SPECIAL SECOND ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

TIKKUN

Memo to the Candidate:

Rep. Patricia Schroeder on the Family; Kenneth Sharpe & Morris Blachman on Central America; Mark Green on Law & Ethics; Harry Boyte on Commonwealth

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY MAY/JUNE 1988 $5.00

ISRAEL AT FORTY

ABRAHAM BRUMBERG, SIDRA EZRAHI, MICHAEL WALZER, MICHAEL ROSENAK, ELEONORA LEV, M.K. DAN MERIDOR, AL VORSPAN & KENNETH JACOBSON



Liberation Theology
Harvey Cox

Family Violence
Christine Stansell

Communitarian Fallacies
Joel Feinberg

Response by **Christopher Lasch**

On American Jewish Poetry
John Hollander

Amboy Dukes
Joan Baum

PLUS

Daniel Matt on Ayin; John Judis on the Democrats; Melvyn Dubofsky on Labor History; Josh Henkin on Choosing Religion; Fiction by Francine Prose; Milton Mankoff on the Student Movement; Peter Gabel & Gary Peller respond to their critics on Creationism.

Black Mountain

On Montagne Noire creeping everywhere under the beech trees
were immense black slugs the size and pattern
of blown truck tires exploded by the superhighway.
Diamonds patterned their glossy and glittering backs.

As we watched, leaves, whole flowers disappeared in three bites.
Such avidity rebuked our stomachs skittish with alien
water and strange food. In patches of sunlight filtered
down, the slugs shone like wet black glass.

Battlefields are like any other fields; a forest
where men and women fought tanks with sten guns
houses as many owl and rabbit and deer as the next hill
where nothing happened since the Romans passed by.

Yet I have come without hesitation through the maze
of lumbering roads to this spot where the small marker
tells us we have reached a destination. To die here
under hemlock's dark drooping boughs, better I think

than shoved into the showers of gas to croak like roaches
too packed in to flail in the intense slow pain
as the minutes like lava cooling petrified the jammed
bodies into living rock, basalt pillars whose fingers

gouged grooves in cement. Yes, better to drop in the high
clean air and let your blood soak into the rich leaf mold.
Better to get off one good shot. Better to remember trains
derailed, turntables wrecked with plastique, raids

on the munitions dump. Better to die with a gun
in your hand you chose to pick up and had time to shoot.
Dying you pass out of choice. The others come, put up
a monument decorated with crosses, no mogen davids.

I come avid and omnivorous as the shining slugs.
I have eaten your history and made it myth;
among the tall trees of your pain my characters walk.
A saw whines in the valley. I say kaddish for you.

Blessed only is the act. The act of defiance,
the act of justice that fills the mouth with blood.
Blessed is the act of survival that saves the blood.
Blessed is the act of art that paints the blood

redder than real and quicker, that restores
the fallen tree to its height and birds. Memory
is the simplest form of prayer. Today you glow
like warm precious lumps of amber in my mind.

—Marge Piercy

"Black Mountain" will be included in the forthcoming book *Available Light* by Marge Piercy (Knopf, 1988).

TIKKUN

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Cover art: *Village #5*, Avner Moriah, 48″ × 68″, oil on canvas, 1987. Courtesy of Ruth Siegel Ltd., New York. Avner Moriah has been painting this subject since 1980. He paints not to further any political cause but to depict what he sees.

TIKKUN UPLIFTS JEWISH, INTERFAITH, AND SECULAR PROPHETIC VOICES OF HOPE THAT CONTRIBUTE TO UNIVERSAL LIBERATION

A catalyst for long-term social change, we empower people and communities to heal the world by embracing revolutionary love, compassion, and empathy. We support ethical, spiritual, economic, and political ideas that seek to replace the ethos of selfishness, materialism, nationalism, and capitalism with an ethos of generosity, caring for everyone on the planet (including animals), and every attempt to build local and global solidarity while enhancing love.

Tikkun magazine grew out of the empirical research of the Institute for Labor and Mental Health chaired by Rabbi Michael Lerner, which focused on the stress that people often experience in the world of work and which is often brought home into personal life. We discovered that the capitalist ethos is held together by a series of beliefs that must be dismantled in order to build a society that strengthens the love and caring relationships in both families and friendship circles. **Among those toxic beliefs:**

I. The fantasy that we live in a meritocracy, create our own world, and hence have only ourselves to blame if things are not turning out in the way that we might have wished. While we encourage people to do what they can to make their lives more fulfilling, we also want people to understand what we are all up against: the vast inequalities of wealth and power by the top 10 percent of wealth holders (in the US and globally), and thru that their ability to exercise the control over the media and much of the educational systems and large corporations.

2. **This self-blaming is reinforced by a political system** that makes it very difficult for ordinary citizens to believe that they can have any substantial impact on changing the system. Whether in politics or in personal life, people tell each other that seeking major changes is unrealistic and that they themselves are unrealistic if they think they can achieve major changes.

3. Many people have religious or spiritual beliefs that incline them to want to live in a society where people care for each other and for the planet. Yet most of the movements for societal change ignore or even ridicule those beliefs, driving many to embrace the Right Wing movements that welcome them. **Tikkun brings to public expression those very hopes and yearnings that have been denied so long and suppressed so deeply that we no longer know they are there.** Thus we advocate for far-reaching approaches that include pushing Israel to help Palestinians establish their own independent state living in peace with Israel, a Global Marshall Plan, and the ESRA Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment to the US Constitution.

We created Tikkun magazine to bring these ideas to a large constituency. We strived to provide a wide, open, and welcoming tent - a space for rich intellectual, spiritual, and political exploration. For that reason, we published many articles from a wide variety of belief systems and religions, not all of which we agreed. We believe that people learn and grow by reading perspectives different from their own.

We are **no longer in print**. We struggled to raise enough money because of the controversial positions we take. On one hand, some progressives dismiss spiritual discourse as inherently flakey or reactionary, see our position on Israel as too soft, and are unhappy with our refusal to engage in demeaning discourse, such as labeling all whites as racists or all men as sexist, even as we called for reparations for victims of every form of historical oppressions. Many liberals, on the other hand, found our criticisms of Israel too upsetting and our advocacy for the human rights and dignity of Palestinians too challenging.

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Letters

Tikkun reserves the right to select, edit, and shorten all submissions to the Letters section.

To the Editor:

No movement called "neo-compassionism" can ever hope to get more than the votes of the tone deaf. With all good wishes.

William F. Buckley Jr.
New York, New York

THE LEGACY OF THE SIXTIES

To the Editor:

Tikkun is to be congratulated for publishing Julius Lester's "Beyond Ideology," a paper delivered at the Second Thoughts Conference, which we held in Washington last fall under the auspices of the National Forum Foundation. Lester's paper is indicative of the richness and depth of the contributions at the conference by a diverse group of former New Leftists.

Unfortunately, Lester's article is accompanied by what purports to be an account of the conference by Todd Gitlin and Michael Kazin, but is in fact a tissue of McCarthyite innuendos, political half-truths and cynical distortions of what actually took place. The falsification that Gitlin and Kazin perpetuate is not even original, having been invented in the first place by the *Washington Post*'s political sleaze artist Sidney Blumenthal ("Thunder on the New Right"). The heart of the falsification consists in the misrepresentation of the conference as a right-wing revival ritual, which it explicitly was not. The falsification is manifest in Gitlin's and Kazin's dishonest presentation of Lester's article as an "admonishment" of the conference participants rather than what it was: a representative contribution by one of their own. Lester's *Tikkun* article was read *in advance* by Peter Collier and myself and was the *basis* on which Lester was invited to participate. And not only to participate. Lester was invited to make his presentation as the featured speaker at one of only two conference luncheons—an honor accorded no one else. To transform Lester's second thoughts, which were an indictment of the dehumanizing effects of radical politics experienced during a decade in the political left, into an indictment of those who shared them—as Gitlin and Kazin do—takes a special kind of arrogance and hypocrisy.

What are second thoughts? A dozen years ago, a member of the Bay Area radical community named Betty Van Patter, then forty-two years old and the mother of three children, was brutally

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murdered by the Black Panther Party. The radical community responded—Todd Gitlin along with them—by keeping its collective mouth shut. People who otherwise at the drop of a hat could be counted on to denounce U.S. leaders like Richard Nixon for crimes they were confident had been committed in exotic lands 10,000 miles away amidst cultures whose languages were impenetrable to them could see, hear and speak no evil when it occurred under their very noses in their own backyard. Three years after Betty's death, Bay Area radical Assemblyman Tom Bates publicly honored the leader of the party that had murdered Betty and more than a dozen black people in the East Bay ghettos with an official California "citizenship award." Those in the radical community who didn't applaud Bates' gesture nonetheless uttered not a word in protest. Todd was silent along with everyone else.

And is still silent. In all these years only a handful of members of the radical community—Peter Collier, Kate Colemen, Julius Lester, and myself among them—have spoken with any candor or directness about crimes committed by the New Left like the murders of Betty Van Patter or Alex Rackley, or the role that radical politics and commitments played in bringing them about. To have second thoughts is to wonder about such silences and what they imply. It is to wonder not only about the implications of the left's complicity in crimes in Oakland and New Haven, but in Southeast Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean as well.

Despite some facile handwringing, Todd Gitlin and Michael Kazin do not begin to recognize their complicity in such crimes as the genocides in Tibet and Cambodia, the politically induced famines in Ethiopia, the totalitarian rapes of Cuba and Nicaragua. If they did, they too would have second thoughts. I choose not to forget.

David Horowitz
Los Angeles, California

Todd Gitlin and Michael Kazin respond:

Talk about innuendos! David Horowitz's letter amply illustrates the deplorable style in which he is thinking his Second Thoughts. He protests both too much and too little.

We neither wrote nor implied that the conference organizers were surprised by Julius Lester's speech. But the lack of applause by Norman Podhoretz and others (while a few of the liberals in attendance responded with a standing ovation) suggests that Lester's eloquent critique of self-righteous correct lines met with far less than universal approval.

Horowitz accuses the New Left of the sixties of virtual silence about the crimes of Black Panthers and various third-world regimes. The accusation has merit. We said as much in our article. But even today's rectitude should not distort the historical sequence. The murderous truth about the Panthers was not divulged until 1978, when Kate Coleman bravely published her exposé in *New Times*. Before, many New Left veterans harbored suspicions (though suspicions are not proofs, even in the kingdom of Second Thoughts), and by the early seventies we and many like us had begun to retract whatever enthusiasm we had once felt for the Panthers. At just that time, when the Panthers were beginning to fall from grace, it was David Horowitz who, by his own account, was recommending Betty Van Patter as their bookkeeper. We did not learn of the sequence of events culminating in her murder until many years later. If Horowitz was afraid to write about this at the time, that is understandable, but he is hardly entitled to excoriate us for failing to protest what we did not know.

We are far from upholding the Sandinistas as paragons of democracy, but it is a degradation of language to characterize their rule—under siege by the most powerful nation in the world almost from the start—as "totalitarian rape." (Is there, by the way, such a thing as "liberal rape"?) If one uses such terms to describe a government which abolished capital punishment and has intermittently allowed pro-contra forces to hold rallies and publish newspapers, how shall we describe Guatemala, say, where the Reagan-supported military killed and mutilated thousands of its citizens for the crime of insufficient anticommunism?

Horowitz's vow "not to forget" is selective. Atrocities committed by governments friendly to the United States get short, if any, shrift. Forces which committed massacres in Tibet and Cambodia are backed by the Reagan administration (in the interest of containing the evil empire!); is Horowitz exercised about that? We favor a single standard. Any person or state which tortures, murders, or deprives its people of rights to political and personal liberty should be condemned. That should be the benchmark of any thoughts about political morality: first, second, or last.

Israel in Gaza

To the Editor:

Your editorial in the March/April 1988 issue of *Tikkun* is based on a premise that I believe is flawed. You state that Israel should announce its willingness to negotiate with Palestinian leaders who don't "wallow in their fantasies of eliminating the Jewish state" and who would be prepared to accept the existence of a "demilitarized and politically neutral Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza" that would "renounce all claims to the rest of Palestine and would police those remaining Palestinians still desiring a further struggle with Israel."

The basic flaw with this argument is that every Arab state, with the exception of Egypt, is officially committed to the elimination of Israel. Informed people recognize, that both from its charter and from the repeated statements of its leadership, the PLO is also intent on the reconquest of all of Palestine. I have not heard of a single Palestinian leader who has publicly taken a contrary position. (Some take the position that they might accept a state on the West Bank and Gaza with the understanding that this would be the "first step" toward accomplishing their ultimate goal. Others seem to believe that time is on their side, and that the demographic explosion of the Palestinian birthrate will allow them to reconquer the state by overtaking the Jewish population.)

In my opinion, most Jewish Israelis would be happy to be rid of the Arab Palestinians, and would be willing to straighten out Israel's frontiers in a manner that achieves part of this objective. However, since there seems to be no immediate evidence that the bulk of the Palestinians is willing to relinquish its "fantasies of eliminating the Jewish state," it is my opinion that Israel may have to hang tough until the current (or future) rulers of Jordan are willing to accept responsibility for policing the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza. At least this strategy buys

time for the Israelis to consider how they may cope with the Arab dream of reconquest. If this strategy is unacceptable to the "Peace Now" types, and they are looking for an excuse to leave Israel, so be it. The survival of the Jewish state depends on the commitment, strength, and clear vision of those of its citizens and friends who are willing to fight for its survival, not on people who fantasize the existence of a putative Palestinian leadership that is willing to make true peace with Israel.

Seymour Bederman
Raleigh, North Carolina

To the Editor:

I am one of your readers who had little interest in Israel when I started reading your magazine. I read *Tikkun* primarily for the original twist that it brings to its political discussions—the way you challenge assumptions that I've always heard from the left, for example their idea that anyone who cares about family life or religion is simply seeking the reactionary security of a patriarchal culture against which we must fight. But as a kid I was so turned off to Jewish things that at first I just ignored your articles about the Jewish world.

Your coverage of Israel, particularly your courageous editorial pointing out how stupid and immoral Israel's behavior is, has ironically turned me into a Zionist. Not because I disagree with you, but because for the first time in my life I was told that it would be okay to express my disagreements and still care about Israel. I can't tell you the mix of feelings your editorial provoked. At first, I felt all the feelings of anger at right-wing Israelis for distorting the Jewish dream that I suspect you also feel. But then, once I could express those feelings, I also began to feel the kind of sympathy and support for Zionism that your editorial expressed—feelings I had never allowed myself to feel in my entire life.

As a result, I found myself arguing with my most anti-Zionist friends. I could agree with them in their criticisms of Israel, but I could show them that this does not have to lead to a total rejection of Zionism. Many of them were simply using the term "Zionism" to mean the equivalent of "Israeli militarism." I wonder if the Jewish establishment, which you criticize so intensely, knows that you are creating Zionists by doing what you are doing?

Zipporah Lehmann
New York, New York

To the Editor:

You ignore the facts that:

1. A Palestinian state *exists* (Jordan). (I suggest you review the history of the Palestinian entity.)

2. Jews who have lived in Palestine since the destruction of the Second Temple, during all the great dispersions, *are* Palestinians—that is, it is more correct to speak of Palestinian Jews as well as Palestinian Arabs, instead of just "Palestinians."

3. No duly constituted (or unduly constituted) and representative Arab group has ever shown the slightest willingness to arrive at a substantial compromise (except possibly the Egyptian government agreements under Sadat, which Mubarak is trying his best to ignore, in spite of Egypt's gain of substantial resources in the Sinai in return for a highly dubious promise of "peace"). Meanwhile, Zionists agreed to the dissection of Jordan out of the Palestinian mandate in the 1930s, the partition plan (U.N. 1947-48), and the Camp David agreements, while Arab leaders (except for Egypt) lost no opportunity (and still lose none) to ask the faithful to "throw the Jews into the sea." (I suggest you listen to Iraqi radio or read transcripts of their broadcasts for a representative sample.)

I would welcome any indication that I am mistaken—but so far, *Tikkun* has not provided it.

David L. Bruck
Universidad de Puerto Rico
Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico

To the Editor:

Thank you for your editorial and for giving voice to Israeli opposition to the occupation in your March/April 1988 issue.

As American Jews who feel a deep connection to our tradition and a great love for the land of Israel and for the Zionist vision, we can no longer remain silent regarding the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. It is an occupation, which, by its very nature, is destroying the moral foundation of the Zionist dream without giving Israel any true security.

In solidarity with tens of thousands of Israelis, we voice our unequivocal opposition to the occupation and to the violence and brutality with which it is being maintained.

We join those in the American-Jewish community who say: "We are mindful of the history of oppression of the Jewish people and believe that it is precisely in the name of that history that Jews must reject the position of oppressing another people."

We urge the government of Israel to publicly acknowledge the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and self-government. We call on Palestinian leaders to publicly recognize the State of Israel. We call on both sides to explore together the possibilities for peaceful coexistence.

Eve Chung
Corey Fischer
Albert Greenberg
Steve Katz
Naomi Newman
A Traveling Jewish Theatre
San Francisco, California

To the Editor:

I am a twenty-year-old journalism student currently studying at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. I am writing to express my frustration and anger at what is being shown in the United States via television. As an intern at the Jerusalem bureau of a major U.S. television network, I have firsthand knowledge of how the media operate. I hear all the information and see all the video that this network receives, and I am able to compare that to the resulting two minutes that are shown in homes across America.

I see the competition for the so-called "best" shots. By this I mean violent, bloody, and exciting, with the end result being sensational and unfair. Oh, how their day is ruined if one network got a shot of a soldier shooting toward a group of rioting Palestinians, and they missed it! And oh, how excited they are to have shots of violence when the other networks weren't there! It's one big game, one big contest, and everyone in the business is playing. Also involved in the game, willing or not, are Palestinians—the winners; Israel—the loser; and the unassuming television viewers all over the world—the victims, manipulated into believing, and in some cases acting upon, the nightly two-minute results of this dangerous game.

Now I know what disinformation means. I watch twenty minutes of an interview with someone, say Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin, and in that twenty minutes he may say that Israel would like to negotiate under certain circumstances, or other such positive types of comments. But what goes on the air? A tough and provocative comment like one about the continuing iron-fist policy. It happens time and time again, the point being that the networks choose what they believe will produce the most emotion; whether or not what they choose is representative of what is happening, or representative of an entire conversation, is something they don't consider.

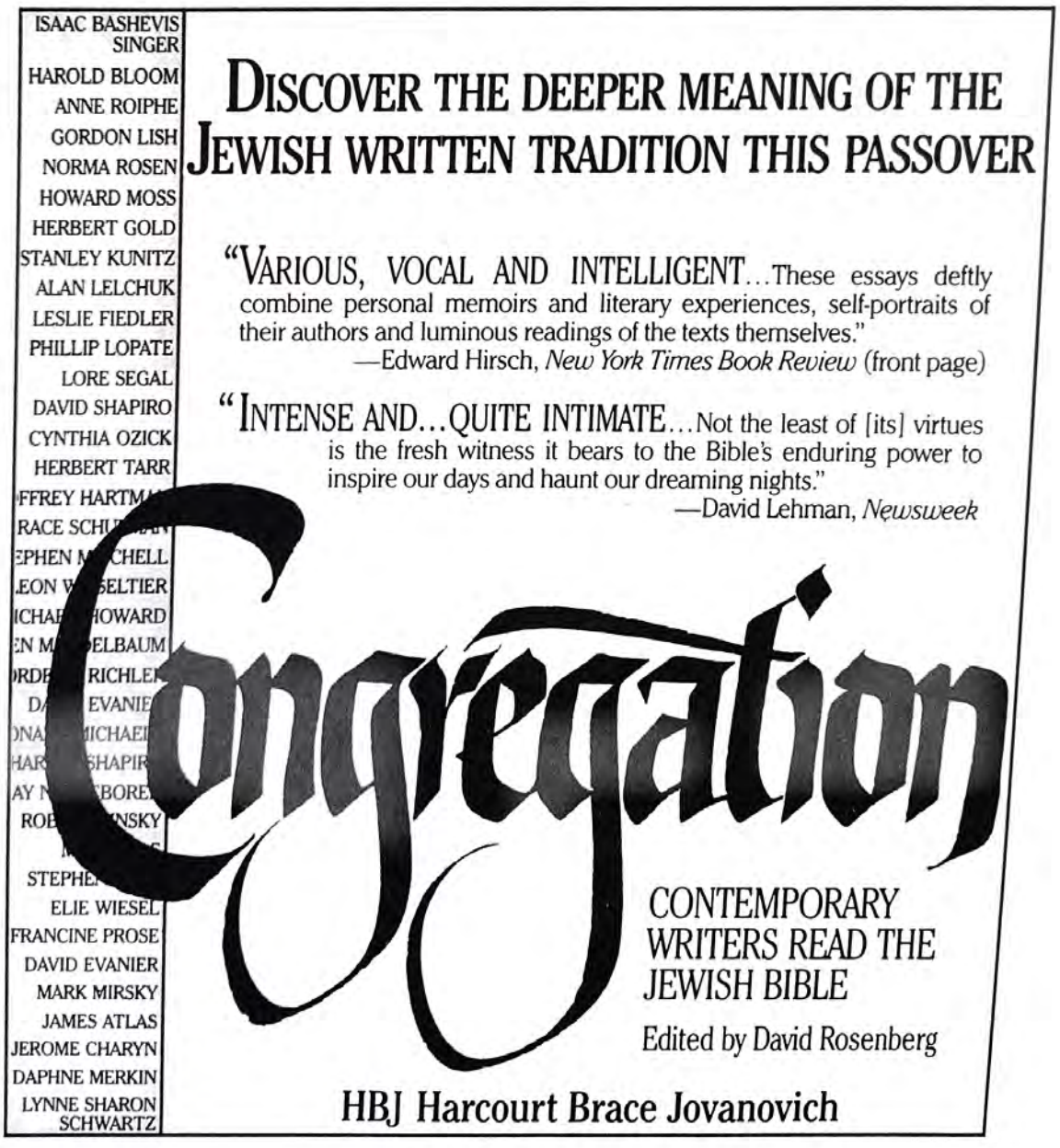
Sometimes the camera crew will return from a day in the West Bank having filmed almost nothing. Why? Because nothing was happening. But what do those in charge do? They show more exciting footage from Gaza, without even mentioning that the West Bank was quiet that day. Similarly, there may be two hours of calm and then a five-minute outburst of rocks and tear gas. Obviously it's the short outburst that gets air play. So what T.V. audiences see is a skewed picture of constant violence, seemingly occurring all the time with the same intensity in every area. On those rare days when it is relatively quiet all over, the day's piece may be a summary of the week's events, using the video filmed during that week—anything to keep the momentum going.

Along with seeing what is there, ask yourself what isn't there. When all you see are soldiers chasing after a young Palestinian, ask yourself if maybe that Palestinian threw a Molotov cocktail first, which the camera did not show. I am not attempting to justify Israel's actions, only attempting to make you realize that it's not as one-sided as it seems.

Laurie Goldberg
Jerusalem, Israel

To the Editor:

In *Tikkun*'s report, "Israelis Address American Jews," many important, passionate calls were made for sensible responses from American Jews concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I prefer to put my voice at the service



of Palestinians I have met.

Having recently returned from living in Ramallah the agonizing month of January, following a sabbatical year at the Truman Institute, Hebrew University, doing work on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, I have come to know a number of Palestinians in the occupied territories quite well. One of the things I spoke about with them (who doesn't?) is their preferred solution to that conflict.

Few echoed in private maximalist illusions heard during the ongoing uprising and which still persist in the Palestinian National Charter, although decreasingly referred to by the PLO. Their views deeply surprised and encouraged many progressive Israeli Jews I mentioned it to and several urged me to make these other voices public.

It goes like this: a *demilitarized* sovereign Palestinian state will be established in the West Bank and Gaza (which Arafat has publicly accepted) approximately within the pre-1967 borders. Its leaders will be democratically elected by all Palestinians now there and those who choose to live there under a Palestinian Law of Return. At a near date, to be determined in the bilateral peace negotiations, both states will form a Confederation, with an undivided Jerusalem as the capital of each.

Such a confederation with Israelis is far preferable to these Palestinians than one with Jordan. It is Israel's unique Middle East democracy they are after, and fascinated with, however arbitrarily it has been applied to them under occupation.

The Green Line will once again cease to exist, not through war or de facto annexation, or through the tired joke of a binational state which would mean the loss of Zionism, but from the mutual desire of both sovereign states. Both sides will obtain access and limited residency rights to all the area west of the Jordan, while retaining the needs of Palestinian and Zionist national identities.

Peace and security will be encouraged by the mutual self-interest both states have in maintaining the economic, social, and political ties that will develop and benefit each in an equitable fashion. The increasing power of Islamic fundamentalism, particularly in Gaza, which threatens both nationalisms, will be defused by the Palestinian perception that the justice that is still possible within this conflict has been achieved. The same should be the case for right-wing Israeli Jewish fundamentalism, religious and otherwise.

Through the confederation with the Palestinian state, the Israeli state can increasingly become more than a geographic part of the Middle East, a longing which at present cannot be clearly recognized because there is too much pain in the rejection.

Both sides will have their realistic dreams met by this Confederation and the maximalist, violence-producing illusions of each will slowly cease to be credible, even to passion. And Israeli Palestinians, for forty years wrongly distrusted by both sides, could begin to find a satisfactory fulfillment for their dual identity in this arrangement which makes that identity no longer a daily, personal battlefield.

Finally, many Arab nations which fear the potentially destabilizing effects of an unpredictable independent Palestinian state, and have done nothing to bring it about, will feel more comfortable with the Confederation, whether they say so or not.

One modest request to all concerned individuals: try to listen to these other Palestinian voices with the respect they deserve. It wasn't easy to arrive at sanity and stick with it.

Dr. Lynne Belaief
New York, New York

CAPITALISM

To the Editor:

Barry Schwartz joins many others in his book review (Jan./Feb. 1988) of *The Capitalist Revolution*, by Berger, and *Democracy and Capitalism*, by Bowles and Gintis, in the effort to discredit individualism. Of course, he sometimes modifies the term by "corrosive" so as to leave some room for benign types of individualism. Yet he certainly indicts that aspect of individualism that gains support from capitalism or free trade. Yes, indeed, money liberates us from various ties that earlier we could not escape. Yes, indeed, money enables us to purchase "status" and such.

All this is seen by Schwartz as a heavy liability for individualism and one better escaped. But some of us who grew up in lands where hardly any individualism was evident, and where status was inherited and one could not escape family and culture without enormous sacrifices, know that the individualism so many American intellectuals now denounce is actually a very wonderful thing indeed. In my family the atmosphere of belonging went hand in hand with constant resentment on the part of all of us. And there was no escape because without the "support" of the family one could not leave. Money does indeed help matters. The nostalgic longing for the days when we all belonged distorts the enormous price we paid for those tight little associations we could but wish we did not have to call our own!

In America you go to the restaurant you can afford and like, but in even the emancipated parts of Europe you still go where you belong! When recently I visited my mother in Austria and we went to a somewhat posh restaurant, I began to talk with the Yugoslavian waiter who had some relatives in America. My mother was offended. I should not lower myself to talk to waiters. They do not belong to our class, they haven't attained our social position and never will!

Frankly, Americans are spoiled. Individualism does require making an effort to form close friendships and other associations. It does not supply human groups from birth, at no risk. But there is the great advantage that one has a choice in the matter. One is generally seen as a sovereign being, one with what radical libertarian Robert Nozick calls his or her own "moral space."

I wish American intellectuals would spend a few decades in those conditions they keep pining for. Then they might come to value individualism for the nonutopian near-heaven it really is.

Tibor R. Machan
Auburn University
Alabama

Barry Schwartz responds:

I received Professor Machan's letter as I was thinking about preparing this year's Passover Seder. What, I wondered, was the *Mitzrayim* faced by people like me and my family as moderately affluent citizens of modern America? Not starvation. Not homelessness. Not enslavement. Not political repression. What then? Was there nothing in our lives to which the story of the Exodus could

be applied? Then it came to me that what we modern Americans suffer from is an *excess* of freedom. As Bowles and Gintis put it in the book I reviewed, "In the absence of vital communities standing between the individual and the state, liberalism's cherished political principle, liberty, is experienced more as loneliness than as freedom."

Machan's point that social, cultural, and political constraints on individualism can be, and often have been, abusive and oppressive is undeniable. But in making this point, he missed my own. Social institutions and their effects do not stand still. American individualism corrects the rigid, stultified social life to which he refers, but the cure will be as bad as the disease unless some effort is made to keep individualism within bounds. Those who worship the free market fail to see that it contributes to a tyranny that is no less serious than its alternatives.

Betty Friedan

To the Editor:

I read with some dismay the negative, dismissive attitude towards women's spirituality expressed by Betty Friedan in her interview with *Tikkun*. Having felt dispossessed from and harmed by a religion dedicated to the glorification of fathers and sons, I could not help being hurt by the remarks made by someone supposedly dedicated to the freedom and advancement of all women.

Women of many traditions are seeking to find a spiritual and religious antidote to millennia of male-centered religious thought. Within the Jewish tradition, work with the concepts of the *Shekhinah*, the Sabbath Bride, and *Chokhma* (the concept of Wisdom as the companion of God), have offered many women an opportunity to find a women's expression within a tradition seen as male. I am saddened that Ms. Friedan did not mention these alternatives or their importance.

As a possible balance for your readers, I would like to suggest the following works:

Kim Chernin's *The Flame Bearers* (Harper & Row); Naomi Janowitz and Maggie Wenig, "Sabbath Prayers for Women" and Judith Plaskow, "Bringing a Daughter into the Covenant" in *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*, ed. Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow (Harper & Row); and "On Not Blaming Jews for the Death of the Goddess," by Carol Christ in *Laughter of Aphrodite: Reflections on a Journey to the Goddess* (Harper & Row).

Carol L. Rosenquist
Hillsborough, North Carolina

Political Strategy

To the Editor:

In "The Legacy of the Sixties for the Politics of the Nineties," Michael Lerner insightfully points out that the New Left's tragic flaw was its members' belief that we could change society by changing ourselves without realizing the degree to which we embodied the very values we were supposedly transcending. Although I think Lerner is generally on target, I would like to respond to several points.

1. Lerner is correct in describing the New Left's reliance on heroic moral action as naive and potentially dangerous. But it was exactly the strategy of living one's principles combined with a belief in the power of human action that allowed the New Left to break through cold war/McCarthyite repression and come into existence. In the anti-ideological atmosphere of the late 1950s and early 1960s, it would have been impossible to use a more intellectual and ideological initial approach to movement building. Putting our bodies

ERRATA

In a review by Sean Wilentz of Russell Jacoby's new book, *The Last Intellectuals* (*Tikkun*, March/April 1988), a sentence was erroneously printed on page 65 which suggested that C. Wright Mills and Gore Vidal "turned political apostate." They did not. The passage should have read: "Reading Jacoby, one gets only the briefest allusion to those non-Jewish radical intellectuals who turned political apostate. Gentiles, like Mills and Gore Vidal, rate certain kinds of adjectives: They are 'stiff-necked,' 'stony,' and 'bony'...."

In the third paragraph of Jean Bethke Elshtain's article "What's The Matter With Sex Today" in the same issue, the text should have read: "Did not Reich promise that those who are 'psychically ill'—read *everybody* in our repressed world—need but one thing, complete and repeated genital gratification?" We apologize for the misprint.

FROM HOLOCAUST TO SOLIDARITY



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on the line allowed the creation of political space within which the movement could develop itself and its politics.

But reliance on self-transformational, volunteerist strategies was not merely forced on the New Left by the peculiar circumstances of its birth. It is something the New Left had in common with almost all modern revolutionary movements at least as early as the Russian Norodnicks. The reason is that without a belief in the ability of individuals to affect history, we are forced to wait for the unfolding of the inevitable. Like Fredrick Engels's Second International, we would build our institutions confidently waiting for the old order to deliver itself into our hands. But old orders seldom collapse of their own accord, and even if they did, idealistic youth-oriented movements seldom have the patience to wait.

Of course, the opposite of passivity does not have to be short-sighted freneticism. Volunteerism can be pushed to ridiculous extremes, as in the vulgarized versions of Ché Guevara's foco theory that claimed a revolution would be sparked by the mere existence of an armed force. And we all know where that kind of thinking led the Weathermen, as well as what happened to Ché in Bolivia.

Still, putting our moral vision into practice is an essential part of positive change. We need to begin creating the future in the midst of the present. Like "progressive" corporations, we need always to present ourselves with the challenge of excellence. We cannot afford to turn over responsibility for post-revolutionary social transformation to any central committee of government. But, as Lerner points out, we also need to give ourselves the space to be incomplete, to fall short, and to endlessly try again.

The point is not to attack the New Left's use of utopian model building, but to point out the self-destructive ways it was used.

2. Lerner correctly describes the need to address the feelings and beliefs of the American people if we are ever to rebuild a mass movement. But emotions are extremely powerful and once people open themselves up they become enormously vulnerable. The experience of those groups that have combined some kind of therapy with their politics is not encouraging. The few progressive groups that have integrated therapy into their practice tend to turn into cults with fascistic overtones. The experience of Synanon, Lyndon LaRouche's National Caucus of Labor Committees, and, perhaps, the New Alliance Party is sobering. The women's movement showed that it is possible to combine emotional and political struggle. But that strategy only worked in an anarchistic context. It is not clear how such an approach can avoid being used to recreate dependency in the context of the kind of strongly lead national organization that Lerner feels is needed.

Until we have a better sense of how emotional release and therapy can be a liberating component of a coordinated and structured organization, we need to exercise enormous caution any time it is used.

3. While the cultural/psychological trap Lerner describes the New Left falling into was deadly, the New Left also walked into another dead end that operated in a more traditionally political sphere.

While the New Left's energizing vision was moralistically radical, it was firmly based in traditional American liberal values and language. In addition, although the movement used direct action and other radical tactics, the New Left started by working towards the reformist goal of getting the nation to recognize its shortcomings and, through an attainable level of political realignment, to correct itself. In the early and mid-1960s, this combination of attributes allowed the New Left to believe in itself while it reached out to large numbers of Americans. This was possible because, at least initially, the New Left's radicalism merely seemed like a creative and effective way to get our political system moving towards achievable and "legitimate" goals.

However, the attempts of the various New Left movements to implement their vision quickly revealed the un-

The initial response to *Tikkun On-Line*, the electronic discussion group for *Tikkun*, has been so overwhelming that our original brochures disappeared even as they became outdated. The original discussion group has grown beyond the Jewish conference on the *WELL* to a coalition of several interested conferences. In addition, there is a brand new branch on the thriving *JewishNet* network of NWI, which maintains even more articles online, along with regular feeds directly from Israel and abroad. If you have a computer and a modem, write: *Tikkun On-Line,* 753 Walker Ave., Oakland, CA 94610. But you needn't wait! Call (800) 624-5916 for information, and to register for *JewishNet* (or *EcuNet,* the Christian ecumenical umbrella on NWI) and join us on *Tikkun On-Line.*

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willingness of the "system" to make even limited concessions. As the nation's power structures fought to retain control of their situations, and as the Vietnam invasion escalated, the New Left's radical vision and tactics generated an increasingly radical critique of American society and of the extent of the changes that would have to be made to achieve the original goals. The demonstrations at the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago were the turning point, as we (myself included) discovered a rage whose practical impotence was hidden behind temporary fantasies of power. But by the late 1960s, the murders of Malcolm X, Bobby Kennedy, Martin Luther King, and the Kent State students seemed to destroy the illusion that meaningful reforms were winnable. Even more, we began to doubt if reform was even desirable.

The New Left grew when it was able to maintain the tension between radicalism and reformism. But when the potential rewards of reformism seemed too limited to be worth the sacrifice, or even counterproductive, then the movement collapsed into a black hole that still darkens the political spirit of many progressives today. Either we have to reject the radicalized critique we so painfully learned in the late 1960s, or we have to revise our understanding of what it is possible to gain through reform, or both. Or else we need a way of approaching and thinking about the whole problem that once again allows us to create an effective tension between radical vision, radical tactics and reformist achievements.

The simple truth is that we have no place to practice politics except as participating members of our society. We have no choice but to bore from within. Therefore, without a reevaluation of our New Left legacy we are stuck plugging ahead with our day-to-day efforts without the energy that comes from full commitment, or retaining our purity by withdrawing from activism behind a banner of cynicism. Neither approach is satisfactory.

What is exciting about *Tikkun*'s approach, especially as presented in Michael Lerner's articles, is that they help begin this process of reevaluation. Keep it up.

Steven E. Miller
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Exchange on Creationism

To the Editor:

I am writing to criticize *Tikkun*'s decision to publish Peter Gabel's "Creationism and the Spirit of Nature" (*Tikkun*, Nov./Dec. 1987). In my opinion, it is a glaringly inept piece of pseudo-science, pseudo-theology, and pseudo-philosophy.

Eric I.B. Beller
New Haven, Connecticut

To the Editor:

The series on Creationism was magnificent. I thought Peter Gabel's article was one of the most impressive, profound essays I've read in years.

Professor Robert Blauner
Department of Sociology
University of California, Berkeley

To the Editor:

Peter Gabel lays before us a classic caricature of science held by some nonscientists: that science and by extension, those who earn their living by doing science, see nature as a collection of facts and therefore adopt an unfeeling, dehumanized attitude toward the universe around us. The crux of Gabel's photosynthesis example is the scientist's purported inability to have a human, sensual reaction to natural phenomena. Yet the sensuality of the plant's reaching for the sun is experienced by scientists in the same way that it is by nonscientists. In what way is this sensuality reduced by the additional desire to understand how phototropism works? The desire to know "how does it work" exists alongside, and not instead of, this sensuality.

There is a world of beauty, wonder, and glory in the systematic study of natural phenomena. Scientists ultimately study science for the same reasons that musicians play and poets write, namely, that they derive personal satisfaction and opportunities for self-expression from what they do. Far from a cold, dehumanized approach to nature, scientific inquiry starts with a fascination with the beauty of natural phenomena and then augments that fascination by an attempt to discover their underlying mechanisms.

Both with regard to the interactions between green plants and the sun, and to the larger issue of creationism, Gabel decries the purported lack of humility of science in its alleged assumption that it can provide all answers about the nature of phenomena. Quite the contrary. Science seeks knowledge of the rules by which nature seems to operate, then makes predictions based on that knowledge, and in some cases, creates technological applications of that knowledge. Science explicitly rejects questions about what Gabel calls the "being" of phenomena as unanswerable within scientific discipline. The inability of science to explain to Gabel his own personal existence is not a failure of science, but rather a recognition of science's limits, limits that are understood quite well by modern, thinking scientists. The validity of spiritual questions is not challenged by science, but such questions are simply not science. Individual scientists are of course free to pursue the answers to spiritual questions in philosophy, religion, or not to pursue them at all. I would like to know which contemporary and respected scientist has claimed that no valid questions about the universe can be posed outside of the scientific method of inquiry ...

Joseph N. Kushick
Amherst, Massachusetts

To the Editor:

I am saddened to find that Peter Gabel, with whose basic proposition I substantially agree, must resort to scientist bashing in order to present his radical perspective on spirit and science. Revolutions in science have *not* been terribly bloody except, of course, in those cases where the church (lower-case "c") has intervened, and animosity toward even radically new notions rarely festers longer than a generation. Thus, unlike fundamentalism, science is not *inherently* reactionary. Not that anyone is selling fundamentalism on the pages of *Tikkun*. But the *apologia* for fundamentalist reaction on the grounds of scientific dogmatism rings singularly hollow in view of a reactionary history dating back long before anyone could have perceived science as any sort of threat to church dogma....

Scientists talking to scientists go out

(Continued on p. 101)

Publisher's Page

After two years of *Tikkun's* existence, my office bulletin board, specially constructed in extra-large proportions, is covered with papers and pictures. Much as a parent gazes at photographs of children at younger ages, remembering how they were and thinking about what they've become, I like to look at this visual history of the magazine.

Among those things that catch my eye is a colored photo of an Israeli soldier standing by his jeep in Gaza early this year, fully engrossed in reading *Tikkun*. His face is turned to the side, so I can't clearly see his expression. I wonder what he was thinking as he read the magazine, especially the articles about the crisis in Israel.

Next to the photograph is a letter from *Library Journal* telling us that *Tikkun* has been selected as "one of the best new magazines of 1986–1987." I am particularly proud of this honor because it was given by people who are good judges of publication quality.

Two of my favorite tack-ups are personal classified ads, one coming from *The New York Review of Books* and the other from an Arizona Jewish newspaper. The first says, "A little to the right of *Tikkun* and a lot to the left of *Commentary*—DJF, editor and calligrapher, seeks a man..." The other one says "Let's talk about *Tikkun* and come to know each other...." In two years *Tikkun* has become a part of people's vocabularies not only as the title of a magazine but also as a way of being in the world—concerned about politics, social change, values, culture, Judaism. Our discussion groups (we now have over twenty-five around the country) and letters from readers make it clear that the concept of *Tikkun* (mending, healing, transforming the world) speaks to many people.

At the top of the bulletin board is the original Hebrew calligraphy for תיקון (tikkun), which appears on the back of the magazine and on our new-this-issue T-shirt (see ordering information on p. 8). Drawn by staff production person Bob Steiner, this beautiful calligraphy has popped up in unexpected places, most notably on a magazine subscription form for an international save-the-trees organization headed by a person living in Brazil.

Running a magazine is primarily hard and unglamorous work, as reflected by the schedules and lists of tasks on my board. The most time-consuming and annoying part of the operation has consistently been dealing with subscription problems. Like other magazines, we don't handle subscriptions ourselves. Instead, we contract with a subscription house to process them. When things go wrong, however, our readers call us and we work with the subscription house to get the problems straightened out. This process is extremely frustrating because we don't have control over making sure the day-to-day handling of subscriptions is done competently, yet we are accountable for the problems.

"WARNING: GHETTO RATS ACTIVE—RUN FOR THE DOOR" is scrawled in thick, black ink on an envelope which is now on my bulletin board. This nasty, anti-Semitic piece arrived at the office last year when *Tikkun* was calling for demonstrations against the pope during his U.S. visit. Hatefulness comes not only from the non-Jewish world, however, as evidenced by the following: "I pray every day for the demise of your lunatic magazine. May G-d grant me the pleasure of seeing you and your families murdered by the P.L.O. because of what you are doing against the Jews...." This letter came recently after we helped to organize a *New York Times* ad, signed by over two hundred teachers, writers and intellectuals, protesting the occupation in Israel.

Also on my bulletin board is a recent news article about Shamir's trip to the U.S., during which he denounced "American Jewish intellectuals"—singling out *Tikkun* editor Michael Lerner as an example—for questioning Israel's policy about the West Bank and Gaza. *Tikkun* strongly believes that American Jews have a responsibility to speak out about this issue, that it is *not* being disloyal to Israel to say that the occupation is a disaster. In recent months the press in Israel has been portraying the American Jewish community as being solidly behind current policy. This cannot help but have an effect on decisions made in Israel. Yet we know that many, many American Jews think the occupation is wrong—but are afraid to speak out because they have bought the line that it is disloyal to do so.

In the years ahead my bulletin board will become even more complexly layered. On this second year anniversary I want to thank you for your support and for your participating with us in this exciting and important venture. □

Editorials

Iran, Iraq, and the Slaughter of the Innocents

Sometimes it seems as if the press, the liberals, and all the voices of conscience in the world care only about Israeli acts of injustice. The recently reported poison gassing of nearly five thousand Kurds by the Iraqis—in violation of international law—is another outrageous and too-frequently-ignored incident in the barbaric war between Iraq and Iran. This slaughter comes in response to the Kurds' long-standing demand for national self-determination.

The world has been all too silent about the national rights of the Kurds. And hardly anyone has been mourning for the more than five hundred thousand people killed in the Iran-Iraq War during the past eight years.

We must not and will not be silent. We mourn for the five thousand Kurds as well as for the hundreds of thousands of victims of the Islamic "holy" war. While some of the victims may have been "true believers" willingly engaging in self-sacrifice, the vast majority were civilians or young soldiers forcibly drafted to fight a war, victims of Iranian Islamic fundamentalism and Iraqi Arab expansionism. If the world wants peace, it should stop funding this senseless war and start to turn Iran and Iraq into "pariah states." Unfortunately, there are no indications that such a response is imminent since both states are generously endowed with oil. When oil interests are at stake, much of the world puts on moral blinders.

"Nonlethal" Contra Funding

There was a moment in March when it appeared that rationality had broken out on Capitol Hill: all forms of contra aid had been defeated. Contra leaders, reading the message that they could not count on endless U.S. support, immediately began to negotiate a cease-fire in Nicaragua, and the Sandinistas started to release political prisoners. Just as *Tikkun* had predicted, once the U.S. allowed the Nicaraguans to settle their own problems, steps toward national reconciliation, peace, and a lifting of political restrictions followed quickly.

But Congress couldn't leave well enough alone. Democratic party centrists, fearful of having to defend their position in the November elections, opted a few weeks later to revive contra funding in the form of "nonlethal" aid. The new funding sent all the wrong messages: It gave an incentive for the contras to refuse political accommodation, and it was accompanied by U.S. talk about support for "the political struggle" inside Nicaragua. Whatever the intentions of congressional Democrats, this administration is now likely to feel authorized to use its resources to create economic and political chaos in Nicaragua. The congressional Democrats seemed to be authorizing a continuation of hostilities by voting for contra aid at the very moment that peace was on the agenda. "Political support" for the contras will likely involve the same kind of tactics aimed at economic and political destabilization that the U.S. used so effectively in its struggle to overthrow the Allende regime in Chile. Responding to this new "lease on life" for its policies, the Reagan administration announced in early April a series of measures to restrict Nicaraguan imports to the U.S., and we can expect an intensification of its campaign of disinformation and dirty tricks in the months ahead.

It would not be surprising if the Sandinista government were to defend itself against these American tactics by reinstituting political constraints on the opposition. Such a response would, in turn, give U.S. hardliners precisely the excuse they are looking for in order to "prove" that the Nicaraguan experiment in democracy has failed and that the contras' military struggle must be supported once again.

The congressional Democrats who voted for "nonlethal" aid have set this dynamic in motion. They should know that the only way to stop the struggle in Nicaragua is for the U.S. to butt out. We have repeatedly criticized the antidemocratic measures taken by the Sandinistas, but we also recognize the plausibility of Sandinista claims that these measures are necessary to defend a popular revolution against U.S.-supported disrupters. Our failed military efforts should have taught us that we will be able to effect change only through moral diplomatic pressure. But our moral authority is undermined if the Sandinistas can point to our renewed efforts to destroy their revolution. The contras have never been a credible vehicle for projecting a commitment to democracy and human rights. Congress should cut off all forms of contra aid, explicitly reject the notion that the U.S. is going to seek avenues to impose

its will on the Nicaraguan people, and begin a serious dialogue with the Sandinistas. Such a path may sooner produce advances toward democracy and human rights than anything that could be accomplished through a continuation of the contra struggle in either its military or political form.

Israel at Forty

It would be a monumental historical distortion to judge the accomplishments of Israel solely through the prism of the current Israeli government's misguided policies in the West Bank and Gaza. In our last issue, *Tikkun* called for a Palestinian plebiscite to elect its negotiators as well as for Israel to declare its willingness to negotiate the creation of a demilitarized Palestinian state, provided that adequate safeguards were established to guarantee that demilitarization in perpetuity. Although *Tikkun* has been critical of Israel's current policies, we remain strong Zionists and think that it is time for the whole world to recognize the fundamental legitimacy of the Zionist dream.

The Jewish people were forcibly exiled from their land by Roman imperialists, though a sizable community remained in Palestine in conditions of relative powerlessness until a new set of conquerors, this time Islamic rulers, forced them to convert or leave. Even the name "Palestine" was a symbol of the triumph of imperialism, a word imposed on the Jews of Judea by the Romans in honor of their goddess Palestina.

Without a land of their own upon which to build a common society, Jews were relatively powerless in the face of the murderous hatred directed at them, most frequently by the Christian world but periodically by the Islamic world as well. When they were not facing the extreme threats of murder and other forms of physical oppression, they were confronted with economic and political oppression far greater than any oppression faced by minorities in the U.S. today.

It was no wonder, then, that Jews dreamed of a return to Zion, where they could be masters of their own destiny. But their dream was never fulfilled, both because Jews did not have the means to organize a political movement that could dislodge the various Islamic states in "Palestine," and because many religious Jews believed that it would be wrong to force God's hand: real Zionism would be implemented only with the coming of the Messiah.

This latter idea became less popular not simply as a result of the growing secularization of Jews after the Emancipation, but also because of the increasing recognition that anti-Semitism seemed to become even more vicious once European nation-states began to emerge. Ruling classes had always found it convenient to blame the Jews for the problems they faced, and often these ruling classes were able to draw upon sacred Christian or Islamic texts to support their bigotry. This tendency increased with the rise of capitalism, despite the hopes of many Jews that the capitalist order would be a vehicle for breaking out of the oppression of years past. The secularization of society that accompanies capitalism, they hoped, would help to overcome religious-based anti-Semitism. And the promise of universal human rights would enable Jews to live as equals in the countries of Europe without any need for a state of their own.

Unfortunately, these Jewish hopes were not fulfilled. Capitalists were able to redirect the growing frustrations and anger generated by the failures of the capitalist order by manipulating the still-strong anti-Semitic feelings that persisted among workers and peasants. Disproportionately located as "the public face of capitalism" in their positions as small shopkeepers, merchants, and middlemen, Jews were an easy target for those who were powerless to attack the real owners of capital. Moreover, the socialist forces, while theoretically opposed to all forms of racism, did not, in practice, prove any more enlightened in their attitudes toward Jews. Not only did the working classes respond with enthusiasm to the nationalism tinged with anti-Semitism of the ruling classes, but even the most enlightened workers, members of communist and socialist revolutionary parties, also manifested this same kind of anti-Semitism, even when doing so conflicted with their fight against capitalism and later against fascism. Those Jews who remained faithful to the internationalist visions and who rejected Zionism soon found themselves betrayed by the working classes of Europe in whom they had placed their faith. In short, the Enlightenment simply altered the visage of anti-Semitism, as religious anti-Semitism yielded to more "scientific" forms of hatred—racist anti-Semitism that defined Jews as biologically inferior—as well as to nationalistic anti-Semitism that saw Jews as representing an alien culture that threatened the culture of the particular nation at hand.

Secular Zionism grew in the nineteenth century in response to this failure of the Enlightenment to provide security for Jews. Jews needed some form of protection and, given the logic of the current historical period, such protection had to come in the form of a state—a state in which Jews were not the minority, but the majority. However strange it may seem to Americans in the 1980s that a state should be established for the sake of a particular people, the fundamental impulse was reasonable and justified: History had taught Jews the bitter lesson that they would always be at risk as a minority. Zionism has been the national

liberation struggle of the Jewish people. As such, it has the same legitimacy as any other people's national liberation movement.

Tragically, the Palestinians never accepted the legitimacy of Zionism. Jewish refugees fleeing the violence and murder they faced both in Europe and in other Arab lands were confronted with unremitting hostility from those Arabs who were just beginning to define themselves as Palestinians in the early decades of this century. This fact does not excuse Israel in the least for its current oppression of the Palestinians, but we might well note that if there is enough land today to support two peoples and a two-state solution, there was more than enough land at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Imagine, for a second, how we would react to such a Palestinian response to Jewish refugees were it made in an analogous hypothetical scenario. Consider the situation of Northern whites in the period between 1880 and 1930. Their ancestors and they had settled and built up the North, turning uncultivated land into thriving cities. Other Northern whites were immigrants, new to America, but they too had given of their energy to build these cities. Like the Palestinians, they considered the cities their own and resented the influx of blacks from the South.

Imagine, then, what might have happened if the whites, instead of allowing blacks to come into their cities, had responded instead by violently attacking blacks (as they sometimes did) and calling upon the other whites from the surrounding areas to support them in their struggle. Many of us would have argued that those whites were wrong, that they had an obligation to make room for blacks fleeing a history of oppression. We would have made such arguments even if many Northern whites were correct to claim that they had not directly oppressed blacks, that slavery had not been condoned by the Northern states, that in any event they were immigrants who didn't even live in America when slavery was instituted.

Imagine that the whites had rejected such claims and had armed themselves to fight the blacks. And imagine that the blacks, given their long history of oppression, came to believe that their protection could be guaranteed only if they had their own state. Imagine, now, that a state with a majority of blacks was created, surrounded by much more populous white states, all of which declared their intention to wipe out the black state. In the course of this struggle to create the black state, many of the whites had been forced out—some leaving voluntarily so that they would not be in the way of what they fantasized to be invading white armies, others literally forced out by the blacks themselves. These "refugees," instead of becoming part of the surrounding white states, were kept in refugee camps by these states. The white states then proceeded piously to preach about their concern for these refugees and demanded that they be let back into the black state. These refugees also demanded their right to the land settled by their ancestors and formed a refugee organization whose goal was the elimination of the black state.

In this hypothetical situation, many American white liberals would support the black state's right to exist and might even be willing to fight for it. They would understand the larger historical picture of racism and oppression and would be much more conflicted than they seem to be about Zionism, on the one hand recognizing that the blacks were mistreating the whites, but on the other hand acknowledging that the blacks have a legitimate claim to their own state. Even if some of those blacks articulated antiwhite ideas that had a suspiciously racist tone to them, liberals would probably understand those statements as a response to the very long history of black oppression. Is it possible that the continuing failure of Western societies to deal with (or teach their young about) their two-thousand-year history of anti-Semitism helps explain why many liberals today do not really see what led Jews to feel the need for protection when Palestinians then (and the PLO Covenant still today) call for pushing the Jews into the sea?

Support for Zionism does not entail support for the current Israeli government's treatment of the Palestinians.

Granted, the analogy does not do complete justice to the historical conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians. We have said in the past that the Israelis are partly responsible for their own fate, that the paranoid way in which they built their state (e.g., organizing specifically Jewish institutions and labor unions that excluded Arabs), though understandable, has contributed significantly to the current impasse. Nevertheless, there is no denying the legitimacy of the Jewish national liberation struggle, and American liberals who are committed to the struggles for women's liberation, black liberation, and various other liberation movements around the world ought, on Israel's fortieth birthday, to reaffirm their support for Zionism.

Of course, support for Zionism does not mean support for the current Israeli government's treatment of the Palestinians. For forty years these people have been living in exile, and most of those now struggling against the occupation were children who grew up in refugee

camps or under the occupation. They should not be held responsible for the inflexibility of their parents or grandparents (many of whom themselves were simply unknowing victims of Arab landowners who feared the possibility of an alliance between socialist Zionists from Europe and the super-exploited Arab peasantry). If they gravitate towards extremist politics today it is less because they believe that they will be able to wipe out the Jews than that they are desperate and frustrated with living conditions that would seem intolerable to any sensitive human being; and those who are desperate, those who have nothing to lose, find visions of total victory appealing. Jews should understand this inclination. When they were powerless, many Zionists envisioned a Zionist empire all the way to the Euphrates. But the dreams of the powerless, their rhetoric of absolute victory and complete destruction of their enemies, usually yield to the compromises of the empowered—since the empowered have something to lose.

