and grounded in *this* world, in *this* body, in *this* moment. It's about being present, in your body, and connected with your baby. It's playing with your baby in the dirt, rather than worrying about how it's going to get cleaned up. It's spending all morning in bed together, playing peek-a-boo, eating, napping, and cuddling. It's allowing anger to well up as you walk your baby back and forth for the sixth time that night, or allowing yourself the shivery shudder of being sick with the flu and still being the primary source of sustenance for your baby. There's not much time off from motherhood in the early days, no matter how much support you have.

Body to Body Communication

SO, MINDFUL MOTHERHOOD IS AN EMBODIED PRACTICE. IN THE FIRST YEAR OF YOUR child's life, your body, much more than your mind or your words, is your primary communication tool. You receive almost all the incoming information you need from your baby through your body and its sensations (as opposed to the communication we tend to focus on as adults—the exchange of ideas). And *all* the outgoing information you deliver to your baby goes through your body as well. You connect with your baby through your facial expressions, your warmth, your touch, your tone of voice, and your tension or relaxation in each moment. Your body is likely the primary source of nutrition, and even if you are bottle-feeding, your body during feeding times nourishes your baby with important skin-to-skin contact.

In fact, everything your baby knows about you and is learning from you during this time of ultimate brain plasticity, when neural pathways are being laid down for life, is happening through the communication between your body and your baby's body. This communication is for the most part nonconceptual—it's made up of sensations and emotions rather than ideas. It's really staggering if you stop to think about it. It's as though you've had to learn sign language rather than verbal language, but the sign language isn't just with your hands—it's with your whole body. Because your body is so vital to your communication, paying attention to and centering your awareness in it becomes extremely important. Which is where mindfulness comes in.

Finally, mindful motherhood above all is a practice of being present in the moment. If being nonjudgmental, accepting, curious, and compassionate, and observing your experience and letting it be as it is without struggling against it are some of the rooms that make up the house of mindful motherhood, being in the present moment is the foundation of the house.

The Pinnacle of Mindfulness

THE GREAT NEWS FOR MANY OF US IS THAT BEING PRESENT WITH OUR BABIES CAN BE really easy. Their adorable little selves can be incredibly compelling. You can find yourself just hanging out in the present with the baby and observing everything that is going on

This article was excerpted in part from *Mindful Motherhood: Practical Tools for Staying Sane During Pregnancy and Your Child's First Year* (New Harbinger/Noetic Books, 2009).

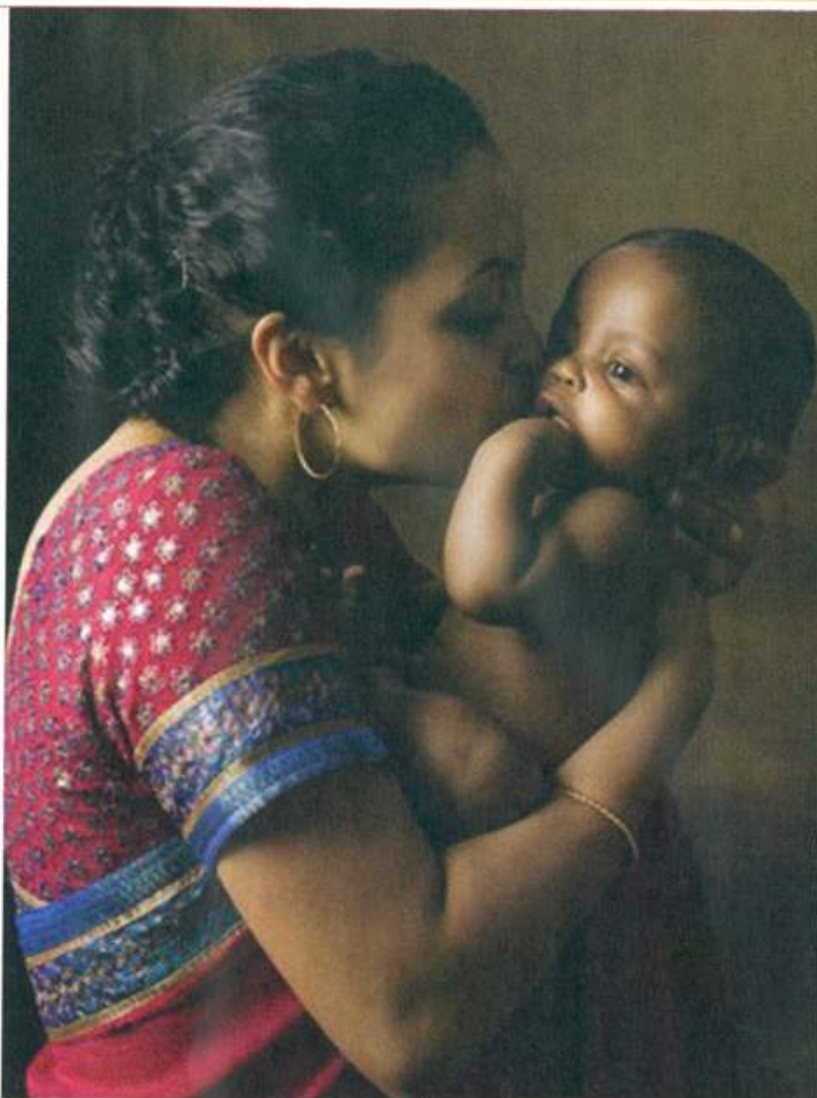
with great interest, curiosity, and love. In some ways this is the pinnacle of mindfulness, so it gives you the opportunity to experience it naturally without even having to try. When all the hormones line up right and you are hanging out with your baby, this experience often trumps that hypervigilance about everything else. You get "mommy brain," where everything else drops away for a while. These moments when mindfulness comes with ease are real gifts.

On the same note, when the baby is crying, it forces you to be present in ways that you may sometimes wish you could avoid but can't. It's really hard to ignore or be distracted from your own baby crying. In some ways, these moments are also gifts. They provide a great opportunity to be present in a demanding moment and to begin to learn how to let go into the present moment, to relax into it, to lean into it and walk right through it without all the extra suffering that comes from resisting it or trying to make it stop.

Finally, mindful awareness in pregnancy and early motherhood opens the door to experiences of deep contentment, expansive joy, fierce love, and warm sensuality that can exceed anything you've experienced up until then, and when you are really there for them, they hold the potential to be transformative. Being open to this depth of feeling can change your understanding of who you are and what you are capable of.

The gist is that pregnancy, childbirth, and early motherhood are not times to put your mindfulness practice on hold and accept that you just won't be able to attend to that part of your life as much. Quite the contrary, pregnancy, childbirth, and early motherhood *stimulate* mindful awareness. When you lean into it, your mindfulness practice makes you grow as a mom (because essentially, the same ingredients that make up mindful awareness, when applied to your relationship with your baby, add up to being a good mom), and becoming a mom encourages mindfulness in a way that few other life experiences can. Yes, pregnancy and early motherhood can be uniquely disruptive to your usual self-care routines, such as setting aside time for meditation or yoga. But this period of time also provides an opportunity to cultivate a practice of radical mindfulness—one that is deeply embodied, and infuses itself throughout your everyday life.

The bottom line is to be gentle with yourself. There are limitless opportunities to cultivate mindful motherhood in pregnancy, childbirth, parenting, and in the rest of your life. Much of what I talk about will come to you naturally, and more than anything, most mothers just need a reminder to stay true to what is most real in each moment. Stay true to your center (your breathing, your body, and your connection to your baby), to that part of you that is awake, aware, and encountering each moment of motherhood for the first time. Rather than being a big project or a strenuous endeavor, mindful motherhood is about giving yourself permission to rest in this moment ... and in this one ... and in this one. Rest into whatever it is that is happening, and explore the adventure of motherhood with open eyes, an open mind, and an open heart. ■



Rethinking Religion

Self Transformation, Social Transformation

by David R. Loy

The mercy of the West has been social revolution; the mercy of the East has been individual insight into the basic self/void. We need both.

—Gary Snyder, *Earth House Hold*

LEFT PROGRESSIVES ARE OFTEN SUSPICIOUS OF RELIGION, AND FOR GOOD reason. Religious institutions have played a major role in rationalizing exploitative hierarchies and other social inequalities, such as legitimating “the divine right of kings,” a dogma once widespread in Asian as well as European polities. To misquote Marx, religion can certainly be an opiate. Too often, religions have diverted our attention to transcendent heavenly realms to be enjoyed after death, provided that we do what we are told here and now.

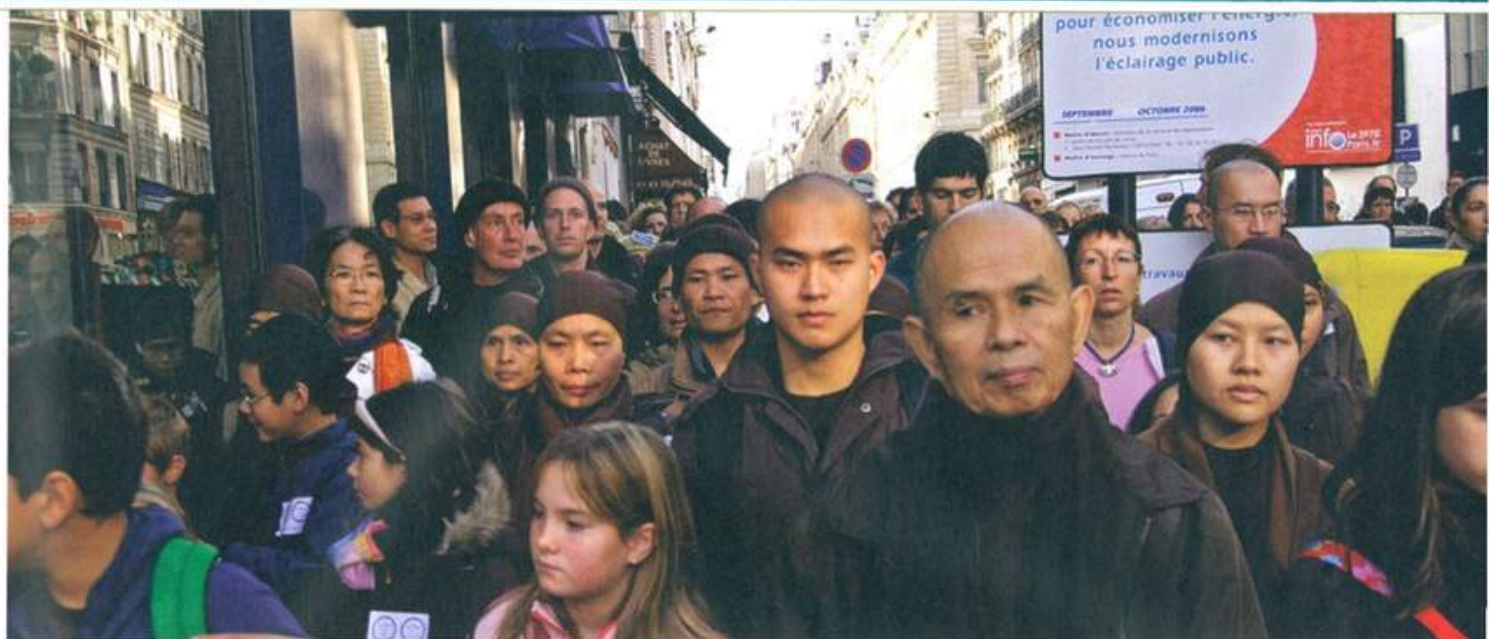
Religious people are often suspicious of the Left, and for good reason. In the last century the pursuit of socialist and communist utopias resulted in horrible legacies of mass oppression and murder: Stalin’s purges, China’s cultural revolution, and the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, to mention only a few. Although these examples were certainly gross distortions of progressive ideals, they nonetheless reflect a certain naïveté (to say the least) among the revolutionaries about social reconstruction and the way to create a just and equitable society. Too often, leftist movements have ended up playing the role of a this-worldly religion, with their own revolutionary leaders acting as secular messiahs.

Religion and the Left have more in common than their mutual suspicion: neither has been very successful, measured against its true potential. In most modern societies, the influence of organized religion is fading, especially among educated people. In some places such as the United States, religion still thrives but often in dogmatic, narrow-minded forms that deserve the leftist critique. On the other side, and despite the enormous ecological and economic problems that face us today, the worldwide collapse of communism that began in 1989 has largely (if unfairly) discredited the Left. Although the corporate media have become very sophisticated at ridiculing and demonizing progressives, the Left has also been very skillful at demonizing itself, in sectarian quarrels and schisms. Progressives offer persuasive critiques of our present situation, but have found it much more difficult to agree on alternatives or an agenda that might resolve those problems.

There is a further similarity between religion and the Left: both are failing to realize their potential because each is incomplete without the other. Religion is about personal transformation, and the progressive movement is about social transformation. Each transformation needs the other if it is to avoid being aborted at an early stage of development. We need to appreciate their nonduality, which means emphasizing and pursuing both. To demonstrate this nonduality, I begin by outlining the individual spiritual predicament that religion ideally addresses. A clear understanding of our personal situation enables us to see the connection with our social predicament, which is nothing other than a collective version of the same basic problem.

*David R. Loy is the Best Professor of Ethics/Religion and Society at Xavier University in Cincinnati. He is a Zen teacher and the author of *The Great Awakening: A Buddhist Social Theory* and *Money Sex War Karma: Notes for a Buddhist Revolution*.*





Our Individual Predicament

TO TALK ABOUT RELIGION IN MEANINGFUL TERMS, IT IS NECESSARY TO BE MORE SPECIFIC. I will do this by discussing Buddhism, but my argument could also be expressed in the categories used by Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Taoism, and so forth, although in each case it would be necessary to distinguish what I will presumptuously identify as the *promise* of religion—its genuine possibilities—from many of its more commonly practiced versions. As a longtime scholar of Buddhist philosophy who has practiced Zen meditation for almost forty years, I am brave and/or foolish enough to distinguish what I believe to be the potentiality of the Buddhist tradition from popular and institutional deformations that (as with other religions) have arrested the more transformative implications of its message. I will argue that Buddhism at its best is not about monastics withdrawing from “the world” in order to attain some quiescent nirvana detached from the suffering of others, nor is the main responsibility of Buddhist laity to “make merit” by supporting those monastics. Moreover, little of what follows is unique to Buddhism; anyone familiar with comparative religion will be able to identify profound parallels to beliefs and practices in all the other major religious traditions, although these are not often emphasized to the same degree.

The most important Buddhist term is *dukkha* (“suffering” in the broadest sense). Shakyamuni (the original historical Buddha) emphasized that his only concern was understanding *dukkha* and ending it. To put an end to one’s *dukkha*, however, one needs to “wake up” (“the Buddha” literally means “the Awakened”) and realize *anatta* “not-self”—one’s lack of any substantial self. For Buddhism, the self is the ultimate source of *dukkha*.

The various Buddhist traditions explain *anatta* in different ways, yet fundamentally Buddhism denies our illusory sense of separation from other people and the rest of the world. Each of us has a *sense* of self, but in contemporary terms, that is a psychological and social construction, without any “self-existence” (*svabhava*) or reality of its own. The basic problem with this sense-of-self is its delusive sense of duality. The construction of a separate self *inside* is also the construction of an external “other” *outside*. Buddhism emphasizes the *dukkha* built into this situation: basically, such a self is *dukkha*.

