Tikkun

POLITICS+SPIRITUALITY+CULTURE

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

SPRING 2012

Daniel Boyarin on

JESUS, THE KOSHER JEW

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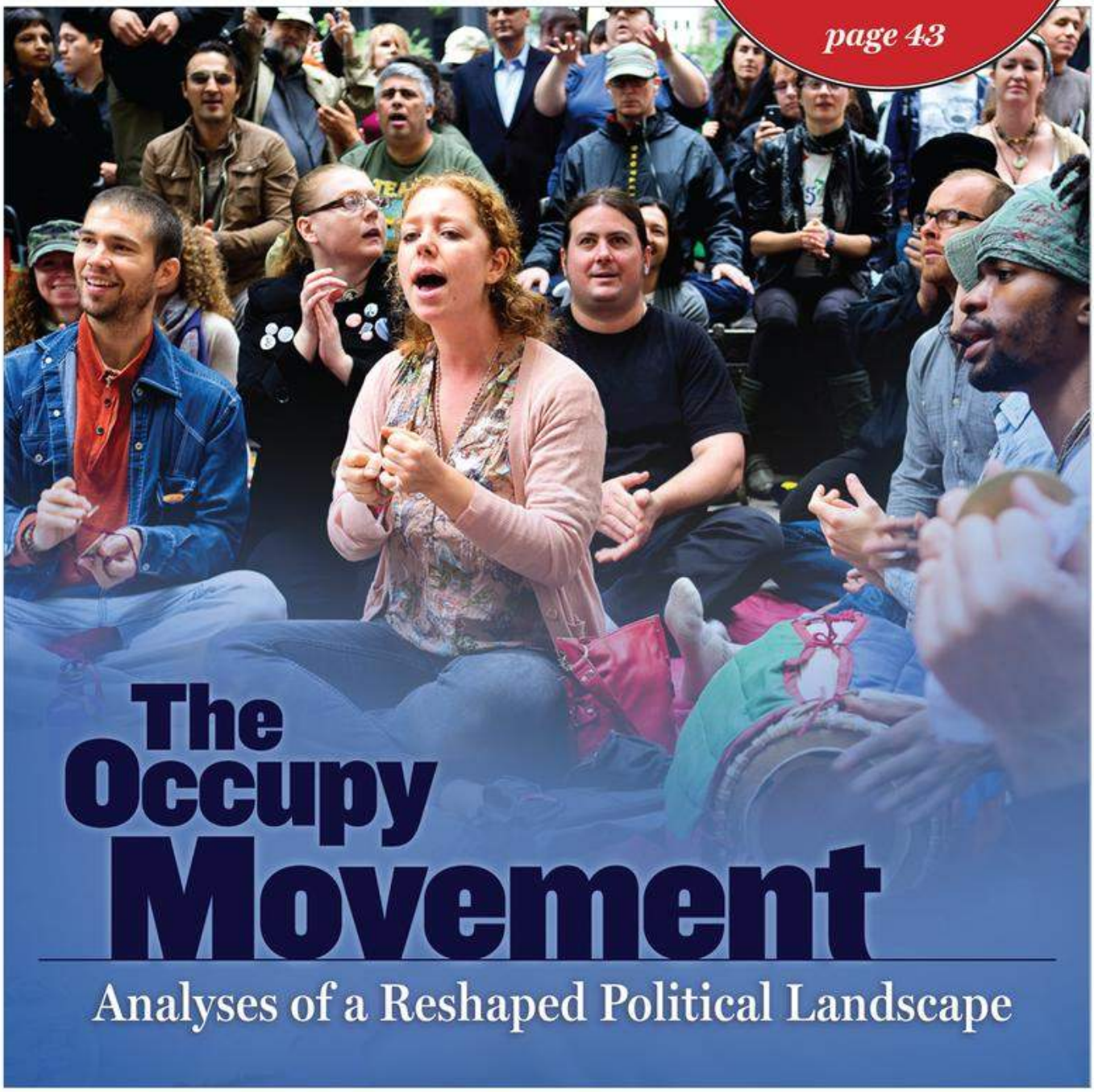

The Occupy Movement

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Obama, Palestine, and the United Nations | Horizontalidad

Manna in the Age of Monsanto | The Religious Counterculture

Consciousness Studies | Melancholia in the Subjunctive Mood

Occupy Passover and Easter | Muslims and Jews in America

Tikkun

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Online Exclusives

Tikkun is not just a print magazine—visit our blog at tikkun.org/daily and our web magazine site at tikkun.org. Vist tikkun.org/occupy to read these online-only articles:

Nonviolence vs. "Diversity of Tactics" in the Occupy Movement by SEAN O'BRIEN, PHIL LAWSON, MATTHEW EDWARDS, KAZU HAGA, MELISSA MERIN, JOSH SHEPHERD, PAOLO, and STARHAWK

Occupy the Climate Emergency by JOHN STANLEY and DAVID LOY

Moving Beyond Occupation into Presence: Decolonizing Our Minds, Hearts, and Spirits by REBECCA SANG

A Conversation with Jeremy Rifkin on *The Third Industrial Revolution*

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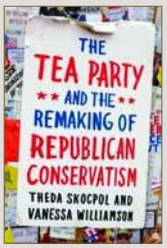
Tikkun RECOMMENDS

THE TEA PARTY AND THE REMAKING OF REPUBLICAN CONSERVATISM

Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson
Oxford University Press, 2012



The Tea Party has reshaped American politics by pulling both parties sharply to the right. Skocpol and Williamson's careful analysis of the Tea Party's ideas and operations, based in part on interviews with activists, is thus particularly useful. They are not, the authors teach, "your father's conservatives." True enough—both parties have tended to serve the interests of the rich and the large corporations. But both in the past were willing to support Medicare and Social Security, whereas Tea Party activists are so committed to a populist, anti-government ideology that they are not willing to accept even those government policies that have broad public support. This ideological purity is often perceived as refreshing by those who have been sickened by the endless unprincipled compromises of many elected officials. And with the backing of the super-rich and Fox News, they have a foundation from which to continue to attack any aspect of government that might threaten the power of America's economic and political elites. Even when their policies lose their luster, they are likely to be around for many years to come.

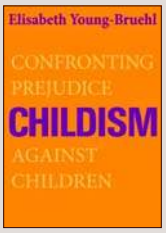
VULTURES' PICNIC

Greg Palast
Dutton, 2011

The one part of government largesse that doesn't get much negative flack from Tea Partiers is the military/industrial/petroleum/security apparatus. Yet reading Greg Palast's powerful exposé on how these elites operate would give Tea Partiers much evidence that the government is in cahoots with the most irresponsible elements in the private sector. The government protects corporations from regulation and exposure for crimes committed against powerless people and the environment. *Vultures' Picnic* brings the reader into the thick of one muckraking journalist's attempt to uncover the criminal practices of corporate giants. Their "mistakes," including the Gulf Coast disaster, often lead to huge environmental devastation. Palast unveils the pattern of BP-covered-up and media-downplayed disasters that have become the norm in our materialistic and environmentally insensitive world, where profit is so often valued above human life. Palast tells this urgent story in an accessible and engaging manner.

CHILDISM: CONFRONTING PREJUDICE AGAINST CHILDREN

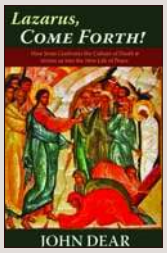
Elisabeth Young-Bruehl
Yale University Press, 2012



The prejudice against children is that we don't see them as real human beings with claims on our caring and respect equal to those of adults. This prejudice then allows us to ignore or minimize the importance of childhood abuse and neglect. Child protective services have been wildly underfunded, and they often place children in family situations that are worse than the situations from which they are supposedly being protected. Neglect and abuse, Young-Bruehl argues, are often ignored or explained away because of the underlying childism in the culture. She details the way childhood abuse is hidden, memories are repressed, and children's testimonies are frequently disbelieved, supporting her argument with many clinical cases to help readers overcome their own denial about how deep childism runs in the contemporary and supposedly more liberated world.

LAZARUS, COME FORTH!

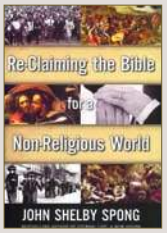
John Dear
Orbis, 2011



Father John Dear is beloved across all religious boundaries for his faithful and unrelenting advocacy for peace and against U.S. militarism. Yet it is a jump for many Jews to open to this book's re-reading of the Book of John, famous for its anti-Jewish account of the crucifixion. But here, as in so many other places in great religious literature, the text itself reflects the contradictions in the soul of the author. If we open ourselves to Dear's new reading, we find John nudging us toward what Dear calls "a realized eschatology" whose message is that we can live today without fear of death and renounce the death culture in which thousands of past generations have been coerced to live. Dear's account of John's notion of resurrection is that we have "the freedom to break the unanimity of our repeated and rabid rush toward war and all the methodologies of death.... We are now free to pour out our lives in service to death's victims, to offer compassion, to secure justice, to inoculate the world against its own violent ways, to beat swords into plowshares and study war no more. We are freed to live as if death has no dominion *this* side of life." So John's story of Lazarus teaches us that "we have been given a great mission—to join God's campaign to lead humanity to the fullness of life." This is precisely what we mean by "tikkun" and what we seek in our Network of Spiritual Progressives. For us, Father John Dear is a leading inspiration, teacher, and activist.

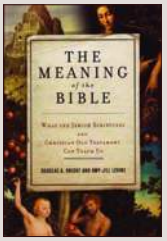
RECLAIMING THE BIBLE FOR A NON-RELIGIOUS WORLD

John Shelby Spong
Harper One, 2011



THE MEANING OF THE BIBLE

Douglas A. Knight and Amy-Jill Levine
Harper One, 2011



Harper One is well on its way toward establishing itself as one of the best publishers of insightful yet accessible new books on religion. John Shelby Spong, former Episcopal Bishop of Newark and a featured speaker at the founding conference of the Network of Spiritual Progressives, has become famous for his willingness to challenge all existing Christian orthodoxies and to provide a spiritual foundation for Christian ideas that have been mistakenly trivialized by the religious establishment. In this book, Spong provides a summary of the books of both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. He writes at an introductory level that gives the reader a basic overview of the stories that have shaped much of the religious thought of the West. Spong concludes from his study of the Bible that "life is holy, that all life is loved, and that each of us is called to be all that we are capable of being."

If you want to go deeper into the texts of the Hebrew Bible, Knight and Levine provide both a historical and a theological contextualization that, when read along with the text itself, connects one to what is most beautiful and most problematic in the holy writings. Sensitive to translating for secularists the issues that have befuddled traditionalists, Knight and Levine provide the more sophisticated reader with a better sense of the latest thinking in biblical studies. Now what we need is a spiritual commentary that highlights the ways in which the Bible might provide people in the United States with the spiritual direction they are seeking.

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.*

ADDICTION AND STRESS

Your two articles on addiction (*Tikkun*, Fall 2011) were of great value but could have been strengthened by addressing root causes of addictions to chemical substances, sex, gambling, shopping, overwork, and other compulsions. Dr. Gabor Mate's book *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts* presents a strong case that many or most addictions stem from the brain's inability to produce chemicals necessary to react to stress. This inability is closely related to a failure to provide infants with the gentle and long-term nurturing necessary for their brains to develop normally. Lack of nurturing is itself influenced by socioeconomic demands on both parents to work. Child abuse also has a powerful impact on brain development and function.

Barry Karlin
Boulder, CO

THOUGHTS ON TWELVE-STEP

Thank you to Nicholas Boeving for his article on addiction (*Tikkun*, Fall 2011). For me, the idea that addiction is a disease that I could put into remission with the help of a relationship to a Higher Power saved my life. It was an entry point of understanding that I could use to do whatever it took no matter how unsavory the task. At the time, prayer and self-inquiry were extremely unsavory to me. But as years passed, I became dissatisfied with the twelve-step model as it is full of the language of conquest. As I learned about meditation (which could be construed as listening), I became turned off by the idea of prayer (it seemed too simplistic to think that God is some guy in charge who really has time to listen to the pathetic requests of all these "sinners"). Eventually, my search for a means to stay out of addiction in ways congruent with what felt right brought me to some powerful practices, all related to ways of creating a shift in perception, a shift in consciousness.

Gabrielle Pullen
Browns Valley, CA

Michael Lerner replies:

It is a mistake to seek one single cause for drug addiction or one single solution. But if we did want to prioritize, the first priority should be to create loving and supportive communities that seek to provide material, psychological, and spiritual caring for everyone. This is what *Tikkun* means when we call for "The Caring Society—caring for each other, caring for the earth." Short of that, and when faced with the dynamics of the competitive marketplace and the ethos of materialism and selfishness of global capitalism, it's astounding that more people aren't addicted to drugs. The call for an end to the addiction to various substitute gratifications like drugs, alcohol, television, money, sex, food, etc., is the call for an end to the conditions that require illusions and substitute gratifications.

THE CHALLENGES OF PEACE

I am a citizen of Israel, a mother of three children, and a nurse by profession. I listened to Rabbi Lerner's moving words as expressed in the Chicago interfaith conference shared with the Dalai Lama in July 2011. Many people in Israel love all mankind regardless of religion, race, and nationality. All we want is calm and peace. We want to live. It is our basic human right. Unfortunately, my parents, my children, and I have been literally fighting for our existence since we were born. I am of second generation to the Holocaust, in which all my father's family perished. My mother was born in Jerusalem, from which she was deported during a war that killed her brother. I grew up carrying with me the Holocaust and the scars of countless wars. Today, the reality is that I live in a small country struggling for existence, surrounded by enemies (see the fragile peace with Egypt) who would not acknowledge its existence. I do not know what hatred is. I'm ready now, at this moment, to love the stranger and the neighbor, ready today and right now to conclude a peace treaty with them.

But contrary to my wishes, my son, a young man of twenty, is serving in the army; my daughter of twenty-six is a university student in

MORE LETTERS

We receive many more letters than we can print! Visit tikkun.org/letters to read more.

Be'er Sheva, a city often bombarded from Gaza. I myself live on a kibbutz in northern Israel under continued threat. I have lost many friends in wars, and as things look today (Arab Spring, the threat from Iran, the spread of terrorist organizations and radical Islam), even my grandchildren probably will have to serve in the army, if we survive until then. Nice words are wonderful, especially when you and your loved ones live in the safety of the United States. Love is a divine gift. I practice love every day and every hour. But it is hard to talk about love with someone who does not speak the language of love. It is very difficult to talk peace with someone who does not recognize my own existence. It is hard to talk peace with someone who hates his brothers, not to mention hating me. I know that Islam also has a different way—that of love, compassion, peace, and harmony between humanity and the faith. I am a great admirer of Sufism and its great poet Jalal al-Din Rumi. This branch is condemned by Islam as *cufur*. I am a great admirer of the Dalai Lama, but I cannot avoid thinking of his people who are oppressed, imprisoned, murdered, and disappeared every day in Tibet. Monks light themselves on fire. Women are being sterilized by force. Despite the love, compassion, and other beautiful words, they have no savior. Most Israelis feel, think, and live like I do, Rabbi Lerner. I hope you will remember these things when you make public speeches with a lot of pretty and lofty words.

Sarit Shatz
Kibbutz Sarid, Israel

Michael Lerner replies:

I also want you to be safe and secure. But that cannot happen as long as Israelis are blind to the history of expulsions of Palestinians, first from their homes inside Israel (1948–49), then from settlement-occupied lands in the West Bank from 1967 to the present. These expulsions are discussed in more detail in my book *Embracing Israel/Palestine*. You can also read about this history in even greater detail in Benny Morris's study *Righteous Victims* and Idit Zertal's book on the settlements. Unfortunately, the Israeli educational system is as blind to this as the American educational system has been blind to the genocide of Native Americans and the huge suffering caused by slavery and then by segregation.

Sadly, there will be no safety for you or your children until the Israeli public, and all the loving people like you, deeply understand the details of this process of expulsion of Palestinians and then move to rectify this huge injustice. At the moment, there is little motivation for many Israelis to demand that kind of societal re-education. Because I care deeply about Israel, so much so that my son served in *Tzanchanim* (the combat unit of the Israeli army that is the equivalent of our paratroopers), I cannot cease from calling for a new ethos of love and generosity on both sides.

Tikkun

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Occupy Passover Seders and Easter Gatherings

Both Passover and Easter have a message of liberation and hope for the downtrodden of the earth. Yet too often we fail to see the continuities between the original liberatory messages of these holidays and the contemporary need for liberation and resurrection of the dead parts of our consciousness.

Tikkun has always sought to offer resources for breathing liberatory politics and spiritual aliveness back into the celebration of holidays, from Passover, to Christmas, to the Fourth of July. This is our first attempt to craft a Seder addressing the needs of the 99 percent, without excluding those members of the 1 percent who have a generous and open heart and wish to identify with the movements to heal and transform our world toward greater generosity, democracy, equality, and caring for everyone and for the earth. We are inviting you to use some of the ideas below in your Easter or Passover celebration, in whatever way feels authentic to you. We're also hoping that those of you who are neither Christian nor Jewish may use the inspiration you get from reading these ideas as a jumping-off point for creating your own rituals or liturgies to highlight the oppression we are facing in the contemporary world in a way that fits with your own spiritual or religious practice.

ISTOCKPHOTO/RONANDJOE

Kadesh—Opening Blessing over the Fruit of the Vine (Grape Juice or Wine)

Before the blessing over the first cup of wine or grape juice, say:

This Passover is the celebration of the liberation of our forefathers and foremothers from Egypt some 3,200 years ago. Had there been no liberation, there would never have been a Jewish people, a Moses, an Isaiah, a Jesus, a Freud, a Marx, a Betty Friedan, or many of the liberatory movements to which they and other Jews gave rise. Jesus's "Last Supper" was a Passover Seder and was celebrated as such by many of the Early Christians until the Catholic Church's Council of Nicaea in 323 CE decided to forcibly separate Christianity from its roots in the Jewish tradition.

Yet as much as we must celebrate the victories of the past, we are also sadly aware of the oppressive realities of the present. So Passover and Easter must not become hollow celebrations of past victories that ignore the present depraved social reality that allows 2.5 billion people to struggle to stay alive on less than $2 a day, 1.5 billion of whom live in the horrible condition of only $1 a day or less. In our own country, tens of millions of people are struggling. Millions are without homes, many more are without jobs, still more have jobs that do not pay a living wage, and many have jobs that are only part-time or that do not give them an opportunity to use their full intelligence and skills. The Occupy movement has highlighted the plight of the downtrodden and the immoral social and economic policies that have resulted in their condition, benefiting the rich at the expense of the 99 percent.

Today it's important to understand that the "downtrodden"—those who are hurt by the materialism and selfishness built into the very ethos of global capitalism—are *not only* the homeless, the jobless, the underemployed, those working more than one job in order to help support their families, those whose mortgages have inflated to levels that they cannot pay, those who can't afford to attend college or university as states are forced to raise the fees of public universities, or those who are likely to lose their jobs in the next few years.

The downtrodden are also those of us who find ourselves surrounded by others who seem endlessly selfish and materialistic or by people who see us only in terms of how we can advance their interests or perceived needs. No—it's not just strangers. People today increasingly report that even their

friends, spouse, or children seem to see them through the frame of the question, "What have you done for me lately?" or, "What can you give me to satisfy *my* needs?" No wonder people feel unrecognized, disrespected, and very lonely, even when they are in a family or a loving relationship. These are also the downtrodden, a part of the 99 percent, victims of the very same system that puts others out of work, makes them jobless, or homeless, or hungry, or desperate, or scared that they will soon be among the economic casualties of this system—the system that teaches us to close our eyes to their suffering.

Yet the message of Passover and Easter is that we are not stuck; that liberation and transformation are possible; and that we should celebrate the partial victories of the past in order to gain both perspective and hopefulness about the future. No, not the hope that some politician is going to save us, but the hope that we ourselves can become mobilized to engage in *tikkun olam* (the healing, repair, and transformation of our world). Just as the Israelites who were emancipated from slavery in Egypt (celebrated on Passover) became mobilized, and just as the Early Christians who encountered Jesus's liberation message for the poor started rejecting the injustice around them, we can begin to live as witnesses to the possibility of a different world.

The Occupy movement has made a great contribution to collective consciousness by helping popularize the notion of the need to resist the class war that has been perpetrated against the 99 percent for the past three decades by the 1 percent and their enablers in both major political parties, the media, the economic structure of our society, and those who popularize the mythologies of the powerful.

Ur'chatz—Washing the Hands

Before washing hands, say:

The irony of systems of oppression is that they usually depend upon the participation of the oppressed in their own oppression. Rather than challenging the system, people accept their place within it, understanding that they may lose their jobs or worse should they become known to the powerful as "disloyal" or "dissidents." In capitalist society, it is not just external coercion but also the internalization of worldviews of the powerful that make the oppressed willing participants in the system. As we do the Ur'chatz on Passover, we symbolically wash our hands of this participation in our own oppression.

The mythology of upward mobility and meritocracy ("you can make it if you really try and if you deserve to make it") leads people to blame themselves for not having achieved more economic security—a self-blame that often leads to emotional depression, alcoholism, or drug addiction, and also to quiet acquiescence to the existing class divisions. The realization that only a small minority of people will ever rise significantly above the class position into which they were born rarely permeates mass consciousness, because each person has been led to believe that she or he is the one who is going to make it.

The belief that democracy levels the playing field between the powerful and the powerless also pervades our society. We celebrate the victories of democracy for good reason—what democracy does exist is the product of long struggles of ordinary working people against oligarchy. But in the twenty-first-century world, democracy is severely limited by the power of corporations and the rich to shape public opinion through their ownership of the media and their ability to pour huge sums of money into the coffers of "viable" candidates (namely, those who support their interests). Without the economic means to buy the television time or employ the large campaign staffs necessary to make a third or fourth party effective, dissenters often end up channeling their energies through the two major political parties, which have repeatedly demonstrated their loyalty to the powerful—thereby unintentionally re-empowering the very forces that oppress them.

Karpas—Dipping Fresh Greens or Other Vegetables in Salt Water

Before the blessing over the greens, say:

The rebirth of the earth each spring reminds us that things that appeared dead can be resurrected and returned to life. Yes, the salt water represents the tears of suffering, but the vegetables represent the return of spring and symbolize hopefulness.

The greens on the table also remind us of our commitment to protect the planet from ecological destruction. Instead of focusing narrowly on what we may "realistically" accomplish in today's world, we must refocus the conversation on what the planet needs in order to survive and flourish. We must get out of the narrow place in our thinking and look at the world not as a resource, but as a focus for awe, wonder, and amazement. We must reject the societal story that identifies success and progress with endless growth and accumulation of things. Instead we should focus on acknowledging that we already have enough; we need to stop exploiting our resources and instead care for the earth.

We are in the midst of a huge spiritual and environmental crisis. Our society has lost its way. Yet most of us are embarrassed even to talk about this seriously, so certain are we that we could never do anything to transform this reality. We're also fearful that we will be met with cynicism and derision for even allowing ourselves to think about challenging the kind of technocratic and alienating rationality that parades itself as "progress" in the current world.

Dip the greens in salt water and say a blessing. From this point on you can eat anything on the table that is a vegetable or vegetable-based.

Maggid—Telling the Stories of Liberation

Before the blessing over the second cup of wine, say:

We are the community of *Tikkun*, the Network of Spiritual Progressives (NSP) of all faiths—the religious and spiritual community formed around the ancient Jewish idea that our task is to be partners with God in healing and transforming our world. We know that the world can be healed and

transformed—that is the whole point of telling the Passover story or the Easter story. Our task is to find the ways to continue the struggle for liberation in our own times and in our own circumstances. Some of the steps include:

- Recognizing each other as allies in that struggle and supporting each other even though we see each other's flaws and inadequacies as well as our own.
- Pouring out love into the world, even when we don't have a good excuse for giving that love to others, even when it seems corny or risky to do so, and thus breaking down our own inner barriers to loving others and to loving ourselves.
- Rejecting the cynical view that everyone is out for himself or herself, that there is nothing but selfishness—and instead allowing ourselves to see that we are surrounded by people who would love to live in a world based on love, justice, and peace if they thought that others would join them in building such a world.
- Taking the risk of being the first ones out in public to articulate an agenda of social change—even though being those people may mean risking economic security, physical security, and sometimes even the alienation of friends and family.
- Allowing ourselves to envision the world the way we really want it to be—and not getting stuck in spiritually crippling talk about what is "realistic."

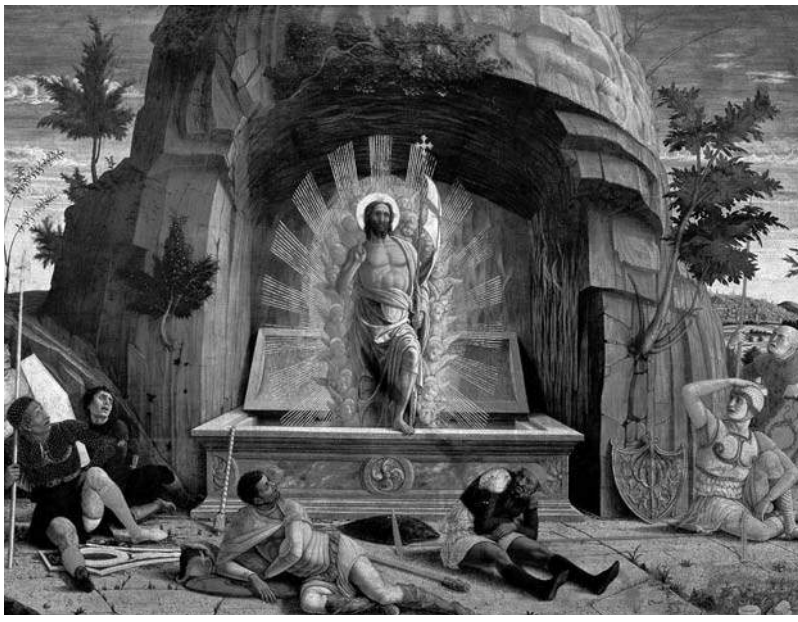
The stories of Passover and Easter are about our people learning to overcome the "realistic" way of looking at the world. On this day, we want to affirm our connection with a different truth: that the world is governed by a spiritual power, by God, by the Force of Transformation and Healing, and that we are created in Her image, we are embodiments of the Spirit, and we have the capacity to join with each other to transform the world we live in.

Affirming that, we dip the greens on our Seder plate with joy at the beauty and goodness of this earth and its vegetation and recommit ourselves to do all we can to stop those processes in our society that are contributing to the destruction of the earth.

Yachatz—Breaking the Matzah

Break the middle matzah on the matzah plate and say:

We break the matzah and hide one part (the *afikomen*). We recognize that liberation is made by imperfect people, broken and fragmented—so don't wait until you are totally pure, holy, spiritually centered, and psychologically healthy to get involved in *tikkun* (the healing and repair of the world). It will be imperfect people, wounded healers, who do the healing as we simultaneously work on ourselves. Close your eyes for a moment and let come to mind some part of you that is broken and needs healing. Resolve to work on that part, but *not* use that brokenness as an excuse not to engage in social/political transformation. Then, let come to mind some others who are broken and hence less perfect than you would wish. Accept their brokenness as the consequence of their having faced the psychological, cultural, intellectual, economic, and political distortions of the modern world, and then tell yourself that you resolve to work with them to heal our world rather than to wallow in the excuse of their imperfections as the reason that you can't see yourself getting involved in social movements anymore.



Just as the Passover tale asserts the possibility for liberation, the Easter story evokes a world shaped by love rather than domination.

CREATIVE COMMONS/ANDREA MANTEGNA

Ha Lachma Anya—The Bread of Affliction

Raise the middle matzah so that everyone can see it and say:

This is the bread of affliction. Let everyone who is hungry come and eat. But when saying that traditional line—"let all who are hungry come and eat"—we must also recognize the stark contrast between the generosity of the Jewish people expressed in this invitation and the actual reality in which we live. In the past year, the U.S. Congress has passed tax legislation that will return hundreds of billions of dollars to the well-to-do, and yet our country has no money to deal with the needs of the poor, the homeless, and the hungry. We should be taking those hundreds of billions of dollars and using them to rebuild the economic infrastructures of the impoverished all around the world, providing decent housing and food for those who are in need. Instead, we live in a world in which we try to build barriers to protect ourselves against the poor and the homeless, which demeans them and blames them for the poverty they face. Debates about "the deficit" switch the traditional Jewish focus on how to care for the poor and those who are economically unstable to how to protect what the rest of us have now. Imagine how far this is from the spirit of Torah; in our sacred text, it was impossible for someone to argue that they had to reduce what they were giving to the poor of today in order to ensure that they would have more to give in the future. Our Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, and secular humanist obligation is to take care of the poor right

now, rather than explain to them that they may have to get less from us because of our calculations about the future or because of our theory that if we give more to the rich now, the wealth will trickle down to the rest. Oy, the contortions the apologists for inequalities go through to justify selfishness—and oy, how easily many of us fall for that line though the expected "trickle down" has rarely been enough to lessen the distance between rich and poor!

So when we say, "*Ha lachmah anya*—this is the bread of affliction; let all who are hungry come and eat," we remind ourselves that this spirit of generosity is meant to be a contrast to the messages of class society, which continually try to tell us "there is not enough" and that we therefore can't afford to share what we have with others. We are the richest society in the history of the human race, and we may be the stingiest as well—a society filled with people who think that we don't have enough.

We who identify with *Tikkun* and are part of the Network of Spiritual Progressives proudly proclaim: **there is enough, we are enough, and we can afford to share.**

Four Questions: The Adult Version

Discuss as a group or in pairs at the Seder table, at your Easter celebration, or at whatever other celebration of spring you participate in:

1. The word *Mitzrayim* (Egypt) comes from the Hebrew word *tzar*—the narrow place, the constricted place. In what way are you personally still constricted? Are you able to see yourself as part of the unity of all being, a manifestation of God's love on earth? Are you able to overcome the ego issues that separate us from each other? Can you see the big picture, or do you get so caught in the narrow places and limited struggles of your own life that it's hard to envision it? What concrete steps might you take to change that?
2. Do you believe that we can eventually eradicate wars, poverty, and starvation? Do you believe that people don't really care about anyone but themselves, and that we will always be stuck in some version of the current mess? Or do you think that such a belief is itself part of what keeps us in this mess? If so, how would you suggest we spread a more hopeful message and deal with the cynicism and self-doubt that always accompanies us when we start talking about changing the world?
3. What experiences have you had that give you hope? Tell about some struggle to change something—a struggle that you personally were involved in—that worked. What did you learn from that?
4. When the Israelites approached the Sea of Reeds, the waters did not split. It took a few brave souls to jump into the water. Even then, the waters rose up to their very noses, and only then, when these brave souls showed that they really believed in the Force of Healing and Transformation (YHVH), did the waters split and the Israelites walk through them. Would you be willing to jump into those waters today? For example, you might jump into those waters by:

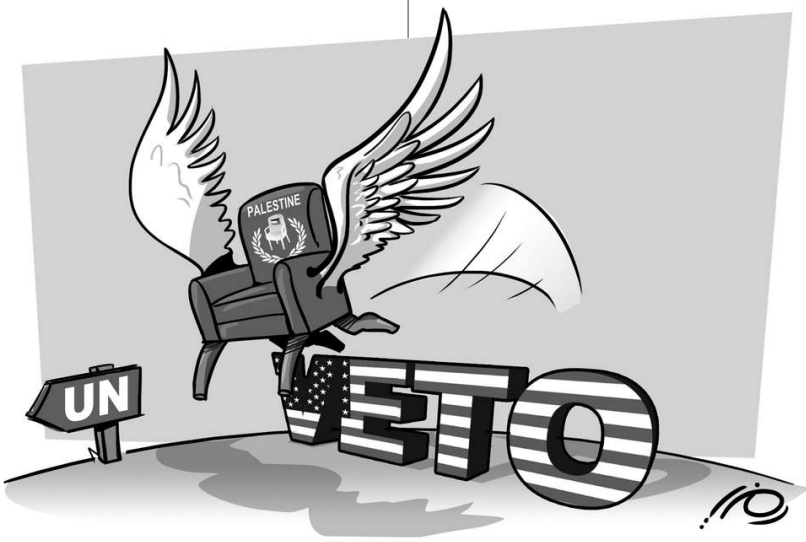
- Championing nonviolence and a new foreign policy based on the strategy of generosity embodied in the Global Marshall Plan (GMP), which calls for the dedication of 1 to 2 percent of the Gross Domestic Product of the United States every year for the next twenty to once and for all end—not just ameliorate, but *end*—domestic and global poverty, homelessness, hunger, inadequate education, and inadequate health care and repair the global environment (spelled out more fully in the downloadable version at tikkun.org/GMP).
- Advocating the elimination of private money in politics and requiring corporate environmental and social responsibility as embodied in the NSP's Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment (ESRA) to the U.S. Constitution (read the latest version at tikkun.org/ESRAtext).
- Taking up the call for economic justice put forward by the Occupy movement and then moving beyond occupations and tent cities to insist on this agenda for your elected officials and for public media. Would you let your political leaders know that you refuse to vote for any "lesser-evil candidate"?
- Embracing the NSP's "Spiritual Covenant with America" (read it at tikkun.org/covenant). Would you go to speak about this to your elected representatives? To your neighbors? To your coworkers? To your family? If not, what do you think holds you back, makes you pessimistic, or makes you feel embarrassed to talk to others about transforming our world? ■

WAIT—THERE'S MORE!