A demilitarized Palestinian state will be in Israel's long-term military and political interest; other solutions that attempt to avoid the demand for the national self-determination of the Palestinian people are foolish and naive. The only real solution is one that will provide Palestinians with a sense of self-esteem and respect—anything less will be an invitation to further struggle. Yet more is at stake than Israeli self-interest. A Jewish state cannot long persist that depends upon the denial of the rights of the minorities over whom it rules. The very same Torah that establishes Jewish rights to the Land of Israel makes it clear that these rights are totally conditional—on Jews using the land in accord with the ethical demands of Judaism. Over and over again the Prophets warn the Jewish people that God's promise to give them the Land of Israel is conditional on their behavior. And there is no more frequently repeated injunction than various formulations of the command, "When you come into your land, do not oppress the stranger. Remember that you were a stranger in the land of Egypt." If the Israelis of today oppress Palestinians, if they turn their backs while their army implements a policy of breaking bones, midnight raids, and violence against civilians, they will do worse than deepen the hatred of the refugees that they oppress—they will risk undermining the legitimacy of their moral claim to the land.

We support the right of Jews to self-defense. However, much of the current action of the Israeli army (IDF) in the West Bank has less to do with defending Israel than with establishing "who is boss." When the IDF tries to break the nonviolent strikes of Palestinian merchants, destroying their merchandise, and disrupting nonviolent protest, it only demonstrates to the Palestinian people that they have no alternative but to join the rock-throwers and to support acts of violence.

We have no sympathy for the rock-throwers. But as we go to press, with 135 Palestinians killed since the uprising began and only one Jew, we find it morally repugnant to hear Israeli calls for "revenge" and self-righteous talk about the blood of Jews that somehow assumes that Palestinian blood is less holy or less valuable. Jewish tradition insists that all human beings are created in the image of God, and all unnecessary loss of life is to be deeply mourned. Israeli soldiers certainly have a right to protect themselves against rock-throwers, but when we have repeated substantiated reports of attacks by the IDF or "settlers" on random Palestinians who live in villages near places where there were previous acts of rock-throwing, and random Palestinians are then killed, wounded, assaulted or arrested, when we have a situation in which every Palestinian is fair game for attack by the superior military might of Israel, then the situation becomes less like a war, and more like an organized pogrom! This is a sacrilege to Jewish martyrs and Jewish morality.

There are those who believe that morality is irrelevant, that all that counts is power, and that as long as Israel is militarily strong nothing else matters. This is a new form of idolatry, just as pervasive and dangerous to a Jewish state as the worship of idols was to the Jewish state in prophetic times. If that were to become the dominant ethos of a Jewish state, one would wonder deeply in what sense this state was Jewish. While we can understand the anger and sense of isolation of those Jews who, having felt abandoned by God and by "the morality of the nations" during the Holocaust, now believe only in armed might, we must insist that this approach is a perversion of Judaism, of Jewish ethics, and of the core vision of Zionism. It gives a posthumous victory to Hitler to allow his murder of European Jews to dictate the ethics of a Jewish state.

A birthday is a time to prepare for the future. It still is possible for Israel to reclaim the nobility of its Zionist dream and to live in peace with its Palestinian neighbors. Indeed, just as the original Zionist dream turned out to be the only practical solution for the Jewish people of Europe and the Arab lands, so too a reconciliation with the Palestinians may be the only practical path for the survival of a Jewish state. If Israel does not allow a demilitarized Palestinian state, in a decade or two a Palestinian state may be imposed under conditions far more threatening to Israel's survival. Those who care for Israel must do their best to support those Israelis—possibly still only a minority, but a sizable minority nonetheless—who understand that it is in the best interest of Israeli military and political security, as well as in the best interest of Judaism and

the Jewish people, for Israel to end the occupation speedily.

American Jewry's Silenced Majority

Tikkun's criticism of Israel's treatment of the Palestinians places it in the political mainstream both in Israel and among American Jews. A *Los Angeles Times* poll released in April 1988 indicates that on most issues American Jewry is far closer to the positions articulated in *Tikkun* than it is to those of American Jewish leaders such as Morris Abram of the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations, as well as the leaders of the United Jewish Appeal, AIPAC, and the American Jewish Committee. A majority is closer to Peres than to Shamir, and this majority supports real autonomy for the Palestinians rather than Likud's stance on retaining the territories. More than twice as many American Jews describe their politics as liberal than as conservative, thereby justifying *Tikkun*'s claims to speak for the American Jewish mainstream.

The incredible power of the "established Jewish organizations" and the "recognized Jewish leadership" has been to make the majority feel as though it were the minority. Even though many Jews affiliated with the organized Jewish community are privately critical of Israeli policies, they have been silenced and made to feel that they are in the minority. *Tikkun*'s role, now backed by the data from the L.A. *Times* poll, is to show this silenced majority that it is in the Jewish mainstream, while the political conservatives who claim to speak for American Jewry are in fact a minority on the political fringes.

If leaders of the Jewish establishment are disturbed by Israel's policies, less affiliated Jews are even more upset. The conservative leadership of the American Jewish community recognizes the extent of this disaffection, which is why it has refocused the debate, arguing that Jews must not say in public what they feel in private. (Indeed, some of the people who most vociferously attack in public those Jews who utter public criticisms of Israel's policies have, sometimes with guilty consciences, assured us privately that they agree with many elements of *Tikkun*'s position). The conservative establishment's great accomplishment has been the success with which it has conveyed its message, the extent to which it has convinced Jews that they are "disloyal" if they express their doubts. And that is why even recent polls that show American Jews critical of Shamir's policies still grossly underestimate how widespread this criticism is.

The sensible Jewish majority has been silenced by a well-coordinated campaign whose implicit message is that if one wants to be part of "The Community" one must adhere to the fundamental assumptions of its leadership and, most important, one must never publicly criticize it. Violating these rules invites comparisons to the nazis, as though one had become a threat to the very survival of the Jewish people.

What many Jews fail to realize is that silence is not equivalent to political neutrality. American Jewish silence is being used by Shamir and other Likud leaders in their political struggle within Israel. While Labor party officials have been arguing that the occupation is not only unjust but self-defeating, often pointing to the fact that the continued occupation may erode American and American Jewish support, Shamir has pointed to American Jewish silence as proof that American Jews support him wholeheartedly. Labor leaders Abba Eban and Shimon Peres, as well as a host of peace movement activists, are well aware of Likud's tactics, as they point out in the March/April issue of *Tikkun*. In Eban's words: "American Jews should reaffirm their right to be heard and should boldly reject the attempt by the Israeli or American Jewish establishments to convert them into 'Jews of Silence.'" Surely Abba Eban is no less qualified than Yitzhak Shamir or Morris Abram to know what is in Israel's interest.

It is true, as some American Jews have noted, that Labor leaders were not begging American Jews to speak out when Labor was in power, but then again, neither were Shamir and other Likud leaders insisting that loyalty required silence. The situation is different today, because the Israeli government is so badly divided that it is impossible to say what is the policy of the State of Israel. It is only possible to say whether one supports the policy of Peres (land for peace) or the policy of Shamir (no territorial compromises). One need only read the Israeli newspapers to see that almost daily they are interpreting American Jewish silence as effectively weighing in on the side of Shamir. In that light, neutrality is impossible, and if American Jews wish to be more than mere pawns of Shamir, they ought to air their private misgivings in public.

Even if Israelis were not so sharply divided on the occupation, and even if Labor officials were not asking American Jews to speak out, American Jews would still be wise to tolerate public debate and dissent. For many reasons, Israel and Zionism will be better served in the long run by an American Jewish community that feels free to speak its mind. When people are told that they cannot express doubts or raise questions, when debate is stifled, the predictable outcome is a slow but steady erosion of commitment. Many younger Jews, growing up in the post-Holocaust era, have responded to the

antidissent attitude of the organized Jewish community by choosing no longer to affiliate as Jews.

In the opinion of conservatives in the Jewish world, this movement away from Judaism has come about simply because many Jews are seduced by the temptations of American society and deem Jewish affiliation a barrier to their complete immersion in the secular, materialist world. Reality, however, is more complex. Many unaffiliated Jews still feel deeply Jewish and believe that their lives reflect the values, and sometimes even the religious traditions, of the Jewish people. What has kept them distant is the organized American Jewish community itself—based on their own experiences of it when they were growing up, reinforced by what they see when they open a Jewish newspaper or attend a public Jewish community event. More specifically, they sense not only that they are forbidden to voice dissent, but that the Jewish values of spiritual and intellectual insight are rapidly yielding to the primacy of money. "The Jewish community" gets defined not as the community of scholars or the community of those seeking spiritual and ethical truth, but as the community of fundraisers or the community of rich benefactors. Ultimately, those with money call the shots.

Assimilated Jews also sense correctly that democratic values are shunned in the Jewish world, that important policy decisions are made behind closed doors without open discussion and debate. In very few Jewish communal organizations are the policies of top officials subject to public scrutiny, and it is not possible to mount a campaign for positions of authority if one has significantly different opinions from the established powerholders. Ultimately, most important American Jewish leaders rise to prominence whether or not most American Jews approve of them.

In short, the American Jewish establishment's current call for "loyal silence" only reinforces the negative attitudes most American Jews have towards organized Jewish life. By insisting on such silence, the establishment weakens the American Jewish base of future support for Israel by weakening the ties of Jews in the 20–50 year-old-age range who are affiliating with Jewish organizations at a much lower rate than people of similar ages some thirty years ago. Those committed to Zionism and to a flourishing American Jewish community must be willing to show younger Jews that it is possible to be loyal and respected members of the Jewish community even if they ask questions, even if they dissent. Conversely, when people see that even respected Jewish leaders, whose commitment to Zionism and the Jewish people cannot reasonably be questioned, are nevertheless charged with disloyalty and treason, these unaffiliated Jews feel so sure that their own credentials will be challenged that they feel the only way they can be safe is to stay away from the Jewish world altogether. Public forums on the current Israel crisis sponsored by Jewish federations, community centers, and synagogues have tended to reinforce the popular sense of how closed the Jewish community really is, because the range of opinions being presented rarely includes those who passionately support the positions articulated by *Tikkun*, the Peace Now movement, the left wing of the Labor party, Ratz, Mapam, and others.

One of the striking things about the specific way that dissent is suppressed is the frequency of the argument, "Who are you to take this position of support for the Israeli peace forces—after all, you aren't willing to take the risks associated with your policy." Yet the same should be asked of those on the other side who seem so eager to fight to the last drop of Israeli blood: "Isn't it easy for you to be super-hawks for Israel living in the ease of America, voting only with your checkbooks to support right-wing causes? Who are you to challenge the Israeli peace forces and their American supporters?" At least we must insist that this kind of silly argument cuts both ways!

Of course, supporting the right of American Jews to criticize Israel is not tantamount to agreeing that all the current criticism of Israel is either justified or constructive. Noam Chomsky and friends do a real disservice to the peace forces by buying advertisements calling for a cutoff of funds to Israel. As a result of these advertisements, conservatives are able to lump together in one anti-Zionist camp all those who disagree with Israel's current policies, strengthening the militarists in the process. In the same manner, the Weathermen proved themselves to be incredibly useful allies of the American government during the Vietnam War, as the F.B.I. used them to identify the peace forces with extremism and violence, discrediting the vast majority who rejected Weathermen-style tactics.

Ironically, the Chomskys of the world make it all the more imperative that strong supporters of Zionism speak out against the occupation. Otherwise, Zionism will be equated with Israeli West Bank policies, and anti-Zionist ideas will gain a much stronger foothold in America than ever before. That is why it is particularly important that we resist the attempts of right-wing Jewish leaders to delegitimize all criticism of Israeli policies, to place all of Shamir's critics outside the mainstream of the American Jewish community. □

Liberation Theology vs. Cardinal Ratzinger

Harvey Cox

On May 9, 1985, the Brazilian Franciscan theologian Leonardo Boff received an official notice from the Vatican that he was to begin immediately to observe an "obedient silence" for an unspecified period of time. The order was issued by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who is Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, an organ of the Roman curia which was known before the Second Vatican Council as the "Holy Office" and was once charged with the responsibility of conducting the Inquisition. Ratzinger is often described as the most powerful person in the Vatican next to the pope. He is also the cardinal whose remarks in the fall of 1987 about the faith of Abraham finding its fulfillment in Christianity led to the cancellation of Catholic-Jewish dialogue meetings that were to be the follow-up to the pope's meetings during his September 1987 trip to the U.S.

Cardinal Ratzinger's order to one of the world's leading liberation theologians stated that the period of silence "would permit Friar Boff a time for serious reflection" but would require him to abstain completely from his duties as editor of the *Revista Ecclesiastica Brasileira*, the most influential theological journal in Brazil, and to refrain from all his other activities as writer and lecturer. The silencing was prompted by a heated discussion which had arisen about Boff's book, *Church: Charism and Power* in which he sharply criticized the way the hierarchy often exercises its authority in the Catholic church. The measure referred, of course, only to Boff himself, but since he is one of the most widely read proponents of the "theology of liberation" nearly everyone interpreted the silencing as a clear warning to that whole movement.

When Rome speaks, the old dictum says, the matter is closed. (*Roma locuta causa finita est.*) But in this case quite the opposite happened. Rome's action closed nothing. Rather it opened up a worldwide controversy about Boff, liberation theology, and the long-range future of Christianity, one which continues into the present and shows no sign of abating.

Sometimes nearly all the issues present in a crisis affecting a huge institution such as the Roman Catholic Church can swirl into visibility in a single vivid incident. The part can reveal the whole. The silencing of Leonardo Boff provided just such an occasion. In recent years, Rome has criticized and disciplined other theologians. Edward Schillebeeckx and Hans Kung have both been summoned by the same Vatican congregation. Cardinal Ratzinger had earlier sent a highly critical communication to the Peruvian bishops about Boff's friend and mentor Father Gustavo Gutiérrez. Later he was to remove the American ethicist Charles Curran from his teaching post at the Catholic University of America and attempt to curtail the authority of Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen of Seattle. Still, though these cases all had certain similarities, the trial of Leonardo Boff revealed divisions that are deeper and more serious. It brought not just one man but a whole region of the Catholic church into conflict with Rome, and it raised questions not just about how the church should *act* but what the church *is* and what its message to the world should be.

Actually Boff knew about his silencing a few days before the official notice came. He had learned of it by way of a discreet personal letter prompted by Cardinal Ratzinger but sent by Boff's old friend Father John Vaughn, the minister general of his own religious order. Monsignor Ratzinger obviously wanted to handle the Boff case with considerable care for procedural rectitude. He was convinced that Boff's theology constituted a serious danger to the doctrine he is officially charged with safeguarding. But he is also sensitive to the unattractive history of the curial office he heads—at least of some of its episodes—and of the grim images of thumbscrews and racks its previous name, the "Holy Office," still calls up in many minds. He seemed determined to demonstrate that he intended to proceed both fairly and decisively, and that in keeping with the new mandate the Sacred Congregation had received at Vatican II, persuasion and positive teaching would replace the negative forms of discipline once used. The Boff case thus provided a kind of test of whether the new, more dialogical and fraternal methods would actually work.

On the same day the letter informing Boff about his silencing arrived in Brazil, the Vatican issued a succinct statement to the press in Rome. It stated that the Franciscan minister general had already communicated

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the terms of the "necessary measures" to the friar. Earlier rumors suggested the silence was to last one year, but the announcement made clear that the official document fixed no duration. It concluded with an assurance that the message "had been received by the friar in a religious spirit." A few days later, Boff himself wrote out a few sentences announcing that he had accepted the decision of Rome. He then secluded himself in the Franciscan Monastery of the Sacred Heart in the small city of Petropolis, located in the mountains, just north of Rio de Janeiro, where he also lives and teaches. He told friends that he planned to abide by the silence and for the moment was not even prepared to receive phone calls. But the friar's decision to accept the Vatican's disciplining did not quell the debate. It pushed it into a new stage.

Leonardo Boff had already attracted considerable attention when the same Sacred Congregation summoned him to Rome eight months before his silencing, in September 1984, and then publicly condemned his view. Rome had also already severely criticized liberation theology itself in an *Instruction* issued while Boff was in Rome. Now, as the announcement of the silencing was widely reported in the secular press, he became something of an unwilling celebrity. His broad face, gently curling hair and thoughtful, direct eyes behind goggle-style glasses appeared in newspapers and magazines all over the world. Letters, cards, and telegrams of support arrived daily at the monastery. Many Brazilians looked upon the Franciscan friar as a religious version of Pelé, a champion of Latin American religion and Brazilian national spirit against outside intruders. Ten Brazilian Catholic bishops took the highly unusual step of publicly criticizing the Vatican's treatment of Boff. Various Catholic groups and some Protestant religious bodies issued statements of support for Boff. Labor unions organized public demonstrations protesting the silencing. T-shirts and posters appeared for sale in Brazil picturing Boff with his mouth gagged. Bishop Pedro Casaldaliga, the Catholic bishop of Sao Felix do Araguaia in the state of Mate Grosso, published a poem called "The Blessing of St. Francis on Friar Leonardo Boff."

Boff himself declined to join any of the protests. He let his supporters know that he appreciated what they were doing, while he himself was not going to try to have the silence lifted, even though he had no idea how long it would last. Months went by. Catholic groups all over the world continued to complain to Rome about what some called a rebirth of the Inquisition. The Swiss weekly newspaper *Weltwoche* lamented that the late Pope John XXIII's promise—that dialogue and intellectual confrontation would now replace condemnations—"seemed gone with the wind." When Cardinal Ratzinger went to Paderhorn, Germany, during the summer of 1985 to address 10,000 Catholics from several countries, he found himself picketed by youthful participants carrying placards denouncing the silencing. He chatted with them amiably and explained his position.

Gradually, however, the protests fell off. Fewer visitors found their way to the monastery. The number of letters dwindled. Boff became depressed. He told his sister he had begun to feel like a leper no one wanted to come near. When the leading Brazilian bishops were summoned to Rome in March 1986, his supporters were fearful that if his case came up at all, it would only result in the prolonging of the ban. The future of Boff and of the liberation theology he advocates looked anything but promising. Still, he maintained his silence.

Then in late March and early April of 1986 a series of unexpected events took place. Somehow the "summit" meeting of the Brazilian bishops with Pope John Paul II and the heads of the curial departments of the Vatican in March turned into a genuine exchange instead of a dressing down of the Latin Americans, who returned home hopeful and encouraged. A few days later, on March 29, Holy Saturday, Boff had just returned from saying mass in an outlying *favela* (shanty town) when he received a phone call in the monastery informing him that the silencing, which had lasted ten months, had been lifted. He told friends he had accepted the news "as an Easter present." Less than two weeks later the pope sent an unusually cordial letter to the Brazilian bishop which was read at their annual meeting. In it he praised the theological renewal going on under their auspices as "a chance to renovate all of Catholic theology." A few days later, the Vatican officially issued a second statement on liberation theology entitled *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*, which papal spokesmen said was intended to cast it in a more favorable light and to balance the earlier and highly critical document.

The flurry of events seemed perplexing. What had happened? Had Rome, or at least the pope, had a change of heart? Did the lifting of the ban on Leonardo Boff and the modulated tone of the new *Instruction* signal a different Vatican attitude toward liberation theology or a defeat for Cardinal Ratzinger and his curial allies? Was the Vatican simply trying to co-opt the language of liberation theology in order to rob it of its real impact? Had a secret deal been struck? Or was it, as one curial spokesman suggested, "an example of Vatican *Realpolitik*"? The responses of the liberation theologians themselves, both to the ending of the silence and to the new Vatican statement, did little to answer these queries. Boff himself praised the new document, telling the Milan daily *Corriere della Sera*, "After this,

liberation theology gains a new dimension. The Vatican has given a universal significance to values that originally were only those of the Third World." But had Rome really done that? One aide to Cardinal Ratzinger thought Boff was slyly using this tactic to claim papal approval for liberation theology. "I'm not sure Father Boff could have read the document," he said, "because I don't see how it can be read to validate the positions of the liberation theologians." When he saw the new document, Father Gustavo Gutiérrez of Peru, the man who coined the term "liberation theology" dramatically announced that, "this marks the end of an era. The debate is closed." But was it? Subsequent events strongly suggest that it was not. In fact, it had barely begun.

The case itself is far from over, and the issues it brings to world attention will continue to provoke controversy within the Catholic church and throughout world Christianity for many years to come. The Boff case contains within itself some even larger sagas. It includes: (1) The spectacular rise of liberation theology and the fierce opposition it has engendered; (2) the emergence of "third-world Christianity" and the consequent "de-Europeanization" of theology; and (3) the discomposure of currently dominant religious institutions in the face of energetic new grassroots spiritual movements.

It is these three often complex subplots—political, intellectual, and social—that have generated a debate that in fact is only now beginning.

(1) The story of liberation theology is about how in less than twenty years, a quiet conversation among a few out-of-the-way Latin Americans became a worldwide theological movement. Boff is one of liberation theology's prominent figures, not as a seminal founder but as an eloquent interpreter and prolific writer. He has published thirty-five books on the subject and heads the religious division of the Brazilian publishing house Vozes, which prints the works of other liberation theologians. Hindering Boff's work was one obvious way for Rome to slow down the entire movement. But why does the Vatican seem to find Latin American liberation theology so threatening?

Newspaper and magazine accounts have made much of the accusation that liberation theologians allegedly make uncritical use of Marxist modes of analysis or that they "mix politics with religion." But hardly anyone who knows either the Vatican or the work of these theologians believes this is the issue. After all, even the pope himself sometimes speaks about "class" and "imperialism," and the role he plays—in Poland and elsewhere—can scarcely be described as entirely nonpolitical. What then is the real cause of the Vatican's concern?

In their famous meeting at Medellin, Colombia, in 1968, the Latin American bishops proclaimed that the church should exercise a "preferential option for the

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poor." Liberation theology is an expression of this preference. It is the attempt to interpret the Bible and Christianity from the perspective of the poor. It is in no sense a liberal or modernist theological deviation. Rather, it is a *method*, an effort to look at the life and message of Jesus through the eyes of those who have normally been excluded or ignored. From this angle of vision, liberation theologians believe they can uncover and correct distortions which have crept into Christianity over the centuries because theology has been almost exclusively the province of the privileged social strata. To do this, they work closely with the burgeoning "Christian base communities" of Latin America. These are local groups of Catholics, most of whom are from the lowest tiers of society, whose study of the Bible has led them to become active in grassroots political movements. Thus liberation theology provides both an alternative to the top-down method of conventional academic and ecclesial theology as well as a source of guidance to the long-neglected people at the bottom. This results in a form of Christian theology which is biblical in its content, but is not easily subject either to hierarchical control or academic assessment. Naturally this makes both the curia and the academy apprehensive.

Critics of the liberation theology movement voice a variety of criticisms against it. Some claim it is insufficiently balanced, that it emphasizes the horizontal over vertical dimensions of faith. Others say it draws too heavily on the idea of class and class conflict in its understanding of the role of the poor, both in the Bible and in the contemporary world. Still others feel the liberation theologians are too wedded to particular sociological analyses, such as economic dependency theory, to explain the poverty in their countries.

Liberation theologians are aware of these charges. They admit their movement, though it draws on very old sources in the Bible and in the Christian tradition, is itself relatively new and needs time to mature. They welcome discussion, but they insist their work is in conformity with the Gospel, and they deeply resent attempts to harass or censor them. The theologians, bishops, and other church leaders who rallied to the support of Boff did so not necessarily because they agreed with all his ideas. Many had differed with him in the past. They protested because they saw the silencing as a threat to everyone's right to think and write, and as an unwelcome intrusion by Rome and Europe into a Latin American reality neither fully understood.

(2) The second story concealed within *l'affaire Boff* is the rapid transformation of Christianity from a faith based principally in Europe and North America to a church the majority of whose members live in South America, Asia, and Africa. Brazil now has the largest Catholic population in the world. According to the Catholic Almanac, about 480 million of the world's 825 million Catholics now live in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. This leaves the U.S. and Europe, including the USSR, with a minority of 338 million. (The remaining seven million are scattered around the rest of the globe.) A similar change is occurring among non-Catholics. The whole of Christianity is undergoing a rapid "de-Europeanization," a jarring demographic metamorphosis which is dismantling the thousand-year-old idea of "Christendom" and undermining a millennium-long style of theology. The church of Charlemagne and Innocent III, of Luther and Wesley and Pius XII, is already gone. In its place there is now appearing a Christian movement made up mostly of black and brown and yellow people, the majority of whom—if current trends continue—will be forced to live their lives in the crowded, hungry megacities of the southern hemisphere. In nearly every Christian church in the world today, whites are a shrinking minority.

Karl Rahner, the greatest European Catholic theologian of our time, once described the Second Vatican Council as "a leap to a world church." In his opinion, the shift from the Latin Mass to the vernacular was in some ways the Council's most important achievement. Rahner wrote that it signaled unmistakably "... the becoming of a world church where individual churches exist independently in their respective cultural spheres, inculturated, and no longer a European export." But Rahner also feared that the Roman curia might hinder the birth of a world church. It still had, in his words, "... the mentality of a centralistic bureaucracy which considers itself to know best what serves the Kingdom of God and souls in all the world, and takes the mentality of Rome or Italy as its standard in a frighteningly naive way."

Boff and his colleagues know about this centralizing mentality all too well. But it is easy to understand why some people think it is vital. Those who still believe the spiritual home of the church is Europe, simply cannot accept what Eduardo Hoornaert calls the *desnortificacao* ("de-northification") of Christian theology. The thought of it evokes fears of anarchy, collapse, and excess. African Catholics drum the mass and ask why the veneration of ancestors and polygamy are necessarily unchristian. By the ghats of the Ganges, Indian Christians meditate on the similarities between the Parusha and the Holy Spirit. Japanese monks are working on a Zen version of the Jesuits' Ignatian Exercises. Where is the familiar uniformity, the comforting predictability that once made "Catholic" mean "same," and "Christian" mean "Western"? Meanwhile, in Latin America, liberation theology, the first non-European theology ever to speak to the entire Christian world, has sprung forth out of the *favelas*. And Brazil is the

center, both numerically and intellectually, of this growing movement. The attempt to quash Leonardo Boff was at the same time an effort to slow down or reverse a trend which, though it will probably not produce a Filipino or Nigerian or Brazilian pope in the near future, will inevitably change the church in profound ways. With the election of the cardinal archbishop of Cracow to the papacy, the Roman Catholic Church is no longer headed by an Italian. But Poland is still Europe, and the larger question is whether the Catholic church can transcend its "Europeanness," become a "world church," and still remain *one* church. The question also underlies the dispute between Ratzinger and Boff.

(3) The third and perhaps the largest story inside the Boff episode is "the revolt of the base." It is reflected in the vexation of the leaders of the Christian church and of other religious institutions as they try to cope with one of the most unexpected reversals of the late twentieth century, the resurgence of religion.

The sorry result of Christianity's refusal to acknowledge its rootedness in Jewish particularity was a spurious universalism.

Nothing seems to have turned out as anticipated. When the multiple eruptions of modernity, revolution, skepticism, and secularization staggered the soul of the nineteenth century, theologians responded in different ways. The Catholic church under the long papacy of Pius IX organized itself like an army, made the pope an infallible battle commander, and prepared for a protracted war of attrition. "Modernist" Catholics, who tried to come to terms with the contemporary world in some way other than with daggers drawn, were declared *personae non grata*. Protestants, as usual, divided over the best way to manage. Liberal theologians from Schleiermacher to Tillich made imaginative attempts to speak to the modern world on its own terms, using the idiom of romanticism or existentialism. On the other side of town, conservative Protestants took a different tack. They endowed the Bible with what they called "literal inerrancy," an infallible authority it had never been granted before, and then clung to this "paper pope" as the landscape swayed around them.

But despite the tactical differences among these various religious parties concerning retreat or advance, negotiation or infiltration, or even surrender on the best possible terms, they all agreed on where the enemy lay. It lay in secularization in all its many guises—the modern attempt to expel God, as God had once expelled Adam. They saw modernity as man's proud attempt to make the world over into a new Eden. It is true that the legions of secularization did not abolish religion completely. More often they tried to quarantine it to the heart of the individual, to the household hearth, to the "spiritual realm." But everyone knew modernity had the momentum. Nothing symbolized this better than the reduction of Catholicism's temporal sphere first from Christendom to the Papal states, then to the 109 acres of the Vatican ministate.

Then, in the latter half of the twentieth century, something quite unanticipated took place: religion itself was "born again." The post-World War II era witnessed a global revival and church leaders began to recognize that the enemy might not be secularization after all. Then, as the 1970s waned, the first Polish pope, having followed his immediate predecessor's example of refusing the papal tiara—the symbol of earthly power—nonetheless became not only the most influential pontiff since Innocent III, but possibly the most widely recognized and admired human being on earth. With John Paul II circling the globe and drawing millions of people to convocations, it was hard to claim that religion was still in irreversible decline. In the Protestant sphere, there were also signs of vitality. Pentecostalists, relying more on a direct emotional experience of the Spirit than on changeless precepts of Scripture, were multiplying so fast they promised to equal or surpass the more staid denominations in a few decades. American college and university students began enrolling in religion courses in unprecedented numbers. Even in Western Europe, once dismissed as irreversibly "post-Christian," church attendance took a modest upturn in the 1980s. For the institutional churches, the dilemma now was no longer how to revive a comatose piety in an age of unbelief, but how to cope with fresh voices of faith that did not conform to the old patterns. Church leaders were faced not with a decline in spirituality but with a new outburst of religious energy. God was not, it seems, dead after all. But sometimes the God who was alive appeared to be more dangerous to the several religious establishments than the old secular foe they had come to know so well.

The threat Leonardo Boff poses to the Vatican is that he represents this grassroots religious energy boiling up from the bottom and the edges. A Franciscan priest, a theologian, a man of transparent religious courage and vigor, he is not the kind of antagonist Rome has become accustomed to dealing with. Boff and the movements of which he is a part—liberation theology, the Christianity of the non-European world, the faith of the disinherited—symbolize something vastly different from the rationalism Pius IX fought with the Syllabus

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Amboy Dukes

Joan Baum

It is now forty years since Irving Shulman's *The Amboy Dukes* heavy-breathed its way into middle-class high school lives, the most thumbed and sweat-stained pack of paper to come between freshman year and graduation. By the early fifties, the book was into its eighth softcover edition, with well over two million copies in print (four million by the late fifties, six million by the sixties). It has recently been reissued, with blue banner letters on the black declaring, "Over 10,000,000 copies in print." No one who read *The Amboy Dukes* forgot it; many who didn't read it talked about it. It was hot stuff. The House of Representatives condemned it as obscene. So did Abe Stark, the mayor of Brooklyn; so did the principal of Tilden High, Shulman's alma mater.

Images flash upon the inward eye, bringing heat, as memories of tight sweaters, duck-tailed hair, smokes and booze, gangs and gang bangs, crowd back alleys of the brain. The Amboy Dukes, degenerate and delinquent, acted out what many adolescents lusted after but leashed. The Dukes were frightening, the Dukes were fascinating. As Lady Caroline Lamb said of Lord Byron, they were "mad, bad, and dangerous to know." Feeling superior to them, but pulsing to their restless energies, we read and reread key passages, feeling the delicious, queasy ache of sexual desire and the chill of violence.

The Dukes were different. We went to academic high schools, they to vocationals; we had our eyes on college, they on shadowy jobs and getting by. *The Amboy Dukes* was very much a New York City book, but it invoked parts of the city that were unfamiliar to us, scary, off-limits. Therein lay its attraction.

The early forties became years of bittersweet memories for Woody Allen and Neil Simon, but to Irving Shulman they were days of restlessness and fear. When *The Amboy Dukes* first came out in 1946, he was looking back only four years. Malts were five cents, eggcreams three. But in the slums of Ocean Hill-Brownsville, dope and alcohol were everywhere. Shulman's young were, to use one of their favorite words, irredeemably "hard." Shulman's work was a combination of the sociologist's research and the writer's art (according to the *New York Times*), and indeed, *The Amboy Dukes* was an unforgettable story about those who were depraved because they were deprived. Home relief and the WPA had yielded work in a wartime economy, but work did not bring comfort. Up from poverty, but not that far up, the families of *The Amboy Dukes* made overtime, but not enough to escape the "dirty, stinking block" of tenements that was their neighborhood. Many Americans worked in defense plants; Ocean Hill-Brownsville residents got mainly the fill-in jobs. Home was an empty place. The Dukes loitered in the corridors of the blackboard jungle and exploded onto mean streets. The fathers were weak and tired, the mothers berated them for not providing. The book begins with their children, the sons, "their voices, purposely brutalized and wildly boisterous...." Though we were moved more by the hot spots than by Shulman's slices of raw life, we did see connections between poverty and rage. What we did not see, however, might have moved us more. It certainly moved Irving Shulman's publishers.

The Amboy Dukes we read in the early fifties was not *The Amboy Dukes* as Shulman originally wrote it. The hardback original had gone out of print, and the book existed, in effect, only in paper. But when Lorevan Publishing in New York recently reissued the original as a paperback, Shulman himself, in a brief forward, confirmed what some of us belatedly sensed: "Every writer hopes to reach many readers. Usually, we must be satisfied with hundreds. I have been lucky enough to have had millions.... Yet, most of them have read abridged, altered versions. I am very happy that *The Amboy Dukes* is now going to reach the millions of readers for whom I wrote it in exactly the version that I intended it to be read."

It turns out that the grimy paperback we devoured in high school had had more than its cover softened. As originally published in 1946 by Doubleday, *The Amboy Dukes* had been about delinquents who were Jewish, punks with Yiddishe mamas who hung out in the ghetto around Pitkin Avenue in the early forties. Reissued in 1947 by Avon Books, *The Amboy Dukes* was simply about delinquents. It had been "de-Semitized," in the phrase of Henry Popkin ("The Van-

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ishing Jew of Our Popular Culture," *Commentary*, 1952). The American Jew was disappearing from the movies, stage, and popular fiction— ignored by gentile writers, unless the object of vicious caricature (and then the names were manifestly telling). The American Jew was also avoided by Jewish writers who preferred to create universal characters too assimilated for ethnic identification (like Willy Loman, whose creator, by the way, was originally called not Arthur Miller, but Arthur Newman). Media moguls substituted innocuous names in revised versions—even as real life members of Our Crowd continued to slip into new cognomens and anglicized spellings. Both Popkin and Irving Howe (*The World of Our Fathers*) ascribed such sanitizing to fears of anti-Semitism from a mass-market audience. The movie version of *The Amboy Dukes*, "City Across the River" (Universal, 1949), continued the sanitizing, as Stephen McNally and Thelma Ritter assumed larger roles than called for in the book, and the Dukes, as nervously violent as ever, became vaguely ethnic (but hardly Jewish): Goldfarb became Abbott in the soft-cover, Cuisak on the screen. America, the melting pot, was not ready to assimilate even secular Jews.

Restless without relief, old before their time, the Amboy Dukes are too secular to seek comfort in Judaism.

The original *Amboy Dukes*, while not creating a manifestly Jewish world, did present a realistic picture of gangs that were Jewish. Of course, once upon a time in America, there were blue-collar criminals who were Jews, but murder and rape by the young? A sense of doom among them so pervasive that nothing serves as a counterforce? *The Amboy Dukes* is still startling in its unsentimental depiction of lower-class urban gang life during the war years. As the story of Jewish gangs, however, it more than startles. All the Dukes are Jewish, down to the last slightly retarded psychopath, appropriately nicknamed "Crazy." There are other gangs, other Jews, as well: The Herzl Street Boys, the D-Rape Artists, the Bullets—a cast of hopped-up, perverse "meschugeners" far from the comforting stage and screen memories of Jewish life past. Shulman let no one off: the good die young, and they are not even that good. The bad live on, eager apprentices to big-time hoods. Frank Goldfarb, with his good looks and cool ways, the only Duke with the capacity to understand moral choices (but unable to act on them), is murdered. He has lived in a world which made him ashamed because he had to ask his uncle Hershell for money for a bar-mitzvah suit. The borderline maniac, Crazy Sachs, defies compassion. Fanny Kane, the prepubescent tease thoughtlessly set up by Frank, then brutalized by Crazy (Jews could do this to Jews), is ruined forever. Stan Alber, the do-good social worker at the Jewish Center, tries and fails to channel adolescent energies by offering basketball in place of bullets.

In the world of Black Benny, Bugsy Stein, Moishe Perlman, Bull Bronstein, Zindele Sachs, manhood is conferred by Ramses, reefers, and guns. The Dukes live by brawn, not brains, moved by macho and money, not morality. As Shulman writes. "They fought for the sheer joy of bloodying and mauling one another, and no insult was so slight that it could not be used as an excuse for a mass riot and free-for-all." None of the characters in *The Amboy Dukes* are observant Jews, but it is clear that they are Jews. Crazy's mother never asks where stolen steaks come from, regrets that they are not kosher, but eats them anyway. The Dukes can provoke a brawl against musicians at their own dance and then welsh on them, but they let others know that defacing a "shul" is also provocation for a fight. Still, their sense of Jewish identity is peripheral. They take from the tradition no lore, no solace. They lie, cheat, steal, maim, whore, rape, murder. Their only sorrow is that they are sometimes caught.

What was gained in the transition from hardbound to paper when the Yiddish expressions disappeared, when bar mitzvahs became confirmations, Goldfarb became Abbott, and Semmel, Saunders? For the publishers, obviously, commercial success. To judge from the sales their instincts were sound. The de-Semitized *Amboy Dukes* is the sexier and more universal book because its sensuality and violence are unplagued by a sense of the larger violence and gynecological perversions of Nazism. Later on, in the fifties, when sales really soared, the Dukes could continue being cool, without worrying about being tainted by cold war anti-Semitism. Shocking in its day for its bluntness, though tame by contemporary standards, *The Amboy Dukes* in its de-Semitized form is still a remarkable cultural document about crime and class. In its original form, however, it is more, especially as seen from a distance of forty years.

In looking hard at the first-generation heirs of the voyage over and their seedy immigrant condition, Shulman may have been too rough for his time—a number of reviewers complained of the book's despair. Obscenity is marketable, hopelessness is not. In 1946, in the wake of the opening of the camps, *The Amboy Dukes*' depiction of young Jews, powerless during the war, powerless in America (from the same economic class

that produced the greatest number of victims in Europe), the book must have seemed particularly brutal. The Amboy Dukes are children of the projects, welfare cases, aimless, vacant, violent, not the exceptions that American literature delights in, but the rule—too poor in fact to enjoy America, too poor in spirit to dream of Israel. In 1942, their gang fights could even be understood as unconscious parody of the Glorious War that excluded them, except as victims. Only later could Norman Mailer herald the Jewish American warrior, and Joseph Heller convert the existential posture to comedic cynicism.

Restless without relief, old before their time, the Amboy Dukes are too secular to seek comfort in Judaism. Though they have been bar mitzvahed and tend to date their own, there are no Jewish precepts that influence their lives. They have no need of, time or respect for books, family, introspection. Humiliated by their poverty and seeing no way out, they hunger after image, not education, gangs more than girls. What Shulman showed was that for children of Jewish immigrants, the moral mandate to make it in America by dint of brains, hard work, humor, and irony—the Old Tradition—did not always take. The Dukes were ordinary and could be uneducable, even moronic. "Normal boyhood" passed them by. Amboy Street was their world; nothing less than a counterworld, orthodoxy, could possibly contend with it.

Primed for romanticism, vulnerable to the lure of the exotic, and relatively comfortable, we did not see in the Avon paperback of the fifties that *The Amboy Dukes* was not a dirty book, but a wonderfully disturbing one. Had we known then the ethnic cast of its set of characters, the temperature in the classrooms when we read it might have been different. We might have felt a cooling discomfort from the fact that such unspeakable acts were committed by "our own." The sexuality we seeped up depended on aesthetic distance. Aesthetic distance meant we could be titillated and at the same time be protectively critical: the Dukes were no one we could or would ever know. Their anonymity guaranteed our voyeuristic ambivalence. It may also have invited stereotyping. "They" could do such things and they, we just assumed, could never have been us. That the Amboy Dukes were Jewish is troubling in the way that the recent arrest of Joel Steinberg is troubling: How could a man, an attorney, a social activist, a *Jew*, beat his child to death and abuse his wife? Any other culture might ask, what kind of a *man* could do that. Jews ask, what kind of a *Jew*? Interestingly (and *The Amboy Dukes* prompts comparison), the question is rarely asked of Jews involved in white-collar crime. The Dukes are not destined to be Boeskys. They are only common, second-rate hoods, pathetic, not tragic, stupid as well as bad. The book opens with a familiar disclaimer, that characters and events are only fictional, but the truth is that *The Amboy Dukes* is grounded in actuality. Jews, like other lower-class kids, belonged to gangs, were sadists, gangsters. In this sense the story is universal. But Jews are unique: as Jean Paul Sartre observed sardonically, the world, not the Jew, decides who is Jewish. Thus, the Jewishness of *The Amboy Dukes*, though peripheral to the larger tale of gang war during the war years, is central to the impression of the book.

The Amboy Dukes is a dispassionate counterimage to the Jewish family album that still forms the stuff of so many contemporary movies and plays. In reissuing *The Amboy Dukes*, Lorevan's publisher, Stanley Reisner, speaks to the draw of "nostalgia," and indeed it is a turning toward home that gives the book a poignancy it may never have had until now. But that's fine, that's what good literature invites. There were youngsters then who, contrary to commandments to struggle and succeed, screamed their punk lives away. Memory lane for Shulman and Reisner is a dark alley. Acknowledging this fact on the heels of the Holocaust, and then during the era of the Rosenbergs, was probably too risky for a paperback publisher. Jews in literature could be reclusive shamans, hard-working fools, talented solitaires, poor wisemen, even assimilated, financially secure Americans with changed names and non-Jewish spouses who faced prejudice, but prevailed. What they could not be, what they had never been, was irremediably bad. *The Amboy Dukes* implicitly exploded this myth. Shulman showed that Jewish children with minimal Jewish education and less culture—the typical condition of contemporary American Jews—had nothing to draw on to counteract the mean effects of poverty. In fact, during the war years their Jewishness probably aggravated their sense of victimization. Frank Goldfarb feels shame, not sin.

The meaning of *The Amboy Dukes* now includes its de-Semitized history, its reclamation in paperback, its transmutation from hot stuff to period despair to disturbing nostalgia. It is richer for this peculiar evolution. Its map of misreadings charts our changing responses as readers, telling as much about ourselves as travelers over the landscape of Jewish-American fiction, as about the literary terrain. Back then in the fifties, as we were salivating over the Avon paperback, the thought that the gang might be Jewish never entered our minds. That ignorance innocently led to prejudice and distorted history. To deny the truths behind the fiction of *The Amboy Dukes* would now be the ultimate and only obscenity left to this remarkable book. □

Tikkun Magazine, as a nonprofit magazine, does not endorse candidates in any election. We do, however, present ideas that may be useful to people engaged in the political process. Rather than present our own perspective on this issue, we have asked a number of outstanding thinkers to tell us what they would say to the presidential candidate if they had his (perhaps in future years, her) ear.

Memo: To the Candidate Re: Family Lies

Patricia Schroeder

The family is the most noncontroversial issue in American politics. Every elected official from Mario Cuomo to Ronald Reagan is profamily. Every campaign brochure prominently displays a photograph of the candidate's family. Out West, where I campaign, the Democratic candidate's family rides on bicycles, the Republican's family on horseback. Every speech, by Democrat or Republican, includes praise for the family.

But in reality, the family is to politics what the weather is to polite conversation. Charles Dudley Warner says: "Everybody talks about the family, but nobody does anything about it." Or, as Finley Peter Dunne's Mr. Dooley observed darkly, "Th' dead ar-re always pop'lar. I knowed a society wanst to vote a monyment to a man an' refuse to help his fam'ly, all in wan night."

We have a multitude of presidential candidates who want to erect a monument to the great American family and refuse to help it, all in one campaign season. The candidates can fly into Iowa to talk corn, drive about New Hampshire to promise lower taxes, and whistlestop the South to pledge a strong defense; but they are incapable of getting excited about the one issue—the family—that touches every voter.

Why? Two reasons. First, like the American flag and apple pie, the family lends itself to platitudes or, as Mr. Dooley detected, to monuments.

Second, there is a sharp division between the Norman Rockwell image and the Dorothea Lange realities of the American family. Some want to believe in a family ideal that does not exist (Mom at home, cooing the babies to sleep; Dad at the factory, whistling while he works)—if it ever did. Others would promote a family structure that not everyone wants (two-career households). As a result, most candidates simply refuse to recognize widespread family problems and needs—everything from inadequate health-care coverage to increasing tax burdens on families with children—and instead utter warm, melodious platitudes about family life.

But problems are not solved through conflict avoidance. "Ozzie and Harriet" was a wonderful 1950s sitcom, but it doesn't tell us what to do today. Moreover, a presidential candidate who was honest about the problems facing the American family, and who offered creative ways to deal with these problems, would be able to appeal to a broad range of voters.

A national family policy would have three basic goals: Accept the rich diversity of American families; protect the family's economic well-being; and provide families with flexibility in meeting their economic and social needs.

More concretely: First, put the American family back in the tax code. Over the last twenty-five years, according to economist Eugene Steuerle, the tax rate for a family with two children has increased 43 percent; for a family with four children, the tax rate skyrocketed 223 percent. Where to start? Repeal the marriage penalty tax. We must be the only civilized country in the world whose tax code actually penalizes married couples. Then dramatically increase the personal income tax exemption for children. For political conservatives and libertarians who cringe at new federal initiatives, keelhauling the tax code is right up their alley.

Second, provide an economic safety net for working families. Require, yes require, parental-leave rights for working men and women. No one should be fired because they are pregnant, want to adopt a child, or have a sick dependent. The Chamber of Commerce will

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object, but so what? It has objected to virtually every progressive idea, from equal pay to minimum wage laws, in the twentieth century. Obstructionism is the chamber's lot in history.

Pass a comprehensive child-care law. Sixty percent of mothers are employed outside the home. Half of the mothers with children under age three are employed. Safe, affordable, and good day-care is difficult for these parents to find. The question is no longer: "Is day-care good for children?" The question is: "What constitutes good day-care and how do we make it available?"

We have a multitude of presidential candidates who want to erect a monument to the great American family and refuse to help it, all in one campaign season.

Increase the minimum wage. Over the past ten years the real value of the minimum wage has decreased by almost thirty percent, and it is now at its lowest level in thirty-three years. As a result, the minimum wage no longer supports a single worker, let alone a head-of-household worker. And guess who makes up the difference? The taxpayer, because minimum-wage workers fall below the poverty level and therefore qualify for an array of government assistance programs. Thus, the taxpayer in effect subsidizes minimum-wage operations such as fast food restaurants. Why not raise the minimum wage and eliminate the subsidy?

Third, promote infant and child health and development programs. As anyone who scans the daily newspaper knows, the experts agree on precious little. But every expert, from Dr. Barry Brazelton to Urie Bronfenbenner, agrees that prenatal care and early childhood development are crucial to the intellectual and social success of the child. We need to throw enormous resources into everything from WIC (Women and Infant Care) and newborn screening to childhood immunization and Head Start.

Fourth, establish minimum health care coverage for every American, working, retired, or unemployed. Over thirty million Americans are without health care, and one-third of these Americans are children. Pass the Kennedy-Waxman minimum health care bill, which would require employers to provide health care benefits to permanent part-time and full-time employees. Pass the Stark catastrophic health insurance bill and the Pepper long-term care bill, which provide long-term and respite care to the elderly. In fact, we ought to provide catastrophic health insurance to everyone. Amend the Medicaid program to include unemployed workers and their families.

These three courses of action would give every American, old or young, employed or unemployed, poor or middle class, access to health care.

Finally, provide retirement security for every American. Millions of Americans, part-time workers, divorced spouses, and homemakers, face an impoverished old age because of inadequate pension coverage. Require employers to provide pension plans to all workers, part-time and full-time. Only fifty percent of full-time employees and twenty-seven percent of part-time employees are covered by an employer-provided pension plan. Part-time workers are the fastest-growing segment of the work force. Over the last two decades, the number of full-time workers has increased 39 percent, while the number of part-timers shot up 63 percent. Over the next twenty years, part-time workers will increase four times faster than full-time workers. Part-time workers are covered by Social Security, but their earnings are so low that their retirement check is minuscule.

As for divorced spouses and homemakers, we need to recognize that the family is an economic partnership. IRA rules should be changed to allow larger contributions for homemakers. Social Security should incorporate "earnings sharing" so that the spouses' benefits are divided more equally. Otherwise, in the event of divorce or early death of the non-homemaker spouse, the spouse with the lower earning record is shortchanged.

So, Mr. Candidate, here is what you should do: make the family a central issue in your campaign. Explain to the American people that they must listen carefully when they hear profamily rhetoric, and that they must challenge the Republican candidate when he claims to be "profamily" by asking him exactly what he means. Then lay out your specific plan and challenge your opponent to join you on these specifics. Make this plan a centerpiece of your campaign and you will find that your normal support from traditional Democratic Party voters will be supplemented by support from a lot of people who otherwise vote Republican. □

Memo: To the Candidate Re: Central America

Morris Blachman and Kenneth Sharpe

When you take office in January 1989, Central America will be one of the major foreign policy dilemmas you have to face. You will inherit a difficult situation made worse by eight years of failed Reagan administration policies. And the American public will be looking to you to act. What is the Reagan legacy? What policy should you follow? How can you avoid the traps your critics are setting for you?

The legacy is clear. In El Salvador, policies justified as promoting an end to the civil war and creating a moderate centrist government have instead deepened the conflict. The insurgents remain a serious military force and retain much popular support, while the government of José Napoleon Duarte has suffered a serious erosion of support because of corruption, failure to deliver on promised reform, and inability to end the war. The fragile political facade created by the Reagan administration could come apart at any moment.

In Guatemala and Honduras, as in El Salvador, elected governments hold office, but harsh and corrupt military officers still monopolize power. Fundamental reforms in land, human rights, and democracy aimed at removing the source of turmoil have not been undertaken. Furthermore, the administration's funding of a contra army to oust the Nicaraguan government turned Honduras into a forward base of operations against Nicaragua and in the process destabilized the economy, promoted capital flight, encouraged drug dealing and corruption among high officials, and strengthened the power of the military at the expense of a fledgling civilian government. The contra policy has not only sacrificed peace for war and undermined development programs, but it has further inserted East-West issues into a primarily local conflict by encouraging the Nicaraguans to militarize, seek increased Soviet arms shipments, and maintain the presence of Cuban advisors.

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Meanwhile, our major regional and European allies see the United States as scuttling attempts to negotiate peace and security agreements, while, all too often, backing disreputable, antidemocratic military and political leaders. Nonetheless, the Esquipulas II (Guatemala Accord) framework provides the United States with an historic opportunity to forge a new partnership in the region, one that could serve our national interests as well as theirs.

What's the smart, effective, and principled policy the United States needs in order to reverse nearly eight years of failure?

A Policy of Principled Realism

You and your fellow Democrats have already laid a good foundation in the primary campaign with your cogent criticisms of the administration's policy instruments. Equally important is to make clear what it is that you stand *for*, and to prepare to defend your new policy from the attacks that will probably be mounted from the Republican right. When you move into the oval office, your first priority on Central America should be to announce and initiate the following five-point program:

- Deescalate superpower rivalry in the region.
- Demilitarize the region.
- End support for mercenary (illegal or technically legal) activity.
- Promote the development and strengthening of democratic institutions, values, and practices.
- Reestablish the primacy of diplomacy, negotiated settlements, and true partnership with regional allies.

Such a sound, realistic program has broad party and public support.

The Traps and Pitfalls

The cases of Nicaragua and El Salvador illustrate how some Democrats have bought into the Reagan agenda and been trapped. The Reagan administration has been able to define the agenda for Nicaragua by weaving together two dubious assumptions: the misleading notion that vital security interests are necessarily at risk as long as the Sandinista government remains in power; and the supposition that the U.S. has the

right and the responsibility to guarantee democracy in Nicaragua. The acceptance of these assumptions leads in only one direction: the presumption that the Sandinistas must be ousted, or forced to change their regime radically through "democratization," which for the Reagan administration means negotiated ouster.

Protecting security and encouraging democracy are two U.S. interests the Democratic party does want to promote, but ousting the Nicaraguan government by force serves neither one. Few Democrats, however, have openly challenged this questionable assumption, or even the distortion done to the meaning of democracy by letting it be simplistically identified with "anticommunism" and "ousting the Sandinistas." Instead, Democratic criticism has concentrated on the means used by the administration—the ineffectiveness, the immorality, the corruption of the contras. Restricting criticism to the *means* implicitly concedes the legitimacy of administration objectives to oust the Nicaraguan government.

As long as this agenda remains unchallenged, you risk being trapped on the campaign trail by the question: "What are you going to do to get this Marxist revolutionary regime in Nicaragua out of power?" Its more subtle version is "Now that you've limited contra aid, how will negotiations guarantee that the Sandinistas democratize?"

The reality is that no U.S. policy is going to guarantee democratization in Nicaragua, especially if the "litmus test" is American-style democracy or abdication by the Sandinistas. No matter how much more humane and pluralistic the Nicaraguan government might be relative to its three northern neighbors, or compared with other leftist revolutionary regimes, the Sandinistas will always fail the test. Nicaragua is undergoing a social revolution. Major reforms threaten historic privilege and property rights, and generate disruption and opposition. Continued reluctance to give opposition groups the power to block such reforms is likely to include curbs on civil liberties. You need to be forthright in telling the American people that neither diplomacy nor war nor Sandinista-contra negotiations will guarantee a regime of our liking. The Reagan administration has proven that it cannot be done by war. And you need to explain that diplomacy cannot guarantee it either—although it may make political openings in Nicaragua *more likely.*

The trap for a Democratic alternative in El Salvador is set by the false picture the administration has painted of a struggling but popular "reformist democracy" confronting Soviet-sponsored revolution. The reality is an increasingly unpopular elected civilian government dominated by a still repressive military. This means that if the situation unravels on your "watch," as well it could, you could be hit with the responsibility of having "lost" El Salvador.

The reality there is that a largely homegrown, leftist insurgency has sustained itself with substantial localized support and only minimal assistance from the Soviets, Cubans, or Nicaraguans. U.S. aid of over 2.3 billion dollars since 1981 and a counterinsurgency strategy of air assaults, bombings, and forced relocations of rebel supporters have brought the eight-year-old civil war no closer to an end. Neither side is weak enough to lose nor strong enough to impose a military solution. The war will simply continue to bleed the country of its population and resources.

Right-wing tyrants must no longer be allowed to pull our anticommunist heartstrings to aid their repressive regimes.

Broad sectors of the population consider a negotiated settlement the number one priority. But as long as the high command can rely on Washington for aid—much of which goes to repair war damage, pay government salaries, and finance corruption and capital flight—it will remain unwilling to engage in serious dialogue with the rebels as many former Duarte supporters are demanding.

Furthermore, Duarte has not had sufficient power to stop abusive interrogation techniques, physical beatings, death threats, disappearances, and assassinations that continue to be used against opponents. The judiciary is nonfunctioning, despite millions in U.S. aid support. No officer has even been tried for human rights abuses, and the October 1987 Amnesty Law wiped out any chance for justice by effectively prohibiting charges against those involved in army massacres and military-connected death squad actions.