One way to describe this problem is that, since the sense-of-self is a psychosocial construct, it is ungrounded and ungroundable—hence always insecure. The self is inherently anxious because it is not a “thing” that could ever be secure. As a result, the self-construct is haunted by a *lack*, the sense that something is wrong with me, understood variously according to one’s character and situation. We identify with things that (we think) might provide the grounding or reality we crave: money, material possessions, reputation, power, physical attractiveness, etc. We push away whoever or whatever seems to threaten our “reality project.” In both cases we try to bolster an illusory construct by focusing on something outside ourselves, which cannot provide the grounding we seek from it. This means that if, for example, a

Although Western Buddhism has typically focused on the individual, socially engaged Buddhism has been growing in popularity. One of its leading exponents, the Vietnamese Zen Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh, here leads a walking meditation in Paris, October 2006.

preoccupation with making money is my way to become more real, then no matter how much money I may accumulate, it will never be enough. The same is true for fame, power, beauty, and so forth.

The Buddhist solution to this predicament is not to get rid of the self (which does not exist) but to “wake up” and see through the illusion of a self that is separate from others. Buddhist practice involves deconstructing and reconstructing the sense of self. When mind and body “fall away” (which is how the Japanese Zen master Dogen described his experience), there is no longer the sense of being “inside,” peering out at an external world “outside.” Rather, “I” am what the whole world is doing, right here and now, one manifestation of a web of conditionality and interdependence that incorporates everyone and everything else. This is much more than an intellectual understanding. “I came to realize clearly that mind is nothing other than mountains and rivers and the great wide earth, the sun and the moon and the stars,” Dogen says. Thus Buddhist enlightenment is not about being saved by a God or gods, nor does it involve gaining access to some heavenly realm, but it transforms the way a person experiences oneself and the world. Note a profound implication of this realization about their nonduality: caring for “other” people becomes as natural as taking care of my own leg. If I am not separate from other people and the natural world, what is good for “me” cannot be separated from what is good for them.

Of course, the Abrahamic traditions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—offer a different approach that emphasizes our *ethical* relationship with an all-powerful creator God, but at their best they nevertheless end up in much the same place: a sense of community in which we realize our inherent relationship with each other and responsibility for each other and live accordingly *here and now*. Whereas the Abrahamic traditions emphasize that God will reward or punish us accordingly, Buddhism understands the law of karma to operate more impersonally. For popular Buddhism as well as for the Abrahamic faiths, this usually involves an afterlife, and a vital question for us today, of course, is whether such a future “pie in the sky” is necessary to motivate our behavior in the present. From the Buddhist perspective I have just presented above, however, morality does not derive from divine command; rather, an ethical life follows naturally from realizing one’s nonduality with others. This applies whether or not anything survives death, and accords better with modern skepticism regarding postmortem survival.

To sum up, I am claiming that the most important point about religion—which is as relevant today as ever—is not its prescriptions about how to qualify for some blissful afterlife, but its emphasis on *personal transformation*, which works to minimize the dukkha in our lives right now, by deconstructing and reconstructing the delusive sense of self—the ultimate source of our dukkha, right here and now. This is not to assert or deny that death is the end of everything, but that we should live in such a way that it makes no difference whether or not death is the end of everything.

In accordance with its cognitive rather than ethical focus, Buddhist teachings say little about evil per se but a great deal about the three unwholesome motivations, also known as the “three poisons” or the “three roots of evil”: greed, ill will, and delusion. In popular Buddhism, karma is usually understood as a way to get a handle on how the world will treat us in the future, which also implies, more immediately, that we must accept our own responsibility for whatever is happening to us now, as a consequence of something we must have done earlier. Such a doctrine can easily be used to rationalize racism, caste and class, economic oppression, ableism, and other forms of discrimination—including the authority of political elites, who therefore deserve their wealth and power, and the subordination of those who have neither. If there is an infallible cause-and-effect relationship between one’s actions and one’s fate, a kind of justice is already built into the moral fabric of the universe. As a result, Asian Buddhism has never emphasized social justice in the Western sense. Eventually people get what they deserve.

Nevertheless, this common (mis)understanding of karma distorts the original Buddha’s emphasis on present motivation, according to which karma is better understood as the key to personal reconstruction: one’s life situation can be transformed by transforming the motivations of one’s actions right now. When we remember the Buddhist emphasis on not-self—in

modern terms, the idea that one's sense of self is a psychosocial construct—it makes more sense to view karma not as something the self *has*, but as what the sense of self *is*. And what that sense of self *is* changes according to one's intentions and choices. "I" (re)construct myself by what "I" intentionally do, because "my" sense of self is a precipitate of habitual ways of thinking, feeling, acting, and reacting. Just as my physical body is composed of the food eaten and digested, so my personal character is a sedimentation of consistent, repeated mental attitudes. In other words, people are "punished" or "rewarded" not for what they have done but for what they have become, and what we intentionally do is what makes us what we are.

Such an understanding of karma does not necessarily involve another life after physical death. As Spinoza expressed it in the last proposition of his *Ethics*, happiness is not the reward for virtue; happiness is virtue itself. To become a different kind of person is to experience the world in a different way. When your mind changes, the world changes; when we respond differently to the world, the world responds differently to us. Insofar as we are nondual with the world, our ways of acting in it involve feedback systems that tend to incorporate other people; my character becomes revealed as the intentions behind my actions sooner or later become apparent. The more I am motivated by greed, ill will, and delusion, the more I must manipulate the world to get what I want, and consequently the more alienated I feel, and the more alienated others feel when they see they have been manipulated. This mutual distrust encourages both sides to manipulate more. On the other side, when what I do is motivated by generosity, loving-kindness, and the wisdom of interdependence, then I can relax and open up to the world. The more I feel part of the world and genuinely connected with others, the less I will be inclined to take advantage of others, and consequently the more inclined they will be to trust and open up to me.

This helps us to understand why even "successful" political revolutions have so often failed, reproducing the very authoritarianism they overthrew. Without such individual transformation, social transformations do not work very well. Why have so many reform movements ended up replacing one gang of thugs with another? If we do not transform our own greed, ill-will, and delusion, our efforts to challenge their political expression are likely to be self-defeating. If I have not addressed my own greed, I will be inclined to take personal advantage of any power I may gain. If I do not acknowledge my ill will as my own problem, I will project my negativity onto those who obstruct my purposes. If unaware that my sense of being a separate self is a delusion, I will understand the problem of social change as the need for me to dominate others. History is littered with examples: Stalin, Mao Zedong, Kim Il-sung, and Pol Pot, for a start ... and many others closer to home.

Our Collective Predicament

BUT WHAT DOES BUDDHISM HAVE TO DO WITH POLITICAL REVOLUTION OR SOCIAL transformation? Traditional Buddhism is a spiritual path for individuals, not a platform for social change—yet is it always clear where one ends and the other begins? Although Buddhism is about ending dukkha by transforming the three poisons, those poisons are all the more poisonous when they infect a ruler, who easily can and often does create widespread dukkha.

Where do we get the stereotype that religion is incompatible with leftist ideas and progressive ideals? Part of the problem may be our conception of religion, which has recently become problematic (perhaps I should say "even more problematic", since there has never been a definition of religion that has found general acceptance among religious studies scholars). It may be that the very concept is a Western construct based upon the example of modern European Christianity, which sharply delineated the religious sphere from the political and economic, and then projected that conception onto various non-Western (continued on page 76)



A Bhutanese Buddhist monk paints a sand mandala at the San Francisco Asian Art Museum, February 2009. Mandalas express basic Buddhist principles, such as compassion and not-self, and are often used as aids to meditation. To create such order and beauty out of sand is to symbolize the impermanence of material life. David Loy's article focuses on the political relevance of such teachings.

It's not enough to support
our principles ...
Please Join the Network
of Spiritual Progressives
spiritualprogressives.org

And I, Where Do I Come?

Experiences in Jewish-Muslim Dialogue

by Zalman Kastel

I AM SITTING NEXT TO A SOUTH LEBANESE SHIA IMAM AT A CONFERENCE OF Australian religious leaders. We are listening to Bishop Shakur from the Galilee at the state parliament in Sydney tell us that he is a Palestinian and an Israeli citizen but he can't be Israeli first because he is sixty-three and Israel is only fifty-nine.

He continues talking but I am barely listening. I hear Shakur's comment about a fifty-nine-year-old Israel as a delegitimization of Israel, an implication that it is a colonial project. I feel a burning question: am I an appeaser or will I stand by my people? I stand up and challenge the bishop. *"Can there ever be peace if you will not respect my narrative?! Because for me, Israel is not fifty-nine years old, my Jewish connection to the land goes back 3,260 years to the conquest of Canaan by Joshua!"*

This confrontation with Shakur is quite out of character for me.

I was raised in the "orthodox" Chabad, Hasidic tradition in the racially divided Crown Heights area of Brooklyn and saw the world through the lens of that community's narrative for years, but in 2001, encounters with Christians and Muslims transformed me. While I am still a Chasidic Jew and a Chabad Rabbi, I have learned to see the world through others' eyes. I run a Jewish-Muslim-Christian anti-prejudice organization in Sydney called Together for Humanity.

Multi-faith teams from the organization I lead work with students to demonstrate how we can stand together and collaborate on our shared values. While we spend time raising awareness of both subtle and blatant prejudices and teaching children how to deal with difference, still my work has involved a lot of "being nice." Our work got some praise in my community, but I suspect the perspective was that the real priority was isolating our "enemies" and engaging the "moderates," which to some people means those who agree with us.

I began this article with my confrontation of Bishop Shakur to illustrate the strong ties we have to "our own." Recognizing my own ties helps me accept the ties our Muslim and Arab friends also have to "their own." One Imam who heard my question seemed to become less available to me after that day. Some would argue that the irreconcilable differences mean that dialogue between Muslims and Jews is a waste of time. I disagree. I suggest that we need to "get real" and accept each other as is, instead of focusing on how we want each other to be. We also need to allow for the difficulty both sides have in working with the "friends of the enemy."

The concern about implied endorsement of evil has merit. Halacha forbids *chanifa*, a word that literally denotes flattery but also applies to showing honor to a wicked person. It would be wrong for a synagogue to honor a philanthropist who is known to be an abusive husband because that would imply endorsement of his behavior. A Christian minister expressed his reservation to me about participating in an educational anti-prejudice program delivered by Jews, Muslims, and Christians because of what Muslims were doing to Christians in some countries. I argued that Muslims in Australia are not responsible for the actions of people halfway across the world.

Some people will agree that not all Muslims are bad but then ask, "Why don't we hear unqualified condemnation of Hamas and Hezbollah?" After Israel's invasion of Gaza, the shoe was on the other foot. Muslims who worked with me in the Together for Humanity Foundation were facing pressure from people in their community. *"Did Zalman condemn*

Zalman Kastel is national director of the Together for Humanity Foundation (togetherforhumanity.org.au) and a rabbi based in Sydney, Australia. He is married and is the father of five children. He enjoys sketching and learning Arabic.

Israel?! Doesn't this prove that this is all a waste of time?

As interfaith workers, we realized that pronouncing judgments on the actions of people in the conflict zone could jeopardize the fragile bridges we were building. Still, we needed to craft a meaningful position that affirmed the sacredness of life, justice, universal standards, and laws. We needed to express deep concern about violent conflict. Such a statement falls short of the unequivocal support many would demand. Nonetheless, I suggested to a Muslim colleague, such a statement is sometimes the best thing that can be realistically expected when people and their communities sincerely hold different views and are tied to opposite sides in a conflict.

Conscience vs. Conformity

CONSIDER THIS IMAGE: A YOUNG MAN IN HIS TWENTIES HAS JUST REALIZED THAT HIS brother has been harmed, perhaps killed. Worse still, he could have prevented it but failed to muster the courage to stand up for him unreservedly. The young man is the biblical Reuben, who wanted to save his brother Joseph. But when Reuben is faced with a mob all in agreement to kill the "dreamer," he feebly suggests they not "kill with our own hands, instead throw him into a pit where he will die without us technically committing murder."

Reuben returns to find that Joseph is not in the pit. His response is one of searing shame and fear: "the boy is gone, and I, where do I come?" Samson Raphael Hirsh explains this as, "I can find no place where I can rest quietly, where I can hold my head up, everywhere, everyone will avoid me..." He felt himself to blame for not having more energetically acted to oppose and prevent what happened.

To be an involved Jew who is engaging with Muslim and Arab communities invites scrutiny. Like Reuben, there is the internal critic questioning the morality of our positions as well as the deep need for belonging that tempts us to conform and comply.

I spoke about my experience of this tension from the pulpit at the end of 2008. I told of my experiences on my recent visit to Israel and the West Bank. Here's the story I told: Arriving in the holy city of Hebron, Khalil to its Palestinian residents, we saw a trailer where an old Rosh Yeshiva (head of a Jewish school) was murdered by Arabs. When the Israeli prime minister came for a shiva call (a traditional visit to comfort the mourners), he offered the widow money. She threw it back in his face. Instead she demanded and got permission to build a permanent building there to replace the trailers.

Our tour group was shown a kettle riddled with bullet marks: "The kettle was put at the corner of one of the trailers to show appreciation for the soldiers with some hot coffee. One night a terrorist came and shot at the trailers. Miraculously all the bullets hit the kettle. The kettle is now known as Nes-Café" (*nes* means a sign or miracle in Hebrew).

As we stood at the top of a hill, we heard the Muslim call for prayer. Our guide remarked in Aramaic, "*hanei kalbin dachatzifin*," which means "impudent dogs."

We visited a house converted to a museum that told the story of the brutal Arab massacre of Hebron's Jews in 1929. We saw the photos and heard the horrific details. We then heard about a group of women and children who came into this house in 1979 in defiance of the Israeli government, which did not want Jews in Hebron at the time. They were left there without water or electricity; when a woman had to give birth, she was told, "you can leave but you cannot come back."

Then we were invited to pray that G-d avenge the victims of 1929 and by implication the victims of Arab violence today. It did not feel right to me. I wanted to pray for safety, for Jews to be able to live in Hebron in peace. The whole group said a prayer for revenge and I softly recited *Tehilim* chapter twenty, *Hashem help us*. I did not dare voice my thoughts: How could I be so insensitive in the face of such atrocities? Whose side was I on?

A very pleasant young mother of five welcomed our group into her tiny home as part of our tour. She was one of twenty families who had moved into a three-floor house the settlers call



The author with three other lead educators in Australia's Together for Humanity Foundation: (left to right) Rabbi Zalman Kastel, Jarrod McKenna, indigenous elder Gapany Gaykamangu, and Mohamed Dukuly. Kastel writes below that Dukuly "explains to the critics that his interaction with me has increased my empathy for and understanding of Palestinian suffering.... He also talks about how his attitude toward Jews has dramatically changed by working alongside Jews" (page 71).



Jewish, Muslim, and Christian students take part in Together for Humanity programs. Top: students present a skit at a regional interfaith dialogue attended by the Foreign Minister of Australia and delegates from Asia Pacific nations in Perth, 2009.

"Beit Hashalom." Her beautiful, calm, eight-month-old baby was looking at his toys and at us. There were wires hanging from the ceiling; the electricity would turn off suddenly and then just come back on. I asked her how the kids did homework. She said she got them to do it immediately when they came home.

The guide told us that the previous week Arabs threw rocks at Jews after *Tefila* on Friday night. "We are not Christians, we don't turn the other cheek," he said defiantly. "Our kids threw rocks at some Arabs."

The tour guide gave me a feedback form. I wondered: What should I say? Should I say what I think? What do I think anyway?

I wrote my name. I wrote that it was an unforgettable and valuable experience, although I meant that in an informative rather than inspiring sense. I reluctantly wrote that I felt uncomfortable with all the emphasis on revenge, with the chutzpa "dogs" comment about a Muslim prayer call. I felt torn. Did I not see what they are up against? I ended up writing something about the viciousness they face, alongside my comments. I gave it to him folded in half: my heavily qualified protest, my near silence. He opened it in front of me. I felt uncomfortable. "If we had a few hours, we could have a great discussion," I said weakly.