The full version of this Occupy Passover/Easter Seder for the 99 percent can be accessed online at tikkun.org/seder2012. Please feel free to make copies of this guide and circulate them to your friends. We encourage you to use this as a model for what you could create as a Seder for the 99 percent or as a model for introducing a consciousness of the need for contemporary struggles for liberation—including support for the Occupy movement—into your Easter or other spring-oriented celebrations. Meanwhile, please help us continue this work by joining the Network of Spiritual Progressives (tikkun.org/join) and exploring the many ways in which you can get involved (tikkun.org/engage).

Obama, Palestine, and the United Nations

by Stephen Zunes



For the Palestinian Authority to win UN recognition of Palestinian statehood, it would have to overcome major hurdles presented by the Obama administration. Back in 1948, Israel achieved its independence through a U.S.-backed UN General Assembly resolution.

RAMZY TAWEEL (CARTOON MOVEMENT)

For those of us who hoped that President Barack Obama would usher in a new era supporting international law, the United Nations, and Israeli-Palestinian peace, 2011 proved to be a profoundly disappointing year. The Obama administration blocked Palestinian membership in the UN, refused to pressure Israel to make the necessary compromises for peace, and vetoed a mildly worded UN Security Council resolution that supported the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and reiterated the illegality of Israeli settlements in occupied territories.

Though international conflicts—including those between Israel and its neighbors—have historically been addressed in the UN, the Obama administration insists that this should no longer be the case. While President Obama has been eager to use the UN to go after governments he doesn't like—such as Iran, Syria, and Gaddafi's Libya—he takes a very different view regarding U.S. allies like the rightist government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Despite the Israeli government's ongoing violations of a series of UN Security Council resolutions, a landmark advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, and basic international humanitarian law, Obama vowed last May that "we will stand against attempts to single [Israel] out for criticism in international forums."

Back in 1988 the Palestinians declared an independent state, which has since been recognized by more than 130 of the world's nations. When the Palestinian Authority sought membership into the UN this fall, however, the Obama administration insisted that it was still too early; it arrogantly dismissed the Palestinians' effort to exercise their moral and legal rights to seek recognition by the international community as simply "symbolic actions to isolate Israel at the United Nations."

In October, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) voted to accept Palestine as a member. In response, the Obama administration cut all funding, which constituted a full 22 percent of the agency's budget, thereby crippling the UN body, whose mission is "to contribute to the building of peace, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information," with a particular emphasis in recent years on promoting gender equality. A series of measures passed by Congress in the 1990s—which the Obama administration has made no attempt to repeal—would similarly require the United States to eliminate its funding for the World Health Organization (forcing massive cutbacks in AIDS prevention, vaccination, and oral rehydration programs for millions of Africans and others) if that agency admits Palestine as a member. The United States would also cut

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funding for the International Atomic Energy Agency (the nuclear watchdog group), the International Civil Aviation Organization, and a dozen other UN agencies should they admit Palestine as well.

Opposing Recognition of Palestinian Statehood

The Obama administration's opposition to UN recognition of Palestinian statehood is based on its insistence that Palestinian statehood can be recognized only following an agreement resulting from negotiations between the Israeli occupiers and the Palestinians under occupation that is facilitated by the United States—the primary military, economic, and diplomatic supporter of the occupying power.

Unfortunately, while the moderate leadership of the Palestinian Authority under President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad has made a series of unprecedented compromises, the current Israeli government is the most hard-line in that country's history and has retreated from proposals made by previous Israeli governments.

For example, Netanyahu insists that Arab East Jerusalem—the largest Palestinian city and the historic heart of Palestinian cultural, economic, religious, and academic life—should be permanently annexed to Israel, as should the Jordan Valley on the eastern border of Palestine. Furthermore, his government has declared that large swaths of territory in between should also be annexed to Israel to incorporate its illegal settlements.

The only land left for the Palestinians to have for their "state" would be a series of tiny, noncontiguous cantons surrounded by Israel. Still, Obama insists that Palestinian statehood must not be recognized except under conditions agreed to by the current rightist Israeli government.

Back in 1948, the United States did not demand that the Jews in the British Mandate of Palestine refrain from going to the UN or that they reach a negotiated agreement with the Palestinians on their boundaries and related issues in order to have their state recognized. Israel achieved its independence through a U.S.-backed UN General Assembly resolution and was accepted, with U.S. support, as a member state the following year. Indeed, the United States was the very first country to recognize Israel.

More recently, the United States recognized Kosovo's unilaterally declared independence and has supported its application for UN membership without demanding a negotiated agreement with the Serbs, despite the fact that Kosovo is legally a part of Serbia.

Israel certainly has legitimate security concerns, which is why UN Security Council Resolution 242—long seen as the basis of Israeli-Palestinian peace—calls for security guarantees from Israel's neighbors as a prerequisite for Israel's withdrawal from occupied Arab territories. However, the Palestinian Authority, under the leadership of Abbas and Fayyad, has already accepted such security guarantees as part of a final agreement; this includes demilitarization of their new state, the disarming of militias, and the opening of their country to Israeli and international monitors. Meanwhile, there has been a marked decrease in attacks against civilians inside Israel from areas controlled by the Palestinian Authority since Abbas became president in 2005.

The Palestinian Authority has also made clear in its application for UN membership that it is not demanding any Israeli territory inside the pre-1967 borders. The state Palestinians wish to have recognized, therefore, would constitute only 22 percent of historic Palestine. Unfortunately, the Obama administration apparently believes this is too much. The promise of the Obama administration to veto this historic diplomatic initiative in which the Palestinian leadership is permanently renouncing its claims to 78 percent of Palestinians' historic homeland will only embolden Hamas. Palestinian extremists can now argue that compromise and diplomacy do not work and that armed struggle for all of Palestine is the only means for achieving statehood.

In many respects, U.S. policy toward Palestinians in the West Bank is comparable to Western attitudes toward colonized peoples in Africa and Asia prior to the mid-twentieth century: independence could occur only under conditions granted by the

occupying powers, with the time at which these nations could be free, their specific boundaries, and the conditions of their independence reached only through negotiations between the colonial occupiers and representatives (approved by the colonial powers) of the conquered peoples. Like the Obama administration, the colonialists insisted that it was not within the purview of the UN or any other international legal authority to adjudicate such matters, since the rights of those in the colonies were limited to what was willingly agreed to by the colonizers.

Activists in Washington, D.C., urge Obama to push for a ceasefire amid Israel's Operation Cast Lead in January 2009. Many at the time were hopeful that the president-elect would respond to the urgency of Palestinian suffering.

What the Obama administration fails to recognize is that, as a territory under foreign belligerent occupation, the Palestinians of the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip have a legal right to self-determination under international law, and neither Israel, the United States, nor any other government can deny that to them. Yet the administration appears to be blinded by a pre-Wilsonian belief in the right of conquest, whereby political freedom can be allowed only to the extent that it is voluntarily granted by the conqueror (which both Republicans and Democrats have repeatedly referred to as potential "painful concessions" by Israel).

Obama, in a speech before the UN in October, argued, "Ultimately, it is the Israelis and the Palestinians—not us—who must reach agreement on the issues that divide them: on borders and on security, on refugees and Jerusalem." What this ignores, however, is that the UN Charter and international law have always put the impetus on the occupying power, not the country under occupation, in reaching an agreement on issues that divide them. UN Security Council Resolution 242 reiterates the illegality of any nation expanding its territory by force, yet Obama now insists that the two sides must "reach agreement" on that question.

Similarly, UN Security Council resolutions 252, 267, 271, 298, 476, and 478—passed without U.S. objection during both Democratic and Republican administrations—specifically call on Israel to rescind its annexation of Jerusalem and other efforts to alter the city's legal status. In a nationally televised address in May, Obama even argued that the borders of the new Palestinian state should be agreed upon prior to negotiations over the status of East Jerusalem, which is the nominal Palestinian capital and the base of leading Palestinian universities, businesses, and cultural and religious landmarks. Any idea that the Palestinians will accept an independent mini-state without East Jerusalem as its capital is naïve.

Obama also disingenuously claimed that "America has invested so much time and so much effort in the building of a Palestinian state, and the negotiations that can deliver a Palestinian state," when in reality the United States has long opposed the establishment of a Palestinian state, formally endorsing the idea barely eight years ago. As far back as 1976, the United States vetoed a UN Security Council resolution calling for the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip under strict security guarantees for Israel.

Supporting Settlements

Instead of allowing Palestine's membership in the UN, Obama insists that the UN should instead simply "encourage the parties to sit down" and "listen to each other." Unfortunately, in the more than twenty years since Palestinians and Israelis first sat down and started listening to each other, Israel has more than doubled the number of colonists in the occupied Palestinian territories, in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, a series of UN Security Council resolutions, and a landmark 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, all of which call on Israel to unconditionally withdraw from these settlements. The United States has pledged to veto any sanctions or other proposed actions by the UN to force Israel to live up to its international legal obligations.

CREATIVE COMMONS/CODEPINK WOMEN FOR PEACE

Indeed, in February of last year, Obama vetoed a UN Security Council resolution that simply reiterated the illegality of these settlements and called for a freeze on further construction. All fourteen of the other members of the Security Council voted for the resolution, which was cosponsored by a nearly unprecedented majority of UN members. This not only situated the United States as an extreme outlier in the international community, it also placed Obama to the right of the conservative governments of the United Kingdom and France.

Refusal to recognize the illegality of Israeli settlements at the UN was not always the U.S. position. When Israel's colonization drive began in the 1970s, the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations were quite willing to do so, with the United States supporting (or abstaining from) four UN Security Council resolutions (446, 452, 465, and 471) calling on Israel to dismantle the settlements. However, despite his distinguished legal background, Obama has demonstrated—on this issue, at least—that he has even less respect for the law than did Richard Nixon.

U.S. ambassador to the UN Susan Rice, in justifying the administration's veto of the anti-settlement resolution, insisted that it is "unwise for this Council to attempt to resolve the core issues that divide Israelis and Palestinians." However, the resolution did not "attempt to resolve" anything. Instead, it explicitly called for the resumption of negotiations. What Obama objected to was the resolution's insistence that negotiations be based on international law, which is actually a very appropriate role for the UN Security Council.

Obama also placed himself to the right of the liberal and mainstream Jewish community, the majority of whom, according to public opinion polls, believe the United States should take a harder line against illegal settlements. Moderate pro-Israel groups like J Street and Americans for Peace Now had encouraged President Obama not to veto the anti-settlement resolution, but the president rejected their pleas, instead allying himself with such right-wing groups as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). In short, this is not simply a matter of Obama catering to the "Jewish vote" or to "pro-Israel groups," which were clearly divided on this issue. Instead, he was allying with the right wing of the Jewish community and with the right wing overall, effectively endorsing the Bush administration's view that international humanitarian law, the UN, and basic international legal principles are not considered applicable if the violator is a U.S. ally.

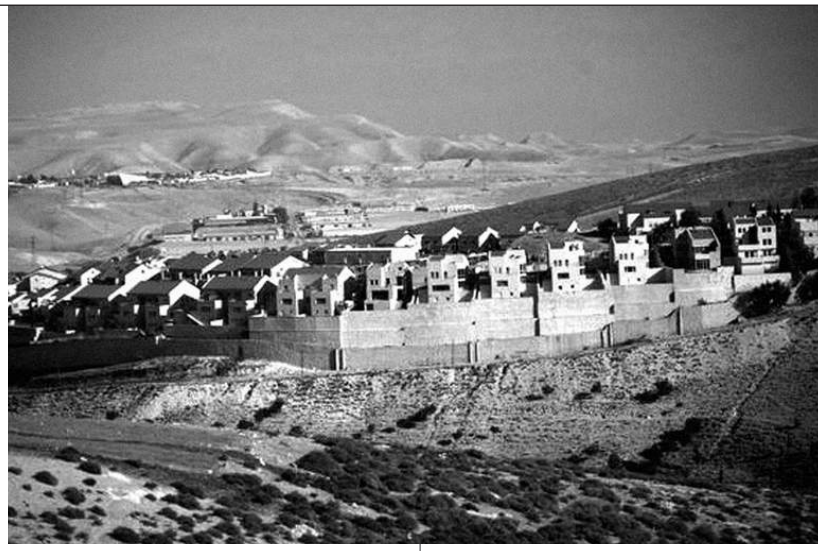
Supporters of international law and Middle East peace the world over denounced Obama's veto; Human Rights Watch noted how it "undermines enforcement of international law." Israeli journalist Ami Kaufman, writing in the *Jerusalem Post*, noted that "the U.S. has lost any ounce of credibility it had left with this latest move." Writing in *Haaretz*, Gideon Levy wrote that Obama's first veto "was a veto against the chance and promise of change, a veto against hope. This is a veto that is not friendly to Israel; it supports the settlers and the Israeli right, and them alone." He added: "America, which Israel depends on more than ever, said yes to settlements. That is the one and only meaning of its decision, and in so doing, it supported the enterprise most damaging to Israel."

Is Support for a Two-State Solution Real?

Despite his apparent alliance with the right, Obama has at times appeared somewhat open to a more moderate position on Israel and Palestine. Last May, for example, Obama gave a speech in which he stressed that the Israeli Occupation should end and an independent Palestinian state should be established, with its boundaries based on the internationally recognized pre–June 1967 borders. He specified that Palestinian borders must be with "Israel, Jordan, and Egypt," which appeared to challenge both Netanyahu's desire to prevent the Gaza Strip from joining with the West Bank and his desire to annex Palestine's Jordan Valley (thereby having Israel completely surround a proposed Palestinian mini-state and closing off Palestinian

access to its eastern neighbor Jordan). Though Obama's call was consistent with what has been the international consensus for years, right-wing Republicans and other allies of Israel's rightist government have called Obama's position "anti-Israel."

However, Obama did not call for a complete withdrawal of Israeli troops and settlers from occupied Palestinian territory. The unspecified variations from the pre-1967 borders, Obama insisted, should be made through "mutually agreed-upon" land swaps. Unfortunately, despite Abbas agreeing to such reciprocal territorial swaps, Netanyahu has refused to consider trading any land within Israel while simultaneously insisting on annexing large swaths of occupied Palestinian territory. It is hard to imagine how such mutually agreed-upon swaps will take place without the United States exerting enormous leverage such as withholding some of the annual $3 billion in unconditional aid, which Obama has already ruled out.



Following Palestinians' successful bid to join UNESCO in October 2011, construction of new homes in the settlement of Ma'ale Adumim was expedited. Human rights groups have denounced the Obama administration's February 2011 decision to veto a UN Security Council resolution reiterating the illegality of these settlements.

ACTIVESTILLS.ORG/OREN ZIV

In many respects, Obama is like the moderates described in Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter From Birmingham Jail" who similarly professed to support the goals but not the methods of the freedom movement. Like those challenged by the late civil rights leader, Obama insists that the oppressed simply trust in negotiations with oppressors who refuse to compromise. He thereby, in King's words, "believes he can set the timetable for someone else's freedom."

Obama's anti-Palestinian position is seriously damaging the standing of the United States in the Arab world just when we can least afford to alienate the new generation of pro-democracy activists who are nonviolently trying to reshape the region.

It is unlikely that Obama will gain much domestically from his hard-line stance either, given that most people who support the Israeli Occupation will presumably vote Republican anyway. Indeed, Republicans will continue to call him "anti-Israel" despite his anti-Palestinian position, just as they call him "socialist" no matter how much he kowtows to Wall Street. Instead, Obama has simply further eroded the support of his liberal base that believes Palestinians, no more or less than Israelis, have the right to national self-determination and that international law, not power politics, should be the basis of negotiations. Obama's denial of the Palestinian right to self-determination and undermining of efforts by Israeli moderates and progressives will cause many of us who enthusiastically supported his candidacy in 2008 to sit out this year's election.

From most accounts of those who knew Barack Obama personally prior to his entering national politics, he understood both the Palestinian and Israeli narratives and was committed to holding his ground on clear moral issues like settlements. However, his earlier challenges to Netanyahu were rebuffed by the Israeli prime minister and were criticized not just by Republicans but by prominent Democratic leaders, as well, and he refused to follow through.

Obama, then, does not need to be educated. In order for his policies to change, he needs to be pressured.

Obama has said so himself. At a small campaign fundraiser in New Jersey in early 2008, he was asked if he would be willing to pressure Israel to make the necessary concessions for peace. He responded by telling the story of when A. Philip Randolph, head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, came to President Roosevelt in 1933 to ask his support for federal legislation supporting union rights in interstate transit. After explaining the need for such changes in the law, the president replied: "OK, you convinced me. Now make me do it." Randolph proceeded to mobilize a diverse constituency and, within a year, the amendment to the Railway Relations Act was signed into law.

Surely Obama already recognizes what needs to be done for there to be Israeli-Palestinian peace. Let's make him do it. ■

The Walls of the Reform Movement's "Big Tent"

by Ashley Bates

"WE KNOW THAT IN OUR MIDST HERE TODAY AND IN OUR SYNAGOGUES ARE MANY thoughtful, committed Jews who hold differing approaches—who look to you as a key articulator of their values, and hold views that we respect and seek to honor in inviting you to join us," said Rabbi David Saperstein. "You embody the highest Jewish and American commitments to public service."

Saperstein, a leader from the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), was politely introducing House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-VA), a keynote speaker during the URJ's five-day biennial conference in December 2011. It must have been a tough speech to compose.

Cantor is a staunch fiscal and social conservative who agitates against gay rights, social welfare programs, and abortion rights. Saperstein, conversely, directs the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, a lobby organization with a long history of support for economic justice, women's rights, and LGBTQ rights. Reform Judaism is the largest U.S. Jewish denomination and is among the most powerful liberal religious groups in the United States.

House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-VA) gives a keynote address at the Union for Reform Judaism's biennial conference in December 2011. He describes Palestinian culture as "infused with resentment and hatred" and calls this the "root" of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Some conference participants boycotted his speech.

UNION FOR REFORM JUDAISM

In Cantor's speech to about 5,000 Reform Jews, he addressed one subject on which he could find some support: his hawkish perspective on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He made no distinction between Arab terrorists and civilians. Nor did he mention Israeli settlements, the humanitarian impact of Israel's forty-four-year occupation, the ongoing struggles of Palestinian refugees of 1948, or the basic importance of acknowledging Palestinian humanity and suffering. Instead, Cantor told a story about a Palestinian extremist who sought to blow herself up in the same Israeli hospital that had treated her burns.

"What kind of culture leads one to do that?" Cantor asked. "Sadly, it is a culture infused with resentment and hatred. This is the root of the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians.... If Palestinians want to live in peace in a state of their own, they must demonstrate that they are worthy of such a state."

Why would the URJ give a right-wing Jewish leader a prominent platform from which to make hurtful, dehumanizing, and simplistic comments about Palestinian "culture"? Does inviting such a speaker honor the Reform movement's history of moral certitude against injustice and discrimination?

URJ's Decision to Invite Cantor

LEADERS OF THE URJ JUSTIFY THEIR DECISION TO WELCOME CANTOR BY RELATING IT TO THE Jewish tradition of dialogue and to the Reform movement's time-tested belief in bipartisan political activism. In his introduction to Cantor, Saperstein alluded to this rationale. He said:

> It's enshrined as a core principle of talmudic organization that minority opinions are recorded on every page of the Talmud, right alongside majority opinions. "Why?" asked the rabbis. We are told, "Because there may well be truth in what today is a minority opinion that will one day make it a majority opinion."

It's doubtful, however, that URJ leaders really believe that Cantor's views on gay rights and social welfare hold much validity. Rather, they believe that by engaging and lobbying people

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like Cantor, they can bring them around and win their support on other issues. They recall that America's great achievements of the twentieth century all happened because of a bipartisan coalition on Capitol Hill, and that the Reform movement was front and center in making this happen.

And they're right. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 were in large measure drafted and strategized in the conference room of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism. The Religious Action Center has played an active role in advancing the agenda of the labor movement, the Civil Rights movement, the anti–Vietnam War movement, the Great Society programs, Medicare and Medicaid, the environmental movement, and the reproductive rights movement.

Martin Luther King Jr., Abraham Joshua Heschel, and Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath—a leader of Reform Judaism—join forces for the March for Peace on February 6, 1968. The Reform movement helped mobilize support for civil rights and condemned the U.S. government's prejudiced policies. It has not shown the same boldness in challenging the Israeli government.

During a workshop on the history and future of social justice activism, Saperstein emphasized his pride at what the Religious Action Center accomplished during the Bush years. The Sudan Peace Act and the Prison Rape Elimination Act were both partly drafted at the Religious Action Center; and, with this Right-Left coalition, the center successfully lobbied for the passage of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, a dramatic increase in funding for HIV/AIDS and malaria treatment and prevention, and an increase in debt relief for developing countries. The Religious Action Center has also worked hard to influence conservative religious communities. Saperstein recalled:

> Some folks said: "You're going to be legitimizing [the Religious Right]" … but I realized you don't win battles with 80 million people. If I can co-opt those people into having a more open view, it's great for America and great for the agenda we fought for. It took us ten years in the legislation we fought for on the environment to move the Evangelical community, led by some very prominent theologians within their community, to say, "You know what? Protecting God's creation is a fundamental religious obligation we have." And it moved them into the mainstream of the pro-environmental community.

The decision to invite Cantor is also consistent with the Reform movement's nonpartisan orientation, despite the fact that most, but not all, of its members are liberals. (According to J Street opinion research, American Jews supported Barack Obama by 78 percent over John McCain; these strong Democratic leanings are likely higher among Reform Jews.) While many Reform movement leaders bemoan the partisan gridlock that has overtaken Capitol Hill in recent decades, they maintain that they have values that they believe in and can find support for in both parties.

Rabbi Daniel Allen, the director of the Reform Israel Fund, said he'd be comfortable inviting *any* Speaker of the House, any congressional minority leader, or any U.S. president to join the URJ conference and express his or her views. "If they say something that we don't like," he explained, "does that not make them in a position of authority and an important figure in the United States with whom we should have a dialogue and engage them?"

Building Consensus Inside the Beltway

On a myriad of issues, the Reform movement has taken decisive and farsighted moral stands. During the most recent biennial conference, attendees passed a sweeping economic justice resolution—no small achievement, since URJ resolutions must be approved by a three-fifths majority of those present at the conference. These resolutions, once passed, come to reflect core values of the Reform movement that new members are actively encouraged to embrace.

The Reform movement's position on gay rights is a case in point. The movement was among the first religious organizations to achieve overwhelming consensus on gay rights issues beginning in 1965, when the Women of Reform Judaism passed a resolution calling for the decriminalization of homosexuality. The Reform movement has subsequently passed resolutions calling for the inclusion of gays and lesbians in the rabbinate and cantorate, supporting civil marriage, and demanding an end to discrimination within the Armed Forces

UNION FOR REFORM JUDAISM

Members of the Reform movement's lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community gather at the 2011 biennial conference. The movement has achieved an overwhelming consensus on gay rights—a sharp contrast to its vague positions on Israel's policies vis-à-vis Palestinian rights.

UNION FOR REFORM JUDAISM

and the Boy Scouts. In March 2000, the movement's Central Conference of American Rabbis became the first major North American clergy organization to give its support to Reform rabbis who choose to perform same-gender ceremonies.

Saperstein was emphatic that an issue like civil unions, on which the Reform movement has established a clear moral position, will not be re-debated. "We would not open it up, and we wouldn't have a debate on the issue," he said. "I might go debate someone on television … but within the movement, I wouldn't open it up. That's all settled."

Presumably then, a keynote speech deriding the "culture" of LGBTQ people would not be tolerated?

It therefore makes sense that Cantor spoke only about Israel. This is one issue on which the Reform movement has not achieved clear consensus. Rabbi Jacobs, the incoming URJ president, acknowledged as much: "There absolutely was an effort to reach out to more conservative voices," he said at a meeting with reporters. "We've got speakers on both sides of the spectrum. We're a big tent synagogue."

Only Marginal, Diluted Criticism of Israel Allowed?

Yet the walls of this "big tent" favor the hawkish Right when it comes to policy toward Israel. URJ's outgoing president, Rabbi Eric Yoffie, has called himself an "admirer and supporter" of the powerful, right-wing lobby group AIPAC (the American Israel Public Affairs Committee). Perhaps not surprisingly, then, the three Israel-focused keynote speakers at the conference—including President Obama—did not once criticize the Israeli government. The third, Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak, is a central member of it. The words "Occupation" and "settlements" did not appear once in any of their speeches.

These walls were also evident in the selection of individuals who would lead the more than 200 workshops and other activities offered during the biennial. Jewish Voice for Peace was nowhere to be found, presumably due to the Reform movement's opposition to its support for boycotts, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) against Israel. (No one who supports BDS—even of settlement products only—was invited to lead a workshop related to this topic at the conference.) A workshop on "respectful" engagement of Israel further established the breadth of debate: the Left was represented by Jeremy Ben-Ami of J Street, a center-left "pro-Israel, pro-peace" lobby group, and the Right was represented by Jonathan Tobin of *Commentary Magazine*, an ultra-right-wing publication with editorial positions on Israel that closely mirror Cantor's (and AIPAC's). Thus, in the name of openness, the URJ included speakers like Cantor and Tobin but excluded Jewish speakers from leftist and non-Zionist groups.

The center-left side of the Reform movement's "big" Israel policy tent was highlighted and explored at only a handful of the workshops offered at the biennial. Anat Hoffman, executive director of the Reform movement's Israel Religious Action Center, was a panelist at one such workshop. Her presentation focused on the actions of some rogue Israeli civilians and the threat these extremists posed to Israeli democracy. She told of the "freedom rides" she'd led on segregated Israeli buses and of Reform movement–supported legal campaigns against bus drivers who refused to help women who demanded their rights to sit in the front of the bus. She told of mosques burned by Israeli extremists—and the Reform movement's donation of more than $30,000 to repair the mosques. She told of a report that the Israel Religious Action Center had produced on racist rabbis, including rabbis who instructed their congregants not to sell property to Arabs, who referred to Arabs as "inferior" and "donkey people," and who even claimed that Judaism permitted the premeditated killing of Arabs.

However, Hoffman generally steered clear of criticizing the Israeli government in her presentation. A similar trend is evident in URJ resolutions, particularly those passed since the outbreak of the second intifada in 2000. With the exception of a 2004 resolution that refers to Israel's destruction of Palestinian homes based on zoning regulations as a "disturbing human rights issue," URJ resolutions typically don't censure Israel or do so in the mildest of language. For example, a 2009 URJ resolution condemned the unequal *(continued on page 60)*

The Occupy Movement

Analyses of a Reshaped Political Landscape

The Occupy movement has not only awakened public outrage over wealth disparities, it has also stirred a deeper yearning for a society rich with interconnection, imagination, respect, and care. The encampments, however fleeting, helped form a new, imagined community—the 99 percent—that cannot be easily dismantled. The following articles explore the deeply spiritual urges and rituals at the heart of the Occupy movement, as well as the religiophobia expressed at some of its general assemblies. They explore the positive vision required to energize the movement and the empathy needed to sustain it. They ask: What's next for Occupy? Might an expanded focus on meeting basic human needs allow the message of economic transformation to take practical shape? How can we translate the newfound alarm at corporate rule into regulations on transnational corporations? How can we build localized economies aimed at sustainability rather than profit? For a Buddhist perspective, a lively debate on nonviolence vs. a "diversity of tactics" in the Occupy movement, and more, check out the online-only articles associated with this special issue at **tikkun.org/occupy**.

RICK REINHARD (TOP); TANZILA AHMED (BOTTOM)

Loving and Supporting Occupy

by Michael Lerner

Some of my most exhilarating moments this past year have been spent with the Occupy movement. Topping the list was the daylong "general strike" in Oakland on November 2, when tens of thousands of us spent a day at the plaza in front of Oakland City Hall and then marched to shut down the Port of Oakland, through which many of the large exploitative corporations do their business. People of all ages, from infants in strollers to octogenarians with canes, gathered in protest and celebration. And then on November 15, when somewhere between 8,000 and 10,000 people assembled at Occupy Cal (the encampment at the University of California, Berkeley), I watched the faces of the students. Many had never been part of a large movement of protest and suddenly seemed to get (at least for that moment) the most important lesson that social movements can teach: that history can be made by us little folk, that we need not merely be spectators watching the powerful shape our world, and correspondingly that we have an obligation to build the world we want to live in.

It was forty-seven years ago that I climbed down a rope from the second floor of UC Berkeley's Sproul Hall, where we in the Free Speech Movement were holding a sit-in to protest the university's attempt to prohibit us from recruiting on campus for civil disobedience against racism in Oakland. I addressed the crowd of 10,000 students outside and reported on the police violence happening at that very moment inside, and I advocated for a student strike that eventually shut the university down and forced the Regents of the University of California to accept our demands. How exciting for me to watch a new generation beginning to open their minds to the possibility that they might take the reins and become *tikkunistas*—healers and transformers of our world.

We at *Tikkun* have rejoiced at the emergence of the Occupy movement, and members of our interfaith Network of Spiritual Progressives have actively participated in the movement's demonstrations, sit-ins, and tent cities all across the United States. Once again, the "realists" have been proven wrong in their prediction that Americans would be too stuck in the dominant discourse of the society to demand change. Even as politicians and the media continue to call for austerity measures to reassure Wall Street and other global stock and

CREATIVE COMMONS/DAVID SHANKBONE

bond markets, Occupy protesters have introduced a new set of questions about wealth disparities. Margaret Thatcher's exhortation that "there is no alternative" to the globalized capitalist system—a claim made famous in the United States by *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman—is now seen for the ideological claptrap it has always been.

While the Republicans continue to tout an austerity agenda as the best way to achieve their real goal of dismantling government—thereby freeing their corporate bosses from constraints imposed for environmental, ethical, and social reasons—Occupy has managed to push many Democrats into finally sticking up for their working-class and minority constituents, whom they have largely betrayed for much of the past thirty years. Even President Obama, whose 2011 State of the Union speech did not mention poverty and whose economic policies favored the rich for his first three years in office, caught the wind of change generated in part by Occupy. He has decided to identify with the populist motif that the Occupy movement has helped surface in America.

In popularizing the notion that the 99 percent need to stand up to the 1 percent (the tiny group of super-rich elites who have been pursuing a class war against the American majority), the Occupy movement has made a major contribution to overcoming the divisions within the Left that have emerged

due to identity politics' emphasis on race, gender, and sexual orientation—divisions that the Right has happily exploited. While *Tikkun* and the Network of Spiritual Progressives have championed those struggles against racism, sexism, and homophobia, we've often despaired at the difficulty of bringing progressives together around a common theme, given the identity-based fractures within the Left. Occupy has momentarily (perhaps longer, we hope) made it possible for people to think across difference to themes of unity.

The deepest truth of humanity is unity within diversity—the unity of being created in the image of God. In secular language, we can describe this as the unity of humans' collective aspiration to be free, conscious, ethical, loving, creative, joyous, mutually supportive, generous, caring, connected to and cherishing the earth, and filled with awe and wonder at the goodness, complexity, and mystery of the universe. These core aspirations play out differently in different cultural, historical, racial, religious, and gendered configurations. They sometimes seem hard to recognize when factors like scarcity of food and material necessities or deprivation of love and mutual recognition in childhood get in the way. These shared aspirations are also sometimes obscured when schools, religions, and the media indoctrinate people into worldviews encouraging harshness, brutality, and denial of the humanity of "the other," and when these cruel worldviews become the organizing principles of daily economic and political life. Yet these aspirations never totally disappear; they are always struggling to resurface in the consciousness of even the most oppressed and the most self-satisfied.

RICK REINHARD

We should all rejoice in the consciousness-changing accomplishments of Occupy. It's also important to note, however, that there are struggles in this young movement whose outcome will determine its long-term significance. We urge readers who sympathize with this movement to become involved in the ongoing daily ideological struggles that take place within it.

Our most pressing concern is the tendency among some in the Occupy movement to define the major problem facing people as simply economic inequality and, by implication, the class-stratified nature of American society and the triumph of economic oligarchs whose power must be reduced. These are central issues, but they must be contextualized within a larger framework of the spiritual deprivation—the deprivation of love and meaning in life and work—that is fostered by the capitalist marketplace. This leads people to treat one another and the earth as instruments for their own needs rather than as beings with intrinsic worth who deserve to be cherished and cared for.

The capitalist marketplace generates an ethos of materialism and selfishness in its "common sense" of "looking out for number one." This ethos has created a way of being in the world in which almost everyone has learned to see things through the framework of the question, "Can this be of use to me in advancing my own interests and needs?" Work is no longer oriented toward creating goods or services that have social value; rather, it is oriented primarily toward generating more money or power for ourselves or for our supervisors and bosses. As a result, many people come home from work feeling empty, recognizing that there is no meaning to their work aside from its provision of the money needed to survive.

This same ethos shapes our relationship to nature and to one another. Our society teaches us to see the natural world as a resource for human use and consumption, often at the expense of our ability to respond to nature and the universe with awe, wonder, and radical amazement. Instead of building a cooperative relationship with animals and the natural world, our practice increasingly has become one of using (often savagely abusing) and then discarding the amazing beauty that surrounds us in our environment.

Similarly, we human beings increasingly look upon others in terms of how much they can satisfy our own needs. When they can no longer meet our needs, they are discarded just as we discard a rotting fruit or vegetable. Even in family life and intimate relationships, this "use orientation" leads us to ask ourselves frequently if our partner, parents, or children are satisfying our needs, or if we might replace them with some other source of nurturance or support. Just talk to most people in their eighties and nineties, and you will hear horrific stories of how many people feel that they are seen only as burdens because they are no longer able to contribute to society through paid work and domestic labor like they did for so many years. This creates a huge spiritual crisis for people in our society—because most people have a fundamental

need to be seen and valued for their humanity, rather than for their ability to "deliver" in response to someone else's desires. Most people need to feel that their work lives have some value beyond how much money they are making; they want their time on earth to be connected to some value higher than profit or power. In fact, most people desire a world in which love and caring predominate over money and power. It is the deprivation of these spiritual needs that is the central contradiction of capitalist society. Capitalist society cannot fulfill these spiritual needs or this hunger for meaning; it cannot produce a society where love, caring for each other, and environmental consciousness replace the old bottom line of money and power.