Popular frustration at failed reform, widespread government corruption, decreasing wages, the repression used against peasant and labor organizations, and the failure to bring about a negotiated settlement to the conflict have outraged many of Duarte's former supporters. This is why he and his fellow Christian Democrats were so soundly beaten in the March 1988 Assembly elections. The victory of extreme rightist death squad leader Roberto D'Aubuisson and his Arena party symbolized the failure of nearly eight years of the Reagan administration's misguided efforts and the clear rejection of the Christian Democrats.

The realistic alternative in El Salvador involves pro-

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Memo: To the Candidate Re: Thawing the Big Chill

Harry Boyte

Now that you've won the nomination, it's time to develop a message for the general election. Forget conventional wisdom.

I'm convinced this is one of those watershed years, like 1932 or 1960, when the country needs an organizing framework for politics—a clear theme that structures language, attention, priorities, and vision.

Primaries, with their particular local and regional issues, are one thing. But to speak to the country as a whole in a way that can galvanize the electorate, we need something else: a pragmatic idealist who can give populist voice to uncertainty and anger but who can also express the Democrats' theme of economic nationalism in a positive, visionary fashion.

This is the moment to use the theme of the commonwealth, at the heart of the progressive tradition of Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt. Commonwealth means an active democracy that takes care of the things we all have a stake in. Saying "America was born and flourished as a commonwealth" of great talents, public spirit, and natural wealth is a positive way to challenge the "get mine quick" greed of the Reagan years which denies the secret of our great successes. And insisting that "we revitalize our commonwealth" will provide you with a way of turning the growing concern about the country's infrastructure into a vibrant image of Americans at work, actively repairing our foundations.

Americans are worried this year. A recent *New York Times* poll showed that for the first time this decade Americans fear that the nation's future may not be better than the present or the past.

As Michael Sandel pointed out in the *New Republic* not long ago, traditional liberalism is especially unsuited to meet the challenges posed by the loss of a sense of collective responsibility and control over our destiny. Liberals speak of *individual* rights and entitlements. When they invoke "community"—as in Walter Mondale's 1984 call for Americans to "be a community, a family where we care for each other, knit together by a band of love"—the appeal is abstract and far removed from the actual diverse *communities* in which people live and work.

Republicans, especially Ronald Reagan, of course, have much more effectively talked about local community. But the sentimental rhetoric of conservatives ignores the effects of radical economic individualism on community life. Capital flight, corporate mergers, and speculation as well as business concentration ravage families, neighborhoods, towns, and whole regions. Sandel points all this out. But Sandel's solution, which calls for "community and self-government," is painted in nostalgic pastoral hues like the misty cover of the *New Republic* with its old-fashioned bandwagon drawn by a donkey. The problem is that Sandel's call for community lacks explicit connection with any specific *political* tradition in American history. It also doesn't suggest what to *do* about the problems facing local communities and the country. The concept of commonwealth adds visionary depth and practicality alike.

Two hundred years ago commonwealth meant democracy—"a state belonging to the whole people rather than the Crown," as Edmund Pendleton put it. The word also suggests the progressive tradition's great challenges to excessive concentrations of power and rapacious economic self-interest. Thus, Teddy Roosevelt in his famous "New Nationalism" speech declared that "the true conservative is he who insists that property shall be the servant and not the master of the commonwealth. The citizens of the United States must effectively control the mighty commercial forces which they have themselves called into being." Similarly, Franklin Roosevelt proclaimed at the Commonwealth Club of San Francisco during the 1932 election that "we are coming to a view that private economic power is a public trust as well. Enjoyment of that power by any individual or group must depend upon the fulfillment of that trust."

Recently, the U.S. Catholic Bishops, in their *Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy*, reminded the nation that "everyone has obligations based simply on membership in the social community. By fulfilling these duties, we create a true commonwealth." But the Bishops' call for a "preferential option for the poor" stressed sympathy for others. Their letter failed to engage middle-class self-interests.

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In fact, the 1988 election offers an ideal occasion for talking about the commonwealth in two interrelated, powerful ways. If you say "America must be a commonwealth again," you remind corporate management that their "prerogatives" are held, as Roosevelt pointed out, as a public trust. This conveys the idea of a participatory economy to which we all contribute (or should be able to contribute) and in which we all have a stake—the vision essential for revitalizing our country.

Furthermore, the commonwealth tradition specifically implies voluntarism and the idea of tangible public goods which potentially speaks to issues of great concern to swing voters, like the baby boomers and the blue collar workers. "Commonwealth" entails the tangible concept of "commons," not only village greens and meeting places but also the key public resources that communities use collectively, from public lands and forests and fishing ponds to schools, roads, waterways, and the local economy itself. Commonwealth is thus a made-to-order idea for describing the basic national and communal infrastructure whose deterioration during the Reagan years has been well-documented, most recently by Congress's National Council on Public Works Improvement.

Community life depends on such core public goods—including childcare, housing stock, bridges, water, parks, and core public services—whose neglect and careless "privatization" is a vivid illustration of the damage that greed and radical individualism do to our collective interests as a nation. The commonwealth idea also points to what to do about the crisis.

Conservatism sees government as *the problem*, an obstacle to the "magic of the marketplace." Liberalism sees government as *the solution* to social problems, the basic agency of change. But the commonwealth tradition exploits the enduring concept of *the people* as the genius of our politics. In contrast to social policies that rely mainly on increased government spending, this tradition recasts problem-solving as potentially collaborative efforts in which citizens, through their voluntary contributions, have crucial roles to play.

Recent local experiences illustrate many ways in which "infrastructure crises" have been turned into opportunities for developing collaborative public relationships that recognize a diversity of self-interests, communities, and concerns. In Baltimore, for example, the "Commonwealth Agreement" around education has prompted a novel coalition.

When the Baltimore organization BUILD, a broad community group made up mostly of black churches, decided that a revitalization of the city's decaying school system was essential, it recognized some additional financial resources would be necessary from both public and private sources. But it avoided simply calling for increased public spending. Instead, BUILD began forging an unusual alliance between black churches, unions, the Superintendent and the main business group, the Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC), around everyone's interest in quality schools. This coalition, in turn, developed the most far-ranging school incentive plan in America, the "Commonwealth Agreement," involving business support for securing employment for high school graduates and guarantees of college financial support for any student with a B average and good attendance.

The agreement is based on the idea that schools are a "common wealth" of everyone. That term proved to be evocative even in the conservative segment of the business community, one of whose leaders told me, "Commonwealth was the best 'marketing slogan' you could possibly have come up with." The Baltimore coalition draws its primary strength from increased citizen involvement in the schools. Local site control Commonwealth Committees involve principals, teachers, students, parents, and custodial staff in basic school decisions about issues like budgets, curricula, and building use.

The BUILD experience is an example of the changing approach one can find in the best local civic efforts today. On the political side, the enthusiastic involvement with the Commonwealth program of Baltimore's new mayor, Kurt Schmoke, is typical of a generation of state and local politicians like Mayor Henry Cisneros of San Antonio or Neil Goldschmidt, governor of Oregon, who have combined an activist, effective role for government with a view of the broad citizenry as potential collaborators.

Such stories suggest an exciting, visionary answer to Reagan's head-in-the-sand "It's Springtime in America" rhetoric. Americans have a remarkable capacity to respond to honest *challenges* when they combine concrete self-interest with broader ideals. And a call to "rebuild our commonwealth," made with successful examples of collaboration between government, business, and citizens (mislabelled "the Independent Sector"), can draw on television's strengths as a story-telling medium. TV spots can portray Americans at work on the foundations of the future. Such images could express Bruce Springsteen's lyrical sense of America: we face real problems, but there are immense reservoirs of energy and spirit still to be tapped.

The commonwealth theme thus offers your campaign both a visionary political tradition and a practical way to recast the problem-solving process. It creates a framework for civic spirit and hope that can lead you to victory in November, and point as well towards a successful theme for governance in a time of change. □

Memo: To the Candidate Re: Law and Ethics

Mark Green

Mr. Nominee, throughout our history, Americans—and their leaders—have displayed a special fidelity to law and ethics. If anything, our revolution militantly rejected arbitrary government and embraced the principle that no person is above the law—or, as Roman lawmakers put it, *Fiat justitia ruat caelum* ("Let justice be done, though the heavens fall").

Recall how George Washington became the first victorious general in history to walk away from power when he completed his second presidential term. Recall how Abraham Lincoln returned 199 dollars in contributions during his 1846 congressional race, spending just seventy-five cents on cider for his supporters. Recall how Senator Paul Douglas would return every gift sent him worth more than five dollars. Recall how Harry Truman would personally pay for stamps he used on unofficial, personal mail sent out of his White House. And recall how Dwight Eisenhower vetoed a natural gas rate deregulation bill that he avidly supported because a natural gas lobbyist had unsuccessfully (and unnecessarily) tried to bribe a New Jersey senator before final passage.

It's a sharp drop from Paul Douglas to Edwin Meese, who appears to take literally the injunctions that he "execute the laws faithfully" and that justice be "blind." Aristotle said that people in government exercise a teaching function, but the lessons learned from Ike and Douglas are far different from those learned from Meese and Deaver. It's the difference between public service and self-service.

True, neither Meese nor Deaver will be running against you. But eight years of unethical and unlawful misconduct have created an irresistible issue in 1988, for several reasons: First, since the eventual Republican nominee has been bragging about how he has stood with President Reagan "through thick and thin," George Bush will have to answer for the Reagan administration's Niagara of sleaze. (Fact: while there were fifty-three federal officials indicted and forty-three convicted in 1975, these numbers had increased ten-fold to 563 indicted and 470 convicted in 1985.) Second, your reputation for rectitude—the perception that you're an Eagle Scout out of uniform—makes you instantly credible against a tainted Bush. And third, the public cares—as can be seen by Reagan's plummeting popularity after the disclosure that he had lied about selling arms to Iran. Republican malfeasance has been so publicized—Meese, Deaver, Nofziger, McFarlane and those indicted in the Iran/contra scandal, not to mention the CIA's friendly dealings with Noriega—that a Democratic nominee who criticizes corruption and proposes solutions will find a sympathetic audience. Also, the subject is not a classic left-right issue that could ideologically antagonize the public. No one's for sleaze.

You should make your arguments thematically and generally, not belaboring the details as if before a jury. Nevertheless, since you like to be prepared in case you confront an inquiring reporter or audience, let me briefly outline why there is an "Integrity Gap" before proposing specific strategies for you to consider.

The Integrity Gap

Conflicts of Interest. The Reagan administration has taken E.M. Forster's spiritual advice, to "only connect," and applied it to the material world. Representative Patricia Schroeder (D-CO) has released a compilation of more than one hundred federal officials convicted of or charged with a range of legal and ethical violations. These influence peddlers seem never to have heard of the 1978 Ethics in Government Act and make the "five percenters" of Truman's era (influence peddlers whose fee was five percent of the profits) look like ethics professors.

From numerous examples, consider David Fischer, a personal aide to Reagan for five years who is now cooperating with the Iran/contra independent counsel. He received twenty thousand dollars per month to arrange private meetings with the president for the biggest contributors to the contras. The arrangement began almost immediately after he left the White House in 1985, barely letting the government doors close behind him before he put his presidential access up for sale.

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Of course, the criminal convictions of Mike Deaver and Lyn Nofziger render them exhibit A and B in the world of Republican influence-peddlers. Don't forget, as well, their flimsy rationale—*viz.*, all they offered was legitimate advice about, and access to, a complex federal government. But when such fixers can get one client out of 240 million Americans in to see key officials before major decisions are made, that's not access but preference.

Meese. What can you say about a walking conflict-of-interest, about the most investigated attorney general ever, other than that he's beginning to make John Mitchell look good? The White House defends Meese by asserting that he's never been indicted and all the criticism is mere partisan sniping. Since when has "never been indicted" been regarded as a credential or qualification? After all, Meese rightly put Kurt Waldheim on the "Watch List" because of the accumulation of evidence of his Nazi past, even though he's never been indicted or convicted of anything. And the problem is not mere partisan sniping. There have been plenty of Republican attorneys general of unquestioned integrity, men such as Elliot Richardson, Edward Levi, and William Rogers. The problem is not Meese's party, but his probity.

Your goal should be to convey aggressively your outrage at the Reagan administration's sleazy ethics.

Here's what the public record irrefutably documents about Meese:

- In 1985 a special prosecutor found that while serving in the White House he had received personal financial assistance from five people—all of whom subsequently were named to prominent federal positions with his assistance.
- He had a conflict of interest or the appearance of one when, as attorney general, he met with top officials of three telecommunication firms (Bell Atlantic, Bell-South, and Ameritech) in which he held substantial investments and later adopted their points of view as Department of Justice policy.
- He assisted in Wedtech's successful but pyrrhic 1982 bid for a thirty-two million dollar Department of Defense contract and later profited from investments in the now bankrupt company.
- He received a memo on the Iraqi pipeline project that proposed a bribe of a foreign official in apparent violation of federal law, but defends himself by insisting that the words in the memo don't mean what they say.

Regulatory Neglect. Given the large number of key regulators coming *from* the business community, it's not surprising that Reagan's regulators have failed to enforce laws *against* business violators.

An EPA scandal during the early years of Reagan's tenure led to the resignations of twelve agency officials plus a perjury conviction for one, Rita Lavelle. But in the regulatory agencies, contempt for law has been not only by commission but also by omission. Since "prosecutorial discretion" allows law enforcers nearly unchecked authority to sue or not, Reagan's regulators realized early that if they did little or nothing they could advance their antigovernment agenda. According to Murray Weidenbaum, who chaired Reagan's Council of Economic Advisors, their motto was, "Don't just do something, stand there."

Hence, nearly all regulatory agencies suffered huge cutbacks in budgets, staff, and prosecutions under the Reagan administration. "Self-policing" of industries became a fig leaf for ignoring regulatory statutes. At a recent hearing of the House subcommittee on consumer protection, Chairman James Florio (D-NJ) lost his patience after being told how the chairman of the Consumer Product Safety Commission persistently refuses to recall obviously dangerous products. Said Florio, "Our dilemma is: When the law is the law and the regulators are not carrying it out, what do we do? Pass another law?"

International Lawbreaking. The same cynical and cavalier attitude toward law at home has been demonstrated abroad by the subterfuges to evade the Boland Amendment in order to funnel funds to the contras, and by the attempts to assassinate the loathsome Khadafy despite U.S. law against assassinating foreign leaders, the loathsome included. Moreover, Abraham Sofaer, the State Department's chief legal adviser, has been especially adept at stretching the law to cover the administration's most cherished ideological goals. Sofaer's novel reading of the 1972 Antiballistic Missile Treaty would allow this administration to proceed with testing of new Star Wars technologies. Such testing would breach the spirit of the treaty, according to a joint statement of the past six secretaries of defense. Proving Jonathan Swift's adage that lawyers are people who can prove that "white is black and black is white, according to as they are paid," Sofaer was also the guiding hand behind the U.S. rejection of the World Court's jurisdiction over the CIA's mining of Nicaraguan harbors. The World Court ultimately condemned the United States for its covert illegal war against Nicaragua.

"Greed is Good". No, Democrats cannot blame Republicans for Gordon Gekko's line from the movie *Wall Street* nor for the transgressions of a Boesky or a Bakker. Nevertheless, the subtext for Reagan's and

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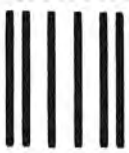
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The Question of American Jewish Poetry

John Hollander

When I confront the question of what American Jewish poetry is, I find myself asking many other questions—questions about what such a question might mean. My colleague Harold Bloom, when asked once to discourse on American Jewish culture, said that the phrase reminded him of the history teacher's line about the Holy Roman Empire: that it was neither holy, nor Roman, nor an empire. What most people mean by Jewish American culture is just as peculiar. Certainly for all serious scholars, the very idea of *culture* is as problematic as the idea of Jewishness. And the ambiguities in both terms generate even more problems when they are conjoined. If by *culture* is meant something like what a Jewish American disciple of Matthew Arnold, such as Lionel Trilling, would have meant by it, then it involves a relation among texts, moral ideas, and the way in which they affect institutions. For most people it would mean, perhaps, Judaized versions of Balto-Slavic or Austro-Hungarian peasant cooking. For anthropologists and sociologists, for fundraisers and political analysts, "culture" would comprise very different areas of behavior, or as I should prefer to say, of life.

I would leave this discussion to social scientists and theorists of tradition were I not unsure how closely related my questions about American Jewish culture and American Jewish poetry might turn out to be. How poetry stands in relation to culture generally is itself a complex matter, and one not to be debated here. But in any case, were I not a poet and scholar, I should find this question far easier to contemplate. For example, in his remarkable book *Alone with America*, the poet and translator Richard Howard selected (in 1969) forty-one of his contemporaries—then roughly between thirty and forty-five years of age—and wrote extensive essays on their poetical works. (His judgments seem to have borne up well under time, and nobody now would claim that, even with so considerable a number of poets, Howard had dipped very deeply into mediocrity.) Of his forty-one poets, eleven were Jewish—at least as far as the Law of Return would define them—and two more had Jewish fathers. Howard, himself a poet of considerable distinction, also is a Jew.

I am by no means sure that a selection of forty American poets of the previous generation would have avoided so much mediocrity. But the list would have included poets ten or fifteen years older than those Howard selected—poets such as Elizabeth Bishop, Robert Lowell, Theodore Roethke, only two or three of whom would likely have been Jewish (Delmore Schwartz, Karl Shapiro, perhaps Muriel Rukeyser). It may be that historians some years hence will look back on the last thirty-five years as a time in which Jewish American poetry flourished exceptionally.

But I am burdened by the American imaginative restraint that demands what Emerson called speaking in "hard words." The first hard question is: "Well, do these Jewish American poets write Jewish American poetry?" But that question is itself misleading. And matters are not made clearer by rephrasing it in the apparently sophisticated literary language—"Which of these poets write poems with Jewish *content*?" or "Which poems reflect Jewish experience?" Such terms as these mean little to poets, and perhaps even less to serious and inquiring literary critics. After all, can anything a Jew experiences—even apostasy—*not* be "Jewish experience"? In any case, the notion of "content" in poetry, the strangely Marxist concept of literature "reflecting" conditions of society, is a rather fumbling notion as far as the teaching and interpretation of literature are concerned. Moreover, poetry always takes concepts such as these and reinterprets them: If something serious and complex is meant by a poem "reflecting" world events, a true poet will reinvent that concept of reflection in each poem he or she writes, will create a new and unique form of distorting mirror. So, too, with the notion of "content": It usually is invoked only in contrast to a notion like "form." Can there be Jewish form and gentile content? Or vice versa? The notion that *form* is what makes a text a poem is a little more adequate than the one that claims that content makes it so, but not much more.

Consider a poem by Moses Ibn Ezra, written in Hebrew, in Spain around the year 1100. It is "about"—its content concerns, if one must—an apple. A contemporary American poet translates and adapts it—makes

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a new English poem of it. The poet is Jewish, yet there must be hundreds of gentile scholars who know more Hebrew than he does. He grafts his own epigram on to the original one. Is the fact that he writes a new poem by interpreting a traditional text a Jewish act? A Judaistic one? The original says something like this:

> The Apple, in truth, God created only for the pleasure
> of those who smell and touch it. I see how green and red are conjoined in it: I see there the face of the wan lover and the blushing beloved.

The modern poet takes only the conceit of the red and green from the Hebrew and, instead of the medieval Spanish-Jewish poet, who substituted his power of poetic meditation for any fool's ability to take a bite out of the fruit, he imagines an interpreter fully conscious of apples as symbolic and literal fruit at once:

> O apple with which—as first fruit of desire—
> Our hunger for significance is fed:
> Around your globe pale grass borders on fire,
> The lovesick green pursues the blushing red.

What is it that makes either of these two texts a poem? Is content a kind of liquor poured into a bottle called form? Is a gentile thought embodied, in the first instance, in the Hebrew language, the literary tongue but not the vernacular of medieval Jews? Modern criticism is properly unhappy with the notion of poetry's having themes or subjects, conceptions derived from composition classes and, when purportedly embraced by poems, only done so in a deep and systematic travesty of thematic discourse. A poem might be Christian, English romantic, or Emersonian American. I could imagine in the last instance, for example, identical stances being taken in the poem by an American Jewish and a gentile writer. Would only the former be writing a Jewish poem, with Jewish content?

It is clear why it might be better to ask, with respect, say, to the American Jewish poets in Howard's collection, "Can you tell from their poems that these poets are Jews? And, when you can, how does each poet's work reveal or conceal or ignore that fact in its own way?" For the essence of true poetry is originality of a mode of expression; that is, a poet will express or figure forth in language not only something totally unique in him/herself, but, as a kind of general metaphor for the holiness of human individuality, will thus reinvent expressing, or poetic telling. Now, many of the poets Howard discusses—Howard Nemerov, Theodore Weiss, Howard Moss, Kenneth Koch (save in what must be one of his more inspired moments in a long comic poem in which specially prepared *matzot* are employed in a visionary South American city as screens in windows against killer bees)—do not reveal much Jewish identity in their work. For some of them, the modernist stance of impersonality was so central to their notion of poetic writing that anything as intimate as their particular sense of "Jewish identity" was irrelevant to what they had to say—as irrelevant, for example, as their blood pressure. Of course, the intimacy associated with Jewish identity would seem to be a condition of certain kinds of exilic assimilation; but, in any case, poetic consciousness always internalizes, makes a peculiar kind of private matter, questions that ordinary language and political life hold to be public.

It is not merely that modern poets and Jews are outsiders, it is more that both carry the burden of an absolutely inexplicable sense of their own identity and history.

Of course, Irving Feldman—whose recent work has become stronger than ever—and Edward Field both reconsider and work over some of the ambience of urban American Yiddishkeit with irony and with warmth, but their ways of doing so are original and widely different from each other's. Allen Ginsberg's long—to me, I must confess, turgid—wail about the madness of his poor mother is called *Kaddish*. Whether or not one admires this poem, one must recognize that it ignores the meaning—the nature, structure, liturgical function—of the prayer after which it takes its title. The litany of Aramaic predicates of sanctification, conjoined with Hebrew afterthoughts; the fact that its recitation by mourners is only one special occasion of its frequent reappearance throughout the synagogue service; the fact that the text on that occasion does not refer to its use as a prayer for mourners—as if *thereby* (i.e., by having those mourners, instead of lamenting in public, intone sanctifications of God's name) it were being deeply, rather than trivially, appropriate—of none of these facts is the poem's allusion in the title aware. It is as if the poem thought that "*kaddish*" meant only a public plaint or dirge of the bereaved. Furthermore, there is nothing in Ginsberg's "Kaddish" to suggest that he somehow knows all this and is deliberately making his "*kaddish*"—his poetic revision of the prose, as it were, of public ritual—into a metaphoric anti-sanctification: No matter how blasphemous that may sound, it might have made a true poem, and more truly interestingly Jewish in an antinomian way.

It certainly is true that, from the point of view of a

naive notion of *content*, some writer who puts into rhyme sentimental childhood memories of Friday night *kiddush*, say, ending with a cry of self-rebuke for having lapsed from the old ways, would be expressing Jewish content or whatever. But it wouldn't be poetry, and this is the heart of the problem. Most people think that a poem is anything printed with a jagged right-hand edge (the technical term for this, pregnant with appropriate moral overtones, is an "unjustified" right-hand margin, and although obviously no Calvinist, I relish it). But that is just like saying, fifty years ago, that a poem is anything that rhymes. Free verse has replaced certain kinds of jingling rhymed verse as the mode in which amateurs write what they think are poems. What is Jewish or not Jewish about certain American poems is all tied up in the vexing problem of what is poetic or not poetic about them.

And so I would prefer to draw back for a moment and approach the question from another direction. Let me do so by citing a strange remark by one poet that is quoted as an epigraph to a poem by another one. Neither of the two poets was American. The remark is by the Russian symbolist, Marina Tsvetayeva: *Vcye payeti zhyidi*, "All poets are Jews." The poet was not Jewish, and we may surmise that she meant by it that all poets are like Jews in the Diaspora, alienated and in exile from something perhaps irrecoverable, nevertheless having to live with and in and among the rest of society. That is a touching and characteristically modern idea, although hardly as suggestive as the metaphoric extension of Jewish identity to stand for the condition of imaginative fullness and modified incapacity which Joyce or Proust, in very different ways, could evoke. What is interesting for me about her remark is that it is quoted as an epigraph to a profound and difficult poem by the great contemporary poet Paul Celan (Born in Bukovina, he wrote in German, survived the Holocaust, and lived in Paris where he taught at the Sorbonne until his death in 1970). Celan is possibly the greatest poet since Rilke to write in German and he is probably also the major Jewish poet of his generation anywhere. As a Jewish poet, Celan takes back the phrase for the sake of a deeper Jewish significance. It is not merely that modern poets and Jews are outsiders, by nature itinerant no matter how locally rooted. It is more that both—and a gentile poet might be less likely to perceive this point—carry the burden of an absolutely inexplicable sense of their own identity and history.

Jewish identity is not so much a mystery as a problem: "People," religion, nationality, linguistic culture—to know anything of these terms, and of Jewish history, is to know how limited their conceptual usefulness really is. If poetry is like Jewishness, it is that both know very well what they are, and though with a lot to say on nearly everything, they cannot easily explain *that*. Both poetry and Jewish identity are forever condemned to being misunderstood, to being wrongly interpreted. Clear, effective writing—whether reporting of facts, classifying and interpreting them, making suggestions, giving orders, framing instructions, making laws—aims at being understood. But "to be great," said Emerson, "is to be misunderstood," and even merely very good poetry shares this with greatness.

Poetry always seems to know that it cannot ever fully be understood. It certainly is possible to put a set of instructions for assembling something into rhyme [viz. "Turn part B the other way / And into it insert flap A"], but that will not make it poetry. Or, in a contemporary equivalent of rhyming jingle, we could write out those instructions in short lines that do not come to the end of the page. Or, if one believes that poetry is not verse, but the expression of sincere feelings, one could drop upon one's toe a very heavy weight or a quantity of boiling water and become—without knowing how to write—a great poet. The major American poet of our age, Wallace Stevens, observed both that "[s]entimentality is a failure of feeling" and that "[r]ealism is a corruption of reality." Poetry is neither of these, but rather a matter of intense meaning, of having so much significance with respect to its own local and the most general parts of life that it breeds rereading and further rereading over the years. True poetry—rather than what I might call literature in verse—partakes of what Rabbi Ben Bag Bag said of Torah itself: "Turn it and turn it over again, for everything is in it."

But if intensity of meaning can lead to difficulty of reading, the openness of poetry to easy misconstrual has perhaps another source. Dante, in that remarkable little book about the dawning of his imaginative existence called *The New Life*, talks of what he calls a "*schermo della veritade*," a "screen for the truth." He is referring to an unnamed lady past whom he was looking, in a church full of people, at his secret muse, Beatrice d'Este. This lady sat in his line of sight. Everyone else believed him to have been looking at her, and he half-collaborated with this misprision of his intentions. He thought to make of the noble lady a screen for the truth, he says, and he thereafter wrote poems "to" and "about" her, all the while thinking of Beatrice. This story is about all poetry, really, which always uses its "subject" or "occasion" as "*un schermo della veritade*," a screen. And this screen may be very clouded, or very ornate; and each poet will not only construct his or her own screen, but virtually invent the materials and the mode of construction. Yet the result will always

be that the *subjects* of poems are no more what they are "about" than their verse-forms are. This fact, too, makes difficult any discussion of Jewish subjects or contents in poetry. A remarkable comment on this question is made in a beautiful poem of Paul Celan's that anyone but a rabid Satmar Hasid or ultra-Orthodox rejectionist would call Jewish. It is titled "*Hawdalah*" and starts out with a meditation on the braided, twisted candle used in the *havdalah* service which ushers out the Sabbath on Saturday evenings. In an inadequate translation, it begins:

On the one, the
only
thread, on it
you spin—by it
spun about, into the free, there,
into the bound ...

[*An dem einen, dem*
einzigen
Faden, an ihm
spinnst du—von ihm
Umsponnener, ins Freihe, dahin,
ins Gebundne]

This is a strange love poem reminding itself that the literal root meaning of the word "*havdalah*" is "division" or "separation," and that the spinning around of the twisted strand of light is of the essence of the kinds of twisting of literal meaning (the Greek word for it is "trope," or "turning") that is itself of the essence of poetry. This is hardly a traditional Judaistic observation to make, although in a general sense it is a sort of midrash on the text, as it were, of the candle's braided structure, and of how this twisting bears light aloft.

One other way of reading the relation between the condition of being Jewish and that of being a poet has to do with a misunderstanding by others of one's own sense of history. As Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi has shown in his fine study *Zahor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, the very notion of Jewish historiography is more or less a modern German one, whereas the internalization of the memory of a people in any individual's consciousness is very traditional indeed. The central metaphor of the Pesakh haggadah might be said to reside in the notion that "*I* was there at the Exodus from Egypt." But such a trope is hardly historiographic (it is not even used, for example, to create a first-person narrative of What Happened That Night, etc.) Similarly, poetic history is *not* the literary history or the history of ideas that so many people think it must be. The stuff of tradition is braided into poetry with the stuff of what is often called experience, and every true poet has very complex relations with those who have preceded him or her. In one account of poetic tradition, the poets who have gone before are ancestors, direct family forebears. (Should one think of them now as one's people?) But more and more for me, the account in *Bereshit* about Jacob's wrestling match seems a central fable of poetry.

If Jewishness is to be identified solely with normative rabbinic religion, then the poet's path is the road to kherem, *religious destruction.*

The man with whom Jacob wrestles by the ford of the river Jabbok (the text designates him merely as "*ish*," "some man"); who cripples Jacob's thigh in order to win; who asks to be released from Jacob's lock on him because day is about to dawn (shades of Dracula!—even if, Rashi so anxiously hastens to assure us, because whoever or whatever it was had to go to his morning prayers); who, in exchange for being released, blesses him by giving him a new name—Israel (meaning "one who has struggled with "*El*"); and who, when asked *his* name, says that one must not ask such a question—this presence is, for any poet, a figure of his major precursors in poetic history, those great figures who have told all the great and important stories, who have been there first. The only strength one has to wrestle with is the power of one's own language. One always comes away from such a struggle with emotional sciatica from which one suffers until the end of one's days. And one is blessed to receive a new name if one comes away victorious from any part of the struggle, but unlike our father Jacob's, it is a name that can be uttered no more than that of the ineffable *El* with whom the struggle has occurred.

The matter of a poet's language is very important. In the first place, it is very private: Stevens once wrote that "every poet's language is his own distinct tongue. He cannot speak the common language and continue to write poetry any more than he can think the common thought and continue to be a poet." How, then, could Jewish poetry be Judaistic in a common way? And how could a poet speak in a common Jewish language, even if his uncommon one, his own poetic word-hoard, were based on a tongue thought of as commonly Jewish? Part of what Stevens meant by the uncommonness of poetic language reflects another aspect of a matter considered earlier. Paul Celan's deeper understanding of Tsvetayeva's comparison of all poets to Jews would

seem to say that all poets are in a kind of linguistic *galut*—they are members of a people dispersed and wandering in a realm of ordinary language, a world of the literal. But poets also are, in a way, an interpretive community, internally and eternally expounding and revising, individually working out a *gemara* or completion of the argument about what poetry really must be: a working out given to none of them truly to complete, but from which they are not free to desist.

But Jewish diaspora has always had the Hebrew language—or perhaps, as with the Alexandrians, just the memory of a Hebrew language—as a clew or thread to hold on to amid the mazes of exile. In medieval Spanish and German its constant seraphic presence lurked always in the spirit of the Hebrew letters, the adapted means of writing, as well as in significant parts of the vocabulary. The poetic diaspora which affects all poets, though, has only an imaginary idea of a language of its own, and each poet must forge it anew from the common metal, or spin its new thread from the fibers picked out of common speech. Thus it is that the Jewish exilic poet can be seen to exhibit two modes of longing for estranged, original language.

For American poetry, in its way a kind of *gemara* of the history of poetry in the English language, there are other problems. The contemporary Israeli poet—Yehuda Amichai, or the late Dan Pagis, for example—can write in a modern Hebrew that is still the biblical language. A poet whose language is English, whose wrestling grips are English hammerlocks and chanceries, has the English Bible built into the heart not only of the diction and syntax, but also the poetics of his language. The English Bible is a polemically Protestant translation of an orthodox Christian book called the Old Testament, which is itself a Christian interpretative translation of the Torah. A modern poet—and by this I suppose that I mean any poet from Alexandrian times on—is, if Greek, a wrestler with the shade of that fictional but very great author, Homer; if Jewish, with Homer's analogue, Moses, who figures as the author of the Pentateuch, and not merely as a character in Exodus.

Thus there is a profound and ever-present irony in a poet's writing "in" (would "out of" be better?) a language from whose literary tradition Torah is not, in fact, merely absent but rather present in such facinatingly distorted form. The cadences and grammatical constructions of the King James version, the shadows of misunderstanding lurking in the archaic meanings of words that have since undergone semantic change, are always singing an undersong in our language, from Milton through Whitman and in subsequent re-echoings. A British or American poet can engage the fabric of scripture in English or even in Latin and still be working in commonly uncommon ways. And to intensify the Latin presence in English by allusion or quotation has the same touch of the natural that moving into extended Hebrew phrases or clauses does in Yiddish. In any case, the English Bible has a strange power for the poet. For example, the way in which the King James Bible translates the grammar of the construct state of the Hebrew tends to create, in the language of the translation, metaphors and even allegorical personifications, traces of fable and parable, which are absent from the original. The dark or shadowed valley—the *gei tsalmavet*—of Psalm 23 becomes that allegorical region, "the valley of the shadow of death" only in translation. But what *is*, for a poet, "the valley *of* the shadow of death"? Does some heroic figure called the Shadow of Death live there? Rule it? Did he, or she, or it move hills about to create it and then desert it? Did Death leave its shadow there for eternity? Or are the hills that cast the shadow themselves embodiments of death? Or what? This kind of prepositional phrase—the common form "the X of Y," ordinarily transparent, becomes complex, opaque, and problematic in the language of poetry. The language of the King James Bible is poetic primarily because it is so richly ambiguous, forcing listeners and readers to interpret in order simply to construe. For a Jewish poet writing in English, then, the resonances of the English Bible are already full of complex fables.

But if poets are in some way exiled from some irrecoverable original language, and if diasporic Jewish poets are so in at least two ways, it must be said that all poets devote to the matter of their personal uncommon languages a most profound and absorbed attention. It is more than the care of a workman for his tools; for language is both material and implement at once. There is a dangerous power, close to magic, by which it molds its fictions, and, as an object of such devotion and attention, a dangerous iconicity, or image-like quality to it. Particularly for Judaic tradition this creates additional complications.

Poetry, as has been observed, lives in remarkably, almost supernaturally, meaningful language, gaining intensity of significance by consciously working with its own structure. Because of this fact, it can always seem poised on the brink of image-making, in the proscribed Judaic sense—though the figures here are of speech and thought rather than of clay or brass. But for the modern poet, older, previously employed poetic images and fictions have indeed become silent, impotent idols of mental brass. Modern poetry will not be content with the tropes and fables that long usage has turned to clarity. The poet must, if invoking them at all, twist them about

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Liberalism, Community, and Tradition

Joel Feinberg

In a series of articles that have appeared in Tikkun *over the past two years, the ideology of liberalism has been taken to task. One of the frequently voiced criticisms has been the contention that liberalism places an excessive focus on the rights of individuals—sometimes at the expense of validating the importance of the interconnectedness of human beings that can take place in shared communities. This "communitarian" critique has also claimed that liberalism produces a distorted picture of the human being, denying our fundamental need to be in loving connection with each other, glorifying instead the lonely but strong individual whose life is aimed at fiercely guarding his/her freedom of choice.*

In the following article, one of America's most thoughtful political philosophers presents a defense of liberalism and a critique of communitarianism. His article is followed by a spirited rejoinder from historian Christopher Lasch, a critic of culture whose work has challenged many of the liberal assumptions that are popular in the American left.

In recent years, traditional rights-based liberalism has come under attack from a group of critics known as communitarians.* Communitarians attack liberalism in two principal ways. They argue, first, that philosophically speaking there is no way to defend liberalism's support of individual rights. For example, communitarian critic Michael Sandel makes such an argument when he critiques John Rawls, perhaps the most influential liberal thinker of the twentieth century. According to Rawls's theory of justice, certain traditional rights, or "basic equal liberties," can be derived from a hypothetical social contract made by individuals in what he calls the "original position." In the original position people operate under a "veil of ignorance," whereby the contracting individuals are not aware of their particular endowments, character traits, and allegiances. That I may be an American, a Jew, a world-class tightrope walker, a father of three children, an impoverished merchant, or a multimillionaire is irrelevant in determining the appropriate principles of justice. In fact, Rawls claims, only when these particular endowments are ignored can the proper principles of justice be determined; and if they are ignored, he adds, the hypothetical contract signed will include, among other things, certain basic rights characteristic of liberal societies.

According to Sandel, Rawls's argument is fundamentally flawed because it rests on a faulty conception of personhood. Real people do not exist under a veil of ignorance. They live in particular places in particular times; they are members of particular communities, and they have particular attachments, sentiments, and beliefs. It is impossible for me to separate myself from my specific ends, to understand who I am without reference to these attachments. In short, even if Rawls is right to argue that people would adopt liberal values under an original position, his argument is based on a conception of the self that is so inaccurate that his whole theory fails.

The second principal argument that communitarians make is less philosophical than sociological. Communitarians insist that liberalism, conceived narrowly as a doctrine protecting individual autonomy, is part of a broader liberal ideology that is antithetical to notions of community and solidarity. In a world based upon the right not to be interfered with by others, the modern liberal invariably is an isolated being—alienated from others and lacking a sense of belonging to a genuine community. Moreover, the argument goes, since liberalism is committed to allowing people to choose their own ends, the very notion of a "common good" is incompatible with liberalism. Liberalism, by its very nature, must be neutral with respect to the particular ends that individuals pursue.

It is my aim to defend liberalism against the criticisms of the communitarians. I will focus, for the most part, on the sociological argument, not because I find Sandel's philosophical critique of Rawls particularly compelling—I do not—but because the sociological

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*By liberalism I mean the notion, commonly associated with the writings of John Stuart Mill, that the only morally legitimate reason for state coercion is to prevent wrongdoers from causing harm to others. Liberalism, in this narrow sense, often conceives of individual human beings as possessed quite "naturally" of human rights, some of which establish a moral claim against state coercion. Each individual, in this conception, is a kind of sovereign ruler within his or her own primarily self-regarding domain. When the state, either by arbitrary action or by means of the criminal law, imposes a prohibition on its citizens for any reason other than to protect others from harm at their hands, then it has invaded their personal autonomy, just as when it sends its armies to invade foreign lands it violates the national sovereignty of another nation.

argument is a more broad-based attempt to indict liberal culture. Moreover, Sandel's philosophical difficulties with Rawls need not be understood as an attack even on liberalism narrowly understood since there are many liberals who are not Rawlsians.

Communitarian critics have argued that traditional liberal ideology is irreconcilable, in at least four ways, with common sense about the importance of community in human life. The first objection to liberalism is that it rests upon an inadequate conception of human nature, one that cannot be reconciled with *the social nature of man*. In other words, liberalism conceives of people as atomized rights-holders instead of as parts of a larger social reality. The second objection is parallel to the first. It charges that liberalism gives insufficient weight to the value of fidelity to *tradition* in human life, that is, to the temporal dimension of community. The third objection is that liberalism ignores the basic human need to *belong* to communities and the severe *alienation* that results when that need is unfulfilled, as it would be, in a perfectly liberal society. The fourth objection, which I treat only in passing, is that the immense importance of civic virtue and public spiritedness cannot be reconciled with liberalism's emphasis on individual self-determination and fulfillment. It will be my thesis that in most of the apparent conflicts between personal autonomy and community, the opposing values can be satisfactorily reconciled, but that in the few cases of irreconcilable conflict, it is not implausible to urge that personal autonomy be given priority.

The Social Nature of Man

To prevent any possible misunderstanding, liberals should begin by acknowledging the bedrock importance of community to human nature and well-being. Whatever else human beings are "by nature," they are essentially social products. They are born into families and larger political communities, each with its ongoing record or history, their first concepts selected by a language provided for them by the larger groups of which they are members, their roles and status assigned by social custom and practice, their membership and sense of belonging imprinted from the start. They find themselves "embedded" in a human culture not of their own design. As soon as they think of themselves at all, they think of their identity as determined by their membership and group-assigned roles. They may form purposes of their own, but even when these are nonconformist or rebellious, they can be understood only against a background of community practice and tradition. Their original purposes, values, and conceptions, all socially assigned, play a decisive role even when, as budding adults, they choose to alter or transform them. A complex modern community will even provide them with antitraditionalist traditions to identify with and be comforted by.

It is unclear why communitarians insist that liberals do and must reject this conception of humanity. It will be my strategy to argue that the liberal can give up the excesses of individualism, acknowledge the social nature of man, and still adhere to liberalism's essential normative commitment to personal sovereignty.

In critiquing liberalism, communitarians usually invoke a conception of personal "identity" to describe how individuals think of themselves. Identity, in this sense, is a narrow and clearly normative concept. It cites those roles, allegiances, commitments, statuses, and other descriptions that are most central to one's conception of one's self, those with the most important place in one's "self-image" or "self-definition." Thus, a monk or priest, asked who or what he is, might reply straight off that he is first and foremost a faithful Roman Catholic. That he stems from an Italian ethnic group might be way down on his list, one of those merely accidental truths of no great significance to him. We can contrast him with an Italian restaurant owner who mentions her ethnic affiliation immediately but who regards her "faith," lax and conventional as it is, as merely incidental to her ethnic membership, a part, but not a central part, of her comprehensive identity. That she lives on the Jersey side of the New York-New Jersey border, while also true of her, may be no part of her normative identity at all if she is no "Jersey patriot," and in this way she may differ from some of her neighbors.

Society should provide an abundance of subcommunities of all kinds, catering to all needs and tastes, and our political and economic substructures should be encouraging to such a proliferation.

Sandel invokes this normative conception of identity, arguing forcefully for the central place in our "identities" of community allegiances—"those more or less enduring attachments which taken together define the person I am." "Living by" our community allegiances, he writes, "is inseparable from understanding ourselves as the particular persons we are—as bearers of this history, as members of this family or community or nation or people, as sons and daughters of that revolution, as citizens of this republic. . . . To imagine a person incapable of constitutive attachments such as these is

not to conceive an ideally free and rational agent, but to imagine a person wholly without character, without moral depth." So far so good. But Sandel then proceeds to argue that "the liberal" is logically committed to the denial of these profound and obvious truths, and in this task, I think, he is less successful.

Sandel prefers "a view that gives fuller expression to the claims of citizenship and community than the liberal vision allows." According to him, this view is provided by communitarian critics, who, "unlike modern liberals, make the case for a politics of the common good. Following Aristotle, they argue that we cannot justify political arrangements without reference to common purposes and ends, and that we cannot conceive of ourselves without references to our roles as citizens, as participants in a common life."

It is not clear why Sandel thinks that liberals are logically precluded from valuing the "common good" and even pursuing it as one of their ends in collaboration with their associates. Moreover, while we are all participants in *some* "common life" or other, there need not be an overlap of common purpose. For some, the primary "common life" is embedded in the neighborhood community, for others in their families. For still others, it is the scientific community, the black community, or a particular religious community. To be sure, they are all Americans (or Japanese, or French, or whatever) and loyal citizens, but their loyalties may well be based on their mutual respect and their devotion to the idea of a national community in which an unrestricted variety of social groups prospers and flourishes. *That* "common good" is hardly alien to the pluralistic liberal tradition. One of its great enemies is the intolerant predominant subcommunity that chokes off or absorbs weaker subcommunities and soon identifies its own parochial values and traditions with those of the comprehensive national community.

Liberals and communitarians, Sandel points out, sometimes give different reasons for the same policies. So, for example, "where liberals might support public education in hopes of equipping students to become autonomous individuals, capable of choosing their own ends and pursuing them effectively, ... communitarians might support public education in the hopes of equipping students to become good citizens, capable of contributing meaningfully to public deliberations and pursuits."

Again, this seems to me to be a false opposition. First of all, liberalism is a theory about the limits of state power, not about the content of education for children. Many virtues should be inculcated in children that could not rightly be forced upon adults. Second, though liberals wish to enable all children to develop the rational skills necessary for self-government and to become capable of "choosing their own ends," they can consistently urge that children should be brought up and educated in such a way that the common good *becomes* one of "their own ends." I think Princeton political scientist Amy Gutman had a similar point in mind when she pointed out that the liberal's "sense of justice," spelled out in part as equal opportunity for all voluntary associations in a harmonious pluralistic society, can be part of a person's own "identity": "My commitment to treating other people as equals, and therefore to respecting their freedom of religion, is just as essential a part of my identity as being Jewish and therefore celebrating Passover with my family and friends." Gutman's liberal sense of justice manifests itself in a concern for the equal good (or equal opportunity to pursue the good) of all constituent subcommunities. There seems to be no truth, then, in Sandel's claim that a liberal cannot make a case for the politics of the common good. At the most, he might claim that the liberal has his own distinctive conception of the public good, consisting in the harmonious flourishing of diverse groups united by bonds of mutual respect and loyalty to a tradition of tolerance and brotherhood.

To be secure in one's human rights is not necessarily to be selfish and antisocial.

Moreover, there is nothing in the liberal's ideology that *need* blind him or her to the social nature of man and the importance to all of us of community membership. Liberals may insist, like Mill, that individual self-fulfillment is good for individual human beings, and that personal autonomy is its essential prerequisite. But they can, indeed they must, concede what is plain fact, that most of the things we fulfill when we fulfill ourselves are dispositions implanted by our communities, and most of what we exercise when we exercise our autonomy is what our communities created in us in the first place. Nevertheless, the selves we have inherited in part from these communities are free to select some of their subsequent affiliations and to exercise their autonomy in making new communal commitments, with new consequences for their personal identities.

Self-determination or self-creation is possible within this community-created setting, even though the self in its capacity as creator is itself a social product. We cannot rebuild ourselves completely, starting from scratch, or lift ourselves by our own bootstraps, but we can use our autonomy to change our course in search of our own deeper currents—themselves partly com-

munity products. This is a capacity well short of omnipotence, but not one to be sneezed at.

Tradition

The value of tradition is not something commonly emphasized in liberal tracts, so it is important here to derive and explain that value and also to state clearly what attitudes the liberal might consistently hold toward it. I have already acknowledged the essential place of community membership in human affairs and the natural impulsion toward communal life in all of us. Perhaps the most important of all the many kinds of communities are those that are most unified and durable, the "communities of memory," as Robert Bellah and his associates call them—those that are in a way constituted by their past and so structured that they do not forget their past. The main way of assuring that continuity with the past is maintained, according to Bellah, is for the community frequently to "retell its story, its constitutive narrative," the legends and histories that distinguish it from other groups and define and reinforce its own ideals. The group's story may consist of exemplary tales of heroic conduct that express favored conceptions of character and virtue, or "painful stories of shared suffering that sometimes creates deeper identities than success." Ethnic and racial communities are examples of communities of memory, as of course are religious communities "that recall and reenact their stories in the weekly and annual cycles of their ritual year, remembering the scriptural stories that tell them who they are and the saints and martyrs who define their identity."

Once we put aside the relatively clear cases—churches, ethnic groups, nations, families—the vagueness of the concepts of "community of memory" and "tradition" is revealed. We speak, for example, of "scholarly traditions" and the "traditions" of particular scholarly disciplines. Then there are cultural and institutional traditions (the common law tradition and the Japanese theatrical tradition, for example). There are traditions of institutional types and traditions of particular institutions. There are traditions within traditions: Protestants and Catholics are united in a common Christian tradition, but they are separated by divergent traditions of different kinds. *A*, *B*, and *C* might glory in their common American traditions, but *A* and *B* both also celebrate the traditions of the labor union movement, while *C*, a corporation executive, glories in the traditions of the General Motors Corporation. *A*, then, is a more natural associate of *B* than of *C*, but s/he is in another way more like *C* than like *B* since *A* and *C* are both Catholics while *B* is a Protestant. So our traditions unite us and separate us in overlapping and interlocking ways. In a large modern nation, at least, the broadest community is a complex network of subcommunities, many of which have their own "constitutive narrative," and thus their own traditions.

A geological metaphor, irresistible to most sociolo-

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A Response to Joel Feinberg

Christopher Lasch

The controversy between liberals and communitarians, if we accept Joel Feinberg's account of it, is so abstract and unreal, so tenuously related to the controversies that actually divide public opinion today, that it becomes unclear why anyone except political philosophers should take an interest in it. Feinberg's understanding of liberalism—the "notion" that the state should use coercion only "to prevent wrongdoers from causing harm to others"—was already out of date a hundred years ago. It bears no resemblance to twentieth-century liberal practice. For a long time now, liberals have resorted to the power of the central government in order to take care of people who can't take care of themselves (or are alleged to lack this capacity), to equalize opportunity, to regulate almost every phase of economic life, and more recently to compensate for past discrimination against blacks, women, and other minorities by giving preferential attention to the needs of these groups.

Liberalism no longer conforms to the ideas advanced in Mill's 1859 essay *On Liberty*—which Mill himself began to modify in his later writings. If John Rawls is "perhaps the most influential liberal thinker of the twentieth century" (a dubious claim in the first place), it might be a good idea to recall that the whole point of Rawl's *Theory of Justice*, after all, is to provide a philosophical defense of an activist liberal state, com-

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mitted to the proposition that the least advantaged groups deserve preferential treatment.

Feinberg's anemic account of liberalism ignores the development of the regulatory welfare state, the recent identification of liberalism with affirmative action and court-ordered school desegregation, and the erosion of local self-government which such programs necessarily entail. "Liberalism is committed to saying ... that the state should leave community traditions alone," Feinberg writes, "neither restrict them nor enforce them." It is committed to nothing of the kind. Feinberg's antiquated characterization of liberalism can hardly be squared with the social policies liberalism has come to stand for in our time. Long-standing "community traditions" in the South, which included racial segregation and disfranchisement of black people, were deliberately destroyed by liberal social policy in the fifties and sixties. In the seventies, court-ordered busing represented another assault on local traditions, in this case the traditions observed in communities like South Boston and Charlestown, Massachusetts. Against those who objected to this invasion of their neighborhoods, this subversion of home rule, liberals argued that localism usually means parochialism, intolerance, and inequity, and that the federal government is the only agency capable of breaking up long-standing patterns of exploitation.

When Feinberg advocates an "abundance of subcommunities of all kinds, catering to all needs and tastes," he is thinking of voluntary associations or "intentional communities," so called, like Mennonite settlements and hippie communes, which ask only to be left alone. Liberals have always defended freedom of association, and Feinberg's article merely reiterates this defense; but the problem of community, in our time, usually presents itself in a more difficult form, where liberalism's commitment to equality conflicts with time-honored local customs and institutions. In conflicts of this kind, which cannot be settled by an agreement to respect "private" freedoms, liberals have not hesitated to side with the centralizing forces in our society against the forces making for particularism; with cosmopolitanism against provincialism; and with an essentially rootless conception of selfhood against a conception of selfhood that recognizes the formative influence not of "society" in the abstract but of specific folkways and traditions.

Liberalism does not lack a vision of the common good, as Feinberg recognizes; but this vision goes beyond the philosophy of live-and-let-live. At its most vigorous, twentieth-century liberalism stands for what might be called distributive democracy, which rests on an understanding that the old ideal of equal opportunity has to be supplemented by measures designed to eliminate the inherited, accumulated disadvantages that make formal equality meaningless for many groups. The trouble is that distributive democracy has been achieved at the expense of participatory democracy. The centralization of political power; the socialization of charitable, nurturant, and educational activities formerly carried on by families or neighborhoods; the substitution of professional expertise for local self-help; and the cancerous growth of bureaucracy have widened the gap between the citizen and the state. The "freedom of choice" celebrated by liberals turns out to be an empty freedom, since it confers little control over public policy and coincides, indeed, with a growing conviction among the people that ordinary citizens are powerless to influence governmental decisions. Apathy and cynicism about politics, abstention from voting, the decline of party loyalties—these familiar symptoms of political alienation register the transformation of politics from a central component of popular culture into a spectator sport. To equate alienation with "loneliness" and "nostalgia," in Feinberg's words, trivializes the issue. It is not some vague feeling of security that has been lost, but the opportunity to exercise the virtues associated with deliberation and participation in public debate. The atrophy of these virtues in the common people—judgment, prudence, eloquence, courage, self-reliance, resourcefulness, common sense—is a loss potentially fatal to the future of democracy.

Distributive democracy has been achieved at the expense of participatory democracy.

The communitarian critique of liberalism is sometimes sentimental and naive, but it helps to bring into focus an issue most liberals prefer to overlook—the dependence of citizenship on the vitality of local institutions. I don't pretend to know how the conflict between localism and the welfare state—participatory democracy and distributive democracy—can be resolved. But at least we have the right to ask social criticism to confront it squarely. Feinberg's article doesn't even come close. The question isn't whether liberalism is "sufficiently inspiring"—as if it were an object of aesthetic appreciation—but whether it is compatible with democratic citizenship. Nothing in our recent history justifies complacency about this problem. Complacency can be achieved—as Feinberg's hopelessly abstract disquisition on "subcommunities" and the right of association demonstrates once again—only by ignoring the whole question. □

Ayin: The Concept of Nothingness in Jewish Mysticism

Daniel C. Matt

How can God be defined? It cannot. To define ultimate reality would be to deny and desecrate its infinity. Though language brazenly insists on extending the semantic realm, God escapes its noisy clutches again and again.

The mystics, who celebrate divine ineffability, are quite comfortable with a God who refuses to be trapped by language. Yet even they need to refer to this nameless one—at least to communicate their awareness to others, to express a bit of what they have uncovered. One of their favorite strategies is to call God "Nothing." We hear this paradoxical divine epithet in the East and the West: Meister Eckhart's *Nichts*, St. John of the Cross' *nada*, the Taoist *wu*, and the Buddhist *sunyata* and *mu*. I will focus here on the Jewish mystical concept of *ayin*, "nothingness." *Ayin* is first found in medieval Kabbalah as a theological concept. Later, in Hasidism, its psychological significance is emphasized and *ayin* becomes a medium for self-transformation.

The word *nothingness* connotes negativity and nonbeing, but what the mystic means by divine nothingness is that God is greater than any *thing* one can imagine: it is like *no thing*. Since God's being is incomprehensible and ineffable, the least offensive and most accurate description one can offer is, paradoxically, *nothing*. David ben Abraham ha-Lavan, a fourteenth-century kabbalist, insists that "nothingness [*ayin*] is more existent than all the being [*yesh*] of the world." David's mystical Christian contemporaries concur. The Byzantine theologian Gregory Palamas writes, "He is not being, if that which is not God is being." Meister Eckhart says, "God's *Nichts* fills the entire world; His something, though, is nowhere."