Condemning your own is very hard. I am concerned about the degree of comfort with which some Jews in Australia respond to civilian casualties in Gaza. This is a different debate from the one about whether this massive loss of life and grief is an unavoidable and justified cost for defending the innocent of Sderot and Ashkelon. It is about whether it is right for Jews in Australia to minimize the significance of the suffering of all the Arabs in Gaza by judging them as culpable for the actions of Hamas on the basis of their failure to prevent them or even for their assumed support of them. (The coercive tactics of Hamas in "getting support" by attacking opponents would also need to be considered when we blame Gazans "because they voted for them.")

I can't help but think of the Genesis story about the abduction and rape of Jacob's daughter Dina by the prince of the city of Sh'chem, and about her brothers' rampage. The rape is followed by a marriage proposal. Dina's outraged brothers propose to the ruler of the city that all the men of Sh'chem circumcise themselves so that they and the Israelites can intermarry and become a single people. When Sh'chem's men comply and become weak from the operation, two of her brothers kill every man in the city.

Maimonides justifies the killing on the basis of the failure of the townsmen to bring the perpetrators to justice. Ramban explains it differently and rejects the argument of collective culpability. Of course the people of the city are responsible to establish courts, but if they fail to establish justice they are not to be killed for this! We cannot hold people responsible for passively not fulfilling the mitzvah. Certainly, we cannot punish people for not adhering to the idea of "do not fear any man" in ensuring justice. We cannot punish someone with death for not turning himself into a policeman to judge his master.

There are different levels of culpability. Certainly if we see injustice we should not be bystanders, but if we fail—regardless of whether this is out of cowardice, disagreement about the application of justice, or tribalism—this is not a capital crime. Common sense suggests that there is a difference between the murderers and those who passively allow violence to happen.

Building Empathy

I DO NOT HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS. WHEN WE HURT AND THERE SEEMS TO BE NO RECOURSE, no justice, we feel like retaliating against the collective population of those who hurt us. Of course we must defend our own, but let us not be indifferent to the suffering of others, especially that of noncombatants.

The same Sidra dealing with Dina, Vayishlach, begins with Jacob feeling very afraid as the hostile Esau approaches him with four hundred armed men. Jacob is afraid he may be killed and afraid he may kill others. The midrash explains he was afraid of killing Esau's men, who may have been coerced into fighting him. An amazing construct: innocent combatants!

One of the people I most admire is my Liberian friend Mohamed Dukuly. He shared some lessons with me that he learned from his experience of civil war. One insight that hit home for me was his pointing out to me that when one party to a conflict tries to minimize the (continued on page 71)

Culture

BOOKS | FILM | MUSIC

[BOOKS]

Can Borders Bring Peace?

POLITICS AND VIOLENCE IN ISRAEL/PALESTINE: DEMOCRACY VERSUS MILITARY RULE

by Lev Luis Grinberg

Routledge, 2009

Review by Oren Yiftachel

IT WILL NOT BE NEWS FOR MOST readers that the Israeli-Palestinian peace process is gripped by a profound deadlock. Lev Grinberg's new book offers a welcome and timely analysis of the impasse.

Grinberg's main argument points to the failure of all key players in the conflict, and particularly Israel, to create definable "political spaces," without which peace or reconciliation cannot be achieved. The main tool for creating such spaces is the creation of clear and firm borders. This would allow three such spaces to develop—an Israeli space, a Palestinian space, and a joint space—where political competition would replace violence as a form of conflict management.

Violence and politics, Grinberg warns, are mutually exclusive. He argues that Israel's "blurring" of the borders, both geographically and legally, has seriously undermined the possibility of democratization and decolonization necessary for moving toward peaceful coexistence. Grinberg builds a theoretical "matrix" that shows how violence, democracy, party politics, economy, civil society, and militarization are interdependent. Violence

disrupts the movement of the matrix toward democratic politics, militarizes ethnic relations, and thus closes political space.

Grinberg argues that the problem was not always so profound. During Yitzhak Rabin's term as prime minister (1992–1995), for example, Israel was potentially capable of establishing geographical and legal borders. Rabin's assassination was the only way possible for the enemies of peace and democracy to halt the process. The insistence of Rabin's successors to maintain the blurriness of the borders has seriously eroded any attempt to decolonize the West Bank and democratize both Israeli and Palestinian societies. This has led both to the rise of Hamas to political prominence and to the pivotal role of religious and nationalist zealots in Israeli politics.

Grinberg observes that in response to the stalemate (which entails the continued blurring of borders and empowerment of the settlers) and to the looming risk of Israeli occupation becoming irreversible, Yasser Arafat was forced to use violence and turn a blind eye to Islamic terror, in order to prise open Palestinian political space. This has had disastrous consequences. The violence further closed the

Israeli political space by weakening pro-peace elements, as well as the indifferent moderate middle classes, whose interests were swept aside by the growing militarization of Israeli politics. The peace process, Grinberg argues, has since become an imagined ritual, enveloped by the harsh realities of military domination and geopolitical interests. This has been augmented by the acute imbalance of power that enabled Israel, with the not-so-innocent backing of the American empire, to dictate matters unilaterally.

Grinberg reiterates how the blurring of the borders (and hence the continuing colonization of the Palestinians) has fractured the internal Israeli political space by driving a growing wedge between the state's Jewish and Palestinian citizens. He reminds us that Rabin was the first and only Israeli leader to rely on Arab members of parliament for his coalition, thereby creating the foundation of a common, "non-tribal" Israeli citizenship.

But in the decade and a half following Rabin's assassination, all Jewish leaders have actively or passively campaigned against the inclusion of Arab citizens in the Israeli political space, and the chasm

CREATIVE COMMONS (LEFT TO RIGHT): GPO/SHV, AMIR FAUZI/SHV, EUBAHIM, JOHN JOSEY, LOOKING FOR POETRY



between the two communities has grown alarmingly. This has paid handsome returns for most Jewish ethnic leaders, who rallied peripheral communities such as Mizrahim, Russians, and ultra-orthodox around the anti-Arab cause. Hence the lack of an external border has deepened internal ethnic borders and strengthened what he terms Israel's "tribal politics."

The book takes the reader through a detailed (and painful) history of Israeli political struggles during the last two decades. Grinberg perceptively analyzes the role of key leaders such as Peres, Netanyahu, Barak, and Sharon, correctly linking their actions to structural factors involving the Israeli military and Jewish economic elites. The delicate cooperation between Israeli militarism and economism has managed to preserve the status of the powerful Israeli war machine and at the same time accelerate the globalization of economy and society. In this context he shows how, without the charisma of Rabin's leadership, the vested conservative military and economic interests have swayed all Israeli leaders (with the partial and contradictory exception of Ariel Sharon) from reversing the colonization of the occupied Palestinian territories.

Grinberg is somber about prospects for peace in the face of profound Palestinian fragmentation and the depth of the economic and political gaps. He notes:

In the current conflict, there are no victors: both Israelis and Palestinians lose ... in this situation Israeli youth lose their reason for living in their own country and the material gains and military success lose their meaning.... Israelis and Palestinians deserve some positive visions of their future.

In his own attempt to craft a positive vision, Grinberg calls for the institutionalization of political spaces, aided by international intervention, and a new confederation-like political design that would go beyond the standard (and arguably defunct) two-state solution. In such a setting, violence would be replaced by political competition, promoting decolonization and democratization.

Despite its many insights, Grinberg's book is not without some weaknesses. First, it underplays the colonial nature of the Israeli "ethnocratic" regime stretching between Jordan and the Sea (see my 2006 book *Ethnocracy* for a discussion of this topic). While Grinberg does note the need to decolonize Palestinian territories, he rarely refers to Palestinian politics as working under violent colonial settings. Consequently, Israel is portrayed as merely blurring its borders. This account conceals the critical fact that borders remain closed for Palestinians while wide open for Jews. Hence, the Green Line is not a border but a colonial line of racist control, with Israel ruling on both sides with the exception of small pockets of ghettoized Palestinian "autonomy" in the colonized territories.

Second, Grinberg focuses on the need to end the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza as a prerequisite for peace but generally overlooks the injuring legacy of the 1948 Nakba in the ongoing conflict between the two nations. Hence, if Israel clearly defines its borders and decolonizes the territories, it will still have to deal with the polarization between Jewish and Palestinian citizens, and the rights and demands of millions of external refugees, especially the right of return. These factors are largely absent from Grinberg's analysis.

Grinberg appears to somewhat glorify Rabin's political project. Peace-oriented readers should be reminded that Rabin never committed to the creation of a Palestinian state or to a full Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories. Rabin allowed all settlements to remain in the Oslo accords and began the bypass roads policy that legitimized their existence. He was also a firm advocate of Israel's Jewish nature, and he promoted a militarized, rather than political, approach to peace. "Reconciliation" under this paradigm would mean, as Rabin famously remarked, that "Arafat would fight Hamas without Bagatz and B'Tselem" (that is, without recourse to high court or human rights standards).

The above points of debate, however, do not in any way detract from the important contribution made by Grinberg's work. Anybody wishing to understand in depth the stalemate in Israel/Palestine,

including Obama's frustrations, is well advised to read this perceptive and insightful book. ■

Oren Yiftachel is professor of political geography at Ben-Gurion University, Beersheba. He is active in several civil society organizations, including B'Tselem, Adva, and the Regional Council of Unrecognized Bedouin Villages.

ZIONISM'S BOUNDARIES

IMPOSSIBLE PEACE: ISRAEL/PALESTINE SINCE 1989

by Mark LeVine, Zed Books, 2009

THE MAKING OF MODERN ISRAEL, 1948-1967

by Leslie Stein, Polity, 2009

POLITICS AND VIOLENCE IN ISRAEL/PALESTINE: DEMOCRACY VERSUS MILITARY RULE

by Lev Luis Grinberg, Routledge, 2009

ISRAEL AND PALESTINE: REAPPRAISALS, REVISIONS, REFUTATIONS

by Avi Shlaim, Verso, 2009

Review by Antony Loewenstein

THE QUESTION OF ISRAEL'S democratic features is as old as the country itself. Can a Zionist state, with Jerusalem as the "undivided, eternal capital of the Jewish state and the Jewish people," in the words of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, ever satisfy the Arab population? Is Zionism capable of understanding the wishes and needs of a Palestinian people under occupation in the West Bank and under siege in Gaza?

Expanding colonies across Judea and Samaria are only supported by a minority of the Israeli population, yet decades of an American-initiated "peace process" have led to around 500,000 Jewish settlers on occupied territory.

Opponents of this creeping trend are labeled traitors to the Zionist cause. *The Jerusalem Post* columnist Caroline Glick wrote in March that protests against Jewish expansion in East Jerusalem were "anti-Semitic," and "leftist" media had conspired to ignore the Jew haters' "stoking violence against innocent Jews for their



crime of lawfully living where they choose.”

The question of defining the boundaries of the Zionist state remains unre-

undetermined by the other.”

The writer doesn’t acknowledge the growing move within Palestinian society to

Palestinian civil society and the political elites begin to coordinate their tactics and understand that a “one person, one vote” campaign could be highly effective internationally, how will Zionists who oppose its truly democratic nature look? We shouldn’t underestimate the power of a global solidarity movement to strip Israeli Jews of their privilege, not by force but by moral and political power.

The global shifts in public opinion toward reexamining the real state of Israeli

has killed civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan, "certainly a number multiplied by some huge multiple compared to the number of civilians that were killed as Israel pursued terrorists in Gaza." If Israel must be protected from transparent investigations, logic dictates that most Western nations should similarly close ranks against a meddling United Nations.

Israel is no longer a protected species in global forums.

This argument is made throughout Mark Levine's small book, *Impossible Peace*. Levine, an associate professor of modern Middle Eastern history, culture and Islamic Studies at the University of California, Irvine, (as well as a longtime contributing editor at *Tikkuri*), has written a work that is refreshingly free of dogma. He destroys the inherent illusions of the Oslo years. Perhaps most significantly, he outlines the complicity of many Western-funded NGOs in the continuation of the occupation.

Although countless organizations provided essential services to desperate

Israel" over the last decades and the younger, prominent Jewish bloggers who refused to offer Israel uncritical support during the recent Gaza conflict. These acts were unthinkable even a decade ago.

Shlaim's gradual disillusionment is perhaps the most moving. A proud Zionist, his aching reminded me of *Haaretz* columnist Bradley Burston, writing in a widely circulated article in February entitled, "I envy the people who hate Israel." He argued that, "unable to beat the forces who want to see Israel as one of the world's primary pariah states, it has resolved to join them" (the rogue states) through building more settlements, shunning once-friendly allies, and turning on critical voices.

Israel and Palestine is the kind of book that reminds the reader that only blind believers don't change or evolve their position on the Middle East crisis. It's the sign of political maturity that events on the ground in the last years have caused profound disquiet amongst liberal Zionists, the bulk of diaspora support for Israel. When these people start to question their loyalty, the Jewish state will truly have an existential crisis on its hands. ■

Antony Loewenstein is an Australian freelance journalist and author of the best-selling book, My Israel Question, published by Melbourne University Press.

HEBREW TONES IN THE BLUES

A FINE ROMANCE: JEWISH SONGWRITERS,
AMERICAN SONGS

by David Lehman, Schocken, 2009

Review by Rodger Kamenetz

DAVID LEHMAN BRINGS A poet's fine ear to *A Fine Romance*, a book of tunes and cultural attunement that moves lyrically and slips in and out of its questions as deftly as the lyrics of the Jewish songwriters he loves. They all mingle here: Jerome Kern, Irving Berlin, the Gershwins (Ira and George), Harold Arlen, Richard Rodgers, and many more, moving in and out of the narrative and inflecting

one another like offbeat rhymes full of chutzpah and brilliance, pizzazz, jazz and nostalgia. This book, part of the Nextbook series of Jewish Encounters, is, as the subtitle indicates, ostensibly a contemplation of the well-known fact that in the period from 1920 to 1950 when the great American songbook was composed and highly popular, many of those who were instrumental (in every sense) were Jews.

That begs many questions, namely what is a Jew, and what is the difference, and how about Cole Porter? But while all such questions get touched on the way a jazz drummer brushes his cymbals, Lehman's approach is singularly sentimental in the core sense—that is, the book is about how the music makes us feel, it is Lehman's fine romance with fine romance, and though there's lots of learning here, there's no heavy-handedness: this is a chrestomathy of loved tunes and musical moments, evoked casually, but with "wide authority and tact," as John Ashbery did say.

The Jewish angle is toyed with and teased, like the famous irony that the two great American classics, "White Christmas" and "Easter Parade" were both written by Berlin, an immigrant Jew, and that the powerful pieties of his third patriotic classic, "God Bless America," were penned by the same poet who had little use for religion as such. Did Berlin make Christmas and Easter safe for Jews by taking out Christ, and substituting snow and an Easter parade? And I was surprised to learn that another son of Jewish immigrants, Mel Tormé, wrote the music in 1945 for Nat King Cole's standard Christmas song that begins with "chestnuts roasting on an open fire."

"You could argue," Lehman writes, "that Christmas became a secular holiday thanks to the efforts of Irving Berlin, who gave 'White Christmas' to a fearful nation in a state of total war in 1942. That was some Christmas present."