So although we have called for a "New New Deal" to provide full employment for anyone able to work, a living wage for everyone who works, single-payer health care, a Global Marshall Plan to end domestic and international poverty, an end to mortgage foreclosures on homes, and a national bank to fund socially useful projects, the kinds of changes in the economy that are needed are not only on the level of better compensation for work and the creation of more jobs and benefits, but also on the level of a more fundamental restructuring of our economic life in ways that encourage a new orientation toward nature, animals, and our fellow human beings. This new orientation must reflect a cooperative and conscious effort to increase our capacities as beings who are loving, conscious, creative, and capable of caring for others. This message needs to be fought for in the councils and general assemblies of the Occupy movement, in the labor movement, and in all the other manifestations of socially transformative consciousness that are emerging in 2012—and then brought to our city councils and state legislatures, and to national politics.

Eliminating poverty and overcoming the huge inequities in the class structure would be a tremendous accomplishment and enough for one generation. But to succeed in doing this or in building a movement that represents a large enough majority of the 99 percent to effectively counter the massive economic, political, military/police, and media forces of the 1 percent, we must simultaneously and with great psychological sophistication address the spiritual crisis that capitalism generates. People with incomes of $80,000 to $350,000 a year, most of whom are still in the 99 percent, may have material needs that are unmet, but the level of that economic deprivation is not always so oppressive as to define their consciousness. For many of these people in the middle and upper-middle classes of society (not yet the 1 percent), it is the spiritual crisis that is precisely what unites their fate with that of many poorer people who suffer both economically and from the spiritual hollowness and love deprivation inherent in the capitalist order.

As *Tikkun* author Harriet Fraad put it to me, the occupiers, at least in New York City, show a profound spiritual care for people in their insistence on democracy and respect for all who

ROBERT KENDALL

come. That insistence is not merely economic; it is ultimately respectful of the joint humanity of all. At Occupy Wall Street in New York, violence was resoundingly rejected, even though it was routinely provoked by police. Anyone who said or did anything hateful or violent was surrounded and slowly pushed to the margins and spoken to about the rules of that inclusive yet nonviolent space. The task for those interested in engaging in *tikkun* (healing and transformation) is to make explicit the underlying values reflected in the actions of Occupy Wall Street, to insist upon them in all the groups that call themselves Occupy, and to apply those values in every aspect of our economic and political lives together.

This is the key to changing the United States and any other advanced industrial society: speaking to the tremendous yearning people have to live in a society in which they can find work that has transcendent meaning and higher purpose; manifest their loving capacities; experience love and care from those around them; and feel deeply respected and treasured for who they are as human beings, as embodiments of the sacred. In such a society, the earth, animals, and all aspects of the miraculous planet on which we live are treasured and experienced in their fullest dimensions of being. A transformative movement without this central element will eventually fail, even in its more limited goal to eliminate poverty and create economic justice for all.

Recognizing the sacred in the other also requires an important amendment to the consciousness of the 99 percent: the ability to see the humanity of the 1 percent, as well. True enough, many one percenters have done little to support the needs of the majority. Imagine how it would be if the one percenters used their power to help move the society in a more just direction. So much could be possible if they stopped focusing so much on maintaining their economic and political advantages. But even though the one percenters have the same yearnings as the rest of us for a world of love and generosity, they are even more deeply sunk into cynicism about the possibility of achieving such a world. They are buffeted in their cynicism by the many advantages they gain by having huge resources and power at their disposal and living in a society that honors and cherishes them for having that money and power. We at *Tikkun* can never feel fully comfortable with a movement that does not insist on the humanity of those who are engaged at this time in oppressive institutions and practices, even while struggling with all our loving energies against those institutions and practices and powerfully criticizing the actions and ideas of those who support the status quo.

Cynicism brings us to the heart of the problem of class-based society. We live in a world where there would be enough for all if global resources were fairly redistributed, but class hierarchies prevent that from happening. These hierarchies are maintained through a pervasive fear of the other—a certainty that the other would take advantage of us if we were to trust and share. The fear of the other, and the certainty that others' narrow view of their own self-interest will triumph over their own need for a life oriented toward meaning and love, lead many of us to embrace the various materialistic compensations that are offered by capitalist society. These compensations, in turn, can momentarily distract us from the deeper spiritual depression we feel as that cynicism begins to shape our view of life and human nature. As *Tikkun* Editor-at-Large Peter Gabel has pointed out, it is this understanding that could form the foundation for a new post-Marxist spiritual Left. Such a movement would be based on addressing our collective yearning for mutual recognition and love, for generosity and mutual caring, and for a sense of transcendent meaning and purpose. It would help people see that their frustrations and isolation are not a product of some fixed human nature but of a capitalist system that induces them to disbelieve in the capacity of others to act from a generous and loving consciousness. If the Occupy movement could embrace this insight and make it central to its public discourse, it would become the vanguard of a revolutionary transformation in the consciousness of American society.

After participating in Occupy San Francisco and Occupy Oakland, *Tikkun* and the Network of Spiritual Progressives urge the larger Occupy movement to adopt the following guidelines for any group that wishes to identify as "Occupy":

1. Make nonviolence mandatory. No group should be part of this movement and allow what Occupy Oakland calls "a diversity of tactics," which permits a small group of self-described anarchists (probably some of whom are actually police, FBI, or agents provocateurs paid by the Department of Homeland Security) to attach themselves to Occupy demonstrations and then proceed to smash windows of stores, burn the U.S. flag as happened in Oakland in January 2012, or seek to provoke police violence. Such a turn of events inevitably results in the fear and injury of people who thought they were coming to a nonviolent demonstration for social justice. No matter how much people agree with the goals of Occupy, widespread support for the movement will dramatically decrease unless Occupy disassociates from groups that engage in property destruction and street battles with the police.

2. Create a more democratic process so that the vast majority of the 99 percent, who cannot attend daily decision-making "general assemblies" because they work all day (and sometimes two shifts) and have families, can still be involved in shaping the direction of the movement. Electronic town-hall meetings and computer voting should make this possible. And put more energy into activities in which the 99 percent *can* participate, like shifting their checking and savings accounts to credit unions, installing solar panels on their homes and workplaces, boycotting (and getting their religious, civic, educational, and state government institutions to boycott) businesses and credit card companies that are socially and environmentally irresponsible, and making and backing candidates who will fight for policies that are pro–99 percent.

Bringing these ideas into Occupy and other emerging social change movements is the specific goal of activists in the Network of Spiritual Progressives. One person can't do this alone—we need a group of people who share this perspective with which to plan strategies and coordinate efforts to shape contemporary movements for social transformation. Whether it's in Occupy, the environmental movement, immigration rights, the peace movement, the human rights movement, the LGBTQ movement, the women's movement, or the struggle for workers' rights, you can play an important role in healing and transforming our world if you bring the *Tikkun* worldview to these movements. That's why we urge you to join our Network of Spiritual Progressives and help us form a group of like-minded individuals in your area or in your workplace or profession. Or if you don't want to join anything, please make a generous tax-deductible donation to help us keep doing this work. Donation or NSP membership gives you access to online versions of the articles from our quarterly magazine, which are only available to NSP members and subscribers. To join or donate, please visit tikkun.org/donate or call our office at 510-644-1200. ■

The Spirituality of Occupy

by John Helmiere

Votive candles line an altar to the death of capitalism at Occupy Oakland on November 2, 2011. Activist imagination drives the movement's dissident spirituality.

ALANA YU-LAN PRICE

"In the beginning of Occupy Wall Street, we decided to be a nonreligious movement," said the middle-aged man to my left. "So, if we're going to debate nonviolence as a tactic, fine, but not as a religious ideology."

This statement continued to trouble me for the remaining two hours of Occupy Seattle's General Assembly. I had been serving as a chaplain in the movement and was the subject of a media stir in December 2011 after the Seattle Police brutally beat me and threw me in jail during an Occupy action. At the time of the beating, I was clad in clergy attire and crying out for peace.

I had come to the General Assembly to listen and participate in a discussion and vote on the place of nonviolence in Occupy Seattle but found myself disoriented by my neighbor's assertion that "religious" values had no place in the movement's dialogue. I felt muted by the insinuation that my spirituality, which is at the core of my identity, was unwelcome.

Since that General Assembly, I have come to believe that while some veteran spiritual activists are able to ignore the presence of an underlying religiophobia (an ingrained distrust of religious people/language/symbols) often present at Occupy events, there are many less-hardened spiritual and religious folks who are hesitant to join the movement because of it. The movement's dominant rhetoric is currently devoid of the language that most powerfully motivates us, and its tone is hostile to spiritual people.

However, we cannot blame the Occupy movement for this detrimental predicament. Rather, it is the responsibility of spiritual leaders to bridge these divides by illuminating the spiritual dimensions that we see in Occupy. We must inspire current Occupiers to rethink their assumptions about the relevance of spirituality to the movement and simultaneously inspire greater participation among our own. As one voice in what I hope will be a growing chorus of spiritual leaders, I would like to name one of the profound spiritual impulses that runs deep within the Occupy movement: imagination.

The spirituality of the Occupy movement is not one that references God, the Divine, or even the numinous, but instead is found in the imaginative transcendence of the consumerist, individualistic, hierarchical constructions of the self and society that we in America are spoon-fed from birth. The exercise of imagination is at the heart of my understanding of spirituality. By imagination I do not mean idle escapism, but rather the ability to envision and pursue a personal identity and social reality that is more expansive than the hedonistic materialism and more genuine than the fantastic utopias that sometimes seem to be our only options. The Occupy movement is an eruption of precisely this sort of transformative imagination. For me, a United Methodist minister, this imaginative exercise is rooted in my understanding of and encounter with God. While I remain unsure about what is fueling the imagination of Occupy (and worry that this ambiguity may be a liability), I can highlight a few instances of the emphatic creativity in which I see the spirituality of Occupy becoming manifest.

A nearly spontaneous explosion of activist imagination has brought forth the people's mic, the 99 percent slogan, discussion forums, makeshift libraries, tent sanctuaries, and arts stations in the camps. This creativity has breathed new life into the use of working groups and the General Assembly and

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its attendant sign language. It is evident in the decolonization principles crafted by oppressed communities and even in the notion of "occupying" economic centers in cities across the country instead of political centers. While the Occupy movement is built on wisdom from past liberation movements and subversive prophetic voices, this past has been used as a wellspring of inspiration in the creative endeavor, rather than as an anchor of authority weighing down its potential.

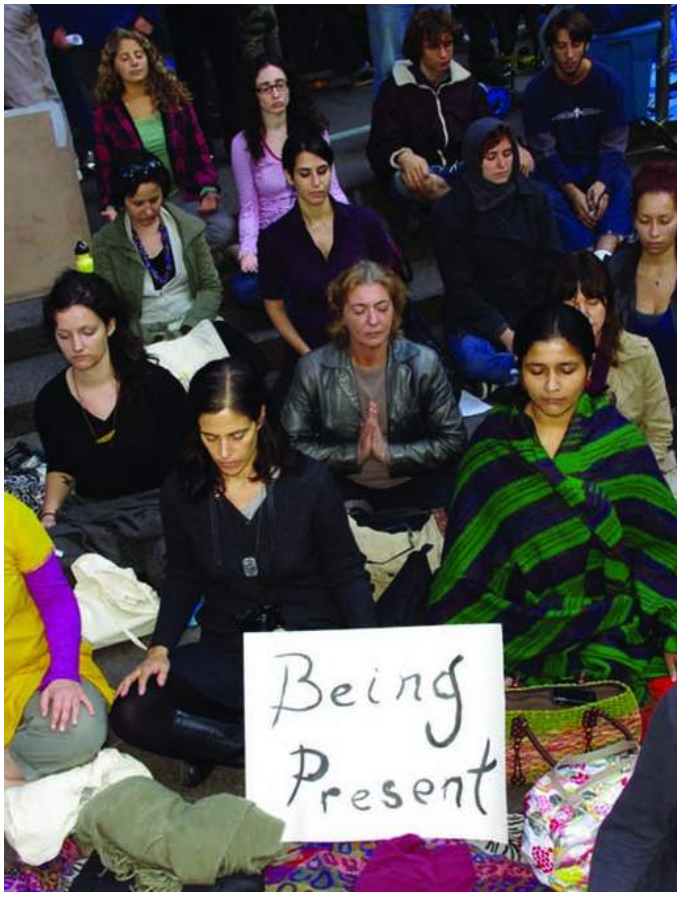
My first experience with Occupy Seattle revealed its creative core. A few friends and I brought a heaping vat of soup made by Valley & Mountain, my spiritual community, to Seattle's Westlake Shopping Center. I intended to eat a bowl, participate in the General Assembly, and start camping but I quickly learned that a few days earlier the police had begun arresting anyone who sat on the ground after 10 PM. Following many arrests for civil disobedience, participants in the movement were looking for a new camp location. Amid all the turmoil, they had decided to take a night off from the business of the General Assembly and have a dance party instead. I was reminded of the words of Reverend Humberto Ramos Salazar, a member of the Aymara indigenous community in Bolivia, who said, "A community that does not celebrate is a dead one." Someone told me, "If you want to join, we're marching in solidarity with Oakland in thirty minutes." Occupy Oakland had recently weathered a violent crackdown. "Where are we marching?" I asked as the young man walked away. "Wherever we want," he replied.

It took me some time to realize not only the tactical brilliance of this idea, but the symbolic genius as well. Our spontaneous, unpermitted, uncharted march was a declaration: we reserve the right to express ourselves and exercise our freedom and conscience. In what I believe is a deeply spiritual move, Occupy is actively seeking to transcend the herded consumer identity and name us free creators.

And yet, personal creativity and freedom do not produce a social movement and would not have flourished in the Occupy movement if they were not situated in an imaginative community. Whether or not it was originally envisioned when occupiers started congregating on Wall Street, the camps fomented relationships, friendships, and the stability necessary for genuine community. After too many years spent in social justice meetings that reflect the segmentation of the wider society, the diversity I have encountered in Occupy Seattle is enlivening. Professors and punks, hippy activists and young anarchists, homeless folks and middle-class professionals are not only in the same room together, but many actually care about one another. Since Occupy is a radical democratic movement, everyone gets to speak at the general assemblies, regardless of those aspects that amplify or mute voices in our current political process.

The Occupy movement is by no means a perfect embodiment of Dr. King's Beloved Community; internecine conflicts remain in the form of unexamined privilege, subconscious attitudes of supremacy, and acts of micro-aggression. Still, while true inclusivity is an elusive ideal within the movement, the effort to embody a genuinely egalitarian community nonetheless stands out as an imaginative—and dare I say, spiritual—contrast to the dominant model of society in which isolated individuals jostle for position on a social ladder.

The police have all but wiped out the camps, and a mature alternative for society has not yet emerged within the Occupy movement. At times, the absence of a definitive vision put forth by Occupy reminds me of a period in the Exodus narrative when Moses, Miriam, and Aaron have led the people out of Egypt but lack a future plan. This undermines the trust of the Israelites. But then I remember that even though Occupy uses symbols, songs, rituals, and narratives as profoundly and deftly as a political party or religious community, it is neither of these. Occupy does not have an agenda or a plan to save the world, and it is not trying to create one. It is simply issuing a call to democracy, and the movement is imaginative enough to realize that until private money stops flowing unchecked into politics, it is useless to try to issue this call directly to the politicians themselves. Regardless of its future iterations, the spirituality of the Occupy movement thus far has brought me new hope and a new imagination for who I might be and for what this world might become. ■



The spirituality of the Occupy movement is not one that references God. It is found in a new practice of community, of being present with each other. Here, Occupy Wall Street protesters meditate in Zuccotti Park on October 16, 2011.

CREATIVE COMMONS/DAVID SHANKBONE

What's Next for Occupy

by Donna Schaper

Everybody wants to know what is next for the Occupy movement, and no one knows. Nor may we. Nor will we. Nor should we.

What Occupy has done is reinvigorate the art of the surprise, the craft of worship and ritual, the soul force in activism. It has changed the conversation and occupied the holiday tables of America. What will be said at Seders and Easter dinners? What will be said on the Fourth of July? The genie is out of the bottle. A kind of truth is being spoken—clumsily and consistently.

Occupy has unseated the pragmatic from its throne and replaced it with a mighty emptiness. That emptiness is as pregnant as any womb before fertilization, any wound before its healing, any glass before its filling. During the week before Christmas, on the fourth night of Chanukah, forty or so faith leaders gathered on three days' notice. One faith leader from Occupy D.C. said, "It was like I was liquefied and poured out." Our introductory go-around was to tell each other what we were like before Occupy and what we are like now. The theme was: I was politically depressed. Now I am spiritually and politically awakened. I used to be a pacifist. Now I am an occupier. I used to be unemployed. Now I have work to do.

Pragmatism is a very good thing in a prophet. And it is not enough. We have been flattened by our own pragmatism. We have been spiritually deadened and issue-organized into smithereens. The *mizraim* come to mind. The mizraim are the set of boundaries and pigeonholes that separate you from the whole and narrow you into their narrow way. What, you aren't fighting for abortion while fighting for tenants' rights, while being anti-racist and multi-faith all at the same time? Instead of being liquefied and poured out, pragmatic, issue-oriented prophecy has hardened us into parts and their partiality. Pragmatic organizing made us worry about what we weren't doing while managing by objective what we were doing.

Occupy—with its glance at all issues, deep enough to see their roots—has radicalized us. *Radical* is the drilling to the center of the problem. What we have seen is that the issues are connected. The unnecessary suffering of the woman who needs an abortion due to her lack of access to contraception is connected to the unnecessary suffering of the senior whose building is being sold so the landlord can make more money off it. The unnecessary suffering of the more than 846,000 black men in prison, jail, on probation or parole—more black men than were enslaved before the Civil War began—when for less cost to taxpayers they could go to Harvard, is connected to the constant harassment of Muslim Americans on the street. And there are more connections.

If you are the type of prophet who reads my sample of sufferings and wonders where your "issue" is, I understand. I used to be that kind of activist. I only worked on immigrant rights—until I realized we weren't going to blunt any instruments without economic rights for all Americans, including those who now question their support for Phoenix Sheriff Joe Arpaio, the notorious proponent of racial profiling against Latinos. Through the Occupy movement's theater and ritual, and through worship and its consequential dethronement of pragmatism, the issues-based prophets have come to see that "issues" organizing is too flat to succeed in its objectives. It is too dry. It doesn't see how culture and economy, sexism and poverty, and queer exclusions and not bothering to vote are interconnected. One root of our troubles is the unjust economy that tries to pretend it works for all but instead just trickles down on people's heads. A second root is a political system that is run by the same money—and has no intention of working for a just economy. Better said, in the old language of the issues-based prophets, like my former self, the root of the problem is a political economy, which is protected by untrue, well-funded stories about itself that are so effective that we have internalized their message. You have debt? You are unemployed? It must be your fault. Anybody who works hard enough in America can get ahead. Anybody who threatens the "old way" of the American family must be immoral. Fear begets fear, which begets more fear. Fear needs an enemy. Enter violence against gays, then immigrants, then Muslims. Kind people turn into monsters, so afraid are they that the American Dream may actually be just a high class of bullshit.

Before Occupy began, my parishioners were embarrassed to tell me they had lost their jobs. They had internalized the blame that failed capitalism uses to outsource responsibility for its debasement. But now, what Frances Fox Piven calls the "insult" of poverty has begun to disappear. People no longer feel that they are wrong. They are beginning to understand that we were wronged. The notion that executives deserve to be paid more than anybody could ever be worth and the notion that homeless people are the cause of their own homelessness are being exposed as harmful zombie ideas. Racism is at the

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heart of these "lazy" ideas. Because of Occupy, people have started to question everything, including punishmentalism, the idea that the poor are responsible for their poverty. Punishmentalism is a theology underlying much misinterpretation of the divine. Piven argues that the genuine pain of poverty, which we have glossed with insult attached to it, can change if the 99 percent understand that we are one, not separated. Homeless people are great organizers.

What Occupy has done is to *core* us. It has driven us to our core, our *corazón*. We have ended up in each other's arms, with nothing on the throne but us. We are disorganized, underfunded, and unsure about which of the tentacles that bind us to pull on first. We are also awakened, as in woken up, shook up, internally bubbling and pouring.

A nativity scene occupies the yard of Trinity Church, which initially supported Occupy Wall Street but later barred protesters from camping on church-owned land.

At the December faith leaders' meeting in New York, we even had absurd struggles with language and jolly conflicts about direction. Some wanted to assault state power; others wanted to befriend the police. Others wanted to talk about how delightfully transgressive the movement is. Still others just wanted to help people understand why they would be paying off their student loans at age sixty-eight or how they got underwater on their mortgage in the first place.

The biggest conversation was about nonviolence and how we are tired of the word. We don't want any more language with a negative before a negative. The same fatigue pushed aside the word "noncooperation," and also the fatter phrase, "withdrawing cooperation from structural violence." We got interested in *Satyagraha*, although most Americans don't know why we would use a Sanskrit word, even if it means "soul force." We ended up coring on the language, "the third great awakening."

The Occupy movement is forcing religious leaders to make some hard decisions about principles and practice. Trinity Church, an Episcopal church at the corner of Broadway and Wall Street in New York, originally supported Occupy Wall Street but later refused to let the movement set up an encampment on church-owned land. When as great a man as Desmond Tutu issues two statements about the Trinity situation—the first appealing to Trinity to accommodate the protesters and the second urging protesters not to force their way onto Trinity's property without permission—we know that some profound confusion is afoot. What people have begun to see is that the economy and its gung ho protection of private property rights are the true violence, that the police have been trained to say or do what they are told by people who are actually hurting them economically. We could spend a lifetime and a long movement unpacking Tutu's two statements. We could spend a lifetime and a movement finding out how to confess our own participation in punishmentalist, state-sponsored capitalism-gone-foul thinking, acting, living, behaving. We could also welcome our own confusion and pray to get the wag out of our finger and the soul into the whole system. What Occupy has awakened is the power to be less judgmental and more loving. That is awakening. That is soul force. It will take a generation or more to understand what it means.

I am an *evolutionary*. I have always loved worship and always known that street theater has the power to move and shake. I have never forgotten the Velvet Revolution in Prague, in which the police joined the protesters who were "just jingling their keys." Or Tahrir Square or Tiananmen Square. I have always giggled when a parishioner of mine has put down worship on behalf of activism. In truth, the two are not so separate. Those who see them as mutually exclusive have missed the whole point of the arms linked in song and the mic check's deep call and response.

What's next in Occupy is a worship service that you conduct in your city. This ongoing service will shift our innards, our bowels, and our bases around. It will happen in the streets and will become theater. The ritual will unfold in Poughkeepsie and Pasadena and Los Angeles and New York. There will be no prayer books issued for now. We are in the unfreezing stage. We are beginning to make great shifts in our thinking. We are not leaderless but leaderful. We are not making pragmatic or issues-oriented or even "just" political or "just" economic change.

Instead, we are ritualizing, coming alive, waking up—while we are doing all the rest at the same time. We are resetting our alarm clocks. That is what worship does: it coheres and cores and awakens.

Note also that we are simultaneously making pragmatic change. You can see it in the fact that Governor Cuomo made concessions to progressive demands on the state budget—not enough, but five times more than he would have without Occupy. We are making issues-oriented change, providing cover for every political candidate to care about issues out loud as opposed to quietly in the privacy of his bar car. We are making political change. This movement will prevent the right wing from taking over the White House. It will also help people see that a moderate Democrat is not good enough to lead great people toward their soul, their justice, their constitutional guarantee of a political democracy. There will be constitutional amendments about getting money out of politics and changing corporations back into corporations. They are in the womb now. We are doing all these things at the same time because one links to another, and we have walked out of the narrow way into the wide way. ■

CREATIVE COMMONS/POSTER BOY

Sustaining the Occupy Movement

by Miki Kashtan

In the fall of 2011, as the Occupy movement spread around the nation and beyond, fundamental systemic change suddenly seemed possible. The movement tapped into tremendous pain and stirred up hidden longings. Its slogan, "We are the 99 percent," caught fire in the U.S. conversation landscape. Talking about the gap between the rich and the poor and even questioning capitalism are no longer taboo.

The movement has also generated enormous controversy, however, and its support seems to be declining. Some are beginning to doubt whether a popular, mass movement can still emerge, now that so many encampments have been dismantled.

Although I still see hope that the Occupy movement could live out its riveting promise, the questions it faces are daunting: How can the movement attract masses of people while preserving the essential founding focus on transforming economic realities? What can appeal to large numbers of people across political, racial, and class divides so that we can create the necessary change to match today's crises?

I don't claim to hold all the answers. What I most love about the Occupy movement is the utter inability of any of us to decide, control, or even predict its unfolding. But I would still like to highlight two aspects of the movement that, if cultivated, could contribute to creating a vibrant mass movement: the infusion of empathy into connections formed across differences and the emphasis on meeting basic human needs.

Sustaining the Movement Through Empathy

The Occupy movement has been a grand experiment with radical forms of democracy, making things happen despite the challenges of getting hundreds of people to agree without any formal leadership. The movement has also alienated those who cannot stand the endless meetings, the acrimonious debates, and the negative attitudes toward leadership.

It has brought together people who don't commonly interact, with more visible diversity than is common and novel ways of relating. But the movement hasn't created enough tools and structures for individuals to shift out of the social isolation and alienation that are pervasive in U.S. life. As a result, the destruction of the encampments turned a group of passionate activists and community builders into a collection of individuals coming together only for meetings that to many no longer seem relevant.

One way of sustaining this movement is to think strategically about how to support the people who are putting their life energy and resources into the daily tasks of maintaining the momentum of the actions that started in September. In the face of police brutality, internal strife, and declining support, those working on the ground are clearly in need of emotional, spiritual, and strategic resources. Even as it has offered food and shelter to many, the movement has also been the occasion for immense conflict, including sexual assaults. Even active supporters have been uncomfortable or afraid to participate. Those of us who want to support the movement could do much to increase the chances that the movement will be inviting to newcomers and remain sustainable for those activists who have been working on it from the start.

We can help the movement align its inner workings with its outer message. When the means align with the ends, when inner transformation follows along with social change, and when we create, now, the relationships and institutions we want to see in the future, movements become more attractive and compelling to large numbers of people.

In response to this need, an array of resources has sprung up to support the movement. These efforts range from the most mundane and material to sophisticated networks of support such as Occupy Cafe (occupycafe.org).

Practitioners of Nonviolent Communication (cnvc.org) have also been involved in efforts to provide this sort of support. In a number of Occupy sites around the country, individuals trained in Nonviolent Communication have offered training, mediation, and empathic support to de-escalate conflicts. In New York, for example, workshops in Nonviolent Communication have been offered daily. A nightly community watch was established

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Occupy's attention to feeding the hungry and housing the homeless has demonstrated a new, interdependent way of life. Here, protesters line up for free food at Occupy Boston.

ROBERT KENDALL

to respond to incidents of violence that tended to occur after 2 AM. Anyone who wanted to join this group received Nonviolent Communication training to learn about defusing conflicts with empathic presence, even for those using drugs or being aggressive. Several sites, including Oakland, have had an "empathy booth" where people could come simply to be heard and thus be rejuvenated in doing their activism.

Aside from on-the-ground support, a small and very dedicated group has been offering daily access to empathy and coaching on the phone for Occupiers anywhere (occupyvoice.info). People often call when they are in great distress and leave with clarity about how they can respond to difficult situations. One Occupier, Kristie Gould from Edmonton, Canada, described the basic understanding she got from participating in the calls in this way: "We all have needs. More often than not (especially when in conflict with others) our needs are one and the same (to matter, to be seen/heard, to contribute, etc.) but our strategies to meet those needs are very different sometimes."

Gould added that she has gained deeper understanding of herself and others, more energy and hope, and all this has allowed her "to connect in some really incredible ways with many Occupy members and also people opposing the [Occupy movement] here and elsewhere.... No one is out of reach, not those Occupiers with addictions or issues surrounding the loss of sobriety in camp, or mentally ill Occupiers."

This way of transcending separation, infusing the movement with love and equipping Occupiers with practical tools to replace our habitual responses such as arguing, giving advice, or interrupting, is a seed of the future put into the soil of the present.

The challenges have been immense, and many of the supporters were stretched to know how to respond to the chaos, intoxicated people, suspiciousness, and lack of channels for introducing changes to the format of the general assemblies that would allow more dialogue to happen. Some of the people offering Nonviolent Communication on the ground have expressed a certain level of despair about the deeply ingrained habits of distancing, withdrawal, and judgment they encounter—habits that sometimes leave few options for resolving conflicts or learning. Another challenge is how efforts to calm people down to de-escalate a conflict can sometimes be perceived as attempts to silence one of the parties. What can be done to support those of us who have been deeply affected by the legacy of millennia of being at odds with each other in a world of separation, scarcity, and powerlessness? How can we mobilize the initial surge of hope that brings people out to the streets? How can we create sustainable empowerment for those who participate?

One of the key lessons from the work of Nonviolent Communication supporters has been that vision provides a deep well of motivation and energy. The very act of tapping into the underlying layer of meaning allows people to root themselves in their needs to nurture the vision of what they want so as to find their own power to take action.

Energizing the Movement Through Positive Vision

As Gandhi noted, a movement that is entirely about opposition cannot ultimately be sustainable. To reach, mobilize, and sustain the commitment of many, I believe Occupy would need to articulate an inspiring vision for a bright future, as well as concrete and practical plans for bringing about its realization without relying on the institutions that have failed all of us.

A clear vision can support existing participants in transmuting their anguish and rage into positive action focused beyond each person's, or even each locale's, specific grievances. Opposing the police and protecting the encampments and public spaces have not provided enough counterforce to the

pervasive disempowerment and cynicism that so many of us bring to our activism. Working directly and practically toward a vision makes a popular movement more possible.

In some cities in Europe, people have shifted tactics to create dozens or hundreds of neighborhood assemblies. Unlike a single mass encampment, multiple diffuse neighborhood assemblies are impossible to shut down or evict, and thus less vulnerable to repression. Such a shift can provide a way for the Occupy movement to dismantle the thick walls of separation and isolation within which we live in North America. Imagine the possibility of groups of people finally getting to know each other, speaking about what truly matters to them and how they want to face life's challenges, and deciding what they want to create in their neighborhood and in the world. What might inspire such assemblies and help them become a source of strength in their communities and beyond as they move toward a shared vision? The focus on providing food and shelter to all brought many people together; perhaps this early focus could become the backbone of a more expansive movement.

Meeting Basic Human Needs

The Occupy encampments took on feeding the hungry and housing the homeless, albeit in tents, demonstrating an interdependent way of living. What if the Occupy movement called on all of us to take back access to our most basic human needs that are now primarily in the hands of very large institutions: food, shelter, clothing, health, and education? Focusing on these needs allows the central message of transforming economic structures to take practical shape. To some extent, this is already happening and is what drew me to the encampments, to the simplicity of having food available to everyone, no questions asked. As many of the larger encampments have been dismantled, this focus continues with an added emphasis on issues related to housing.

In focusing on meeting basic human needs, the Occupy movement would follow in the footsteps of Gandhi, who instructed his followers to spin yarn for at least thirty minutes a day. Spinning was the centerpiece of what Gandhi called "constructive program," which was ultimately more important to him than noncooperation or civil disobedience. In his program for the future, Gandhi had a clear and detailed vision of new forms to replace existing oppressive structures in every aspect of life, ranging from ownership to war. The former would be replaced with trusteeship, the art of having and using items for service, and the latter with "Shanti Sena" (peace army) to resolve regional and international conflicts.

Spinning was a perfect fit for the conditions Gandhi faced. It was a concrete act that anyone could do on a daily basis; it was proactive and responsive to a real need; it signified immediate economic independence by being cheap and self-run; and it was deceptively simple and ultimately highly subversive. What organizing principle could be its equivalent here in the contemporary United States, where buying from large corporations is cheaper and easier than local production? What is something that could be done on a daily basis and also provide a framework for large-scale actions?

In terms of a constructive program for the Occupy movement, focusing on these essential five basic human needs could mean dedicating thirty minutes a day to identifying, learning, and executing home-based or community-based ways of attending to those needs so as to increase self-reliance and empowerment and undo the dependence on external institutions.

This focus would not be new to Occupy because tending to basic human needs has been a thread woven into the encampments and beyond. Just the activity of doing this has supported a stronger connection with the radical notion that meeting basic human needs is actually possible and not difficult. Two recent examples support my intuitive sense that the challenge of meeting human needs is more political than material.

In Brazil, the officials and citizens of the city of Belo Horizonte discovered that ending hunger was embarrassingly easy once the political will was there. It meant, in part, changing how food, money, and relationships were thought about. Ending hunger meant providing food for everyone and getting everyone involved in solving the problem. It also meant better lives for farmers around the city.

Taking on ending hunger as an entirely grassroots effort requires ingenuity, courage, and sustained will. Neighborhood assemblies can support the growing, sharing, and distribution of food as part of the constructive program aspect of this focus. Volunteers can collect leftovers from households, restaurants, and grocery stores for people in need. Others can donate to local farmers to grow food to be distributed free of charge. Through ongoing conversations about ending hunger, people can learn what works elsewhere and come in contact with their power as they co-create strategies that fit their community context. *(continued on page 61)*

The Occupy movement could follow in Gandhi's footsteps by focusing on basic human needs. Here, a Gandhi statue donated by the Peace Abbey stands with Occupy Boston.