I

The kabbalists did not invent this negative style of theology. Philo taught that God is unknowable and indefinable. The Gnostics address the hidden God as "ineffable, inexpressible, nameable by silence." Trying to outdo his predecessors, the Alexandrian Gnostic Basilides states that even the word "ineffable" says too much. God "is not even ineffable," but rather totally "nameless and nonexistent." Another Gnostic explains this final negation: "Nor is he something that exists, that one could know. But he is something else ... that is better, whom one cannot know.... He has nonbeing existence." The mystical philosopher Plotinus attacked the Gnostics, but he too maintains that the One surpasses our most basic and cherished categories: "Even being cannot be there."

John Scotus Erigena, a ninth-century Christian mystic influenced by Plotinus, was perhaps the first to apply the term "nothing" to God. Writing in Latin, he calls God *nihil*, by which he means not the lack but the transcendence of being. Because of "the ineffable, incomprehensible and inaccessible brilliance of the divine goodness ... it is not improperly called 'nothing.'" For John, creation out of nothing, *ex nihilo*, means the procession of differentiated being out of divine nothingness. In its essence, the divine is said not to be, but as it proceeds through the primordial causes, it becomes all that is. "Every visible creature can be called a theophany, that is, a divine appearance." Medieval Christian mystics who speak of divine nothingness, such as Meister Eckhart and Jacob Boehme, are indebted to John Scotus.

The kabbalists may also have been influenced by John Scotus, but their immediate teacher in the field of negative theology was Moses Maimonides. Building on the Islamic philosophers Alfarabi and Avicenna, Maimonides taught that God has nothing in common with any other being. God "exists but not through existence," he wrote in *Guide for the Perplexed*. In fact, Maimonides developed an entire system of negative attributes and encouraged his readers to discover what God is not:

> Know that the description of God ... by means of negations is the correct description.... You come nearer to the apprehension of Him with every increase in the negations regarding Him.

The Jewish mystics adopted Maimonides' theory of negative attributes, at least as it pertains to the infinite

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nature of God. The thirteenth-century kabbalist Azriel of Gerona notes the similarity between the mystical and philosophical approaches: "The scholars of inquiry [philosophers] agree with the statement that our comprehension is solely by means of 'no.'"

The very strategy of negation provides a means of indicating the ineffable. Negative attributes carve away all that is false and leave us with a positive sense of nothingness. Here the mystics claim to surpass the philosophers. Joseph Gikatilla exclaims: "How hard they toiled and exerted themselves—those who intended to speak of negation; yet they did not know the site of negation!" *Ayin* is revealed as the only name appropriate to the divine essence.

What the mystic means by divine nothingness is that God is greater than any thing *one can imagine.*

This reevaluation of nothingness is bolstered by the intentional misreading of various biblical verses in which the word *ayin* appears. In biblical Hebrew *ayin* can mean "where," as in Job's rhetorical question (28:12): "Where [*me-ayin*] is wisdom to be found?" The first kabbalists of the thirteenth century transform this question into a mystical formula: "Wisdom emerges out of nothingness." Asher ben David writes, "The inner power is called *ayin* because neither thought nor reflection grasps it. Concerning this, Job said, 'Wisdom emerges out of *ayin*.'" As Bahya ben Asher puts it, the verse should be understood "not as a question but as an announcement." Refracted through a mystical lens, Job's question yields its own startling answer. In the words of Joseph Gikatilla,

> The depth of primordial being ... is called *ayin*.... If one asks, "What is it?" the answer is, "*Ayin*," that is, no one can understand anything about it.... It is negated of every conception.

The kabbalists identified *ayin* with *keter 'elyon* ("supernal crown"), the first of the ten *sefirot*, the stages of divine being. Moses de Leon explains this identification and then draws an analogy between divine and human ineffability:

> *Keter 'elyon* is ... the totality of all existence, and all have wearied in their search for it.... The belt of every wise person is burst by it, for it ... brings all into being.... Anything sealed and concealed, totally unknown to anyone, is called *ayin*, meaning that no one knows anything about it. Similarly, no one knows anything at all about the human soul; she stands in the status of nothingness, as it is said [Ecclesiastes 3:19]: "The advantage of the human over the beast is *ayin*"! By means of this soul, the human being obtains an advantage over all other creatures and the glory of that which is called *ayin*.

God and the human soul share an infinite, inherent indeterminacy. If the human soul could be defined, it would lose its divine likeness. By our nature, we participate in *ayin*.

II

For the kabbalist, one of the deepest mysteries is the transition from *ayin* to *yesh*, from "nothing" to "something." Following in the footsteps of John Scotus and others, they have reinterpreted creation *ex nihilo* as emanation from the hidden essence of God. There *is* a "something" that emerges from "nothing," but the nothing is brimming with overwhelming divine reality. The something is not a physical object but rather the first ray of divine wisdom, which, as Job indicates, comes into being out of *ayin*. It is the primordial point that initiates the unfolding of God. In the words of the Zohar (1:15a):

> The flow broke through and did not break through its aura.
> It was not known at all
> until, under the impact of breaking through,
> one high and hidden point shone.
> Beyond that point, nothing is known.
> So it is called Beginning.

The opening words of Genesis, "In the beginning," allude to this first point, which is the second *sefirah*, divine wisdom. Though second, it "appears to be the first" and is called "beginning" because the first *sefirah*, *ayin*, is unknowable and uncountable. In the words of Moses de Leon, the point is "the beginning of existence."

> When that which is hidden and concealed arouses itself to existence, it produces at first something the size of the point of a needle; afterwards, it produces everything from there.... This is the primordial wisdom emerging from *ayin*.

The transition from *ayin* to *yesh* is the decisive act of creation, the real context of Genesis. As time proceeds, nothingness serves as the medium of each transformation, of every birth and death. *Ayin* represents the entirety of potential forms that can inhere in matter, each one "invisible until its moment of innovation," when it issues as a pool spreading out from a spring. As matter adopts new forms, it passes through *ayin*; thus the world is constantly renewed. In the words of

one kabbalist, "Form is stripped away by the power of *ayin*." In every change, in each gap of existence, the abyss of nothingness is crossed and becomes visible for a fleeting moment.

III

The mystic yearns for this depth of being, this formless source of all form. Though humans "walk in the multiplicity" of the material world, "one who ascends from the forms to the root must gather the multiplicity ... for the root extends through every form that arises from it at any time. When the forms are destroyed, the root is not destroyed."

Can one know this reality beyond forms? Only by unknowing or, in the words of David ben Judah he-Hasid, "forgetting":

> The Cause of Causes ... is a place to which forgetting and oblivion pertain.... Why? Because concerning all the levels and sources [the *sefirot*], one can search out their reality from the depth of supernal wisdom. From there it is possible to understand one thing from another. However, concerning the Cause of Causes, there is no aspect anywhere to search or probe; nothing can be known of It, for It is hidden and concealed in the mystery of absolute nothingness. Therefore forgetting pertains to the comprehension of this place. So open your eyes and see this great, awesome secret. Happy is one whose eyes shine from this secret, in this world and the world that is coming!

The *sefirot* are stages of contemplative ascent; each one serves as a focus of mystical search. In tracing the reality of each *sefirah*, the mystic uncovers layers of being within himself and throughout the cosmos. However, there is a higher level, a deeper realm, beyond this step-by-step approach. At the ultimate stage the kabbalist no longer differentiates one thing from another. Conceptual thought, with all its distinctions and connections, dissolves. Ezra and Azriel of Gerona call the highest *sefirah* "the annihilation of thought" (*afisat hamahshavah*): "Thought ... rises to contemplate its own innerness until its power of comprehension is annihilated." Here the mystic cannot grasp for knowledge; rather, he imbibes from the source to which he is joined. In the words of Isaac the Blind, "The inner, subtle essences can be contemplated only by sucking ... not by knowing."

Ayin cannot be known. If one searches too eagerly and pursues it, one will be overtaken by it, sucked in by the vortex. Ezra of Gerona warns:

> Thought cannot ascend higher than its source [the *sefirah* of wisdom]. Whoever dares to contemplate that to which thought cannot extend or ascend will suffer one of two consequences: either he will confuse his mind and destroy his body or, because of his mental obsession to grasp what he cannot, his soul will ascend and be severed [from the body] and return to her root.

Isaac of Akko balances the positive and negative aspects of the experience of return. He describes *devequt* ("cleaving" to God) as "pouring a jug of water into a flowing spring, so that all becomes one," yet he warns his reader not to sink in the ocean of the highest *sefirah*: "The endeavor should be to contemplate but to escape drowning.... Your soul shall indeed see the divine light and cleave to it while dwelling in her palace."

The mystic is vulnerable. Moreover, she is responsible for the divine emanation. She must ensure that the *sefirot* themselves do not collapse back into nothingness. Through righteous action the human being stimulates and maintains the flow of emanation; wrongdoing, on the other hand, can have disastrous effects: "One who sins returns the attributes to *ayin*, to the primordial world, to their original state of being, and they no longer emanate goodness down to the lower world."

The depths of nothingness are both a lurking danger and a reservoir of power. "Out of the depths I call you, *YHVH*." Mystically understood, this verse from Psalms (130:1) describes a human cry not *from* one's own state of despair but *to* the divine depths in which God lies hiding, from which God can be called forth. This is not to deny the reality of human suffering. On the contrary, adversity leads one to appreciate the resources of *ayin*. "Human beings must quickly grasp this *sefirah* to secure healing for every trouble and malady, as it is written [Psalm 121:1]: 'I lift up my eyes to the mountains; my help comes from *ayin*.'"

IV

In eighteenth-century Hasidism, the kabbalistic material is recast and psychologized; now the experiential aspect of *ayin* becomes prominent. The emphasis is no longer on the *sefirot*, the inner workings of divinity, but on how to perceive the world mystically and how to transform the ego. Dov Baer, the Maggid ("preacher") of Mezritch, encourages his followers to change *aniy* ("I") into *ayin*, to dissolve the separate ego in nothingness. As we shall see, this is not a destructive but rather a dialectical and ultimately creative process. According to Dov Baer:

> One must think of oneself as *ayin* and forget oneself totally.... Then one can transcend time, rising to the world of thought, where all is equal: life and

death, ocean and dry land.... Such is not the case when one is attached to the material nature of this world.... If one thinks of oneself as something ... God cannot clothe Himself in him, for He is infinite, and no vessel can contain Him, unless one thinks of oneself as *ayin*.

We must shed the illusion that we are separate from God. To defend an independent sense of self is a sign of false pride. True humility involves the consciousness of *ayin*. In the words of Issachar Ber of Zlotshov:

> The essence of the worship of God and of all the *mitzvot* is to attain the state of humility, namely ... to understand that all one's physical and mental powers and one's essential being are dependent on the divine elements within. One is simply a channel for the divine attributes. One attains such humility through the awe of God's vastness, through realizing that there is no place empty of Him. Then one comes to the state of *ayin*, which is the state of humility.... One has no independent self and is contained, as it were, in the Creator.... This is the meaning of the verse [Exodus 3:6]: "Moses hid his face, for he was in awe...." Through his experience of awe, Moses attained the hiding of his face, that is, he perceived no independent self. Everything was part of divinity!

The experience of nothingness does not induce a blank stare; it engenders new mental life through a rhythm of annihilation and thinking. "One [should] turn away from that [prior] object [of thought] totally

As long as the human ego refuses to acknowledge its divine source, it is mistaking its part for the all and laying false claim to that which cannot be grasped.

to the place called 'nothingness,' and then a new topic comes to mind. Thus transformation comes about only by passing through nothingness." In the words of one of the Maggid's disciples, "When one attains the level of ... gazing at *ayin*, one's intellect is annihilated.... Afterwards, when one returns to the intellect, it is filled with emanation." The creative pool of nothingness is described as the "preconscious" (*qadmut ha-sekhel*), that which precedes, surpasses, and inspires both language and thought. According to Dov Baer:

> Thought requires the preconscious, which rouses thought to think. This preconscious cannot be grasped.... Thought is contained in letters, which are vessels, while the preconscious is beyond the letters, beyond the capacity of the vessels. This is the meaning of: "Wisdom emerges out of nothingness."

The mystic is expected to trace each thought, each word, each material object back to its source in *ayin*. The world no longer appears as essentially distinct from God. In the Habad school of Hasidism acosmism has become a fundamental teaching: "This is the foundation of the entire Torah: that *yesh* [the apparent "somethingness" of the world] be annihilated into *ayin*." "The purpose of the creation of the worlds from *ayin* to *yesh* was that they be transformed from *yesh* to *ayin*." This transformation is realized through contemplative action: "In everything they do, even physical acts such as eating, the righteous raise the holy sparks, from the food or any other object. They thus transform *yesh* to *ayin*."

This mystical perspective is neither nihilistic nor anarchic. Matter is not destroyed or negated, but rather enlivened and revitalized. The awareness that divine energy underlies material existence increases the flow from the source (*ayin*) to its manifestation (*yesh*). Dov Baer explains:

> When one gazes at an object, he brings blessing to it. For when one contemplates that object, he knows that it is ... really absolutely nothing without divinity permeating it.... By means of this contemplation, one draws greater vitality to that object from divinity, from the source of life, since he binds that thing to absolute *ayin*, from which all beings have been hewn.... On the other hand ... if one looks at that object ... and makes it into a separate thing ... by his look, that thing is cut off from its divine root and vitality.

World, mind, and self dissolve momentarily in *ayin* and then reemerge. *Ayin* is not the goal in itself; it is the moment of transformation from being through nonbeing to new being. The Maggid conveys this thought with the image of the seed that disintegrates before sprouting:

> When one sows a single seed, it cannot sprout and produce many seeds until its existence is nullified. Then it is raised to its root and can receive more than a single dimension of its existence. There in its root the seed itself becomes the source of many seeds.

Ayin is the root of all things, and "when one brings anything to its root, one can transform it." "First [each thing] must arrive at the level of *ayin*; only then can it

become something else." Nothingness embraces all potentiality. Every birth and rebirth must navigate the depths of *ayin*, as when a chick emerges from an egg: for a moment "it is neither chick nor egg." As long as the human ego refuses to acknowledge its divine source, it is mistaking its part for the all and laying false claim to that which cannot be grasped. In the words of Menahem Mendel of Kotsk, "The I is a thief in hiding." When this apparently separate self is *ayin*ized, the effect is not total extinction, but the emergence of a new form, a more perfectly human image of the divine. Only when "one's existence is nullified ... is one called 'human.'"

Ayin is a window on the oneness that underlies and undermines the manifold appearance of the world. The ten thousand things we encounter are not as independent or fragmented as they seem. There is an invisible matrix, a swirl that generates and recycles being. One who ventures into this depth must be prepared to surrender what he knows and is, what he knew and was. The ego cannot abide *ayin*; you cannot wallow in nothingness. In *ayin*, for an eternal moment, boundaries disappear. *Ayin*'s "no" clears everything away, making room for a new "yes," a new *yesh*.

Our familiar and confining images of God vanish in *ayin*. This "*Nichts* of the Jews," writes the poet Henry Vaughan, exposes "the naked divinity without a cover." *Ayin* implies the God beyond God, the power that is closer and further than what we call "God." It symbolizes the fullness of being that transcends being itself, "the mysterious palace of *ayin*, in which everything dwells." The reality that animates and surpasses all things cannot be captured or named, but by invoking *ayin* the mystic is able to allude to the infinite, to *alef* the ineffable. □

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Forty years ago, the Jewish people experienced the creation of the State of Israel as a modern miracle. Crawling out of the gas chambers and crematoria of Europe, not yet fully comprehending the depth of destruction that they had just experienced, they almost could not believe that the two-thousand-year exile of the Jewish people should finally be over. There was, for some, a tragic irony in the situation: had the Palestinian people not succeeded in pressuring Great Britain to prevent Jewish immigration in 1937, had a Jewish state been allowed in the 1930s, millions of Jewish lives might have been saved. Yet such recriminations were rightfully drowned out in the celebrations of a people, so long at the mercy of others, who were reemerging into history, finally joining the family of nations as an equal.

The exhilaration of that historical moment is still with us. To those for whom the history of the past two thousand years remains alive, the miracle and triumph of Israel can never be a mere matter of fact. That a people so oppressed and reviled could be capable of so much renewal and creativity, that they could build a society bursting with cultural and intellectual strength, that they could absorb hundreds of thousands of Jews fleeing from oppression in Arab lands and hundreds of thousands more who were survivors of the Holocaust—all this was a testimony both to the wisdom of the Zionist enterprise and to the beauty and strength of the human spirit.

Small wonder that in the midst of this kind of euphoria, few Israelis worried much about the Palestinians who had left their homes (sometimes voluntarily fleeing, sometimes being forcibly evicted), and who ended up in the refugee camps of the Arab world. Yet their problems, their pain and their anger have severely shaped the Israel that has emerged.

We would have preferred to celebrate Israel's fortieth anniversary by focusing on its strengths and accomplishments. But those Israelis whom we had originally asked to write for this special Fortieth Anniversary issue shared our own sense that the Palestinian uprising had raised fundamental questions that could not be given a secondary place at this historical moment.

Our special section on "Israel at Forty" is a continuation of the discussion that we began in our March/April 1988 issue. Tikkun*'s editorial—a copy of which we mailed to over 300,000 American Jews—sharply critiquing the occupation and calling for Israel to announce its willingness to create a fully demilitarized Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, has generated a sharp and spirited public debate.*

While some of Tikkun*'s critics seem unaware of the context of our speaking out—our deep and abiding commitment to Judaism, the Jewish people, and the State of Israel—others have been prodded into dealing with the substance of our analysis.*

Following Tikkun*'s tradition, the articles that follow represent a range of different positions on the current situation and the appropriate response of American Jewry.*

Eyeless in Gaza

Sidra Ezrahi

When the Lord brought us back to Zion, we were as dreamers.

Psalm 126

I have been obsessed these days, in my most wakeful moments, with dreamers and their dreams. From Joseph to Sigmund, Jews have been good at dreaming, at deciphering dreams, and at living within the imaginative strategies of a collective dream analysis. On the very ruins of the Temple, the Rabbis built a corpus of law and a corpus of legend (halakhah and aggadah) that held Jewish life together for two millennia. The aggadah is what is patently *not true* but comes to explicate—and even to authenticate—revealed truth. It may be the greatest edifice the Jews ever erected against intolerable reality. "When facts or [sacred] texts become unacceptable," Shalom Spiegel wrote in the introduction to L. Ginzburg's *Legends*, "fiction or legend weaves the garland of nobler fancy."

Then, along comes Herzl who appears to shake the very foundations of the enterprise by insisting that we

Sidra Ezrahi teaches contemporary Judaism at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. She is a member of Tikkun*'s editorial board.*

emerge from that twilight zone between sleeping and waking ("If you will it, it is not a dream [aggadah]."). But consider that Herzl might have been the greatest dreamer of them all. One hundred years later, it is not the dream itself, but *dreaminess*, that has survived the Jewish revolution. Maybe our somnambulism is stronger than our desire for an awakening.

As my friends and I tread gingerly in Jerusalem among the shards of what we have come to refer to as our shattered dreams, we may finally be ready to recognize the extent to which we have been living synthetically, hypothetically—and precariously. For some six decades we have sung and recited the lyrics of Rahel's poem—never, I think, pausing to consider just how subversive they really are:

Perhaps it was never so.
Perhaps
I never woke early and went to the fields
To labor in the sweat of my brow . . .

Nor bathed myself clean in the calm
Blue water
Of my Kineret, O, my Kineret,
Were you there [behayit] or did I only dream?

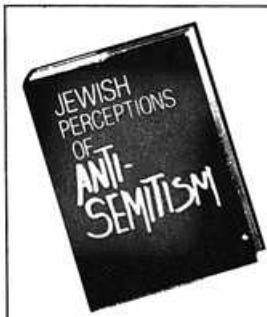
Was life by the blue waters of the Kineret so wonderful to these barefoot pioneers as to appear ethereal—or is this just another instance of provisionality as a Jewish defense against the very idea of permanence in a still unredeemed world?

If we had greater confidence in our ontology, would we be so anxious—on the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the State—to get recognition from the PLO for our "right to exist"? Maybe we really see ourselves as a figment of Arafat's imagination? ("Well, *do* we or *don't* we exist?") Or at best as the discarded scenario in a Woody Allen movie? When Woody appeared on the front pages of the international press in February to reprimand his Israeli cousins ("I mean, fellas, are you kidding? Beatings of people by soldiers to make examples of them? . . . . Are these the people whose money I used to steal from those little blue-and-white cans after collecting funds for a Jewish homeland? I can't believe it . . . "), how many of us said to him in our hearts, "Please go rewrite the script so it will come out right!"?

Maybe the West Bank is Israel's collective bad dream? If we came to our senses, we might realize that while everyone there—Jew and Arab alike—has lived at one time or another under the same dominion—the Hashemite or (in Jewish orthography) the haShem-ite kingdom—neither King can claim sovereignty over all the inhabitants of this land. The events of the last few months, which have been referred to by the Palestinians as an "awakening," are countered by Israeli actions that proclaim that the dream of Eretz Yisrael leaves no room for such an impossible reality. Therefore, it is not some teenager wielding a rock in the name of his people's liberation, but the demonic hosts of Amalek or Haman—or Hitler—that we see. The woman who appeared on Israeli television sitting in the back seat of her car, holding her infant and staring blankly at the hole in her windshield while her settler-husband, abandoning wife and child, galloped off through the wild West Bank in hot pursuit of the young native who had thrown the rock, is an icon of our insensate state. In awakening very slowly from *that* dream, we have begun pinching ourselves—and beating others—until we are *all* black and blue.

It is not the dream itself, but dreaminess that has survived the Jewish revolution.

Of course, even in my present iconoclastic mood I am not indifferent to the qualitative distinctions between the original (Labor Zionist) vision and the gluttonous, messianic dream of a Greater Israel, but it does



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JEWISH PERCEPTIONS OF ANTISEMITISM

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appear that what persists is a sense that success or failure of "the enterprise" is measured by the distance between reality and whatever vision of utopia one subscribes to.

As in the sixties, Philip Roth provides us with a prooftext of our time. *The Counterlife* is built on the idea of invented lives and the divine power of the writer to imagine, simultaneously, the road taken and the roads not taken. The middle chapters, set in Israel (mostly in a settlement on the West Bank) and so top-heavy with polemics that they read at times like a disembodied symposium between (did I say *between*??!) *Commentary* and *Tikkun*, hits at the very heartland of our nightmare and at the games we play with ourselves.

The Zionist dream of transforming Jewish history into something utterly *other* was, perhaps, a great act of impersonation. What Nathan Zuckerman defines as his fabricated identity may capture the protean profile of the Jew in the twentieth century—and may also account for the hysterical Jewish concern with "image" as a media construct:

> Being Zuckerman is one long performance and the very opposite of what is thought of as being *oneself*. In fact, those who most seem to be themselves appear to me people impersonating what they think they might like to be, believe they ought to be, or wish to be taken to be by whoever is setting standards. So in earnest are they that being in earnest is *the act*. For certain self-aware people, however, this is not possible: to imagine themselves being themselves, living their own real, authentic, or genuine life, has for them all the aspects of a hallucination.

The Zuckermans incorporate the sum of Jewish options in the modern world: The two brothers and their respective counterlives are synecdoches of the choices made over the past century by migratory Jewish collectives. A prosperous dentist and philanderer in New Jersey reappears as a *ba'al teshuva* in a settlement on the West Bank; his brother, the writer (of course), shuttles between alternative lives in New York and London. Every time the author smudges out one version and tries on another, he winks at history and reinstates the primacy of the dream. If it doesn't work, that is, write another draft, switch the channel (or turn the damn set off!), turn over and go back to sleep.

The reader of *The Counterlife* comes to expect each brother, in turn, to be extricated by a fiat of the imagination from the impasse—death on the operating table, hijacking in mid-flight—into which he has been written. How different is this reading from that of the embattled liberal democrat in latter-day Israel who longs to be delivered by an American *deus ex machina* (with Ronald Reagan once again playing the leading role)? How different is it from that of the child in his plaintive appeal to parental reason to extricate him from the clutches of his nightmare?

Have we become so self-defined as the People of the Book that we cannot emerge from our *textuality*, from the paralyzing faith in a major copyediting job that will change the narrative? In the symbolic rhetoric of our texts, with their infinite possibilities for recontextualization, we may find stoning an appropriate form of punishment for the sin of collective arrogance. But when do we finally close the book and open our eyes?

The dangerous gap between the real, *la vrai condition juive*, and some ideal construct of a possible Jewish world, is the abyss over which the entire Zionist enterprise is now perched. Those who are still luxuriating in the spinoff of their dreams are complemented by the cynics among us who have relinquished the dream altogether; both parties are hardly invested in living tolerably in the present. A widespread inattention to the procedures for meliorating the status quo is the obverse side of utopian reasoning. There is, in the most profound sense, no true democratic spirit abroad in this land because there is so little concern for the procedures, the arrangements of reality. Absolutist thinking leaves no room in the scheme of things for relativity, for compromise, for *process*. Blueprints of a Heavenly City preempt a genuine social contract—and here the socialists and the Jewish "ethicalists" may be as much to blame as the nationalist and religious fanatics.

"Chosenness" may mean, above all, a state of self-proclaimed incommensurability—a fundamental unaccountability before the assembly of nations or any Kantian moral tribunal. Whether God or Marx is the architect of our social vision, it is cut of impermeable whole cloth.

"In dreams," Yeats wrote, "begin responsibility." The narrator of Delmore Schwartz's story by that name views a film of his parents' courtship and—anticipating the disastrous issue that he knows will come of their coupling (himself!)—attempts to halt the film in mid-reel. Our nightly newsreels permit no such splicing, no return to those halcyon days before the deportations and the beatings, or—rolling back even further—before the conquest of "Judea" and "Samaria" which was the catalyst of our imperialist dreams.

Blind Tiresias was a seer; Samson, on the other hand, "eyeless in Gaza," acted on a very private vision of reality and pulled the house of the Philistines down together with his own. Our actions in Gaza show that we may have inherited his strength—and his blindness. □

ISRAEL AT FORTY

Israel: Into the Abyss?

Abraham Brumberg

Mordechai Virshubsky, a member of Ratz (Movement for Civil Rights), was rapidly polishing off his lunch in the Knesset dining room. "I have come here," I said, "to write an article about the current situation in Israel." "You mean," he replied, "an obituary?"

Our conversation took place on February 4, 1988, a month after my arrival in Israel, and funereal comments no longer shocked me. With the Arab insurrection in full swing, they typified an atmosphere of gloom that hung over some segments of Israeli society. There had been pessimism five years ago, when I last visited Israel, but now it was compounded by a sense of urgency and foreboding. In May 1983 a friend who is active in the Peace Now movement (PN) said he thought the prospects grim but not hopeless. Now, he confessed, he saw only "one chance in a hundred" that the situation would turn around.

BIRDS OF ILL OMEN

The writer Amos Elon had told me four years ago that the situation was "salvageable." No longer. "Israeli society," he now said, has become "hopelessly brutalized." Not even the most ghastly acts committed by the Israeli soldiers are likely to shake most Israelis, fed for years on rhetoric that enshrines violence and struggle as the existentialist fate of the Jews—in their own state no less than outside it. This rhetoric has fostered the image of an Arab as a subhuman creature, not to be trusted, forever waiting to thrust a knife into your back. (Palestinian "terrorists," Begin used to intone, were nothing but "animals on two legs." Not to be outdone in zoomorphic imagery, General Rafael Eytan, erstwhile chief of staff, referred to West Bank demonstrators as "drugged roaches," and Mr. Shamir likens the Palestinians to grasshoppers whom he threatens to "crush without mercy.")

Elon was equally pessimistic about the political system, which allows small parties to exercise enormous power and contributes to the steady erosion of democratic values; in addition, he was bluntly censorious about some of his own friends in Peace Now. Though he shares their goals, he faults them for some of their tactics—for instance, failing to take on the military for flagrantly violating the ruling of the highest appellate military court after the Kfar Quasim massacre in 1956, which clearly defined the kind of orders soldiers are duty-bound to disobey.* (Two PN activists, Galia Golan and Paul Mendes-Flohr, told me the day after the large rally in Tel Aviv on 23 January that they felt it would be "unfair" to exhort the soldiers to defy their officers. Instead, PN was encouraging Israeli lawyers to challenge Rabin's orders in court. On 22 February Rabin, in what seemed like a remarkable lapse of memory, told an NBC interviewer that he had never issued such orders.)

Elon's views, by no means singular in their anger and thrust, illustrate the radicalization of the Israeli "left," "opposition," or "peace camp." The palpable sense of impending catastrophe is accompanied by a proliferation of views once considered *outré* and heretical, if not downright treasonous. A few years ago there were some who mentioned taboo concepts such as "a Palestinian state," or the need to negotiate with the PLO. Now I found that these notions have become part of the vocabulary of much of Israel's internal opposition.

A good part of the press reflected this change. Articles in *The Jerusalem Post* (JP), *Haaretz*, and *Davar* overflowed with criticism of entrenched Israeli attitudes and government policies, and calls for recognizing the Palestinians' right to self-determination. A long-time subscriber to the JP, I was unprepared for the avalanche of titles such as: "Israel Must Unfreeze Its Patterns of Thought," "Seeing Through the Greater-Israel Bluff," "No Security in Holding on to Areas," and "Along the Road to a Disaster."

Abraham Brumberg has written on Jewish subjects for *The Economist*, *Soviet-Jewish Affairs* (London), *New York Review of Books*, and *Tikkun*.

*On the afternoon of the first day of the Sinai Campaign, October 29, 1956, forty-three residents of the Arab village of Kfar Quasim, unaware that a curfew had just been imposed on all Arab villages along the Israeli-Jordanian border, were mowed down by Israeli troops as the villagers were returning home from their fields. There was a public outcry, two officers were given long prison sentences, and the subsequent ruling of the Appellate Court was accepted as legally binding by the IDF. (The culprits, incidentally—not the first or last instance of selective Israeli "generosity"—were later amnestied.) For a discussion of the relevance of this ruling to the current situation in Israel, see "Law Must Rule, Even in Times of Crisis," by David Kretzmer, *Jerusalem Post*, Feb. 5, 1988, p. 5.

Anatomy of the Opposition

The opposition (or "peace camp") in Israel is neither large nor monolithic. It includes groups such as the Mapam (a socialist-Zionist and almost exclusively kibbutz-based party), which have consistently advocated the return of the territories, and also intellectuals who, while hardly "anti-Israel," have taken a dim view of some of the basic tenets of political Zionism.

The prominent writer Benjamin Tammuz is one of them. Years ago, Tammuz was associated with the "Canaanites," a small group of intellectuals advocating the creation of a new "Hebrew" nation, rooted in pre-Biblical cultures, and embracing various indigenous Arab tribes. He now looks back indulgently at this heroic if rather unrealistic effort. His attitude towards Zionist ideology, however, has not changed. Indeed, he traces the current "malaise"—the obsession with holding on to Arab-populated territories, "political skullduggery," economic irrationality ("ten percent of our population lives off the stock exchange"), and above all the penchant for looking at reality through "ideological" rather than "realistic" lenses—to Zionist history "*ab ovo*."

Already the First Zionist Congress, held in Basel in 1897, he said, "was based on two false presumptions—first, that the sufferings of the Jews dictated one single solution and, second, that 2000 years in exile must culminate in the creation of a Jewish State." "It is arguable," he added with a smile, "whether Jews do in fact need a state, but there can be no doubt that they do not want one. What better proof do you need than the fact that for the past forty years, with our gates open, so few Jews have opted for *aliya?*" With some notable exceptions, "those who have come to this country have done so because they were *forced* to do so—or were manipulated by party *shlikhim* (emissaries) and Jewish Agency bureaucrats." Now we have a society in which the proportion of those who come here to those who leave [the so-called *yordim]* is one to four."*

According to Tammuz, the stark disparity between much of the reality of Israel and the ideals that inspired Zionism's founders and leaders lies precisely in the fact that the ideals were *au fond* illusions (e.g., that the Arabs would welcome the Jews bearing the gift of economic prosperity) which could not be maintained indefinitely without leading either to a "divorce from reality or brazen hypocrisy." It may already be too late, says Tammuz, to undo the damage wrought by years of "illusions and delusions." In the meantime, he is prepared, for all his strictures, to vote for Peres, who is at least "more pragmatic" than his partners in the National Unity Government (NUG).

Another critic outside the Zionist fold is Yeshayahu Leibowitz, an eighty-five year old distinguished biochemist and man of letters. Unlike Tammuz, who is thoroughly secular, Leibowitz is an Orthodox Jew: "You will find me in a local synagogue every morning," he said, "and there are thousands like me here in Jerusalem." Unlike Tammuz, who now confines his activities largely to belles lettres, Leibowitz is not loath to cast his animadversions publicly. ("He has become a veritable television personality," one awed Israeli told me.) His comments are positively scabrous. "This country," Leibowtiz said, peering at me owlishly, "has become one huge apparatus of violence for maintaining dominion over another people. All its resources—spiritual, mental, physical—are channeled into one single effort: to keep a nation under subjugation, without civil or political rights, without the protection of the law, under permanent military occupation."

Leibowitz does not shrink from the bleakest scenarios: "Statehood has become the dominant ingredient of Israeli political culture. From this to fascism is but a small step. Do you realize," he suddenly adds, "that we are the only modern state to have legalized the use of torture?" (Leibowitz was referring to the judiciary commission, headed by ex-Supreme Court Justice Moshe Landau, which ruled last May that the country's security services, when dealing with suspected "terrorists," may use not only "nonviolent psychological pressure," but also "a moderate measure of physical pressure." Who and what determines the nature of "moderate physical pressure" was spelled out in the secret part of the ruling, to which no one outside the narrow circle of security officers is privy.)

Clearly, Leibowitz is out to shock the listener. But he is deadly serious all the same. "There are two roads open to us," he says: "Either the perpetuation of the current state of self-deformation, or partition of the country and full recognition of the Palestinian right to self-determination. Only the latter may prevent Israel from becoming a fascist state."

The "non-Zionists" (I exclude from this category the Communist party, Rakakh—now almost exclusively an

*Mr. Tammuz was exaggerating. The figures are more or less one to two. He is more right than wrong, however, about "manipulation" (if not worse). The Israeli policy towards Soviet Jewry is illustrative: Over the past ten years or so, only about 20 to 25 percent of Soviet Jews have opted to go to Israel. Alarmed, the Israeli authorities have been pressing the U.S. Government to deny refugee status to Soviet Jews and to bring them directly from Moscow to the Ben Gurion Airport, whether they want to or not. As one who had been active in the 1960s in alerting American public opinion to the plight of Soviet Jews, I can testify that the same indifference to the actual aspirations of Soviet Jews—those who wanted to leave and those who clamored for equal cultural and religious rights in the USSR—informed Israeli efforts when the head of the government was not a former leader of the Irgun or of the Lehi (Stern Gang), but the much venerated Golda Meir.

Arab nationalist party—and the ultra-Orthodox Neturei Karta) are a marginal phenomenon, albeit their approach to the current crisis is strikingly similar to that of the far larger group—people with impeccable Zionist credentials. (Unlike most of Kahane's followers, for instance, who have earned their combat spurs either by attacking Soviet officials and ballet dancers in the United States or roughing up the occasional Arab in Galilee and the West Bank, Peace Now includes many battle-scarred IDF officers.)

Arye Eliav—writer, educator, former diplomat and, between 1970 and 1972, Secretary General of the Labor party (LP)—has long been a champion of the "peace for territory" formula. In 1973 he led an unsuccessful revolt against the LP's "Galili compromise," presided over by Golda Meir, which called for an increase of settlements and provided hefty financial incentives to businessmen eager to invest in the West Bank. At first, Eliav advocated negotiations with "Palestinians" and the creation of a Palestinian-Jordanian state. Subsequently, he concluded that Israel must accept the PLO as the legitimate spokesman of the Palestinians, and that the options for the nature of the final settlement must be left open.* "We must insist," he told me when I saw him in January, "on only one condition—namely, that the PLO suspends its hostilities during the negotiating process." The LP must resign from the NUG, stop "mouthing platitudes and pious generalizations," and "educate the Israeli public why the present policy is nothing but a prescription for disaster." Like many of his friends, Eliav is dismayed at the "passivity" of most American Jews. "Unless they—and the U.S. Government—make it crystal clear to Shamir that his road leads to the abyss, we are finished."

Professor Yehoshafat Harkabi, former head of Israeli Intelligence, is an even more salient example of a person willing to revise his views when faced with a changed reality. In *Ben Yisrael Learav* [Between Israel and the Arabs] (1968), and *Arab Attitudes to Israel* (1972), Harkabi had analyzed the implacable hostility to Israel prevalent in the Arab world at that time. As recently as January 1985, in a lecture delivered at the Hebrew University, he said that "what is on the agenda ... is not negotiations with the Arabs but the need to refrain from blocking the possibility of negotiation in the future." Now he advocates immediate talks with the PLO. He explains matter-of-factly: "Of course I speak differently now—because the Arab attitudes have changed."

*A year ago, three independently conducted polls in the territories revealed that 93.5 percent of the respondents were loyal to the PLO; 71.1 percent chose Arafat as their preferred leader. (Meron Benvenisti, *The West Bank Data Base Project—1987 Report*, Jerusalem, 1987, p. 45.)

Harkabi says that those who insist that the PLO is sworn to the ultimate destruction of Israel (as expressed in its National Covenant) and that any concessions would therefore merely whet its appetite for "Jaffa and Tel Aviv," are blind to the new developments in the Arab world in general, and in the PLO in particular. In recent years, the "pragmatists" within the PLO, who are prone to overlook its "grand design" in favor of something less but realistic have grown stronger. The Hussein-Arafat agreement of 1985 was based on the "revolutionary" (for the Arabs) principle of "land for peace." The Amman document of November 1987 similarly stresses Israeli withdrawal from the territories, and says nothing about "Greater Palestine."

The "opposition" is waging a war against some of the most pernicious ills that afflict Israeli society—the addiction to ideological dogmas, jingoism, the erosion of moral sensitivity, the imperviousness to the dictates of common sense.

Are all these nothing but empty phrases? Must Israel insist that the PLO formally revise its National Covenant before it agrees to sit at one table? No, says Harkabi. It is unrealistic to demand from any movement that it "abrogate explicitly its basic documents," however "vicious." But a wise policy would help to "consign them to oblivion." PLO moderation would be encouraged by Israeli moderation, while an intransigent Israeli position will only strengthen PLO extremists. The PLO has already gone on record as being fully prepared to accept the various UN resolutions, among them 242 and 338, which explicitly recognize Israel's sovereign existence, in exchange for Israel's recognition of the Palestinians' right to self-determination. It has also announced its readiness to abandon terrorism—again on the basis of a quid pro quo. Yet all such overtures have been rejected out of hand by Israel, with even some of the "doves" insisting that the PLO must unilaterally declare its covenant null and void.

This, says Harkabi, is nothing but a counsel of despair. Unless Israel negotiates directly with the PLO, youthful radicals will sweep aside its moderate leadership, opt for full-fledged war, and enlist "the violent support of Arab states," however much the latter might prefer to remain on the sidelines. Iran, now engaged in war with Iraq, might well be in a position to head a fundamentalist *jihad* against the Jews. "What I want,"

says Harkabi, "is simply the best deal for Israel. This means choosing not between good and bad, but between bad and worse. Those who urge us to dig in our heels are pushing us to the brink of the abyss."

The growth of pragmatism within Fatah—Arafat's mainstream and largest PLO organization—has also been traced compellingly by Matti Steinberg of Hebrew University. (See his "Arafat's PLO: The Concept of Self-Determination in Transition," *The Jerusalem Journal of International Relations*, No. 3, 1987). I asked Steinberg what he thought of the claim that the PLO had merely set aside its goal of "liberating [all of] Palestine" in favor of getting it piecemeal, through the "policy of stages." Ten years ago, he replied, this was indeed the case. Now the "stage" is gradually being identified with the ultimate goal.

Another voice calling for cold realism is that of Zeev Schiff, *Haaretz*'s military expert, and one of the country's most respected journalists. Three years ago, Schiff, hardly a "bleeding heart" (*yefey nefesh*—a favorite Israeli invective), had outlined the harrowing consequences likely to ensue from an annexation—either *de facto* or formal—of the territories ("The Spectre of Civil War in Israel," *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 39, No. 2, Spring 1985). Early in January he spoke firmly about the need to negotiate with the PLO, but he envisioned a time span of ten to fifteen years to iron out "the final scenario." Four weeks later, Schiff's calendar had changed. "Time," he said, "is against us." The uprising in the territories may turn out to be the "last opportunity to negotiate for peace." He was visibly shaken by the behavior of Israeli troops: "What worries me more than the hatred for the Arabs displayed by thousands of young Israelis is that this hatred may eventually turn against the politicians who forced them into a no-win situation."

Finally, a few words about criticism from an unexpected source—the Likud—and from the religious "peace camp." The position of the Likud—and above all that of its major component, Herut, rooted in Jabotinsky's Revisionist philosophy—is as clear as it is intransigent: The West Bank and the Gaza strip are part of Eretz Yisrael, and not a single dunam of it can be ceded on "historical" as well as security grounds. Recently, however, some of its members have questioned the received wisdom. One of them is the mayor of Tel Aviv, Shlomo Lahat (or "Tchitch," as he is known throughout the country), a member of the Liberal Party (Herut's junior partner).

When I saw Lahat in his Tel Aviv office, he laughed off the brouhaha he had caused ("Garbage disposal—that's my number one problem," he says engagingly.) He has long been opposed, he said, to annexation: "To sit where we're not wanted corrupts Israel's democratic character." He believes such a policy engenders worse security problems than would ensue from abandoning the territories. He is staunchly opposed to the notion of a Palestinian state, advocating instead the "return of the territories to Jordan." (The "Jordanian option," incidentally, is by now but a historical footnote. Hussein is no more keen on absorbing a million and a half Palestinians than the latter are eager to live under his rule.)

Another maverick is Menahem Savidor, former Liberal-Likud MK and Speaker of the Knesset. Savidor blends traditional Revisionist "toughness" with some distinctly un-Revisionist suggestions: Israel must "quell the riots by all available means," and then undertake "an aggressive diplomatic initiative" leading first to the creation of "an autonomous [Palestinian] entity" and eventually to a referendum allowing the Arabs to choose between a linkage with Israel, or one with Jordan, or with a "federated Israel-Jordan condominium."

More surprising than the cases of "Tchitch" and Avidor is the defection of a Herut Central Committee member, Moshe Amirav. Last summer, Amirav and two Herut MKs, Don Meridor and Ehud Olmert, held several secret meetings with PLO supporters in East Jerusalem, where they unfolded a plan for a peace settlement, to be reached through direct negotiations with the PLO, on condition that it suspend its hostilities and recognize Israel. The plan envisioned an Israeli-Arab confederation "in historic Eretz Yisrael on both sides of the Jordan." According to what Amirav told me, he himself would also "consider, after a ten-year period, giving up part of Eretz Yisrael"—which is to say, acquiesce in the formation of a Palestinian state.

The Palestinians who met with Amirav's group registered interest. Arafat invited Amirav to discuss his plan, indicating that he was ready to meet the plan's two major conditions. But the Herut was unimpressed. Meridor and Olmert—though not dissociating themselves from Amirav—fell silent, and Amirav was hauled before a "party court" (an institution borrowed by all major Israeli parties from the Russian revolutionary tradition), which promptly censured him. Amirav agreed to meet no more with the PLO: "I told them I had done my job, now it's up to Shamir to carry on." A subsequent trial, at which Amirav "brought documents" presumably proving his plan to be squarely within Jabotinsky's ideological legacy, ended in no verdict.* Once Amirav published his plan in the press, the party decided to try him again. With expulsion a foregone

*It is safe to assume that Mr. Amirav had set himself an unenviable task in trying to turn Jabotinsky into a friend of the Arabs. Jabotinsky plainly regarded the Arabs as inferiors, and although (unlike his present day epigones) he certainly did not advocate "transferring" them, he was in favor of granting them only personal and not national rights in the future Jewish State.

conclusion, Amirav decided to steal the show from his comrades. A few days after our meeting, he defiantly tore up his party card in that most public of all public places—national television. His two fellow travelers remained in the party and in the Knesset. Avidor left the party.

The breaking of ranks in the Likud is a novel development. Thus far, save for some ungenerous comments, the defections have not drawn much fire from the party leaders.

The story, however, may not be over. For Danny Rubinstein, *Davar*'s specialist on the West Bank, the case of the dissident Likudniks illustrates what he terms "the de Gaulle syndrome"—that is, the theory that the Likud alone, precisely because of its hard-line record, may bring about the withdrawal from the territories. Extrapolating from current polls,* Rubinstein told me that Likud is bound to win in the next elections, and then be forced by the escalating cost of the uprising (including the mounting impatience of Israel's allies, especially the United States) to become "more flexible." Whether or not Mr. Rubinstein's theory proves right, further defections cannot be ruled out.

Finally, the religious objectors. There are two groups: Netivot Shalom (Paths of Peace), and Oz V'Shalom (Courage and Peace). Their case rests on reasoning similar to that of other "oppositionists," as well as the contention that Jewish religious law—*halakha*—as one of them put it to me, "commands the Jews to become a light unto other nations—and not to oppress them." "*Khesed*" (magnanimity), proclaimed a rabbi at a discussion I attended at Hebrew University's Truman Center, "is the heart of the Torah, not territorial acquisition." Morally, the religious "doves" are important if only because of their fierce opposition to the religious fundamentalists such as the Gush Emunim (Block of the Faithful—GE) and ultra-orthodox parties.† Numerically, however, they are weak and lacking in the appeal exuded by the other religious groups. Which brings me to the latter, and their stalwart allies on the right.

Onward Jewish Soldiers

The proposition that hatred and/or oppression of other nations is fundamentally at odds with Jewish religious teachings is admirable but not altogether accurate. As nearly any other body of doctrine, Judaism contains some patently moral as well as distinctly obnoxious elements. And it is precisely those elements that a good part of the religious community invokes to justify Israel's right to "oppress others."

Religious Jews who are anguished by the betrayal of their beliefs are aware of the darker sides of the *halakha*. However, instead of rejecting, condemning or explaining them (which many rabbis have done throughout the ages) as having been shaped by specific historical conditions that are no longer relevant, many of them prefer to ignore them. In the ensuing "battle of quotations"—with each side laying exclusive claims to "the truth"—those who insist that hostility to if not outright war against the "gentiles" (that is, Arabs) is sanctified by Jewish teachings often have the better of their opponents. They appeal to the same atavistic instincts as the anti-infidel preachings of the Islamic fundamentalists or Christian fundamentalist fulminations against the "Antichrist."

No political party is more violently anti-Arab and more adept at selecting appropriate passages from the *halakha* in order to prove the "superiority" of the Jewish people, its right to "Greater Israel," the need to treat Arabs as treacherous inferiors, and the notion that democracy is alien to the Jewish tradition than Kahane's Kach.‡ But Kahane's voice is not one crying alone in the wilderness. Basing themselves on passages from the Torah and Maimonides, scores of ultra-orthodox rabbis have rained anathemas upon the Arabs that are nothing but mirror images of the most besotted anti-Semitic diatribes.

Why must the search for "political solutions" be postponed until that distant (and unlikely) day when the uprising dies down? Why not seek them now?

To cite just a few examples: Rabbi Eliezer Waldenberg, recipient of the Israel Prize in Judaic Studies for 1976, declared that same year that the *halakha* dictates the expulsion of "all Goyim from Jerusalem" (*Haaretz*, May 9, 1976). The Chief Rabbi, Mordekhai Eliahu, has forbidden the Jews to sell "even one flat to gentiles" (*Haaretz*, Jan. 17, 1986). In an article entitled "The Genocide Commandment in the Torah" (!), published in *Bal Kol*, Feb. 26, 1980, the former campus rabbi of Bar Ilan University, Israel Hess, averred that just as Maimonides preached

(Continued on p. 120)

*According to the latest poll (as of March 1988) conducted by *Haaretz*, a vote now would increase Likud's representation in the Knesset by four seats, Tehiya's by four, Kahane's by three. At the same time, the LP would lose four seats.

†Until a few years ago, the politics of parties such as Agudas Israel consisted almost entirely in wheedling more and more money for religious institutions. Now they are firm ideological allies of the Likud.

‡See Ehud Sprintzak, "Kach and Meir Kahane: The Emergence of Jewish Quasi-Fascism," in *Patterns of Prejudice*, London, Vol. 19, Nos 3-4.

ISRAEL AT FORTY

In a Time of Trouble: Reflections of a Religious Zionist

Michael Rosenak

One of the most stirring and theologically startling prophecies describing the relationship among God, Israel, and its land is found in the thirty-sixth chapter of Ezekiel. After the Lord tells the prophet that He "has poured His fury" upon the House of Israel "for the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for their idols with which they had defiled it," He declares:

> and I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed through the countries: according to their way and according to their doings I judged them. And when they came to the nations, into which they came *they profaned My holy Name, in that men said of them, These are the people of the Lord, and they are gone out of His land.* [emphasis added]

Exile, it seems, desecrates God's name, makes Him "look bad," as it were. And He, being concerned for His holy name, "which you have profaned among the nations to which you came," will *sanctify* His name. "And the nations shall know that I am the Lord ... for I shall take you from among the nations, and gather you out of all countries, and I will bring you into your own land." Coupled with this promise comes another—a promise of moral and spiritual renewal: "A new heart will I give you ... and I will put My spirit within you ... and you shall be My people, and I will be your God."

This prophecy, albeit in a secularized and highly "actualized" interpretation, was an inspiration to Zionist writers and workers. They believed (they might have said, with Ezekiel) that Judaism was truncated and crippled in exile and that its social testing-ground would be the society to be built in Eretz Yisrael. Whether they were secular or religious, all Zionists had an idea of the new "heart of flesh" they would be granted upon their return to Zion. Also, they were thrilled by the blossoming of the arid plains and the mushrooming of the old and new cities, and were reminded thereby of God's reassurance to the Babylonian exiles that the nations, which had had contempt for the scattered people of Israel and its God, would be brought to say: "The land that was blighted has become like the Garden of Eden and the waste and blighted and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited."

It is one of the signs of our time, and of recent months in particular, that this spirit of awesome celebration has almost vanished from the land, that the prophecy seems to have gone sour and the descendants of the prophets are bitter. Nobody talks like the celebrants anymore, except for the people of Gush Emunim, the pious yet insensitive settlers of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza, whose awesome faith now looks merely awful, and whose religious confidence is indistinguishable from smug and tight-lipped dogmatism. The rioting and "unrest" in the territories conquered during the Six Day War seem to have turned even hearts of flesh (Remember Rabin's beautiful address on Mount Scopus in 1967 in which he praised the spiritual, courageous, and humane qualities of our soldiers?) into hearts of stone. The Jews of Israel, returned to their land, appear on the world's television screens as helmeted bullies beating David-like demonstrators armed only with stones—most of them children surrounded by weeping mothers.

The *Khillul HaShem* (desecration of God's Name) emanating from Zion seems pervasive. A perplexed government tries to sound as though it is in control, but succeeds in sounding only hard-hearted and obtuse. Our soldiers, frightened by a war for which they were not trained, confused by vague orders that seem to permit random violence and by legal authorities warning them not to obey illegal orders, are increasingly demoralized and/or brutalized. Perhaps worst of all, "the religious," for whom the desecration and sanctification of God's Name are important concerns, make one wince. With few and notable exceptions, rabbis and other religious leaders think that the most serious problem in the present confrontation is the "faintheartedness" of those who lack the courage to obey the biblical commandment to face the enemy without fear, and who, by their moralistic exhortations, weaken the hands of the defenders of our Holy Land. The Diaspora is

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caught on the horns of a dilemma. Liberals are angry and offended, but since they bear responsibility neither for the policies they deplore nor for those they advocate, their accusations sound more panicky than principled. To us, at least, they also sound too comfortable with their anger. Diaspora Jews on the right, on the other hand, and, alas, religious Jews are heavily represented in their ranks, seem to approve "tough" policies, but, thank God, do not have to carry them out. Their sons are at college or in yeshivot, not patrolling Gaza on rain-swept wintry nights, not tormented by the question of what exactly they are expected to do. They, too, don't have to live with the consequences of, in their case, patriotism-by-proxy. For all—right, left, and center—life is good in Connecticut and California, and the living is easy with moral and metahistorical judgments, respectively. Nevertheless, the nations may be excused for saying that, all in all, in Israel and in the Diaspora, God's Name as the God of Israel doesn't look so good at the moment.

It is one of the signs of our time that the prophecy seems to have gone sour and the descendants of the prophets are bitter.

Actually, however, matters are not that simple. Things are not good in Israel at present, but we remain a free society, however perplexed and divided. From our press, we learn what the situation is. Brutality in the army is being investigated—by the army, among others—and reports are being published and discussed. Thousands take to the streets to demonstrate against Rabin's policies, under stringent police protection. A prominent Arab citizen of Upper Nazareth, while castigating the Israeli government and declaring that only a Palestinian state will restore peace to the land, admits candidly that even when such a state comes into being he will stay in Israel as an Israeli; he wants "to live in a state where I am free to speak my mind." Moreover, the reaction of "the world" to what is happening in what Saul Bellow aptly described as its "moral playground" can only be termed malicious. Israeli soldiers whom I know and believe report that television crews tell Arab youngsters to "organize some action" and are at times obliged. Some people in the press insinuate ludicrous comparisons to the Holocaust, and the world smiles and shudders in relief. As one Austrian (!!) hotelier recently wrote to an Israeli who had made a request for a reservation: "For us Austrians born after the war, concepts like Dachau and Auschwitz belong to the past. The present for us is Gaza, the West Bank, Jerusalem, the bombings of civilians in other countries and the establishment of concentration camps in the occupied territories." And so, he loftily rejected the man's request.

The young Austrian, who reminds his correspondent that Waldheim was elected democratically, is not the only one to tell or believe lies and to ignore the still-functioning realities of Jewish-Arab life together—at work, on the street, in hospitals. Also ignored are the lethal qualities of large rocks and the refusal of most Arab leaders to admit to the long-range legitimacy of any Jewish state at all. The world has never judged us as it judges itself; this fact, together with our (fortunate) tendency to judge ourselves harshly—when we are not indulging our (unfortunate) tendency to ignore justified criticism—makes the present moment both embarrassing and an opportune time for *kheshbon nefesh* (self-examination).

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How did we get into this situation? To answer that question, we have to do what the media cannot do and what we generally do not want to do—that is, gain an historical and conceptual perspective.