Most of the lyricists and composers he writes about were second-generation children of immigrants, eager to assimilate and become as American as possible. Lehman's

search for any signs of Jewishness in their work is a subtle operation, suitable for a poet's ear. He hears Jewishness in the mix of learning and whimsy in Ira Gershwin's "Isn't It a Pity":

My nights were sour
Spent with Schopenhauer

And he nicely evokes the "irrepressible, self-lacerating humor" that enters Lorenz Hart's "It Never Entered My Mind," a sad lyric, and makes it more poignant:

You have what I lack myself,
And now I even have to scratch my back myself.

Is this Jewish or not Jewish? There's no point in arguing too strenuously because one of Lehman's real points is that the intermingling of Jewish and American is so thoroughgoing that it's pretty hard to disentangle one from the other.

The issue gets even more complex when one adds in W.E.B. DuBois's claim that African Americans are the true archetypal Americans. Certainly since I live in New Orleans, I have to agree that jazz and blues are the only truly American music. Lehman notes the affinity between Jewish melancholy and African American blues, an affinity sufficient to engender a complex culture of exchange between the two groups. He tiptoes carefully through the minefield of who exactly appropriated what from whom,

acknowledging the great debt of these mostly Jewish Tin Pan Alley masters to African American jazz, and yet insisting that African Americans borrowed from that other great songbook, the Torah, especially from the story of Exodus, to write their own first liberation lyrics in the era of slavery:

Go down, Moses,
Way down in Egypt's land;
Tell old Pharaoh
Let my people go!

The interplay of black and Jewish plays out in multiple ways, trading back and





A Short History of the Jews

Michael Brenner

Translated by Jeremiah Riemer

"With his characteristically deft touch, Michael Brenner has produced a sweeping and riveting account of Jewish history from Biblical times until the present day. This slender volume is lively, engaging, and a pleasure to read."
—John M. Efron, University of California, Berkeley

Cloth \$29.95 978-0-691-14351-4



The Rebbe

The Life and Afterlife of Menachem Mendel Schneerson

Samuel Heilman &
Menachem Friedman

"Brilliant, well-researched, and sure to be controversial, *The Rebbe* is the most important biography of Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson ever to appear. Samuel Heilman and Menachem Friedman have produced a landmark study of Chabad, religious messianism, and one of the greatest spiritual figures of the twentieth century."
—Jonathan D. Sarna, author of *American Judaism*

Cloth \$29.95 978-0-691-13888-6



PRINCETON
UNIVERSITY
PRESS

press.princeton.edu

forth from "Go Down, Moses" of the "Negro spiritual" to "Old Man River" of Gershwin. He hears this interplay as a "distinctive trait of the popular songs written by Jewish songwriters," celebrating the songs' resulting "black-and-blue" edge, their foretaste of loss in the midst of joy:

For example, the mixing up of anticipatory pleasure and loss animates an Irving Berlin simile in "Cheek to Cheek": It's a curious compliment that you pay a girl when you tell her that she makes your worries "Vanish like a gambler's lucky streak." What kind of luck is that ringing you? You may argue that the cantor wailing in the morning prayers has his musical affinity with the saxophonist in the smoky cellar—and what's more, that the saxophonist may be playing a song written by the cantor's son.

Lehman wisely refuses to resolve the issue of who took what from whom. Neither does he resolve the larger issue of what makes a song Jewish or not—he simply throws the questions into play musically and allows them to reverberate throughout his book.

Lehman listens deeply for the Jewish note, not only in the lyrics, but in the music. Where else but here could you discover that Gershwin's classic song of skepticism about the Bible, "It Ain't Necessarily So," sung by the character Sportin' Life in *Porgy and Bess*, actually has musical roots in the blessing before reading the Torah, *Barchu et adonai hamvorach*.

Here resonance takes on a deeper sense. Playing the tune of one against the other, one hears Hebrew tones in Gershwin's bluesy sound. A riff of pure skepticism played against the blessing for the Torah sets up a transformative resonance that simultaneously acknowledges his Jewish roots while cutting them. It's a marvelous discovery, and these sorts of delights are scattered all through the book.

There are moments when the narrative seems to loop into nostalgic time warps, or get lost in constant shuffling—anyone looking for a linear history of the subject should probably go elsewhere. But in exchange Lehman shares his deeper un-

derstanding: song is for pleasure after all, and, if I can quote some non-Jewish jazz royalty in Duke Ellington, "it don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing." Lehman has that swing. ■

Rodger Kamenetz is a poet and the author of *The History of Last Night's Dream* and has a book forthcoming in the fall, *Burnt Books: Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav and Franz Kafka*.

MEDITATIONS ON ACTIVISM

MOSAIC ORPHEUS by Peter Dale Scott

McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009

Review by Alan Williamson

THE LAST QUARTER OF THE twentieth century was not the strongest period for American political poetry. True, the identity-experiences of many minorities entered the poetic dialogue almost for the first time. But few poets attempted, as Lowell and Ginsberg had, to speak for, to, and about the polity as a whole.

Peter Dale Scott was one of the few. A former Canadian diplomat, and a celebrated writer about conspiracies and the dark underside of American politics, he brought unusual credentials to the task. And, indeed, his landmark book-length poem *Coming to Jakarta* was triggered by his inability to publish, in standard academic venues, some fairly incontrovertible evidence about American involvement in the coup and massacre in Indonesia in 1965. But as the poem evolved, it became an extended meditation on how political activism and political impotence mesh with aesthetic, familial, and religious life commitments. No other poet I know of has treated this subject so poignantly and honestly.

Mosaic Orpheus is the latest in a series of books extending this project. The political material has become ever more chancy, scary, and ambiguous. The long poem "The Tao of 9/11," if I am reading it correctly, entertains the possibility that the Chechen bombings in Moscow, the war in Kosovo,

and the September 11 attacks were all encouraged by forces in the international drug milieu, for the simple reason that there are

Two kinds of businesses:
those which flourish from peace
and the strengthening of law
and those which require the opposite

zones of incessant chaos

Scott wonders out loud whether our reluctance to believe such things makes us "like the good Germans / not thinking about who caused the Reichstag fire." But he himself doubts, remembering the betrayals and inscrutable motives of informants he had relied on in the past.

In a world where such untouchable (and unprovable) influences may underlie the obvious fact "of increasing superwealth / and declining average income," Scott feels "Uncertain as always / whether this republic is past saving." As he becomes increasingly disillusioned about the possibilities of institutional politics, he is more and more drawn toward religion and (in "Secular Prayer" and some of his recent prose) toward faith-based utopian hopes. In this, as he well knows, he resembles some of the



great ancestors he often invokes—the Dante of *Paradiso*, Milton, Pound. Scott's religion is of a peculiarly attractive kind, rooted in Buddhist meditation but reaching out empathetically toward his wife's

Judaism, his childhood Christianity, and Islam. I suspect many readers of *Tikkun*, like me, will be delighted to encounter it, after the militant secularism that afflicted the Left during the Bush years. Whether or not we believe it can transform politics, it certainly cannot hurt our political behavior. Scott's lovely poems about meditation ("Breathing Exercise" and "Commuting to the Land of Medicine Buddha") are also important, it seems to me, because they take American Buddhist poetry a step beyond the earlier, Gary Snyder tradition, in concentrating less on moments of enlightenment than on the troubled Western ego

struggling, breath by breath, with distraction and psychological fears.

Finally, I wouldn't want to leave this book without noting that some of the best poems, from a purely lyrical point of view, are the more personal ones, that don't try to transcend the facts of aging and loss. "Pelican" is a small masterpiece, the dying bird's

small eye open
blinking slowly once or twice

not for terror
but in some bardo where
there is much to contemplate

a distance making it
closer to us near death
than was possible in life

Other very fine poems of this kind include the elegies for Scott's first wife, Maylie, the two sonnets for Raquel Scherr, and "Occitanian Spring." Scott remains, above all, a humane poet. Whether we see him grieving about loss, fidgeting on his meditation cushion, or bewildered by his own conspiracy theories, his deepest subject is always how to live. ■

Alan Williamson is Distinguished Professor of English at the University of California, Davis. His most recent books are The Pattern More Complicated: New and Selected Poems (Chicago) and Westernness: A Meditation (Virginia).

[FILM]

SUSPENSE, MALAISE, AND THE MOVIES

THE GHOST WRITER,
Summit Entertainment, 2010

THE WHITE RIBBON,
Sony Pictures Classics, 2009

SHUTTER ISLAND,
Paramount Pictures, 2010

Review by David Sterritt

SUSPENSEFUL MOVIES HAVE always been popular, but moviegoers (and critics) use the word "suspense" so automatically that its original meaning—the state of being literally, physically suspended—tends to be overlooked. While we get

much pleasure from suspense films, the most memorable ones make us uncomfortable as well, reminding us how precarious and unpredictable life can be, how the things we value sometimes seem to hang by a thread that could snap at any time. This is why serious filmmakers often use suspenseful stories to explore their ideas. By placing characters in situations charged with uncertainty and malaise, they hope to shake us into more acute awareness of the problems we all face and the solutions we need to find.

Current releases by three thoughtful filmmakers rely on suspense for a major part of their effectiveness, and their distinctive approaches show how adaptable the genre is to changing times. The one with the most old-fashioned flair is *The Ghost Writer*, directed by Roman Polanski, who had almost finished it when he was jailed last September on a 1978 arrest warrant for unlawful intercourse with a minor. *The Ghost Writer* is a relatively gentle thriller, suggesting that Polanski has mellowed since the days when he specialized in disquieting and sometimes violent pictures such as *Rosemary's Baby* (1968) and *Chinatown* (1974). Yet the film seems almost as personal as his 2002 drama *The Pianist*, which was partly based on his own memories of being a Polish Jewish refugee struggling for survival in Nazi-ruled Warsaw.

Ewan McGregor plays the title character of *The Ghost Writer*, an author hired to replace a scribe who has mysteriously died while helping a retired British prime minister, Adam Lang (Pierce Brosnan), finish his memoirs. Parallels between Lang and Polanski are hard to miss. Polanski has been unable to enter the United States since he fled the country rather than face trial thirty-one years ago, while Lang is unable to leave his temporary retreat in the United States, so badly has he infuriated many of his compatriots back home. Even in America he has trouble avoiding British demonstrators yelling catcalls and waving signboards with insulting slogans. Is this a natural element of the plot, which is based on Robert Harris's novel *The Ghost*, or is Polanski making a sardonic joke at his own—and America's, and Britain's—expense?

Critics have come down on both sides of the question, but this isn't what makes the movie interesting. Its most revealing aspects are political, since the fictional Adam Lang clearly resembles the real-life Tony Blair, one of George W. Bush's chief enablers and accomplices in the Iraq war, and the new ghostwriter comes upon information pointing to clandestine ties between Lang, the Central Intelligence Agency, and secret policies of prisoner abuse and torture. *The Ghost Writer* doesn't delve very deeply into this—that would carry too many commercial risks for a movie of this size and scope—but its glimpses of government conspiracy are far bolder than the action-film heroics of *Green Zone* and the apolitical exploits of *The Hurt Locker*. Polanski hasn't lost the skill he showed in *Chinatown* for blending suspense-movie chills with sociopolitical themes.

Austrian filmmaker Michael Haneke is another suspense specialist who appears to have mellowed lately; compared with shockers like *Funny Games* and *The Piano Teacher*, his Oscar-nominated mystery *The White Ribbon* is practically genteel, unfolding its story in nostalgic black-and-white and keeping most of the nastiness off-screen. Set in a German village just before World War I, it chronicles a series of awful crimes that profoundly upset the villagers, who can't understand why the patriarchal forces of Protestant religion and imperial government have come under attack. Accumulating evidence points to involvement by the town's children, which further agitates the community, and we gradually realize that these youngsters are the generation that will become Hitler's enthusiastic



followers a couple of decades hence.

Like many of Haneke's films, *The White Ribbon* is open to multiple readings. The title refers to a piece of cloth that the pastor (Burghart Klaussner) makes his children wear to remind them of the purity they're supposed to preserve, and of the shame they're supposed to feel when they don't. Do the town's youngsters rebel because of oppressive parenting and unbending religion? Is evil built into human nature, as *Lord of the Flies* theorized decades ago? Or are historical forces to blame, affecting everyday life in unseen but insidious ways? Haneke never tells us, and your response to *The White Ribbon* may depend on whether you find it a thought-provoking parable or a philosophical cop-out. I find it some of both, but its bittersweet images haunt my memory.

Martin Scorsese isn't famous for suspense pictures, but *Shutter Island* is a flat-out thriller, complete with a third-act twist that throws

everything you've seen into a drastically new light. It centers on two 1950s police officers (Leonardo DiCaprio and Mark Ruffalo) assigned to investigate the inexplicable disappearance of a patient from a hospital for the criminally insane located on a desolate, escape-proof island controlled by authorities whose agendas may be the opposite of what they claim. I read Dennis Lehane's eponymous novel long before Scorsese's adaptation premiered, and I thought that knowing the story's secrets would weaken the movie's impact. In one way, I was right—the last half hour seemed overlong, talky, and unsurprising. But in other ways, I was wrong. Not having to figure out the plot left me free to enjoy the film as a pure atmosphere piece,

drenched in menacing moods and omens of ill fortune.

More important, I could concentrate on the subtexts that Scorsese draws out of Lehane's novel. Although various kinds of insanity are ubiquitous in the film, the most disturbing ones are implicitly connected to the cultural paranoia of the 1950s era—fear of nuclear war, of the Soviet Union and China, of communists subverting our government and hiding under our beds. We live in a time of terror again today, much of it manipulated and even fabricated by reactionary powers for their own political and financial gain. Scorsese has never been an overtly political filmmaker, but he's an intelligent artist with an insightful grasp of contemporary culture. The suspense of *Shutter Island* is as meaningful as it is enthralling. ■

David Sterritt, Tikkun's film critic, is chairman of the National Society of Film Critics and professor emeritus at Long Island University. He was film critic of The Christian Science Monitor for decades. His latest books are *The B List* and *The Honeymooners*.

ISRAELI CINEMA CONTINUES TO SHINE

AJAMI, Inosan Productions, 2010
FOR MY FATHER, Film Movement, 2010

by Ralph Seliger

FOR A COUNTRY SO SMALL, Israel has remarkable film and television production industries. Before the nomination of *Ajami* for this year's Oscar in the best foreign-language film category, *Waltz with Bashir* (last year's Israeli contender) pioneered with its use of animation on a serious subject. And HBO's renowned series, *In Treatment*, is an American adaptation of Israeli television's *BeTipul*.

Those of us who have patronized the Israel Film Festival—staged in New York, Los Angeles, and Miami for twenty-four years now—or local Jewish film festivals, have had the opportunity to see the full range of Israel's cinematic output,

including feature films, documentaries, and television productions. Reflective of Israel's turbulent history, most of its celebrated films relate to internal Arab-Jewish tensions and Israel's wars. Powerful markers in this history include *Hamsin* (1982), *Avanti Popolo* (1986), *Kippur* (2000), and the Oscar-nominated *Beyond the Walls* (1984).

Recent films add a religious dimension, such as Joseph Cedar's *Time of Favor* (2000) about a conflict between students' devotion to a charismatic rabbi and the laws of the state, sparked by a terrorist plot to destroy the Al-Aksa Mosque in Jerusalem. Among contemporary issues earnestly probed within ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) communities are the status of women (*Kadosh*, 1998), sexual desire (*Bruriah*, 2009), and homosexuality (*Eyes Wide Open*, 2009). *Yossi & Jagger* (2002) did not have a religious theme, but broke ground for its depiction of a love affair between two young male soldiers.

Ajami, a film that includes more dialogue in Arabic (Israel's second official language) than in Hebrew, reflecting the

would have been a stronger contender than the grim war drama, *Beaufort*, which lost out to Austria's *The Counterfeiters* (a searing Holocaust film).