ROBERT KENDALL

BECKY WHITE (LOCALFUTURES.ORG)

Localization:
The Economics of Happiness

by Helena Norberg-Hodge

The Occupy movement has transformed our political culture in profound ways. New forms of struggle seem possible now that thousands have braved winter chill, rubber bullets, and pepper spray to voice their dissent. And the struggle has gained newfound public legitimacy: according to polls, a majority of Americans remain firm in their support for the issues Occupy has brought to the fore.

With this widespread support, there is now a rare opportunity to promote fundamental change toward a better economic future. The Occupy movement has managed to highlight the social and environmental effects of corporate rule. It is now time to examine how transnational corporations and banks have become so powerful and how they have been able to capture our governments.

For the past thirty-five years, I have worked with economists, environmentalists, and social activists to study the impact of trade agreements around the world. It has become clear to us that "economic globalization"—the deregulation of trade and finance—has led to a rapid and unprecedented expansion in the power and influence of transnational corporations. In the name of freedom and free trade, constraints on global businesses and banks have been removed, creating an interlinked global empire that has turned our elected representatives into corporate servants. From Sweden to Slovenia, from the United States to South Africa, the picture is frighteningly similar. During election campaigns, political representatives from left to right speak our language; once in power, they implement policies that serve the needs of global capital, rather than the needs of the people.

Until quite recently, trade deregulation was a subject that lay beneath most of the public's radar. Today, however, even market fundamentalists have had to concede that the deregulation of trade and finance led to increasingly reckless speculation and ultimately to a near meltdown of the global financial system. I'm very hopeful that people will soon recognize that deregulation—the core of economic and corporate globalization—is also the single biggest contributor to most of the other major crises of our time, from unemployment to climate change, ethnic conflict to the epidemic of depression.

For decades, deregulation in the name of globalization was presented as a way of bringing the people of the world

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Trade deregulation has let transnational corporations run wild. Community gardens and farmers markets offer a glimpse of an alternative system. Will Occupy open new paths to economic localization?

together. It was seen as the only way toward progress and as an almost evolutionary process. Bill Clinton, one of the foremost promoters of trade deregulation in the 1990s, said, "Globalization is not something we can hold off or turn off.... It is the economic equivalent of a force of nature." Yet, over the years, more and more people have realized that this is simply not true. The global economy is structured the way it is because of policy choices. In thrall to outdated economic theory, governments are making massive investments in trade-based infrastructures, signing onto trade treaties that open their economies to outside investment, and scrapping laws and regulations designed to protect national and local businesses, jobs, and resources. In the process, national sovereignty has been relinquished to giant transnational corporations and undemocratic supranational bodies like the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Bank of International Settlements (BIS).

Support for international trade has given global players an unfair advantage over local producers and businesses. Long-distance transport networks, for example, make it possible for huge agribusinesses and corporate marketers to deliver their products worldwide, helping them absorb the markets of businesses selling locally-produced goods. Publicly funded global communications networks are of little use to the local family farmer or the local bank, but they enable transnational corporations to wield centralized control over their widely dispersed activities and to transfer capital around the world at the stroke of a computer key. The result of these policies has been an explosive growth in international trade of both goods and toxic debt. Whole economies are becoming dependent on global trade, and virtually every sphere of life is being affected.

The impact on food—one of the only products that people everywhere need on a daily basis—is particularly revealing. As Steven Gorelick and I discuss in our book, *Bringing the Food Economy Home* (Kumarian Press, 2002), in most of the industrialized world, the average plate of food travels thousands of miles before reaching the dinner table. Today, one can find apples from New Zealand in apple-growing regions of Europe and North America; kiwis from California, in turn, have invaded the shops of New Zealand. In Mongolia, a country with ten times as many milk-producing animals as people, shops carry more European dairy products than local ones. Just as absurd, many countries import *and* export virtually identical products. According to the last publicly available trade statistics from the Food and Agriculture Association (FAO), the United States imports more than 100,000 tons each of milk, beef, potatoes, and other staple foods each year, then turns around and exports roughly the same amount.

It's not just food, either. Because taxes, subsidies, and regulations are skewed to favor global trade over local trade, corporations take advantage of the situation and routinely transport manufactured goods across the world and back again. In China, for example, production for domestic consumption is subject to sales tax. This has led producers to evade this tax by exporting their goods, then "re-importing" the same products labeled as originating from abroad. In an era of impending climate chaos, wasting fossil fuel in these ways is nothing short of madness.

One of the most destructive effects of globalization is that it eliminates diversity. In order to grow and to provide the "economies of scale" that huge transnational corporations require, whole populations are induced to want the same consumer goods. Diets worldwide are homogenized so that a narrowed range of global commodities can be grown on mega-farms. In this way, the global economy systematically replaces cultural, biological, and agricultural diversity with monoculture. Since the very existence and functioning of the biosphere depends upon diversity, it seems clear that continued globalization threatens to undermine the basis for life itself.

By providing a focus for people's frustration, Occupy has put the issue of corporate control at center stage. But only with an understanding of *how* our governments have been captured by corporations and banks will there be enough pressure to reverse the process. One thing is clear: as individuals, as communities, and even as nation states, we will have very limited power so long as the economy continues to be controlled by transnational corporate interests.

CREATIVE COMMONS/WIRRALWATER

Environmentalists have long warned of the dangers of pollution, the extinction crisis, and impending climate disaster. Social justice activists, meanwhile, have focused on inequality and the roots of conflict. Now is the time to bridge divides—to make the essential links between the movements for ecological, economic, and social change—because the shifts that are needed to save the planet are the same as those that will increase employment and shrink the gap between rich and poor. These policy changes would also enable us to better meet our need for community and a sense of belonging, thus lessening the tensions that lead to conflict both at home and abroad.

In order to turn things around, we need to force our political representatives back to the negotiating tables, this time to revoke the agreements that slashed the rights of both nature and the 99 percent while handing unprecedented power to a small number of unaccountable institutions. Revised international agreements would no longer provide greater freedom for huge global monopolies but would instead protect the environment and human rights.

The goal of these policy shifts would be to set a course for a greater *localization* or decentralization of the economy—in other words, taxes, subsidies, and regulations would be shifted away from encouraging production for export toward production for local and national needs. Regulations would ensure that businesses were place-based or "localized," making them more transparent and accountable. Localization doesn't mean eliminating all trade or adopting an isolationist attitude—it simply means shortening the distances between consumers and producers wherever possible. It would aim to reduce unnecessary transport while encouraging changes to strengthen and diversify economies at the community and national levels. The type of goods produced and the amount of trade would naturally vary from region to region.

Economic localization means supporting local economies and communities rather than huge, distant corporations and banks. Instead of a global economy based on sweatshops in the global South, stressed-out two-earner families in the global North, and a handful of billionaire elites worldwide, localization means a smaller gap between rich and poor. It also means closer contact between producers and consumers, which translates into greater social cohesion. A few years ago, a team of sociologists followed shoppers around and found that those at farmers markets had ten times more conversations than those at supermarkets.

Economic localization has been described as the economics of happiness. This is because it replaces our dependence on distant bureaucracies and corporations with human-scale interdependence. This is the structural path to rebuilding community, a key ingredient in happiness. Almost universally, research confirms that feeling connected to others is a fundamental human need. Local, community-based economies are particularly crucial for the well-being of our children, providing them with living role models and a healthy sense of identity. Recent childhood development research demonstrates the importance, in the early years of life, of learning about who we are in relation to parents, siblings, and the larger community. These are *real* role models, unlike the artificial stereotypes found in the media.

Changing the trajectory of our economic system can seem exceedingly difficult but—in the context of climate change, extinction of species, and mass social unrest—continuing on our current globalizing path is impossible. Meanwhile, efforts to localize economies are already happening at the grassroots level all over the world. In Detroit, one of America's most blighted cities, there are now more than 2,000 community gardens, each one bringing with it a sense of connection to others and to the earth. A young man who founded one of these urban gardens told me: "I've lived in this community over thirty-five years, and people I'd never met came up and talked to me when we started this project. We found that it reconnects us with the people around us. It makes community a reality." Another young gardener in Detroit put it this way: "Everything just *feels* better to people when there is something growing."

In hundreds of communities, grassroots initiatives also aim to save local, independent businesses. The Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE) is a hub for many of these efforts. Its mission is to catalyze and connect local business networks and to strengthen these networks. BALLE comprises more than eighty community alliances in the United States and Canada and represents more than 22,000 small businesses. Members of the network support economies that are controlled locally to the greatest extent possible while sustaining the communities and ecosystems in which they are embedded.

Banking and finance are also the focus of localization efforts. Anger over the bank bailouts has led millions of people to pull their money out of big banks in favor of small, local banks and credit unions. After Bank of America announced a new debit card fee this year, a Move Your Money campaign led more than 650,000 people in a single month to abandon the banking giant and join credit unions.

Through small projects worldwide, the localization movement is demonstrating that it is possible to reduce our ecological footprint while at the same time increasing both productivity and employment. It is extremely inspiring—and all the more so when one realizes that these initiatives are taking root without help from government or the media. Imagine how powerful the movement could be with the support of even a fraction of our tax dollars!

Despite the fact that most of the North American Occupy camps have now been cleared away, the movement carries on. Community bonds have been forged and commonalities have been found despite our differences. The Occupy movement is a heartening sign that we are ready for a shift toward an economy of renewal, sustainability, and happiness. The choice is now ours. Let us join together—across the social, economic, and environmental divides—and work for localization on a global scale. ■

Horizontalidad and Territory in the Occupy Movements

by Marina Sitrin

Horizontal social relationships and the creation of new territory through the use of geographic space are the most generalized and innovative of the experiences of the Occupy movements. What we have been witnessing across the United States since September 2011 is new in a myriad of ways, yet also, as everything, has local and global antecedents. In this article I will describe these two innovations and ground them in the more recent past, looking back to Argentina's popular rebellion of eleven years ago and its conception of *horizontalidad*. I do this so as to examine commonalities and differences, but also to remind us that these ways of organizing have multiple and diverse precedents from which we may learn.

Horizontalidad, horizontality, and horizontalism are words that encapsulate the ideas upon which many of the social relationships and political interactions in the new global movements are grounded—movements from Spain to Greece, and now most recently here in the U.S. Occupy movements.

Horizontalidad is a social relationship that implies, as its name suggests, a flat plane upon which to communicate. Horizontalidad necessarily implies the use of direct democracy and the striving for consensus—both processes in which attempts are made so that everyone is heard and new relationships are created. Horizontalidad is a new way of relating, based in affective politics and against all the implications of "isms." It is a dynamic social relationship. It is not an ideology or political program that must be met so as to create a new society or new idea. It is a break with these sorts of vertical ways of organizing and relating, and a break that is an opening.

To participate in any of the assemblies taking place throughout the United States and in many places around the globe means to stand or sit in a circle, with a handful of facilitators, and speak and listen in turn. The point of these discussions, which are usually conducted with general guidelines and principles of unity, is to collectively attempt to reach consensus—a general agreement with which all can feel satisfied, even if it is not perfect—through the process of active listening. If one were to ask a participant about this process, which I have done countless times, they would most likely explain the need to listen to one another. Perhaps they would use the language of democracy, something like direct, real, or participatory democracy. Or maybe they would say that we do not have a society in which people can really participate, so that is what we are trying to do here, in this space and with this assembly. Often in these conversations, some version of horizontalism will arise. This current experience in the United States is strikingly similar to what took place in Argentina beginning in December 2001, where I then lived and compiled an oral history. This similarity requires reflection and historical grounding.

Argentina's 2001 Rebellion and the Emergence of Horizontalidad

The word horizontalidad was first heard in the days after the popular rebellion in Argentina in 2001. No one recalls where it came from or who first might have said it. It was a new word and emerged from a new practice. The practice was people coming together, looking to one another, and—without anyone in charge or with power over the other—beginning to find ways to solve their problems together. Through doing this together, they were creating a new relationship: both the decision-making process and the ways in which they wanted to relate in the future were horizontal. What this meant was, and still is, to be discovered in the practice of it. As the Zapatistas in Chiapas say, the meaning is in the walk and always questioning as we walk.

The rebellion in Argentina came in response to a growing economic crisis that had already left hundreds of thousands without work and many thousands hungry. The state provided no possible way out—and in fact quite the opposite. In the days before the popular rebellion, in early December 2001, the

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The horizontal social relations of the Occupy movement are strikingly similar to the horizontalidad *that emerged a decade ago during Argentina's popular rebellion. Here, workers protest outside the Supreme Court building in Buenos Aires in December 2001.*

AP PHOTO/PABLO ANELI

government froze all personal bank accounts, fearing a run on the banks. In response, first one person, and then another, and then hundreds, thousands, and hundreds of thousands came out into the street, banging pots and pans, *cacerolando*. They were not led by any party, and were not following any slogans. They merely sang, "*¡Que se vayan todos! ¡Que no quede ni uno solo!* [They all must go! Not even one should remain!]" Within two weeks, four governments had resigned, the minister of the economy being the first to flee.

In the days of the popular rebellion, people who had been out in the streets cacerolando described finding themselves, finding each other, looking around at one another, introducing themselves, wondering what was next, and beginning to ask questions together.

One of the most significant things about the social movements that emerged in Argentina in 2001 is how generalized the experience of horizontalidad within them was and continues to be. Members of the middle class organized into neighborhood assemblies, as did the unemployed, and workers pushed to take back their workplaces. Horizontalidad and a rejection of hierarchy and political parties were the norm for thousands of assemblies taking place on street corners, in workplaces, and throughout the unemployed neighborhoods. And now, ten years later, as people come together to organize, the assumption is that their relations will be horizontal. This is true for the hundreds of assemblies currently taking place up and down the Andes, where workers are fighting against international mining companies, and for the thousands of *bachilleratos*—alternative high school diploma programs organized by former assembly participants and housed in recuperated workplaces.

Horizontalidad is a living word, reflecting an ever-changing experience. Months after the popular rebellion, many movement participants began to speak of their relationships as horizontal as a way of describing the new forms of decision-making. Years after the rebellion, those continuing to build new movements speak of horizontalidad as a goal as well as a tool. All social relationships are still deeply affected by capitalism and hierarchy, and thus by the sort of power dynamics they promote in all collective and creative spaces—especially how people relate to one another in terms of economic resources, gender, race, access to information, and experience. As a result, until these fundamental social dynamics are overcome, the goal of horizontalidad cannot be achieved. Time has taught that, in the face of this, simply desiring a relationship does not make it so. But the process of horizontalidad is a tool for the achievement of this goal. Thus horizontalidad is desired and is a goal but it is also the means, the tool, for achieving this end.

Participants in the Occupy movements in the United States—as well as around the globe, from Spain and Greece to London and Berlin—are using directly democratic assemblies. When I traveled through Greece and to London and Berlin in November 2011, I found that many activists in each place were even using the specific language of horizontal, horizontalism, and horizontalidad. They said they were using horizontal forms so as to create the most open and participatory spaces possible. And now, many months into the occupations, participants are speaking of the challenges to the process as well, similarly reflecting that horizontalidad is not a thing but rather a process and, as it was for the Argentines, both a tool and a goal.

In the months since the Occupy encampments began in the United States, there has been a tremendous interest in what occurred in Argentina. Sales of the book I edited, *Horizontalism: Voices of Popular Power in Argentina*, have spiked. Countless people tell me that *(continued on page 62)*

Occupy's Message to the Food Movement: Bridge the Class Divides

by Kristin Wartman

Occupy Wall Street is about nothing if not about class politics in America. Class has long been the submerged topic—it seems to make most Americans uncomfortable while at the same time defining many of our social structures and personal interactions. We often discuss race and gender inequalities, but discussions of class seem to be almost taboo outside of an academic setting. Sure, politicians will use code words for talking about class ("working people"), but there is no explicit mention of the strict class lines that divide and segregate people in this country. What Occupy Wall Street has succeeded at is opening up this dialogue and bringing the question of class to the foreground.

And from where I stand, nothing is a more deeply felt and lived indicator of class in this country than food—this is why the question of global food systems must be addressed within the framework of Occupy Wall Street.

For all the talk of Occupy having a vague message, I find the message quite clear and compelling: it is a dissection of American class politics rooted in calling out the corporate control of our democracy and our everyday lives. As such, dismantling our corporate-dominated food systems and replacing them with local, sustainable alternatives will play a crucial role in getting corporations out of our food supply. The challenge will be getting the majority of Americans to agree with this idea.

The food landscape and its correlation to class is complicated and rife with contradiction. This is partly because our modern-day American food system is brand new—it's only been in existence for about sixty years. Compared to our agrarian past, which is at least 10,000 years old, sixty years is a blip. But the past sixty years of industrial food systems have come to define American food as well as the global food economy. Much remains to be seen about how this new global food economy and new food products will ultimately affect our world. But as the food movement has been pointing out for the past thirty years, many negative effects on our environment and our health are already quite clear. What's less easy to identify and understand are the complex webs of social relations that have developed around our food and food systems.

Farmers gather in New York in December 2011 to demand an end to fracking and factory farming.

To consider the real implications of our food system, we must first understand how deeply corporations control our food supply; at this point, there is a near monopolization. Just four companies—Cargill, Archer Daniels Midland, Bunge, and Louis Dreyfus—control 90 percent of the global trade in grain. In the United States, three firms process 70 percent of soybeans and 40 percent of wheat. Three companies now process more than 70 percent of all beef, and four firms slaughter and pack nearly 60 percent of all pork and chicken. By 2002, the USDA reported that four companies made 75 percent of breakfast cereal, 75 percent of snacks, 60 percent of cookies, and 50 percent of ice cream.

This monopolization is taking the ultimate toll on our environment and our health. While large-scale industrial food production results in vast quantities of food, these systems are inefficient in managing their own waste. Long-term environmental damage is the consequence. Runoff from industrial agriculture is the biggest source of water pollution in the United States, according to the EPA. Likewise, the food produced in these systems is often of poor nutritional quality, resulting in an overfed but undernourished population. Currently, 75 percent of the population is obese or overweight, and many are chronically ill from diet-related diseases.

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Michelle Obama harvests vegetables from the White House kitchen garden during a "Let's Move!" event in June 2010.

LAWRENCE JACKSON (OFFICIAL WHITE HOUSE PHOTO)

This is a systemic problem, but the solution has come to be framed as one of personal choice. Much of the discussion thus far has focused on people making healthier food choices and exercising more often. While these two pieces of the puzzle surely play a role, there are deeper and more complex mechanisms at work. But these are often hidden.

Many Americans are not convinced that food has anything to do with politics while at the same time much of our cultural identity is tied up in an affinity for processed, industrial foods. This phenomenon is a testament to the work of Big Food and its partner, the advertising industry. Together, they have succeeded in creating a familial loyalty to big brands and corporate foods that is unprecedented.

Witness the concept of the "nanny state" purported by conservative Republicans and Tea Partiers like Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann. The concept took hold at the time Michelle Obama introduced her "Let's Move!" campaign to encourage healthier eating habits, like eating more fresh fruits and vegetables, among our nation's youth. Palin, Bachmann, and other conservative pundits immediately accused the first lady of telling our nation's children what to eat. They decried her efforts as anti-American, invoking the notion that Americans have a right to eat whatever they want without any government interference. Trouble is, the government is not telling Americans what to eat. Big Food corporations are.

While Palin and Bachmann claim to be defending the family and American values, they are really defending corporate control over the food supply—a monopolization that severely limits people's ability to make healthy choices for themselves. All the while, they ridicule the first lady and accuse the Obama administration of socialism. But what is it called when corporations owned and run by a few control what the vast majority of the population eats?

Big Food is not just feeding low-income communities its cheap, processed foods; it's also reinforcing class divisions in our society with its slick, billion-dollar marketing campaigns. And Big Food has succeeded in this goal—much as Republicans have succeeded in getting working-class and middle-class Americans to vote for the Republican Party against their own interests. Not coincidentally, these two trends are connected, since Republicans are the party most beholden to Big Food. So far, for the 2012 election cycle, Republican candidates, parties, and outside groups have received 71 percent (or $13,205,208) of the total donations from agribusiness. Sixty years of these marketing campaigns have created unquestioned loyalty and fused American identity with products like Coke and the Big Mac. Big Food is taking advantage of the widening gulf between lower- and upper-income classes—it's getting average Americans to view healthy foods as elitist and to embrace processed, industrial fare as real, American foods.

It's clear that this is not about personal choice or individual freedoms, as both sides of the political spectrum contend. The charge on the left that what's needed is better access to whole foods is limited; it focuses solely on the supply side of the equation without acknowledging the deeply embedded cultural and political identities implicit in food choice. The charge of infringement on personal freedoms made by critics on the right is a fallacy since our "choices" have already been limited to foods controlled by a handful of corporations. The solution to this problem is not one that the capitalist economy that created it is capable of solving. Indeed, the phrases "individual choice" and "personal freedoms" are the language of our neoliberal economic policies.

Occupy's challenge so far has been getting average working- and middle-class Americans to identify with the 99 percent—so far it has done this, with the majority now in support of the movement. A crucial part of the success of Occupy will also depend on getting Americans to understand corporate control of our food supply and the way in which, over the past sixty years, industrial food has come to dominate our food choices.

So how can we do this? It is no doubt a daunting challenge when we consider the large sums of money invested in Big Food corporations and the power that these corporations wield. We can't simply continue to individually buy better foods and think this is enough. We need collective action. The current model of the food movement says: if those who can afford to buy better foods do, this will eventually affect those who currently cannot by creating more demand for better foods and lowering their prices. But this is akin to the "trickle-down" theory of the neo-cons. Trickle-down is a fallacy in that context, and it is also a fallacy in the food movement.

Philosopher and cultural critic Slavoj Žižek—an outspoken supporter of Occupy Wall Street—has said that in our capitalist economy we often engage in "low-level, self-satisfying consumerism," such as buying organic versions of food. This might make us feel good but actually undermines any real move toward radical change in our food system. Žižek says we need a more radical rethinking of our entire way of life, not just on an individual level but collectively.

Just like Occupy has exposed the underbelly of our corrupt economic system, the food movement needs to employ similar cross-class tactics to expose the greed and financial gain that structure our food system at the expense *(continued on page 64)*

Healing the World Through Consciousness Exploration

by Phil Wolfson

LINNEA VEDDER-SHULTS

There is nothing more palpable and democratic than conscious experience. All of us have it and all of us recognize that others share in the richness and wonder of being conscious. To respect and love one another is to recognize that the "other," no matter how different from oneself, is also conscious, and thus subject to the same range of possibilities for joy and suffering.

At the same time, because of our nature—our having circumscribed individual consciousnesses—we are unable to empirically prove that anyone other than ourselves is actually conscious in the same way that we are. It behooves us as loving, sharing eco-citizens to agree to hold and cultivate the lived assumption that all other humans are created equal by virtue of their sharing consciousness. This is in fact the foundational assumption behind our notion of universal human rights: we are all conscious, and thus we all have needs and we all suffer.

An exploration of consciousness confirms that no matter how different the trappings of culture, language, costume, or beliefs, we are the same sort of beings, we want the same things, and we are subject to the same disappointments and joys.

In short, an exploration of consciousness has great power to illuminate and inform efforts at *tikkun olam*—the healing and transformation of the world. I am pleased to offer this essay as an introduction to a new section of *Tikkun* devoted to the exploration and understanding of consciousness. This new endeavor, for which I am serving as editor, will focus on these questions: Why should an exploration of consciousness be included in a broad-based nonsecular magazine devoted to spiritual, social, and political progressivism? Why does consciousness matter, and why does it matter in this context?

To situate our project in relation to the academic field of consciousness studies, I asked Christopher Holvenstot to write a piece for this issue of *Tikkun*. Holvenstot is in the vanguard of those creating a holistic understanding of the interweave of life and consciousness/cognition that commences from the inception of life itself and evolves in complexity and ever-growing sophistication over its 3.2 billion years. His piece introduces this growing force within consciousness studies and provides a critique of the field from that perspective.

Consciousness and Claims of Human Superiority

While more and more of the general public, as well as some behavioral and cognitive scientists, are increasingly recognizing that animals possess various degrees of consciousness, historically, human culture has expropriated consciousness

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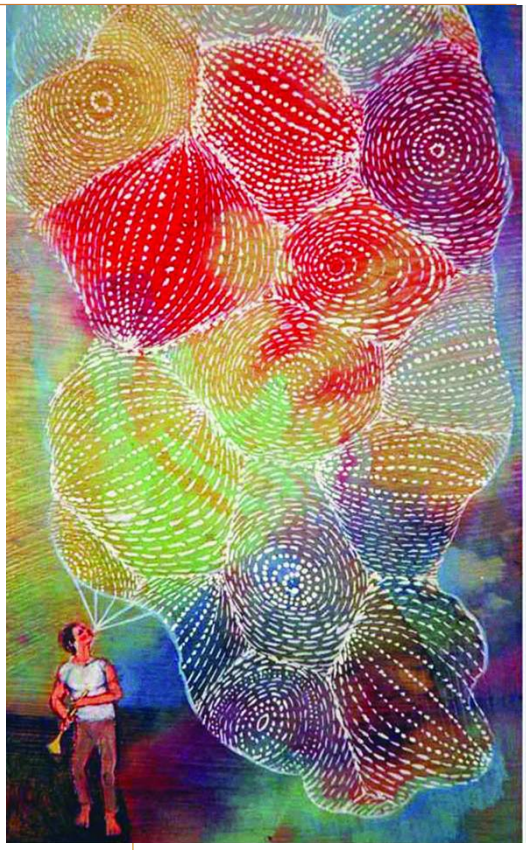

from other animals, claiming it as the particular and exclusive human attribute that sets us above and apart from all others. This serves to legitimate the destructive view that we have rights over other living things. And that expropriation has taken the form of domineering theological, cultural, and political hegemonies that have forced individual and group consciousnesses into formats that constrain behavior and mind and make other humans and groups seem inferior. This exclusionary stance in support of special privileges is now widely known to be unsustainable. By continuing to hold these beliefs, we threaten the very continuity and resilience of earth's ecosystems. This occurs through the power structures' self-serving assertion of their economic "rights" to all the ecosystem's resources, no matter the consequences for other living things. We participate too often in this discourse without clarity about how consciousness is being viewed—in truth, the idea behind the assertion is, "My consciousness is more important, smarter, and more privileged than yours." Thus, manipulating our beliefs about consciousness can have the most dire and consequential of implications—the death of the planet as we know it. In fact, we are witnessing the largest extinction episode in 64 million years, and it is the first time such devastation has been the direct result of the behaviors and beliefs of a single species. Understanding the forces behind specific beliefs about consciousness can empower us to communally contradict those influences and to adjust our beliefs and behaviors accordingly.

Telling us how to think is and has been unfortunately a very successful strategy for domination, especially when backed up by wealth, private property, the power of ruling elites, and the power of cultural biases and the control of information. Thankfully, our minds escape full control howsoever they are coerced. Our liberated potentiality exists because our minds' workings are unknowable to others save through conjecture or through behaviors that demonstrate our independence. Remarkable examples abound of people whose consciousness remained free, despite the most extreme forms of coercion—take, for instance, Nelson Mandela on Robben Island, who was in jail for twenty-eight years of his life. We all find some degree of mental autonomy, despite our often rigid families and a culture that seeks to tell us how to think in the interest of its profit-driven consumerism and drive to be globally dominant. These are the two sides that make for the great drama: consciousness's simultaneous malleability and independence. It is malleable because the contents of mind are imbibed and learned, yet it is also independent, as we all have the ability to think for ourselves, developing new, critical, and imaginative views that can transform and transcend.

This is what makes the study of mind so fascinating and so potentially radical: we are each able to explore our own minds to varying degrees. No one can truly know my mind. I cannot truly know another's mind. My mind can be influenced and altered by other minds. I can influence and alter another's mind—or so it seems. My mind and others' minds, insofar as I am able to make them out, are participants in strong views and influences that shape all of our thoughts, passions, and behaviors. And these views are often unexamined and unconscious, shared and prejudicial, and against our own and others' seeming self-interest.

The Mind in the World

So, is mind everything? Certainly when my lights go out—with surgery and general anesthesia, stroke or head trauma, and seemingly with death—my awareness of myself and the world disappears. One historic philosophic "distortion" has been that therefore I must create the world, for it does not exist without my consciousness. All of us carry that narcissistic seed, at least a bit. In the great fear of death that most of us experience, the core anxiety is usually about this cessation of awareness of self and world. After all, what good is an end-stage Alzheimer's brain, or a body with a comatose mind that cannot be brought back? But this is the individual vista, disconnected from all that creates, nurtures, supports, and obligates. In truth, our lived experience cuts against this narcissistic idea. We experience ourselves in community with other humans who vie for importance with us and with whom we have to negotiate constantly to stay alive and well. Our social community has great power over us. We feel we must contribute at least something to it. We know that surely a single one of us cannot be making this all up!

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This concerns the great business of the self and its struggle to balance with nature and community, with sharing and receiving. Here is the rub: we are necessarily bounded beings, differentiated from other life forms, and yet we are also of one piece with the entire universe. We need our boundaries in order to differentiate ourselves and have identity at multiple levels of complex interaction—as individuals, as species, and as micro- and macro-ecological participants in this natural world of Gaia. But at the same time, we are also remarkably similar even to simple life forms like bacteria. We have become aware of having arisen in continuity with all of the life forms that constitute our lineage going back to the primordial soup. An extinction at any point along the chain in the roughly 3.2 billion years of life on earth would have eliminated our being here. Our commonality with other life forms is vast indeed. And that indispensable realization is truly radical. We can feel its profundity. Practicing this awareness changes how we choose to live.

For millennia the idea of the specialness of human consciousness—generally promoted as the singular capacity for self-awareness, and also posited as akin to God mind—has dominated Western discourse about conscious life. But this has led to a juggernaut of problems, facilitating perpetual conflicts. This idea of human superiority masks greed and self-interest with its super-structural justifications.

An Evolutionary Perspective on Consciousness

I believe it's time to reject this discourse of human specialness and superiority, and instead explore an evolutionary perspective on being. In this new realization, we understand that consciousness arises with life itself. From the simplest forms to the most complex, *any and all life to be established as being such must exert the quality of "for itself."* This is the defining moment of consciousness at its most basic level, when the separation of life from the physical world occurs and then perpetuates itself. And what is cognition? It is the simultaneously arising ability of life to interact with its environment in order to sustain itself and to expand its reach, to be counter-entropic, to trap energy and build structure. It took about 2.6 billion of the 3.2 billion years of life to develop the molecular systems and complexity that would foster multi-cellularity (multicelled organisms appear to be no more than 6 hundred million years old), and those systems persist in fairly unchanging ways, both inside and outside our bodies. Much of us is in fact very, very old. As evolution proceeds, the complexity of consciousness often increases along with its adaptivity, flexibility, internal complexity, and relational potential. For example, think about how the ability to move changes an organism's responses to opportunities and potential disasters. That ability gives rise to one of our very many complexities of choice: to move toward, or away from. This is one of the great "archetypes" of consciousness in more complex organisms, as Hans Jonas noted in *The Phenomenon of Life:*

> The great contradictions which [humans discover in themselves]—freedom and necessity, autonomy and dependence, self and world, relation and isolation, creativity and mortality—have their rudimentary traces in even the most primitive forms of life, each precariously balanced between being and not-being, and each already endowed with an internal horizon of "transcendence."

Consciousness is often equated with "awareness," the capacity to recognize sensations of internal experience. This conflation has given rise to myriad questions and problems: What is this awareness we have? What is it made of? Is this our connection with God and his wisdom? What other creatures might also have awareness? Does awareness come from brain alone, or from connections outside of us, or from other sources outside of our current scientific awareness? Who is the most aware? Who has the best theory of awareness? And is it restrictive of other theories? Can you build machines capable of awareness? Can you create awareness from parts of the body, especially neurons? What are the minimal conditions necessary for awareness in

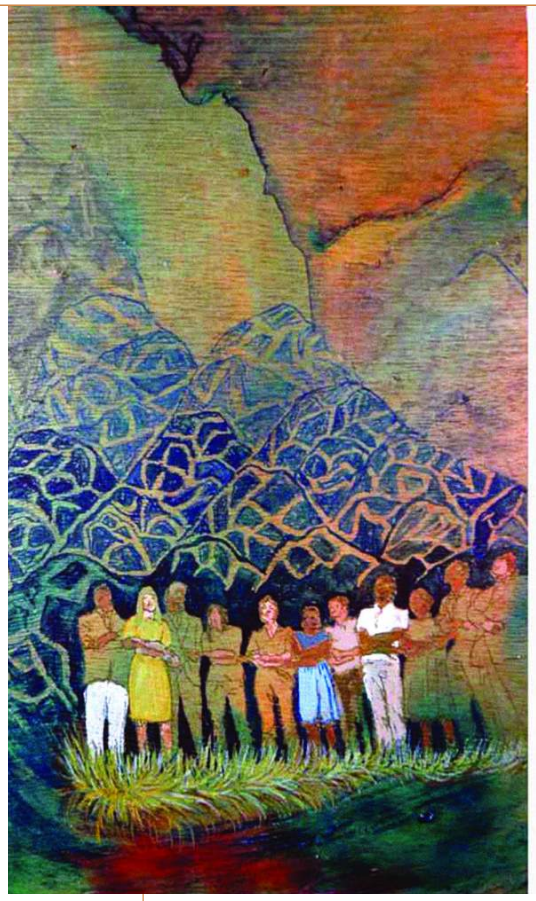
potential machines and potential biological arrays, and how big do they have to be? Can such simulations self-report on their internal awareness if it is ever achieved? I could go on fairly interminably. Among other things, from this partial list, you may discern that consciousness/cognition/awareness is indeed a part of everything living and everything about living that goes on. Consciousness itself is also part of the social and psychological therapeutics and educational methods that seek to enhance the complexity and rationality of consciousness, and it is essential to the evaluation of the effectiveness of their methodologies. Of course, there are many potential hazards and misuses of consciousness exploration. It is at risk of manipulation at all points—political, scientific, and relational—since virtually all of science can be used either for benefit or for control.