Historically, many factors got us into this situation. Jewry and Judaism have been in a state of ideational and identity crisis since the beginning of the Enlightenment and the Emancipation. All those who chose to remain Jews despite modernity—or had no choice—were faced with diverse solutions to the "problem of the Jews" and of Judaism, all of which, except for the new ultratraditionalism, involved strategies of "normalization." Zionism was one of these solutions and strategies; like most of the others, it was revolutionary yet desirous of continuity and legitimation. Like all the other modern Jewish movements, it had piercing questions about what Jewish values are, what Jewish identity is, and how to accommodate these Jewish values and this Jewish identity to other values and identities Jews had taken on. Unlike most of the other movements, Zionism envisioned transforming the Jews into a comprehensive *society*, responsible for its affairs and its "destiny," and it rejected the tradition of *Galut* wherein Jewish *communities* lived within—and somehow, *off*—gentile society. Zionism was mostly a secular affair, though its precursors were mostly religious. Therefore, it was not willing to commit itself to the traditional *halakha*, yet it expected to discover, in the flow of "normal" national life, new "holy" norms. Zionism gave up on the millennial waiting for the Messiah, but spoke, almost glibly, of redemption. It highlighted what it considered the failings of the Jewish *Galut* tradition, particularly its passivity and lack of historical involve-

ment, and insisted that a modern Jewish commonwealth would set an example of what history could and should be like—according to prophetic and messianic traditions.

Most traditional Jews kept their distance from this movement because it was a rejection of Torah as they understood it and of messianism as God had promised it. But the traditionalists were not alone in rejecting Zionism. Zionism, despite its popularity after the Holocaust and in the exciting days of state-making and state-preserving, was never the mass movement of the Jewish people. The normalization did not demand the comprehensive Jewish identity, however secularized, that Zionism did, an identity with which most Jews no longer were comfortable. America offered a better, more natural way than, Germany not to mention Russia, of being "a man [sic] outside and a Jew inside." Among new Americans (Orthodox, Conservative, Reform), ultratraditionalists and Bundists, Zionists remained a minority, too heretical and too Jewish. So they had to defend themselves and explain themselves on many fronts. To the anti-Zionist normalizers, they declared that Jews will be despised as long as they call any gentile country their homeland; to the traditionalists, they had to explain that even Jews, and even before the coming of the Messiah, require *some* homeland. It sounded too ideological to the Americans and too *goyish* to the traditionalists. And so, the Balfour Declaration and the British Mandate were not really exploited. The Jewish people did not return. Though hundreds of thousands of Jews did arrive in Palestine between the wars, the Arab population rose by the same number. Something good, both economically and socially, was happening there, no matter how infuriating it was politically. Standards of living were rising, medical services were improving, infant mortality was declining. While not producing friends for the Zionist Jews, such improvements encouraged Arab immigration and, of course, life expectancy.

Then came the Holocaust, putting an end to "the Jewish problem" in Europe in the most nightmarish fashion imaginable. Arab propagandists like to claim that the Holocaust created a Jewish state, but it would be more accurate to say that the Holocaust made it come about earlier than planned *and killed most of its potential citizens*. And the basic human and political problem of Jews and Arabs living together in Eretz Yisrael began to take center stage. How would these two peoples (for the Arabs of Palestine, influenced by Zionism, were also beginning to see themselves as a distinct people) live in the same tiny land, with each claiming possession of it all? To complicate matters, most Jews, even though they had no inclination to live in Israel, converted Israel in the wake of the Holocaust into some kind of *ersatz* or civil religion which made many demands on those heroic (and foolish?) enough to live there. Thus were born the demographic and moral problems that are at the heart of the current events.

The partition of Palestine and the victory of Israel in the War of Independence, leaving it with somewhat improved—though still difficult to defend—borders (the "Green Line"), lowered the profile of the problem for a while. True, there was intermittent Arab terror, reprisals, and no peace in the land. But Israel (that stupendously successful enterprise of Zionism), considering the handicaps under which it was born, labored, and achieved, was clearly, for all but the bigoted, morally in the right. It had made a claim to at least part of its historic homeland under the principle of moral reciprocity, which was, after all, the best and most objective type of moral claim, and had developed the strength to defend its claim against those who denied that moral reciprocity. Of course, Israel remained "romantically" attached to the rhetoric of *subjective* right, such as religious authority and biblical promise. Nevertheless, the reasoned and reasonable argument of moral reciprocity, which could convince even those not bound to or by the Bible, was that every people, like every individual, had the right to demand for itself what any other people or person could rightly claim. Moreover, in accordance with the logic of moral reciprocity, Zionists freely admitted that the basis for Jewish claims to a homeland applied to the Arabs as well: Anyone making a claim on the grounds of a universal moral principle accepted thereby the inalienable right of others to make similar claims. The only question dividing Zionists was where the Arab claim could legitimately be realized. Some (the Revisionists) insisted that it had already been realized in numerous new Arab states; others, and later the Herut party too, especially after Camp David, maintained that moral reciprocity meant that Palestinians, like Jews, had the right to define themselves as a nation apart from the general Arab identity. The argument among the Israeli parties was whether the demands of moral reciprocity had already been met by the severing of Jordan from Palestine, with its Palestinian majority, or whether the density of the Arab-Palestinian population in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza required drawing the border closer to the "Green Line."

For Israel in the pre-1967 period, the prime focus was not on Jewish-Arab relations, but on achieving security—on the "ingathering of the exiles," that is, rehabilitating in its land that part of the Jewish people willing and able to come to it, and building a Jewish culture that would be modern and "normal," but that

still would maintain continuity with the past.

This view of the task of nation-building corresponds, I believe, to three fundamental ideological aims of Zionism as a revolutionary Jewish movement. First, Zionists called for rebellion against Jewish passivity. They declared that Jews—as Jews—were morally bound to refuse to be killed, and that they had to be prepared to kill when necessary. Jews thereby would become morally responsible for their own existence, for people without power cannot be held responsible. Second, Zionists demanded that the Jews be reconstituted as a people in the land of their ancient (and thus presumably common) historical memories, but without regard in principle to their present lifestyles or worldviews and despite their varied cultural backgrounds. Third, Zionists insisted that Jewish culture had a (largely secular) future as well as a religious past—that Hebrew, and whatever could be "done" in and through it, was neither too holy nor too irrelevant for actual use, development, and growth.

These Zionist aims were widely attacked, from both the right and the left of the religious and cultural spectrum. The ultra-Orthodox and the ultra-Reform had no use for a "Jewish return to history." The ultra-Orthodox considered such aims pure impudence before the coming of the Messiah and the classically Reform believed that the Messiah already was present in emancipatory movements and enlightened societies and that Jewish "particularism" merely hindered his efforts to perfect the world. Moreover, the prospect of killing was unacceptable to many. Traditionalists feared the increase of anti-Semitism, and some ultraliberals, including theological ones, found a certain moral excellence in the symbolic status of Jews as vicitms, while others simply believed that the world was becoming benign. As for the reconstitution of the Jews in their land, it was diametrically opposed to the ideologies of Emancipation and it created the specter of dual loyalty. Finally, the "development of Jewish culture" seemed sacrilegious, on the one hand, to the traditionalists who knew Hebrew to be a holy tongue and Jewish culture to be Torah; and parochial, on the other hand, to the cosmopolitans. Why speak, write, and think Hebrew, they asked, when French and English were infinitely "richer," and were spoken by practically everyone?

* * *

The religious Zionists were an idiosyncratic group. They disagreed with their traditionalist brethren who said that all historical significance was confined to the remote past and to the indeterminate (messianic) future, yet they accepted the traditional conception that in a theologically significant past God had given a still-binding Torah and that, in the future, He would send the Messiah to redeem Israel and all humankind. At the same time, they believed that something meaningful and important could be done *now* that corresponded to Judaism's need for a society, something that affirmed Jewish longings to return to Eretz Yisrael and that would solve or mitigate the increasingly intolerable conditions of the Galut and draw Jews who had left religion back into Jewish life and commitment. They were bitterly castigated by ultra-Orthodox leaders who considered Zionism worse than assimilation, and they were pitied by the secular left for their religious fixations. To the religious right, they explained that Zionism was not messianism, but rather a political and pragmatic affair; to the irreligious left, they stressed the importance of cultural (religious) continuity and ventured to suggest that even they, the iconoclasts, were bringing Messianic times closer by their dedication.

If we cannot apply Torah in a manner that testifies to a heart of flesh, in all things and with all people, then God's Name will not be sanctified through us, and the Land of Israel will revert to its state before there was Torah—it will become, once again, "the land of Canaan."

In fact, religious Zionism "fell between the chairs," as the Hebrew expression puts it. Both the secular Zionists and the non-Zionist Orthodox could demonstrate, each from a different perspective, that Zionism was incongruent with—that in fact it undermined—traditional religiosity. Power, said the ultra-Orthodox, meant worldly corruption: The Jewish tradition anticipated a Jewish kingdom only in redemptive times when power had become redundant or when victory over the powers of darkness was assured by the messianic king. Power, said the secularists on the other hand, meant liberation from the overspiritualization, bred in the powerless ghetto, of pristine biblical attitudes toward human nature and conflict. If the religious Zionists could free themselves from the exilic tradition, they could actively reshape Jewish life spiritually, but in rejecting part of Jewish tradition, they would naturally become secular. Moreover, said the secularists, *halakha* was inappropriate for a society since its codes assumed a surrounding gentile society not bound by it. *Halakha*

contained no categories useful for a sovereign Jewish state dealing with and being part of the modern world. The "world" of Jewish tradition was mythic-idolatrous, irrelevant to contemporary international affairs; and its spokesmen were too naive to comprehend mass media, public relations, and international relations. The ultra-traditionalists agreed but drew the opposite conclusions: If *halakha* was inappropriate for a modern state in a "modern world," then such a state was intolerable and Zionism was an affront to genuine Judaism and could only corrode Jewish existence. The secularists agreed that new Jewish culture competed with the Jewish culture of Torah observance. They pointed out that one could hardly square a renaissance of Jewish culture with loyalty to a religious heritage that looked upon writing footnotes to sacred texts as more important than writing a short story or a scientific critique of religion—in Hebrew, of course.

Until the Six Day War, most religious Zionists were at a loss to respond. Actually, they seldom had to, for nobody talked much to them. The ultra-Orthodox "yeshiva world" never engaged them in theological discourse and treated them with patient disdain, anticipating their "return"; the secular world made coalition agreements with them, but otherwise ignored them, anticipating their disappearance. The religious parties were concerned with "religious leadership," religious education, and religious settlements and communities. Their supporters were good citizens, but hardly a force to be reckoned with. Those on the left of religious Zionism were proud of religious kibbutzim that were, in a sense, junior partners of the Labor movement's settlements, though such kibbutzim also were religious communities. Those religious Zionists more inclined to the political right made much of patriotism, but added little to the national right wing except for traditional rhetoric and conviction.

Nevertheless, I would argue that religious Zionism had a crucial role to play in the national rebirth, namely, to maintain its essential Jewishness and to negotiate the innovations required within the tradition by virtue of the return of part of the Jewish people to its land. This role required that religious Zionists be profoundly aware of the crisis facing Judaism, and that they recognize Zionism both as a response to this crisis and as itself deeply enmeshed in it. What was *not* called for, but was to develop, especially after the Six Day War, was an ideology of religious Zionism that blended "tradition-as-usual" with a messianic fervor that, in its exhilarating grandeur, ostensibly could sweep the halakhic and theological problems of modern Judaism—together with the moral ramifications of these problems in a Jewish society—under the carpet.

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, the first chief rabbi of modern Eretz Yisrael, intimated what the role of religious Zionism should be when he said that "the sacred must be renewed and the new be sanctified," but there were few who wished to draw the necessary conclusions—that religious Zionism was a new conception of Jewish religiosity, innovative but not Reform, halakhic yet distinct from Galut Orthodoxy.

Among the few thinkers who clearly recognized this challenge were Martin Buber and Isaiah Leibowitz. Two people of such disparate views, who would so dislike being placed in one corner, can hardly be imagined. Buber, moreover, can hardly be categorized as a religious Zionist, having been, as Gershom Scholem described him, a "religious anarchist." An antihalakhic Jew, whose understanding of Zionism was theological to the core, he was cordially disliked by the religious parties. Leibowitz is a radically neo-Orthodox Jew who sees in *halakha* the distinguishing mark of Judaism and the wellspring of its spirit; his Zionism is exclusively political (Zionism means that "we are fed up with living among the goyim"). He too is cordially disliked by organized religious Zionism for his antimessianic and radically dovish views. Both Buber and Leibowitz have written extensively against what the other represents. Buber looked forward to a Jewish collective life in Eretz Yisrael imbued with a dialogic spirit, the hallmark of a holy people; and he saw the kibbutz, with its sense of community as possibly pointing the way. Leibowitz, on the other hand, considers idolatrous all attempts to spiritualize the state and demands that Jewish religion confront the intrinsically secular state with its normative-halakhic claims, much as prophets of old confronted corrupt kings. Nevertheless, both of these men understood that Zionism means that religion has to meet new challenges, and both of them considered either "dialogic encounter" or compromise (Buber and Leibowitz respectively) with the presence and position of the Arabs essential for the success of the Zionist enterprise.

Both men seem to have agreed that it was necessary to seriously examine and partially resolve the dialectical tensions within the aims of Zionism itself. Zionism involves power, yet one of religion's tasks is to teach that too much use of power is no less morally corrupting than too little. Of course, those who have had no power can be excused for being oblivious to its dangers and Jews have, indeed, been powerless enough, for long enough, to become dangerously innocent. We seem not clearly to understand that power involves self-limitation, especially if one wishes to be responsible and effective vis-à-vis others who also have power—and more of it than we.

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In Defense of Likud Policy: An Interview with M.K. Dan Meridor

Although the Labor party won a larger percentage of the popular vote than its opponent, the Likud party, in the last Israeli election, the coalition agreement that it entered into with Likud created a "rotation" that eventuated in Likud's Yitzhak Shamir becoming prime minister during the final years of the National Unity government. Although Foreign Minister Peres strongly disagrees with Shamir's policies, Likud is now in a position to present its views as "the policy" of the State of Israel.

Member of Knesset Dan Meridor is widely recognized as one of Likud's most effective spokesmen and one of its most influential insiders. He was secretary of the cabinet in the Likud government headed by Menachem Begin and later by Yitzhak Shamir. He is now a member of the Defense and Foreign Affairs Committee of the Knesset. Tikkun *interviewed MK Meridor in late March of 1988.*

Tikkun: As you know, part of *Tikkun*'s criticism of Israeli policy in the West Bank rests on our reading of the Torah, which consistently commands the people of Israel not to do to others what was done to them when they were an oppressed minority in Egypt. Some Jews use the Holocaust and the sufferings in Europe as a license to reject normal standards of morality, asserting that the countries of the world have no right to judge Israel because they treated us immorally in the past. Yet Torah ethics reject this assertion and insist that we Jews must break the cycle of oppression, resist the repetition-compulsion, and not treat others as we were treated.

Dan Meridor: *Tikkun*'s reading of the Bible is exactly correct, and this requirement not to oppress others emerges from our history as well. But this doesn't answer the questions about the morality of the "occupation."

To deal with the "occupation" we must first understand Israel. Israel is a nation-state. We Israelis do not see ourselves as simply part of an ethnic group or a religion—which, I think, is how American Jews understand their position as part of the United States. We see ourselves as a nation, entitled to have a country of our own and a state of our own. If we Jews say that we have a right to a state of our own in some part of Eretz Yisrael (leaving aside the question of boundaries of that state for the moment) and if we say, as most of us do (except for that American immigrant Kahane), that we won't expel the Arabs from Samaria or the Galilee or from Abu Ghosh or from the Negev, then we must inevitably say that some part of the Arab nation will live as a minority in a Jewish state even if they don't want to. In this sense, those Arabs will be deprived of the right to self-determination, if self-determination means having their own state in which they are the majority and their culture is the dominant culture. If we are not prepared to say this, then we must accept the alternative—that there can be no Jewish state at all. Does this make me an occupier in Nazareth or in Bethlehem? I don't think it's fair to describe it as an "occupation" when we talk about a state that has Arabs living as a minority.

When you questioned Prime Minister Shamir in Washington on March 15th, you asked an interesting question which he didn't answer. You asked him what he would do if he were an Arab living in Israel.

Tikkun: Yes, we asked him: "If you say that Palestinians must not be allowed to win any advances as a result of the current violence on the West Bank, what would you advise them are effective techniques for achieving their goal of political independence?"

Meridor: If I were an Arab living there, I would recognize that there are twenty Arab states, including one, Jordan, where there is a majority of Palestinians. So, I would either choose to move to one of those states, or accept that my lot was to be a minority in a Jewish state. This, incidentally, is what you American Jews have chosen: to live as a minority under a non-Jewish majority. So if I were this Arab, I wouldn't do more than you do in America. I wouldn't raise hell or demand my own state. America is somewhat of an exception in this regard because it is an amalgam of many different minorities. So consider France or Hungary. If I were a Jew wanting to live there, I'd have to accept my minority status even if my family had lived there for a thousand years. If I wanted to live in a state where I was a majority, I would emigrate, which is precisely what many of our parents did.

So if Zionism has any legitimacy, then we must say

that Arabs living within the borders of a Jewish state will not have the right to self-determination, even if they want it very much. What the borders should be, and what the relations should be within the State of Israel, are legitimate questions that I'm ready to address.

Tikkun: In a democratic society, minorities are allowed to vote and thus exercise some important influence over their own fate. But in the West Bank, Palestinians do not have such rights.

Meridor: Well, there are limits to democracy even in the U.S. If blacks became a majority in some part of the U.S. and said they wanted to secede from the U.S. and have their own national state separate from the U.S., it is highly unlikely that the U.S. government would allow it. Imagine that the Jews in Morocco say, "We want a Jewish state in the part of Morocco where we are a majority." Do you think anyone would take this seriously? If this were how the world conducted itself, there would be thousands of nations around the world.

Now, if there is a people that has no place whatsoever where it can exercise national self-determination, then I think the world should see to it that it gets some place. But this is precisely what the Arabs have—and even the Palestinian Arabs have one country, Jordan, where they are in fact the majority.

As to democratic rights in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza, here I tend to agree with you. In the long run what we have now is not healthy. I don't think that having a military government is sustainable for an indefinite period of time. That is why I'm in favor of applying Israeli law to everyone in the entire country and granting to every Arab the option to become an Israeli citizen and vote for the Knesset. In the long run we can't keep different systems of sovereignty or different legal systems, one for Judea and Samaria and one for the rest of the country. But if we do this, we would be attacked by you—because you would then say that we had annexed the land. Annexation is Likud's position.

Tikkun: So if you want to give Palestinians those rights, why don't you?

Meridor: Because we agreed at Camp David not to apply our sovereignty, but to leave the question open for negotiations.

Tikkun: So why didn't you implement the autonomy agreements of Camp David before?

Meridor: It was Egypt and Jordan that refused to go along with those autonomy talks that were mandated by Camp David.

Tikkun: Judging from many public statements by Likud leaders, it appears that your actual plan is to perpetuate the current situation of occupation for as long as possible, because Likud knows that if the territories were formally annexed and the Palestinians given the vote, within a not very long period of time the Arabs would be the majority in Israel and the majority in the Knesset, and then there would be no Jewish state.

Meridor: The only way we can actually solve our problems is through a negotiated settlement in which the Arabs understand that they can't get all that they want and we understand that we can't get all we want. There are two possible compromises that will accomplish this: One—which I don't like—would be to slice up Judea and Samaria. But the other, which I prefer, is along the lines envisioned by Camp David: The Arabs have control over all aspects of their internal affairs and the Jews are still in charge of security. This would give them more freedom than they have in any Arab state in the world.

Tikkun: They've been living for twenty-one years under Israeli rule, and the rosy picture you paint of freedom without their own state has been far from the reality.

Meridor: I just want to see Arabs who live in Hebron and Bethlehem and other Palestinian cities coming to us saying, "We are ready to talk and work something out." If they don't feel they have to wait for Arafat and his henchmen, we will be willing to sit down and negotiate an agreement with them. We would be willing to really give them control of every aspect of their lives under an autonomy agreement. With the exception of security, which would be in our hands, they would have control over everything concerning their lives. Of course, it won't be a state, so it won't have the attributes of a state, like conducting foreign affairs. They would elect their own self-governing authority, and that authority would have powers including a budget so that they could tax and run their own programs, agriculture, industry, tourism, education, religious affairs, the local police—almost everything you can think of would be in their hands. But the question of security would have to be in our hands, to protect us from Arab attacks—and this, after all, is not just in our imagination: we've suffered it in the past. And the question of security against terrorism would have to be in our hands. The issue of coexistence between Jews living in Judea and Samaria (who would not be subject to this authority) and the Arabs is one that would need to be worked out—and it can be agreed upon. Issues of land and water—these can be worked out, if there's a desire to work them out.

But the problem is that many of them don't want to

work things out. Even on U.S. television you see from time to time interviews with Arabs in the territories, and we see this much more frequently on our TV, and when you ask them what they want as a final settlement and would they be willing to settle for a Palestinian state living in peace with an Israeli state, they tell you quite openly, "No, we want an Islamic state all over the land. Jews, as in America, should be a minority here." But I don't want to live, forgive me for saying so, the way you American Jews live—as a minority. That's the whole difference.

Tikkun: There were elections in the 1970s on the West Bank and people were elected who expressed loyalty to the PLO, so the Israeli military authority removed them from office. If you were a Palestinian, would you trust an election under the military authority of Israel, given this previous experience?

Meridor: We had elections only for mayors, not for a self-governing authority à la Camp David. If we had a self-governing authority, it would be created under terms of an agreement shared by both sides.

Tikkun: What are your objections to the idea of a demilitarized Palestinian state along the lines described by *Tikkun* in the March/April 1988 issue?

Meridor: Let me answer that with another question. Since the Palestinian Arabs will never agree to a demilitarized state, will the occupation that continues after your plan has been rejected thereby become less immoral and less stupid, in the words of your March editorial?

Tikkun: Certainly the perception of Israel in the U.S. would change dramatically if Israel were to proclaim its willingness to give the Palestinians all national rights, a flag, a passport, a place in the U.N.—and then the Palestinians rejected this plan because of their insistence on their right to have their own army.

Meridor: They have their own state now—Jordan. You will not be able to convince me that the Jordanian Foreign Minister in Amman is of one people and his brother living in Nablus is of a different people; or that Anwar Nussibeh, the Jordanian defense minister, is one nationality and that his son Sari Nussibeh is a Palestinian. You cannot convince me that they are two separate nations needing two separate national states. Please don't tell me they don't have a state. They have a state—and part of their nation is under the sovereignty of a different state. The majority of them live in Jordan and they are a majority in Jordan.

Tikkun: A majority of them believe that they don't have a state.

Meridor: They make you believe it. But I don't think they believe this: 1.6 million out of 2.8 million people in Jordan are Palestinian Arabs. Half of the ministers of the government are Palestinians. They say they are one people. Jews have only one place in the world where they are the majority. Palestinian Arabs have one state where they are the majority and they want to make Israel into another Arab state, a second Palestinian state. I know that there are questions about the border that need to be negotiated, but there is no need for a second Palestinian state. Morocco is an Arab state, and there are Jews living there. I don't accept that there is a people being denied self-determination. They are living as a minority within a Jewish state. Could they make it a non-Arab state? No. They are a minority and they live there.

Tikkun: But how will you hold on to your majority status in perpetuity? Won't you be forced into a Kahane position eventually?

Meridor: No, I'm not Kahane and I will never accept expulsions of Arabs from Israel, just as I equally reject the idea that a settlement should involve Jews being expelled from the settlements in Judea and Samaria. Both Jews and Arabs have a right to stay where they are and not to be pushed out. My main answer to the demography question is aliyah. But we should also note that as Arabs make gains in their material status in Israel the birth rate goes down. In fact, the birthrate of Christian Arabs in Israel who are doing particularly well economically is lower than the Jewish birthrate. So we will see a closing of the gap between birthrates. To give up parts of my homeland and to jeopardize my security now because maybe fifty years from now there will be an Arab majority seems unreasonable.

Tikkun: Let's get back to demilitarization.

Meridor: You can demilitarize the Sinai, where it is empty land. But you can't demilitarize people. Who will look at them when they pass the Jordan river with a Katyusha in their truck?

Tikkun: *Tikkun*'s plan calls for the Israeli army to have that border authority.

Meridor: But they will never accept that. And many American Jews would condemn us—having the only army in the world occupying another country. And won't the stones still be thrown?

Tikkun: If they won't accept it you've lost nothing. And the appearance of Israeli intransigence on Palestinian rights would be completely undermined. If you are right that the Palestinians won't accept, then the offer comes at no cost to you, but with plenty to gain.

Meridor: I don't think the Palestinian Arabs deserve a second Palestinian state. Suppose we say what you say. They will reject it and make their counterproposal. Then the compromise will be someplace between what they say and what we say. Then, we will accept the compromise to be nice, and finally we will be pushed, out of this same logic of trying to appear reasonable, to accept a U.N. army. And then, if we agree to that, they will eventually tell us that the only way they can assure that there is no terrorism is for them to have their own army.

The process is this: If tomorrow Shamir says yes to the Shultz plan, Hussein will say no. Then we will have two weeks of good publicity, and in two months Shultz will come forward with a new proposal that is closer to the Arab position. It always goes like this: Israel makes steps forward, the Arabs refuse, and then Israel is still portrayed as the bad guy that is wanting to continue the occupation. So if you put a proposal like *Tikkun*'s on the table now, what will be your compromise position later?

We said at Camp David that we would be willing to settle for substantial autonomy for the Palestinian Arabs, but without sovereignty for them. That was what America committed itself to. The Americans gave us a solemn promise that for our big concession in Sinai the Americans would accept the concept of autonomy as the only way to solve the Palestinian problem. America promised that its position would be Camp David.

Tikkun: Unfortunately, when you negotiated Camp David you left out of the negotiations the one party whose participation and agreement is indispensable for peace: the Palestinian people themselves. Perhaps what the U.S. is coming to realize, and what Israel will eventually have to accept, is that you can't negotiate the fate of the Palestinians with anyone else but the Palestinians.

Meridor: Well, I'm in favor of elections in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza so that they can elect representatives who will talk with Israel and participate in an autonomous body along the lines of Camp David. We want the elections.

Tikkun: The Palestinians might participate in elections for a body whose task was to negotiate the future of the West Bank. But you want them to participate in elections whose purpose is to fill places in a structure set up by the Camp David process—a process in which they had no voice and in which they did not wish to participate. If you are calling for elections so that they can negotiate with you, that's quite different than if you are calling for an election to further your own plans for the West Bank, plans that they have not agreed to.

Meridor: Well, they can elect these people and they can become part of a joint Palestinian/Jordanian delegation and raise whatever they want at direct face-to-face negotiations with us. But what you are ignoring is that we hear day after day from these Palestinians that they are not struggling for negotiations; they are struggling for all of Palestine and the elimination of Israel. We know what the stones are meant for. They want all of Palestine. We live here, we hear this daily—am I supposed to close my eyes and pretend that we don't see it? Can I close my ears and pretend that I don't hear it?

In Camp David Begin signed an agreement that talked about "the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and their just requirements"—who would have believed that? But does that help us a bit now?

Tikkun: It might have helped had Israel actually acted as though it believed in the legitimate rights of the Palestinians and made efforts to get autonomy talks going. Instead, Israel sped up the creation of settlements in the territories and Begin talked with contempt about the Palestinians. Similarly, even if you called for Palestinian self-determination now, but then acted in ways that ensured that there could be no negotiations, you could probably ensure that Israel was not perceived as serious—and then little would be gained.

Meridor: So next you will be saying that we must negotiate with the PLO! And that we will never do. The PLO is bent on our destruction.

Tikkun: We have called for a plebiscite—but to be legitimate, Israel can impose no conditions on who can run for the positions to be elected. You must eventually negotiate peace with your enemies, not your friends.

Meridor: If the PLO doesn't represent the Palestinians who live here, let those who do represent them come to negotiate. But if the PLO does represent them, so that what they really want is what the PLO wants—no Israel and no Jewish nation, no self-determination for the Jews—then I will never talk with them.

The IRA doesn't even want all of England; all they want is Northern Ireland, and no one pressures England to talk with them. Or the Action Directe in France. There are people you just don't talk to.

But people always apply different criteria to us. Look

at America recently. On the one hand, Shultz tells us that a little bit of territory doesn't matter in today's conditions of modern warfare where missiles, not land, are decisive. And a few days later I watch the U.S. send troops to Honduras because the Nicaraguan Sandinistas are a threat—because they are too near home. The whole world almost went to nuclear war because the Russians put missiles in Cuba. But when it's here, near our home, a few miles from my home in Jerusalem, then suddenly territory and distance from your enemies is unimportant. What kind of people do they think we are? Are we really so dumb that we don't understand the meaning of these moves? Or so dumb that we don't understand what the Arabs want? We understand precisely. Assad gave a speech a week ago, and he said that we will go on fighting Israel, sometimes in the form of full-scale war, sometimes with stones, sometimes with Molotov cocktails—it's the same war and it will go on till we destroy Israel, just as we did the Crusaders. The stones are part of the Arab battle to get rid of Israel.

Tikkun: Are you unaware of the many Palestinians who would want to live in peace with Israel?

Meridor: Let them come and talk with us, for God's sake.

Tikkun: But when Amirav, your own Likud party member, attempted to talk with Palestinians this past year and reported that there was some real progress you threw him out of your party.

Meridor: But he met with the PLO! That is an organization that by its very name says it is committed to liberating Palestine from the Jews, and it cannot be part of negotiations. We will negotiate only with those who wish to live in peace with Israel in this land, not those who want to destroy Israel.

Tikkun: Every Palestinian calls him or herself PLO—just the way that Israelis call themselves Zionists. Many Palestinians say they are PLO, but do not seek the destruction of Israel.

Meridor: But they don't wish to talk to us, these people—all they do is tell us to talk to the people in the PLO who have the real power, and those are the ones who wish to destroy us. And ninety percent of Israelis, both Labor and Likud, agree that it would be wrong to talk to the PLO.

Tikkun: We worry that Likud doesn't see that a far greater military threat than any risk that might come from a Palestinian state will come from the loss of political support in the U.S. if the beatings and repression associated with the occupation continue.

Meridor: We don't want to oppress anyone. When there are incidents of soldiers acting with excessive force, Israel has a reputation for erecting commissions of inquiry that far exceed those of any other nation—we supervise our own military.

But suppose your assumption is correct. Israel existed for many years before we had a military relationship with the United States. I think there may be a much greater military threat. If Israel does retreat to the pre-1967 borders, if Israel becomes twelve miles wide, if Jerusalem again becomes a border city, if Israel becomes a weak country, then the relationship between Israel and the U.S. will deteriorate in a very short time, because then Israel will really be a burden on America, no longer a strategic asset. The high peak of military, political, and economic ties with the U.S. was only attained after we had won the military victory of 1967—only when Israel started to project strength, not weakness or crying for help, did the U.S. show an interest in having a solid alliance with us. And only then did the Arab countries show any interest in talking peace with Israel. Sadat or Nasser didn't come before 1967. It was only afterwards that they wanted to talk with us. If we retreat, we would be reversing the course of history, and that would encourage our enemies. For that same reason, we have to make it clear to the Palestinian Arabs that the pressure they are exerting through throwing stones will have no positive effect, and that if they want to run their own affairs they can get that in only one way—by sitting down and talking with us face to face, and talking peace. □

ISRAEL AT FORTY

A Narcissistic Wound

Eleonora Lev

[For Nathan, who said, "The little Palestinian in me is dancing now."]

This time we're not on the side of redheaded David, that heroic scamp, God's darling, the crowd-pleasing favorite. This time we're that fool Goliath, weighed down by our armor, and you know how the story ends. After so many years of unclouded self-love, how painful it is to wake up and discover this wound, this coarse and ugly nakedness. What, the State of Israel a monster? What, firing indiscriminately at a rioting throng, smashing bones on command and in cold blood, blue welts on the abdomen of a pregnant woman, tear gas in the hospital, soldiers burying four Arabs alive?

There were perhaps similar incidents during the Lebanon War, but then it still seemed like an aberration. All we had to do was come home, get out of the Lebanese quagmire, and everything would be all right. But this war is being waged at home and reaches down to the root of the matter. There is no longer any way to evade it, to explain it away.

One reason why many are only now beginning to understand what a few already understood during the Lebanon War is that habits of thought are the most difficult to break. There has been a series of ever-larger modifications of Israeli conduct through the years without a corresponding alteration in how we see ourselves.

Thus, at a certain point we gave up hitchhiking and sleeping under the stars, except in large groups and under guard; but we continued to think of ourselves as living in a small, friendly, and safe country. Most of us gave up traveling to the territories years ago—granted, more out of fear than out of shame. We made our peace with the daily abominations of discrimination and injustice, and we benefited from cheap labor, tax benefits, and extra privileges based on devious and labyrinthine laws. But we continued to believe, wanted to believe, in the old slogans of an egalitarian society and, even, of a chosen people.

Eleonora Lev is news editor of the Israeli newspaper Maariv. *This article, written originally in Hebrew for this issue, was translated by Lenn J. Schramm.*

It's hard to surrender a myth that has been so much a part of our identity. The present crisis—one from which everyone agrees there is no return—is thus a grievous narcissistic wound. Not only has our very Israeliness been a central factor in our identity, but over the years we have gotten used to the state being a supplier of self-love. The state, however, has betrayed our trust. It had a charge to always make it possible for us to see ourselves as good, the embattled few against the many, the humble saints versus the warmongers bent on our destruction. The mandate it received for the use of force was limited and well-defined. By no stretch of the imagination did it include swinging clubs to smash limbs, rifles aimed at demonstrating children, the filthy struggle against a popular uprising.

We were supposed to be the spiritual heirs of the Exodus and of the Warsaw Ghetto. That was the pretentious appointment we sought—and even received, for a while—from the world. The price that had been paid for this appointment was so terrible that we felt we owned it, like an inalienable asset, a fat account in the bank of history that would always be in the black. As could have been anticipated, the credit was squandered, in part because of politicians converting it time and again into pennies of extortion and begging, and also because *a priori* it was effrontery to decide that someone owns the memory of the Warsaw Ghetto.

The entrenchment behind our historic right to the myth of the persecuted and righteous is what spawned the moral monsters such as Ariel Sharon. Self-love is a basic existential need; these men have been blessed with it in abundance. They will have no problem withstanding the prolonged siege of public opinion in Israel and the world, the horrifying clips screened on television. Nothing will penetrate their pachydermatous innocence, until the bitter end.

However, even their sworn enemies, the perpetual bleeding hearts, the members of *Shalom Akhshav* and the leftists of various persuasions, have long had their own safety valve—the ritual purification of signing petitions, the repeated ceremony of demonstrations against oppression, against the occupation, of waving signs in

torchlight processions that have little impact but are wondrously effective against the increasing self-nausea. The bleeding hearts will be all right: they are still able to hide under the excuse that their persistent and well-documented opposition to the policies proves that their consciences are always on the side of the angels.

We're that fool Goliath, firing indiscriminately at a rioting throng, smashing bones on command and in cold blood, blue welts on the abdomen of a pregnant woman, tear gas in the hospital, soldiers burying four Arabs alive.

Between these two extremes stand all the other Israelis. As the weeks and months pass, it becomes increasingly evident that it is their battle that will determine the outcome—not the war between us and the Palestinians, which, so obviously and so classically, is bogged down in the blind alley of a stalemate, so that all we can do is wait, during the protracted bloodletting, until the leaders of the two sides finally understand the situation and reach some sort of agreement, one requiring mutual concessions and a more-or-less just partition of the land in contention. The question, on the Israeli side, is what sort of Israel will emerge from this battle if the painful and persistent undermining of its self-image continues.

The strong-arm policy shatters more than the limbs of a few hundred Palestinians. It casts us, the people, who once identified with the Entebbe raid, in the role of the foolish and wicked, both committing detestable acts and failing to profit from them, gaining no advantage in the war against the rebellious youth who continue to throw stones, with scornful smiles upon their faces.

The weapons of the Palestinians are no longer defamation and myths, no longer just bloody terror and the military threat of the Arab countries. All of these we could and did withstand, somehow, for forty years. A few youths had the right inspiration last December, and it spread like wildfire through every Palestinian town and village—no more borrowed weapons and dependence on others. At long last they have succeeded in dragging us into the true frontal confrontation: a battle for clods of earth, for the local stones, for the roads. They have finally held the mirror of truth before our faces. And now, pinched and hungry, stones in hand, eyes full of hatred, they are no longer impotent. Armed to the teeth and with psychologists in tow, loving ourselves less and less, we swing our clubs, fire tear gas and rubber bullets, and envy them: from the moment they understood they have nothing to lose, we understood that, in this confrontation, we no longer have anything to gain. □

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ISRAEL AT FORTY

The Twenty-First Year

While many Israelis continue to hope that the coming elections will be the avenue to achieve a dramatic change in policy on the West Bank, and see political organizing of the Peace Now variety as a mechanism to mobilize public opinion that may eventually translate into larger electoral support for the peace-oriented parties, others have begun to develop a different strategy: what they call a "politics of refusal." The best known example of this approach is "Yesh Gvul," the organization of Israeli army reservists who refuse to serve on the West Bank or in Gaza. A newer group, called "The Twenty-first Year," was established in Tel Aviv this past January. Its founding document, "Covenant for the Struggle Against the Occupation," has been signed by over one thousand Israelis, including writers Yoram Keniuk and David Schutz, poets Yosef Sharon, Harold Shimel, and T. Carmi, and academics Amos Funkenstein, Israel Gershuni, Ruth Garrison, and Paul Mendes-Flohr. The organization is being formed as an umbrella of groups of activists working in different sectors of Israeli society, each aimed at confronting the various cultural and political mechanisms within Israeli society that make the undisturbed continuation of the occupation possible.

COVENANT FOR THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE OCCUPATION

I

The fortieth year of the independence of the State of Israel is the twenty-first year of its occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. For more than half of its years of statehood, Israel has been an occupying power; the State of Israel is losing its democratic character. The continued existence of a parliamentary system of government within the "Green Line" cannot disguise the fact that Israel rules over a population—the Palestinian Arabs—which is deprived of all democratic rights. The occupation, thus, is not only a deplorable situation affecting the lives of the Palestinians; it has an equally pernicious effect on the very political and spiritual substance of Israeli society.

- The occupation has become an insidious fact of our lives; its presence has not been confined to the occupied territories; it is, alas, among and within us and its destructive effects are in evidence in every aspect of our lives:
- The Israeli Defense Forces and the conception of our national security are subordinated to the dictates of the occupation.
- The Israeli economy benefits from the blatant exploitation of Palestinian labor; it has developed a distorted colonialistic structure.
- The educational system is based on a double message: while promoting "democratic values," it condones a repressive regime which controls the lives of disenfranchised subjects.
- By yielding to the authority of the Military Government in the occupied territories, the Supreme Court of the civilian judicial system tacitly condones the violation of the human rights of the Palestinians. The military judicial system unapologetically and brazenly subjects considerations of legal justice to the regnant needs of the occupation policy.
- Israeli culture is pervaded by a self-satisfied glorification of its tortured posture; its political involvement is by and large sterile.
- The Hebrew language has undergone a process of contamination. It has been harnessed to the imperatives of the occupation. It has been called upon to provide a misleadingly benign vocabulary to anesthetize the repression and flagrant violations of human rights.
- Israeli political thought is preoccupied and impoverished by the debate over the future of the occupied territories; it has locked itself into stereotypical conceptions of the Palestinian enemy and a demonological perception of its acts of resistance.

Expressions of protest against the occupation are circumscribed by the national consensus; protests do not transgress the boundaries deemed permissible by the occupation regime. The Israeli of good conscience expresses his or her anguish, remonstrates and demonstrates, but by accepting the terms and norms of political conduct set by the regime implicitly collaborates with the occupation.

The presence of the occupation is total. Our struggle against the occupation must therefore be total.

II

The political agenda guiding Israeli society is a closed field of possibilities, determined by the occupation and

conducive to its perpetuation. The guardians of the ruling political system prattle about "peace" while in practice all executive branches of the system act to deepen and institutionalize the occupation. The debate over "territories in exchange for peace" and various futile gestures in the "peace process" distract attention from the colonizing process which keeps gathering momentum along the road from Tel Aviv to Gaza and Nablus.

The real moral and political question today is not the price of peace but the price of the occupation.

Against the all-embracing presence of the occupation, we posit a new framework for thought, for critical debate, and for political action. Against a limiting, distorted political agenda we call for opening a new field of alternatives for both personal and public conduct vis à vis the occupation.

III

We shall not be content with protesting yet another new settlement, another shooting or killing of those who resist the occupation, another failure to seize a political opportunity. We shall point out the occupation's insidious presence in every aspect of our lives, we shall resist it wherever we can identify it. In our struggle against it, we shall be willing to pay a personal price.

We shall refuse to collaborate with the occupation—in accordance with the dictates of our conscience and political judgment—in either all or some of the following ways:

- We shall not abandon our national symbols to the distorting interpretation of the occupation. We shall not participate in any celebration, ceremony, or symbolic occasion held in the territories under occupation or in one which lends it legitimation in any way whatsoever.
- We shall not take excursions in the occupied territories uninvited by the local Arab inhabitants. We shall not take advantage of the protection of the Israel Defense Forces and seek bargains and leisure in the occupied territories.
- We shall not allow our children to be exposed to the means by which the school system and its official curriculum promote and sanction the occupation.
- We shall not collaborate with the exploitation of Palestinian labor taking place under the sponsorship of the occupation. We shall publicize and boycott institutions, places of entertainment and the products of companies whose Palestinian employees are denied human dignity and decent working conditions.
- We shall not tolerate the willful ill-treatment of Palestinians which has become rampant within Israel proper. We shall act to stop such conduct; we shall expose each incident of this sort and take all legal measures to eradicate it.
- We shall not stand by while the Palestinians in the occupied territories are subjected to coercion, humiliation, and physical maltreatment through measures such as collective punishment, banishment, arrest without trial, torture, beatings and daily harassment. We shall not allow these ignoble deeds to be pushed from our consciousness; we shall not harden our hearts. We shall remain vigilant and accordingly protest such deeds in every possible way, including being physically present where and when they take place.
- We shall not buy goods produced by Israeli settlements in the occupied territories and shall avoid any economic ties with the settlers.
- We shall not condone the deliberate confusion of acts of protest and resistance by the Palestinians with Palestinian acts of terrorism.
- We shall not go along with the new vocabulary promoted by the reality of the occupation. We shall insist on using language true to the moral and political condition created by the occupation.
- We shall not obey any military command ordering us to take part in acts of repression or policing in the occupied territories.
- We shall not cease our quest for new strategies of critical inquiry and political action in the struggle against the occupation.

We shall resolutely refuse to collaborate with the system of the occupation in all of its manifestations.

Refusal is the only morally and politically sound form of participation in Israeli society during the Age of Occupation.

Refusal is a way out, a source of hope for our moral integrity as Israelis.

Refusal is the form of our struggle until the State of Israel will depart—in its actions, political conceptions, and daily conduct—from the path of occupation and return to the road of justice and peace.

Address for correspondence: Against the Occupation, P.O.B. 24099, Jerusalem, Israel.

For those interested in supporting the Israeli peace movement below are a few addresses:

Netivot Shalom: (Paths to Peace) P.O. Box 4433, Jerusalem, 91403 Israel.

Shalom Achshav: (Peace Now) 7 Betzalel Yaffe Street, Tel Aviv, Israel.

Yesh G'vul: (There is a Limit) P.O. Box 4172, Tel Aviv, Israel.

A committee is being formed to raise funds in America for all the pro-peace political parties in Israel prior to the elections this Fall. Information: Organizing Committee for Peace, 1024 Creston Road, Berkeley, CA 94708.

Now is Not the Time to Speak Out

Kenneth Jacobson

Some years back, George Ball wrote an article in *Foreign Affairs* entitled "How to Save Israel In spite of Herself." Today, we are witnessing others, including the editors of *Tikkun*, taking it upon themselves to save Israel from herself. They call on American Jews to speak out in criticism of Israel because they "know" that Israel has lost its moral bearings and is the obstacle to peace. And they justify this course of action on the grounds that some Israelis encourage them to do so.

The motives of American-Jewish critics of Israel may be different from those of George Ball. But their posture—knowing what's good for Israel—reflects a certain chutzpah and lack of faith in Israel's democracy. Not having made the ultimate commitment to the Jewish state—aliya—they now seek to enter the decision-making process from a distance without having to bear the consequences of those decisions.

This piece will argue that we ought to continue to support the people and elected officials of Israel, however *they* choose to resolve the difficult problems before them. It is not as if the Israeli people will have no opportunity to confront their problems shortly—an election will be held, at the latest, in October 1988.

- On February 10, the *Jerusalem Post* reported that King Hussein of Jordan said on a visit to Europe that the greatest gain for the Arab world from the uprisings in the territories has been the reaction it has provoked in the American-Jewish community.
- Early in March, thirty U.S. senators wrote a letter to Secretary of State George Shultz that, in part, criticizes Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir for his position with regard to the West Bank and Gaza.

These are some of the early results of the growing tendency in the organized Jewish community to engage in public criticism of Israel. If this tendency continues, we may have seen nothing yet.

For most of Israel's existence the Jewish community has generally accepted the principle that on matters of fundamental security there ought not be public criticism of Israel. The basis for this proposition has been that Israel is a country under siege, that Israelis are the ones that have to live or die with the consequences of Israeli decisions, and that we as a community, as much as we care about Israel, must leave these big decisions to Israel since we have not opted to participate in Israeli democracy through *aliyah* and will not suffer the consequences of any one course of action. None of which is to say that there was ever any question about the right to speak; obviously, as Americans we all have that right. Rather, it is a question of responsibility.

Now along come some American Jews, among them the editors of *Tikkun*, who maintain that things have changed. It is said that one side of the Israeli political spectrum, led by Yitzhak Shamir, is leading Israel down a road that is harmful to the country and is blocking an opportunity for peace. Therefore, it is said, the question of responsibility must be seen in a different light, and American Jews ought to speak out and side with those on the Israeli left who oppose Shamir.

But movement away from the long-standing position of Jewish restraint ought not to be taken lightly. We should move in that direction only when there is an absolutely clear consensus among American Jews that Israel's course is self-destructive. There is no such consensus. Take the question of an international conference. It may well be, as Israel's Labor party leaders argue, that Israel should grasp the opportunity for such a conference. On the other hand, the Likud leaders have a persuasive argument of their own: if King Hussein were truly interested in peace he would go the route of direct negotiations, as Sadat did; that to inject the Soviets and Syrians into the peace process would inevitably lead to stalemate and maybe even war. Ten years ago, we may recall, the Carter administration was calling for an international peace conference, when the man of peace, Anwar Sadat, understood that direct talks were the real route to peace. Arguments can be made on both sides. But this very fact impels us to refrain from intervening and trying to "save Israel in spite of herself."

More broadly, let us imagine for a moment that those who are opposed to Shamir have their wish: elections are held early in Israel and Shimon Peres does something that's never happened in Israel's history—wins a majority of the seats in the Knesset. According to those who criticize Shamir, peace would now be at hand.

In fact, there is nothing to suggest that such would

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be the case. Let us remember that even Peres, who supports an international peace conference, wants such a conference to lead to direct talks between the parties, without a role for the PLO, and critically without preconditions for negotiations. King Hussein undoubtedly has moved closer to such a position himself, but he never could come to the table without legitimation from the Palestinians. For several years prior to the disturbances the King had been seeking that legitimation. First he sought agreement from Yasir Arafat and the PLO, but he could not bring it off because of the PLO's continued rejection of Israel and of a process of open and direct negotiations. After that, he thought to finesse it through Palestinians approved by the PLO; but in that instance too, no success.

Now come the riots. The suggestion that Palestinians will display a new moderation after the activity of recent months is not supported by any evidence. Hussein is weaker, violence has been encouraged, and radical Palestinian factions as well as Islamic fundamentalists are in control. There are no Palestinians, hence no Hussein, ready to negotiate directly without preconditions for Israel.

Thus, unless one accepts the proposition that Israel in advance of negotiations should agree to long-standing minimal Arab demands—full withdrawal, creation of a Palestinian state, East Jerusalem to the Arabs (a posture which no Israeli leader supports) it is reasonable to conclude that there is no peace process today.

Negotiations have a dynamic of their own. What Israel, including Shamir, might do when facing real peacemakers ready to negotiate openly is unknown. In the early 1970s Moshe Dayan used to say, "Better no peace with Egypt than peace without Sharm el Sheikh;" the same Dayan, with Begin, was instrumental in bringing about the peace with Egypt in which Israel gave up the whole Sinai, including Sharm el Sheikh. The choices of peacemaking generated a new reality.

At least half the people of Israel are ready to make concessions on the West Bank once there are negotiations; one can assume that fraction will grow with the sense of a chance for real peace. In other words, all problems—Israeli security, greater Palestinian control over their own destiny, the demographic issue—can be resolved through negotiations.

Historically, the American-Jewish community has also refrained from public criticism of Israel for another vital reason—to criticize would weaken our ability to influence U.S. policy in a pro-Israel direction. While American Middle East policy has been motivated by strategic and moral interests, we *have* mattered. We count because the political world and the general public know that when it comes to matters affecting Israel's security, the community will be united, personal opinions aside, in its respect for Israel's right to decide. As a result, in the most basic terms, there is a political price to be paid by those who would turn against Israel.

Now we are in danger of losing what we have built these many years. During recent months, the community, by the willingness of some to break this historic posture toward Israel, has made it easier for political figures and others to discount the cost of their criticizing Israel. All of this criticism is at an early stage and there is nothing that has been lost to date that cannot be recouped. But should the criticism continue and grow, should a free-for-all emerge in the Jewish community, then those who see as their goal the weakening of America's relationship with Israel will find their task far easier.

It is no accident that King Hussein of Jordan and others have focused on the impact of the riots on American-Jewish opinion. While they may exaggerate the influence of the community, they understand that to neutralize us might open up all kinds of possibilities. Indeed, let us not forget the analysis by Arab leaders about why they don't have a military option against Israel—because of U.S. military and economic support—and how they can regain it—by working to diminish and eliminate that support. Whatever chances exist for peace, indeed the one part of peace that does exist, depends on the Arabs knowing that the U.S.-Israel relationship is here to stay. A split Jewish community revives hope among the Arabs that a new dynamic in U.S.-Israel relations can be set in motion. The result—peace opportunities disappear, thoughts of war reemerge.

One more point. One should not be overly impressed by the argument that it is now legitimate to speak out because Israeli political figures come here and call upon us to do so in order to help Israel. This is not so new a phenomenon. It usually is a case of whose ox is being gored. Israelis on the right opposed to the Camp David accords wanted American Jews to speak out to "save Israel"; and Israelis on the left opposed to the war in Lebanon wanted American Jews to speak out to "save Israel." Each would have been appalled had we spoken out on the "wrong" issue. They would have told us to mind our business, to leave these crucial matters to Israel. And they would have been right.

In sum, let us maintain our historic approach to this question. Israelis, not we, still have to live with the life and death consequences of their decisions; nothing fundamental has changed to suggest they are not capable of making these decisions in a rational way when facing a choice for peace; and, the critical role of the American-Jewish community in the making of U.S. policies warrants continued support for Israel. □

ISRAEL AT FORTY

Jewish Umbrellas and Dissent: Baby, It's Raining Outside

Albert Vorspan

What happens to Jewish umbrella organizations when traumatic events in Israel deeply divide American Jews? How can dissenting organizations function under an umbrella without being drenched in a downpour?

One significant umbrella is the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council (NJCRAC) which is the coordinating body for the entire field of Jewish community relations. It includes ten national organizations and over one hundred local Jewish community relations councils. Among the national agencies are the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the Anti-Defamation League, and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC, Reform). In terms of process, the NJCRAC is the most open and democratic of all umbrellas. Its annual convention is both serious and substantive. Over the years, the NJCRAC has succeeded in producing an annual joint program plan which is relatively liberal and surprisingly multi-issued, thus refuting both the *Commentary* contention of a Jewish tilt to the right and the left-liberal lament that Jews are becoming a single-issue community. Since 1967, the Israel issue has been the highest priority for the NJCRAC. Prior to the Six Day War, Israel was not even one of the major issues in the field, eclipsed then by immigration policy, church-state separation, and civil rights.

At this year's convention in Los Angeles in February, there were sessions on every major issue; but this year we *were* one-issue at heart. The key session was a plenary debate between Ted Mann, president of the American Jewish Congress and a prominent peacenik, and Malcolm Hoenlein, director of the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations. But it was too bland to ignite the passions of the delegates.

In all modesty, a forum on anti-Semitism, in which I participated with Earl Raab and Gary Tobin, somehow hit the nerve and the fan. Rabb surveyed the unfolding events in the territories and charted somber scenarios involving a possible backlash against Israel by opinion makers in America and ultimately by Congress. Tobin noted the shallowness and volatility of American public opinion on the Middle East and the disturbing persistence of stereotypes such as Jewish loyalty to Israel taking precedence over Jewish loyalty to America.

I accused the Jewish community relations field of being advocates for social justice on all issues except one—ours. We had lost our role as champions of social justice and had become cheerleaders and amen-sayers for every policy coming out of Jerusalem. By defending even the indefensible, we had hurt our credibility and badly served Israel itself. I said that the Hebrew prophets judged the Jewish people, and not only the Assyrians and the Egyptians. If we pretend that the media are the heart of our problem and continue to suppress the "P" word—Palestinians—we will not be community relations workers but hired guns for bankrupt policies.

There was loud applause, which I interpreted as a sense of relief on the part of younger delegates and staffers. But so what? Jewish community relations councils are tied umbilically to Jewish federations which are the fundraising and planning arms of every local Jewish community. Federations have a vested interest in Israel and in protecting sacred cows from criticism and controversy lest the spigot be turned off.

So what can one expect from an umbrella when profound diversity exists among many of its agencies? Fair and pluralistic debate. An honest hearing. And procedures whereby an organization's position is not ignored in the name of majority rule.

The NJCRAC is scrupulous about process. The rub comes when such a body as its Israel Task Force, set up jointly with the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Councils, evolves strategies and guidance for local communities that may or may not reflect the nuanced differences among the agencies. Inevitably, the NJCRAC maintains day-to-day relationships with Israeli consular officials that are much more intense than its relations with its own agencies, excepting of course the so-called Big Three (the American Jewish Congress, the American Jewish Committee, and the A.D.L.). If Shamir is prime minister, one should not expect the idea of an international conference to be

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pressed upon Jewish umbrellas by Israeli consular officials. Thus, the bland lead the bland.

There is another and very powerful player—American Israel Political Action Committee (AIPAC)—that interacts on both policy and daily operations. Apparently it was AIPAC that dreamed up the idea of legislation to close down the PLO offices in both Washington and New York City. Some NJCRAC agencies went along in Washington but thought closing the U.N. office in New York City was illegal and counterproductive. But by that time ambitious legislators were already making hay with fire-eating bravura and anti-PLO posturing—and it was too late. Moreover, the doubters within the Jewish establishment were afraid to go public after the fact. Thus, dumb policy making and fear of making waves made the Jewish community look ridiculous in the eyes of Shultz and others in the know at the very height of the Israel crisis. Incidentally, AIPAC is now undergoing a major internal postmortem concerning the recent letter of the thirty senators. How did it happen? Could it have been stopped? Was it erosion or reality? One question that will not be asked: Isn't it chutzpah to think U.S. senators need permission from the Jewish establishment to comment upon an American peace initiative? And is it beyond our comprehension that these senators, several of them Jewish, are going through the same anguish and questioning that we ordinary people are?

Our task is not to stand around singing Hatikvah while Israel may be headed for disaster.