Ajami

BECAUSE OF THE BRUTALITY AND hopelessness depicted in *Ajami*, it is hard to sit through. It's not that we don't sympathize with some (or even most) of the characters, but on the level of inter-group dynamics, hardly anybody—Arab or Jew—comes off smelling of roses. Still, most viewers should find it thought-provoking.

And it is significant that the codirectors are an Israeli Arab and an Israeli Jew (the Arab co-director, Scandar Copti, also acts in a memorable role). Remarkably, most of the roles were played by non-actors with unscripted dialogue. The utterly believable way in which they pulled this off testifies to the ingenuity of the directors.

The editing process took an entire year. It was shot in sequence and then reworked with some scenes that go back in time. Reminiscent of John Travolta's second coming in *Pulp Fiction*, this technique helps us more fully appreciate one character in particular after he dies.

The portrayal of conflicts and social divisions reveal levels of complexity that we don't normally consider regarding Israelis and Arabs. Fault lines divide not only Arabs and Jews, but also Muslims and Christians, Israeli Arabs (citizens of Israel who usually also regard themselves as Palestinians) and illegal

Palestinian workers from the West Bank, and Bedouins from the south and urban Arabs, not to mention people from different economic classes.

Ajami is an actual place—a rough Arab neighborhood in Jaffa, a mainly Arab city that was incorporated into Tel Aviv in 1954 and now has a mixed population. The film also touches upon Bedouin clan violence and the inability of Israeli (Jewish) police to get along with Arab citizens, and vice versa. There is only one substantial West Bank Palestinian character, a sympathetic

young man who works illegally in an Arab-owned restaurant while desperate to raise money for a bone marrow transplant for his ailing mother.

Characters are forced by circumstance (usually economic) to skirt the law, if not to live entirely outside it. In at least one case, the Arab restaurant owner, who is also a local power broker and fixer, manipulates the authorities to serve his ends. Yet these people are never shown as one-dimensional.

Following the screening that I attended in Manhattan, Isaac Zablocki, the director of New York's Other Israel Film Festival who hosted a discussion afterward, mentioned that Israeli Arabs disliked the movie because of the crime and corruption depicted. But he said that when he spoke with Arabs who saw it with him in Israel, they remarked that the real *Ajami* is actually worse than shown in the film.

For My Father

THE ATTENTION FOCUSED ON *AJAMI* should not completely obscure another recent feature from Israel. *For My Father*



ethnic balance of its characters, ensured Israel's inclusion in the list of Academy Award finalists for the third year in a row. The film also won Israel's Ophir award for best picture, Israel's version of the Oscar.

Two years ago, a language issue prevented the poignantly comic *The Band's Visit* from being Israel's nominee for the Academy Award in the foreign language category, because the Egyptian and Israeli characters communicated to each other in English—as they would have in real life. In my view, *The Band's Visit*

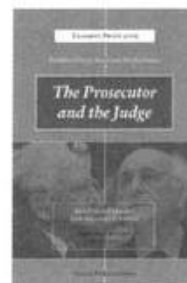
NEW FROM AMSTERDAM
UNIVERSITY PRESS

The Prosecutor and the Judge

BENJAMIN FERENCZ AND ANTONIO
CASSESE—INTERVIEWS AND WRITINGS

Heikelina Verrijn Stuart
and Marlise Simons

The authors provide in-depth interviews with Benjamin Ferencz, chief prosecutor at the Einsatzgruppen trials in Nuremberg, and Antonio Cassese, first president of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.



Paper \$29.95

Distributed by the University of Chicago Press
www.press.uchicago.edu

began its commercial run in the United States on January 29. You will not detect its lighter side from this description, but it's a deadly serious movie that plays largely as a comedy.

Terek, a young West Bank Palestinian, is driven to Tel Aviv by his handlers to explode himself in a crowded market place. But his detonator malfunctions and he finds a small electronics shop that will order the part he needs to repair it. The cantankerous but kindly shopkeeper has no idea what he needs the part for; Terek agrees to repair his leaky roof in exchange. During the course of his weekend wait in their home at the back of the shop, he discovers the tragedy of their lives—the fact that their son, their only child, died in a recklessly mishandled army training exercise.

Terek also meets Keren, a hip young person with body piercings and revealing clothing who has fled her rigidly religious family. The two become almost inseparable.

Later we learn what has motivated Terek to become a suicide bomber. His father, a musician, discovers that his son is a talented soccer player and gets him on the

team representing the Israeli-Arab city of Nazareth. But with the advent of the second intifada in 2000, he must struggle against increasingly impervious border crossings, to get his son into Israel from their native Tulkarem. By hook or crook he continually succeeds, only to arouse the suspicion of local Palestinian nationalists who threaten him in the belief that he is a collaborator with the Israelis.

It is not at all unreasonable for them to believe this, as the privilege of getting into Israel frequently, for the benefit of his son, is precisely the kind of thing that the Shin Bet, Israel's internal security service, would dangle in front of the father in exchange for his being an informant. Not only is the father under suspicion, but his family is also shunned. The father's desperate desire for his son to find a way out of their de facto imprisonment in the West Bank throws the father into a deep clinical depression.

We also see the loving mother, the Palestinian equivalent of the proverbial Jewish mother in her doting concern for her son. These characterizations of Terek's parents run counter to the notion that Palestinians routinely sacrifice their

children as suicide bombers in a culture that worships death.

Terek volunteers for his mission to redeem his father's name. Hence the film's English title; the actual translation from the Hebrew is "Weekend in Tel Aviv." He sees no option for himself, but it's clear that his "friend" and the other terrorist operative who recruit and oversee Terek are taking the fullest possible advantage of his circumstances.

They coldly fix a cell phone detonating device to his explosives vest, giving them the capacity to explode him remotely, should he lose his nerve. He is told that he cannot disengage it without triggering the device. But Terek is a more valuable instrument of death if he chooses a target where he will do the most damage to average Israelis going about their lives. So they choose the market place on a Friday afternoon, when Jews are busy making purchases for the Sabbath.

Yes, they are cold-blooded, but they also have an understandable rationale. One explains to Terek before they leave him in Tel Aviv that they do this because they have no air force: "Remember, Terek, you are our air force."

Here is an Israeli film that humanizes a suicide bomber, just as he learns to appreciate Israelis in human terms.

Don't Boycott Israeli Culture!

RECENT PROTESTS IN THE UNITED STATES against the Israel Ballet Company (and last year against the Batsheva Dance Company), as well as the brouhaha at last year's Toronto Film Festival over its spotlight on the city of Tel Aviv in its centennial year, raise the prospect that BDS (boycott, divestment, and sanctions) activists may target Israeli films. Those who support BDS need to consider whether attacking this film industry, boldly liberal in its exposure of current and historic flaws in Israeli society, is the way to go. Moreover, the targeting of cultural entities in general (including universities) comes across as an attack on Israelis as a people, and not just against the often repressive policies of the government of the State of Israel. ■

Ralph Seliger is editor of Israel Horizons, Meretz USA's quarterly publication, and a blogger at www.MeretzUSA.blogspot.com.

The Jewish Experience

An Introduction
to Jewish History
and Jewish Life



Steven Leonard Jacobs

Appropriate for
general and historical
introductory courses
on Judaism as well
as for general readers
who seek a better
understanding of
the richness and
meaning of Jewish
life through history.

The Jewish Experience

An Introduction to
Jewish History and Jewish Life

STEVEN LEONARD JACOBS

This introduction to the Jewish experience presents the many dimensions of Jewish life as "cycles" through which Jewish history, thought, writing, and practices have evolved and continue to mature.

Steven Jacobs' clear and straightforward introduction explains the basics of Jewish history, the tradition of texts, key philosophical and theological issues and thinkers, the Judaic calendar, and contemporary global concerns and what the future may portend for Judaism.

"A unique contribution to the materials on Judaism and a vital addition for any class or student to read." —James F. Moore, Valparaiso U.

Author, *Toward a Dialogical Community:
A Post-Shoah Christian Theology*

978-0-8006-9663-4 240 pp paper \$32.00

FORTRESS PRESS
THE POWER OF SCHOLARSHIP

At bookstores or call 1-800-328-4648
fortresspress.com

JEWISH-MUSLIM DIALOGUE

(continued from page 60)

suffering of the other side, it sounds indifferent to their suffering, because essentially it is.

We can argue about the morality and harsh practicality of realistic measures for defending one's own people. We can legitimately question the assertion that violence is never justified, and we can disagree about the way one side or the other approaches the pursuit of peace or justice. We cannot rest while rocks and rockets are hurled at our brothers and sisters. We must continue to care, pray, and act for peace, dignity, and justice for all. We must not be indifferent to the killing of Palestinians and to the plight of a million Gazans waking up every morning feeling the pain we inflict on them while all of us wait endlessly for peace.

My Muslim friend Mohamed explains to the critics that his interaction with me has increased my empathy for and understanding of Palestinian suffering. He says this change has improved attitudes toward Muslims in my circle of influence. He also talks about how his attitude toward Jews has dramatically changed by working alongside Jews. He is certainly not the only one.

A few Arab high school girls recently had a session with our multi-faith team, which included a devout Lebanese Muslim man. They were encouraged to ask questions, and one asked about the breaking of the glass at Jewish weddings. I explained this tradition as it relates to our loss of Jerusalem and added a light bit of trivia: some superstitious people think if you hold a piece of the glass you will get married that year. In the playground at lunchtime one girl in a hijab called me over to show me something. She had a broken piece of glass, she tells me jokingly, "*I am getting married this year.*"

Some months later, their hijab-wearing teacher attended our fundraising dinner. She told me that some of the girls approached her with the realization that "Miss, maybe we are being racist when we talk badly about Jews." Jewish students have also been deeply moved by their experience with their Muslim counterparts.

It Helps If We Don't Underestimate the Difficulties

INTERFAITH WORK YIELDS ITS FAIR SHARE of disappointments. Intense frustration can arise due to participants' unrealistic expectations of changing the other. Abraham learns this too, after waging war to save his nephew Lot, who was captured in a Sodomite defeat. One commentary explains that he had expected that the Sodomites would come around to his righteous way because of his liberating them. Alas, the Sodomites do not change. Abraham is afraid and asks, "did I sin?" G-d tells him, *do not fear*. It is not for us to expect to change everyone. Let us let go of specific expectations, but we must do the right thing. We dare not do nothing!

Returning to my experience with Bishop Shakur: I learned later that the bishop is highly regarded by bridge builders in Israel. Since that time I have learned a great deal about navigating a path that maintains my integrity, keeps faith with my own community, and keeps faith with Muslim and Christian communities.

Since then, a few dozen of us, including Lebanese and Palestinian Imams, brought the total number of students in our programs to 50,000 across Australia. Some engaged in role-plays of a fictional cross-cultural conflict in order to learn how hard it is to see past one's own "tribal" narrative, how the same "facts" tell a different story in two different newspapers, and how really listening can help. Sometimes, the students don't learn to deal with different views, but they do learn that there are important values we share and we can like each other.

Speaking out in the face of pain, anger, and attachment is difficult. This awareness can make it easier to accept the other as the other is. Some participants in inter-religious work will shift their views and come closer to the position of the other. Many will not, and that's OK. Building relationships with "the other side" is not the same as agreeing with them or siding with the enemy. Let us interact more and judge less, demand less and expect more. If we are not too specific in our expectations of the rewards, we will rarely be disappointed. ■

ANTI-SEMITISM

(continued from page 27)

appears more entrenched in the West Bank—the principal focus of Palestinian national aspirations—than ever, and organized Jewish diaspora opinion behind Israel and its policies seems more solid than ever. As the Palestinians despair of a two-state solution—and as Israelis despair, too, but for somewhat different reasons—the prospects of a fair and workable peace settlement are fast fading. In the absence of a plausible alternative, the conflict is on the verge of becoming unresolvable and of transforming itself into a state of perpetual strife, with potentially dire international consequences, not least, I fear, for Jews around the world.

The downward trajectory of the situation has been brought into focus recently by the Goldstone Report on the war in Gaza and by Israel's usual "there's-nothing-to-it" response to that report. More ominously, it has been sharpened by the growing worldwide BDS campaign—a call for boycott, divestment, and sanctions against Israel—which, despite the occasional Pyrrhic "pro-Israel victory" that every time seems to excite the U.K.'s *Jewish Chronicle* and other Jewish media to no end, we can be sure will continue to gather steam for as long as the Occupation lasts. How big a step is it from boycotting Israeli goods to boycotting shops that stock such goods? And guess which shops this will mostly affect? The battle lines are already being sketched out.

The Mantras of Self-Justification ... and Self-Delusion

HOW, ONE MAY ASK, DOES A REPUTEDLY intelligent people, with traditionally strong humanistic values, manage constantly to delude itself about what is going on, what lies in store and what needs to be done? And how has it allowed the Jewish Star of David, and by implication the Jewish religion and Jewish people, to become associated in the eyes of growing numbers of people with repression?

One answer is that, over the years, a blanket of self-justifying stories and catchphrases that we tell ourselves and everyone else time and again, ad nauseam, has smothered the art of rational thought. Many

of the mantras will be familiar:

"We are the only democracy in the Middle East. We have the most moral army in the world. The Palestinians spurned our generous offer—as always, with violence. We have the right to defend ourselves. There is no peace partner. The Arabs have always rejected us and always will. Palestinian terrorism. Arab terrorism. Muslim terrorism. Anti-Semitism. New anti-Semitism. Blood libels. Self-hating Jews. Islamo-fascism. Security, security, security. Everyone else is naïve, naïve, naïve. We have no alternative." And the list goes on. It is worth noting, however, that one formerly popular slogan, "the most liberal occupation of all time," is rarely heard these days.

Again, it's not that there is nothing to any of these catchphrases or the stories that underpin them—although many of them do not stand up well to scrutiny—but they are constantly wheeled out, in a spirit of injured innocence, to deflect any substantive criticism of Israeli actions.

The analogy with the hypothetical Hindu and Buddhist states can be taken only so far. It breaks down once an explanation for the ostensibly wicked ways of the "nation of usurpers and occupiers" is sought by delving into their scriptures, belief systems, history, or supposed genetic makeup. In the Jewish case, this does not require much original or detailed research for, possibly uniquely, there, waiting in the wings, is a pernicious time-tested ideology—that of full-blown anti-Semitism—with all the answers, simplistic and absurd though they may be. It is at this point that anti-Jewish sentiment tips portentously into something far more sinister. Hinduism and Buddhism, whatever their own issues, have nothing to compare with this.

I make none of the above observations with relish. There was a time in my life when I sang from the regulation Jewish pro-Zionist song sheet and defended Israel's corner at the local, national, and international student levels, first as an active member of the Jewish Society at the University of Birmingham, then, more diplomatically—and I believe fairly—as student union president during the seminal 1967 Arab-Israeli war that spilled over onto campuses up and down the country, and later as deputy president of the British National Union of

Students, responsible for international affairs during a distinctly hot phase of the cold war, in which the Middle East conflict played a starring role. I believed then, as I do now, in the essential justice of Israel's underlying cause and backed its right to self-determination and independence, free of threat—not always to my political or personal advantage. The Jews had suffered enough over many generations and deserved their own place, if that's what many of them wanted.

I was struck, as others have been, by Lord Byron's lament in 1815, when the worst tragedies to face the Jewish people still lay a distance ahead and several decades before Theodor Herzl, the founder of political Zionism, was a twinkle in anyone's eye. Byron wrote: "The wild dove hath her nest, the fox his cave, / Mankind their country, Israel but the grave!" By "Israel," of course, he meant the Jewish people.