Humans' perception of the color red has frequently been used by philosophers to illustrate what they conceive of as "consciousness." The potential for stimulating the perception of the color red in humans exists out there—in nature. But the ability to perceive the color red only exists in humans and some other creatures. The substance of "red" for these creatures is indescribable, yet it exists for those who experience its wholeness as the color red. It is an assemblage—a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts, with its own integrity. The perception of red can be reduced to component parts, such as the firing of receptors at the retina, or the illumination of cortical areas of the brain using PET scans. Its analysis at the stimulation level can be tweaked and played with. But the color red without its linguistic signifier (red, rojo, rot, etc.) cannot be found. The concept of red relies on linguistic, subjective description: "I see the color red." It relies on consensuality: "Do you see what I am seeing—that red color over there?" Once conceptually bound by the identifier "red," the experience of red can be moved around by imagination internally, associated with emotions ("red makes me angry"), and identified in dreams. But what is the color red to me? How does it exist inside of me, say in my mind? What is it made of? Try answering these questions for the more complex, feeling-bound "love," or any other emotional concept; the same questions arise with each inquiry. Some have called this "the hard problem" of consciousness research, "the explanatory gap."

Consciousness as a Vehicle of Interconnection

The great human problem and its terrific solution is the recognition that we can only mediate between our minds—cognition—and the outside world. Once life enters its first container, it is in relationship through boundaries; however we feel our experiences to be immediate and vital. Our relationship to the outside world and to our own bodies is through mechanisms that have developed over the eons and have given rise with time to the phenomenon of self-awareness in all its complexity. Assuredly, external reality exists in all its complexity, but we can know it only through our senses and the creations we make to analyze and experience it. That is the source of both our alienation and our capaciousness. At most, we can approximate; and in our best moments, our sense of that reality will be the source of doubt and humility, a desire for education and further exploration, and an awareness of our limitations. Abiding in the awe of not knowing, we choose to reside in numinous spaciousness.

By choosing to recognize this conscious state as our common characteristic, and by choosing to take the suffering of others seriously, we arrive at the utopian yet indispensable possibility of forming complex communities of diverse individuals based on trust and mutual understanding. This is a possibility rather than an inevitability because in truth we can go either toward Eros and community, or toward a greedy social suicide. And thus, consciousness is not just a common characteristic, it is the *vehicle* by which we are aware of one another, the *vehicle* by which we form and feel empathy, the *vehicle* by which we share in the sufferings and joys of our loved ones, friends, community, culture, nation, and species. So an exploration of consciousness illustrates that in addition to being a common trait, it is more importantly a common *bond*. It is a vehicle of interconnection. By virtue of being conscious, *(continued on page 69)*



LINNEA VEDDER-SHULTS

"To be conscious is to be part of a larger whole," the author writes. "This interrelational characteristic has spiritual implications." The image above is part of a series of divination cards intended to help viewers access their inner intuition. Understanding this and other levels of awareness is a central focus of consciousness studies. To learn more about the four images in this article, see The World Is Your Oracle *(mamasminstrel.net/writings.htm) by Tikkun Daily blogger Nancy Vedder-Shults.*

Consciousness Studies and a Transformation of the Western Worldview

by Christopher Holvenstot

In the mid-1990s, fMRIs (functional magnetic resonance imaging devices) enabled researchers to begin mapping correlations between real-time brain activity and specific cognitive functions, thereby providing an empirical basis for the study of consciousness. Though it was a commonsense fact that we were conscious long before the invention of fMRIs, the lack of empirical proof meant it was taboo to speak or write of it as a scientific fact, and to do so was to jeopardize one's career by garnering unflattering labels like irrational, flaky, New-Agey, etc.

For decades, humanities departments had been openly exploring subjective perspectives, inner voice, psycho-social dynamics, and altered conscious states, but in a culture that looks to physics and religion for its ultimate truths about reality, these explorations were regarded as mere entertainments. Discovering a consciousness-related physical effect that could be observed, measured, and tested in repeatable trials finally sanctified the subject of consciousness and, in the wake of these empirical blessings, a new interdisciplinary field arose with the enthusiastic character of the Wild West. From physics, biology, cognitive neuroscience, psychology, philosophy, anthropology, computing and artificial intelligence, health and medicine, religion and spirituality, and from literature and the arts, adventurers have come to stake their claims in the wide-open territory of consciousness studies.

Staking Claims in the New Field

Adventurers have come to the field of consciousness studies bringing a variety of skills, ideologies, and intelligence types, and they have come for many reasons. Some with empirical intelligence have come to prove or maintain the superiority of science, to uphold the honor of empiricism in the face of the science-resistant mysteries surrounding consciousness. Some from this camp go so far as to assert that the rich, perspectival, interrelational aspects of conscious experience are an illusion, because neither brain imaging nor the rules and maxims of empirical science can fully account for them. Some with spiritual intelligence have come to the field to reinvigorate their religious wonder. They use the interrelational nature of our conscious condition and its unusual resistance to empirical reduction to reconfirm their faith in a higher power. To enter the field is to step into an explanatory turf-war between science and spirituality. The science camp defends the study of consciousness from those who would muck it up with the irrational mysteries of faith and the interpretive vagaries of spiritual dogma. The spiritual camp defends the subject matter from the meaning-stripped tests, measurements, and physical reductions of the godless empiricists.

Some members of both camps have come with either the conscious intention to prove the *special-case* self-image of humankind or with a subconscious intuitive defensiveness regarding the superiority of human cognition over the cognitive capabilities of other living systems, intentionally or inadvertently focusing the whole of their analytical fervor on humanity's many miraculous and inexplicable cognitive achievements, particularly in comparison to other primates. Some of these humans-as-a-special-case asserters regard the brain as the centerpiece of the field of consciousness studies. They focus exclusively on the physical, chemical, electrical,

Christopher Holvenstot writes about science and consciousness and champions ongoing theoretical developments in the field of consciousness studies. He is currently finishing a book, The Origin of Cognition: The Evolution of Sentience from Single-Cell Organisms to Human Brains.

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and quantum processes within the human brain, asserting that these represent entirely sufficient explanations of our conscious condition. Special-case asserters exclude important details from their inquiry: they neglect manifestations of awareness and intention in other living systems; overlook the cognitive capabilities relevant to participation in the complex social structures of other species; disregard the inter-accommodative exchanges *between* species; and, even closer to home, ignore the vital manifestations of intercommunication and inter-accommodation that take place in other parts of our own bodies—exchanges in and between cells and tissues and organs, for example, not all of which are regulated by the brain. As important as it is to our self-understanding and in the treatment of brain-related illnesses, focusing exclusively on the human brain obscures the relevance of our socially embedded condition and discounts the interrelational nature of our conscious characteristics.

Some consciousness studies scholars seek to prove the specialness of human cognition, ignoring signs of awareness and intention in other species. Mad Mule *by Pamela Blotner, pencil and mixed media, 2004.*

Many adventurers have come as concerned operators of a conscious mechanism, hoping to better understand the vagaries and complexities of their own minds, their own startling behaviors, the interpretive and sometimes deluding nature of their own perception, as well as the unpredictable, unknowable minds and behaviors of others. They seek answers to the mysteries of conscious and subconscious processes *within themselves* and bear the well-defended ideological claim that the subjective nature of conscious experience is all we can ever know (about consciousness or about anything else). Theirs is an ideology in stark counterpoint to empirical method, which explicitly and categorically excludes subjective perspectives in the pursuit of objectivity.

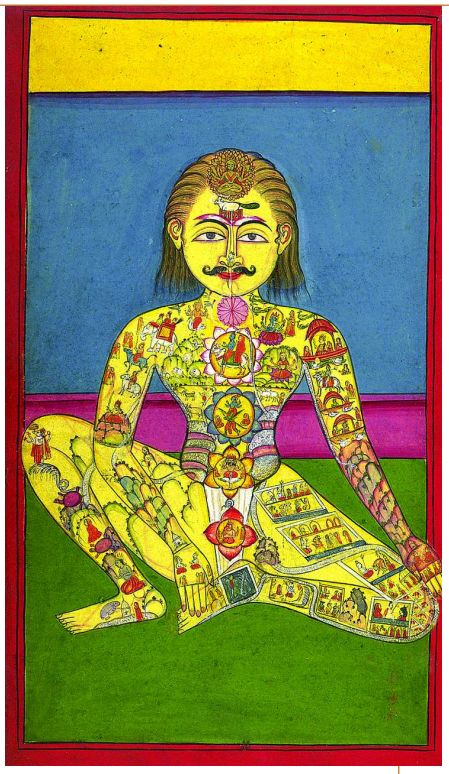
And still others come to the field with the pragmatic and heartfelt spirit of reconciliation, asserting the need for creative compromises, either between the divergent ideologies of distinct fields of interest, or between opposing beliefs within themselves (professional ideologies often conflict with private beliefs). Most of these creative compromises force science into a relationship with religion. Yet ultimately, any approach that allows for the notion of eternal mystery proves unsatisfying in the scientific sense, and deferring even in part to physical proofs reduces the ecstatic texture of spiritual wonder. Some ideologies do not mix very well. And the fact that consciousness manifests in such unique qualities, characteristics, and dynamics makes it all the more elusive and resistant to crossbred ideologies, particularly when the ideologies being combined were designed for other purposes (for control and certainty in the physical realm; for faith, inspiration and ethics in the spiritual realm). Unfortunately, despite a universal impulse toward cultural relativity (i.e., the notion that all beliefs are sacred to those who hold them, which thus compels us to respect one another's ideological differences), the reconciliation contingent has provided the field neither unity nor explanation.

New Efforts to Unify the Field

The field of consciousness studies has emerged as a giddy mix of belief assertions all protected by a code of cultural relativity. This exuberance, while marvelous in its own right, frustrates those wishing to develop a distinct ideology unique to the subject matter, prevents the field from coming together in ideological unity, and forestalls its manifestation as the self-and-world transforming field of endeavor we all know it can be. We are at an important tipping point in which an alternative approach to the problem of unifying the field must be considered. Some see the need for a significant conceptual reorientation, rather than forcing reconciliations of existing ideologies designed for other purposes. Many are coming to the conclusion that what we are talking about when we talk about consciousness is a cognitive dynamic that *precedes* and *supersedes* our beliefs and ideologies—a cognitive dynamic that is integral to the formation of any belief about anything.

Even among physicists, who have been the staunchest defenders of their discipline's explanatory supremacy and of its right to describe reality to the masses, important voices are admitting that cognition is more primary than physical models, and thus more important in an explanation of reality. In *The Grand Design* (2010), Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow write: "There is no way to remove the observer—us—from our perception of the world, which is created through our sensory processing and through the way we think and reason. Our perception—and hence the

PAMELA BLOTNER (PAMELABLOTNER.COM)



Many scholars come to consciousness studies to explore the mysteries of their own interior experience. Compromises between those who bring different motivations and ideologies to the study of human consciousness often force science into an uneasy relationship with religion.

CREATIVE COMMONS/THE BRITISH LIBRARY (*SAPTA CHAKRA*, 1899)

observations upon which our theories are based—is not direct, but rather is shaped by a kind of lens, the interpretive structure of our human brains."

The admission that cognition is fundamental to conceiving physical models of the world, coming as it does from our top physicists, provides the opening we need in order to explain our subject matter on its own terms rather than in the language and metaphors of the physical sciences. This admission opens a space for a new explanatory scenario in which consciousness can be understood as a world-modeling dynamic—a scenario in which cognitive processes are understood as inherent to modeling a self/world relationship, and in which cognition would therefore be understood as an integral aspect of being a living thing. This echoes and reinforces what radical biologists were attempting to convey long before the advent of fMRIs (and who were thus dismissed as New Age flakes for failing to provide empirical proofs). In *Autopoiesis and Cognition* (1979), Humberto Maturana writes, "Living systems are cognitive systems, and living as a process is a process of cognition."

Ultimately, relinquishing the primacy of physics from our analysis of consciousness bodes well for the field of consciousness studies. But clearly this is not an easy ideological leap to make while holding firmly and habitually to the Western belief that reality is a physical manifestation and/or a spiritual representation. The corresponding beliefs about consciousness (that it emerges from physical processes in the brain or that it is a numinous spiritual attribute, a sign of our unique relationship with the divine, an exclusively human capability, etc.) prevent us from comprehending a cognitive dynamic of awareness and intention that is ubiquitous throughout nature, and which is neither physically reducible nor divine in origin. Our culture's currently held physical and spiritual beliefs about the world do not help us identify and map a realm of cognitive dynamics in terms that are relevant to its unique qualities and characteristics. And without a subject-appropriate map of the cognitive realm, we cannot expect to build a cohesive and effective field of consciousness studies.

Consciousness as a World-Modeling Process

Fortunately, an increasing number of researchers are recognizing the primacy of consciousness and are entertaining the notion that awareness and intention are at the center of forming an internal perspectival model of an external world, and that this modeling process is essential to functioning as a living system. Awareness and intention (and therefore consciousness and cognition) are at the service of modeling a creature-appropriate version of the world (a model appropriate for successful biological engagement). Living systems model a version of the world for specific life purposes. We too are living systems caught up in the same process—not a special-case species in that sense. Under the influence of this unfamiliar ideological approach, the belief structures of the Western world can be understood as refined articulations of the same world-modeling scenario found throughout nature. Our human beliefs show up as world-modeling tools with finer language, a more articulated sense of self-reference (and self-importance), more explicit and complex concepts, and more elaborate cultural institutions and architectures. Unlike the world models of other life forms, ours is more fully and widely accessorized with the fruits of our handiwork—the countless physical and meaningful manifestations of our individual and cultural belief investments. Yet ultimately, the human model, though far more elaborate, is not so very different in basic structure or purpose from the simpler world-modeling formulations of other living systems.

In order to function, a living thing must shape and invest in a unique conceptualization of the world, a conceptualization that allows for the organism's own volitional success. It must orient its unique morphology in a physical format suitable to its own volitional capabilities. In every living example this physical configuration of space is elaborated with self-attributions of meaning and value sufficient to allow an organism to successfully maneuver not only within a theater of physical action but also within a theater of meanings and dynamics unique to its own needs and purposes. Each organism operates in a theater scaled to its own cognitive and strategic capabilities, a theater of interrelations unique to the socio-environmental circumstances of a specific species. All organisms, humans included, participate in the formulation of a configuration space that has both physical *and* meaningful dimensions. The process of meaning *(continued on page 70)*

Jesus Kept Kosher

The Jewish Christ of the Gospel of Mark

by Daniel Boyarin

Most scholars say Jesus rejected the Torah's kosher laws in the Gospel of Mark, but did he? A closer look at Mark 7 reveals a Jewish Christ—not a "parting of the ways" between Judaism and Christianity.

LAURA BECKMAN (LAURABECKMAN.COM)

In conventional readings of the Gospel of Mark, Jesus's relationship to the Jewish dietary laws is taken as a watershed moment in religious history, when one set of fundamental beliefs is cast out in favor of a new worldview. For centuries, Christian preachers, scholars, and lay readers of Mark have read the Gospel as teaching us not only that Jesus did not keep kosher but also that he permitted all foods that the Torah had forbidden Jews to eat. This would be a shift of no small moment, as indeed the dietary laws were then and remain today one of the very hallmarks of Jewish religious practice. If Mark has been misread, however, and his Jesus did not abandon or abrogate such basic Jewish practices as keeping kosher, then our entire sense of where the Jesus movement stands in relation to the Judaism of its time is quite changed. In short, if the earliest of Christians believed that Jesus kept kosher, then we have good reason to view that Christianity as another contending branch of Judaism.

The question of the "Jewishness" of Mark lies at the very heart of our understanding of the historical meaning of the Jesus movement in its earliest period. Jesus was, according to the view I defend here, not fighting against the Jews or Judaism but with some Jews for what he considered to be the right kind of Judaism. This kind of Judaism included the idea of a second divine person who would be found on earth in human form as the Messiah (and in the person of that Jesus). The only controversy surrounding Jesus was whether this son of the carpenter of Nazareth truly was the one for whom the Jews were waiting. Taking himself to be that very Jewish Messiah, Son of Man, however, Jesus surely would not have spoken contemptuously of the Torah but would have upheld it.

As read by most commentators, Mark 7 establishes the beginning of the so-called parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity. This is because, according to the traditional interpretation and virtually all modern scholarly ones, in this chapter Jesus declares a major aspect of the Torah's laws, the laws of *kashrut* (keeping kosher), no longer valid, thus representing a major rupture with the beliefs and practices of virtually all other Jews, Pharisaic or not. The representatives of what are arguably the three most central and important scholarly biblical commentary series in the United States, ranging from the Word series for evangelical scholars to the Anchor Bible for the

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Daniel Boyarin, Taubman Professor of Talmudic Culture and rhetoric at the University of California, Berkeley, is the recipient of numerous awards and fellowships. His books include A Radical Jew, Border Lines, *and* Socrates and the Fat Rabbis. *Copyright © 2012 by Daniel Boyarin. This text originally appeared in* The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ, *published by The New Press. Reprinted here with permission.*

The misinterpretation of the Gospel of Mark stems from the conflation of two entirely different systems of rules: kosher dietary laws, which forbid Jews from eating foods such as these creamy bacon cupcakes, and purity laws. Carrion (like the putrefying chicken above) is the only food that can render a body impure, according to the Torah.

CREATIVE COMMONS/CLEVERCUPCAKES (TOP), JESSICAREEDER (BOTTOM)

non-confessional and more general (but advanced) audience and then to the very scholarly and secular Hermeneia—which, taken together, represent the closest thing we have to an authoritative modern reading of the passage—all agree on this in their commentaries on Mark 7, even while disagreeing on much else. Thus Adela Yarbro Collins, in her Hermeneia commentary, writes of verse 19 ("and thus he purified all foods"), "The comment of v. 19c [third clause of v. 19] takes a giant step further and implies, at the very least, that the observance of the food laws for followers of Jesus is not obligatory."

In the evangelical scholarly Word commentary, Robert A. Guelich too writes, "Jesus' saying in 7:15 explained with reference to what one eats by 7:18b–19 means that no foods, even those forbidden by the Levitical law (Lev. 11–15), could defile a person before God. In essence, Jesus 'makes all foods clean.'" In his commentary in the time-honored Anchor Bible, Joel Marcus writes that "anyone who did what the Markan Jesus does in our passage, denying this dietary distinction and declaring all food to be permissible (7:19), would immediately be identified as a seducer who led the people's heart astray from God (cf. 7:6) and from the holy commandment he had given to Moses (cf. 7:8, 9, 13)." This view is the commonly held interpretation of the passage in both the pious and scholarly traditions.

But did the Markan Jesus do this sacrilegious thing, and is this passage truly a parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity? Reading the text backward from later Christian practices and beliefs about the written Torah and its abrogations, interpreters and scholars have found a point of origin, even a legend of origin, for their version of Christianity in this chapter. In contrast, reading the text through lenses colored by years of immersion in the Jewish religious literature of the times around Jesus and the evangelists produces a very different perspective on the chapter from the one that has come to be so dominant. Anchoring Mark in its proper historical and cultural context, we find a very different text indeed, one that reveals an inner Jewish controversy, rather than an abrogation of the Torah and denial of Judaism.

What Did Mark Really Say?

It will be well to have the entire narrative in mind for this discussion, so let me begin by citing the text (presented here without verse numbers, for ease of reading) from the NRSV translation:

> Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him, they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders; and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.) So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?" He said to them, "Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.' You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition." Then he said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition! For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'Whoever curses of father or mother must surely die.' But you say that if anyone tells father or mother, 'Whatever support you might have had from me is Corban' (that is, an offering to God)—then you no longer permit doing anything for a father or mother, thus making void the word of God through your tradition that you have handed on. And you do many things like this." Then he called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside a person that by *(continued on page 64)*

The Religious Counterculture

by Ana Levy-Lyons

Actor Mayim Bialik blogged about the difficulty of finding this dress for the Emmy Awards, given the Jewish modesty laws she observes. What if all religious liberals felt such tension between their religious values and the demands of capitalist society?

HEATHER WEISS

I'M NOT EASILY STARSTRUCK, BUT THERE IS ONE MINOR CELEBRITY ON WHOM I have a kind of a crush: Mayim Bialik. She plays Amy Farrah Fowler in *The Big Bang Theory* and long ago starred in the show *Blossom*. I have never watched either of these shows, but that's beside the point. It's not her acting performance that I admire so much… it's her performance of her values. She uses her Ph.D. in neuroscience from UCLA to teach science classes as part of homeschooling children in her community. She is a vegan who says that she prepares vegan food for her family to teach her kids to care for the earth. And she is an observant Jew who keeps the Sabbath, keeps kosher (so it has to be kosher vegan food), and even tries to adhere to Jewish modesty laws in her dress. The last, I imagine, is no small feat for a woman who makes a living in Hollywood.

The modesty issue came to a head as Bialik prepared to attend the Emmy awards last fall. She needed to find a dress that covered her elbows and knees and collarbone, was not too tight, and, of course, was absolutely *gorgeous* enough for the red carpet. The quest for this perfect dress became very public as she wrote about it in her various blogs and columns. She called the quest, "Operation Hot and Holy."

We may disagree with a tradition that requires this kind of modesty (although I'll point out that most of the same modesty laws apply to men). But you've got to admire someone who takes her religious values so seriously that she is willing to withstand intense social pressure. If women in our culture normally feel pressure to dress in revealing clothing, the pressure must be tenfold in Hollywood and a hundredfold at big public industry events like the Emmys. But she did it—Operation Hot and Holy: mission accomplished—and afterward the blogosphere was bursting with women, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, thanking her for her courage in so publicly contesting the cultural rules of how women are supposed to look.

Do we religious liberals and progressives similarly experience a tension between our religious values and the values of the secular world? If not, why not? It's clear to me that there should be tension. There should be *enormous* tension. We should feel it in every decision we make. We should feel it when we shop at the grocery store, when we go to work, when we speak to a child, and when (and if) we watch TV. We should feel it when we lie down and when we rise. We should feel like Orthodox Jews in Kansas or Mennonites in Manhattan. Until the world is as it should be—until all wars have ended, until no child is hungry, until we are living gently on the earth, until power is shared, and until all silenced voices are heard—until that day, we should not be able to fit comfortably into this world. As Martin Luther King Jr. wrote, "There are some things in our social system to which all of us ought to be maladjusted." Questions about the extent of our participation in the dominant culture should keep us up at night. If they don't, something is wrong.

Of course, I didn't invent this idea. Religious communities have almost always started out countercultural. Religious teachers across the millennia have exhorted their followers

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Like Occupy Wall Street, a true religious counterculture rejects the dominant culture, instead seeking to embody a radical vision of loving community. Here, three ministers mock the worship of money with a golden calf modeled after the Wall Street Bull.

TOM MARTINEZ/WITNESS PHOTOGRAPHY

to stop striving after the false idols of the secular world. Instead, they have called on believers to come together in loving community and connect with God. The Early Christian community described in the Book of Acts is a perfect example. The story goes that people were so inspired by the teachings of Jesus that they completely broke from their social context. Chapter 4 of Acts says:

> They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness. Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common.... A great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold.

This is Christian Scripture. This is what many Christians believe was an unalloyed expression of the teachings of Jesus—the first human foray into building a Christian utopia "on earth as it is in Heaven." Being a Christian was not initially seen as compatible with living a normal life, working a normal job, or even owning land. To be a Christian was to have an entirely different understanding of what it means to be human. On a political level, these Early Christians were not directly trying to change the policies of the state; rather, they were asserting an alternative vision of how people can live together in community.

Sacred Community at Occupy Wall Street

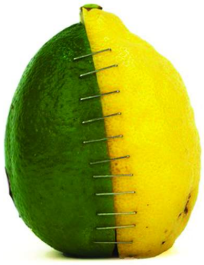
Rev. Jacqui Lewis at Middle Collegiate Church in New York City calls what those Early Christians were doing "rehearsing the reign of God." By my analysis, this is exactly what was going on in Zuccotti Park this fall. The Occupy Wall Street protesters were not focused on delivering a message because in a very real way, the medium *was* their message. Their protest embodied a communitarian ethos: reclaiming a piece of private land, declaring it public by their presence, and living on it together in a way that intentionally rehearsed their ideals. They did it imperfectly, to be sure, but they struggled to get it right.

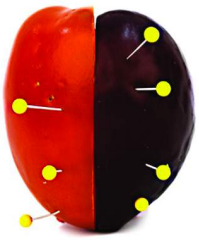
They resisted hierarchy and intentionally elevated traditionally marginalized voices. They studied from a free library of donated books. Volunteers taught classes in everything from economics to nonviolent conflict resolution, all to help people reframe their thinking from outside of the dominant paradigms. And they broke bread together. The food was mostly vegetarian or vegan, free and available to everyone, and somehow it fed almost one thousand people per day, loaves-and-fishes style. Although participants might have disagreed, I interpreted the Occupy Wall Street encampment as a fundamentally religious endeavor. The people within it were struggling to embody the beloved community and recognize the sacred in one another. Planting themselves as a brazen non sequitur in the financial district of New York City, they asserted a vision of the world as it should be in the very midst of the world as it is.

The "rehearsal of the reign of God" that constituted the Early Christian church has surfaced repeatedly in different forms, through different religions, and at different times throughout history. The Occupy encampment was just one recent instantiation of it. But, sadly, the trajectory of these movements is almost always one of decline: the commitment fades, the momentum fizzles, the teachings ossify. Over time, people find it too hard to stand so alienated from the lives they once knew. The sacrifices are too great. We all want to be able to look fabulous walking down the red carpet at the Emmys. And so religion loses its radical edge as its institutions become ensconced in mainstream society. *(continued on page 67)*

Finding Manna in the Age of Monsanto

by William O'Brien





JESSIE CARON

Once upon a time, in order to grow corn, farmers around the world would do the same thing their parents and grandparents did: plant simple, ordinary corn seed. But now, in the twenty-first century, they have marvelous new choices. They can purchase potent seeds such as Bollgard, Yieldgard Plus, or Genuity SmartStax. Behind the fancy monikers are promises of unprecedented crop yield.

All of these choices are courtesy of the global mega-corporation Monsanto, a world leader in genetically modified food. They are part of a great tradition of human technology that insists that, with a bit of scientific tinkering, we can improve on the limitations and blandness of Mother Nature. And of course, Monsanto, its PR machine insists, is simply putting technology at the service of the people, helping to feed a hungry world.

But grassroots activists and critics of globalization tell a different story: many of Monsanto's patented genetically modified seeds are designed to be infertile after planting, forcing farmers to buy new seeds each year instead of practicing the ancient art of seed storage. Further, the seeds are highly dependent on the usage of toxic pesticides sold, of course, by the same company. These new costs have embroiled hundreds of thousands of poor farmers and their families in debt.

It's yet another piece of a distressingly familiar pattern: a profit-driven corporate juggernaut uses its economic power and political clout to put a stranglehold on poor communities worldwide, forcing them into economic arrangements that keep their countries bankrupt and beholden to aid from the West. These arrangements not only fail to deliver on promises of prosperity, they are also harmful to creation. And all the while, companies like Monsanto reap massive profits, even as much of the world continues to go hungry. What can we do to change this bleak reality of global economic oppression and injustice?

Enough for Everyone: Food Justice in Exodus

An increasing number of faith-based activists and advocates from both the Jewish and Christian traditions are making the audacious claim that some powerful answers might be found in the old and odd tales of the Torah. They are looking to stories of liberation from empire, of a new covenantal community, and of divinely given visions of an abundant creation that can be shared by all, free from hoarding and bondage.

I believe that ancient biblical wisdom can empower us to take on the high-tech and politically sophisticated iniquities of the Monsantos of the world. One story, in particular, offers a profound vision of economic and ecological justice: the famous account in Exodus 16 of God feeding the hungry, grumbling, newly liberated but still fearful Hebrews who were wandering in the desert. For us churchgoers, the manna story was a lovely and quaint Sunday School tale of God's miraculous provision, as well as a prototype for Jesus's institution of the Eucharist. But we would do well to take a deeper look at its insistence on "enough for everyone" and its introduction of the Shabbat rest, which offered a framework for resistance to slavery.

William O'Brien works for Project H.O.M.E., an organization that develops solutions to homelessness and poverty in Philadelphia, and has been involved in political advocacy on economic justice for over thirty years. He also coordinates the Alternative Seminary, a grassroots program of biblical and theological study (alternativeseminary.net).

The story of manna—a life-sustaining substance that cannot be fully named, controlled, or hoarded by humans—challenges our world of profit-driven agribusiness and genetic modification.

One seemingly innocent detail in the story is the very name of the food with which God feeds the ungrateful recipients of divine liberation. We all know it as "manna," a word that has taken on its own cultural significance, even outside of religious settings.

But what exactly was this substance that saved the Israelites from starvation? God told Moses, "I will cause bread to rain down from heaven for you" (Exod. 16:4), and the notion of it being a kind of bread became part of the tradition (including the language of Jesus and the Gospels). But it doesn't seem to be bread in the sense of a grain-based product. Verses 13, 14, and 31 of Exodus 16 toss us a few intriguing details:

> In the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor.... It was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey.

"Like frost ... like coriander seed ... like wafers." Is the text playing with us? The ambiguity is sufficient to spark continuing debate, from the rabbis of antiquity to the scholars of today: was it some kind of resin from the tamarisk plant, a desert lichen, an insect secretion, maybe even some exotic mushroom?

The Israelites themselves were not certain what this substance was. Their befuddlement, in fact, gives rise to some linguistic playfulness: the name they eventually give this puzzling and unfamiliar foodstuff ("manna") is a pun on their earlier query in verse 15: "When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, 'What is it [*man hu*]?' For they did not know what it was." In a way, one could argue that God fed the Israelites with "What's that?"

In their quest for historical veracity, scholars have pointed to other etymological possibilities, such as the Egyptian term *mennu*, which means "food." Whether or not that is true, it's clear that the text is having its fun—the Torah is winking at us: get the joke?

Unfortunately, those of us reared in traditions with a high reverence for God's Holy Word usually don't get the joke. Our piety leaves little room for divine humor. We miss the wonderful fact that having "What's that?" on the dinner menu is but one of many occasions of wordplay in Torah. Did we miss it that *Adam* (the first man) was formed out of *adamah* (the soil)? Is the primal joke that we are literally, as Rabbi Arthur Waskow has suggested, "earthlings"?

But more than humor is going on here. My sense is that the Exodus tale is inviting us to a little midrash: Is there some weightiness hiding behind the quirky name/non-name for the divinely provided food? Are the sly Hebraic bards insinuating something to the astute reader, something that might be pivotal to our understanding of what the God of liberation is trying to teach these unruly children?

Unidentifiable Food from an Unnameable God

"Manna" is not the first cryptic name to be figured in the Torah. Earlier in the narrative, in Exodus 3, having heard the groaning of the Hebrews, God intervenes by appearing to Moses in the burning bush. Moses, perplexed and reluctant to take on this role of liberator, asks a seemingly strange question: what should he say if the Israelites want to know the name of this God?

Hasn't this fiery divine presence already given adequate self-identification as the God of the ancestors? Why would Moses need another "name" for this God? Could it be that the Israelites, in their generations of oppression, have lost touch with the ancient stories? Under the crushing weight of slavery, have the Israelites despaired that their God has disappeared or forgotten them?

God responds to Moses's query in a most perplexing fashion: "I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

Can we detect a theological "What's that!?"

That famous "name" is quite odd, even for a deity, and hardly even a comprehensible word. Sometimes referred to as the Tetragrammaton, the four Hebrew letters *(continued on page 68)*

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Culture

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[BOOKS]

Our Saving Grace: A Relational Mode of Being

RELATIONAL REALITY by Charlene Spretnak, Green Horizon Books, 2011

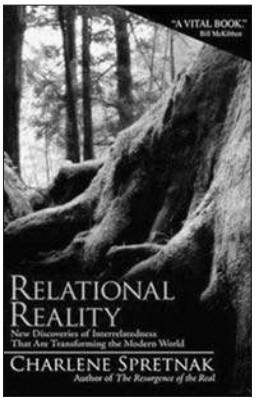
Review by Karen K. Chen

Contemporary society in the West stands at a crossroads, a pivotal moment in time. We have become a culture of individual consumers, our central purpose tied to the accumulation and production of material wealth. Isolated and disconnected, we have forgotten our intrinsic and inevitable need to live in relationship, to participate within the natural cycles that nourish us. This mode of being has led to severe consequences that are undermining our ability to survive on this planet. In light of rising incidences of resource and energy depletion, rampant greenhouse gases, and environmental degradation, it is clear that healing our modern crisis will require reprioritizing our most basic values and beliefs. We must make new choices in support of true psychological, physical, social, and environmental health.