The NJCRAC is careful to avoid becoming an obvious vehicle of propaganda. Propaganda, no. *Hasbarah* (public relations), yes. The NJCRAC is solicitous about the sensibilities of its national agencies, especially the Big Three. When the American Jewish Congress disapproved of a draft of an NJCRAC letter rapping the thirty senators who had criticized Shamir, the draft was dead in the water. But whose idea was it in the first place? How could such a letter even be contemplated by a consensus body that included in its membership organizations that had gone public in favor of territorial compromise and against the status quo?

The truth is that while the NJCRAC is a multi-issue umbrella, its bottom-line issue is Israel, and the dovish and hawkish bodies cancel each other out on the policy level. At the recent convention, an agreement could not be secured to say anything, even in private, about the impending Shultz peace mission. Operationally, day by day, the NJCRAC does an important job of interpreting Israel to the American community—usually better than the government of Israel does.

A second umbrella is even more *pareve* on the Middle East. The Synagogue Council of America (SCA) representing Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform bodies, is invisible on the Israeli crisis. This coordinating body for the Jewish religious community, far from raising the prophetic moral issues that undergird Judaism itself and that wrench thoughtful Jews everywhere, has chosen to sit this one out. A fragile body at best, living under the sword of a frequently threatened veto by Orthodox bodies, the SCA agrees about very little of serious consequence, except for some areas of interreligious relations (not including the pope).

How a silent Jewish religious umbrella can meet with Catholic bishops, the Methodists, the National Council of Churches, and other leading organizations in the midst of this crisis boggles the imagination. Perhaps by steering the discussion to hunger in Ethiopia or the old staple of Soviet Jewry.

As a delegate representing the UAHC, I urged the SCA to address the "moral issues" in the midst of the uprising. "What moral crisis?" I was asked. "Oh, you must mean the decline of tourism." Another person said that the paramount moral issue was the presumption that Jewish leaders in the Diaspora had a right to speak publicly while Israelis were on the firing line.

A rabbinic leader of the Synagogue Council participated in the recent Presidents' Conference mission to Israel. He publicly urged Prime Minister Shamir to ignore pressures for compromise and flexibility and to dig in his heels against the Shultz peace plan. So much for the Jewish religious mitzvah of pursuing peace and being a light unto the nations.

Indeed, when Amos Oz says that the current crisis is not about the borders of Israel but about the boundaries of Judaism, I start to notice how rare it is to hear rabbis (especially the chief rabbis) talk about the moral imperatives of Judaism, the demands of God, the universality of God's family, and the uniqueness of Jewish ethics. If Israel has become our God, our surrogate synagogue, and our surrogate faith, we are all idolaters.

But it is the Presidents' Conference that is the chief vehicle of support for Israel. Like the NJCRAC, the Presidents' Conference tries to give a hearing to diverse views. Its three-day mission to Israel early in March reflected careful planning and an exceptional mix of contrasting positions. The difficulty is that, in a crunch, the Conference inevitably becomes a useful tool for whichever Israeli government is in the saddle. Thus, when the current drama exploded in the media, with headlines about beatings and deportations and mass

arrests, Morris Abram, current president, inexorably emerged as the defense attorney. In effect, he became another Israeli ambassador to the public, and, despite virtuosity and great skill, the bestower of a communal kosher stamp upon Israeli conduct and policies.

Thus, when Shamir came to New York City to report to the Jewish community on the results of his meeting with Shultz in Washington, he was received by Abram and three hundred leaders of the Presidents' Conference not as a failed diplomat who had blundered into saying "No" to an American peace initiative, but as a conquering hero, fresh from the wars. Having hoisted and shackled the Shultz plan, he skewered Jews in America who presumed to criticize Israel. Two of us rose to challenge him, urging him to consider that difference of opinion on policy should not be equated with disloyalty to Israel and the Jewish people, reminding him that if the government and public of Israel are divided, American Jewry will be divided as well. From the audience's response, one would have imagined we had presented a brief for Jesse Jackson to the Jewish Defense League. Mr. Shamir lowered the boom on us, suggesting that public criticism of Israel by Jews plays into the hands of the anti-Semites and helps the government of the United States pressure Israel. Thunderous ovation. It was an atmosphere hostile to diversity and more akin to mass hysteria than to pluralism.

So how can one function within an umbrella like this? With difficulty. Organizations of the left and of the right must have the courage to fight for their positions, however unpopular at the moment. It is good to remember that Israeli public opinion was antagonistic to Egypt and the prospect of peace with Egypt only months before Camp David. It is vital to keep the Conference from preemption, either by Israel or by a grouping of member organizations within the Conference. Our commitment to the Jewish people means that we need instruments of Jewish cooperation. The alternative to the Conference is chaos. But in the name of unity we must not paper over the deep philosophical and political principles that divide us on issues like the disposition of the territories. We should not destroy our credibility by blaming everybody else and exempting Israel from any accounting. We are not ambassadors who either carry out orders or get fired. We are loving and honest Jews who are joined at the hip with our people and are full partners (and not silent partners) in the Jewish enterprise.

Each of our organizations retains its own autonomy and sovereignty. By joining an umbrella, we do not cease developing our organizational resolutions, or expressing our conscience and our judgment. Schindler-bashing may have become the chic indoor sport of American Jewish leaders—they now have Woody Allen and thirty senators to savage as well. But the real debate is about the nature of our Jewish identity, the quality of our ethics, and the Jewishness of the Jewish state. That debate resonates in every conscience and in every broken Jewish heart. In that sense, a meeting of the Presidents' Conference is an Alice in Wonderland exercise in self-delusion, because it pretends that debate raging everywhere occurs only on the margins of Jewish life.

Credibility and integrity are at risk. When Alex Schindler publicly criticized the Rabin policy of beatings, Rabbi Harold Schulweis, one of Conservative Jewry's compelling moral voices, indicated that he agreed with Schindler but attacked him for going public. The dichotomy between our public utterances and our true beliefs is becoming a form of communal schizophrenia. Check the last few presidents of the Presidents' Conference. Most said publicly what they disbelieved privately. The evidence is the dramatically different views they expressed after they left office.

And what difference does it make? Who can take such leadership seriously? Why should an American official meet with a Presidents' Conference delegation—Ten Little Sir Echoes—when he can meet much more simply with the Israeli ambassador? What is the particular role of the Presidents' Conference? If U.S. and Israeli interests are not totally identical, then are American Jewry's and Israel's interests absolutely the same? With reference to Irangate? Pollard? Relations with South Africa? The Iraqi Pipeline?

After the tumultuous events of recent months, a sea of change is taking place beneath the surface. American Jews no longer accept Israeli leaders as infallible or even wise in many matters. They see a mediocre leadership in all parties, totally gridlocked. Our institutions will not turn away; we will intensify our efforts in Israel in the belief that its very soul is in jeopardy. The Reform movement has responded by developing a Religious Action Center in Jerusalem. Our joint task is not to stand around singing Hatikvah while Israel may be headed for disaster. Despite Shamir and our umbrellas, the relations between Israel and the Diaspora will never be the same again. They will be more reciprocal, more quarrelsome, more candid, more public and more plural. How the Jewish umbrellas respond to this new reality will determine whether they will endure as worthy servants of the Jewish people or be discarded like the leaky and broken umbrellas one sees littered on the sidewalk after a storm subsides. □

ISRAEL AT FORTY

Search for Zion

Michael Walzer

Martin Buber is best known for his religious philosophy, especially for his account of the I-Thou relationship—a dialogue of such passionate intensity and absolute honesty that it makes all ordinary discourse seem pale and inauthentic. I shall have little to say about I and Thou in this essay, for I want to look at a different Buber, not the Jewish philosopher, but the Zionist critic. Buber's critical pieces have recently been collected by Paul Mendes-Flohr in a single volume called *A Land of Two Peoples: Martin Buber on Jews and Arabs*. Read in sequence, they make an impressive body of writing, though without the depth (and obscurity) of his more philosophical work. They suggest, indeed, a model of what the critical enterprise is and how it best proceeds. I want to examine this model in order to learn something about criticism in general and about Zionist criticism in particular.

Interpretation and Reiteration

Writing to Buber on his eightieth birthday, David Ben-Gurion praised Buber's "faithful participation in the work of the rebirth of Israel from your youth to the present day." Although during his youth Buber had edited the theoretical journal of the Zionist movement, he had held no office and done no work for the movement since that time. His "faithful participation" consisted of constant criticism, often directed at Ben-Gurion himself. But he remained a committed Zionist from 1898 until his death in 1965. Asked in 1962 to write an article on Jewish-Arab relations for the American Council on Judaism, an anti-Zionist group, he briskly refused, arguing that his own "criticism of the Israeli government's Arab policies comes from within, yours from without. Our program for Jewish-Arab cooperation is not inferior to what is called official Zionism; rather it is a greater [he means better] Zionism." Buber was a nationalist critic of nationalist politics.

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Buber's argument in the essay "Nationalism" displays two of the most important devices of internal criticism, and so I shall consider it in some detail. The argument begins by distinguishing peoplehood, nationality, and nationalism. The first is a matter of common experience, "a unity of fate"; the second a collective awareness of this unity; the third a heightened or "overemphasized" awareness in the face of division or oppression. Peoplehood is an impulse, nationality an idea, nationalism a program. The program is conceived in difficulty; it aims to mobilize the nation so as to overcome some deficiency in its common life. The mobilization is legitimate, Buber believes, but the strains to which it responds and the enthusiasm it requires combine, very often, to produce presumption and extremism. Nationalism tends to exceed its limits.

But how does one recognize and affirm the limits? Buber rejects the conventional philosophical response to this question, which is, he writes, "to limit this expanding group egoism from without, to humanize it on the basis of abstract moral or social postulates. . . ." He offers a twofold alternative. First, group egoism is limited from within the group by "the character of the people itself," its common experiences and shared values. Peoplehood and nationality together constrain programmatic nationalism. For the Jews this means that the conception of justice first affirmed in the Exodus code, reaffirmed by the prophets, and then reinforced by centuries of exile and persecution, must determine how Zionists act. "Jewish nationalism" is legitimate only insofar as its activities are shaped by the adjective, not the noun; its terms derived not from the category "nation" but from the category "Judaism." Of course Buber's vision depends upon the acceptance of his own account of Judaism, but his was an account that many Zionists, though not many religious Jews, probably found congenial.

The second limit to expanding group egoism is found in the process of expansion itself. Nationalists encounter other nations with programs of their own. Here political movements may be compared to individuals: "A genuine person also likes to affirm himself in the face of the world, but in doing so he also affirms the power with which the world confronts him. This

requires constant demarcation of one's right from the rights of others." Recognizing that the other person has rights follows, Buber believes, from the nature of the encounter itself. His attitude is reflected in the Talmud: "It is only common sense. Who knows that your blood is redder [than his]? Perhaps his blood is redder." The same argument holds with regard to the group. Buber contends: "There is no scale of values for the function of peoples. One cannot be ranked above another." It's not by comparison and classification that we acquire moral knowledge of other people; rather, we understand others by reiterating our self-understanding, that is by understanding others as we do ourselves. Thus Buber, responding in 1929 to those of his fellow Zionists who thought Arab nationalism an "artificial" creation, said: "We know that ... we have genuine national unity and a real nationalist movement; why should we assume that these do not exist among the Arabs?"

The moral value of stepping into the other person's shoes is a commonplace of philosophical and practical ethics: we must try to see the world from the perspective of the other. It is important to stress, however, that this is the very opposite of another commonplace, which enjoins us to step back from every particular perspective, to detach ourselves, to take a God's-eye view of the world. The first mode, stepping into rather than stepping back from, is the more modest enterprise. Of course, we can never fully understand the worldview of the other by stepping into his shoes, for what he sees, hopes for, resents, and loves is shaped more by where his shoes have been than by where they are now. But we can grasp the simple moral fact that he exists, that he has hopes, resentments, loves like ours—as legitimate as ours.*

Imagine, writes Buber, that "we were the residents of Palestine and the others were the immigrants who were coming into the country in increasing numbers, year by year, taking it away from us. How would we react to events?" Our imaginations don't attain true or certain knowledge of the other person's reaction. We don't enter into his head when we step into his shoes. We don't, because we can't reproduce other people's ideas; instead, we reiterate our own. But that is a significant moral achievement. It is, Buber writes in "Nationalism," the prophet Amos' achievement when he recognizes that the God who brought Israel out of Egypt also brought the Philistines out of Caphtor and Aram out of Kir. Instead of imagining a universal exodus, Amos imagines a series; and the fact that he can specify the details of only one of the series does not deter him from acknowledging the moral value of the others.

Buber's first limit on nationalist excess is interpretive in character: it requires him to tell a story about Jewish experience and understanding. His second limit is reiterative in character: it requires him to recognize that a similar story could be told (and is told, again and again) about the others. Similar but different—there is no ideal story, no single correct account of nationalist aspiration that, in the best of worlds, we and they might simultaneously recite.

But if legitimate nationalism takes many forms in Buber's account, illegitimate nationalism seems to take only one—political realism. What the realist sees is a world of nation-states, each one conceived in abstraction from its own history and culture, hence identical with all the others in aim and action, having no purpose save that of preserving and asserting itself. Interpretation gets no start here, and reiteration yields only an endless series of nations as frightened and aggressive as we are. Zionists who aspire to "normality" really mean, writes Buber, simply to join this series of nations.

Buber denies the legitimacy of such a goal: "The activities which we have begun in Palestine are not directed toward creating just another small nation in the family of nations ... another creature to jump and intervene in world disputes." Zionism must create a nation different from all others, true to what Buber calls its "eternal mission." That is an ominous phrase, like "manifest destiny" in American ideology, full of evil omens; but the evil is avoided by reiteration. Every nation has its mission, and what remains to be worked out is the "line of demarcation" between one mission and another. "No nation in the world has [self-preservation and self-assertion] as its only task, for just as an individual who wishes only to preserve and assert himself leads an unjustified and meaningless existence, so a nation with no other aim deserves to pass away."

If there is no single correct nationalist program, no universal version of a mission, we might still hope for a single correct rule with which to draw the line of demarcation. But Buber denies that any such rule exists. There are indeed rules against murder and expropriation, for example, but these rules do not draw the line. The line can only be negotiated; it comes into being as a result of "a thousand small decisions." Here politics takes precedence over philosophy, though this must always be politics guided by interpretation and reiteration. "There are no formulas: for truly responsible conduct there is only an orientation, but no formulas." Morality cannot work at a distance.

*Buber sometimes goes further than this, as when he writes (under the impetus of the Arab revolt of 1929) that "we need ... the ability to put ourselves in the place of the other ... the stranger, and to make his soul ours" (*Land of Two Peoples*, p. 79). This is the language of *I* and *Thou*, and it suggests a good deal more than we need to do (or can do). Morality requires that we recognize, not that we possess, the soul of the stranger.

Binationalism

The central theme of Buber's criticism from 1918 until 1965 was the failure of Zionist leaders to work hard enough, inventively enough, for Arab-Jewish cooperation in Palestine. Buber's opponents in the movement insisted that the word "enough" was meaningless because Arab-Jewish cooperation simply was impossible. Why should the Arabs cooperate with these Jewish interlopers? One had only to perform Buber's thought experiment, imagine the Jews as the residents and the Arabs as the immigrants, "coming into the country in increasing numbers ... taking it away from us," to see that the problem had no solution. In the eyes of Zionist leaders, the encounter with the Arabs took the form, almost from the beginning, of a historic tragedy. The Jews had to come, for they had no other place; the Arabs were already in place and had what Buber called an "inalienable right" to remain. And once the tragedy was recognized, what could be done but play it out? Soon enough, the looming danger of catastrophe in Europe made the tragic encounter with Palestine's Arabs seem a minor price to pay for a place of one's own.

But Buber all his life rejected the tragic view. His rejection worked on two planes, and on the second, it seems to me, more successfully than on the first. The first was higher: Buber proposed to resolve the tragedy by establishing a binational state. The second was lower: Buber tried to resist the tragedy at the level of the "thousand small decisions," setting himself against every particular act of provocation or terrorism, looking but not waiting for signs of reciprocity from the Arab side—the interlopers, he thought, had to take the initiative in creating some degree of mutual trust.

I do not believe that binationalism was ever a plausible politics; the trust that it required could not have been won except by the surrender and departure of the Jewish settlers, in which case it would have been unnecessary. Ordinary nationalism would have sufficed for the Arabs. In fact it did suffice, since they never proposed to share sovereignty with the Jews; they were the majority and demanded their democratic as well as their national rights. Ordinary nationalism sufficed for the Jews too, given their most essential purpose, which Buber shared, at least early on: to establish "the right of free Jewish immigration to the land." He rejected the standard nationalist goal, the nation-state, but it is hard to see how the right of immigration could ever have been guaranteed by any arrangement short of sovereignty. Buber argued throughout the twenties and thirties that the Arabs would accept Jewish immigrants if only the Zionist leadership committed itself to economic cooperation and political compromise. But immigration was not an issue that lent itself to compromise. What was at stake wasn't just the institutional arrangements or the practical policies of the binational state, but its very population. Who would be present and counted among its citizens? How many of each nation? As time went on Buber was driven by his commitment to binationalism to deny or at least to equivocate about the Jewish right to come into the land.

The conception of justice first affirmed in the Exodus code, reaffirmed by the prophets, and then reinforced by centuries of exile and persecution, must determine how Zionists act.

Mass immigration, obviously, would frighten the Arabs and generate an increasingly fierce nationalist politics among them. But Buber had another and, to my mind, less honorable worry. The immigrants would be frightened Jews, refugees rather than pioneers, whose desperation, he sensed, would blind them to the justice of a binational state. They were not likely to be supporters of a Buberian program. This was indeed a realistic view, but not a sympathetic or generous one. The formula Buber eventually adopted called for the "greatest possible number" of Jewish immigrants, where "possible" was (or seemed to be: his language here was never explicit) a complex function of the absorptive capacity of the Jewish community in Palestine and the agreement of the Arab community. But this was an impossible position within the Zionist movement, for Buber adopted it at the very moment when the urgency of mass immigration was overwhelming.

Binationalism in the late 1930s and early 1940s looks like a peculiarly doctrinaire position, the triumph of moral principle over reality. Faced with a steadily intensifying Nazi persecution and a growing stream of refugees, the Jews of Palestine could hardly do anything else than fight for "free Jewish immigration"—a necessity whether or not it was a "right." But Buber could never quite bring himself to acknowledge the necessity. The horror of Nazism is largely missing from his published writings during these crucial years. Only in 1959 did he try to explain how the extremity of the situation overwhelmed binational rectitude. "The principle of selective, organic development" could not stand, he acknowledged, against "the most frightful happening of modern history, the extermination of millions of Jews by Adolf Hitler. The harassed, tormented masses

crowded into Palestine.... Who would have taken it on himself to obstruct this onrush of the homeless in the name of the selective method! The masses came and with them came the necessity for political security."*

Here Buber says the obligatory things: that the refugees had to be taken in and that the community that took them in had to protect them against further onslaughts. But he clearly regards the arrival of the refugees as a disappointment to his theoretical hopes, and that is not, in human terms, an adequate response to their experience.

This, it seems to me, was Buber's worst time. And yet his dogged, resolute opposition to Jewish statehood represented an important strand of Zionist thinking. It addressed the moral reality of life in Palestine, the need to find some *modus vivendi* with the Arabs. And it gave expression to a sensibility born of centuries of statelessness, a sensibility ill-disposed, as Arnold Zweig wrote to Buber in 1918, to the paraphernalia of power: "cannons, flags, and military decorations." A certain sort of socioeconomic normality was much sought after by Zionist leaders: Jewish farmers, dockhands, engineers, even policemen. But political normality—"another creature to jump and intervene in world disputes"—remained a highly controversial subject into the 1940s. Only Jewish helplessness in the face of Nazism made normality in all its forms look more and more attractive. Given that helplessness, anyone who opposed "normal" sovereignty had to explain how s/he would cope with the immediate and overwhelming problems of the Jewish people. So far as I can tell, Buber never did that, and therefore when he wrote angrily in May 1948, just after the proclamation of Israel's independence, that "[t]oday the Jews are succeeding at [normality] to a frightening degree," the outburst did not carry the critical force that he had intended. What was the alternative to this frightening success?

Buber's micro-criticism, his attempt to confront the problem at the level of the "thousand small decisions," worked against the background of his binationalist convictions, but it served at the same time another purpose: to minimize the injustices done by the Jews. "We cannot refrain from doing injustice altogether," he wrote in 1945, "but we are given the grace of not having to do more injustice than absolutely necessary." Settlement itself was unjust, for it encroached upon Arab living space, "if not in the present generation, at any rate for future generations." But Buber was prepared to defend this injustice. What he opposed consistently, year after year, was any use of force by the settlers that was not literally and narrowly defensive. Writing against Jewish terrorism in 1938 and 1939, he drew that essential "line of demarcation" with clarity and force: "If a man enters the room where his child is playing, and sees a stranger point his rifle through the window, it is his right and duty to fire the first shot." But if the attacker makes his escape, "right and justice will not admit of the victim waylaying [another] stranger only because he is of the same blood as the criminal." Again and again, without ever adopting a pacifist position, Buber denied the moral efficacy of violence; compromise alone would open the way to coexistence and cooperation between Jew and Arab. After independence, his larger politics shattered, Buber maintained this critical posture, rejecting expropriations and reprisals, searching out local opportunities for cooperative work. His micro-criticism sustained him in those years, and it also did him honor.

"This Place, This People"

In 1945 a group of right-wing Jewish militants, led by Menachem Begin, attacked the *Ichud* (Union), the organization that was Buber's political home for the last twenty-three years of his life. The members of *Ichud*, Begin wrote, are professors from Mount Scopus (the location of the Hebrew University). The Hebrew name means "hill of observation", and they "are indeed observers ... not party to what takes place below, they reside above on the heights of a moral Olympus." This is a fairly standard criticism of critical intellectuals, but it cut especially deep in 1945 because what had just taken place "below" was the Holocaust. Buber could not avoid a response, though these were not opponents to whom he usually responded. He insisted that the "quiet, refined, reproachful" tone (the adjectives are Begin's) in which he and his friends wrote did not indicate that they had not wept for the Jews of Europe but only that they had stopped weeping in order to address the hard choices that the Jews of Palestine now faced. "Those who have been in hell, and have returned to the light of day again, have learned to speak quietly and clearly," he said. Buber refers here to Plato's well-known metaphor, but with an important difference. Hell is not the cave; it is someplace far worse; and the light of day is ordinary light. Buber's claim is not that the philosopher must leave the cave

*Compare these lines to the speech of Berl Katznelson, the moral leader of Labor Zionism, twenty years earlier, at the Twenty-First Zionist Congress in 1939. Katznelson had also favored a policy of selection; now, recognizing the Nazi threat, he called for mass immigration. "We may ask why it is that history did not choose free ... and well-behaved Jews to be the bearers of its mission and preferred instead the Jewish refugees, the most wretched of all humankind, cast adrift on the seas. But we cannot change the fact. That is what history has determined, and it is left to us to accept its choice.... What, after all, is Zionism about? Summer camps? Shabbat eve gatherings? Hasn't it always been its aim ... to provide true salvation to the Jewish people? *Collected Writings* (Tel Aviv, 1948), vol. 9, p. 75 (in Hebrew). I owe this reference to Dahlia Ofer.

but that he must leave the concentration camps. He cannot speak calmly and rationally unless he distances himself from the Holocaust. I have already suggested that Buber may have exaggerated the necessary distance. But he did sense, very early on, some of the pathologies of a politics shaped entirely by the Holocaust experience: the belief that one must fight "against the whole world" and the identification of heroism with a refusal to compromise. This, he wrote, "is not the heroism of Prometheus, but that of Don Quixote ... a tragic Don Quixote, tragic in every sense of the word."

If the new state is to be a "Jewish state," Buber writes, it must subject "its whole social life to [God's] rule, which means the realization of justice and truth both in its internal and external relationships."

If not from hell, however, then not from heaven either: The critical philosopher stands on the ground—stands, in fact, on a particular piece of ground. Buber's example is the ancient Hebrew prophet who "does not confront man with a generally valid image of perfection, with a Pantopia or a Utopia. Neither has he the choice between his native land and some other country 'more suitable to him.' In his work of realization, he is bound to the *topos*, to this place, to this people, because it is the people who must make the *beginning*." (Buber's emphasis). That is, I assume, a self-description as well as a historical portrait. Buber's prophetic presence, face bearded, voice resonant, language straining, too often, for poetic power, must have annoyed many people in Palestine and then in Israel, who, despite their *topos* did not look for prophecy in their everyday politics. But he was tied to those same people nonetheless, and in exactly the way he describes. The claim that the prophet was just one of the people, however, was never part of his description. Buber's politics were elitist as well as prophetic, "equally free," he wrote in 1947, "from the megalomania of the leaders and from the giddiness of the masses." His attitude toward mass immigration was governed by this same elitism (he preferred "the principle of selective development"), even though, as he acknowledged years later, "the tradition of the Messianic promise still lived on" among the mass of refugees. And if it didn't live on, what else could the prophet do but remind the people of the promise? He could hardly go looking for a more "suitable" people. Commitment, if it is serious and sustained, moderates the presumption of the "spiritual elite."

Standing on solid ground, Buber managed some startlingly prescient prophecies. He grasped a reality that the supposedly more realistic leaders of the Zionist movement mostly missed. He saw, first, that the partition of Palestine and the establishment of Israel meant not one war, but a series of wars, for the international standing of the new state could not make up for what was absent at home, that is, an agreement between Palestinian Jews and Arabs; hence, Israel would have to "apply its best forces to military activity." And he saw, second, that sovereignty for the Jews, political power piled on top of their existing economic superiority, meant the reduction of the Arabs "to the status of second-class citizens"—which could only make the necessary local agreement harder to obtain.

Given the conditions of the middle and late 1940s, these may not have been satisfactory arguments against statehood. Buber was simply describing, it might have been said, risks that had to be taken. And if they were to be taken, they probably had to be discounted, even denied. I suspect that Ben-Gurion really believed that the war for Israel's independence would be followed by some sort of peace. Buber did not believe it, and in the early weeks of the war he must have reached the nadir of his commitment "to this place, to this people." The binational state was lost, so it seemed, forever; Arabs and Jews were cooperating only in mutual slaughter; and the massacre of Arab villagers at Deir Yassin confirmed the breach of faith that Buber had already discerned in the response of right-wing Jewish groups to Arab terrorism in 1939. He insisted nevertheless upon his connection with and commitment to the Jewish people in Palestine: "Often in earlier times, Arab hordes had committed outrages of this kind and my soul bled with the sacrifice; but here it was a matter of our own, or my own crime, of the crime of Jews against the spirit." But it wasn't his own crime; if ever a man was innocent, he was. People with his political views must have been tempted to turn innocence into escape, to cut their ties and set out in search of some "more suitable" country. In fact, some of Buber's friends and followers left Palestine at this point, but Buber chose to remain. "Against my will," he wrote in May, 1948, "I participate in [the war] ... and my heart trembles like that of any other Jew."

After 1948, Buber made his peace, though the Arabs did not, with the new Jewish state. This concession may be taken as a great betrayal of political principle, though what is striking to me is

(Continued on p. 127)

FICTION

Ghirlandaio

Francine Prose

Not long ago, in the library, I happened to glance through a book on Renaissance painting which someone had left on a table. I saw the Ghirlandaio portrait of the old man and his grandson and immediately closed the book. After a while I turned back to the Ghirlandaio, and then I kept looking until, for a moment, I quite forgot where I was. I was remembering the year when that painting was on loan at the museum and my father took me to see it; remembering how, as a child, I couldn't stop staring at the old man in the painting, at his bulbous grapey nose. And I could almost hear my father's voice telling me once again that what the old man had—what made his nose look like that—was lupus erythematosus.

My father was a doctor. He loved medicine and art and loved especially those places where the two seemed to him to coincide: Van Gogh with his digitalis-distorted color sense, Monet, whose retinal degeneration my father pronounced to have influenced his later works, paintings of saints curing lepers, and most of all astigmatic El Greco, his View of Toledo that we lingered before, gazing at the roofs and spires and nighttime sky which El Greco with his bad vision had seen and painted as squiggles. My father walked briskly through the museum, visiting his favorites as if he were making hospital rounds, and in my slippery party shoes I skated after him. The Ghirlandaio double portrait was my father's idea of what art should be, and I was glad that it gave him such pleasure, that year when nothing else did.

I remember that winter so clearly that I can say with both certainty and amazement: I never imagined that by the next year my parents would be divorced. It seems incredible now that they never argued in front of me. But it was also the very last year when, ultimately and beyond all rebelliousness, I chose to take my parents' word for what was real and what wasn't. I believed life was as they told me, as it seemed, and what seemed to be happening on those Sundays was that my father wanted to go to the museum and my mother didn't, and she argued against his taking me because this was 1955, at the height of the polio scare, and she was afraid I would catch it in the damp overheated galleries.

But polio, my father said, was a summer disease, and besides, the European painting wing wasn't exactly the community swimming pool or a movie theater showing *Dumbo* to a thousand runny-nosed kids. He made it seem silly to worry about this, and only much later did I understand that this was not my mother's real fear. I have often wondered if, at some time on those trips, my father and I might have run into the woman he would soon leave my mother for. How would I have known? She was no one a child would have noticed in a museum full of adults, and even if my father had seen her, by accident or design, and reacted, I don't think I would have noticed that either. I was eleven, and the drama of my life was happening elsewhere.

Several times, as we stood before the Ghirlandaio, I asked, "Could someone die from that?" And my father, his love for the subject outweighing his customary wariness about what he had told me and I had obviously not paid attention to, said "Well, not immediately." There was a secret conversation beneath this, what he and I did not say: my sixth grade teacher, Miss Haley, had pretty much the same nose. The reason I kept asking was because—though I couldn't have admitted it, not even to myself—I half-hoped Miss Haley might die of it, if not instantly then sometime during the school year.

It is difficult now to remember how large our teachers loomed. Each grade-teacher was our fate for a year that lasted so much longer than any year does now; they were the only future we believed in. We collected the rumors, the gossip, the reputations, studied their passions and personality tics for clues to our future happiness. What you heard about Miss Haley was that her nose looked that way because she was a Christian Scientist and wouldn't go to a doctor, and after a while you got used to it. We heard that you did ancient Egypt, that she had strong, inexplicable, immutable loves and hates—either she loved or hated you, and you knew which it was right away.

From the first day of school it was perfectly clear that Miss Haley hated me, and sixth grade unrolled before me in all its grim, unendurable length. Miss Haley was

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a stocky, energetic elderly woman who drew fearlessly on the blackboard in very long straight lines which I recognize only now for the marvels they were. By lunch we felt as if hers were the most normal nose in the world, and we realized the truth of what the former sixth graders told us. Something in her presence made it clear that her nose was not to be spoken of—not even among ourselves, in private—and it truly was remarkable, how deeply we took this to heart. The only thing that explains it is that we were at an age when we watched very carefully—to see what you said and kept quiet, what you showed and concealed—and this was especially crucial in regards to things of the body.

Many times that first day she repeated, "Of course, when we study Egypt. . . . ," and she drew an enormous pyramid on the far side of the board. Each day, she explained, one well-behaved student would be called up to write his or her name in a brick. The Good Behavior Pyramid was much too young for sixth grade, when anything that smacked of the babyish embarrassed us beyond words. Even so, I longed—without hope—to write my name in a Good Behavior brick.

Miss Haley's unfriendliness might simply have been the result of that chemical friction which sometimes springs up between teacher and student, so that nothing between them goes right. I was a sallow, skinny girl, alternately know-it-all and mopey—it certainly might have been that. It might have been that I was half-Jewish and had a Jewish name in that small, suburban, private school where hardly anyone did. Any of that seems more likely now than that Miss Haley disliked me for the reasons I thought—because she and my father (and by extension me) were opposites, because my father represented everything her religion was against, because my father smiled, compassionate and superior, when I told him about her being a Christian Scientist, and because on Sundays my father and I stood before the Ghirlandaio and discussed her disease.

She couldn't have known that, but I imagined she did, and in fact was so certain of it that I never complained to my parents. Enough seemed wrong at home without my adding that. I never suspected the truth—that my father had fallen in love and didn't want to be, and fought it while my mother waited helplessly for him to decide—no more than I recognized our trips to the museum as almost the only things he could still do for comfort and without guilt. Still, I sensed danger, some mood that hung over our breakfasts and dinners and even the once-happy moments like watching Sid Caesar's *Your Show of Shows*, some drifting of attention that made it necessary to repeat what we said to my father several times before he heard. I misread my mother's attempts to charm him and make him laugh, her expecting me to do the same; briefly I worried that my father might be sick, or that he was losing his hearing. And I refused to bring home one more bit of bad tidings for my parents to think was their fault.

I too realized the difficulty and great importance of keeping my father interested—but I hesitated to say anything which might accidentally reveal my unhappiness at school. At meals, when my father asked what we were studying, I'd mumble something like, "Egypt."

"What about Egypt?" my mother would say.

"I don't know," I'd say. "Pyramids. The Pharaohs."

"What about the Pyramids?" said my father.

"I don't know," I'd say.

"*We're* the guys who built the pyramids," he'd say. "Actively *shlepped* the stones." Then catching my mother's eye he'd add, "On my side, that is. On your mother's side, Cleopatra."

Sundays, at the museum, my father often suggested a walk through the Egyptian wing. How it would have pleased him to read me the captions and hear what little I knew. There was so much we could have discussed—embalming techniques, anthrax powder, the ten plagues. But I feared that the artifacts themselves would somehow betray the only information that mattered: I'd never been called on to tell about Osiris being hacked up in chunks and thrown into the Nile, or to make a clay man for the funeral barge our class was constructing, or to fill in, with colored chalk, the scarab Miss Haley outlined each day on the board.

By then our class was well-launched on what Miss Haley called our little journey down the Nile, and when she pulled the heavy dark-green shades and showed us slides of temples and sarcophagi, I did feel just a bit rocky, as if we were floating past everything that I knew, and the dusty metallic smell of the projector became the salty, garbagey odor of river water and sand. Pretending to watch the slides, I stared at the dust motes streaming in that wedge of light until my eyes went out of focus and the classroom disappeared and a scary chill of aloneness startled me back to myself.

There was no one in whom I could confide; it would have been foolish to let my friends know I cared about something which, without my prompting, they seemed not to notice. We were at that age when much is secret, much is embarrassing, when certain questions—what to do with our shoulders and knees, and whether people like us—assume an intensity they will never have again. At that age, everyone and everything is both love object, mirror and judge, and we go around frantically wasting ourselves on whatever is nearby.

On top of my other problems, that year I fell in love. This, too, I had no one to tell. It was one thing to love

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Elvis—all the girls loved Elvis except a few who were famous for *not* loving Elvis, and there were a couple of upper school boys we all agreed were cute. But we were late-bloomers, love was still something you did in a group, by consensus, and the consensus was that we hated sixth-grade boys.

But there was one I liked. His name was Kenny something. I remember that his last name changed between fifth and sixth grade, when his glamorous actress-mother remarried—but I don't remember either name. I have only the fuzziest sense of what he looked like—red hair in a spiky fifties kid's crewcut—which is strange, because our love was so purely physical, so exquisitely located in those angular shoulders and knees, in our skins, in inches of distance between us, and all we asked was to look at each other or brush, accidentally, his hip or his elbow grazing me as we ran out to the playground. This happened perhaps twice or three times a week; the rest of the time, I replayed our moment of contact in my head. For days we didn't look at each other, and I thought I had been dreaming anything else. Then a weekend would pass; on Monday the looks and collisions began again. Everything was unspoken, potential and in constant flux.

Ours was a doomed love. To have acknowledged it, even to each other, would have meant taking on the world—and for what? We might have been forced to have a conversation. In fact we could barely manage a sentence. My greatest dream and greatest fear was being alone with him, and I liked to terrify myself by imagining occasions where this might occur. One place where it seemed this might happen was the museum; our class was scheduled to visit the Egyptian wing. For weeks before the trip I invented impossible scenarios of escaping with him into the shadows of the church-like, stone medieval hall which I alone among the sixth graders knew about. And what would we do then? My mind refused to go further. Just thinking that far gave me chills, so I thought it again and again until I came up with a plan to arrange what I wanted and dreaded most.

On the morning of the trip I woke up shaking with fever. I still remember staring down into my dresser drawer, wondering how many sweaters I could get away with wearing. I must have put on three or four, but nothing felt warm. At breakfast, I shivered and tried to hide it. How strange that my parents didn't notice; normally, one sniffle and they were feeling my forehead. But sometime during the night we must have entered that world of mischance that parents so fear, with its history of catastrophes occurring in eye-blinks when parental vigilance lapsed.

Briefly I wondered if maybe I did have polio, as my mother so dreaded, but I was still a child, and didn't know what was worth fearing; children rarely fear airplanes but, almost always, the dark. The prospect of missing the trip scared me far more than polio. Besides, I already knew that first principle of everyday magic: once you say something, give it a name, then, only then, can it happen. So I kept quiet and shivered and wrapped my hands around my cocoa cup and everything around me slipped in and out of focus.

This is how I recall that day—at moments the edges of things would be crisply, painfully sharp; then they would blur and turn wavy. Kissing my parents goodbye, I was so confused I imagined my father would be interested to hear that the world looked to me like an El Greco painting. But just in time I caught myself and climbed onto the steamed-up bus.

Our classroom was in chaos, but through it all rang Miss Haley's strained voice, yelling, "Hang on to your coats," which struck me as the most deeply kind, the most thoughtful thing she'd ever said. There was one moment, as we lined up to leave, when I knew I was in danger, that I should tell someone and go home. But then I felt someone bump into me, and even through all those sweaters, I knew who it was. Kenny was right behind me in line, and as we pushed toward the narrow bus door, he whispered, "Can we still go see it?" It

took me a while to think what he meant, though for days it was all I had thought of.

What he meant was the Ghirlandaio painting, which he'd heard about from me. It had required astonishing bravery to approach him in the school yard, to speak to him for so long, but that was minor compared with the courage it took to mention the unmentionable—that is, Miss Haley's nose. I don't recall how I'd phrased it, how precisely I'd made it clear that there existed a work of art with a nose like our sixth-grade teacher's. It had left us both feeling quite short of breath, as if we'd been running, and had gotten our second wind and were capable of anything, and in that light-headed state I offered to take him to see it. It would be easy, I said—I knew the museum so well we could sneak off and get back before anyone noticed.

Yet now the idea of walking even the shortest distance exhausted me, and my plan (which I'd never expected him to agree to) seemed to demand impossible stamina—though less than it would have taken to shake my head no. I told him to be on the lookout for the right moment, and my voice dopplered back at me through an echo chamber of fever.

At the museum, a guard instructed us to throw our coats in a rolling canvas bin. And this is my sharpest memory from that day—the panic I felt as my coat disappeared, how it looked to me like someone jumping, vanishing into a sea of coats. Suddenly I was so cold I felt I had to keep moving, and I caught Kenny's eye and we edged toward the back of the crowd and dimly I heard my fever-voice telling him: Follow me.

Not even running helped. I just got colder, wobbly and unsure; of course we got lost and crisscrossed the damp medieval hall, where the shadows climbed the chill stone walls, pretending to be doorways, which vanished when we got close. At last we found the staircase, the right gallery, the Ghirlandaio. And I gloried in the particular pride of having done what I'd boasted I could.

Kenny stared at the painting. Then very softly he said, "Wow. Disgusto." Disgusto was the word all right. And yet I felt strangely hurt, protective of Ghirlandaio's old man, as if he and his grandson were relatives of mine, and Kenny had passed judgment on my family, on my life, on those afternoons when I stood here with my father as if this were something compelling and beautiful and not what it clearly was: Disgusto.

At that moment we heard footsteps, angry taps on the parquet floor, and we knew whose steps they were, though not how Miss Haley had found us. Instinctively, we moved to the center of the gallery, so no one could tell what painting we'd been near, and I thought—as fast as the fever allowed—that if she noticed the Ghirlandaio, I would direct her eye to the grandson, at how he gazed at the old man, how trustingly and with what love. But she just stood there, glaring at us in the silence of the gallery.

Then Kenny burst into tears. Miss Haley and I looked away from him, embarrassed and upset, though I doubt that she could have been feeling the same emotions that I was—revulsion, and the strong desire to be anywhere, with anyone else but with him. Sometimes, in later years, I ran into old loves and wondered what I saw in them; but that day, in the whirl of eleven-year-old love, this shift of emotion happened instantaneously. The love I had felt just a few hours before now seemed grotesque and absurd. I caught Kenny's smell of hair oil and damp wool, and for a second I gagged.

Was it the tears that so turned me against him? I think it was something more: We were at the age when love cannot stand exposure, when to be caught brings humiliation so profound we can only blame the beloved. We were, in that way, not much older than Adam and Eve, whom we must have resembled as Miss Haley chased us through the galleries, past those paintings of the expulsion from Eden which my father always rushed by—perhaps because the couple was naked or, more likely, held no interest for him, having nothing physically wrong.

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Meanwhile my fever was climbing, the chill in my bones transforming itself into needles of ice in my skin. When we rejoined our classmates in the Egyptian wing, I hardly recognized them. Shuffling obediently, gazing morosely at their feet, they could have been the funerary procession which the docent was describing. Miss Haley had prepared us for the highlight of the tour—a trip through the vast Egyptian tomb which the museum had imported brick by brick, from Luxor. But as we approached it, the docent narrowed her eyes and dropped her voice to an ominous register and warned us to stay together because the tomb had been built as a maze to foil robbers. And then it hit us all at once—we were entering a grave.

Inside the temperature dropped. I had never been so cold. Perhaps the docent was chilly too, or didn't like it there; in any case she walked faster until the children were practically trotting to keep up. I knew I couldn't do it—and then the urge to curl up and lie down quite suddenly overwhelmed me. I let the others push ahead through the twisting corridors, and when we passed a roped-off room, I ducked into it and found a corner where I couldn't be seen from outside.

I crouched in a cul-de-sac, surrounded by glass-covered walls. Beneath the glass were friezes, lit with a soft golden light. Figures in a procession surrounded me. It was a funeral procession, extending into the afterlife to follow the dead and their gods, and it gave me a strange sense of comfort that I knew who everyone was. First came the mourners, shedding their broken-line tears, then the cows, the oxen dragging the carts with all the dead's possessions, then the boats which ferried them across the waters of the other world. And now came the lesser gods, Bes, the dwarf, Tauret, the hippopotamus, frog-headed Heket, the lioness Renenet, the scorpion Selket.

Slowly the line began to move forward, and I watched it, steadily and without surprise, moving across the glassed-in walls like an animated cartoon—the goddess with the balances for weighing the souls of the dead, then Thoth, Isis, Osiris to receive the lucky spirits. And all at once it seemed to me that the figures were leaving the walls and marching straight at me, coming for me and for everyone that I loved. In silence came the fifty-two judges, then Horus, Bast, Anubis, the hawk, the cat, the jackal streamed toward me through the air, and at the end of the line stood Amement, the Devourer, crocodile, hippo, lioness, receiver of the souls who had been tried and found guilty.

But really, the goddess I saw was Miss Haley, who stood looking down at me, her white hair backlit, flaming around her head. She must have come searching for me, and yet she seemed not to recognize me. Her face was opaque, her eyes looked visionless and dead, and that seemed strange because it had just occurred to me I had been wrong, that all this time I had been thinking Miss Haley and I were opposite, when in fact we were opposite sides of a coin—she and her Christian Science, me and my father and our Ghirlandaio. We had precisely the same concerns. We did the same things in our spare time. This thought made me strangely, inexplicably happy; I was suffused with affection, not only for Miss Haley but for my father and me, a compassion much deeper than anything we credit children with and so consider the exclusive province of adults. I felt like someone who had solved a hard problem and now could imagine relaxing. I was sleepy and closed my eyes.

It was not, as it happened, polio, but a kind of meningitis that did no lasting damage but kept me in the hospital three months. I came home to two separate houses. Since then I have often wondered why my parents—who were always so careful of me—failed to consider the effect on me of a homecoming like that. Why couldn't they have waited? But I think that they must have considered it, considered waiting, and found that they had no choice.

My father and I were never so close again. For a long while I was angry at him, and somewhere in that time stopped wanting to please him and tell him interesting things, including something I remembered, a thought I had but couldn't say when he came to pick me up at the museum.

I remember very clearly lying on a cot in a room with adults gathered around. I looked up and saw my father's face, all wavy and distorted and extraordinarily beautiful, and I wanted to tell him something but couldn't speak, wanted to say it so badly that I can remember it now.

What I wanted to say was this: that he had been wrong about El Greco, that if something were straight and you saw it curved, you would actually paint it straight; your hand would correct what your eye had seen wrong, so it finally came out right. Then the objects in your painting would appear to you just as everything always did—distorted, buckled, and curved. But anyone else who looked at it would see what you never saw—a perfect likeness of the world, the world as it really was. □

REPORT FROM THE MOVEMENT

Rutgers, DSA, and the Revival of the New Left

Milton Mankoff

In the past several years students have started to stir from a deep sleep. Since 1985, 127 colleges have been pressured to divest South African assets and seventy-eight have protested CIA campus recruitment. Over five hundred students have been arrested in the past year for political activity.

Encouraged by the rebirth of campus activism, students from a score of institutions began in January 1987 at Hampshire College, to lay the foundation for a national student organization designed to radically transform American society. Eventually the National Student Convention '88 (NSC) was planned and held at Rutgers University February 5-7, 1988.

The conveners, largely from Rutgers, MIT, and Berkeley, reached out to bring the NSC nonsectarian, direct-action-oriented leftist students desiring to transcend fragmented single-issue struggles. They were determined to avoid the mistakes of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the closest incarnation of their dreams, and they were very sensitive to the pervasive sexism that ultimately forced many women to abandon political work with men. In addition, they addressed two other critical problems: how to insure "participatory democracy" and non-bureaucratic but effective leadership; and how to prevent, without being undemocratic, Marxist-Leninist sects from taking over the organization.

It was generally agreed that women should comprise at least half the membership of all regional and national organizational structures. There was less consensus on questions of Marxist-Leninist sects and organizational structure. Many felt SDS was crippled by the infiltration of the Maoist Progressive Labor Party (PLP). PLP's rigid ideology and tight discipline alienated prospective members and pushed opposing factions to adopt similar characteristics in self-defense. One proposed antidote, which some found too bureaucratic or antidemocratic, was to create bylaws limiting sect members to minority status in local chapter and national convention voting.

On the thorny question of leadership profound differences also arose. Some attributed the failure of SDS to excessive centralization. They believed a regionalized structure with a national office playing little more than a coordinating and information role could overcome such problems. Others, however, maintained that SDS's demise, and a major failing of the New Left in general, was a distrust of leadership so intense that it prevented even democratically oriented leadership from advancing common goals. The resulting leadership vacuum was filled by egomaniacal individuals and collectives accountable only to themselves. Paranoia regarding leadership also allowed the mass media, eager to create celebrities and locate accessible and quotable spokesmen for movements, to confer national leadership positions on persons without any legitimate claim to them.

The organizers had expected about two hundred activists at Rutgers. They tried to insure fair representation by limiting embryonic college chapters to three voting delegates. Contrary to these expectations, Rutgers was swamped by almost seven hundred registrants representing approximately 130 institutions. In addition to groups from universities which were part of the heroic past, such as Columbia and Wisconsin, there were delegations from Kutztown University and Stevens Institute of Technology just as committed to "making history." Overall, the assembled multitude was over ninety-five percent white, geographically diverse, a mixture of the modish and those expressing reverence for the sixties through dress and hairstyle. Ideologically, the spectrum included liberals, socialists, communists, and anarchists.

In addition to students, a host of New Left elder statesmen attended. Youthful and grey-haired militants from the gamut of sects hawked their publications and tried as ever to catch the fancy of an ideologically unformed student or a disaffected cadre from a rival group.

Despite the desire of organizers to prescreen participants, many arrived through word of mouth or were invited simply because they were the only representatives from a particular college. Distinctions between "delegates" and observers soon became meaningless. Some tensions inherent in such diversity emerged during workshops. For example, a gathering to explore "Visions of the Movement" revealed one hundred flowers blooming. One student spoke of combating racism as a priority; another, taking the *nom de guerre* Digger, aspired to be "free of science." The moderator tried to achieve unity by urging each participant to write a line for a poem depicting life after the revolution. Some students walked out, dissatisfied because they were not looking for a revolution, or because they saw no need for a poem.

Another workshop, "Relations with Other Organizations," rejected the notion of relegating any left political organization or individual to permanent marginality. A proposal requiring members to adhere to *unspecified* principles of unity was supported. Since there were no restrictions on workshop participation, sectarians might well have played a decisive role in influencing this outcome.

When questions of ideology and organization were subordinated to single issues, greater consensus emerged. In numerous workshops, students exchanged "war stories" and agreed to

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oppose a familiar "laundry list" of social evils. Some discussions, however, were notably absent. There seemed almost no desire to address the 1988 Presidential election. Nor was voice given to the possibility that one kind of president might inadvertently set in motion forces that could aid a radical resurgence.

Another issue that received scant attention was pedagogy. Discussion of educational institutions focused on falling minority enrollments, student aid, and the misuse of campuses by corporations, the CIA, and the military. By contrast, little was said about how university curricula could be utilized by radical students to raise the consciousness of a generally apolitical generation of undergraduates.

On the convention's last day, when the campus delegates were supposed to debate and vote on a constitution and various workshop-generated proposals, a twenty-five member Students of Color Caucus declared that insufficient care and skill had been devoted to assuring the presence of greater numbers of nonwhite students. The caucus, supported by the similarly aggrieved Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Caucus, demanded that the convention postpone any vote on a proposed constitution until new outreach efforts were undertaken. If this were not acceptable to the delegates, Students of Color would disassociate itself from the organization. Pandemonium ensued. Privately, the conveners said their considerable outreach efforts had aroused little enthusiasm among black and hispanic student groups about the prospect of joining a multiracial, multi-issue organization in which their interests might frequently be subordinated to other pressing concerns. Publicly, they remained mute on the issue. Some students spoke against the caucus's proposal. One lesbian eloquently noted that the NSC participants were "not the enemy. Whatever problems exist, far more people outside than inside this building are racist and homophobic." Another woman, who played a major role in planning the convention, even sang to heal the open wounds.

Nevertheless, with widespread white guilt clearly evident, a voice vote of those assembled (not simply delegates) easily carried the day for the Caucus's demands. Regional delegates were chosen to conduct the outreach. The conveners from Rutgers managed to get a motion passed committing the body to national demonstrations against the CIA and racism, and another NSC. But there was no adequate attempt to create a temporary national organizing committee to whom outreach efforts should be reported and which in turn would plan the demonstrations or the next convention. (A black Eastern Michigan student *informally* offered to organize an NSC before 1990.) Finally, since the assembly just voted itself insufficiently representative of student radicalism, there was no logical rationale to vote on the myriad positions and proposed actions that had been discussed at workshops earlier.

Students drifted aimlessly about the gym and eventually began to leave for home. Those who were not disappointed either saw no pressing need for a "top down" bureaucratic organization or had much lower expectations than many of the conveners. Thus they left pleased by the knowledge that their political commitments and struggles were shared by many others. Others anticipated fruitful regional coordination through the establishment of computer-based networks.

Many who were dismayed by the actions of the Students of Color Caucus and its allies nonetheless agreed that a constitution was premature. A key organizer conceded the NSC was a "gamble," when asked whether it might have been wiser to emulate Port Huron, which started with a small, relatively homogeneous group and built slowly instead of geometrically.

Abbie Hoffman, a convention sponsor, who had watched the denouement with bitterness muttered, "I can't believe it. I guess age makes a difference. You'll never find an adult activist convention so resistant to having a national organization. Students just have a hard time accepting the need for it." The implication that anyone under forty couldn't be trusted was followed by his observation that the FBI in the sixties often destroyed radical collectives by infiltrating "militant" black and women agents trained to be divisive. "The easiest thing to do is play on left guilt," he said. Regardless of FBI machinations, there is no possibility in today's balkanized left to avoid the expression of complaints about intraorganizational racism, sexism, and homophobia. Hoffman's frustration prevented him from accepting this reality.

This most significant radical student convention in nearly twenty years was hardly a failure. But one thing was certain. The problems that thwarted the organizational aspirations of the Sixties New Left had not evaporated. Instead, they were recapitulated within a mere forty-eight hours. Whether another attempt will actually be made to revive the NSC is unclear. Even before the coda, Barbara Haber, a Port Huron veteran *cum* journalist, and the political equivalent of an expectant parent noted, "Even if it doesn't happen now, it'll happen over the next year. These students will see each other, work together, have affairs. They'll be much closer."

Just one week after the ambiguous conclusion of the Rutgers convention an ongoing radical student organization held its own semi-annual meeting. About 250 members of the Youth Section of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) gathered at Barnard College. The Youth Section, with two thousand members in forty campus chapters, balances education, direct action, and electoral work. It excludes Marxist-Leninists from membership but anticommunism does not prevent DSA from opposing cold war policies. Affiliated with a parent organization founded in the mid-1970s, the group has lately shown modest growth. Members reported socialism has become less of a dirty word on campuses since Black Monday on Wall Street. Given DSA's disdain for Soviet-style regimes, it was ironic that *glasnost* apparently has helped their image as well among students unable to make distinctions between democratic socialists and communists.

In several respects the Barnard gathering contrasted with the one at Rutgers. There was ideological and organizational consensus, as one might expect from an established organization. Far more attention was paid to campus curricular reform and to the upcoming presidential election—in which DSA supports Jesse Jackson.

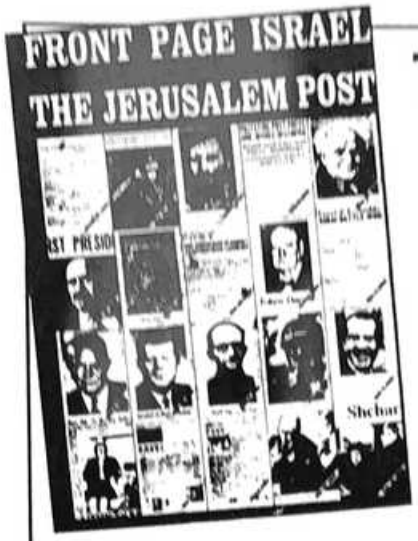
In many respects, the Youth Section seems a model organization. Nevertheless, if campuses ever explode, DSA

will probably not be a major beneficiary because few students, like adults, are viscerally drawn to carefully-reasoned ideological appeals to activism. What mobilizes masses is emotion and excitement, whether at football games or in politics. DSA was lacking in that respect. NSC '88, perhaps because of its romantic and nostalgic quest, captured students' imaginations. So did post-1965 SDS and the Yippies. Unfortunately, what was true then is also true now. Romantics are essential on the first day of the Revolution, but on day two. . . .

The *internal* problems faced by the NSC and the DSA Youth Section are not insurmountable. More critical is whether the national economic and political environment in the coming period will affect university life and student culture in a manner promoting *mass* activism. Even remarkable extra-parliamentary organizations have stagnated when the national climate was not right.