But, in the attempt, more than a century later, to rectify the Jewish calamity, a second people paid a heavy price. The ill-fated Palestinians—the knock-on victims of Nazi atrocities, whose original felony was simply to be in the way of another distressed people's frantic survival stratagem—have also suffered enough and are no less worthy of their place in the sun. If they don't get it soon, the Israelis, for sure, will never be left in peace to enjoy theirs. In this respect, each holds the key to the other's destiny.

The passionate arguments deployed in bygone days—that Israel was not expansionist, that it desperately yearned for peace, that it was eager to withdraw from the occupied territories, that it would guarantee everyone access to their religious sites, that it was a good friend of the Palestinians, that it did everything it possibly could to avoid civilian casualties, and so on—have all been exposed, one by one.

It's not that these arguments were necessarily false from the very beginning. But little by little they were usurped by the triumphalist mood that infiltrated the country and swept the Jewish world following the Six-Day War and the hubris the resounding victory gave rise to. Such characteristics are of course not unique to Israel. They are common to conquering powers and have frequently led to their eventual downfall.

The Immutable Terms of Any Deal

SO WHAT MAY BE DONE?

By far the preferable—and simplest—path would be a public declaration of a swift, authentic change of Israeli policy that heralded a genuine commitment to ending the Occupation, pulling out of the West Bank, sharing Jerusalem, ending the siege of Gaza, and living peacefully and in mutual respect alongside a sovereign Palestinian state broadly along the pre-June 1967 borders, albeit with agreed, equitable land exchanges. Nothing less than this will ever do, no matter which Palestinians are on the other side of the bargaining table or which government is in power in Israel or indeed the United States. These are the immutable terms of any deal, and Israeli leaders' occasional and hollow claims to be extending a hand in peace to the Arab world are no substitute. Absent the above commitments, they are worthless platitudes.

An Israeli declaration along the lines I have outlined, if sincere, could radically transform the regional and international political atmosphere, just as the Oslo Accords did in the 1990s. Almost overnight, Israel moved from semi-pariah to semi-hero. Its leaders, together with the Palestinian leader, were awarded the Nobel peace prize. Shimon Peres, then the Israeli foreign minister, was spoken of as a possible future UN Secretary General. One country after another, including from the Arab and Muslim worlds, lined up to establish or re-establish relations with and visit the Jewish state. As the optimism, in subsequent years, gave way to gloom and doom, it is easy to forget the uplifting mood of that time.

Today, sixteen disappointing years later, the reaction to a fresh initiative may not be quite so dramatic, but a firm Israeli commitment along the lines described would give the Palestinians—as well as the Israelis—something tangible to hope for. It could be the vital trigger everyone is waiting for to spark off a fresh momentum.

If they had any sense, Jewish diaspora communities would use such influence as they have with the Israeli government to encourage it to adopt such a policy and simultaneously align themselves with apposite international moves to this end—if not from conviction then at least on the grounds of prudent self-protection.

And Failing That ... Jews Must Protest

IN THE MORE LIKELY, IF REGRETTABLE, event that the current Israeli government will commit itself to no such thing, what should Jewish diaspora communities do? I believe they would be well advised to take a deep breath and reconsider their habitual reflexive responses, which are in part responsible for the mess we are in. No one would expect them to waver from their uncompromising support for the genuine welfare of the Israeli state and people, and I do not propose this. But, with precisely this welfare in mind, it is beyond time for them to distance themselves from the expansionist policies of the Israeli government, its belligerent approach to problem-solving in the region, and its propensity to infringe Palestinian human rights, periodically on a massive scale.

Some Jewish groups and many individual Jews are already doing this, to the consternation of certain voluble self-appointed guardians of the Jewish good. However, in the main, these dissenting Jews are, I believe, helping to lower the temperature of anti-Jewish feeling.

To state the obvious, not everyone will agree with all the arguments expounded here. That is their prerogative. But this is not a purely academic discussion. The price of getting it wrong could be high. To those who hold that Israel is not "in occupation" of the West Bank at all, but that it has "liberated" the biblical Judea and Samaria, more worldly considerations may matter little. This is a voice that has grown louder over the years, and it is not susceptible to reasoned argument. Nor does it concern itself, in a serious way, with such secular anxieties as anti-Semitism.

But there is another camp that is seriously concerned about anti-Semitism. Indeed, it is convinced that anti-Semitism is the principal underlying cause of the conflict, and—with the full force of the self-fulfilling prophecy behind it—interprets any manifestation of ill feeling toward Jews, or even toward Israel, as compelling proof of this conviction. It is "Jew-hatred," they say, that continues to keep the conflict going and prevents Israel from leaving the West Bank. Movement toward a peace settlement will be possible only once the Arab and Muslim worlds, they argue, have purged their

anti-Semitism—doubtless a worthy goal but one with an almost limitlessly extendable bar and a certain cart-before-the-horse quality to it.

In the end, this argument is both an excuse and a recipe for sustaining the status quo, continuing the colonization of the West Bank, the building of exclusive roads, the construction of the monstrous separation barrier, the destruction or confiscation of Palestinian homes, and, in general, the encroachment on and encirclement of the remaining space of the putative Palestinian state.

Through cheap and inappropriate usage, the charge of anti-Semitism has become so debased—in particular when it is directed at the dispossessed Palestinians themselves and at others for whom universal justice and human rights are genuinely paramount—that a strange and dreadful thing is starting to happen: the charge of anti-Semitism is gradually being transformed in the minds of many from a mark of shame to a badge of honor. This is quite an achievement.

But not everything is so bleak. In the White House, there is a president who is learning his trade but who seems to have the right instincts. Intellectually, emotionally, and politically, he is committed to solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the near future on the only basis that, for the last forty years at least, makes any sense: two states for two peoples. The twenty-seven-nation European Union, to Israel's predictable ire, has recently reiterated the same policy in very clear terms, laying emphasis on the need for Jerusalem to be the shared capital of both states.

The Arab Peace Initiative of 2002, which calls for full peace and normalization of relations with Israel in exchange for withdrawal from the territories captured in 1967—an offer that would have had Israelis dancing in the street not so long ago—remains on the table, with the support of the twenty-two-nation Arab League and the endorsement of the fifty-six-nation Organization of the Islamic Conference. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, in a speech in June 2009, uttered, for Likud, the hitherto forbidden phrase "a Palestinian state," even if he hedged it with strict preconditions. The PLO, too, still remains committed to the two-state policy it adopted in 1988, and even

Hamas has indicated its preparedness to do a deal based on the pre-June 1967 borders.

So, it seems, many of the pieces are in place. But they are no more than the bare bones of a comprehensive solution and will amount to little without a deft international strategy that responds to the urgent needs of the moment, coupled with an effective enforcement mechanism. Sponsoring indirect or even direct negotiations between inherently unequal parties in the first instance is decidedly not that strategy. What is required now is an end to sham processes and a shift of focus directly to the endgame.

We are on the cusp. It could go this way or that. Hard decisions will have to be made. In the next year or so, we'll all have a better idea of where we stand and what to look forward to. Much will depend on President Obama's grit and strategic sense. One thing's for certain, though. Whatever happens, there will be profound repercussions, good or bad, for Jews *qua* Jews around the world. So if we can have any influence on the decisions, let's try to make sure they are rational, sound, and responsible, for much rides on them—not just for Israel and the Palestinians, but for all of us. ■

PHILOSOPHERS OF CATASTROPHE (continued from page 30)

[which Levinas midrashically shows helped save the Hebrews right before the Exodus].

Unfortunately, Levinas could not rely on "Bobby" for his safety. He was condemned to relying on human beings. I wonder: after getting out, how did he go on being a philosopher, especially after finding that a dog was the last Kantian in Nazi Germany? Like Rosenzweig, he could have rejected philosophy. But Levinas chose to redeem it. He redeemed it with Judaism.

Responsibility for the Other: Countering the Unbearable Idolatries of Philosophy

SHADOWED BY JUDAISM AND THE NAZI Judeocide, Levinas's words demand resistance to the supposed ethics that allow for—indeed give rise to—catastrophe. Reaching back to the Talmud, Levinas pleads for real discussion. Catastrophe often happens when someone or some ideology

owns the conversation. A plurality of voices upsets such ownership. Discussion is where we find our menacing characterizations of others interrupted, displaced, and resisted. When asked if his philosophy is messianic, Levinas responds:

Only if one understands messianic here according to the Talmudic maxim that “the doctors of the law” will never have peace, neither in this world nor in the next; they go from meeting to meeting, discussing always—for there is always more to be discussed. I could not accept a form of messianism that would terminate the need for discussion, that would end our watchfulness. (See *Face to Face with Levinas*, edited by Richard Cohen, 1986.)

By watchfulness, Levinas means looking out for the other. Watchfulness is not for oneself, but for the other for whom one seeks peace. In the same essay, Levinas says: “I seek this peace not for me, but for the other.” Ideology—especially in defense of nationalism—turns one’s entire view of the world back on oneself. This is a betrayal of the other, of the world, of what ethics truly is. It’s no wonder Levinas extends this betrayal to philosophy’s self-seeking concerns with self-knowledge, which turned out to be at the other’s expense, a bodily fact of Levinas’s life.

Levinas offers philosophical redemption to post-Holocaust Europe with a common Jewish ethic; he substitutes the ethically irresponsible self-centered subject of philosophy with *the other, for whom one is responsible*. In other words, his philosophy begins with Jewish responsibility for the other instead of beginning with self-seeking knowledge and/or salvation for itself. His work is Other-centered. Like the ancient rabbis, Levinas’s concern is ethics, and in his concern we are shown that our encounters with others begin ethically, which he locates in one’s response for the other by whom one is addressed.

Levinas shows that that we don’t choose to respond to the other, but have choice only about how we respond. For example, when someone I don’t like sees me and yells, “Hey, Stephen!” I might pretend to not hear them

and keep walking, or I might turn and acknowledge the caller. Either way, I have been identified and directed into response by the caller. At this point what do I do? No matter what, I have found myself in response to (and for) the caller; even if I continue to ignore the caller, it is a response. How I respond, not whether I am going to respond, is the question. Do I respond with a sense of responsibility for the other, or not? Here I am exposed to that ancient Jewish ethic; I am immanently responsible for the other.

Just as the biblical writers were troubled by idolatry, much of the Hellenic-Christian philosophy critiqued by Rosenzweig and Levinas ought to be understood as a historical source of idolatry where reigning moral theories—like a golden calf—blinded the greatest philosophical ethicists from intuiting that which Bobby (the dog in the camp) understood; one does not philosophically search for truth to understand, know, or justify that a person is a person. It’s not like reading Plato, Aristotle, Kant or any in between would have provided Hitler and his minions with an epiphany: “These are people and it’s wrong to murder them!”

Rosenzweig and Levinas’s Gift to Judaism

ROSENZWEIG AND LEVINAS’S EXODUS from the ashen remains of nationalism and philosophy’s “self-cating” search for itself in waxen representations of life was guided by Jewish tradition. Ironically, some have said these thinkers contribute little to Judaism. Yes, they take from it, but what do they give to it? Rosenzweig and Levinas were steeped in two traditions deeply alienated from each other. Their very being was and is a bridge between the Hellenic-Christian world and European Judaism. From their Jewish traditions, these two men interrogate the intellectual world of Gentile Europe. There is no way a non-Jew could come up with their critiques, for the non-Jews are immanently alienated from Jewish life and thought. On the other hand, these two thinkers show us—Jews—that Judaism does not live in a world only of our own making. And although these non-Jewish worlds may be alienating for many Jews, Rosenzweig and Levinas show that this alienation is quite fruitful. In amplifying their insights for the non-Jewish world,

it plays a role in keeping Judaism open to what it’s not; if they had only stayed put in Judaism, how would they have known the implications of their tradition for not only the stranger, but us, too? In their dialogue comes greater self-understanding and a reminder for us all that the thirty-six biblical injunctions to take responsibility teach us not only to care for the other, but also that the stranger reminds us that we’re not here alone to act as if the world were a receptacle for our actions. In their Jewish critique of the Western philosophical tradition, Rosenzweig and Levinas fulfill these thirty-six biblical injunctions, for it shows a type of care and concern for the other while demanding that the other take note of the tradition it tried to crush. But there is more that comes from this bridge of two worlds. Their Jewish critique of the Hellenic-Christian world is now applicable to many Jews, especially those of us that have betrayed our ethical traditions on behalf of nationalism.

Nationalism is a deadly disease. When we as a people lose sight of our ethical concerns for the stranger on behalf of imitating the nation-state interests of the non-Jewish Western world, we sacrifice our ethics on behalf of blind ideology. The lives of these two show us that the Jewish world, instead of only saying “Never Again!” to the non-Jewish world regarding anti-Semitism, also teaches us to “Never” ignore or abuse the stranger in one’s midst. In the words of these thinkers I find a sociopolitical articulation of the ancient ethics of our rabbis that speaks against Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians, that speaks against keeping have-nots from health insurance in the United States. It’s as Levinas says: “The other’s material needs are my spiritual needs.” From here we are not so far from the cries of our prophets. I have no doubt they would command us to demand that Israel lift the blockade against Gazans and stop the settlements from expanding, and demand that America ensure all have health care, all the while reminding us that our covenant is not only for us, but to bring peace to the world. It’s as Levinas says—discussion should never cease. It is here that *tikkun olam* comes out; discussion is the realization of messianism. ■

CRIME

(continued from page 32)

possible models and worldviews that are dismissed as dangerously unrealistic and naive.

When questioned by a staff member about the de-emphasis of the social services (carrot) piece of his program, Kennedy remarked, "Look, we would all like to save everyone, but we can't. We don't know how to do that yet, and Ceasefire (the program) is fundamentally about what can be done. It's engineering, not evangelism." The staff member was dismissed from the team.

The cynical realism of this model should be a rallying cry for spiritual progressives and people of good will from all walks of life to fight back and push for a life-affirming movement based as much as possible on self-determination, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, and spiritual meaning. Kennedy's insight about the community's moral voice is certainly not a new one in American social science and could be used much differently as the basis of a spiritual progressive retort to his model.

The Peer-Support Alternative Model

SPONTANEOUS SELF-HELP HEALING groups based on spiritual progressive values offer the possibility of a trans-valuation of the individual and the world. They incorporate a deep respect for the complexity of humanity and the possibilities of lasting and more permanent transformations, which can break the never-ending cycle of violence while offering the vehicles through which a new world of trust and love can flourish. The Kennedy model is simply not constructed to accomplish this. At best, it's set up to try to control or deter a never-ending struggle of good versus evil. At worst, this struggle becomes a continuous life and death struggle that can end up in mass destruction and human misery.

In the spiritually progressive scenario, the damaged, abused, exploited, or victimized individual turns to a new or substitute primary group (one in which they have intimate face-to-face daily contact). The other members of the group who have also experienced a similar pattern of hurt, frustration, anxiety, drug or alcohol abuse, sexism, racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, etc., develop a bond that enables them

to build support to get them through immediate tough moments in their daily life. An older, more experienced member of this new primary group can act as a guide, and if a younger member reaches out for help, he or she has a ready role model as living proof of the possibility of a better life. Older members see younger members and relive what it was like to feel what they are now going through. This powerful interaction acts to further strengthen older members' resolve to maintain the "new life" they are achieving and reinforces that changed frame of reference so that they can help others (and themselves) see the world through a whole new set of eyes.

In this fascinating and complex human interaction, individuals and groups who have been severely damaged or negatively labeled can help and heal each other in ways that no other model has been shown to do. The community's moral voice can operate at a level of human awareness and spirituality that can lead to a safer, more peaceful world based on a communalism that reaches out to our deepest social needs of belonging and interacting without resorting to the authoritarian and moral superiority streaks of the deterrence model.