In her recent book, Charlene Spretnak skillfully motivates us to rediscover the essential relationships that facilitate true happiness and health in our societies. She identifies the fallacies of modernity that have led to our current crises by highlighting one very basic point of reference underlying the predominant mode of living today: the mechanistic worldview. She explains:

> One simple idea underlies the systems of knowledge that have shaped modernity: that all entities in the natural world, including us, are essentially separate and that they function through mechanistic ways of interacting. In contrast, a very different, yet elegantly simple, idea is now emerging and correcting the extremely limited mechanistic view: that all entities in the natural world, including us, are thoroughly relational beings of great complexity, who are both composed of and nested within contextual networks of dynamic and reciprocal relationships.

By illustrating the ways in which a relational frame of reference is now beginning to change our predominant manner of doing things, Spretnak offers a way of moving beyond the limited and problematic mechanistic mindset, which incorrectly assumes that all life is modeled after static and mechanical operations. The relational view, on the other hand, reflects the interconnected, vibrant qualities that are characteristic of real, living environments and therefore serves as a more appropriate frame of reference for living in sync with the natural processes that we depend upon for our ultimate sustenance.



In this book, Spretnak presents a lucid, elegant, and compassionate critique of modernity and its harmful effects on self-worth, social conduct, and planetary dynamics caused by the failure of our hypermodern culture to acknowledge that reality is inherently dynamic and interrelated. She writes, "We are profoundly relational beings who have been living—with some difficulty—in anti-relational (mechanistic) systems of thought and ways of doing things." She provides an insightful account of the ways in which all aspects of modern life are now being transformed by a growing recognition of our reality as relational beings, a way of life informed by having relationships, being in relationships, and being composed of relationships. Looking at the various fields and industries being transformed by what Spretnak calls "an emergent Relational Shift," she examines the extent of the shift in four main areas: education and parenting, health and health care, community design and architecture, and the economy. In each area, she provides insightful examples of the psychological, emotional, mental, physical, social, and ecological issues derived from living within anti-relational systems, and then she presents a comprehensive account of the ways in which a relational orientation is now being applied to remedy these detrimental side effects.

At the heart of her research, Spretnak emphasizes that the recognition of our interrelatedness is our saving grace. We need relationships; they provide meaning and context. We look to them to shape the ways in which we participate in the world. We are inherently relational beings, and our emotional and physical well-being depends upon our recognition of and

interaction with mutually beneficial relationships in the world around us. In order to shift from the fallacies of a mechanistic worldview, we must find new ways to express and practice this recognition. Spretnak notes:

> [We] hardly have the necessary vocabulary to shift our thoughts and utterances to a more deeply relational orientation. Vietnamese monk and peace activist Thich Nhat Hanh has suggested we think of existence as matter of interbeing. We interare. They interare. Everyone interis. Our bodymind needs real connection with the embodied presence of other people and with nature.

Relational Reality builds upon Spretnak's earlier book, *Resurgence of the Real* (Routledge, 1999), which contextualized the cultural emergence of a relational perspective in the modern century. Whereas *Resurgence of the Real* provided us with a sketch of what this growing relational orientation could look like, *Relational Reality* brings color and depth to this vision by investigating how a relational understanding of the world is now being integrated into fundamental social systems in the West.

The integration of a relational orientation into Western culture is critical to healing the deep fragmentation we face today; however, it is important to be attentive to some of the pitfalls of mechanistic thinking when making this transition.

First, getting to know ourselves as relational beings requires experiencing our own connectivity. A relational sense of being is a radically different notion from the dominant, mechanistic perception of self and world. Strongly influenced by the Cartesian method of inquiry championed by René Descartes in the seventeenth century, the mechanistic view separates the observer from the rest of our material reality and validates the ability to think over all other ways of knowing. We must be wary of the tendency to intellectualize and compartmentalize our reality. Mental comprehension of our interrelatedness is not enough; we must also experience ourselves as networks of relationships embedded within relationships. We must learn to appreciate the depth of who we are, even when thinking ceases. We are dynamic capacities, always in dialogue with networks of psychological, physical, social, and ecological support. It is essential that we recognize our intrinsic capacity for relationships; only then can we begin to nurture our own connectedness to other living beings.

Second, due to rising instances of global instability, the intuitive need for change is often enmeshed with urgency and fear, which prevents us from truly experiencing what we need most: our natural propensity to be in relationship. Mechanistic thinking views reality from a very narrow scope; therefore, decisions are often made on a moment-to-moment basis, with little room to consider bigger-picture variables and repercussions. We must guard against this tendency to react to feelings of urgency by honing the qualities that we truly want to see in the world. Change should be based upon envisioning a world that motivates and inspires us. We must shift our consciousness so that it is based in a desire to actualize our connective potential rather than in a reaction to fear. Transforming consciousness must coincide with a larger vision that moves and nourishes us—inside and out.

Third, the integration of a relational worldview in our everyday lives requires a participatory approach. We must resist mechanistic and capitalistic tendencies to reduce, homogenize, or subsume our responses into a one-size-fits-all, overarching solution. To honor our relationships is to appreciate the diversity of learned experiences that make up our interactive reality. As relational beings, we all have a deep need to be functional members of a community, to be connected to a practical vision with the capacity to hold space for our meaningful contributions. Integrating a relational vision in our societies requires facilitating inclusive, diverse, and creative solutions that celebrate the talent and ingenuity available within our networks.

The development of healthy, creative, and reciprocal relationships is critical to the process of recognizing, addressing, and healing the deep divisions and devastation that we have inherited from centuries of disconnection. *Relational Reality* is foundational for anyone looking to cultivate the relational sensibilities that we so desperately need today. ■

Karen K. Chen is a festival and community organizer working to develop preparedness and long-term sustenance at the local level. She received her Ph.D. in 2011 from the California Institute of Integral Studies.

THE GROWTH OF A GLOBAL COMMUNITY

WAITING FOR SOMETHING THAT NEVER ARRIVED: MEDITATIONS ON A PROGRESSIVE AMERICA IN HONOR OF TONY JUDT

by Dan Shanahan

Togga, 2011

Review by Robert Inchausti

When we hear the word "growth" spoken in political discourse, we generally think in economic terms—and usually with the implication that growth is a good thing. But at least since E.F. Schumacher's *Limits to Growth*, the West has been faced with the notion that economic growth in and of itself may not be the unmitigated blessing we once thought it to be.

If we try to bring the discourses of economy and personal psychology together, we run into real problems: few would argue that "personal growth"—as conceived by psychologists like Rogers or Maslow—is anything but a good. Schumacher's "limits" don't come into consideration at all.

At first glance, this is nothing more than cross-disciplinary crosstalk. One discipline using a word in one sense, another in a different sense, and—to paraphrase Mark Twain—you're OK if the trains don't meet. But in a new and provocative reflection on the future of progressive political thought, *Waiting for Something That Never Arrived: Meditations on a Progressive America in*

Honor of Tony Judt, Dan Shanahan lets the trains meet. And instead of a head-on collision, we get something more like atomic fission, and it produces a remarkable amount of energy.

As the title suggests, the book is in part an homage to Tony Judt, the brilliant New York University political historian known to readers of the *Guardian* and the *New York Review of Books*. Shanahan had a brief set of email exchanges with Judt in the waning months of the historian's life, which ended last year due to Lou Gehrig's Disease. Shanahan had been struck by the implied optimism of Judt's *Ill Fares the Land*, a 2010 book on the alarming increase in unequal distribution of wealth in Western democracies, so he found himself wondering if Judt wasn't leaving himself open to the accusation of naïveté with respect to his assessment of the possibilities of social democracy in America. Pondering that question up to and after Judt's death, Shanahan set out to ask what foundations, beyond altruism and liberal guilt, might exist upon which a progressive vision could be built in the age of Limbaugh, Palin, and the Tea Party.

Enter "growth."

Shanahan says life has two irreducible qualities: it tries to survive and reproduce, and to aid in that effort, it "grows"—both with respect to its complexity (thus Darwin's findings on natural selection) and with respect to what, for lack of a better word, we might call "wisdom" in elaborating its interactions with its environment. Anything that nurtures those qualities, Shanahan says, is "progressive" and therefore good in the eyes of people who call themselves by that name.

But Shanahan also finds fault with the American Dream and the focus on purely economic growth (a focus often veiled by the use of the word "prosperity"). Particularly in a world where relative affluence is guaranteed for the many, he says, to make economic growth the pinnacle of human aspirations is to demean what it is to be human. In short, the focus upon prosperity has left Americans in a vacuum where meaning is concerned; the dream reduced meaning to the material, and when the material was assured, no new aspirations appeared, leaving the country in an unbroken cycle of material pursuits centered around the increasing variety and volume of consumer toys.

Shanahan fears that this cycle has already infected not only other Western democracies, but also the many countries that are striving to achieve economic liftoff and enter the ranks of the affluent—as well as the many that cannot yet even protect themselves from famine and disease. This, he suggests, requires progressives to re-examine the foundation of their political philosophy, but also affords the opportunity for growth of a more satisfying and ultimately a more deeply human kind.

Shanahan introduces Maslow's hierarchy of needs, long a staple of both personal psychology and even some more radical approaches to economic development. Maslow's emphasis on the need to establish a foundation of basic safety and security—which then allows development of a sense of belonging, the respect of one's peers, and self-esteem—provides, in Shanahan's eyes, a means for measuring the extent to which the world of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has continued to evolve in the way the species might expect. The report card is not good. In a world where the affluent distract themselves with celebrity scandals, unreal "reality" shows, and mindlessly obsessive consumption, struggling to ignore the evaporation of higher-order concerns in their lives, the less affluent—that is to say, the overwhelming majority of the planet's population—struggle with poverty, often living on the edge of personal and social catastrophe.

Shanahan's repeated references to a "global family" are not incidental. He argues that progressives must, without becoming overly sentimental, recognize the extent to which contemporary realities bind rich and poor, North and South, into a global family in which each member's fate is interwoven with that of all the others. He says:

> Without launching out into some New Age, Starship Enterprise view of where we must go, we can look at ourselves as a species situated on a habitable planet with sufficient resources, talents and tools to maintain ourselves at a minimum level of comfort and within the limits of those resources.
>
> We have also begun to recognize that our species has an identifiable pattern of needs, behavioral responses to those needs, and even an ability, in the right circumstances, to transcend those needs, and that the insights we have into how our species behaves, brought together with our understanding of our evolution and of the environment we inhabit, afford us the chance to establish an equilibrium which will afford us all safety, security, and the opportunity to reflect on questions of meaning without facing undue threat. What is perhaps most awe-inspiring about our age—and, indeed, frightening—is that *we have the power to situate ourselves in the evolution of our species and our planet and to make our decisions accordingly.*

Redoubling the family motif, Shanahan says the magnitude of the frightening power we hold could easily inspire a sense of futility—futility of the kind that underlies his questioning of the optimism implied in Judt's *Ill Fares the Land*. But, he says:

> I suspect that, just as I have countless times in the past, in moments of doubt about the usefulness of writing a book about the inequalities of affluent societies which he would shortly leave, never to revisit, he drew strength from thinking about his sons. While he might not live to see the impact his book would make, while the book might not even have any impact at all, thinking about his sons, their future, and the world that future would play out in must have

> reminded him of one of the cardinal rules any good parent learns from the moment they know a child is on its way: you don't take chances with your children's welfare.
>
> And in that rule I think there is a lesson for progressive thinkers, particularly those of us who may wonder about the futility of it all. You don't take chances with humanity's future.

Along the way, Shanahan offers insightful reflections on subjects such as abortion, gun control, health care, and the rabble-rousing discourse of Limbaugh, Palin, and the Tea Party movement, and he makes interesting suggestions about the need for progressives to introduce a note of gravitas into their discourse. But the real message of this clearly written and thought-provoking book is that we stand at a crossroads in the history of the species on the planet. The decisions we make, or fail to make, will affect the lives of generations upon generations to come. Even if there were not much else to recommend it—and there is—the introduction of that perspective in a sober and reflective fashion makes the book a welcome addition to the progressive political discussion. ■

Robert Inchausti is the author of Subversive Orthodoxy *and* The Ignorant Perfection of Ordinary People.

ASSIMILATION FOR MUSLIMS AND JEWS?

MUSLIMS AND JEWS IN AMERICA: COMMONALITIES, CONTENTIONS, AND COMPLEXITIES

by Reza Aslan and Aaron J. Hahn Tapper

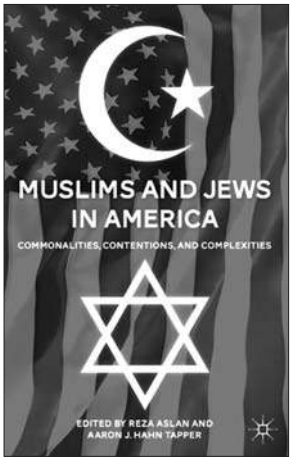
Palgrave Macmillan, 2011

Review by Jill Jacobs

As I write, twenty states are considering laws that would prohibit courts from considering any "foreign law" in their deliberations. Tennessee, Louisiana, and Arizona have already passed such statutes. In January 2012, these attempts suffered a setback as a federal court found one such Oklahoma law unconstitutional. It remains to be seen what the future of such laws will be.

These laws—some of which explicitly mention Islamic Sharia law, and others of which hide their anti-Muslim intentions behind a more innocuous ban on "foreign law"—raise the specter of fundamentalist Muslims turning the United States into an Islamic theocracy.

There is no question that this perceived threat is absurd. And while Muslims currently bear the brunt of this fear-mongering, other groups' religious practices may also soon fall under the scrutiny of these new laws. The new attention to the role of foreign law in American courts brings to light, for example, the seams in the supposedly flawless integration of Judaism and American life.



American courts today consider religious law in a limited set of cases: business contracts in which the parties have agreed that arbitrations should be carried out by religious judges; marriages in which certain stipulations follow religious law; and cases that touch on religious freedoms, such as the right of prisoners to practice their faith. In cases in which a defendant claims religious motives for murder or other criminal behavior, courts have routinely refused to consider such defenses.

Jews, like other religious minorities, have long taken for granted the right for parties to a contract to turn to a religious body such as a *beit din* (rabbinical court) for arbitration. In a number of cases, civil courts have upheld agreements made in Jewish and other religious prenuptial agreements. Therefore the Jewish community waxes poetic about the unprecedented religious freedom that Jews enjoy in America.

Most Jews—especially those of us in the liberal camp—assume that there is no conflict between Jewish values and American values. We take for granted our right to practice Judaism as we wish, our right to marry and divorce according to Jewish law (however we may interpret such law), and our right not to be coerced into any other practice. But the legislative assault on foreign law—coming in the same year as a failed attempt to ban circumcision in San Francisco—forces us to ask whether Jews really are just like all other Americans.

I thought of this bubbling tension often as I read Reza Aslan and Aaron J. Hahn Tapper's excellent new anthology, *Muslims and Jews in America: Commonalities, Contentions, and Complexities*. This collection brings together a fascinating group of voices, including rabbis and imams, those enriched by interfaith dialogue and those burned by it, professors of theology and leaders of Jewish and Muslim communal organizations.

Over and over, the authors of the essays collected here consider whether and how the assimilation of Jews into America should and could be a model for the integration of Muslims into America. As I read, I wondered whether the questions about what it means to be an American Muslim might also inform conversations about what it means to be an American Jew.

In one piece, Rabbi Amy Eilberg describes a planning meeting for an interfaith Passover seder in which Jewish and Christian members of the team jump into an animated debate about how to understand God's violent actions in the Exodus story. Finally, a Muslim participant jumps in with a complaint: "You are talking about criticizing your sacred text! I do not feel comfortable with this."

As a liberal and feminist Jew myself, I sympathize with the Jews and Christians in this story who ask why the biblical God sees it necessary to murder Egyptians in order to bring about the liberation of the Israelites. My own family's Passover Seders have considered this question and many others that some biblical literalists might consider heretical. In all of these conversations, I rest secure in the

knowledge that the traditional Jewish interpretive tradition allows for much wrangling with God and with text.

At the same time, I also hear the Muslim participant's critique, which I would rephrase as, "Do your texts always have to become American?" That is, in the rush to demonstrate that there is no fault line between Judaism and Americanism, or between Judaism and modern liberal values, do we fail to allow ourselves to be challenged by our texts and traditions?

Perhaps even texts that we initially perceive as difficult can teach us something about the limits of modernity. For example, even while we reconsider marriage laws and traditions that seem misogynistic or homophobic, we might also learn from the traditional insistence on monogamy, a challenge to the sexual permissiveness of our own society. Even the violence of the Passover story might teach us real psychological truths about the need to express anger against one's oppressor.

Since the French Revolution, Jews have managed our integration into various other nations by defining Judaism as a religion and not a nation. Thus, one can be fully Jewish and fully French; fully Jewish and fully British; and, of course, fully Jewish and fully American.

But this insistence that Judaism is a religion just like Christianity downplays the ethnic and cultural factors that make Judaism more than simply a religion. And, for liberal Jews, generations of equating Jewishness with Americanness result in shock when a municipal government questions the morality of circumcision, when *kashrut* practices are challenged on the grounds of animal rights, and when legislators in Texas question whether a Jew is sufficiently Christian to be the Speaker of the State House of Representatives. The uneven integration of Muslims into America now throws into question the extent to which religious and cultural identity must be Americanized in order for a minority group to become American.

In an especially thought-provoking essay, Taymiya R. Zaman, an assistant professor at the University of San Francisco, wonders to what extent Muslims should look to Jews for a model of how to fit into America. She writes:

> The implicit premise that if Jewish people could prosper in America despite blatant anti-Semitism so can Muslims is one that should be interrogated further, especially because it calls for a downplaying of ethnicity in favor of religion.... Is it useful or meaningful to reduce the mosaic of Muslim ethnicities and cultures down to an amalgam of religious teachings and allegiances to America? ... I believe that civic engagement between Muslims and Jews should not center only on a model of winning at being American ... rather, it should involve an appreciation for the cultural diversity of both communities, as well as an openness to question the structures of power that place Jews and Muslims at odds with one another by making them competitors in a model of assimilation that damages even as it grants privilege.

Zaman writes as a Muslim searching for the right way for her and her students to be American without losing their ethnic identity. As a Jew, I read this essay as a question about how Jews can reclaim the ethnic identity that we surrendered in the rush to become American. Perhaps the public integration of Muslims into U.S. society will open up space for Jews, Hindus, and others to recreate our own identities, which will be fully American yet not consumed by America, and which might even, at times, challenge America.

Crafting a new American Jewish—or Muslim—identity means first acknowledging that our identities cannot be reduced to what prayer services we attend, what holidays we celebrate, or what we eat or don't eat. Second, we need to identify the moments of discontinuity between Jewishness and Americanness. In each of these areas, we can then ask: In this particular case, do we want to be more Jewish or more American? And are there cases in which we might push America to be more Jewish?

For example, Jewish law includes strong language regarding the responsibilities of an employer toward his or her employee. These laws include an expectation that even someone working a low-wage job will earn enough to support his or her family. How, then, do Jews function in a society in which employers are expected only to pay minimum wage, and in which some small business owners feel that they can compete only by paying low salaries? There are a few options: One possibility (and the most common one) is that Jewish employers will decide not to bring Judaism into the workplace, but instead to hold themselves only to American standards. The second option is that Jews will hold themselves to a different standard than the one common to America. The third option is that Jews will push America to be more Jewish by guaranteeing everyone a living wage.

In some cases, such as engaging in ritual practice or reviving multiple aspects of our cultural heritage, embracing Jewish identity fully may not involve any discontinuity with America, especially in this age of multiculturalism. In other cases, we will have to choose between being more Jewish or more American, or between pushing Jewish values in public and keeping them to ourselves.

In one essay, Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf writes, "Some Muslim and non-Muslim leaders have attempted to separate their 'Muslim-ness' from their 'American-ness,' rendering an increased interpretation for one identity to be a direct threat to the other. Yet despite these and other impediments, similar to the history of American Jews, Muslims in the United States are fostering a burgeoning American Muslim culture and identity, drawing from the diversity of its immigrant and African American backgrounds."

American Jewish identity and American Muslim identity already are, and will continue to be, different from Jewish or Muslim identity anywhere else that Jews and Muslims have lived. Judaism and Islam will change as a result of their practice in America, just as both traditions have been influenced by life in Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and elsewhere. And I also believe that America will change as a result. Does this mean that foreign law threatens

to take over America? No. This means that America is a country enriched by a continued infusion of people with different backgrounds, ethnicities, religions, and experiences, as well as one whose laws and values benefit from an ongoing conversation with these "foreign" influences. ■

Rabbi Jill Jacobs is the executive director of Rabbis for Human Rights–North America. Her most recent book is Where Justice Dwells: A Hands-On Guide to Doing Social Justice in Your Jewish Community *(Jewish Lights, 2011).*

MELANCHOLIA IN THE SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD

MANUFACTURING DEPRESSION: THE SECRET HISTORY OF A MODERN DISEASE
by Gary Greenberg
Simon & Schuster, 2010

Review by Bradley Lewis

Grammarians tell us that even our verbs have a "mood," and these moods clue us into people's disposition toward their topic. The three moods in English are the indicative, the imperative, and the subjunctive. It is interesting to look at the mood (in the grammatical sense) of "mood disorders" (in the psychiatric sense), because when people talk about psychiatric mood disorders—like depression—the first two grammatical moods are very common. But the last is quite rare. The indicative is the matter-of-fact mood of description and explanation. Examples include "depression is a malfunctioning limbic diencephalic system" or "depression is the result of anger turned inward." The imperative mood is the stern request or command: "Take your medicine!" or "You should see a shrink!" The subjunctive mood, by contrast, infrequently shows up. This mood indicates a much more whimsical disposition. It is used to express wishes, possibilities, and fantasies. The subjunctive is the mood of "what if?" Some examples are "depression might be many things" and "I wonder what would happen if we were to think about depression this way or that way."

The loss of the subjunctive with regard to depression is unfortunate because the cultural and phenomenal world of depression, whatever else we may want to say about it, is a world of uncertainty and a world of multiple points of view. When we use the indicative and imperative moods to discuss depression, we cover over this uncertainty and multiplicity. We make it seem as if depression were clearer than it really is. And, more important, we close down our options and limit our flexibility. We lose the capacity to imagine, to fantasize, and to creatively consider the advantages and disadvantages of the many possible ways of making sense of depression.

Gary Greenberg's book is a delight to read because it is a sustained meditation on depression that stays largely in the subjunctive mood. Greenberg uniquely comes at the project from several different points of view: he is a science writer (and a good one at that), a psychotherapist, a historian, an investigative journalist, a patient of depression, a volunteer for clinical research trials, and—perhaps most important—by the time you finish the book, something of a friend. At least, I felt like I was in the presence of a friend, because Greenberg does a nice job keeping the reader company with his own often humorous and thought-provoking reflections about his project. Using his multiple hats, Greenberg explores the rise of psychiatric diagnosis, the insights of Freud and psychoanalysis, the controversies over talk therapy versus medications, the remarkable power of pharmaceutical marketers to get inside our heads, the experience of taking medications, the role of insurance companies and America's can-do attitude in the promotion of cognitive-behavioral therapy, how yesterday's phrenology compares with today's neuroscience and neuroimaging, and even how a magical afternoon taking ecstasy and fooling around with a room full of naked strangers can relieve depression.

Since this is a review, I cannot go into the details but must move straight to the big questions. What does Greenberg find out about depression after such a wide exploration? In the last chapter, he sums it up this way: If you explore depression seriously,

> you won't necessarily get coherent advice.... More likely you'll hear cacophony and contradiction, one voice beckoning you this way and another that way. But you shouldn't be afraid of complexity. We're pretty complicated creatures, no more so than when in the throes of an emotional state that colors all of our experience. And among all those voices, chances are good that sooner or later you will hear something that hits home, reaches down to you and lifts you out of your darkness.

Greenberg follows this conclusion with a little advice of his own: As we explore depression (what it means for us and what it has meant for others), we must be careful about swallowing too quickly the antidepressant medications that are so often the first thing we find in our exploration. Greenberg backs this up throughout the book by showing the way that hype and limited perspective surround these medications. The medications are oversold by a pharmaceutical industry bent on making profits through marginally effective lifestyle drugs, and the drugs are discovered and researched through an empirical reductionism that too easily becomes an ideology of brain over mind (and most everything else).

That does not mean that the medications may not be helpful for some people in some situations. It just means that we should be circumspect about what that "helpfulness" means before we buy into the idea of having a mental disease. And we should be imaginatively open to alternative possibilities. This imaginative process is invaluable because it not only shows us different ways to understand our sorrows and misfortunes, it also shows us different ways to make sense of who we are and different possibilities going forward.

For example, if I understand my depression as the result of a broken

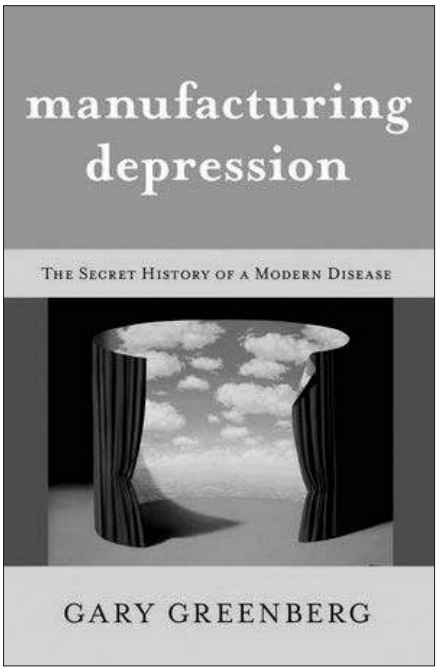
brain, or an unresolved childhood grief, or the result of white, capitalist, heteronormative patriarchy run amok, it makes a difference. It affects not only how I understand my history and my present, but also what I do in the future, whom I hang out with, and what practices and rituals I get involved with.

If I go with the broken brain narrative, I'll see myself as having a psychiatric disability: I may apply for benefits; hang out with doctors, pharmacists, and other patients; and spend a great deal of time talking and thinking about my diagnosis and my neurotransmitters. If I go with the unresolved grief narrative, I'll find a therapist or a support group and talk over the slings and arrows of my past, discussing how I can leave the past behind and stop repeating the most damaging patterns that have emerged with my significant others. And if I choose the political narrative, I may join an activist group, move to a cooperative housing community, or get involved in politics. And these three options only scratch the surface of the multiple possibilities for understanding and responding to depression. There are also perspectives centered on the family, interpersonal relations, yoga and meditation, spirituality, religious practices, and creative practices, just to name a few.

Greenberg gives us the background needed to understand this flexibility. One place where I would like to supplement his meditation on the interpretations of depression, however, is on the question of "the truth." At times Greenberg seems to be overly concerned about this question. At these points in the book, he seems to fall into a commonsense view of science as capable of providing an objective truth that is independent of human perspective and values. With this view, once we know the "truth," we can let go of other knowledge formations, labeling them as "myth" or "superstition" or "ideology." That would be nice with regard to depression, because if we had the truth (say, that depression is a disease like diabetes), we could let go of the other options. But recent scholarship in science studies has moved past a sharp dichotomy between truth and myth. Science studies scholars now believe that the real world and human perspectives—which is another way of saying objective and subjective, nature and culture, material and semiotic, facts and values—contribute to meaning-making by intertwining and interacting. The worldviews that humans hold and act on are determined partly by the metaphors, linguistic distinctions, and cultural preferences through which we approach the world, and partly by the world itself—in its active capacity to accommodate or resist different framings. This science studies insight means that there is not "one truth," nor do we live in an "anything goes" world of free play. It means that there are multiple ways of understanding the world, which will result in multiple ways of being in the world. Each way says something true (and something mythical) about the world, and each has advantages and disadvantages for organizing a way of life.

If we apply this science studies work to depression, we see that the question about the many perspectives on depression is not so much which one is true, but rather, what will be the lived experience of inhabiting the many different truths possible. What kind of narrative identity will I create for myself if I adopt truth option A, B, C, etc., or a hybrid combination of several truth options? From this science studies perspective, theologians, neuroscientists, psychoanalysts, cognitive therapists, political activists, and creative artists all have value; they all touch the reality of depression.

One of the fascinating findings of depression research is that outcome studies tend to support this science studies perspective. Outcome studies show over and over again that the many different therapeutic ways of approaching depression are similarly effective. And, though medications are not usually included in these studies, it seems to be equally relevant for medications as well. For all of these treatments, the human qualities of the healer and the expectations of the healed are more important than the specific



interventions. In other words, science shows that multiple approaches to depression can be effective. This means that people have multiple options. They do not have to figure out which narrative about depression is true. Instead they can spend more time figuring out which is the best fit for them. Each intervention is better at some things than others, so it is unlikely that a single intervention will be more effective for everything. And even if it were, if a magical substance, soma, appeared that took everyone to a higher plain in all areas of life, that does not mean everyone would have to (or want to) take it. Taking soma would still be a personal and cultural choice rather than a medical necessity, and there might be good reasons to say no to such a drug.

I doubt that Greenberg would disagree with these last couple of paragraphs. Indeed, he reviews the outcome studies I just cited in detail. My guess is that the science studies perspective of multiple truths (and therefore multiple options) is more or less a default position for him as well. But it does seem that with a little help from science studies, we can hold on to this multiplicity a little more clearly. The advantage of doing so is that in the face of a cacophony of ways to understand depression, we can spend less time asking, "Which is true?" and

more time in the subjunctive mood of possibilities, asking, "Which way or combination of ways might be right for me in my particular situation?" ■

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SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT: THE ARABS, ZIONISM, AND THE HOLOCAUST

THE ARABS AND THE HOLOCAUST: THE ARAB-ISRAELI WAR OF NARRATIVES
by Gilbert Achcar
Metropolitan Books, 2010

Review by Ussama Makdisi

It is not at all clear why there should be a book about the Arabs and the Holocaust. After all, the program to exterminate Europe's Jews occurred in Germany and Nazi-occupied Europe. Arabs were neither participants nor victims. Racial anti-Semitism, moreover, was a product of European history, not of Arab or Islamic history. There is, on the face of it, no more need for a book on the Arabs and the Holocaust than for a book on the Africans or the Australians and the Holocaust.

But Israel was created in the Arab world, and Israelis and Arabs have long been fighting a bitter war about both the nature of Israel and that of Arab opposition to Zionism. In this war, the shadow of the Holocaust looms large. Although Zionist colonization of Palestine predated the Holocaust by decades, Western powers legitimated their support for the creation of Israel in the wake of Nazi mass murder. These powers also rationalized their embrace of a Jewish state as atonement for a long history of Western anti-Semitism culminating in the Holocaust. Although the indigenous Arab inhabitants of Palestine were uprooted and dispossessed to make way for a Jewish state, in the United States today, partisans of Israel routinely equate anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism. Critics of Israeli policies have often been denounced as being "anti-Israel" and anti-Semitic, as if support for denied Palestinian human and national rights in the face of Israeli occupation necessarily means antipathy to Jews *tout court*.

Such has been the prevalence of this association of anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism that in his *Semites and Anti-Semites* (1986), Bernard Lewis suggested that "classical" anti-Semitism had become an "essential part of Arab intellectual life at the present time—almost as much as happened in Nazi Germany," and "considerably more" than fin-de-siècle France. The Israeli historian Benny Morris goes further. He pathologizes Arab opposition to Israel, which he sees as an indication of Islam's age-old hatred of Jews. In his *1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War* (2008), Morris misattributed an anti-Jewish statement to the Qur'an and then directly transposed it to explain modern Ottoman and Arab opposition to Zionism. In an interview in 2004 in the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, Morris also declared that "[Palestinian] society is in the state of being a serial killer. It is a very sick society. It should be treated the way we treat individuals who are serial killers." A slew of other books have sought to tie Arabs to Nazism at one level or another and have thus reinforced the notion that Arab opposition to Israel is not primarily opposition to injustice and colonialism. Rather, it is seen as a reflection of a pervasive Jew-hatred among Arabs that is akin, if not directly related, to European anti-Semitism.

Hajj Amin's Oversized Shadow

The case of the Palestinian Hajj Amin al-Husseini, the mufti of Jerusalem during the British Mandate in Palestine, is habitually cited as hard evidence of this alleged Arab pathology. In the mufti's case, the line between opposition to the Zionist claim to Palestine and a generalized antipathy for Jews was indeed blurred beyond recognition. The mufti, who had initially been elevated by the British before fleeing from them following the failed Palestinian anticolonial revolt of 1936, met with Adolf Hitler in November 1941. The mufti presented himself to Germany as a viable anti-British Muslim Arab leader who could destabilize British control of the Middle East. He hoped that any anti-British alliance would also dismantle the Zionist project in Palestine that had flourished under British protection.

Hajj Amin's association with the Nazis was sordid. But his collaboration with the Germans, which ultimately came to naught, has invariably been evoked *not* in order to discuss the pitfalls of religious, national, and anticolonial consciousness in the modern world. Instead, Hajj Amin's Nazi association is evoked mostly to deny the Nakba, to tarnish the Palestinians as a people, to suggest a general Arab infatuation with Nazism, and to enable Western audiences—including many people acutely aware of the horrors of the Nazi genocide but generally indifferent to the cruelty and bitter legacies of Western colonialism—to discredit Arab opposition to Zionism. In *The Holocaust in American Life* (1999), historian Peter Novick points out that the *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, published in association with the Israeli Holocaust memorial museum Yad Vashem, has a biographical entry on Hajj Amin that is longer than that of Adolf Eichmann or Heinrich Himmler. Hajj Amin's picture with Hitler taken in their meeting in 1941 has been so often reproduced, and Hajj Amin so demonized, that the question about the actual influence of Nazi ideology on major Arab intellectual currents and political figures has been lost in fable and propaganda.