Mass mobilization of students between 1960 and 1970 was produced by a variety of social conditions: affluence, the dominance of liberal reform rhetoric (accompanied by conservative practice) in Washington, and growing student interest in the social sciences and humanities. This academic interest reflected both ascendant student liberalism and increased occupational opportunities in the human services, and exposed many students to critical perspectives on society, politics, and culture. When one adds political disenfranchisement, the draft, Vietnam, and a nonviolent civil rights movement utilizing moral appeals to obtain formal political rights and to end desegregation, campus rebellion was overdetermined. By the end of the sixties, police brutality, the paternalistic authoritarianism of university administrators, and the development of a generation gap rooted in music, sexual experimentation, and psychedelic drugs spurred militant activism.

The rejuvenation of student activism since 1985, after more than a decade's hiatus, can be understood through the lessons of the past. Again, students responded to shifts in the national mood. By the mid-eighties the economic insecurities plaguing the country for almost fifteen years had abated. President Reagan's electorial successes had depended on the stagflation crisis of



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the late seventies and "recovery" from the managed recession of the early eighties. There never was wide support for indiscriminate cuts in social spending or, except briefly, a massive military buildup and jingoism. Slowly the liberal economic agenda reemerged. Wall Street scandals linked with media attention to the homeless eroded the legitimacy of the Yuppie mentality, even among Yuppies themselves. Reagan's indifference to apartheid and his obsession with third world communism, culminating in the Iran-Contra affair, increasingly came under attack. Finally, Gorbachev's "peace offensive" has made cold war rhetoric seem anachronistic.

As in the early sixties, declines in unemployment have allowed for the partial transcendence of student narcissism. The repression of black South Africans and the tragic circumstances of homeless Americans have aroused compassion, while not conflicting with the personal goals of a student generation still careerist in orientation.

Another parallel with the nascent New Left involves leadership. A disproportionate number of activists in the 1960–1965 period were heavily influenced by parents once associated with leftist causes. The current campus scene is witnessing the first wave of "New Left-babies," the politicized offspring of sixties radicals.

Despite promising signs, conditions conducive to the growth of a mass student movement may not continue to exist. Black Monday may be a harbinger of bad times ahead. Because student social consciousness is still fragile, economic insecurity would probably lead to the neglect of public issues for private troubles.

The 1988 presidential election will also significantly alter the environment for student activism. If a liberal Democrat wins, hardly a certainty, a deeper renewal of commitment to social reform on campuses might occur. Mass movements grow best in an atmosphere of hope, or even hope and disenchantment, not disgust and cynicism.

Even with favorable economic and political trends, without a significant transformation of student culture as in the 1965–1970 period, activism will remain modest in scope. A great chasm separates new college students from those at the height of the earlier student movement. Research by the American Council of Education indicates half as many 1987 freshmen call themselves "liberals" as in 1970, a time, unlike today, when campus liberals differed from radicals more in their aversion to violence than in any greater faith in our major institutions. On specific issues, today's freshmen seem to strongly endorse social spending, cuts in defense allocations, environmentalism, busing, free speech, and women's equality. At the same time, they oppose open admissions, wish to prohibit homosexuality, advocate the death penalty, and have little desire to protect criminals' legal rights. In comparison to students in 1970, twice as many students today consider it essential to be "well-off" financially.

Radical student leaders determined to build a mass movement of campuses must carefully pick issues, integrate single-issue activists into social networks that can generate ideological commitment, and devise strategies for mobilizing apathetic sympathizers. Exposing students to heavy doses of the liberal arts, one possible vehicle for networking and politicizing, may yet occur, although student preference for majors and careers still focus primarily on business. Yet university curricular reforms have increasingly compelled students to enroll in social science and humanities courses. If, as at Stanford, political biases in the core curricula are contested, radical politicization could be immeasurably aided. There is even evidence that corporate recruiters are looking with increasing favor on liberal arts graduates. By increasing social spending, a president might also signal greater opportunities in human service occupations to campuses and stimulate a liberal arts renaissance.

There is no possibility that legions of New Left babies will *by themselves* expand student activism on a grand scale. Not all parents of upcoming collegians went to college, and less than half of those who did were protesters. While most remain more liberal than their peers who never were college protesters, a fair number do not. Moreover, even among parents who are radical and have tried to influence their children, surely some sons and daughters have turned out like Alex in *Family Ties*.

There is no reason to believe a sixties-style oppositional student culture will surface. Alcohol has replaced psychedelics, and sexual experimentation in the AIDS era is less appealing. Popular music occasionally contains social alienation or protest themes, but this in itself is insufficient to launch a thousand ships. Moreover, *in loco parentis* has been dead on most campuses for years, and there is no significant generation gap.

Finally, the end of the military draft and the precipitous decline in black enrollment have removed two influences from campus that in the past played major roles in raising political consciousness. Assaults on black students were less frequent in an earlier time when blacks had more of a campus presence.

These considerations suggest that new student radicals may have a tougher row to hoe than their forebears. Students cannot reconstruct the social order alone. They can, if mobilized, put enormous pressure on those in power. They can also develop profound critiques of everyday life and a compelling alternate vision, in part because they are less compromised by having to work nine-to-five and raise families. Both NSC '88 and the DSA Youth Section have elements of what is necessary to realize their potential. Each, in fact, supplies what the other lacks. If their strengths are acknowledged, weaknesses overcome, and the larger social climate is favorable, the next New Left might prove less dramatic but more durable and effective than the last. □

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Book Review

The Harm at Home

Christine Stansell

Heroes of Their Own Lives: the Politics and History of Family Violence, Boston, 1880–1960 by Linda Gordon. Viking, 1988, 383 pp.

For those student radicals in the 1960s who were bookish by inclination, the discipline of history held out the possibility of an intellectual militancy at one with the insurgency of the streets. Historical scholarship promised a life of the mind dedicated not to career and self-advancement, not to meaningless pedantry, but to informing and nourishing radical social movements of the present with the lessons of the past.

Among such scholars, none has held to the original mission—writing a history bound to the questions and dilemmas of radical politics—with more dedication and brilliance than has the feminist Linda Gordon. *Woman's Body, Woman's Right*, her first book, was a resounding historical argument for the absolute necessity of contraception and abortion rights to women's freedom. Published in 1976, the book gave theoretical weight and empirical depth to the insistence of feminist activists that reproductive rights were a positive, desirable goal in a democratic society. Researched and written in the early 1970s, *Woman's Body* partook of the high hopes and feistiness of feminists on the move. It was a book confident that ideas and politics need each other, that in action, principles could yield, sooner or later, a winning politics. At the imaginative heart of *Woman's Body* were high-spirited feminist rebels, thinking, fighting, breaking free.

Heroes of Their Own Lives gives us instead only the unlikely heroes of the title: battered wives, neglectful mothers, incest victims—women in the grips of poverty, tyrannical fathers, their own rage—barely hanging on, let alone enunciating a program of political action. *Heroes* is a worried book, born of a feminism fretted with ambivalence, paused before problems far worse than many of us, in the early days of the women's movement, ever dreamed.

Still, there is no resignation or quiescence in Gordon's politics. This is a feminism sobered but unapologetic, battle-hardened and dug in for the long haul. The exhilaration has dropped out of her work, but not the militance: indeed the major point of the book, woven through a multitude of examples, is that family violence has everything to do with the powerlessness of women. The case *Heroes* makes for the injustices inflicted upon women is eloquent and damning. If you think of feminism as merely special-interest politics, with little to say about the general welfare, you will come away from the book thinking new thoughts. If you're already a feminist, you will read with rekindled dismay the self-justifications and willful delusions of a society utterly drenched in, corroded by, sexism.

At the heart of Gordon's interpretation is the notion of family violence as a "social construction." By this, she means that there are no eternal truths about family violence which we, the enlightened moderns, have discovered. People create—or "construct"—over time their sense of what family members should and shouldn't do to each other. Gordon's deliberate, reiterative use of the theory of construction challenges mainstream sociologists and policy makers who see family violence as a pathology, a bizarre inversion of the normal. But Gordon also uses the term implicitly to contest a strain of radical feminist thinking which, in a strange way, views family violence as *utterly* normal, as the acting out of the monolithic male oppression on which families are founded—more specifically, men's near-genetic brutishness towards women and children. Against both these versions of determinism, Gordon stresses an intellectual perspective which can give purpose and direction to feminist activism: family violence, having been made in a set of specific historical conditions, can be unmade as well.

Family violence has everything to do with the powerlessness of women.

Heroes is based on prodigious research (including statistical work) in the case records, spanning eighty years, of three social welfare agencies in Boston, a city which Gordon shows was typical of the urban industrial Northeast, with its large immigrant populations and massive poverty. In this period, changing assumptions about class and gender gave credence to some interpretations of family violence and downgraded others. New types of family violence were added to the canon; others receded in importance. The most obvious example is child abuse: the immigrants' corrective beatings became the caseworkers' abuse. Social workers, who up through 1965 or so tended to be zealously middle class, could seldom see that there was a distinct child-rearing ethos in the predilection of the working poor to physically punish their children. In the pitched battles between first-generation American adolescents and outraged Old World parents who beat them for their "laziness" when they ran off to the movies instead of doing their daily share of drudgework, it was usually the parents whom the caseworkers blamed. And in an illustration of gender rather than class politics, caseworkers frequently exonerated the men involved in father/

Christine Stansell teaches history at Princeton University. She is the author of City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789–1860 *(Knopf, New York).*

daughter incest and blamed the situation on the mothers' "frigidity" in the 1950s, when conservative neo-Freudians dominated popular and therapeutic discussions of women's problems.

The first half of the book chronicles the institutional development of the movement against family violence and details its major policy shifts. The "discovery" of family violence occurred in the 1870s, with the founding of numerous Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, which set out to "rescue" innocent children from the supposedly abusive and debasing care of their working-class immigrant parents. Zealots of bourgeois culture, the reformers descended on their chosen clients to convert them to a middle class model of family life: father at work, mother at home, children at school or under the mother's direct care. Feminists were active and influential in this early phase of the movement; they aimed to reform men's excesses—their drinking, financial recklessness and violence—and thus strengthen the position of women and children. But by the early twentieth century the feminists' influence had waned, and a discourse critical of fathers had turned into full-fledged woman-blaming. When poor women shooed their children outdoors to play on the city streets, when they kept older siblings home from school to care for the babies, they risked charges of "unfitness" and could lose their offspring to institutions or foster care.

Child abuse, which tended to be pinned on men, diminished in urgency; child "neglect," which was *always* blamed on women, took its place. The new category was laden with gender prescriptions. "Single mothers" who now appeared in tandem with neglect as a new "problem," were neglectful almost by definition: Gordon points out —one of her many striking discoveries— that historically there has been no better predictor that a woman will lose custody of her children than if she is living without a man. Single mothers who worked were the easiest targets for neglect charges, even if "neglect" consisted of working at a job to support one's children.

Yet Gordon never takes the easy way out, dismissing these categories as misconstruals or figments of the reformers' imaginations. "Neglect" and "abuse," she insists, were not simply class and sex prejudices imposed on truly worthy parents. Rather, she unravels a tangle of definitions and self-definitions which worked within families. Sometimes the bias-weighted terms engendered a matching reality: a caseworker's hostility toward a mother who went to work to compensate for a sick or wretched or irresponsible father often ended up pushing the woman into a paralyzing dilemma from which she emerged so depressed that she eventually gave up on her children. Or, reality could press through the predominant discourse and insist upon a new category, as happened when battered women, who in the late nineteenth century had not yet achieved status as a "problem," so determinedly barraged the child-saving agencies with their own complaints that the reformers became battered women's advocates despite themselves.

"Neglect" and "abuse" were not simply class and sex prejudices imposed on truly worthy parents.

Following this chronology, which takes up the first half of the book, can be wearing. The legal history is a bit austere, the institutional history a bit dry and the reformers, as personalities, are colorless. Gordon has always been a historian of the big idea, and the vagaries and quirks of human beings don't interest her as much as the cumulative curve of their actions. So despite her promise early on that she will tell us about her subjects' passions and sorrows, emotions are muted. At times, the language of social work tinges Gordon's own writing; although lucid, it lacks the felicity of style to convey changes of emotional register. *Heroes* can read like alternative casework.

But when it comes to the big ideas, she delivers, and in the culminating three chapters—studies of child abuse, incest and wife-beating drawn from the entire period—the big ideas take fire. *Heroes* then becomes a massive and eloquent brief for how easily, in a society which teaches men to blame women for their daily disappointments and women to blame themselves, normal expectations between the sexes can lead to cruelty and blows. Family violence, Gordon shows patiently case by case, statistic by statistic, is neither the perversion of normal family life nor its quintessence; it is, rather, the exaggeration of everyday expectations and behaviors. The point is really a familiar one when thinking about child abuse: if you live with a child, chances are at some time you've felt the pull to go that one step further in correcting some small bundle of unrepentant defiance and unreason, been lured by the delusion born of anger in the blood that with just this one extra measure the culprit would finally learn his or her lesson. Abusive parents don't think of themselves as abusers, they think of themselves—if *only* at those moments when they're punishing their children—as parents meeting their moral responsibilities.

Well, it turns out—and this *is* a surprise—the same is true for incestuous fathers. Gordon finds that incest typically began not in families out of whack, not in households where evil stepfathers reigned (stepfathers, she shows, were not inordinately involved in incest), but in homes presided over by highly traditional fathers whose sense of themselves as good smacked of age-old pieties. The classic lineaments of incest, as Gordon sketches them in, were a weak or deceased mother, an older daughter who had effectively become the mother and who felt great responsibility for her younger siblings, and a father committed to his family, yet rigid in expecting his dependents to reciprocate his financial contributions by meeting his every domestic need—meals cooked to please, clothes washed and mended, sexual cravings stilled. Femininity, to such men, was an essence which went with the domestic territory, a pervasive capacity to serve; it was in woman's nature to clean and cook and sew, and it was in her nature to roll over on her back, and whether it was one particular woman or another didn't seem to make a hell of a lot of difference. For her part, the dutiful daughter went along to protect younger children and, not infrequently, her mother.

What appeared horrible to those who stumbled upon the secret, seemed normal within the family, an exaggeration of the mollifying and coddling and pacifying of needy men that went on all the time. From a case record: "fa [father] told her that it was all right for him to do such things for all fas did so with their daus [daughters]." Of

this masculine sensibility Gordon notes, "probably the most striking indication of the father's power was his ability to create within the family an alternative psychosocial order," a restrained comment on the iron grip of men's sense of entitlement in family life.

Incest typically began not in families out of whack but in homes presided over by highly traditional fathers.

The provender of the household piled up daily before men, the booty of gender. Women, in contrast, felt entitled to virtually nothing—except to their children, for whom even the most down-and-out mother would fight with cunning and ferocity. Quietly, undemonstratively, Gordon accumulates the evidence of the consequences of this fundamental lack of reciprocity, until *Heroes*, this sedate, scholarly study, takes on the power to make the blood boil. Consider one little point, for example, which Gordon makes with typical understatement. Generally, she finds, a woman left alone would struggle to serve as both father and mother to her children, taking on the provider role on top of her domestic burdens. Men left without women, in contrast, sought someone else to be the mother, and in a pinch used their own daughters to solve their problem. Much could be made of this, for one thing some bitter observations on men's affinity for colossal self-involvement at the expense of everyone around them. When an added space of parental responsibility opened up, the women moved in to fill it while the men shrank back and scurried about to find women to do the job. Gordon, however, firmly restrains the reader from the leap to judgment. It is never masculine identity she blames but gender socialization. Still, the indictment is heavy.

Take wife-battering. Neither sex, Gordon points out, had a monopoly on reason and clarity when it came to conjugal fights. But, because women had a greater stake in family cohesion (above all because they had so few alternatives to marriage) they developed "greater cooperative, socially manipulable skills." Wife-beaters, on the other hand, "accustomed to supremacy, acculturated to expect service and deference from women," had "a smaller range of responses to anger, less constructive responses to stress and frustration." So time after time, as they told the caseworkers and judges, they just lost control. It takes a while for the full meaning of these academic formulations to dawn on you, but once it does, you think, where did these guys get off? Burn it down! you want to say, along with Virginia Woolf at her wildest, a patriarchal system that raises males with the emotional capacities of children and then sends them into the world to swagger and bully their way about.

* * *

For all the insistence of feminists on "hearing women's words," revealing the experience of women from all walks of life, we have not always been successful in doing so. There is a long and powerful feminist narrative tradition of poor women's travails, going back to the 1830s and still influential today, which depends on a stock set of characters: the drunken, loutish husband, the wan, timid wife, the pitiful, innocent children. The story in all its variants focused on male perfidy. Women who didn't conform to the script, who were sharp-tongued or uppity or were themselves drinkers or child abusers, were labeled bad women, unfit mothers, sometimes not even real women but a kind of half-sex. These narrative conventions have also shaped women's activism: feminists have often been more comfortable with poor women who presented themselves as peaceful and long-suffering, victims of male vice.

Gordon knows this, and her break from this tradition to give a fuller and more various narrative of poor women's lives greatly enriches and expands her analysis. There are women in her book before whom many a more dogmatic feminist would flinch: adolescent "sex delinquents" truculent with erotic bravado, mothers so limp with depression and self-pity they turned their daughters into domestic slaves, wives who met their husbands' blows with taunts, kicks, punches and bites, women who beat their toddlers black and blue. Gordon's feminism is complicated enough to encompass all, and the intellectual complexity, in turn, generates political generosity. She is able to achieve both complexity and tolerance by her utter repudiation of any notion of women's innate "difference"—a code word in feminist circles today—from men. Men and women are certainly different in Gordon's portrayal, but that difference derives not from their natures but from the lives they live—to put it more precisely, from their respective structural positions.

If we think of the case records as stories in which several voices are struggling to press through the caseworkers' renditions, then Gordon's belief in women's varied possibilities allows her to listen to the female stories pressed between the lines. One of her main points is that, for all the befuddlement of the experts, the victims of family violence have doggedly spoken of their own solutions, even though few were willing to hear them. Here is what they asked for: jobs, the social and economic support *not* to get married, mothers' pensions, custody of their children.

Simple enough, but how far away we are. Thickets of contempt for women stretch so far into the political horizon that it is difficult to imagine what a decent family policy might look like on the other side. In the meantime, the policy makers intone their grief in the morning papers for the child victims and pin the whole business on comfortably neutral terms like the "underclass" or "poverty" or "crisis of the family." Gordon forces us to see that family violence has less to do with social pathology, less to do with the nature of the sexes, than it has to do with who does the dishes. □

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Book Review

The Democrats' Dilemma

John B. Judis

Right Turn: The Decline of the Democrats and the Future of American Politics by Thomas Ferguson and Joel Rogers. Pantheon, 1986, 276 pp.

The Life of the Party: Democratic Prospects in 1988 and Beyond by Robert Kuttner. Viking, 1987, 265 pp.

History in Sherman Park: An American Family and the Reagan-Mondale Election by Jonathan Schell. Alfred A. Knopf, 1987, 133 pp.

Republicans have won four out of the last five presidential elections, three by landslides. As consultant Patrick Caddell noted in a memo last year, Republicans have won twenty-three states five straight times—totalling 203 of the 270 electoral votes necessary to win—while Democrats have won only the District of Columbia. Gaps of gender and race yawn wide and deep. In 1984, 71 percent of white males voted for Ronald Reagan; in Michigan, a strong union state still plagued by recession, Reagan won 75 percent of the white male vote.

Of course, Democrats still control Congress and a majority of state houses, but in American politics, the party that controls the White House sets the nation's political agenda. During the Reagan years, for example, no Democrat would dream of developing a program for national health insurance or advocating diplomatic recognition of Cuba. Moreover, if the Republicans continue to win the White House, they will eventually reap rewards in other races—as ambitious young politicians decide what party to join and as Republican candidates campaign on a promise of being able to influence the party in power. In short, whatever the opinion polls say about Democratic vs. Republican allegiance, the Democrats cannot afford to continue losing presidential elections. Yet in 1988 their chances appear little better than they were in 1968.

How did this happen to the Democrats? And what can they do about it? There have been two approaches to these questions. The first, pioneered by political scientist Walter Dean Burnham, is historical and based on the assumption that American politics goes through different stages that are conditioned by social and economic changes over which individual politicians may have little control. According to this view, the reigning New Deal liberalism, espoused by Democrats and moderate Republicans, became obsolete in the 1960s.

According to the second, more voluntaristic view, the Democrats fell from power because they made specific errors in their platform, presentation, and in other areas like fundraising and voter registration. This view is articulated by Thomas Ferguson and Joel Rogers in *Right Turn*. And the latest author to argue the position is Robert Kuttner, economics correspondent for *The New Republic*.

In *The Life of the Party*, Kuttner blames the Democratic decline on its desertion of what he calls "progressive populism" in favor of divisive social and foreign policy stands and Republican "me-too" economics. He attributes this abandonment to a combination of political timidity in the face of Republican successes and misguided campaign financing that has made Democrats dependent upon wealthy donors more interested in helping Nicaragua than reindustrializing Oshkosh. Kuttner calls on the Democrats to rebuild "a majority coalition of ordinary wage- and salary-earning people, whose political and economic interests are not identical to those of the wealthy."

Unfortunately, it isn't always clear what Kuttner means by progressive populism. He appears to use the term "progressive" as a synonym for populist rather than in its original meaning as an antipopulist politics of middle class reform. For the meaning of populism, he quotes approvingly Texas Agricultural Commissioner Jim Hightower's statement that "the true center is populism, which is rooted in the realization that too few people control all the money and power, leaving very little for the rest of us." Yet the kind of programs he groups under populist economics range from the expansion of the New Deal-Great Society initiatives like the minimum wage and Medicare to "neo-liberal" programs for lifetime learning for workers, workplace democracy, a value-added tax, government brokered labor-management compacts, and a new Bretton Woods agreement.

The ambiguity in Kuttner's definition of populism reflects a deeper ambiguity in his argument. Kuttner writes lucidly, but *Life of the Party* really contains two different arguments. In the first, he calls on the Democrats to adopt a campaign strategy that focuses on mobilizing "ordinary," "average," "non-rich" Americans including underclass nonvoters, through populist economic appeals. He rejects an emphasis on either liberal or conservative foreign policy, or on cultural radicalism.

This strategy assumes that a "populist" (or "progressive") majority is lurking beneath the political surface and can be summoned forth by a national candidate who flays "established interests," promises jobs and income, and registers low-income voters. As strategy, it certainly has merits. Democrats interested in winning are better off focusing on economic issues than on issues like abortion that tend to divide their constituency. They would also be wise to avoid the kind of Hooveresque

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John Judis is senior editor of In These Times *and author of the recently published* William F. Buckley: Patron Saint of the Conservatives. *Simon & Schuster, 1988.*

economic proposals that former Vice President Walter Mondale advanced in the 1984 campaign.

In national and many state elections, however, left populism may not be a winner. Georgia Senator Sam Nunn would probably make a more promising presidential candidate in 1988 than Illinois Senator Paul Simon or the Reverend Jesse Jackson—the choice of many left populists. Former Governor Chuck Robb is much more likely to win a Senate seat in Virginia than, say, left-wing populist Henry Howell. In their authoritative *Politics and Society in the South*, Earl Black and Merle Black write, "To campaign statewide as a full-fledged liberal is—under ordinary circumstances—simply to invite defeat." Indeed, a large group of new Democrats who were drawn to Gary Hart in 1984 and to Michael Dukakis in 1988 appear uninterested in, if not hostile to, left populist appeals.

Americans don't necessarily vote according to a mechanical model of their economic class interest.

But sometimes Kuttner writes as if he clearly recognizes the limitations of his own campaign strategy. He acknowledges that the new economic conditions of the 1980s constrain Democrats from using New Deal-style economic promises to lure voters. "Simply embracing a litany of activist proposals is no recipe for electoral success, because too much about the economy and the society has changed," Kuttner writes. He also acknowledges the truth of Jonathan Schell's observations in *History in Sherman Park*. In studying several middle-class Milwaukee families during the Reagan-Mondale campaign, Schell discovered that when hitherto loyal Democrats went to work as cookie salesmen or salaried consultants, they were suddenly drawn to the kind of entrepreneurial individualism that Reagan espoused. Kuttner writes that the Democrats must offer some "symbolic appreciation" of these voters' perceptions—something that the left's current version of economic populism is certainly unprepared to do.

Indeed, Kuttner seems at times to propose a completely different scenario. He suggests that in order to create and consolidate a majority, Democrats will first have to win the White House. The Democratic party, Kuttner writes, needs "a broad economic program" to "restore its weakened links with the electorate. And this is a task not primarily for electioneering, but for governing. Sooner or later, events will thrust a Democrat into the White House. And it is in office, not on the campaign trail, that Democrats will succeed in restoring the alliance between party and voter—or fail."

This second scenario suggests that the Democrats may not win office on the basis of mobilizing nonvoters through promises of a higher minimum wage, but through either Republican incompetence or an economic or geopolitical calamity that discredits the opposition. The Democrats would then be in a position to build a majority through the advocacy of new economic approaches. It is in this context that Kuttner presents proposals that are not really populist, but neo-liberal or old-time progressive.

Kuttner's first scenario—his populist campaign strategy—currently prevails among many Democratic intellectuals. Groups out of power always like to imagine that they are simply the victims of technical error and not historical change. In the late 1950s, conservative Republicans blamed the loss of Congress on the party's abandonment of Taft Republicanism. In the 1980s, many Democrats including Kuttner, Ferguson, and Rogers blame the party's defeat on the party's abandonment of its political past. According to this view, Reagan's popularity was simply due to his stage presence rather than his program or ideology. Reagan, Kuttner writes, "was popular *in spite of* his stands on many issues, not because of them. What fueled his popularity was his conviction, not his convictions." According to this view, the Reagan years have simply been a bad dream from which Americans will awaken, if jolted by an aggressive populist appeal.

The limits of this view are most apparent in Kuttner's discussion of nonvoters. Nonvoters are the *deus ex machina* of the left populist, the factor that, when all else fails, can be introduced to explain Democratic defeats. In 1983, left-wing sociologists Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward launched a voter registration drive that they believed would realign contemporary politics. Kuttner endorses this strategy. The party, he writes, "ignores the possibility of rallying real enthusiasm among nonvoters." Kuttner also dismisses opinion poll studies like those of Curtis Gans and Arthur Hadley which demonstrate that nonvoters tended in 1984 to favor the same candidates as did voters.

Americans don't necessarily vote according to a mechanical model of their economic class interest. In 1984, for instance, both the Democrats and the Republicans undertook strenuous voter registration campaigns, but when the smoke cleared, new voters went for Reagan by almost two to one, and provided the margin of victory for Senator Jesse Helms over challenger Jim Hunt. It wasn't simply that the Republicans spent more; they had an equally receptive pool of Reaganite nonvoters to draw from.

One can identify four historical factors that underlay the Democratic decline. First, new economic circumstances, especially global overcapacity in key postwar industries and increased competition from abroad, made New Deal economic policy obsolete and substantially undermined the populist rhetoric that it sustained. Proposals to increase social expenditures—including national health insurance and the Humphrey-Hawkins Full Employment Bill (before it became toothless)—ran up against rising budget deficits and inflationary pressures, as well as fierce opposition from corporate lobbies. The outlook for such proposals is, if anything, worse after seven years of record Reagan deficits; and Democrats who champion them, like Illinois Senator Paul Simon, are quickly forced to come up with some convincing figures or sink into the shadows.

Second, the defeat in Vietnam created a rift not only within the Democratic party, but also within the foreign policy elite—one that has never fully closed. Conservative Democrats, acting through organizations like the Coalition for a Democratic Majority or Chuck Robb's Democratic Leadership Council, continue to argue that Democrats' abandonment of a hardline cold war posture, whether in Central America or in arms control talks with the Soviet Union, is the reason for the party's de-

cline. Judged by individual policies, the claim is absurd, but, sadly, there is something to it. In the wake of defeat in Vietnam, the energy crisis, and the Iranian hostage seizure, many Americans have felt an anxiety about American imperial decline that Reagan Republicans have successfully responded to with bellicose rhetoric and occasional military adventures.

Third, the rise of the civil rights movement in the South and its spread to the North created a lasting division within the Democratic party that the Republicans have been able to exploit. The most important split in 1968 was not between the McCarthy and Humphrey wings, on the one hand, and the George Wallace wing on the other hand. As then Nixon aide Kevin Phillips understood, the collective Nixon and Wallace vote in 1968 was the basis for a Republican majority. The race issue continues to split the Democrats, and in 1988, as in 1984, the Republicans may be able to use the Reverend Jesse Jackson's prominence to their own advantage—in spite of Jackson's attempt to focus his campaign on economic rather than racial justice. It also undercuts much of Democratic "economic populism" by transforming social welfare issues into disputes between blacks and whites. To put this another way: the race issue sustained a right-wing populism that consistently undercut the left.

Fourth, the transformation of the American labor force and of American industry has undermined the thematic appeal and organizational basis of the older Democratic populism and liberalism. More Americans now work in services than in manufacturing. And increasing numbers work in environments that are not conducive to industrial unionism or to the kind of social consciousness that Democrats appealed to. In fact, as many Americans are now self-employed or own their own businesses—about 17 percent—as belong to unions.

Modern liberals and populists envisage a society divided between ordinary Americans, on the one hand, and managers, financiers, and politicians, on the other hand. But a service-oriented economy and the spread of computer automation to nearly all money-making activities have transformed the older working class beyond recognition. Terms like "average American" and "ordinary American"—the staples of populist rhetoric—have little resonance for a mélange that includes hospital orderlies, software designers, robot operators, and cookie salespeople.

The transformation of the American labor force and of American industry has undermined the thematic appeal and organizational basis of the older Democratic populism and liberalism.

The forms of social organization are also changing. While wealth has become more concentrated, production has become more decentralized. Small business has increasingly become the engine of economic growth and rising productivity, as well as providing the majority of new jobs. These arrangements are conducive to new levels of workplace democracy, but not necessarily to the kind of industrial unionism that flowered during the heyday of Democratic liberalism.

These four factors produce a negative force field from which it is difficult for national Democrats to escape. Other elements can sometimes neutralize them—Jimmy Carter's southernness partly overcame the reluctance of whites from his region to vote for a liberal Democrat. But normally that candidate who advocates part of the Democratic program becomes a captive of the others. To overcome this, Democrats must change the assumptions of political debate, alter the choices that Americans perceive.

In 1988, the Democratic presidential candidates are clearly struggling to escape from this dilemma. Except perhaps for Illinois Senator Simon, each of the Democrats represents a kind of politics that did not exist fifteen years ago; and each is facing a problem—America's declining industrial economy—that was only faintly visible in the early 1970s. And while each candidate lacks something important, together they comprise the Democratic future. For example, Representative Richard Gephardt's successful campaign in Iowa demonstrated the truth of Kuttner's strategy. By blaming "established interests" for farm foreclosures and factory shutdowns, Gephardt attracted the kind of male, blue-collar, socially conservative Democrats who had voted for Reagan in 1980 and 1984. Through his creative record in Massachusetts—using government as a catalyst to bring high-technology industry to old mill towns—Dukakis inspired many of the "new collar" Democrats. Yet Gephardt could not frame his populist appeal in terms that would appeal to the Dukakis voter, and Dukakis was not able to generalize from his own political experience to draw in the Gephardt voter.

As Kuttner suggests, the Democrats may have to win power first in order to change the terms of debate and to find common ground between the Gephardt and Dukakis constituencies—between populism and middle-class progressivism. This would be no different from what occurred in the 1930s. In 1932, Franklin Roosevelt campaigned on the promise of a balanced budget rather than deficit spending; he discovered both the policy and the rhetoric of the New Deal while in office. Kuttner's populist strategy may provide the answer—against, say, a blueblood like George Bush. But it is equally possible that the kind of moderate, prodefense campaign favored by the Democratic Leadership Council and by Albert Gore, Jr. will win the White House in 1988 or the 1990s. Then the hard work would really begin. □

BOOK REVIEW

Workers, Jews, and the American Past

Melvyn Dubofsky

Power and Culture, Essays on the American Working Class by Herbert G. Gutman, ed. Ira Berlin. Pantheon, 1987, 452 pp.

This posthumously published collection of essays written by Herbert Gutman during the past twenty-five years and wonderfully edited by Ira Berlin prompts one to reflect on the relationship of American Jews to the discipline of history and on Herbert Gutman's place as a second-generation Jewish-American historian and intellectual. Several years ago, while being interviewed about his graduate student years at the University of Wisconsin, Gutman recalled a note sent to him by Selig Perlman, then the dean of labor historians in the U.S. and a distinguished senior member of the Economics Department at Madison. Perlman advised the young graduate student "... that being an historian was an Anglo-Saxon profession."

The academic world that Gutman entered as a graduate student and a young faculty member in the 1950s was precisely as Perlman described it. The history department at Madison, then one of the largest in the country, had not a single Jewish-American member, and the same could be said about almost any other prestigious history department in the nation. This absence contrasted with the many Jews who had established themselves in the other humanities and social sciences. The pages of *Partisan Review* and soon of *Dissent* rarely included the views of professional historians. The universe of "New York intellectuals" in its heyday counted few or no historians in its circle. Did the character of history as a profession exclude Jews or were Jewish-Americans antipathetic to the formal study of history?

One second-generation Jewish-American *had* risen in the profession of history even before Gutman chose to devote his career to the discipline. Oscar Handlin had published a brilliant first book in 1941, *Boston's Immigrants*; had won the Pulitzer Prize in history for his sensitive exploration of immigration to the U.S., *The Uprooted* (1951); and held a tenured chair in history at America's most prestigious university, Harvard. There he pursued his career as a Jew in a gentile world, as one whose histories of immigrants and immigration neglected his "own people." *Boston's Immigrants* examined the Irish and *The Uprooted* focused on peasant peoples from the south and east of Europe.* Handlin even seemed to take as his own the values of Protestant, Yankee, Brahmin Cambridge, and thus to elaborate a history of the U.S. in which newcomers and their descendants acculturated, assimilated, and ultimately became transformed into "real," individualistic, upward-striving, modernized Americans. Handlin celebrated the American experience and relegated its losers to Trotsky's famous "dustbin of history." That, at least, was how Herbert Gutman perceived Handlin's history and partly why Gutman, whose biography resembled Handlin's,† chose to write a different version of history, one that celebrated tradition, mutualism, rebellion, and life's losers. The reality of Gutman's reaction to Handlin and the dominant mode of history as written in the U.S. can be discerned in the essays in this collection (especially those in Chapter 5) and Ira Berlin's introduction to them, which describes the trajectory of Gutman's life as an historian and intellectual.

Between the time Gutman first began to publish his early work in relatively obscure state historical journals in 1959–1960 and the moment of his death in the summer of 1985, the world of American history was turned upside down. Perlman's characterization of the historical profession no longer applied. Increasingly the names of Jewish-American scholars bulked large in the field of history. Leading departments no longer lacked for distinguished senior members of Jewish origin. In many departments, Jewish-Americans composed 25 percent or more of the faculty. Pulitzer and Bancroft Prizes were showered on the work of such historians as Leon Litwack and Lawrence Levine of Berkeley and Natalie Zemon Davis of Princeton. These three prize-winning historians all epitomized the new sensitivity that Jewish Americans brought to the academy. They studied the powerless, the outcast, and the lower orders. They employed folklore, popular rituals, and other oral traditions to examine hitherto obscure actors on the stage of history. Litwack served as president of the Organization

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*Although *The Uprooted* clearly drew most of its evidence from the experiences of Catholic peasant newcomers to the U.S., Handlin's sensitive depiction of the cultural conflict between first-generation and second-generation children emerged directly from his own life as the child of Orthodox Jewish parents who discarded the culture of his family and adopted that of his native land.

†Children of Jewish immigrants in New York City; educated in the public schools and city colleges (Brooklyn and Queens respectively); and trained as historians in great public and private universities (Harvard, Columbia, Wisconsin). Politics, however, distinguished the early and later lives of the two historians. Gutman was the child of secularized, left-wing parents who came to the United States in the 1920s and whose influence likely moved their son to the left, first to a brief flirtation with the Communist party, USA and later to a form of nonparty "popular front" politics. Throughout his life, Gutman remained a man of the left. Handlin, by contrast, never associated with radicals.

of American Historians last year; Davis is the current president of the American Historical Association; and Litwack's successor as president of the OAH, Stanley Katz, enjoys a professional academic career symbolic of the place of Jewish-American historians in the contemporary United States, rising from an initial faculty position at the University of Wisconsin to the presidency of the American Council of Learned Societies. Where then, one might ask, do Gutman and his work fit into this revolution in the profession of history in the U.S.?

Jewish Americans studied the powerless, the outcast, and the lower orders.

It seems to me that Gutman, David Brody, and myself, all of whom turned to writing labor and social history at a time when it was marginal to the broader discipline, were in fact prototypes of Handlin's generational model of immigration. As second-generation Americans, children of Jewish immigrants, we chose topics for our dissertations far removed from the culture of our parents and grandparents. We appeared to prefer anything to a Jewish-American subject. Brody opted to write the history of steelworkers in the nonunion era, a subject as far removed from the mainstream of Jewish-American history as one could imagine. I sought to investigate the relationship between working people and that perennial subject of debate among conventional historians of the United States, "progressivism." And Gutman studied the experiences of working people during the depression of the 1870s, a research project that compelled him to explore such quintessential American themes as "republicanism" and "millennial Protestantism."

Perhaps we chose better than we realized. The one historian of our generation who elected to write his dissertation on a Jewish subject, Moses Rischin, experienced a conflictual relationship with his mentor, Oscar Handlin, and watched the historical profession neglect his first book. Rischin's *The Promised City: New York's Jews, 1870-1914*, (1962) now widely recognized as a classic work in Jewish-American history, made as much initial impact in the profession as the proverbial falling tree in the forest. The national journal of American historians did not even deign to review it. In the early 1960s, history in the United States remained in many ways, "goyische."

The essays collected and reprinted in this volume disclose how Gutman transformed the way history was seen, done, and written in this country. They also reveal what a slow, tortuous, and often frustrating process that was. Here we see all the weaknesses as well as the strengths of Gutman's approach and grasp clearly the slowness of his maturation as a scholar. The early essays overwhelm the reader with detail, piling one fact upon another, in an almost monomaniacal Rankean effort to recreate "the past as it actually was." In such essays, Gutman eschewed theory and kept analysis to a minimum. The hundred pages that he devoted to coal miners in Braidwood (Chapter 3) suggested to the reader that the facts speak for themselves.

Nevertheless, Gutman managed to distinguish himself from more conventional historians. Their method might be the same; their subject, however, differed. Gutman chose to examine aspects of the American past ignored by others and also to cast his findings in a new perspective. Not only was the study of working people rare among academic historians (labor history in the 1950s remained a discipline taught mostly in economics departments and industrial relations schools), but research into the lives of nonunion workers was rarer still. Gutman not only turned away from traditional political and diplomatic history, he also scorned the conventional topics of labor history: trade unions, labor leaders, and great strikes. Instead, Gutman sought to study the experiences of the previously anonymous "masses" and to demonstrate that they too had a past worth knowing and respecting.

Most important, he struggled to convey to others not simply what history *did* to its neglected subjects but what they did with what happened to them. As Gutman put it, "Studying the choices working men and women made and how their behavior affected important historical processes enlarges our understanding of 'the condition of being human.'" Through assiduous reading in newspapers, state labor reports, and labor journals, among other sources, he recreated the world of the quotidian experience, proving that the common people were not inarticulate and that some of them could indeed be grandiloquent in their expressions. It is quite remarkable how, in reading essays originally conceived in the late 1950s and written in the early and mid-1960s, one observes the appearance of women, nonwhites, and "new" immigrants as key participants in the history of American labor. Even before he condemned the "Balkanization" of labor and social history (in the introduction to his first collection of essays published in 1976), Gutman had proved that the history of women, of Afro-Americans, and of immigrants could not be separated from the history of labor. That is why Gutman chose to write his first complete book on Afro-Americans (*The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom*, 1976) and why three of the essays in this collection treat Afro-American history. Just as Gutman demonstrated that free workers partly made their own history, he also disclosed in excruciating detail how black slaves made something of *their own* out of what their masters did to them.

Yet Gutman paid dearly for the almost complete absence of theory in his work. Too much theory may result in dry abstraction and dense prose. It may also produce, as Gutman learned during his youthful flirtation with left-wing politics, scholarship more faithful to a party line than to the past. Thus, perhaps in flight from the sterile and mechanical Marxist historical models of his youth, Gutman abjured theory and wrote articles more notable for their dense detail than for their theoretical lucidity. The absence of theory in most of Gutman's writing produced opaqueness and circumlocutions around a main theme. His publications are more to be sampled for the gems buried deep within their prolix prose than to be read through at a single sitting.

The absence of theory also weakened Gutman's scholarship in more serious ways. His writing on labor history invariably conflated class and culture. As Berlin shrewdly observes in his introduction, Gutman rarely used the word class and never used the term proletarian. When writing about immigrants, ethnics, and Afro-Americans he invariably alluded to their distinctive

subcultures. In such nonclass subcultures, however, workers, petty proprietors, rising bourgeois, politicos, clergy, and professionals worshipped in the same temples, associated in the same fraternal associations, and shared common traditions. In his most famous single essay, "Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America," Gutman implicitly adopted a crude modernization model to explain the dynamics of working-class history. In that essay, Gutman suggested that the most decisive and violent moments in American labor history occurred when people new to industrial society experienced the discipline of wage labor. People with traditional ways of life rebelled against the demands of an industrial society. By implication, as such people grew more accustomed to the new regime, they adapted, modernized, and behaved in a more orderly manner. Although Gutman never so asserted, a reader of that essay would not have been mistaken to conclude that labor-capital conflict, rather than being intrinsic to industrial capitalism, was merely a passing phase in the process of initial proletarianization.

Gutman's theoretical deficiencies, and his tendency always to place the most sanguine interpretation on the behavior of workers in the past, blemished his scholarship in other ways. Not only did he tend to conflate culture and class; equally important, he understated the bitter ethnic and racial conflicts that divided the American working classes in the era that his research examines, the Gilded Age and its aftermath. Instead his version of the past reminds one of the "Popular Front" song made famous during World War II, "The House I Live In." Gutman's emphasis on the resilience of workers under attack often disguises the fact that the people being described *lost* their battles. The Gilded Age was not an era of rising working-class power. Quite the contrary. It was instead a time when millions of immigrant and American-born workers bought the American dream and worshipped at the same shrine of equal opportunity as did Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller. For every worker who challenged the power of capital and its soiling of the tradition of "republicanism," another worker aspired to become a capitalist and believed that "republicanism" made such aspirations possible.* Gutman's tendency to romanticize working-class behavior; to perceive unity where diversity ruled; to neglect the extent to which subordinate people assimilated ruling-class values; and to interpret defeat as triumph, opened him to the harsh attacks of historians Eugene and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, criticisms openly and fairly addressed in Berlin's introduction. Gutman would have been wiser to have heeded the advice of some of his friendlier critics and to have devoted as much attention to explaining *why* capital ruled the United States at the end of the Gilded Age as to how working people survived with their humanity and dignity intact. Culture may have enabled oppressed people to survive; it did *not* endow them with power.

That Gutman was capable of distinguishing between culture and power and also of moving in new and more theoretical directions is disclosed in the nondocumented parts of the book: an interview originally published in *Radical History Review*, think-pieces on the labor question and historical consciousness in the U.S., and an essay coauthored with Berlin on class composition in America. There Gutman shows a way with language, ideas, and theory practically absent in his more scholarly articles. In the long interview he explains that his work had sought to recast the periodization of American history, to turn it away from a focus on presidential eras or civil and foreign wars to a concentration on decisive stages in the process of class formation, an objective he never actually achieved. He also admits that labor history can only be written properly by examining the conflictual relationship between superordinate groups that wield power, and subordinate groups that are the victims of the powerful. Moreover, Gutman concedes the fatuousness of romanticizing working-class culture and instead suggests that a deeper, finer-grained analysis of labor history must consider the ongoing dialectic between individualism and mutualism. In the essay written jointly with Berlin, we see the beginning of an effort to write the history of the making and remaking of an American proletariat. They draw attention to the discontinuity between the first American wage-earners of the antebellum years and the "new" working class of 1880, of which more than 75 percent were immigrants and their children. In only one generation, descendants of the original working class had practically vanished from factories, docks, and railroad yards. Yet here too, Gutman and Berlin slight the ethnic diversity of their new proletariat.

*Those familiar with Abraham Cahan's novel *The Rise of David Levinsky*, will remember how materialistic and nonmaterialistic, individualistic and mutualistic values clashed in the minds and hearts of immigrants.

Gutman proved that the history of women, of Afro-Americans, and of immigrants could not be separated from the history of labor.

In the end, by compiling and editing this collection, Ira Berlin has done more to preserve the memory of Herbert Gutman as a scholar than have all the memorial services that were held after his untimely death. One comes away from reading *Power and Culture* with an appreciation of Gutman's strengths as well as weaknesses as a historian. One wonders whether, if death had not come so unexpectedly, Gutman might have succeeded in weaving the imaginative intellect revealed in parts of the book more fully into his historical scholarship. Then we might have had a Jewish-American historian more renowned for his prose and intellectual panache and less remembered for his leaden language and romanticization of the powerless. □

Book Review

Choosing Religion

Josh Henkin

Lovingkindness by Anne Roiphe. Summit Books, 1987, 279 pp.

Like many other American Jews growing up in the middle of the twentieth century and achieving political and social consciousness in a world still reeling from Auschwitz and the Gulag, a world about to enter the age of burnt bras and draft cards, Annie Johnson, the protagonist of Anne Roiphe's latest novel, *Lovingkindness*, is only remotely attached to her religious heritage. Raised in a secular household, Annie marries a gentile poet; and although she tells her daughter she is Jewish—even takes her once to a feminist seder—she considers traditional religion a relic of the past.

It is with great surprise, then, that Annie, after not having heard from her daughter for five months, receives a call from Andrea informing her that she is studying in an ultra-Orthodox yeshiva in Jerusalem. If the first twenty-two years of Andrea's troubled life have taught her mother anything, they have taught her to expect the worst. Nevertheless, Annie would never have guessed that the young woman with a rattlesnake tattoo between her shoulder blades, the recent recipient of a third abortion, the flouter of every imaginable convention, would be telephoning her mother from Yeshiva Rachel. "I was always waiting for some definitive end-of-the-line call," Annie muses after hanging up the phone. "We've found your daughter in a ravine outside of Las Vegas with her throat cut, we've found your daughter dead of an overdose in a pickup truck with a Hell's Angel, we've found your daughter naked hallucinating on the L.A. freeway. I had anticipated a lot of phone calls. I had not thought of the Yeshiva Rachel."

Set in contemporary America and told by Annie in the first-person, *Lovingkindness* is the poignant tale of a single mother trying to come to terms with her daughter's "conversion" to fundamentalist religion. Chilly afternoons in the sandbox, hours over a hot stove, and late nights wiping a fevered brow all seem for naught.

But Roiphe's novel is not simply a moving account of maternal self-doubt or of filial relations gone awry. *Lovingkindness* is also a political work—the story of liberalism's unfulfilled promise—and it is as a political work that it is most thought-provoking, and also most problematic.

Roiphe holds a common but unsubstantiated liberal belief that secular choices are more genuine than religious ones, that the halls of the university house a diverse bunch of thinking individuals, while the halls of the yeshiva house an indistinguishable flock of sheep.

Annie Johnson is a writer, a feminist, and, most important, someone brought up believing in the liberal ideal that one can achieve personal fulfillment by rationally choosing and planning one's life. Yet Annie argues that Andrea is simply one of a growing number of people who find choice too burdensome to bear. Even while reaffirming liberalism's values, Annie wonders what a world of choice has led to: "I have supported the changes in America that have brought women more power, more economic equity, and have enabled them to see for themselves a wider variety of futures.... On the other hand, I see that choice, too much choice, a world without boundaries, has pushed Andrea overboard, and I, I am not sure that I can save her."

Conceived in these terms, Andrea's problem is that she is too weak to deal with the complexities of liberal society. As her mother puts it: "Some of our children just can't make it. They're not strong enough." Andrea has rejected a life of choice in favor of a "happier," more comfortable life. Or so the argument goes.

This tension between choice and happiness is not particularly new. It can be seen in the work of John Stuart Mill, who on the one hand argued that a life of autonomous reflection maximizes human happiness, and on the other hand admitted that pigs might be more satisfied than human beings, a fool more satisfied than Socrates. Nevertheless, Mill insisted that the "reflective" life, the life filled with autonomous choices, is more noble and ultimately more fulfilling than the unreflective one.

Unfortunately, Annie makes the all-too-common mistake of equating reflective with secular and unreflective with religious. Thus, although she has sympathy for her daughter, Annie never questions the fundamental assumption that Andrea's "conversion" is a choice not to choose. In other words, although Annie does not blame Andrea for becoming a "satisfied fool," she never doubts that such a description is accurate. As a result, *Lovingkindness* paints a false dichotomy between choosing liberals and nonchoosing religious extremists.

Having formulated the struggle in this way, Annie is unable to protest her daughter's decision: she has to admit that no one has forced Andrea to embrace fundamentalism. On the contrary, when one day in Jerusalem Andrea finds herself drawn to a group

Josh Henkin is assistant to the editor of Tikkun.

of Americans smoking and listening to the Rolling Stones. Rabbi Cohen, the principal of Yeshiva Rachel, gives her a Rolling Stones tape. "He said that as long as I am hungry for old sounds I should allow myself to listen and remember," Andrea writes her mother. "He wants me to find my own truth." Thus, when Rabbi Cohen meets Annie for the first time, he knows exactly how to persuade her not to interfere with her daughter's new life. "Greet her with love and allow her to choose her own future," he tells her. "That is what you believe in, is it not—freedom? Individual choice?"

Roiphe's attempt to cast Annie's frustration in political terms, to make the argument that Annie's despair is a response not simply to personal rejection, but to her daughter's disdain for the "choosing life," simply does not hold water. Annie—and Roiphe too, it seems—holds a common but unsubstantiated liberal belief that secular choices are more genuine than religious ones, that the halls of the university house a diverse bunch of thinking, reflective individuals, while the halls of the yeshiva house a group of automatons, an indistinguishable flock of sheep. Such an argument runs implicitly throughout *Lovingkindness*, even though Roiphe has written a novel about a small cast of characters, and not—at least not explicitly—a political treatise defending liberalism. Time and again, Annie universalizes her claims, making it clear that her comments refer not simply to Andrea, but to a large number of people who, in her opinion, are fleeing from the life of choice. Roiphe uses Andrea as an illustration that "all over the globe people [have] stopped wanting to be free," and that "the world is without doubt wicked and cruel." Throughout the novel, Annie weaves her political insights together with her personal life, creating a quilt whose threads are not easily disentangled.

In this light, it is frustrating to see Andrea used as the prototype of the secular individual turned religious. Her life, both before and after her "conversion," smacks of a caricature; the young woman who once placed the words "God sucks" above her mirror, who hung out with vagabonds on the streets of New York, now finds Yeshiva Rachel appealing because her assigned role is clear, her realm of choice limited. Like Micah, the man whom Yeshiva Rachel has chosen to be Andrea's husband, and who says "I can go on learning till the end and that is all that is wanted of me." Andrea seems to be a straw woman for liberalism to knock down.

Granted, some people are drawn to religious lifestyles because they wish to escape the complexities of modernity, but no one would know from reading Roiphe's book that a large number of rational, sophisticated people have chosen to embrace religion. One need not read the work of Thomas Merton, Abraham Joshua Heschel, and Abraham Isaac Kook, or even subscribe to *The New Oxford Review*, in order to encounter numerous people for whom religion is not a flight from the so-called real world. For these people, religious faith and practice are a daily struggle, a choice they make over and over again. Given the pervasive influence of the secular world, even certain members of black-hat yeshivas are continually faced with the option of abandoning their faith, are constantly forced to rechoose their religion. Particularly for people like Andrea and Micah, people who have spent most of their lives in the secular world and who have parents begging them to come home, religious life is a constant act of choice. Like the monogamous marriage partner who, in today's world, must choose daily whether to remain faithful, the religious person is faced with a continuous barrage of choices.

Moreover, it takes a strange sort of logic to imply that to yearn for a strong, supportive community is to take flight from the real world. When Andrea writes her mother: "I have never before been so cared for," or "Everyone here seems to like me," is she saying that she is too weak to live in a world she found unwelcoming or excessively individualistic? Or is she more accurately celebrating, not simply accepting, the importance of friendship and love? Echoing the lyrics made famous by Janis Joplin, Annie's friend Lionel says: "[W]hat is [independence], after all, only a license issued by your support group to be alone a lot."

It is often argued that the comfortable environment that yeshiva communities provide, not to mention their uniquely ritual-oriented lifestyle, effectively insulates their members from the outside world. Such an argument is problematic. Since the Enlightenment, Jewish history has been a history of leaving the yeshivas, a history of assimilation. Even today, in the age of religious revival, many more Jews abandon traditional religion than embrace it, suggesting that the walls of secular society may be a good deal less permeable than the walls of the yeshiva.

Of course, many people stay religious unreflectively, but this lack of reflection does not distinguish the religious from the secular. It is hard to understand how Annie can pretend, with only an occasional suggestion to the contrary, that her world is composed of autonomous agents while her daughter's world is composed of self-selected prisoners. But time and again, Annie's letters to Andrea betray this attitude: "Are you sure you just don't want someone to tell you what to do? Don't you really think that those laws that determine what you can eat ... are infringements on your natural choices. [Shouldn't] you determine for yourself your own personal ethical behavior? ... Don't you feel weighted down [by these rules] ...?"

Does Annie really believe that people in her world choose more freely? Is it a coincidence that children sent by prosperous, well-educated parents to prestigious New York City private schools tend to go to college instead of becoming Southern sharecroppers, joining hippie communes, pumping gas, or going to Yeshiva Rachel? And once they get to college, or go on to have careers, are they really "freer" than yeshiva students? They too choose from a limited number of options, slowly narrowing their fields of study and their social circles. They may be "free" to serve lobster at their dinner parties, but so are observant Jews, only they've chosen not to.

I don't mean to imply that one's station in life completely determines one's choices, or even that autonomous choice is not worth pursuing; only that the religious world does not have a monopoly on unreflective choice. Moreover, secular people fool themselves if they think that they don't operate under a strict code of ritual, a code that, written or not, they must adhere to in order to succeed both professionally and socially. The president of a bank is not likely to show up to work in tie-dye, and not because he happens to have

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a personal preference for pinstripes. As Mircea Eliade points out: "[T]he majority of the 'irreligious' still behave religiously, even though they are not aware of the fact.... The festivities that go with the New Year or with taking up residence in a new house, although laicized, still exhibit the structure of a ritual renewal. The same phenomenon is observable in the merry-making that accompanies a marriage or birth of a child or obtaining a new position or a social advancement, and so on." Anthropologist Mary Douglas is even more explicit: "The apparent anti-ritualism of today is the substitution of one set of religious rituals in place of another."

Shortly after learning that Andrea has moved into Yeshiva Rachel, Annie wonders how things might have turned out differently: "If I had married again ... would [Andrea] now be in a post-doctoral program in biochemistry at Yale? If I had been a woman who was more domestic ... would she now be a corporate lawyer in a Wall Street firm and would we meet for lunch whenever her busy schedule permitted ... and could we confide in each other the exasperations and thrills of day-to-day life without the interference of divine voices?"