The civil rights, women's, peace, and environmental movements, as well as many, many others around the world, have all made extensive use of the healing power of this model:

- The Fortune Society in New York, since 1967, has been "Building People—Not Prisons" and providing emergency and phased-permanent housing with supportive services to homeless ex-prisoners in addition to court advocacy, education, counseling, family services, and treatment services, all with a peer support model that has gained the trust and respect of thousands of ex-convicts.
- The Brooklyn Mental Health Court serves as a "problem-solving" juvenile justice alternative court focusing on the treatment needs of defendants rather than on punishment as deterrence.
- The Adolescent Portable Therapy program founded in 2002 by the Vera Institute of Justice has played a major role in setting up the efforts of the Brooklyn Mental Health Court. Ramon

Solkhah, MD, a psychiatrist at the Maimonides Medical Center in Brooklyn, has been a prime advocate for the Vera Institute program. The portable therapy program focuses heavily on the need to combine traditional cognitive behavioral and family therapy techniques, which are delivered in a portable fashion. These services are to be given at home, in jail, or wherever the teen may be located, and are designed to engage, include, motivate, and gain family support for teens throughout the treatment and healing process.

- Eben Bronfman, the longtime special assistant to Manhattan District Attorney Morgenthau, has been working for decades to implement an "Alternatives to Arrest" program in New York. Heavily based on the community's input and individual personalization, the program allows for a high degree of family and peer support, which is crucial for the program's success. The concept of Community Policing from which this program evolved (and which is widely practiced in a variety of stressed communities across the country) is at its core dedicated to the close partnership of that community and their police, who mobilize together to heal, repair, and create an environment of less social disorganization through, in part, community empowerment and the recognition of the community's needs and desires.
- Marie Volpe, director of the Dispute Resolution Center at John Jay College, has patterned her program along themes of healing in restorative justice and the history of various International Truth and Reconciliation Panels. Volpe argues that people are not taught how to anticipate, analyze, engage, or manage conflicts constructively. "The consequences can range from minor miscommunication to severe and costly outbreaks of violence and loss of lives," she says. "Our jails and prisons are full of individuals convicted of crimes that result from a systemic, benign neglect of the value placed on paying attention to what it takes to make talk work at all stages from proactive measures to response efforts." The New York Police Department's Hostage Negotiation

Team and hundreds of other groups avail themselves of the program's expertise.

The fear-based, "cynical realistic" deterrence worldview that has dominated recent criminal justice and re-entry policy is not set up to bring a safer or more lasting peaceful world. That paradigm is based on a paternalistic sense of perceived moral superiority that creates and perpetuates a dependent, scapegoat population and a never-ending cycle of fear, mistrust, and cynicism. At best, this model leads to an uneasy and temporary cold peace that some label a success. History teaches us differently. The cold peace usually takes another form—often a more destructive one than the form that was supposedly regulated, controlled, and deterred. Spiritual progressives and their insights need to be involved in these already existing worldwide movements to help spread an alternative vision and paradigm that is truly humane, nonexploitive, and based on caring. It's time for a paradigm of healing grounded in a spiritual toughness in the civil rights tradition. Otherwise, we're left with just another quick fix. ■

SELF AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION (continued from page 57)

societies where it is not so easy to distinguish "religion" from other aspects of culture. There are good imperialistic reasons to cherish such a Western construct: if the religious sphere is distinct from the economic sphere, in particular, one can exploit and despoil the natural resources of an "undeveloped" country while nonetheless "respecting" the indigenous beliefs and rituals of its population.

In *The Buddha: Buddhist Civilization in India and Ceylon*, the British scholar Trevor Ling argued that religions as we know them today are "reduced civilizations"—the remnants of movements originally much more ambitious:

To say that Gotama the Buddha founded a religion is to prejudice our understanding of his far-reaching influence. For in modern usage the word religion denotes merely one department of human activity, now regarded of less and less public importance, and belonging almost entirely to the realm of men's

private affairs. But whatever else Buddhism is or is not, in Asia it is a great social and cultural tradition.

Did Shakyamuni Buddha envision a much broader spiritual revolution, which would transform society politically and economically as well as religiously? It is an intriguing idea, although perhaps impossible to confirm, since we know so little about the historical Buddha and his original teachings. The earliest texts we have, in the Pali Canon, were transmitted orally for over three

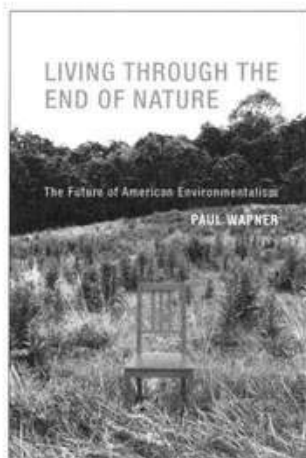
hundred years before being committed to script, and perhaps preserve a later and more narrow understanding of his mission. According to the Pali Canon, the Buddha advised kings on a variety of issues, including war (to be avoided) and economics (alleviating poverty). This relationship became even more important to the monastic *sangha* (community), which came to rely upon royal patronage soon after he passed away. There was a predictable price for that economic relationship, however: if you want support from the powers that be, you must support the powers that be. Is this how Buddhism became "reduced" to a religion?

Today we take for granted the principle of separation between church and state, but this distinction is another modern Western concept. Asian Buddhist rulers were not only patrons and defenders of the sangha; they also served as cultural idealizations and living symbols of the social order, necessary to maintain harmony between the state and the cosmos. In other words, their role was religious as well as political. This made it very difficult to challenge an unjust social structure, for that was also to revolt against the order of the cosmos itself.

Today we see this as an example of collective mystification, but it has been the norm in Buddhist cultures as in other pre-modern societies, including medieval Europe (remember the "divine right of kings"). Chinese emperors claimed to be bodhisattvas and even Buddhas. Perhaps we see vestiges today in the attitude of many Thai people toward their king, and in the reverence of many Tibetans for the Dalai Lama. The emperor Ashoka, who reigned 273–232 BCE and was the third ruler of the Mauryan empire that first united India, is still revered by many Buddhists as a *chakravartin* (ideal universal ruler).

The coming of Buddhism to the West challenges such mystifications, even as Western modernity long ago overthrew the absolute monarchs of Europe. Secularism and democracy are freeing Buddhism from any need to cozy up to autocratic rulers, creating new possibilities that socially engaged Buddhists are just beginning to develop. As Buddhist emphasis on impermanence and insubstantiality implies, history need not be destiny.

The MIT Press



Living Through the End of Nature

THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTALISM
Paul Wapner

"Wapner is one of the world's leading scholars of environmental politics and his latest book, *Living Through the End of Nature*, is a sophisticated exploration of the future of the environmental movement."

— Peter Dauvergne, University of British Columbia, author of *The Shadows of Consumption*

184 pp., \$21.95 cloth

To order call 800-405-1619 • <http://mitpress.mit.edu>
Visit our e-books store: <http://mitpress-ebooks.mit.edu>

Another way to make the above point about mystification is by emphasizing both our personal and our collective constructedness, and the importance of reconstructing both. Shakyamuni Buddha realized that the sense of self is a construct to be deconstructed and reconstructed, which is what the Buddhist path is about. What the Buddhist tradition did not sufficiently realize (although there are intriguing hints—for example, the *Agganna Sutta* in the Pali Canon questions the caste system) is that the social structure is a human construct that also could and should be reconstructed, to make it more equitable and just. That discovery opened up the possibility of social revolution, “the mercy of the West.”

We trace the origins of the West back to classical Greece, especially Athens, because the Athenians reconstructed themselves into a democracy (of sorts). Emphasis on social justice for the downtrodden and exploited derives more from the Judeo-Christian prophetic tradition, so it is significant that Western civilization was born from the union of “Athens and Jerusalem” in the late Roman Empire. But it was not a marriage made in heaven, for the two partners had rather different worldviews. In fact, one could argue that the basic issue addressed in this article—the tension between religious commitment and secular social reform—originates here.

The notion that human society is a construct that can be reconstructed is a truism today, yet it derives from a new distinction the Greeks made between *nomos* (the “norms” or conventions of human society, including culture, technology, etc.) and *phusis* (the natural world). The Greeks of the classical era realized that whatever is social convention can be altered: we can reorganize our own societies and in that way (attempt to) determine our own destiny. Without our sense of historical development, and therefore generally unaware of alternative possibilities, most preliterate peoples accepted their own social structures as inevitable, just as “natural” as their local ecosystems. When rulers were overthrown, new ones took their place at the top of the social pyramid, which was also a religious pyramid: kings were gods or godlike because (as with many Buddhist rulers) they had a special role to play in maintaining

harmony with the transcendent powers that kept the cosmos going. The Aztecs, to cite one famous example, required mass human sacrifice because blood was needed to keep the sun-god on his proper course through the heavens.

We call the Greeks *humanists* because their discovery—one of the great insights of human history—challenged the archaic religious worldview that imbedded the traditional social order within the natural order: humans could decide for themselves how to live. An unusual set of cultural conditions encouraged this development. Homer’s detached, ironical attitude toward the gods meant that they authorized no sacred book, proclaimed no dogma, and set up no powerful priesthood. Greek merchant fleets sparked a great colonizing movement that exposed the Greeks to very different cultures, which encouraged skepticism toward their own myths. Thales founded natural philosophy when he did not use gods to explain the world. Unlike Moses and Mohammed, Solon did not get his tables from them when he gave Athens new laws. Socrates’ philosophical quest for wisdom did not depend upon them, and Greek drama reduced the gods’ role by emphasizing human motivation and responsibility.

With the help of some remarkable leaders, Athens was able to reorganize itself more or less peacefully. Solon broke the power of the aristocratic assembly by admitting the lower classes into it. Cleisthenes replaced the four traditional, family-based tribes of Athens with ten districts, determined according to one’s area of residence. Pericles extended the access of humble citizens to public office. The result was a very limited (women and slaves did not participate) experiment in direct democracy.

Not everyone liked democracy. Plato, for example, offered more elitist plans to restructure the Greek city-state in two of his dialogues, the *Republic* and the *Laws*. Such alternative visions nevertheless presupposed the same distinction between *phusis* and *nomos*. The various revolutions that for better and worse have recreated our modern world—English, American, French, Russian, Chinese, etc.—all took for granted such an understanding: if a political regime is unjust and oppressive, it should be challenged and changed, because

such systems are human constructs that can be reconstructed.

Our Double-Sided Predicament

THE GREEK EXPERIMENT WITH democracy failed for the same reasons that our modern experiment with democracy is in danger of failing. We have already noticed the problem: unless social reconstruction is accompanied by personal transformation, democracy merely liberates the ego-self. Insofar as I am still motivated by greed, ill will, and delusion, my freedom is likely to make things worse. So long as the illusion of a discrete self, separate from others, remains strong, democracy simply provides different types of opportunities to take advantage of other individuals—as contemporary capitalism encourages us to do, resulting in a predatory ethic rationalized less by Adam Smith’s “invisible hand” than by a crude social Darwinism.

Athenians became aware of this problem quite early. According to Orlando Patterson’s *Freedom in the Making of Western Culture*, Greek individualism “was rooted in the Homeric tradition of personal fame and glory and was nourished by habitual competition, as much in art and athletics as in business, but everywhere off the battlefield with little team play.” This individualism “was tempered by little sense of strictly moral responsibility, or in particular of altruism.” It soon became obvious that “private appetites” were motivating people to corrupt the democratic process. Demosthenes lamented that politics had become the path to riches, for individuals no longer placed the state before themselves but viewed it as another way to promote their own personal advantage. Plato’s *Republic* argues that the democratic personality fails because it lacks a coherent organizing principle and yields to the strongest pressures of the moment—a recipe for interpersonal as well as intrapersonal strife.

Sound familiar? Perhaps there is no need to elaborate the similarities. From a Buddhist perspective, the main difference between then and now is that modern industrialized, bureaucratized societies provide different outlets for our perpetual predicament: the dukkha that results when actions are motivated by the three poisons

of greed, ill will, and delusion. Today our economic system has institutionalized greed, our militarism institutionalizes ill will, and our corporate media institutionalize delusion. They are systemic versions of the same problems. The problem is not only that these three poisons are operating collectively but that they have taken on a life of their own. This parallel is especially disturbing because from a Buddhist perspective, these institutions cannot provide the grounding we collectively seek from them, which is why we always want more, and why they tend to grow uncontrollably.

Consumer capitalism institutionalizes greed in at least two ways: corporations are never profitable enough, and people never consume enough. To increase profits, we must be conditioned into finding the meaning of our lives in buying and consuming—but we can never earn or consume enough. Globalization means that this emphasis on profitability and growth are becoming increasingly important as the motivating engine of the world's economic activity. Everything else, including the health of the biosphere and the quality of everyday life, tends to become subordinated to this anonymous demand for ever-more profit and growth, a goal that can never be satisfied since this preoccupation with “ever more” is not directed at any particular endpoint. The earth is converted into resources, and people into human resources.

Many examples of institutionalized ill will, the second poison, could be cited, such as racism, our punitive judicial system, and the treatment of undocumented immigrants, but the “best” example, by far, is the plague of militarism. Whether we are “the good guys” or “the bad guys,” war promotes and rationalizes the very worst part of ourselves: we are encouraged to kill and brutalize other human beings. In doing these things to others, though, we also do them to ourselves. This karma is very simple. To brutalize another is to brutalize myself—that is, to become the kind of person who brutalizes. “In war, there are no unwounded soldiers” (Jose Narosky). But no matter how many weapons we have, it seems like we can never feel secure enough. The parallel with one's individual, never-satisfied sense of lack is hard to miss.

And what about the third poison,

institutionalized delusion? Genuine democracy requires an independent and activist press, to expose abuse and discuss vital issues. As profit-making mega-corporations whose bottom line is advertising revenue, however, the main concern of the media is to do whatever maximizes those profits. An important part of genuine education is realizing that many of the things we think are natural and inevitable (and therefore should accept) are in fact conditioned (and therefore can be changed)—in other words, applying the Greek distinction between *phusis* and *nomos* to our own society. The world does not need to be the way it is; there are other possibilities. The present role of the media is to foreclose most of those possibilities by confining public awareness and discussion within narrow limits. Since we already have the best possible political and economic systems, all that's needed is a few minor adjustments. The media normalize this situation, so that we accept it and continue to perform our required roles, especially the frenzied production and consumption necessary to keep the economy growing. (For more on these systemic versions of the three poisons, see “The Three Poisons, Institutionalized” from *Tikkun's* May/June 2007 issue.)

The profound parallels between our individual “three roots of evil” and these institutionalized versions demonstrate how much personal transformation is intertwined with social transformation. If this relationship between individual *dukkha* and collective *dukkha* is valid, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the great social, economic, and ecological crises of our day are also *spiritual* challenges, which therefore call for a response that must have a religious and personal component.

To sum up, we cannot expect social transformation to work without personal transformation as well, but the history of Buddhism shows that the opposite is also true: religious teachings that promote individual awakening cannot avoid being affected by oppressive social forces that work to keep us asleep and docile. Our own awareness cannot thrive indifferent to what is happening to the awareness of others. As the sociological paradox puts it, people create society, yet society also creates people. Our economic and political systems are not

spiritually neutral; they inculcate certain values (competitive individualism, moneytheism, consumerism, nationalism, and militarism) and they discourage others (community, generosity, empathy, and compassion).