How then to interpret fairly the enormously complex relationship between the Holocaust as a European genocide and the consequences of this genocide on the contemporary

Arab-Israeli conflict? How must a scholar try to understand the fact that Jews were *not* singled out as the antithesis of an emerging Arab nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but were often indeed singled out in Europe? Perhaps the most obvious and yet stunningly underappreciated fact remains that Zionism initially arose *not* from the turmoil of the late Ottoman empire—as did Arab, Turkish, and Armenian nationalisms—but from that of nineteenth-century Europe. And yet Zionism as ideology, as political practice, and finally as a set of existential anxieties about maintaining a Jewish identity in inhospitable and often anti-Semitic European environments, was displaced to the Arab world.

Setting the Historical Record Straight

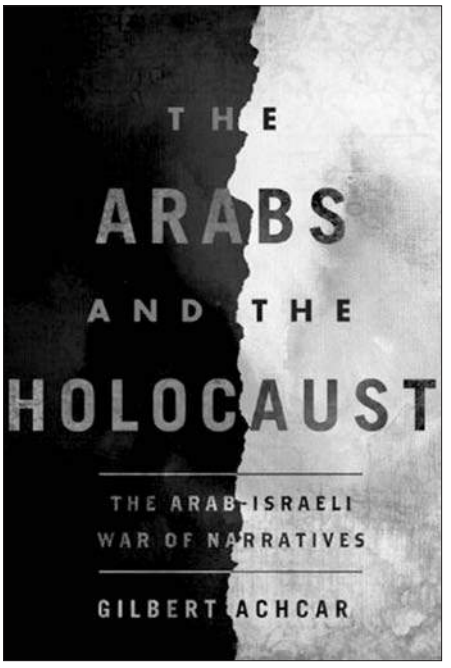
Given the centrality of the Holocaust for post-1948 Zionist politics and culture, and the centrality of the Nakba (or catastrophe) for the modern Palestinian experience, how should a scholar go about analyzing Arab reactions to the Holocaust in the context of the Zionist colonization of Palestine?

Gilbert Achcar's *The Arabs and the Holocaust* provides some fundamental answers to these questions. At its most basic, it represents a long-overdue setting straight of the historical record. Here is an Arab author who examines primary sources from the Arab world. A professor at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London, Achcar is aware that the historiography of the Arab-Israeli conflict is a minefield. And yet he walks openly into it. He refutes the oft-peddled notion that Arabs were in any general sense sympathetic to Nazism in the 1930s and 1940s. He demonstrates, instead, how little traction Nazi ideology had in the major intellectual currents of the Arab world (which Achcar identifies as liberal, nationalist, communist, and Islamist). A significant part of Achcar's book, then, is to show how a number of orientalist scholars (including Stefan Wild, Elie Kedourie, Yehoshafat Harkabi, and Bernard Lewis) have advanced tendentious interpretations of the allegedly fascist leanings or anti-Semitic attributes of the Arab world. He demolishes, for example, the assertion made by Wild (a German Islamicist) that one of the Baath party founders, Michel Aflaq, was fascinated by Nazism.

But beyond picking apart the misleading work of the likes of Wild and Lewis, Achcar understands the clear need to separate an indictment of "the Arabs" from individual Arabs and some strains of Islamic thought from Islam itself. Refreshingly, he does not excuse or justify the bigoted utterances and actions of Arab individuals such as Hajj Amin or the king of Saudi Arabia Ibn Saud. Of the major currents of modern Arab thought, he singles out what he describes as the "reactionary and/or fundamentalist pan-Islamists" as being the most prone to a religiously inspired anti-Jewish prejudice and racism. Achcar deplores the anti-Jewish prejudice of the late Rashid Rida, the influential Cairo-based Muslim scholar who died in 1935, and, of course, of Hajj Amin, even if his repeated condemnations of Hajj Amin ultimately come across rather like beating a very dead horse.

What is most valuable in Achcar's discussion of Hajj Amin's collaboration with the Nazis is his insistence on what he calls the "indispensible contextualization" to make sense of such collaboration and to explore how Hajj Amin's sense of victimhood degenerated into outright bigotry and racism in the name of self-preservation. For Hajj Amin, as for the first prime minister of Israel, David Ben-Gurion, the struggle over Palestine was a zero-sum game: either "the Arabs" or "the Jews" were going to triumph there. The conclusion that Achcar draws from Hajj Amin's experience is inescapable: there can be no substantial discussion, let alone judgment, of Arab attitudes toward the Holocaust without a frank discussion of Zionism's violence toward Arabs. The one is impossible to understand without the other.

This twinning of discussions is what sets this book apart from virtually all others on the subject of Arabs and anti-Semitism. While there can and ought to be a discussion of Arab prejudice



and racism, it is debatable whether there can be a meaningful one on anti-Jewish racism in the *modern* Arab world that purposefully ignores Zionist settler-colonialism, which Achcar characterizes as a "fundamentally racist colonial movement." Anti-Arab and anti-Muslim racism in Israel, the Arab experience of Zionism, and Israel's claim to speak on behalf of all Jews everywhere (as much as this claim has been contested by some inside and many outside of Israel) burden any discussion of contemporary Arab anti-Jewish prejudice. The dual tragedy that Achcar notes was not only the loss of Palestine and the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians, but also the demise of Jewish communities in many parts of the Arab world. For far too long, in fact, the study of the collapse of Jewish-Muslim coexistence in places like Iraq has been held hostage either to an Arab nationalist gloss or to a Zionist ex post facto contention that the mass expulsion of Palestinians was acceptable because Arabic-speaking Jews were scapegoated in places like Iraq, as if these tragedies were not all part of a single, complex history of the rise of nationalism and the transplantation of a European Zionist movement into the Arab world. Thankfully, Achcar does not indulge either of these apologetics.

Arab Attitudes Post-1948

In the second half of the book, Achcar explores Arab attitudes toward Jews after 1948. He dismisses the notion that opposition to Israel in these years is reducible to anti-Semitism (particularly in his discussion of Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser and what he describes as the PLO years from 1967 to 1988). Taking on the recent work of Israeli authors Meir Litvak and Ester Webman, *From Empathy to Denial* (2009), which also traced Arab attitudes toward the Holocaust, Achcar continuously brings to the fore the crucial dialectic between these attitudes and Zionist and Israeli colonialism. Like Litvak and Webman, Achcar delineates several Arab attitudes toward the Holocaust, including indifference and denial, but he insists that the most prevalent attitude has been a comparison of Israelis to Nazis.

Achcar, to be sure, deplores such comparison as wrong-headed and deeply flawed. He rejects any equivalence between colonial usurpation and racist extermination of whole populations. This point can easily be conceded in the abstract, but is this the real historical question at hand, or even the essential dichotomy that has ever impressed itself as such on the Palestinians and Arabs? As Achcar concedes throughout his book, the Arab experience of Zionism is a colonial experience, one that has been compounded by an ongoing system of Israeli Jewish discrimination and violence directed at both non-Jewish Palestinian citizens of Israel and Palestinians living under occupation in East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza.

That Gamal Abdel Nasser and Yasser Arafat compared Israelis to Nazis may thus be historically inaccurate, but such comparisons also reflect an Arab awareness and an appropriation of the power of a categorical post-Holocaust moral vocabulary that had been often used against them. Achcar insists, after all—and here he is building on the insights of Tom Segev, Peter Novick, and Norman Finkelstein among others—that Israel and its supporters in the West have exploited the horrors of Nazi genocide to justify Zionism at the expense of Arabs. An Arab engagement with this vocabulary, whether describing Israelis as Nazi-like oppressors or Palestinians as victims like the Jews, was perhaps an inevitable, if ineffectual, turning of the tables. The appropriate question is not so much the invidious nature of such comparisons, but the degree to which they have been articulated within projects of ostensible liberation or domination—this is where Achchar's book would have benefited from less of a sweeping survey and more attention to contextual analysis.

Hezbollah, Hamas, and Contemporary Politics

In the final section of his book, Achcar illustrates how the demise of the PLO and secular Arab nationalism gave way to the rise of "Islamized Anti-Semitism" embodied by Hezbollah and Hamas. Israeli politics in this same period, Achcar is quick to note, have been dominated by an ever more virulent anti-Arab racism. As with the case of Hajj Amin, Achcar sharply rebukes the xenophobia, dogmatism, and parochialism prevalent in what are known as "resistance" organizations and also within facets of contemporary Arab culture. Yet even here, Achcar notes how Hamas, whose charter is filled with absurd ideas about the Jews, has sought to transform and portray itself as a major Palestinian political, social, and above all national movement rather than a parochial Islamist organization. His point, of course, is not to exculpate Hamas. Rather, his point is to distinguish between racialized European anti-Semitism that targeted European Jews, on the one hand, and, on the other, the development of reactionary anti-Jewish thought in its different forms in the Arab world that has drawn sustenance from Israel's oppression of Palestinians and Arabs and its insistence that it speaks and acts on behalf of the Jews everywhere. But as much as Achcar is scathing about the hollowness of much of contemporary Arab political discourse (the book was written before the wave of uprisings that are now sweeping the region), including the declarations of solidarity with the Palestinian cause that are routinely accompanied by the dismal treatment of Palestinian people in Arab countries, he is also careful to point out that Arab culture, like all cultures, is multifaceted and in constant contestation. Achcar, in other words, affirms a timely point that is often forgotten in Western mass media discussions of the Arab world—namely, that Arabs themselves have always counted among the sharpest critics of religious and cultural chauvinism and state orthodoxies in their countries.

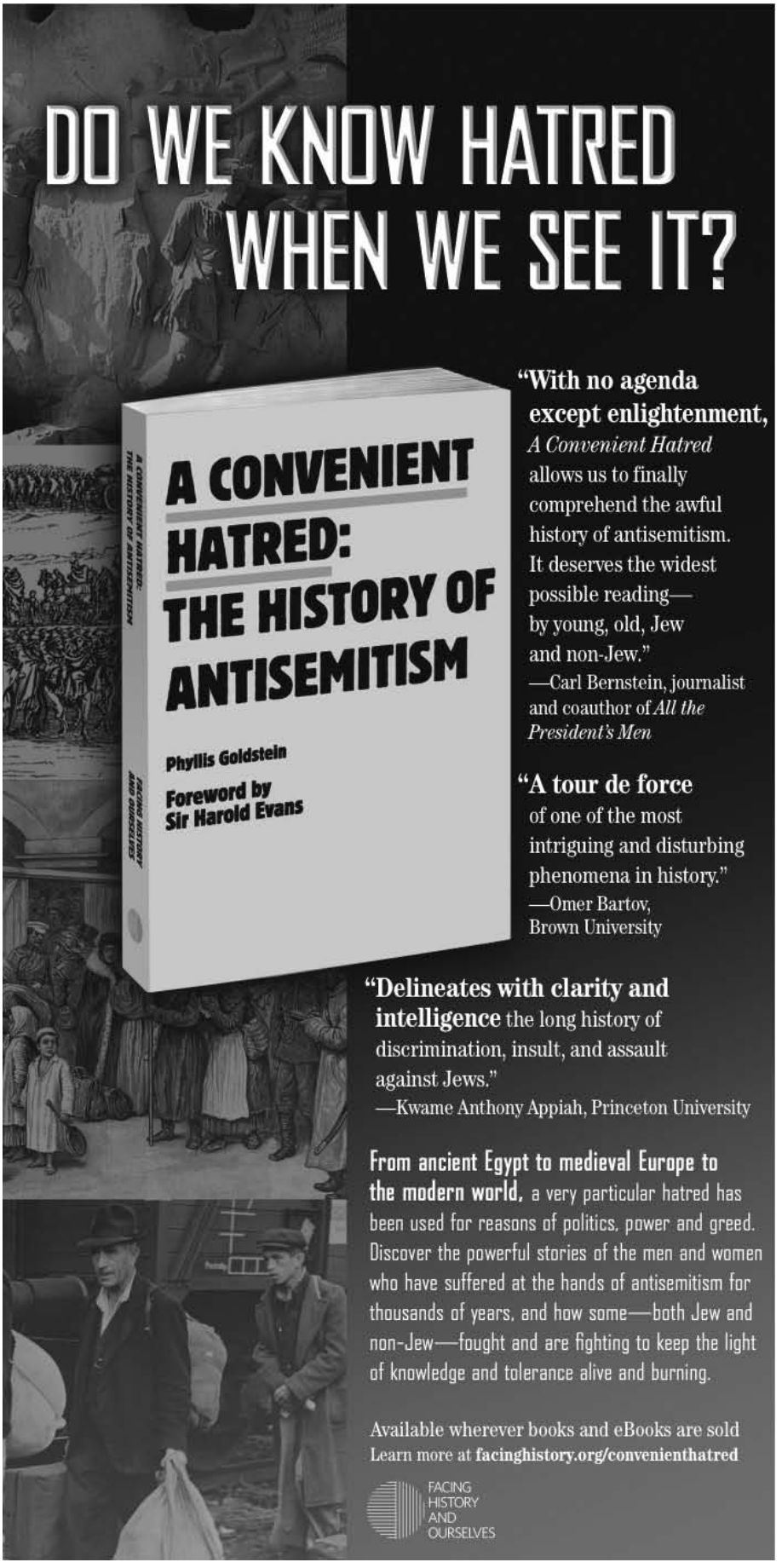
Where, then, lies any hope for reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians? For Achcar, what faint hope there is lies in the ability of both Arabs and Israelis to acknowledge the importance of history without becoming trapped by it—to not cherry-pick historical experiences in order to affirm an exclusionary sense of victimization. Achcar therefore celebrates the figure of the late Edward Said precisely because he recognized the intertwined and tragic fate of both peoples and understood how Palestinians had become, in a sense, the new Jews, the so-called victims of the victims. For Achcar, Said is important because he affirms Palestinian rights without recourse to racist language to describe Israelis or Jews (at a time, it should be recalled, when even the use of the word "Palestinian" was considered controversial on American college campuses). On the Israeli side, Achcar applauds the disillusioned Avraham Burg, former president of the Jewish Agency, the World Zionist movement and Israel's Knesset because he has condemned Israel's instrumentalization of the Holocaust and has recoiled at Israeli state and society's increasing virulence toward Palestinians.

Through the juxtaposition of Said and Burg, Achcar sets out his vision of a historically informed dialogue that takes as its point of departure the full recognition of the Holocaust and the Nakba, not a conflation of these two experiences. What is most important about his book is the interconnectedness of the problems he puts on the table.

A commitment to Palestinian rights must not overlook the failings of Arab societies. And a frank criticism of Arab failings cannot ignore Israeli and Western colonialism. Achcar thus recognizes both Arab and Israeli racism, and Muslim, Christian, and Jewish fanaticism without drawing facile equivalences between them. Each has its own peculiarities, and each constitutes its own affront to the idea of secular equality and dignity. But they have also become interlaced together and thus pose a major challenge to the viability of truly secular citizenship throughout the modern Middle East, not just the Arab world.

Ultimately, Achcar depathologizes Arab reactions to the Holocaust and to Israel. In the face of a perverse and persistent narrative about an Arab "hatred" of Jews that has been consistently asserted by Zionist authors from Leon Uris to Benny Morris as a way of not grappling with, or rather denying, Zionism as a settler-colonial project imposed upon Palestinians, Achcar's account constitutes a crucial corrective. This book, therefore, is not for those who are used to seeing the world with one eye or to speaking with one tongue, as the Sudanese novelist Tayyib Salih put it so memorably in his classic 1966 novel *Season of Migration to the North*. It is not for those who want to represent "the Arabs" rather than study the Arab world. It is not for those who need to demonize Arabs in order to relate to Israel. Nor is it for those who are unable to deal critically or historically with the Arab past or with Arab or Islamic nationalism. Finally, this is a book that will not sit comfortably with those who have become accustomed to considering the legacy of the Holocaust as the exclusive preserve of any one people or state. But for those who are interested in learning about the tragic dialectic that has bound Jewish and Arab suffering in the modern world, this thought-provoking book is an important place to begin. ■

Ussama Makdisi is a professor of history at Rice University and is the author of Faith Misplaced: The Broken Promise of U.S.-Arab Relations, 1820-2001 *(Public Affairs, 2010).*



REFORM JUDAISM'S "BIG TENT"
(continued from page 16)

allotment of welfare and educational resources given to Palestinian citizens of Israel as compared to Jewish Israelis; however, the resolution praised the Israeli government for its continuing efforts to address this problem. Another 2009 resolution titled "Mideast Peace: The Urgent Need for Leadership" offered this diluted criticism of Israeli settlements: "Although Israel may need to retain some areas technically classified as settlements, the failure of the Israeli government to meet its commitments regarding the removal of unauthorized settler outposts and the halting of settlement growth are sources of concern." This, too, is hardly a pointed criticism—even some members of the right-wing Netanyahu government would agree that some settlements are "sources of concern."

In a meeting with reporters at the biennial, I asked Rabbi Rick Jacobs, the incoming URJ president, about another "source of concern": anti-democratic laws recently passed in Israel. I mentioned an Israeli law that fines Israeli citizens who promote boycotts against settlement products and a law that forbids school teachers from using the Arabic word *nakba* (catastrophe) to refer to the devastating impact on Palestinians of Israel's 1948 Independence War. Rabbi Jacobs did not address these anti-democratic laws in his reply; he instead emphasized that all criticism must come from a place of love for Israel:

> Our values are about Israel as a vital, pluralistic, democratic state, and that has been our commitment and that's the Israel that we work for. We work with every government.... The basis of our relationship with Israel is about love and responsibility.... It's our hope that that is the foundation of our relationship, and from that foundation, all things are possible.

Perhaps "all things are possible" means that, once a relationship of trust and mutual respect has been established between Reform movement leaders and the Israeli government, these leaders privately share their criticisms and try to effect change behind the scenes?

The "Uninspired" Young Jews

At every opportunity throughout the biennial conference, Reform movement leaders promoted their multimillion-dollar Campaign for Youth Engagement. They emphasized that "the future of the Jewish people" was at stake in this ongoing initiative, which includes free trips to Israel, Jewish summer camps, and creative efforts to reach Jews who feel little connection to their Jewish identity. "Anyone we don't reach, we need to do better," said Rabbi Jacobs. "We need to understand what goes on inside unaffiliated and uninspired groups."

The theme of inspiring Jewish youth also appeared in the Shabbat sermon of URJ's outgoing president, Rabbi Eric Yoffie, in which he shared stories about his own children's connections to Judaism and Israel. He said that his son, Adam, has visited the extremist settlement of Hebron and is "tired of being told by Jewish leaders that building settlements throughout the West Bank doesn't really matter when it manifestly does."

Five years ago, Yoffie publically criticized AIPAC for alienating young people like his son. AIPAC had invited Pastor John Hagee, chairman of the settlement-funding group, Christians United for Israel, to give a keynote address at the 2007 AIPAC national convention. In an op-ed for the *Jewish Daily Forward*, Yoffie expressed his concern that allying with Hagee would push young Jews away from the Reform movement and other pro-Israel organizations:

> The American Jewish community must decide: Does it want to connect young Jews to Israel, or does it intend to drive them away?... There is no single explanation for [young Jews'] disaffection, but surely one important reason is the increasingly right-wing and even reactionary tone that some elements of the organized community have adopted in their pronouncements on Israel.

Many young (and old) Reform Jews felt similarly put off by the tone of Cantor's speech—some even boycotted his presentation in dismayed anticipation. And some Reform movement leaders are pushing for more proactive initiatives to challenge immoral and self-destructive Israeli government policies. During a workshop following Cantor's speech, Al Vorspan, URJ vice president for more than forty years and a leader of its social justice work, said, "American Jewry, at least in part, has begun to define pro-Israel as supporting everything Israel does, and somebody who has a contrary view is either anti-Semitic or anti-Israel." He called for Israel to "confront its own problems," both internal and external, and worried aloud that "the dream that brought [him] into Jewish life, the Zionist dream ... will disappear in the name of settlements, in the name of appeasement of the Haredim, in the name of failure to achieve full religious freedom, and [in the name of] discrimination."

Vorspan's concerns ought to be preeminent concerns of the current Reform movement leadership. While other left-leaning Jewish groups (including the Tikkun Community) lack the resources that the Reform movement has amassed, the Reform movement is uniquely positioned to mobilize support for justice- and peace-oriented policies that are in Israel's long-term moral and strategic interests. For example, Reform Jews could push for the passage of a URJ resolution supporting J Street.

With access to the Reform movement's funding resources and vast networks, this desperately needed alternative to AIPAC could be more effective in lobbying for moderate policies that recognize the legitimate rights of both Israelis and Palestinians. This could nudge the Israeli-Palestinian peace process out of its current paralysis—a paralysis partly enabled by AIPAC's unwillingness to challenge Israel. Supporting J Street would estrange some Reform Jews, but it could also

attract new ones and re-inspire current ones. And it would honor and uphold the Reform movement's tradition of doing the right thing—not only in private conversations but also in bold, public pronouncements and activist initiatives.

Asking that the Reform movement take an unequivocal stand against the Occupation and against Cantor-like insularity is not asking it to be something it is not. Rather, it's asking the movement to be more like itself—to exhibit the same moral courage that it has shown in advancing other social and economic justice causes. ■

SUSTAINING THE OCCUPY MOVEMENT
(continued from page 28)

In the area of housing, I can't point to such a powerful success story, though one appears to be in the making. Rosanne Haggerty, founder of Common Ground (commonground.org), is revolutionizing the field. She has launched a campaign to end chronic homelessness—which affects over 100,000 people in the United States—by July 2013. She has mobilized support and built alliances with government agencies, nonprofits, and activists in dozens of cities around the country. Although the project is far from completed, Haggerty's discoveries already parallel those of Belo Horizonte: she is finding that the problem is eminently solvable and requires more political will than anything else. As *New York Times* writer David Bornstein pointed out in "A Plan to Make Homelessness History" (2010), housing the homeless dramatically reduces costs relative to the medical expenses of the chronically homeless, most of whom have diabetes, cancer, mental health challenges, or heart conditions and thus cycle through emergency rooms. The high retention rates in permanent, supportive housing have allowed a number of cities to reduce their homeless population, sometimes by more than half.

Just as in Gandhi's times, constructive program is rarely enough. Creating change on a scale to match the vision also requires acts of civil disobedience. The focus on basic human needs in this case lends itself to large numbers of people being mobilized and in the process taking on the most sacrosanct of institutions in this country: private property.

The Occupy movement faces the challenge of operating without government support and more often than not against government and police hostility. While the encampments existed, homeless people shared the space with activists. Now that the encampments are largely gone, the housing crisis remains a primary focus of the Occupy movement around the country. Activists have formed coalitions with low-income communities and organizations working for housing rights, such as Causa Justa (cjjc.org) in Oakland and San Francisco, and have staged occupations of foreclosed homes, disruptions of banks known to foreclose on many properties, and active interference with evictions.

If the movement succeeds in attracting large numbers of people, actions of an entirely different scale can take place. Imagine masses of people marching to the Central Valley in California, where vast areas are being cultivated by large-scale corporations, to harvest vegetables and other crops and bring food home for themselves and others in need. Imagine organizing a city-wide squatting by homeless people and their allies of all of the unoccupied buildings at once. The

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same could be done in yet a third area, health, as marchers could take over a corporate warehouse of medicine and distribute its supplies to people in need.

Like Gandhi's Salt March and the lunch counter sit-ins, these kinds of actions are not purely symbolic. They partake of what Sharif Abdullah calls "highly illegal and highly moral" action, or "vision implementation": demonstrating the envisioned world while obstructing the continuation of current structures.

Such events would require tremendous acumen in design and implementation, and massive amounts of mobilization, trust building, and training in the core principles of nonviolence, especially love. For this kind of action to lead to significant transformation, marchers would need to be able to love the people they are targeting in their actions. Harvest vegetables illegally and leave some for those who own the field. Raid a medicine warehouse and thank the people who developed the medicine that saves lives.

Without love, whatever gains are made will be short-lived. With it, the Occupy movement can become a caring community that ushers in the world we are trying to create, embodying a vision of what's possible by enacting that vision daily in its operations. With love, I trust it can draw more and more people away from the institutions we all know are no longer working, not even for the few. ■

HORIZONTALIDAD
(continued from page 33)

what they read about Argentina is exactly what they are feeling, and that the forms of organization are remarkably similar. They then usually ask me how that is possible. Similarly in Greece, a few months into the occupation of Syntagma Square, the group SKYA (the assembly for the circulation of struggles), asked to translate my book into Greek. It has since been translated, and in November I traveled to Athens and met with various assemblies who were beginning to use the book as a political and popular education tool. Again, as in the United States, movement participants in Greece shared how the experiences of horizontalism in Argentina were so similar to the ways in which they were organizing.

Occupy's Reclamation of Public Space

Not only are people in the current global movements organizing in ways that are horizontal, they are also doing so in open and public spaces. Part of this politics, as described by people all over the world, is the need to come together, do so without hierarchy, and do so in open spaces, where not only all can look at one another, but where a space in society is opened up and changed, whether that be a park or the occupation of a plaza. This opening of space is not limited to cities and large towns either. I have spoken to dozens of people involved in the movement in small U.S. towns and villages. They describe meeting on a street corner or in a local plaza, perhaps with only a few dozen people, but still in public space. In one such instance it is a village of only 300 people. The importance is being visible to others, and using and changing space. It is part of the politics of intervening in a larger conversation, but on our own terms.

The importance of the location of the Occupy movements—using public spaces to gather face-to-face—cannot be underestimated or seen as something coincidental. Rather, it is at the heart of the politics of the movements. The movements are choosing to gather together and decide their own agenda. The Occupy movements are not protesting the state or city governments and asking them to resolve the problems of society; the politics of these movements is that the state cannot fix the problems of society. Of course this is not to say that things cannot be made better, or that there are not countless things the Occupy movements want changed, such as access to housing, education, food, etc. Nevertheless, the crux of the politics is that the point of reference is not above, it is not to the state; instead it is across. It involves looking to one another in horizontal ways. And from that vantage point tactics and strategies are decided.

The movement's not being about a specific "demand" is related to the above two issues. It is a horizontal movement that does this in a way that has to be face-to-face and in specific geographic locations. Sometimes, as with Occupy Wall Street, a place was chosen based on politics, and many assemblies occurred before the actual occupation to decide on the best possible locations (there was a list of eight potential sites in New York). Settling on Zuccotti Park was indeed a political choice based on its location in the Wall Street area and also its location in a privatized park. But the point was again not to make a demand. One of the first decisions of the Occupy Wall Street assembly was to rename the park Liberty Plaza, claiming it as a collective space—not asking that

Occupy Wall Street protesters meditate in Zuccotti Park on October 16, 2011.

CREATIVE COMMONS/DAVID SHANKBONE

it be made public or demanding more public space in New York. Again, this supported the idea that the movement was not about the demand against or a focus on the "other" but about a focus on and among ourselves.

Argentinean Territories of Resistance

In Argentina the use of space and concept of territory was also central. This was true for the neighborhood assembly movement, the unemployed movements and the recuperated workplace movement. People spoke of this new place where they were meeting, one without the forms of institutional powers that previously existed. Here's how one assembly participant described it to me:

> I understand *horizontalidad* in terms of the metaphor of territories, and a way of practicing politics through the construction of territory; it is grounded there, and direct democracy has to do with this It is like it needs to occupy a space.

Argentina's recuperated workplace movement now involves close to three hundred workplaces organized under the slogan of "Occupy, Resist, Produce," which are almost all run horizontally and without bosses or hierarchy, and are necessarily located in specific geographic spaces. Within this space of the workplace, workers speak of the construction of new territories. By this they are referring not only to the fact that they have occupied a space, but also to the ways in which they are running the workplaces together, and in solidarity with people from the community and other workplaces. The new territory is created in how they are running the workplace, not just in the fact of taking it over.

The unemployed workers movements first began as a protest, demanding an unemployment subsidy from the state, but shortly thereafter, in the midst of the protest, they began to create something different together. Their protest took the form of a blockade. Not having a place of work, the unemployed workers usually blockaded bridges or major intersections, with the intention of shutting down those major arteries. At the same time, while blockading, they were creating horizontal assemblies to decide what to do, as well as creating an entire infrastructure of food, health care, media, and child care, together opening up a new space on the other side, yet as a part of the blockade. Many began to refer to this space and new free *territorio* (territory). Raúl Zibechi's book, *Territorios en resistencia: Cartografía política de las periferias urbanas latinoamericanas*, published by Lavaca in 2008, deals precisely with this issue. In a 2008 CIP Americas Program article titled "The Revolution of 1968: When Those from Below Said Enough!" he also spoke to the importance of territory, describing places that are rapidly becoming sites not only of struggle, but of organization:

> The real divergence from previous time periods is the creation of territories: the long process of conformation of a social sector that can only be built while constructing spaces to house the differences. Viewed from the popular sectors, from the bottom of our societies, these territories are the product of the roots of different social relations. Life is spread out in its social, cultural, economic, and political totality through initiatives of production, health, education, celebration, and power in these physical spaces.

Pulling the Emergency Brake

The Occupy movements globally have all begun with the same two features, which must be explored in depth and taken seriously: the creation of horizontal spaces and the opening of new territories in which to create new social relationships.

Walter Benjamin's words from *The Arcades Project* perfectly fit what has been going on around the globe throughout 2011, and in many places before this as well. He wrote: "Marx said that revolutions are the locomotive of world history. But perhaps things are very different. It may be that revolutions are the act by which the human race traveling in the train applies the emergency brake."

The movements are about the shouting of No! *Ya basta. ¡Que se vayan todos!* They are about a collective refusal to remain passive in an untenable situation. And so we pull the emergency brake, and in that moment freeze time and begin to open up and create something totally new. What it is still is not totally clear, and that is a part of it—there is a desire to stop time and open something new, creating new relationships and more free spaces. What this looks like is being discovered as a part of the process as it is created, which is also *how* it is being created: horizontally and in geographic space. ■

Like Argentina's popular rebellion, Occupy is about "a collective refusal to remain passive in an untenable situation," the author writes. Here, protesters participate in an Occupy Wall Street General Assembly on October 15, 2011.

CREATIVE COMMONS/JOE LUSTRI

BRIDGE THE CLASS DIVIDES
(continued from page 35)

of our health, our environment, and human and animal welfare. But the key here is unifying people across class lines. How to do this?

Here are a few ideas for starters: Unite well-heeled professionals with farm workers, factory workers, and food service employees and ask them to march in solidarity in coordinated strikes. Organize potluck think tanks in underserved areas coordinated with community leaders, local farmers, and food activists to engage various neighborhoods in conversations about Big Food and its consequences. Current food co-op members can invite low-income residents of neighboring communities to join their food co-ops, and then coordinate the ordering and distribution of bulk ingredients to make them as affordable as processed foods. Create "mobile" co-ops that bring food to people without reliable transportation. And finally, call on artists across the nation to launch a coordinated "culture jamming" effort to alter all corporate food billboards to show how Big Food companies do not have our best interests in mind.

Occupy Wall Street is already bringing people together across class lines—and we in the food movement need to follow suit. The food movement needs to present an aesthetic "brand" that will inspire Americans to band together and uproot the warm feelings many Americans have toward Big Food. If we collectively demand healthy, affordable food, fair wages, and non-destructive farming and production practices, we might just have a real movement to Occupy Big Food. ■

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JESUS KEPT KOSHER
(continued from page 44)

> going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile." When he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about the parable. He said to them, "Then do you also fail to understand? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile, since it enters, not the heart but the stomach, and goes out into the sewer?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.) And he said, "It is what comes out of a person that defiles. For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

There is such a long history of interpreting this passage that it alone would fill a book. The demons that beset the "tradition history" of this passage are legion; some scholars consider some verses original and others later additions, while others argue just the opposite as to which verses were original and which added later. I am going to cast the demons out by ignoring them and trying to read the text as it is. My goal is to get closer to a sense of what the canonical Gospel of Mark might have meant in its original cultural, religious context, a context that has to be thoroughly known and clearly articulated to do its interpretative work.

The first thing that must be acknowledged is that while the *readers* of Mark are clearly expected to be far away from traditional Jewish practice as well as from the Aramaic and Hebrew languages, the *writer* of Mark is anything but distant from and ignorant of these matters. He demonstrates, in fact, a fine and clear understanding of Jewish practice and the Jewish languages, as does his Jesus. This distinction has been missed in much of the earlier work on Mark and especially on this chapter.

Food Can Be Kosher But Not Pure

In contrast to virtually all Christian commentators, I propose that whatever Jesus is portrayed as doing in the above text from Mark—including "and thus he purified all foods"—it is not permitting the eating of all foods, even if we accept every word of the passage as it is before us in the text.