Western attempts at collective social reconstruction have had limited success because they have been compromised by ego-driven individual motivations, such as the three poisons identified by Buddhism. “Religions” such as Buddhism have also had limited success, if the measure of their success is eliminating *dukkha* and delusion, because up until now they have not been able to challenge successfully the *dukkha* and delusion built into oppressive social hierarchies that mystify themselves as necessary and beneficial. Each has been constrained because it has lacked the other, but their convergence in our times opens up fresh possibilities. May each find in the other the supplementary perspective it needs to realize its own deepest promise. ■

SPIRITUALITY IN A TIME OF CRISIS

(continued from page 41)

living, we begin to invite new possibilities that go beyond our old habits and ways of being.

Finally, we need to be able to *incarnate the vision*, moving from the realm of vision to action. This is perhaps the most complex of all the paths, for it calls us to work together in new ways that are infused with the power of creative synergy that remains open to the possibilities and potentiality of each moment while at the same time renouncing the exercise of domination and manipulating control.

In walking all four of these intertwined paths, we find inspiration in the dynamic image of the Tao. To the extent that we can align ourselves with the deep energy and purpose evident in the unfolding evolution of the cosmos, we tap into a vast potentiality that can enkindle, guide, and sustain our work for meaningful change. In the words of Thomas Berry in *The Great Work*: “We are not lacking in the dynamic forces needed to create the future. We live immersed in a sea of energy beyond all comprehension. But this energy, in an ultimate sense, is ours not by domination but by invocation.” ■

FORMALITY

On me like sprayed stars,
blast in the atelier,
splayed below the acrylic horizon

of soldiers running past the fold
of a magazine—
not a chamber, or the storehouse of the arrow,

but digital modernity upon a creased war
which, in fact, is over, we want. It is said: *the error already begins*
when someone is about to buy a stretcher and canvas.

Mission Accomplished for these sailors who are on this ship on their mission,
or the error already begins when someone is about to say *crusade*.
You and I are the lower third, and as we close-caption,

I say again what I thought to be done saying,
oh my sloppiness. When I try to forget you,
one side of my brain sleeps. My breath is held as I would hold.

Would hold. You offer only
brief. A whale thinks not of breath held but breath taking,
and its breath taking sleep is hemisphere by hemisphere.

When the left side sleeps, the right navigates breath,
and while the right sleeps, the left oversees breath.
The left of the human senate, with a mere skeleton,

prevented recess appointments, holding pro forma sessions,
neither chamber adjourning. The whale's never-recess
is chamber by chamber. The whale flips up a tail

which looks to be the biggest butterfly,
Darstellung fluttering deep. Representative one,
you misplace my consent and semaphoring

along my legislative body. I hope
for more than two-thirds.
I speak, as long as necessary, on this issue.

— Deborah Bernhardt

Obama, the Tao, and Planetary Consciousness: the Songs of Penguins and Whales

by Richard Grossinger

I DON'T AGREE WITH ALL OF Barack Obama's positions or policies; he's way too Center Right for me on marijuana, gay marriage, preemptive and permanent war, mercenary armies, extreme renditions, Guantánamo and other war crimes, subservience to Wall Street and corporate lobbies, bailouts for banks and corporations, gun-owners' rights, hush money to Israel, protection of habitats beyond cap-and-trade *mea culpas*, non-AMA medicines, and single-payer health-care reform. That's some major deviation—and I'm not even as Left and progressive as many.

Barack is smart, but there are lots of smart people.

He's compassionate and spiritual. At his inauguration, poet Elizabeth Alexander invoked the physics of love in a political context. But—Leno aside—the way Barack smacked that fly during a TV interview makes it clear to more than just PETA that he's not exactly the Dalai Lama. Would Jesus Christ swat an insect like Dikembe Mutombo blocking a shot? All life is sacred—in action, in principle.

Barack is oriented to service first, power second, but a lot of El Presidentes, even Stalin and Tito, paid lip service to that ministry.

Barack is the first candidate to whom I ever donated money, and I don't regret it. Yes, I am disappointed that he has extended so many Bush administration policies and privileges and wimped out to the Republicans' formulaic capitalism and autopilot militarism—but I am still behind him.

First and foremost, Obama is changing planetary consciousness, from Islamabad to Pyongyang, from Teheran to Havana, from Cairo to Kandahar—not in some obvious way that can be reported on the news and also not in a way that will unambiguously lead to favorable results in the short run.

Those who loved George W. Bush knew from his vibes and body language that, no matter what policies he undertook, he stood on the side of Crusading Jesus and Pentecostal Yahweh; likewise, those who love Barack know in their hearts that, at



the end of the day, he is on the side of the Tao.

As a husband, a father, a son of unknown fathers, a community leader, an artist, a humanitarian, a mensch, Barack is holding a place to which all events are slowly adjusting—subtly, inevitably. His undisclosed meaning is the undisclosed meaning of our times.

Yes, roundballing Barry O. with his ChiSox cap is a mystery, a mystery within a mystery, which is why Conservative crazies deem him an imposter, and far uglier.

Unless we get some of the Earth's actual magic onstage here and now, we will sink under the weight of our own cumulative cyni-

cism, our contrived functioning and feckless do-goodism, our stress-ridden obsession with endless exterior surfaces, media-sanctioned factoids, portable commodities, and immediate payoffs. We will subvert all and everything to hyperfractionated, pulverized attention spans and irresolvable clashes of policy, agenda, and purities of ideology and forget to summon the planet's own deep voice, that arcane and unknown thing not unlike the collective mantra-buzz arising from penguins huddled together in a subzero Antarctic blizzard in the absolute dark, a sound carrying the interior mystery of the Earth Soul and the future key to our redemption. It calls likewise from within the trans-oceanic songs of whales. Deeply intelligent, esoteric voices are arising unheeded from the solar plexus of Spirit Earth.

We are in a nonlinear situation with only non-literal forces to aid us, non-literal gods to turn to—and, for all his pragmatism, Barack is a nonlinear event—nameless, unrevealed; renegade, retrograde.

He has come from an unknown place for which the cover myth is Olduvai Gorge, in order to represent us to ourselves—where we are so that we know how to get to somewhere else. And that's not easy: to stand there patiently, holding the place, even blindly, in gale-force winds, until we see. ■

Richard Grossinger is the author of numerous books including Planet Medicine, New Moon, and The Bardo of Waking Life. A native of New York, he graduated from Amherst College and received a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan for an ethnography of fishing in Maine. He has published books on medicine, cosmology, embryology, and baseball. He is the founder and copublisher of North Atlantic Books in Berkeley, California. This piece is an excerpt from 2013: Raising the Earth to the Next Vibration, published in April 2010.

PLAN B 4.0

Lester R. Brown
W.W. Norton & Co., 2009

LIVING THROUGH THE END OF NATURE

Paul Wapner
The MIT Press, 2010

LESTER BROWN, PRESIDENT OF THE EARTH POLICY Institute, and Paul Wapner, director of the Global Environmental Politics Program in the School of International Service at American University, have each written a book that you and every other American must read.

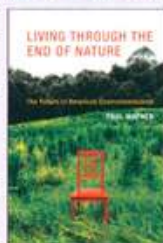
You may have thought you read *Plan B* from Brown before, but actually version 4.0 is an important revision and update of this pioneering work of global environmentalism. 4.0 not only details the threats to the environment, but also the hopeful developments in the past years that need to be kept in mind. The scale of the effort needed to avoid global catastrophe boggles the mind, yet could be achieved if we would agree with Brown's straightforward diagnosis: "Mobilizing to save civilization means fundamentally restructuring the global economy in order to stabilize climate, eradicate poverty, stabilize population, restore the economy's natural support systems, and, above all, restore hope." So Brown is a closet *tikkunista*!

Wapner's book is the most sophisticated analysis of the theoretical issues underlying contemporary environmentalism yet written. In easily accessible language, Wapner unveils some of the contradictions facing environmentalism. For example, he shows that while environmentalism "wants to preserve, conserve, and sustain the more-than-human realm, which involves minimizing our presence, reducing our footprint, and otherwise restraining our interventions," it is also "realizing that this cannot be done without extreme intrusion using some of the most sophisticated technologies and managerial types of control." Wapner argues that these dual orientations are not necessarily antagonistic and that the tension between these two must be incorporated into an environmentalism that recognizes that "we live in a completely humanized world in which every corner of the globe has been inflected by human presence." Wapner's "middle path" involves a set of principles to inform environmentalist policies and a spiritual consciousness that requires mindfulness, heartfulness, a respect for the wildness both within nature and within ourselves, and a willingness to accept our state of not fully knowing how to maintain our awareness of the deep mysteries that abide both inside and outside ourselves—mysteries "whose wildness is crucial to maintaining our own sense of well-being along with that of the world."

THE DISENCHANTMENT OF SECULAR DISCOURSE

Steven D. Smith
Harvard University Press, 2010

POLITICAL DISCOURSE HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY devoid of rationality and ethical content. The reason, according to Steven D. Smith, lies not primarily in the dumbing-down that occurs in contemporary media, but rather in the triumph of a worldview that imagined progress in knowledge and control of our world would be enhanced by leaving behind the metaphysical and ethical domain in favor of a leaner world "viewed as complete in



the empirically observable, naturalistic, or physical dimension." The triumph of secularism has stripped us of our ability to articulate in the public sphere "what we really believe" when it comes to ethical issues. Smith presents the claims of those who have bought into what we at *Tikkun* call scientism and then shows how their worldview leads them to ethical difficulties, making a plea to allow religious discourse back into the public sphere on grounds of tolerance of differences.

RESTORED NEW TESTAMENT: A NEW TRANSLATION WITH COMMENTARY

Willis Barnstone
W.W. Norton & Co., 2009

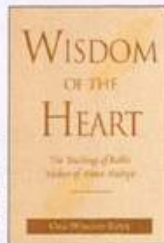
THIS NEW TRANSLATION IS AN IMAGINATIVE AND creative leap into the world that Jesus and his followers inhabited, capturing the texture and sounds of the Aramaic and the Hebrew, as well as of the Greco-Roman worlds in which they lived, struggled, and taught. The fresh rendering restores the incantatory poetry of the Greek, and reviewers have called the *Restored New Testament* the most important and literarily influential version since the 1611 King James Version. Barnstone's introduction is a powerful critique of the identity theft attempted by later Christians to deprive Jesus of his Jewishness: "The disappearance of Yeshua's Jewish identity dumbfounds common sense and history, but, alas, this illusion has remained dominantly at the center of Christian reception of the New Testament.... The anachronistic portrayal of Yeshua and his circle as ... Christian among enemy Jews permits an unquestioned hatred of the Jews, and is a logical understandable and inevitable reading of the New Covenant [i.e. New Testament] as we have it." Barnstone has done a masterful job that will help both Christians and Jews recognize the prophetic brilliance of Yeshua of Natzeret and the potentially revolutionary nature of his teachings.



WISDOM OF THE HEART

Ora Wiskind-Elper
Jewish Publication Society, 2010

THE TEACHINGS OF RABBI YA'AKOV LEINER OF IZVICA-Radzyn (known to some as the Beit Ya'akov) and his father R. Mordecai Joseph Leiner (known as the Mei Hashiloach) have been among the most influential sources of the variant of the Jewish Renewal movement that we call neo-Hasidism and which—transmitted to us from the teachings of Abraham Joshua Heschel, Shlomo Carlebach, Zalman Schachter Shalomi, and from our own study of the Mei Hashiloach and Beit Ya'akov in Hebrew—permeates the worldview of *Tikkun* magazine. Ora Wiskind-Elper presents the wisdom of this inspiring teacher while attempting to convince us that his teachings are less radical than have been touted by many who have labeled them as nonconformist, anarchist, and antinomian. The strength of this book lies in Wiskind-Elper's detailed presentation of the Beit Ya'akov's approach to traditional Jewish texts; her highlighting of his emphasis of the role of the feminine in Jewish thought; and her discussion of his "moving message" that affirmed and elevated the needs of the body and physicality, and communicated the need to come to grips with the suffering of the body. As Wiskind-Elper correctly concludes, Rabbi Ya'akov is attentive, respectful, and filled with love for what is human, moved by a profound belief that no soul, no matter how distant from God, will ever be rejected.



LIBERALS AND PROGRESSIVES NEED A NEW STRATEGY IN THE OBAMA YEARS COME TO THE STRATEGY CONFERENCE JUNE 11-14, WASHINGTON, D.C.

CO-SPONSORED BY *THE NATION* • DEMONSTRATE AT THE WHITE HOUSE ON JUNE 13

Inviting: social change activists and intellectuals • artists and poets • scientists and techies • small business people and philanthropists • atheists and religious people • and all who are aching for peace, social justice, love, kindness, generosity, and ecological sanity to prevail.



Convened by *Tikkun* and the Network of Spiritual Progressives and co-sponsored by *The Nation*, Common Cause, *Yes!* magazine, Progressive Democrats of America, Peace Action, the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, Code Pink, Pace e Bene, the Backbone Campaign, the Shalom Center, the Institute for Policy Studies, 350.org, and many more.

Presenters include Congressman Keith Ellison, Congressman Dennis Kucinich, Bill McKibben, Joan Chittister, David Korten, Medea Benjamin, Dr. Margaret Flowers, Robert McChesney, Marianne Williamson, Robert Thurman, Rev. Brian McLaren, Riane Eisler, Rev. Father John Dear, Sharon Welch, Rev. Graylan Hagler, Jeremy Ben-Ami, Rev. James Forbes, Ama Zenya, Sherry Shapiro, Jonathan Granoff, David Loy, Rabbi Arthur Waskow, Peter Gabel, Rabbi Michael Lerner, Jim Winkler, Lester Brown, Svi Shapiro, Paul Wapner, Bill Moyer, and many more.

THE OBAMA YEARS

The 2008 elections revealed the great yearning of a majority of Americans for a world based on peace, social justice, generosity, environmental sanity, and recognition that our well-being is tied to the well-being of everyone else on the planet. To the extent that Obama and congressional Democrats have failed to fight for a world based on those principles, and have at times moved in the opposite direction, they have opened up a chasm of despair, thereby creating the space for a racist and potentially quasi-fascist movement led by Sarah Palin and Tea Party reactionaries.

Progressives have to protect the liberals from the anger their policies have generated, because we don't want the quasi-fascists to take their place, but we also must put forward an alternative that really embodies the best in liberal and progressive thought. We need you to come to D.C. to strategize with us on how best to build that progressive movement—and to say “no” to the inside-the-Beltway realists and pragmatists who have led liberals and progressives into their current mistaken and unpopular path. Join us at our conference and at our demonstration at the White House!

RESIST THE CORPORATE TAKEOVER OF AMERICAN SOCIETY

At the conference we will discuss:

- **ESRA: The Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.** Corporations are not persons. Spending money on an election is not “free speech.” The planet and all of its people deserve to be protected against the power, influence, and environmental destructiveness of the large corporations, banks, and insurance companies. For info on ESRA, see spiritualprogressives.org/ESRA.
- **A Global Marshall Plan** to end global and domestic poverty, homelessness, hunger and inadequate health care and education as well as to repair the global environment. For info on the GMP, see spiritualprogressives.org/globalmarshallplan.
- **End the War on Terror and Replace the Department of Homeland Security with a Department of Global Well-Being.** The best path to “homeland security” is a Strategy of Generosity (as manifested in the Global Marshall Plan) to replace the military-oriented Strategy of Domination that defines contemporary American politics. Come help us implement a nuanced and sophisticated strategy.

If you can't come to the conference, please help us develop public support for the ESRA and the Global Marshall Plan. Join the Network of Spiritual Progressives.

REGISTER AT SPIRITUALPROGRESSIVES.ORG/CONFERENCE OR CALL 510-644-1200.