In order to make this proposition stick, it's very important that we make some distinctions between different domains of the Torah's law and especially the dietary laws, for there has been much confusion on this score. To call food kosher refers to its permissibility or impermissibility for eating by Jews as defined in the Bible and the later rabbinic literature. Among the foods forbidden are nonruminants such as pigs and rabbits, birds of prey, and sea creatures that have no fins or scales. Meat, to be kosher, has also to be slaughtered in a special way deemed painless to the animal, and milk and meat foods must be kept separate from each other. These laws are observed to the letter by pious Jews even today. Although, somewhat confusingly, animals that are not kosher are referred to as "impure" animals, these *kashrut* (kosher) laws have nothing to do with purity and impurity of the body or other items. There is a separate set of rules that define when any food—kosher or not—is pure or impure, depending on how that food was handled and what other things it may have come into contact with. Indeed, there are kosher foods that in *some* circumstances and for *some* Jews were forbidden to be eaten, despite the fact that they are in themselves made of entirely kosher ingredients, cooked in kosher pots, and not incorporating milk with meat. Such foods have become impure through some mishap, such as being touched by a person with a flux from his or her body. While all Jews are forbidden always to eat pork, lobster, milk and meat together, and meat that has not been properly slaughtered, only some Jews, some of the time, are forbidden to eat kosher food that has become contaminated with ritual impurity. While in English they are sometimes confused, the system of purity and impurity laws

and the system of dietary laws are two different systems within the Torah's rules for eating, and Mark and Jesus knew the difference. One of the biggest obstacles to this understanding has been in the use of the English words "clean" and "unclean" to refer both to the laws of permitted and forbidden foods and to the laws of pollution or impurity and purity. These translate two entirely different sets of Hebrew words, *muttar* and *tahor*. It would be better to translate the first set by "permitted" and "forbidden" and use "clean" and "unclean," or "pure" and "impure," only for the latter set.

On one hand, the Torah lists various species of birds, fish and other sea creatures, and land animals that may never be eaten. It also forbids the eating of the sciatic nerve, the consumption of certain kinds of fat on otherwise kosher animals, the consumption of blood, and cooking a kid in its mother's milk (taken early on by most Jews, apparently, to mean not to cook meat and milk together). Together these rules make up what is called the Jewish dietary laws or kosher rules. As I have mentioned, they apply to all Jews everywhere and always.

Purity and impurity, or pollution (*tuma'h vetaharah*), is an entirely separate system of rules and regulations that apply to a different sphere of life, namely, the laws having to do with the touching of various objects, such as dead humans or humans who have touched dead humans and not washed properly, as well as with other causes of impurity such as skin diseases or fluxes from the body, including menstrual blood and semen (but not excreta), which render a person "impure" according to the Torah but carry no moral opprobrium. People may become impure without any deed on their parts at all. In fact, most Israelites were impure most of the time (and today we all are all the time), since it requires a trip to the Temple to be purified from some kinds of ubiquitous impurities. The touch of such "impure" persons renders certain perfectly kosher foods forbidden to be eaten by Priests or by Israelites who are entering the Temple. During Second Temple times, there is much evidence that many Jews sought to avoid such impurity and to purify themselves as quickly as they could according to the rules from the Torah even if they were not planning to go to the Temple. The Pharisees extended these practices, even legislating that eating kosher food that has been in contact with impurities renders one impure.

According to the biblical system (to which, apparently, the Galilean practice might very well have corresponded), the two sets of rules are kept quite strictly apart. A Jew did not eat nonkosher food, but rules around defiled kosher food depended on various circumstances of the eater's life and certainly did not render the body of the eater impure. The Pharisaic tradition seems to have extended that prohibition against eating defiled kosher food and also rendered the eater him- or herself impure through this eating. The Pharisees sought to convince other Jews to adhere to their new standards of strictness (this is apparently the meaning of them going over land and sea to convert—they were attempting to "convert" other Jews, not Gentiles). They therefore instituted a practice of ritual hand purification by pouring water over the hands before eating bread, so that the hands would not make the bread impure.

Thus, in order to understand what Jesus is talking about in the Gospel, we must have a clearer sense of what his terminology might have meant in his cultural world, not ours. In the Gospel, we are told that Pharisees have come from Jerusalem, apparently to proselytize for their understanding of the Torah and its rules, including these extensions of the purity regulations, such as the washing of the hands. Jesus protests, asserting that foods that go into the body don't make the body impure; only things that come out of the body have that power to contaminate. So really what the Gospel describes is a Jesus who rejects the Pharisaic extension of these purity laws beyond their original specific biblical foundations. He is not rejecting the Torah's rules and practices but upholding them.

Mark Reveals His Own Jewishness

In contrast to many earlier views, it's clear that Mark knew very well what he was talking about when he discussed the Pharisaic ritual practices and purity rules. The clearest demonstration of this involves a word in the Greek that is usually obscured in English translations of Mark 7:3: "οἱ γὰρ Φαρισαῖοι καὶ πάντες οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ἐὰν μὴ πυγμῇ νίψωνται τὰς χεῖρας οὐκ ἐσθίουσιν, κρατοῦντες τὴν παράδοσιν τῶν πρεσβυτέρων [For the Pharisees and all of the Judaeans do not eat unless they wash the hands *with a fist*, according to the tradition of the Elders]." Scholarship has only recently adopted the translation "with a fist" after centuries of emendation of the text against the dominant textual tradition. The usage "with a fist," albeit for fighting or hitting, is attested in the ancient Greek translation of the Bible, the Septuagint, more than once (Exodus 21:8; Isaiah 58:4).

As anyone who has seen Jews actually performing the ritual of hand washing would guess immediately, Mark is referring to the process of forming a loose fist with one hand and pouring water over that fist with the other. I would suggest, moreover, that Mark's emphasis on "with a fist" might well be a description of the practice itself but also an allusive, almost punning reference to the pugnaciousness of these Pharisees. But regardless of that last point, when the Gospel is understood in this manner it provides incredibly precious evidence, available nowhere else, of the great antiquity of a Jewish practice otherwise attested only later. If Mark was such a close observer and manifests such intimate knowledge of Pharisaic practice, then my assumption as I read the passage is that he knew of what he spoke all the way down. This suggests strongly that his perspective (as well as that of his Jesus) is firmly from within the Jewish world—nearly the opposite of what has been usually said of Mark.

Loyal to the Written Torah, Jesus Attacks the Pharisees' Innovations

Yair Furstenberg, a young Talmud scholar at the Hebrew University, has recently provided a convincing explanation of the basic controversy between Jesus and those Pharisees. Furstenberg writes that Jesus's statement needs to be read literally to mean that the body

is made impure not through ingesting impure foods but only through various substances that come out from the body. As noted, according to the Torah it is not what goes into the body that makes one impure but only things that come out of the body: fluxes of blood, semen, and gonorrhea. The only food, according to the Torah, that renders a body impure is carrion—certainly not the eating of permitted food that has become impure, or of forbidden foods generally. According to the Talmud itself, it was the Rabbis (or the legendary Pharisees) who innovated the washing of the hands before meals—which implies that the ingesting of defiled or polluted foods renders one impure. It was thus against those Pharisaic innovations, which they are trying to foist on his disciples, that Jesus railed, and not against the keeping of kosher at all. This is a debate between Jews about the correct way to keep the Torah, not an attack on the Torah. Furstenberg has brilliantly argued that in its original sense, Jesus's attack on the Pharisees here is literal: they *have* changed the rules of the Torah. This is made clear in Zabim 5:12, a key rabbinic text, which, while much later than the Gospel, ascribes a change in the Halakha to the time of Mark:

> These categories render the priestly offering unfit [to be eaten by the Priests]: He who eats directly impure food; ... and he who drinks impure fluids; ... and the hands.

If someone eats or drinks impure food, then his touch renders the priestly portion impure and unfit for the priests. This innovative ruling is, moreover, explicitly connected in the list with the hands as well, just as the Markan Jesus associates them. Now, these rulings are explicitly marked within the talmudic tradition as being of rabbinic origin and not as rulings of the Torah. That is to say, the classical Rabbis themselves maintained a distinction between what was written in the Torah and what had been added by them or by their Pharisaic forebears. They explicitly remark that here we have a Pharisaic extension of the Torah, thus confirming what Jesus said. According to the Torah, only that which comes out of the body (fluxes of various types) can contaminate, not foods that go in. Thus, if the Pharisees argue that food itself contaminates, that is a change in the law.

The attack on hand washing in the story is, moreover, consistent with Jesus's subsequent attack on the vow that releases one from supporting one's parents:

> But you say that if anyone tells father or mother, "Whatever support you might have had from me is Corban" (that is, an offering to God) then you no longer permit doing anything for a father or mother, thus making void the word of God through your tradition that you have handed on. And you do many things like this.

Jesus here accuses the Pharisees of having abandoned the plain sense of the Torah, which requires that Jews support their elderly parents. They have allegedly done this by asserting that one who takes a vow not to allow his parents to use any of his possessions—as if those possessions were a sacrifice dedicated to God—has effectively prohibited himself from providing such support.

This represents another instance in which the Pharisees apparently supplant the Torah with their "tradition of the Elders." Once again, Jesus and Mark have got it exactly right in terms of the Torah and the oral traditions exemplified by the Pharisees and other innovators. For Jesus (Mark) the "tradition of the elders" is a *human* creation, as opposed to the written Torah, which is divine. Hence the force of the citation from Isaiah, in which Jesus says to the Pharisees, "Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.' You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition."

From Jesus's point of view, the "tradition of the elders"—later called the oral Torah—is exactly "human precepts" being taught as doctrines, as in the prophetic formulation. For the Pharisees, and later for the Rabbis, the "tradition of the elders" is divine word and not human precepts (though they were transmitted orally rather than scripturally). In this case, moreover, we have an admittedly Pharisaic innovation, contested even by some other Pharisees. No wonder that Jesus would balk and protest. What I hope to have shown in this section is that when Mark wrote the words "καθαρίζων πάντα τὰ βρώματα [purifying all foods]," there is little reason to believe that it meant "thus he permitted all foods," but rather, "thus he purified all foods," meaning that he rejected the extra-stringent laws of defiled foods to which the Pharisees were so devoted—not the kosher rules. Jesus was certainly not sanctioning here the eating of bacon and eggs; rather, exactly as the text says, he was permitting the eating of bread without ritual washing of the hands, quite a different matter. The controversy ends where it began, in a contest over the question of bodily impurity caused by the ingestion of impure foods. It is highly unlikely that in its original context Mark was read as meaning that Jesus had abrogated the rules of forbidden and permitted animals.

What makes this not merely "a halakhic [legalistic] squabble between first-century Jews" (to echo a colorful bon mot of John Paul Meier's) is Jesus's use of the controversy to make a strong theological claim in the form of the parable. Whether or not the Pharisees were hypocrites (I would imagine that some were and some were not), it is certainly the case that to concern oneself with extraordinary performances of external piety while ignoring (or worse) the ethical and spiritual requirements of the Torah is poor religion, on the order perhaps of preaching that Jesus is love but hates homosexuals. We should remember, however, that "in general, in ancient Jewish and Christian contexts a 'hypocrite' is a person whose interpretation of the Law differs from one's own," as Joel Marcus has so sharply put it. There is a story of the nineteenth-century Rabbi Mendel of Kotzk (the famous Kotzker Rebbe) who said that many Jews concern themselves more

with a blood spot on an egg than a blood spot on a ruble, but surely he himself remained just as careful about blood spots on eggs and expected no less from his followers "and all the Jews." (Recently Marcus has re-cited the Kotzker's apophthegm in precisely this Markan context.) Jesus's homily is indeed in this radically critical Jewish tradition that began with the great prophets and continued for millennia. ■

THE RELIGIOUS COUNTERCULTURE
(continued from page 46)

James Luther Adams, a twentieth-century Unitarian minister, had these harsh words to say about what he saw as liberal religion's slide down this familiar slope:

> The element of commitment, of change of hearts, of decision so much emphasized in the Gospels, has been neglected by religious liberalism, and that is the prime source of its enfeeblement. We liberals are largely an uncommitted and therefore self-frustrating people. Our first task, then, is to restore to liberalism its own dynamic and its own prophetic genius ... A holy community must be a militant community with its own explicit faith; and this explicit faith cannot be engendered without disciplines that shape the ethos of the group and that issue in the criticism of the society and of the "religious" community itself.

The kind of commitment Adams is talking about is a pretty radical kind of commitment on the part of the community as a whole. He uses the terms "holy community" and "militant community" in the same breath. He is describing a kind of community, like the Early Christian church and like Occupy Wall Street, that is dramatically different from the surrounding culture; sustained by the power of love and fundamentally incompatible with a world where poverty, oppression, and violence can exist. He is talking about a *religious counterculture*.

A Hard Look in the Mirror for Religious Liberals

If we religious liberals look in the mirror, do we see the religious counterculture that we ought to embody if we really believe in the things we say we believe in—the inherent, sacred worth of all living beings; the delicate interdependence of all existence; the goal of a just, peaceful world community; and our special obligation to the powerless? Do we act as we would act if we had *really* internalized the revelation at the burning bush—that the force that authorized and empowered the Israelites to free themselves from oppression was the very ground of Being itself?

For the most part, in a word, no. Many of us have fled the oppressive and seemingly arbitrary obligations of our religious childhoods and have since focused our energies on affirming personal liberty. Others of us were raised in secular families and don't really understand the meaning of religious obligation (but figure that whatever it is, it doesn't sound pleasant). Most of us are liberal about our liberalism. We take our religious commitments lightly, measuring them against a secular understanding of what's "reasonable." In rejecting the particular obligations of traditional religions, we have rejected the notion of obligation itself. This, I believe, is our tragic flaw. It leaves us adrift. We fail to take our religious selves seriously and so we fail to be taken seriously by others, especially in the political arena. And as our convictions become flaccid, our congregations dwindle.

There is another road, other than traditional (conservative) religious observance on the one hand and watered-down liberal religious toothlessness on the other: we can become religiously observant liberals, together forming a religious counterculture. The claims of liberal theology, if taken seriously, generate fairly radical obligations. They call us to lovingly and substantially take care of one another. They call us to refuse to participate in systems of oppression. They call us to raise our children, cast our votes, eat our food, spend our money, and act toward the stranger within our gates in ways consistent with our faith in a loving Universe that bends toward justice. They call us to embody our religious ideals no less than the claims of conservative theology call the Religious Right to embody theirs.

What would the world look like if religious liberals became *religiously observant*? What if those of us who consider ourselves spiritual progressives began joining (and founding) religious communities in droves? What if we began tithing to those institutions? What if we became Sabbath-observant together and radically disengaged from social and economic structures every week? What if we began lobbying on religious grounds for environmental stewardship, and what if liberal Senators quoted Isaiah on the Senate floor? What if those of us who have high-paying jobs refused to accept a salary that was more than seven times what the lowest-paid worker makes in our organizations (and explained to the stunned custodians, "It's because we're really religious")? What if we only ate food that was sustainably grown, humanely raised, and for which the farm workers were paid a living wage, even if this ruled out most of the food we currently eat (and explained to our outraged children, "It's because, in this family, we're really religious")? What if straight couples refused to get married until there was marriage equality for everyone (and explained to their disappointed parents, "It's because we're really religious")? What if we stopped to pray two, three, five times a day?

By adapting and redeploying traditional religious disciplines in these ways, I believe that religious liberals and spiritual progressives could find our gravitational center. Our connection to our own God energy would deepen as our lives took on a religious orientation. As we aligned our practices with our values, we would build internal coherence and integrity. It is no coincidence that the deeply devout Amish people of Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania, in 2006 were able to find healing through forgiveness for the killer of their schoolchildren and compassion for his family. We too could access such preternatural compassion if

we so fully embodied our spiritual ideals in our daily lives. It is no coincidence that conservative religious communities have such longevity and political influence. Their strength comes from a sense of mission—a belief that they are doing God's work on earth. Our religious communities too would thrive if our members shared such a common sense of purpose. Our voices too would have gravitas and power in the public sphere if we believed that the Universe itself authorized our words.

Small Steps Toward Social Transformation

Can we get there from here? I believe that we can, if we do it together. The unit of change has to be the congregation or small community. And if that community is supported by an interfaith strategic body like the Network of Spiritual Progressives (spiritualprogressives.org), so that its members know they are part of a larger movement, all the better. Religious practices and prohibitions can feel meaningful and even joyful if done in community, but feel like deprivations if done alone. We need a religious community to sing songs with, play with, and eat good food with. A religious community can serve as a Petri dish where we try to create an internal culture that embodies our best vision. In this Petri dish we slowly, collectively work through our ambivalences about our role in the larger society. With the support of a religious community, we don't need to retreat from modern life as much as live in counterpoint to it, sifting out what we don't want and continuing to embrace all that is good and joyful in it.

This is not a call for moral or spiritual perfection but rather for us all to think of our religion as central to—even inseparable from—our lives. None of us will do it perfectly and there will be tension as we negotiate our desire to simply participate as normal people in this society. We'll hear ourselves saying, "Can't I just enjoy a friggin' cheeseburger, for God's sake?!" We naturally want to succeed in this world. We want to make money, we want to have fun, we want to feel accepted. We want to be not only holy, but hot too! (Even Mayim Bialik mused aloud about whether God would mind that much if maybe just her left arm were exposed.)

The important thing is not that we live austere lives but that we remain ever conscious of the gap between the way things are and the way they ought to be and we *engage with that tension*. We're not there yet. But I believe that religious liberals and spiritual progressives have the potential to form a religious counterculture that changes everything. Together we can assert a holy vision of the world as it should be in the very midst of the world as it is. By taking ourselves seriously, we can start a revolution. ■

FINDING MANNA
(continued from page 48)

have confounded generations of believers, scholars, and others. Given the complex workings of ancient Hebrew, it simply isn't clear how these four letters are to be understood. The typical English translation is "I am who I am," though it could just as easily be rendered, "I will be who I will be," or even "I am becoming who I am becoming."

An odd name, indeed, but in fact the elusiveness of the name is precisely its power and profundity. Linguistically, we cannot grasp God's name. Nor can we, in any other sense, grasp or control the true and living God. God's name is one of radical freedom: I will be whoever I will be, in spite of any human efforts to name, control, limit, or manipulate me.

This is a powerful theological assertion in the wisdom of the ancient Israelites, which is further fleshed out by two of the central commandments in the Sinai covenant: the prohibitions against graven images and against taking the Lord's name in vain. Both of these are reactions to what the Israelites saw in the empires and city-states around them. In their world, religion served political power; the gods, captured in name and image, were emblazoned in imposing statuary and architecture, functioning to uphold the king or Pharaoh. (We moderns diminish the significance of "taking the Lord's name in vain" by assuming that it refers to outbursts like "Goddamit!" In fact, the commandment is a radical hedge against the politicization of divinity for human purposes—perhaps not unlike saying "God bless America.")

The "name" given to Moses proclaims, in essence: I am a God whom neither Pharaoh nor you can control. I am holy—in the Hebrew sense of "set apart," transcendent of human purposes and designs. Isaiah will reaffirm this notion centuries later, after witnessing Israel's futile efforts to create its own religious system at the service of monarchy: "My ways are not your ways, my thoughts are not your thoughts" (55:8).

The deliberately enigmatic name of God is central to the liberation story, asserting at the onset of the Exodus adventure that this God is different from the gods of Egypt, deities who serve and uphold empire, who provide the theological underpinnings for a system built on slavery and oppression. If the liberated Israelites are to form a different kind of human society, it must be grounded on the premise that they must never try to control or contain the radically free YHWH.

Manna's Message of Sacred Wonder

So what does the story of God's name have to do with the desert feeding story? What is the joke behind "I AM" feeding the people with "What's that"? (It's starting to sound a bit Abbot-and-Costello–ish.)

There is, I am convinced, a compelling connection between these two puzzling names/non-names: just as God's name is elusive and uncontrollable, so too God's fundamental provision, the first food of the newly liberated community, cannot be named. The life-sustaining abundance of a good and holy creation cannot be controlled by humans—it must always be received as grace. It cannot be hoarded, but must be consumed in appropriate measures and released to ensure sustenance for the entire community.

Pharaoh, surrounded by his divine sycophants, feels free to extract the goods of

creation and "hoard" them in storage cities built on slave labor—a practice implicitly condemned in the revolting image in Exodus 16:20 of the hoarded manna that is rotten and "stinks of maggots." Torah, meanwhile, is warning us that we can control neither the Creator nor the creation. Just as we must always approach God in wonder and awe, knowing that God will be who God will be, so too must we always regard nature with an awe of ultimate unknowing—"What's that?"

The Exodus story is communicating, however slyly, a powerful and very relevant teaching: by not naming this food substance (and not hoarding it), humans are being instructed not to manipulate, dominate, or control creation. In the new covenantal community, which is charged with creating a radical alternative to the slavery of Egypt (or *mitzrayim*, the provocative Hebrew name, meaning literally the narrow place, or perhaps the suffocating imperial system), we must desist from extracting natural resources for purposes outside God's economic vision of enough for all.

We only need to look at the track record of modern human societies to further understand the wisdom of the unnamable gift of creation. Rather than adopting a stance of awe and gratitude, advanced human societies have largely tried to name and control the earth and its natural resources, to the point of pillaging and exploiting them to our purposes. We privatize the land, capturing it in deeds and measurements. We deplete the land through hyperproduction. We turn natural resources into commercial commodities, exhausting them for economic gain. We create "food systems" whose ultimate purpose is to fuel profits. We mindlessly waste what we choose not to use, even to the point of poisoning the ecosystem.

Moreover, we take the ultimately ineffable miracle of abundant life contained in a tiny rice seed, and we twist it into a patented market commodity, bearing such elaborate names as Bollgard or Genuity SmartStax. And we use it to fuel a system of inhumane inequities and injustice.

Tragically, our religious systems have, like the gods of Egypt, provided ample justification for our destructive approach to creation, just as they have for our political systems. But perhaps it's not too late for us to hear these ancient stories again, to let them reawaken us to a fundamental awe before both Creator and creation.

As I live into this amazing story, I also wonder whether we need to balance what Rabbi Jesus will later call a "hunger for justice" (Matthew 5:6) with a "hunger for mystery"—a spiritual "What's that?" that we ask without needing an answer. (Following his own desert sojourn, Jesus also drew heavily from the manna story in inviting his followers to experience the reign of God rather than the reign of Caesar.)

And perhaps, as people of faith reread these stories, we will find that the profoundly hopeful global movements for economic justice and for ecological healing can and will come together. We might learn that building an economy of "enough for everyone" must be based on an apprehension of the sacred quality of creation that proclaims the goodness and beautiful mystery of what God has made and given us.

The Exodus account of manna ends on a curious note. The people are instructed to put a portion of manna in a jar and keep it on display in the sacred tent in the presence of God. It is to be a sign for the generations to come, "so they can see the bread I gave you to eat in the desert when I brought you out of Egypt" (16:32). In other words, this story, this test of faith, this new economic practice, was to be memorialized as sacred and central to the identity and vocation of God's people.

We were told to keep a jar of "What's that?" in a sacred place as an eternal reminder of sacred wonder. Somehow, we've lost that jar. We need to refind it. There is a sacred story we must remember and tell our generation. That story can help rekindle our hunger not for domination but for holy mystery. And maybe, in the process, it can empower us to be healers of a scarred earth and builders of a truly just and holy human economy, with enough for everyone. ■

CONSCIOUSNESS EXPLORATION
(continued from page 39)

we are actively aware of one another and actively connected. And by virtue of this awareness and connection, we come to know and feel the interrelational nature of our existence. To be conscious as a socially embedded organism is to be interconnected and interaccommodative.

To be conscious is to be a part of a larger whole. This interrelational characteristic has spiritual implications. We quite commonly transcend our physical boundaries by virtue of our awareness and empathy with one another, and by virtue of our investment in the ideologies and imperatives of a social group (oftentimes over and above our investment in our own well-being). The interrelational characteristic of consciousness is therefore the vehicle for the ultimate experience of interconnected oneness that we all intuitively seek and that we all cherish when we find it. It is deep within our spiritual and emotional nature to want to give ourselves over to something larger, more important, and more meaningful than our own private ailments and appetites.

Tikkun's ongoing exploration of consciousness in the coming months will be by necessity wide-ranging. The field of consciousness studies is a vast expanse of independent academic sub-endeavors rooted in physics, philosophy, religion and spirituality, cognitive neuroscience, biology, psychology, chemistry, anthropology, and artificial intelligence. Many inquiries into consciousness are also rooted in the arts and literature, where our ever-evolving conscious states are represented in their most exacting, articulated, and refined expressions. And in addition to these traditionally outward explorations of shared knowledge, empirical research, and cultural artifacts, we will also be exploring the *inner* dimensions of consciousness. Due to the private and perspectival nature of individual conscious experience, these inner explorations will be of a deeply personal nature. With each

new discovery, and from each new perspective, a new clue emerges—a new piece of the puzzle of who we are as individuals, as communities, and as a species.

Over the course of more than three hundred years of empirical science, we have come to understand quite a lot about the physical world and about our biophysical origins; but we are now charting new territory regarding our biocognitive origins and regarding the qualities, characteristics, and potentialities of our *conscious* condition. This is something quite new and very exciting. And a caveat: the new field of consciousness studies is not yet sufficiently developed to present all avenues of research under the banner of a single, ideologically unified, analytical framework. At this stage of development, that would be stifling. The contributions that will appear in *Tikkun*'s ongoing series on consciousness will come from a wide range of fields, many of which, by necessity, hold to their own ideologies and terminologies, and many of which are in heated contention with other fields doing similar research using alternative ideologies and terminologies.

Physical, biological, psychological, philosophical, and spiritual explorations of consciousness generally come from prefixed ideological perspectives with prefixed notions of what are appropriate questions and appropriate answers. We will explore the implications of these prefixed ideological parameters and provide a series of interesting, seemingly unrelated stepping stones in our search for a new level of self-and-world understanding.

So, it is in the spirit of *Tikkun*'s quarter-century of activism and elucidation that we invite you to participate in this adventure. Join us as we take exploratory risks and entertain new angles of analysis, whenever these can be shown to promote better understanding and a better world. We hope you will find this new series stimulating, provocative, and informative, and that you will share your own consciousness exploration with us. May this journey together be of benefit! ■

CONSCIOUSNESS STUDIES
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attribution occurs when the physical objects and circumstances an organism encounters are value-tagged (judged positively or negatively in relation to its own biological survival) in order for the organism to form life-promoting (extinction-avoiding) reactions and behaviors. (For the simplest of examples: toxins and predators are value-tagged *bad*; prey, nutrition, and mating situations are value-tagged *good*.) The values and meanings required to successfully maneuver the living world do not require linguistic representations to be useful, and despite eluding the empirical reductions to physical, measurable, observable, testable proofs, the uses of values and meanings are nonetheless vital to the dynamic process of being a living thing and must be included in a fuller explanation of our condition.

Because the ideologies behind physics and religion were designed for other purposes, they prevent a clear understanding of even the most common and widely shared cognitive characteristics: awareness and intention. Adhering to our culture's predominant beliefs while attempting to analyze the uses and manifestations of consciousness prevents us from comprehending and describing the process of belief formation itself (a process in which awareness and intention are deeply implicated, a process that *produces* physical and spiritual beliefs as pragmatic world-modeling orientations). When physical and/or spiritual precepts are held firmly in our minds as absolute truths, we are prevented from formulating an explanatory perspective that would be based upon the logic of cognitive dynamics itself—a logic incorporating beings and their awareness of their environment; beings and their awareness of the cognitive and strategic attributes of other beings; beings and their awareness of socially embedded meanings; and so on. Neither religious teachings nor the empirical reductions of science were designed to account for this uniquely cognitive dynamic. This dynamic accounts for life-appropriate interrelationships rather than only focusing on distinct objects, causal forces, and divine interventions as holding firmly to the precepts of science and religion causes us to do.

An Origin of Cognition Narrative

A PERSPECTIVE THAT CAN ACCOUNT FOR cognitive characteristics requires its own central narrative along the lines of the story used to illustrate biophysical logic (the evolution of species narrative) or the stories used to illustrate spiritual logic (creation narratives). An understanding of the logic of cognitive dynamics can be greatly enhanced by formulating a version of an origin narrative similar to the familiar biophysical evolutionary narrative, but which emphasizes incremental cognitive adaptations. Such a narrative is needed to illustrate how cognitive characteristics developed incrementally from configurations of awareness and intention supporting life-processes in the primordial soup to the configurations of cognitive complexity supporting and shaping human life. In the course of that long adventure, awareness and intention are shaped and reshaped into ever newer cognitive structures that suit the world-modeling needs of a particular species in a particular niche. These are not physical structures but rather the scaffolded uses of adaptively upgraded awareness types (awareness of a self/world boundary, awareness of a one-after-the-other linear order of events, awareness of specific volitional capabilities, etc.) that by logical necessity must accompany all biophysical developments. In fact, it is the presence and use of cognitive characteristics (awareness and intention) that make all physical adaptations possible. Without some modest form of cognition (an awareness of the environment and an intention to do something about it), there would be no physical adaptations in the living world.

An origin of cognition narrative is a necessary step in the development of the field of consciousness studies and should prove an invaluable tool for illustrating an ideology unique to this field—thereby uniting and organizing the various academic and scientific interests

around a common theme and purpose. The story of biophysical evolution has shaped our understanding of biology, genetics, anthropology, paleontology, and psychology by providing the ideological structure around which such distinct and varied fields have organized themselves. Similarly, a story of our biocognitive evolution can shape our understanding of awareness, intention, cognitive dynamics, the mind, the psyche, social dynamics, learning, and brain function. An origin of cognition narrative can be used to organize the otherwise disjointed, chaotic, ideologically contentious areas of interest currently clashing around the subject of consciousness. And an origin of cognition narrative can flesh out areas of biology and evolutionary theory that, under the thrall of empiricism, have remained denuded of the cognitive dimension. By including our cognitive inheritance in our origin narrative we can understand ourselves and our condition—as well as the condition of other living things—in a new way.

A clearer explanation of cognition emerges by recognizing the uses and applications of awareness and intention in all living systems and then drawing some commonsense conclusions regarding the evolutionary emergence of more complex cognitive phenomena in nature and in ourselves. The conclusions will not necessarily be familiar or comforting as humanity is once again knocked from its self-idolizing pedestal of universal specialness. Yet an origin of cognition narrative, by illustrating a logic inherent to the evolution of our conscious condition, can provide commonsense solutions to the conundrums that so plague the founding of this promising new field. Of all our current endeavors, the field of consciousness studies has the greatest potential to change the course of the human adventure, and to do so in an astoundingly positive direction.

The process of mapping the interrelational, inter-accommodative characteristics of beings and meanings can provide us with a more objective and durable view of ourselves and our condition. We are an integral aspect of a holistic inter-accommodative living system—a system that includes all life on the planet and that encompasses every order and scale of biological organization, from cells to individuals to social structures to species to ecosystems. We are a living system held in interrelationship by grace of cognitive characteristics (awareness and intention).

Toward Greater Equality, Justice, and Sustainability

Conscious characteristics and dynamics, when cogently described, provide a new understanding of our condition and can thus form the basis of a viable and objective belief system. In addition to elucidating the evolution of cognitive dynamics, embracing the truths of our conscious condition can provide a firmer foundation for fairer and more sustainable political and economic structures—polities and economies that better support and reflect the new and daunting interrelational, inter-accommodative responsibilities of humankind. Despite its attractions and comforts, the Western worldview has serious explanatory deficits and is increasingly perceived as psychologically, emotionally, intellectually, economically, politically, ecologically, and spiritually unsustainable. Thus, to form this new field of endeavor (requiring, as it does, a shift in our beliefs) is equivalent to forming a commonsense interrelational view of self and world based on the qualities, characteristics, and uses of consciousness throughout nature. A well-reasoned and well-articulated explanation of our conscious condition that illustrates our inter-accommodative interdependence can ease the transition into what has quickly become humanity's daunting new responsibility: to create and inhabit an ethos of global and ecological justice, a code by which we can all live equitably and sustainably.

The field of consciousness studies is in the position to provide our global culture the explicit knowledge that all living things are related, not only by a common biophysical and biocognitive ancestor in the primordial soup, but also via the commonality of awareness and intention amongst all living things in the here and now. A view of ourselves as part and parcel of the larger empathic, interrelational entity called life (rather than as part of a mechanical universe as described by physics, or of a human-centered cosmos as described by religion) can help us to normalize behaviors that reflect this altered and expanded notion of reality. This would perhaps result in a fairer distribution of rights and resources and enable otherwise distinct cultural self-interests to unite behind the impulse to protect and steward ecological resources in a way that is equitable to *all* of life's varied manifestations. In a universe of mostly inanimate matter, the unusual emergence of what are our most common biocognitive traits (awareness and intention) is something extraordinary—something to be focused on and celebrated. Empiricism and spiritualism obstruct our vision of the cognitive realm and prevent us from acknowledging, much less celebrating, the biocognitive traits that animate life and propel the survival narratives of all living things. The prevailing beliefs of the Western world prevent us from seeing ourselves as inheritors of cognitive characteristics or as part of a unified whole (as integral aspects of the interrelational dynamic of the living world, the likes of which we have been unable as yet to find anywhere else in the universe).

In order to formulate an ideology in which consciousness can be properly explored and explained, the field of consciousness studies is obliged to contradict Western cultural beliefs. In so doing, consciousness studies can provide our global community the revised worldview it requires in order to transform itself into an interrelational, inter-accommodative entity capable of saving the living world and advancing the human adventure with sustainable beliefs and behaviors. ■

Embracing Israel/Palestine

Read Rabbi Lerner's new book and create a study group with others. Help spread the message. Become involved.
Here's how: tikkun.org/nextgen/eip.

NIGHT STOP

He has only his open hand and his
sweetly accusatory
Bless you. We have only
to turn our heads and he's gone.

Who says we have
to offer a cloak to every
shivering soul on Solano?
A nip of remorse
is almost its own reward.

Inside, in the caustic light,
a push-broom relocates
the dust of day.
The checker scans us
with a sleepwalker's blinkered gaze.

There's a raw wind blowing
but you and I
will be home in no time
to naked comforts. We'll fall asleep
to the murmur of the fridge.

We walk out with summer,
bagged and paid for:
strawberries piled in plastic coffers,
raspberries, blueberries,
shade-grown Jamaican coffee,

not forgetting sunflower seeds
for our little sisters the sparrows
who are always hungry,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

— Chana Bloch