Annie's wishes are perfectly legitimate. There is nothing wrong with wanting to be able to relate to one's own children, with hoping that they share one's interests. But it does not follow that children who reject their parents' lifestyles have chosen not to choose. Anne Roiphe is a wonderful writer, and she has written a moving novel about fragile relations between mother and daughter. What's more, many of her political insights are extremely sophisticated. Her analysis of feminism, in particular, is both subtle and thought-provoking. In this light, it is particularly disappointing that she devoted much of her book to hazy ideas about choice. Doing so served only to weaken her grip on this reader, to make him question her crude dichotomy between the religious and secular worlds instead of focusing his attention on the power and intelligence of her tale. □

EXCHANGE

(Continued from p. 9)

of their way to stress the provisional and nondogmatic nature of their propositions in a manner I cannot imagine fundamentalists doing. As I write this letter, I happen to have at hand a scientific text by Steven Weinberg, which allows me to quote a *typical* scientific sentiment: "Of course, the standard model may be partly or wholly wrong. However, its importance lies not in its certain truth but in the common meeting ground it provides for an enormous variety of observational data. In the context of a standard cosmological model, we can begin to appreciate their cosmological significance, whatever model ultimately proves correct...." (*Gravitation and Cosmology*). This sentiment is typical, as well, of biologists.

We all strive to foster empathy. Indeed, the epistemological enterprise of identifying the limits of scientific knowledge is one in which practicing scientists have played not a small part. I happen to know few more empathetic individuals than acquaintances who study animals, not to mention ecologists who train their disciples to view the world in a holistic way that can well serve as a general model even if one doesn't subscribe to the tenets of a particular discipline. Science, in short, is not nearly so medieval as the rest of society....

Samuel J. Petuchowski
Bethesda, Maryland

To the Editor:

Peter Gabel's article "Creationism and the Spirit of Nature" is disturbing, to say the least. It is one thing to promote intuition as a mode of apprehension and a way of subjectively deepening our spiritual rapport with the web of reality. It is quite another to claim intuition as the basis for an explanatory theory of the external world. To suggest a common cause with creationists in this regard is disastrous for not only science and religion, but for politics and ethics as well.

No doubt, the world would be a more humane place if our empathetic and intuitive faculties were more sensitively developed. But it is sad to see many intellectuals, in the name of an ill-defined progressivism, fiercely attack modernity and its finest fruits.

Joseph Chuman
Hackensack, New Jersey

Peter Gabel responds:

There are two main criticisms of my Creationism/Evolution article expressed in these letters—one that I presented an unfair and overly dogmatic view of the scientific method, blaming science for cultural evils that are not the fault of science but of people who misuse it; the other that the claims I make for the validity of intuitive insight and understanding are dangerous and can lead to fascism.

The first point misunderstands the basic thrust of my critique of science. The problem with science is not that it is inherently rigid or dogmatic; all good scientists recognize that their hypotheses are provisional and are subject to revision based on the discovery of new information. The problem with science, rather, is that the detached objectifying outlook characteristic of the scientific method is inconsistent with the engagement, compassion, and empathy required to understand the spiritual meaning of life in all its forms. These two kinds of knowledge could coexist in a proper relation to one another, but only if the pursuit of quantitative, objectified knowledge were guided by a comprehension of the qualitative, spiritual nature of all living things. Instead, exactly the reverse has occurred over the last several hundred years. The relationship between scientific knowledge and intuitive or spiritual knowledge has been severed; scientific knowledge has been accepted as the only kind of knowledge that can be considered "objective," while intuitive knowledge has been relegated to the realm of mere personal opinion or belief. As a result, scientific research and the technologies spawned by it now run wild without any ethical anchor because they have been crazily liberated from any relationship to the spiritual knowledge—to the knowledge of what is objectively good and bad for human and other living beings—which should guide their use and development.

One of the consequences of this severing of the scientific method from any underlying spiritual understanding is that science becomes capable of producing authoritative but false theories whenever it is applied to living or spiritual phenomena. This is what I claim has occurred in the case of the theory of evolution—from Darwin's theory of natural selection right down through the contemporary ideas of Stephen Jay Gould. Darwin and Gould were/are great naturalists, and I in no way mean to impugn the significance of their contributions as insightful observers of plant and animal life. But because they limit what they think they can know to what can be "objectively observed," they rely exclusively on factual notions like survival, genetic mutations, climatic conditions, the size and location of particular species, and the like, in generating their hypotheses about how the physical forms of plants and animals have developed over the course of historical time. Suppose I wish to claim as I try to do in my article—not on the basis of logical argument but by a kind of intuitive appeal—that so-called lower forms of life are animated by qualities of spirit, such as intention, desire, the need for love and connection, and the pursuit of sensual grounding and meaning; and that these qualities also must shape the physical development and transformation of the life-forms that constitute the natural world. Evolutionary biologists would respond as Joseph Kushick does in his letter, that while this is legitimate philosophical speculation, it is "not science"—i.e., that it is not hard knowledge of "the rules by which nature seems to operate." But, I respond, the presence of spirit in plant and animal life means that nature does not "operate" at all, that it is not a mechanism functioning according to objective laws, and that the theories of the evolutionists which create a dualism between indwelling spirit and the transformation of physical forms—attributing the latter to genetic mutations and a purely "physical" quest for survival—are in contradiction with the ontology of all animate life. The answer of Joseph Kushick to this claim would be that the hypotheses of Darwin and his followers remain consistent with the "observed facts" and that they can only be falsified by evidence that is recognized as real by the scientific method. In this way, the theory of evolution is rendered authoritative via the privileging of detached "objective" analysis over engaged intuitive insight, even though it violates what intuition reveals. It is a mistaken theory, but it

cannot be proved to be so by its own criteria, and it will only accept its own criteria as evidence of truth or error.

But I don't want to spend too much time responding to the many scientists who were outraged by my article, because my article was not written primarily for scientists. It was written to try to validate the experience of the many non-scientist readers of *Tikkun* that their emotional, intuitive, spiritual responses to the world provide access to a knowledge of Being in all its forms that is correct, a knowledge that the "scientific method" cannot begin to address. The main point of my article is that the creationist movement is an understandable response to three hundred years of the hegemony of liberal scientific thought, and that the only way to combat the evils of creationism—its fanatical anticommunism, its homophobia and repression of sexuality, its authoritarian use of the Bible and the image of God to enslave the desire and imagination of its followers—is for the left to stop allowing these people to be the sole spokespersons for the knowledge revealed to the human soul. We cannot overcome the appeal of the Jimmy Swaggarts and Jerry Falwells of the world by declaring that their views are "not science" and are therefore merely subjective, religious opinions. This just leads to an emotional and ethical relativism that people know is the most corrupt aspect of our alienated liberal culture—it affirms that we are ontologically detached from one another and from nature, floating in empty isolation toward a meaningless death. The way to defeat the right-wing creationists is to validate that there is such a thing as intuitive, passionate, ethical knowledge, that this knowledge is grounded in our connection to each other as social and natural beings, and that the right-wing creationists' version of this knowledge is wrong because their understanding of our social and natural existence is distorted and pathological. Why should we let the Assemblies of God run unopposed in the public arena as the spokespeople for God?

This leads directly to the question of whether claiming that there is an objective basis for intuitive knowledge is dangerous and might give legitimacy to fascist movements. This is certainly a serious and legitimate question because fascism acquires its power in part by linking appeals to people's emotions with knowledge of the Truth. The great achievement of liberal culture over the last several hundred years has been its partial protection of the individual from the tyranny of the group, and perhaps the single most important ideological source of this protection has been the idea that people cannot dominate others with truth-claims that are not provable by objective and verifiable methods. This idea has been the basis of the historical link between the claim that science provides the only objective basis for making knowledge-claims about the true nature of reality and the affirmation of the right to freedom of speech and religion. In the realm of feelings and insight into consciousness, no person can silence another in the name of truth because, in the liberal world view, truth must be demonstrated scientifically and ideas that emerge from feelings or insight into consciousness (roughly, spiritual insight) cannot be demonstrated to be true or false by scientific procedures. To say that spiritual insight is "just a matter of opinion" does, to some degree, protect the individual from being dominated by the spiritual insight of others, and, to some degree, it gives people the courage to think for themselves (since each person's opinion is as good as anyone else's).

Without in any way denying the specific historical importance of the Enlightenment and the rise of science in helping to rid the world of the spiritual persecution that to some extent characterized feudal society, I think we must now recognize that science has become part of the problem rather than part of the solution and that the liberal world view, at least in its current form, is as likely to be a cause of the rise of fascism (whether religious, racial, or nationalist) as it is to be what prevents it. The reason is not only that liberalism in its current form legitimizes, in the name of individual freedom, an immense amount of completely unnecessary worldwide economic suffering, a fact which certainly plays a part in making large masses of people vulnerable to the promises of redemption and revenge spun out by fascist leaders. It is rather that the liberal world view, at least when tied to the idea that scientific rationality is the only route to true knowledge, *drives people crazy* because it prevents people from affirming their own felt knowledge that there is a spiritual dimension of existence that is *real* and not just "a matter of opinion," and that this dimension is accessible to all of us through the insight provided by emotional/intuitive understanding. The paradox of liberalism is that in its attempt to protect the individual from the group by insisting on the merely "subjective" nature of spiritual insight as contrasted with rationally provable scientific knowledge, it has made itself into a dogma which drives people toward fascist group movements by denying the reality of the spiritual or feeling world that fascist movements speak to.

The argument implicit in the left-wing creationist articles appearing in *Tikkun* is that there is only one way to combat the power of the religious right, and that is to recognize that they are addressing something real and valid in people's experience and to challenge them on the merits. If the spiritual/emotional/intuitive dimension of reality is acknowledged as an aspect of the world that can be *known*, then we no longer have to stand idly by and listen to these lunatics tell us that God doesn't want us to sleep together before we're married or that the Bible must be read as literally true. Instead, we can struggle with them over the true meaning of what is revealed to us through passionate intuition and "demonstrate," by the evocative power of our words and the moral direction of our actions, that the religious right is wrong about virtually everything it speaks to. But to begin to do this, we have to first recognize how wrong we have been to sever the bond between loving and knowing that is the basis for grasping all living truth.

To the Editor:

Having read the recent set of articles on the creationism-evolution controversy by Peter Gabel, Betty Mensch, Alan Freeman, and Gary Peller (*Tikkun* Nov./Dec. 1987) I am led to ask the following question: Is *Tikkun*'s philosophy of "neo-compassionism" simply a neo-conservatism that has been sent off to New Age charm school?

If these three articles have any one theme in common, it is their contention that the fundamentalists have gravitated towards aspects of the left's world view because of their fight against science and technocracy. However, what is most interesting about these authors is the astonishing degree to which they (self-

styled leftists all) have gravitated towards the world view of the fundamentalists. In particular, all four insist on an affinity between the fundamentalists' declaration that science is the religion of "secular humanism," and the supposedly leftist truth that scientific theory is the mere ideological reflection of capitalist domination. Even while they attempt to invoke Marx in support of this contention, they propound the rather un-Marxian notion that the spiritual and moral sense is the fount of ineffable Truth itself.

It is a remarkable cut-and-paste job indeed that rejects the standard leftist diagnosis of New Morality movements (among which one would have to include "neo-compassionism") as instances of petty bourgeois radicalism, while simultaneously wading through the most discredited backwaters of Stalinist history to revive the "bourgeois science" arguments of the Lysenkoists. It is also strange that Gabel, Mensch, Freeman, and Peller seem to equate leftism with populistic antimodernism and antiscientism, it being precisely those aspects of fundamentalism that they find most appealing. And it is even more revealing that all of these writers evidently feel lost in a sea of "ethical relativism" and want a return to a time (like that of fabled small-town America) when people acted as they ought, obediently paired themselves off for morality-training in nuclear families, and in which self-righteous spiritual certainty (to be "empowered and compelled to do what you always knew was right," as Gabel puts it) was the common (middle-class) cultural inheritance.

For them, as for the fundamentalists, "morality" has become a kind of intellectual catsup that can render every sort of revisionism palatable if only enough of it can be poured onto the analysis. One soon begins to suspect, however, that these authors are engaged not in "leftist" analysis but rather in the exaltation of certain upper-middle-class identity projects—and in nostalgically reinventing history and nature so as to give these projects a mythically grand scope.

Even Trofim Lysenko's theory of "marriage for love" among plants is surpassed in sheer silliness by Gabel's claim that panda bear evolution should be understood as a sort of eons-long panda New Age spiritual self-actualization movement. Mensch and Freeman, reconstructing history rather than nature, suggest that the Nazis succeeded in Germany because "German bourgeois culture offered little to satisfy the German yearning for community and for moral significance." However, the middle-class Germans who helped bring Nazism to power had survived disaster compounded upon disaster: military defeat, Communist near-revolutions, devastating inflation, and crushing war reparation debts. The claim that they acted as they did because of a German version of suburban yuppie ennui is almost as absurd as the assertion of the postwar "authoritarian personality" psychologists that they did so because of insufficiently permissive German child rearing techniques.

And Peller, who mimics Irving Kristol's brand of neo-conservatism by claiming that fundamentalism is the expression of a class struggle of Southern working-class whites against Northern technocratic knowledge-class carpetbaggers, simply misrepresents the historical evidence. Fundamentalism is and always has been a movement of the nativist and Protestant rural middle classes —small shopkeepers, barbers, farmers, and those declassed from this group—and its traditional targets have been blacks and the urban working class as well as the Eastern corporate bourgeoisie. Using Peller's basic argument, one could similarly construe the followers of Italian fascism, the Ku Klux Klan, Huey Long's Louisiana-bred Peronism, or Ernst Roehm's quasi-proletarian SA as misunderstood comrades-in-arms of *Tikkun*-style leftism simply because all were populistic, antibourgeois, and antimodernist. However, if one views the neo-conservatives' "knowledge class" theory as George Wallace populism decked out with a polysyllabic vocabulary, then substituting the word "technocrat" for "pointy-headed intellectual" doesn't make it any prettier—or any more "progressive."

Does "neo-compassionism" represent the position of upper-middle-class liberals who have been rocked by the same tidal waves of social change (feminism, youth revolt, sexual revolutionism) that have upset the traditional family and so alarmed the fundamentalists? Have these liberals, like the fundamentalists, gravitated towards a world view that emphasizes certainty and uniformity of belief (whether this be Christian, Jewish or New Age), rigid and fixed social relationships, and a defensive obscurantism? Like the French "Yellow" (i.e., national) socialism of the 1930s, is it a conservatism that tries to camouflage itself in the world view of its enemy and that (ironically) enthrones the scientist rather than the Jewish shopkeeper or Jewish financier as the all-purpose scapegoat of its antimodernist reactionism?

Ronald P.S. Mahler
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Gary Peller responds:

I was surprised by the level of hostility in some of the responses to the articles on creationism and evolution—especially the comments that linked our criticism of scientific discourse and our sympathy with creationists to nazis, Italian fascists, George Wallace, the KKK, etc. I have been wondering why this reaction was so intense.

The easy answer is because of the right-wing politics of the fundamentalist movement as a whole. But I think it goes deeper. I believe the outrage has to do with the way we as a Jewish community have come to understand the Holocaust and our place in American society.

We have, for several decades now, interpreted Nazism according to a particular grid of reason and passion. According to our liberal-oriented story, the nazis came to power because passionate mobs were permitted to act on the basis of prejudice and racism, unconstrained by reason and truth. Viewing fascism as the victory of passion over reason, of bias over objectivity, we have been committed to reason, to the norms of objectivity, as a way to ensure safety. That is why the conflict between evolution and creationism is so charged for us. Evolution represents the same objectivity and dispassion in opposition to the religious account of creationism that American society represents in opposition to the nazis. We have identified with science as part of a conviction that impartiality and neutrality will protect Jews, and others, from social domination; we identify with the liberal vision of American society because it promised to rid public life of passion, spirit, and prejudice in the name of freedom and equal opportunity.

Early on, this way of understanding

things was progressive—we could support the ACLU against McCarthy, and the NAACP against George Wallace—because social domination appeared in the overt guise of racial prejudice and ideological repression. But today the rhetoric of liberal objectivity and neutrality is the rhetoric of the ruling class itself, the way that the elite rationalize disparities of wealth, power, and social status through the discourse of equal opportunity and the functional meritocracy of standardized testing. That's the point I was trying to make in my essay. There is no neutral objective discourse for social life—banning spirituality from public schools did not make them free and enlightened, but instead helped make them antiseptic, lifeless places where children are confronted with the ideology that detachment and impersonality are the characteristics of truth and knowledge, and where the same rhetoric is used to rationalize the social stratification of children, supposedly according to intellectual merit as objectively determined. There are real victims of this new discourse in the schools. They include many of the people who make up the creationist movement, and who feel justifiably alienated by the centralized, corporate, and colonialist feel of public education today.

And it is not only in our contemporary context that this liberal discourse of objectivity has become repressive. The interpretation of fascism as rooted in the dangerous release of public passion was false from the beginning. The nazis reflected their commitment to the discourse of science in too many ways—including the central image of the socially engineered master race and the awful efficiency of their technique of murder—for the simple identification of repression with passion and freedom with scientific detachment to have ever really made sense. We interpreted fascism in this way not because it was an accurate way to explain the nazis, but because it was a way for us to find a place for ourselves in the American political context.

We now face a fundamental choice. If we continue to interpret the world through this liberal public/private prism—if we continue to see passion and spirituality as essentially private and scientific discourse as objective and neutral; we will continue to buy into the false liberal rhetoric that, I have argued, is repressive when seen in the context of the actual social relations of various communities.

Debunking the false pretensions of the scientific discourse of public education is not an invitation to fascism; we need to rethink our association of public passion and spirituality with danger and our faith in the American liberal norms of neutrality and objectivity.

The repressive right-wing content of the creationist movement should be opposed and resisted. But the solution is not to treat the creationists as the enemy of Jews, and therefore to turn our backs on the way that they have been victimized in contemporary American life. The heart of the struggle against fascism is to find a way to engage the creationist by offering a vision of resistance to the false pretensions of public objectivity and neutrality, a vision that will more deeply respond to the acute alienation that people feel in schools, and other public institutions. The real danger of fascism is for progressive Jews to ignore the justifiable anger of the people in the creationist movement, and thereby leave it to corporatist right-wing religious leaders to articulate their pain. □

LIBERATION THEOLOGY

(Continued from p. 21)

of Errors or the skeptical scientist William Jennings Bryan attacked at the Scopes trial. The most fascinating question the Boff case raises is whether the established religious leaders and the dominant theological thinkers of today can shift gears for a time when, although secularization continues in many places, it no longer sets the cultural pace. John Paul II's most recent encyclical, *Dominus et Vivificatus*, attacks atheism and materialism. But these were the heresies of the past. The most perplexing challenge Christianity will face in the decades ahead will not be these "isms" at all. Rather, Christianity now has to respond to the challenge, posed by the rise of militant Islam, the revival of Shinto, the rebirth of fundamentalism in the United States and Israel, and a hundred other such movements. The next pope may fret more over spiritual zealotry than materialism, and more over polytheism than atheism.

There are good reasons why religious leaders are apprehensive about these developments. Revival is never unambiguously good news for anyone. Religious feelings are often mixed with national, ethnic, and racial loyalties. Fanaticism is always ugly, whether it wears the smile of the antireligious tyrant or the frown of the devout bigot. But it would be naive to believe the managers of the different religious establishments are jittery about new spiritual movements just because of the harm they fear they may do to others. They are also worried about their own authority. Ecclesiastical bureaucracies and hierarchies are always upset by religious awakenings. Typically they try to discourage them, eliminate them, or channel them in directions that will allow the existing pillars of sacerdotal power to stand. For the canonical elites, Leonardo Boff represents not just an unmanageable galvanic wave but an uprising of the religious plebs—never a wholly welcome turn of events.

All these stories lie just below the surface of the dealings of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith with one Franciscan friar. The trial of this theologian is also the trial of liberation theology. And the attack on liberation theology is the thrashing of western Christianity as it watches its millennium-long hegemony drain. The trial also uncovers the understandable distress in the upper echelons of the world's great religious edifices as leaders see their authority threatened.

Perhaps the most obvious lesson of the Boff affair is that the present leaders of Christianity, including those of the Roman Catholic Church, can no longer ignore the issues his case brings to the surface. They are questions which could once be kept safely within the province of professional theologians. But that is no

longer true. Boff has been tried not just by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, but also by press releases and newspaper articles in the courtroom of world opinion. The arguments his case thrusts into the spotlight of world publicity cannot now be consigned again to the inner sanctum. Specifically, the case of Leonardo Boff, produces *four key questions* that still remain unanswered.

(1) What will the Catholic church do in the next decades about the powerful religious and intellectual movement represented by liberation theology that sees not just the heavenly salvation but the earthly liberation of the disinherited as the core of the Gospel of Christ?

(2) How will church leaders deal with the restless spiritual energy splashing up from the underside of society and threatening to erode traditional modes of ecclesial governance? It is their vitality and independence, not their so-called "political activism," which constitutes the real threat the thousands of "Christian base communities" all over Latin America pose for the hierarchy. How will the ecclesial elites respond?

(3) How will Christian theology, the inheritor of a two-thousand-year-old Western metaphysical tradition, come to terms with the rising "southern" tide that is reducing the old territory of Christendom to an island in a vast sea of cultural variety? Some believe the enormity of the change required is comparable only to the one Christianity underwent in the first hundred years of its life when it ceased to be a sect of Judaism and plunged into the world of Roman and Hellenistic culture.

(4) How can the church respond to all this and still remain in some recognizable sense *one* church instead of a shambles of competing sects?

While the issues raised by liberation theology have universal significance, some of the disputes that it has raised touch directly on the relationship between the church and the Jews. Liberation theologians have challenged the "supersessionist" view that Jesus Christ puts an absolute end to the "old covenant" and that the Jewish way of approaching God is totally superseded by the Christian way. Most liberation theologians hold that Jesus can only be understood properly in *continuity* with the faith of Israel and in the light of the Hebrew Scriptures. Of course both parties confess Jesus as the Christ, but for the liberationists this confession, far from cutting Jesus off from his Jewish roots, underlines the importance he himself attached to his calling as a prophet in the tradition of Amos and Jeremiah. The ministry of Jesus, instead of superseding the mode of God's acting in the past, extended and deepened it.

Admittedly the "supersessionist" position Ratzinger takes—that the Christian church has definitely replaced Israel as the new "people of God"—has been the dominant one for centuries. But starting about two decades ago, spurred by the painful recognition that the "supersessionist" view may well have contributed to the anti-Semitism that culminated in the Holocaust, scholars began rethinking both the biblical evidence itself and this inherited theological depreciation of the Jews. The consensus of this work, including that of Catholic scholars, now tilts very heavily against the supersessionist view. What has called it into question is both the accumulating evidence of current biblical scholarship and the weight of Catholic and Protestant theological interpretation. The continuity between Judaism, Jesus, the Palestinian "Jesus Movement," and the first decades of the church is becoming increasingly clear with every new archeological find and each new discovery of an ancient manuscript.

Catholic theologian von Balthasar provides the best example of the position held by the opponents of liberation theology on the Hebrew Bible. He grants that the God of the Hebrew Bible did indeed promise liberation to His people in a language which clearly included the political dimension. In the Hebrew Bible, he agrees, "poor" never meant just "spiritually poor." But for von Balthasar, God spoke such coarse and earthy language only because in the culture of ancient Israel religion and politics were still mixed. In the New Testament however, he says, all this is completely changed. Salvation is no longer merely promised, it is definitely realized; and in the process the very meaning of the word "salvation" is radically altered. Salvation or "liberation" (since von Balthasar, like the liberation theologians, is willing to use the two words interchangeably) no longer has any historical or lineal aspect at all. It has become transcendental. But this interpretation creates certain problems. Jesus clearly taught his disciples to pray for the coming of the Kingdom of God "*on earth*." What does this mean for those who believe that Kingdom is entirely transcendental?

Von Balthasar handles this difficulty by giving the prayer a strictly individual meaning. He holds that in this prayer Jesus is placing *himself* at God's disposal as the vehicle of the Heavenly Kingdom, and asking his followers to do the same. He is telling them to give up all efforts to control their own lives in order to be available for this divine reality "unto death" since as von Balthasar says, "he who is not yet willing to give himself unto death has not yet really given himself." Indeed the ultimate expression of the fact that they are fully God's and no longer their own is that the coming of the Kingdom "lies in a dimension which is beyond life and death." Thus in von Balthasar's translations, "Thy kingdom come on earth" becomes "may the eternal

Kingdom come in and through me."

The practical outcome of this interpretation is obvious. It means, for those who follow von Balthasar, the prayer of Jesus for the Kingdom to come on earth and for daily bread holds out no hope whatever for bread or deliverance in *this* world. Even in pre-Christian Judaism, von Balthasar says, such utopianism had already been purified from its immanental, this-worldly limitation by merging the prophetic (historical) and the apocalyptic (transcendental) parts of the Jewish tradition. Nonetheless, he insists that still today the hope of Israel remains a mere "dynamic projection into emptiness" unless the Resurrection of Jesus gives its forward-looking hope a *real* basis. Christianity is not less utopian than Judaism, he says, but it is "real-utopisch," *realistically* "utopian." The contrast does not cast Judaism in a particularly favorable light.

As the prefects read it, the Hebrew Scripture does *not* help us understand the New Testament. Quite the opposite. We can only know what Amos, Jeremiah, and the Suffering Servant songs really meant in the light of the Apostles. The result of this Christian theology is that some of the ideas in the Hebrew Bible are interpreted in a spiritual sense while others are simply abandoned as having been displaced by the New Testament. Christianity has *succeeded* Judaism. Although von Balthasar does not deal with the issue, it is hard to see how, on the basis of his theology, there remains any legitimate religious or theological role for Judaism in the world at all. It would appear to be an anachronism.

One key outcome of God's replacement of Israel by the church, the prefects say, is that religion and politics must no longer be mixed. They insist that, as theologians, they are not only against the *particular* political goals that Boff and his coworkers endorse but that they oppose *any* theologically sanctioned political engagement at all. They believe the liberation Jesus brings to the world is in no sense whatever economic or social, or anything else which smacks of earthly bondage and liberation. It is, says von Balthasar, something infinitely greater, a liberation from the fetters of Satan. This radical difference in interpretive starting points colors everything the liberation theologians and their critics say, about God, Christ, apostolicity, the role of the poor in the church, and the responsibility of the church in the world.

Part of the justification cited by some Catholic theologians for the need to supersede Judaism has been the contention that Christianity could provide a more universal religion.

Those, like the pope, Ratzinger and von Balthasar, who hold to one or another form of this "supersessionist" theology, sometimes suggest that although the Hebrew Bible is particularistic, the coming of Jesus Christ changed all that: with the crucifixion and resurrection, this narrow particularism was transcended and left behind. Christianity, it is said, unlike Judaism, is by definition a universal faith.

Most liberation theologians believe this formulation is wrong both historically and theologically. First, Judaism is not just particularistic. The Jewish faith teaches that the people of Israel were given a universal task at the beginning of their history when God told Abraham that through him "all the nations of the world will be blessed." The key words here are "through" and "blessed." The God of the Bible favors *all* peoples by choosing and working through a *particular* one. And the favor God grants is *blessing*—which for the ancient Jews meant health and well-being and long life—not conversion or domination. As Jewish law developed, it recognized the rights of non-Jews, the "strangers in the land," to certain God-given rights, like Sabbath rest. The universal side of Jewish religion is grounded in God's creation of all peoples, in the covenant with Noah, and in the promise of a messianic era where all the just shall dwell in peace.

On the theological level, this particularistic-universal pattern continues with Jesus. His clash with some—not all—of the Jewish religious authorities of his time arose not because he questioned the core teaching of his own faith tradition, but because, like the earlier prophets, he believed some of those leaders had distorted and delimited it. Jesus lived and died a Jew, a passionate participant in a very particular culture. But what does this mean for the church today? Did the crucifixion and Resurrection change this?

The evidence says not. Jesus' dead body was removed from the cross on Friday just before the sundown that marks the start of the Jewish Sabbath. We have no mention of the Resurrection until the women came to anoint the body on Sunday morning. They would normally have done so on the day immediately following the death, but, as good Jews, they waited until Sabbath was over. The question of when and how the Resurrection itself took place remains a mystery, but the Easter texts clearly teach that God did not intrude into the Sabbath even to bring the Easter event to pass. Even God keeps the Sabbath, and if the risen Christ is the same Jesus who was "crucified under Pontius Pilate" (as the classical creeds state), then he remains Jewish. Christianity has a Jewish messiah. The only universalism Christians can claim is inseparably linked to God's promise of blessing to all nations which was given to a particular people and never rescinded.

The sorry result of Christianity's refusal to acknowledge its rootedness in Jewish particularity was a spurious universalism. Christians soon became blithely unaware of the provincialism of the Graeco-Roman world in

which they so thoroughly "inculturated" themselves, a civilization with lofty confidence in its own universality and catholicity. But the Greek and Roman ideas of universality had little to do with blessing or servanthood. The Greeks believed the mission of Hellas was to civilize the barbarians whether they liked it or not. The Romans imposed their universal unity through law and the legions. Historically Christianity became as "culture-specific" as any other religion, but it acted as though this culture were somehow already universal. It was not. It was one culture among others. What we need now is a catholicity that recognizes and nurtures particularity.

Ironically, as Christianity gropes its way toward becoming—at last—a world faith, and not a Western religion with outposts and enclaves around the globe, Catholic theologians may have a certain advantage over Protestants. True, the Roman party erred in trying to wed Catholic theology eternally to St. Thomas Aquinas and thus to an idealized Western medieval culture. But Protestants, faced with the same dilemma, made an even more disastrous mistake. They tried, earlier in the present century, to create a theology that ostensibly needed no culture at all. Karl Barth grumbled that "Kulturprotestantismus" was Christian theology's greatest foe. He tried to fashion a theology founded on the naked Word of God that allegedly needed no cultural vehicles. Now, however, it has become clear that *every* theology—including Barth's—must express itself in and through some set of cultural patterns. Consequently some Catholic theologians, having grown accustomed to the old inculturated manner of thinking, do not find it as hard as Protestants to enter into other cultural systems. The problem is they can often become too uncritical of an environing culture. The Protestant suspicion of uncritical "inculturation," on the other hand, therefore preserves an invaluable balancing insight. The Gospel must say both "yes" and "no" to a culture at the same time: "yes" to those parts of it which nurture life, and "no" to those which perpetuate domination and exclusion.

Perhaps the time has come for Christianity to stop trying to deal with world cultures as it tried to deal with Judaism, by—in the pope's ill-chosen words—"assuming" and "surmounting" them. The model of Jesus is one of serving, not one of surmounting or of merely assuming. Incarnation means not just that God became flesh but that God became human, and the human always includes culture. It is important to emphasize, however, that the incarnation took place not in an abstract or universal culture, but in a particular one, the culture of Israel. Further, God chose to come to the subculture of the poor, the landless, the religiously suspect, and Christ contested those elements of the dominant culture he found oppressive to the human spirit. Here, as in many other aspects of the current struggles in the Catholic church about liberation theology, the outcomes of internal Catholic theological struggles may have important consequences for Jews, for the Third World, and for the forces of social change in the Western world. □

CENTRAL AMERICA

(Continued from p. 28)

moting a settlement that protects opposition forces anxious to pursue nonviolent means and that gives the insurgents a rationale for laying down their arms. But unless you speak out now about this reality, the responsibility for this deteriorating situation could fall on your shoulders, especially after January 1989 when the Reagan image-making machinery collapses.

The situation could deteriorate even more should the extreme right win the March 1989 presidential election, a likely outcome given the widespread disillusionment with Christian Democratic failures and the difficulties that repression creates for mounting an active campaign by left of center parties. That means that shortly after taking office, you could easily inherit a seemingly intractable policy mess: an extreme rightist president, a closure of all avenues of reform, and a powerful guerrilla movement. That could lead the military to try a severe crackdown, plunging the country back into the brutality of the 1980–84 period, or to an expansion of the war by the rebels, putting the military on the defensive and, perhaps, even threatening its survival.

If you have not already challenged the Reagan agenda, the Republicans will pressure you to increase our military commitment to "support" or "save" what falsely appears to be a "democracy under siege." It will be particularly difficult to prevent the "loss" of El Salvador from falling squarely on your shoulders if conservatives have already been able to tar you somewhat with the "loss" of Nicaragua.

You do not need to be trapped. The problem is not your program, but the unrealistic, costly, and dangerous goals of the Reagan policy agenda. You can transform the debate by framing it in terms of the *real national interests* we have in Central America—guaranteeing our security, and promoting peace, broadly shared development, and democracy. When the Republicans ask, "What will you do about the Sandinistas or how will you prevent revolution in El Salvador?" your response must be: "You are asking the wrong questions. We need to pursue our real national interests. Your policies have undermined them.

Let me tell you how I will secure them."

Take security first. The idea sold by the administration that Nicaragua poses a direct and vital threat to the U.S. is patently absurd. The U.S. does have security interests in the region—like discouraging armed aggression by one country against another, minimizing cross-border arms flows to insurgents, promoting demilitarization, and reducing the number of foreign advisors in the region. But the only direct and vital threat to the U.S. would be if the Soviets were to attempt to change the current strategic balance, by putting nuclear missiles in Nicaragua, for example.

That possibility is highly unlikely, given the existing and far more potent capabilities the Soviets have, as manifested by their submarine-based missiles. As president you can make sure this development stays unlikely by dealing directly with the Soviets on this issue. The kind of understanding worked out after the Cuban missile crisis could be extended to cover the whole region. The point is that the principal way to protect security—and this is a good campaign theme—is to reduce superpower tensions in the region.

How about our other security interests, such as preventing foreign aggression and discouraging substantial material assistance to insurgent groups? You don't have to oust the present Nicaraguan government to make such aggression unlikely. If there were aggression, you could trigger hemispheric collective security agreements to use a range of diplomatic, economic, and, if necessary, military means to stop it.

Arms flows to El Salvador and elsewhere would be a concern, were there credible evidence of them. You would be putting Nicaragua's declared intentions to test. For years they have offered to negotiate verifiable agreements to assure that no such arms flows take place. If they hold to what they have said, there would be no problem. If not, you could make hemispheric arrangements, already in place, to seek adequate multilaterally enforced sanctions to halt the aid.

How about the national interests we have in broadly shared development, peace, and democracy? Their promotion is the only way to remove the long-term poverty and inequality at the root of the current conflicts. Working together with other countries, we could formulate a regional economic development plan. But economic assistance is not a quick fix, and it makes no sense as long as civil wars wrack the region: the dollars we pour in simply repair the damage, keep local militaries operational, and finance capital flight. What's more, economic aid makes no sense until local governments are committed seriously to backing the reforms necessary for that development. That means recalcitrant economic and military elites must yield power and privilege and cease the political repression against those who press for reform. Therefore, your prior concern will be to throw the full weight of the U.S. behind the Guatemala agreements as well as the efforts at negotiated solutions promoted by the five Contadora countries.

Lasting peace, of course, demands broadly shared, equitable economic development and an end to internal repression: A population that is the enemy of its government will always be on the verge of war with it. Peace and development demand reform and political openness, so the United States has an interest in encouraging democratic, reform-oriented governments. After all, if our neighbors are governed democratically, then the environment in which we live will be not only more just, but more secure. But you must explain to the public that *promoting* democracy is different from *imposing* democracy, and that your efforts will minimize our direct intervention into the politics of other countries.

As president you can encourage democracy not only by advocating elections, but by giving strong support for human rights. If elections are nothing more than facades to mask official violence and repression, as so often has been the case in El Salvador, the people will become alienated from electoral practices and solutions. Promoting democracy means publicly condemning gross and systematic violations of human rights no matter where they happen, under governments of the right or left. That means throwing the full diplomatic weight of the United States behind protecting nonviolent opposition movements of the right, center, and left; speaking up for those who are imprisoned or have disappeared; actively supporting the work of human rights organizations; and refusing to condone or tolerate abuses even during civil wars. Above all, the U.S. interest in promoting democracy is best served by refusing to consider any but humanitarian aid to governments of the right or left that are gross and systematic violators of human rights. Right-wing tyrants must no longer be allowed to pull our anticommunist heartstrings to aid their repressive regimes, even if they are faced by insurgencies.

You must also make clear the limits on our power to encourage democracy. We have neither the ability nor the responsibility to use force to impose a domestic political solution. We must be generous with countries that respect human rights and favor reform and development; we owe nothing to those who do not. But, we must not, as John Quincy Adams rightly warned, go "abroad in search of monsters to destroy.... Once enlisting under other banners than her own [America] ... would involve herself beyond the power of extrication, in all the wars of interest and intrigue, of individual avarice, envy and ambition, which assume the colors and usurp the standard of freedom."

The Political Struggle to Define the Democratic Agenda

Putting forward this new Democratic program will not be easy because the Reagan agenda has mythologized reality, usurped and distorted traditional, moderate symbols, such as democracy and human rights, and inflamed popular fears regarding threats to America. Therefore, you must lead a political struggle to redefine the nation's foreign policy agenda by forcefully challenging the myths, reclaiming the symbols, and confronting the popular fears.

The fabric of lies and distortions woven around El Salvador, for example, must be countered with accurate, sober, graphic depictions of the realities of an elected president who never held much power, economic elites who block reform, and a recalcitrant military whose harsh policies still limit the freedom to organize and speak out.

Reclaiming the symbols is also essential if the American people are to understand that promoting human rights and democracy means, for example, refusing to provide support for those whom the Reagan administration has wrongly defined as friends. That means challenging the distorted identification of anticommunists with democrats or freedom fighters. You must make clear the reliable evidence showing the contra's brutality, corruption, and authoritarian tendencies. You must make public and clear that elites who use their governments to defend their unrestrained pursuit of wealth in the name of free enterprise are neither defending nor promoting democracy and freedom. You must criticize press censorship and the people's courts should they reappear in Nicaragua. But you also must make equally clear that the killing and terrorizing of journalists in Guatemala and El Salvador is at least as much press censorship as the closing of a newspaper. And you must point out that the disappearance of hundreds of arrested citizens in these two countries has constituted an even graver violation of democratic principles than the unwarranted jailing of suspected contras by people's courts. And you must insist that electing someone to office who has little or no power does not make a democracy, that a reform government is not achieved simply by electing someone with reformist credentials, and that respect for human rights cannot be measured by a decline in death-squad killings in the midst of continuing arbitrary arrests, disappearances, and torture.

There is yet another challenge—recognizing and confronting the fears that are present in the American public's mind: the fear of "another Vietnam" *and* the fear of "another Cuba." Democrats have confronted the first fear, speaking to the unease many feel about being drawn into future quagmires. But the fear of "another Cuba" remains powerful and unchallenged. This latter fear, fed by the Reagan agenda, must be confronted directly.

The key is to accept the kernel of truth around which the big lie is always built, to educate people to distinguish real threats from false ones, and to show them how their focus on false threats blinds them to the smart alternatives that will help to reduce the real threats. That means acknowledging the major rivalry between the U.S. and the Soviet Union and guaranteeing that the U.S. will have sufficient military capability to defend itself against real military threats. But not all world turmoil is reducible to the Soviet threat. We need to take actions that lower the chances that superpower rivalry will inflame and complicate other forms of turmoil, and internationalize North-South conflicts.

In fact, Central America is an ideal place where you can start winding down cold war tensions. Firmly putting forward concrete measures to reduce superpower rivalry and deescalate conflicts will go a long way toward defusing irrational fears and convincing the public that you understand, and can deal with, real threats, and that you will promote real security.

With regard to U.S. security issues, you can immediately pursue Gorbachev's offers to negotiate reductions of arms shipments to Nicaragua in the context of a regional settlement and along the lines of the Guatemalan accords. You can enter into bilateral discussions with Nicaragua to negotiate all mutual security concerns. And you can begin bilateral consultations with Cuba about Central America. Given Cuba's involvement in the region, it makes good sense to talk with its leaders.

With regard to Central American regional security issues, you can throw the full weight of your office behind the Guatemala accords. That means backing the Contadora mediated negotiations "concerning security, verification, and control" to help the five Central American presidents resolve their political and security issues. That means promoting a negotiated solution to the conflicts in Guatemala and El Salvador, as well as Nicaragua—a solution that includes all political forces. And concretely, that means making continued aid, economic and military, conditional on such a negotiated settlement.

You also can support efforts to have international forces monitor, and where necessary, patrol the Honduran and Nicaraguan borders to minimize cross-border arms flows and incursions. You can support efforts to remove foreign military advisors from the region. And you can take the lead in pressing for a Caribbean Basin treaty with verifiable and enforceable provisions prohibiting offensive strategic weapons in the region.

These measures to help demilitarize the region, re-

duce superpower conflict, and negotiate peaceful settlements are only your first steps. It is essential that the long-term U.S. interests in broadly shared development and democracy also be pursued. Such interests demand immediate steps to help all countries with postwar reconstruction. Resettle insurgents and refugees. Provide medical care for the injured. Rebuild the infrastructure.

But they also demand our helping to create an environment that will deal with the deep-rooted problems of poverty, inequality, and repression in the region—the continuing sources of turmoil and insecurity. Here you can back a regional economic plan that would be created multilaterally. It would allow any country, independent of its ideology, to participate if it demonstrated a serious commitment to development and did not violate human rights. In short, aid, assistance, trade benefits, etc., would be available to those governments seriously interested in the welfare of their people.

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As the Democratic candidate, you can lead the political struggle against the unrealistic policies and outmoded agenda of the Reagan years. Your Democratic agenda will bring us into the twenty-first century. Your policies will protect our *real* national interests in security, peace, broadly shared development, and democracy. By challenging the lies, reclaiming the symbols of democracy and human rights, and confronting irrational fears you can gain the popular acceptance these sound policies deserve. And on the campaign trail you can take the high ground and secure the sure footing while your opponent stumbles over the obstacles that lie in his path.

Therefore, when you are challenged with "What are you going to do about the Sandinistas if the ceasefire talks fail, the contras are disbanded, and a Marxist government is still in power?" your response will be powerful and clear: "You are asking the wrong question. The real question is: What is the best way to protect U.S. security and get peace in the region? Have the contras furthered U.S. security and promoted peace in the region? No, they have not. Their attacks have encouraged militarization in Nicaragua and have led the Sandinistas to turn to the Soviets for arms and to the Cubans for advisors.

"Look at the number of times our regional allies have tried to broker treaty agreements on exactly these issues. Look at the number of times the Nicaraguans have agreed to accept such negotiated solutions.

"And what has the Reagan administration done? It has scuttled the agreements. It has refused even to test Nicaragua's sincerity. It not only has supported a bankrupt and failing policy, but more important, it has closed the door on a much less costly, much more practical diplomatic solution. This is the time and place to rely on diplomacy. Why? Because it's a much more realistic and effective approach. With it we can protect our national security, not undermine it like the failed contra aid policy did. The White House says it is concerned about Soviet arms shipments to Nicaragua. Well, how come at the summit President Reagan simply chose not to follow up on Gorbachev's offer to negotiate an end to the arms shipments if we would recognize Nicaraguan sovereignty? Why? Because the Reagan administration's crusade to get rid of the Nicaraguan government has blinded it to our real national security interests.

"It's time to take the reins of control out of the hands of these misguided zealots. It's time to put into office people who will take an honest, hard look at reality. It's time to work with our friends in the region and bring their influence to bear on our common problems. It's time to pursue policies with a real chance of success. That means asking the right questions. That means revitalizing our professional foreign service. That means a primary reliance on pursuing security through diplomacy. That's not only the right thing to do. It's the smart thing to do. And, it's the effective thing to do. □

LAW AND ETHICS

(Continued from p. 32)

Bush's laissez-faire philosophy has been to unleash the selfish impulses of the private sector, whose members try to justify their conduct with the simplistic claim that growth and jobs will "trickle down" to the rest of us. In other words, as John Locke instructed us, private vice makes public virtue.

Hardly. The corruption on Wall Street renders a gross judgment about the limits of unregulated capitalism. Even George Will observed that the Republican party, as the party of free market capitalism, will bear political blame for the excesses of its corporate constituents. So any general election assault on conservative sleaze will be particularly convincing against the backdrop of widespread private sector corruption.

How did the Reagan-Bush administration, which got itself elected by calling for a return to family values, religious ethics, and a "strict construction" of the law, wind up betraying these very standards? Two forces stand out—ideological fervor and the habit of profiteering.

This administration's policies from the first have been framed in crusading terms. Abroad, the Soviet Union

was simply "the evil empire." At home, government was a symbol of "waste, fraud, and abuse." In the face of such universals, congressional restrictions—otherwise known as laws—can appear to be technical, trivial, even avoidable. As Richard Hofstadter wrote in his classic 1963 essay "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," unaccountable zealots "regard a vast or gigantic conspiracy as the motive force in historic events. History is a conspiracy, set in motion by demonic forces of almost transcendent power."

Richard Hofstadter, meet Ollie North. North acted as though the American Congress, by rejecting military aid to the contras, represented not American voters but Soviet interests. In one of many intriguing exchanges with his two former bosses at the National Security Council, he ventured that dealing with the Iranians was a relatively easy matter compared with the acts of deception essential in dealing with Congress.

Beyond ideology, Reagan's profiteering appointees have frequently brought the habits of the private marketplace into public life. Their conduct demonstrates that you can take appointees out of the private sector, but you can't always take the private sector out of the appointees, many of whom seem more interested in managing their assets than their agencies.

Strategies

The press and public are prepared to believe there's an Integrity Gap. But how can you fill it? And how can you use the issue to animate voters? Here are five possible strategies:

No More Meese-takes! Because it looks unpresidential, if not bullying, presidential nominees rarely bash individuals by name. But Ed Meese should be an honorable exception. Both because he's a presidential-level target, given his close links to Reagan, and because of his uniquely squalid performance (Can you imagine how astronomically high his negative poll ratings must be among independent voters?), a strategy centered on Meese would be fair and effective. Voters who don't relate to an abstraction such as "integrity" or "sleaze" may understand the personification of the abstraction: witness Richard Nixon's successful invocation of Attorney General Ramsey Clark in 1968 and Walter Mondale's use of James Watt as a paradigm of pollution in 1984.

There are two ways to challenge the Republican nominee about Meese. First, publicly ask whether, if he had been president, he would have fired Meese when his numerous acts of misconduct became known, as you would have done. And second, publicly ask whether he'd join you in a pledge not to choose a top campaign official or close political friend as attorney general.

The latter challenge is based on a real problem and proposal. The attorney general both advises the president and enforces federal law. When these assignments conflict, we want a person who will be able to choose law enforcement over politics. What got John Mitchell and Edwin Meese in trouble is that they saw their jobs as primarily to protect their mentor rather than act, in Professor Alexander Bickel's phrase, as the "keeper of the executive conscience." An anticrony pledge means that the next attorney general would have the independence to tell the president what he may *not* want to hear. And if the cost of such depoliticization is the loss of one Robert Kennedy for every two Edwin Meeses, it's a price worth paying.

If you issue these two challenges, the other nominee must either concur with you, which makes you look like a leader, or not respond, which makes him look like politics-as-usual.

Pardon, a December Surprise? The trials of those indicted in the Iran/contra scandal will be underway this fall, competing with your race for headlines. While you, of course, must be careful not in any way to prejudice the court, you should raise the legitimate subject of pardons. Yes, for a televisable week last summer, North was a popular figure. But now his comet has burnt out as people focus more on his deceptions than on his medals. According to a recent *New York Times*/CBS poll, the public, by 70:20 thinks he is not a hero, and by 3:1 opposes a pretrial pardon.

It would put Bush on the spot if you (a) urged President Reagan not to grant pre-inaugural, Christmas pardons, which would look like a payoff for stopping the buck short of his desk, and (b) suggested that you would be disinclined to pardon, subject to a more thorough review of their cases. When Bush refuses to go along, the media would likely begin to recycle Ford-Nixon pardon stories, which cannot help the nominee who denies being in the Iran/contra loop or who claims he was in the men's room during the crucial White House meeting when George Shultz and Caspar Weinberger objected to arms-for-hostages.

PACing the Congress. Another tactic is to highlight the spreading influence of PACs (Political Action Committees). As you know, PAC giving has increased more than tenfold in the past decade, to the point that it accounts for nearly *half* of all contributions to successful House candidates in open-seat races. The result: purchased politicians and races so expensive that only plutocrats or PACmen need apply. The problem is not just money but, as Common Cause's Fred Wertheimer calls it, "legislatively interested money." These five thousand and ten thousand-dollar checks come not from

Joe Sixpack but from lobbyists seeking access or votes. And the number of registered lobbyists swarming Capitol Hill has grown from five thousand in 1981 to twenty thousand in 1986, or thirty-seven for every member of Congress.

Since Senate Republicans staged a successful filibuster against PAC reform this past March and since you have provided strong leadership for PAC reform, yours is a winning way to remind people just who is the candidate of big money and who fights for working folks. Explain how PACs tilt legislation, taint democracy, and contribute to higher deficits because of special interest spending. You can then pledge that one of your top priorities in your first legislative package will be to end the PACing of Congress by means of (a) limiting the amount candidates can take from all PACs, (b) reducing the maximum PAC gift and (c) providing matching funds to bona fide candidates for small gifts from one's home district or state. If this system works for presidential candidates, why not for congressional candidates?

Honest Judges. By imposing strict ideological saliva tests, the Reagan-Bush administration ran into trouble with many judicial appointments, most obviously with choices such as Robert Bork, Douglas Ginsburg, and Daniel Manion. You should emphasize that, while your judicial nominees would reflect your general legal values and philosophy, your Justice Department would not require potential nominees to answer detailed questionnaires in order to prove their ideological purity. Stress that you would consider and choose Republicans as well as Democrats, since neither party monopolizes legal wisdom and since the courts should not be part of any spoils system. With this guidance, your model of selection would be more like New York Governor Mario Cuomo, who has appointed several Republicans to top judicial posts, rather than Ronald Reagan, who chooses *only* Republicans.

Public Servants and Civic Virtue. While it's obviously presumptuous and premature to name cabinet and subcabinet choices before your election, why not indicate the *type* of people you'd choose and the *standards* expected of them. Let voters know you really do want to sweep Washington clean.

Instead of choosing top appointees from a short list handed to you by Democratic power brokers, you should announce that you will scour the country for unheralded heroes who have invested their professional lives in public service of one kind or another. In other words, as a people we should aspire to a civic virtue disdained by Reagan's CEOs. People such as FDR's Frances Perkins and Truman's George Marshall and Kennedy's Stewart Udall and LBJ's John Gardner and Ford's Edward Levi and Carter's Michael Pertschuk—these officials all were more interested in making history than money. They shared George Marshall's description of the indispensable qualities of a public servant: "Courage. Wisdom. Tolerance. An understanding of the democratic procedures." And in a major fall address at an appropriate place—Jefferson's Monticello or Truman's birthplace, for example—you should announce that any top official shown to be feathering his nest or abusing the law will be out on his or her ear the next day. Your cabinet will aspire to a legal and ethical standard far higher than merely "not yet indicted."

Your goal, then, beyond any analytic arguments or even eloquent prose, should be to aggressively convey your *outrage* at the Reagan administration's sleazy ethics. The problem is not merely technical law-breaking. Rather, Bush's crowd has violated basic American norms of fair play, exploited public office for private gain, and failed to enforce the laws on behalf of the average citizen and the powerless—all without one iota of shame or remorse. That's un-American, unpatriotic, and a repudiation of what makes America a light unto the nations—our adherence to law, justice, and morality. □

AMERICAN JEWISH POETRY

(Continued from p. 37)

into originality and thereby into poetic truth. First Isaiah's (2:4) trope for peace following war is one that almost every literate person used to know: "And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruninghooks." The poetic quality here—the way of being poetic peculiar to ancient Semitic literature—comes from its figures and from the way in which one serves to gloss, or revise, the preceding one (in this case it is not only a matter of intensification). But let us consider a more modern poet, using the same image. The Roman Virgil, talking of the twisting of peaceful civilization into the strict violence of warfare, writes (in the *Georgics*, I, 508) that unbending blades are forged from curved sickles; but as this works in the peculiar way of Latin poetry, certain words are pushed up syntactically against others in the line to make an additional point. Virgil's *et curvae rigidum falces conflantur in esenem*"—or, as I'll try to make it work in English, "From sickles curved unbending blades are formed"—says in effect that the curvature of sickles that causes the grain to bend as well during the mowing of peacetime is as nothing to the rigid inflexibilities of the straight swords of battle. The spirit of the Latin language itself makes the metaphor more than another instance of what may have been a Roman commonplace. It is this way of revising an old figure and making metaphor with it as

if it had itself been a literal meaning that in part makes for poetic originality.

At this point, one thinks once again of what Tsvetayeva's remark must have meant to Paul Celan: that, among other things, every true poet is in a kind of diaspora in his own language. Celan, who in his later poetry had to invent new German words out of purely German materials, and based on analogies of purely German grammatical structure, probably grew up in a German rather than a Yiddish-speaking home. But he was keenly aware of a poet's distance even from the language with which he thinks to gauge all sorts of other distances. *Sprachgitter*—"the grid of language"—is the title of one of his books, and it evokes images of an infinite regress of Dantean poetic screens, and screens of screens. But all poets, even those without Celan's sense of living and writing in a post-apocalyptic time and space, know what exile inside one's own language might mean. For poetry doesn't *use* words in the way ordinary discourse does; rather it stands back from them, misuses them, plays with them as no grown-up who really *knew* the language would, notices funny things about them that only a non-native speaker would. Poets know, with Emerson, that every word is a fossil poem, that the history of its meanings, changing over millennia by means of the tropes of metaphor and metonymy which characterize the stuff of poetry, is a kind of fable of transformation. For poetry, etymology is one of the great primal stories, to be told and retold on the occasion of a fresh look at any word. As a Jewish poet, I suppose that haggadah rather than halakha, fable and fiction rather than law, is most important to me in Judaic tradition. But as a poet I also note that the word halakha means a way, a going, a walking; and that, as in so many other languages, including English and Chinese, the basic word for ethical procedure on life's journey literally evokes a footpath. I suppose that a scholar might point out that the concern for the interpretative play of etymologies is rooted deeply in Judaic tradition; certainly, portions of the Pentateuch are studded with etymological wordplay, false-etymologies invoked as narrative devices, mysterious and unavowed puns, and so forth. But the poet of a passage in the Pentateuch had more wonder at his own language than did all his commentators.

Hebrew, some dialects of Aramaic, some of Alexandrian Greek, some versions of medieval Spanish and German—these have been the languages of Jewish literature. One might argue that modern German, the language of Kafka, Celan, Freud, Gershom Scholem, Martin Buber, Walter Benjamin, and Leo Strauss, must be added to these. But we have as yet had no great Jewish literary culture in English. An American Jewish poet must make his or her own way, making American English his or her own. The first steps of this process always involve, for a young writer, purging one's style of cliché, of empty public gesture; and this entails, of course, the impossibility of, say, versifying rabbinically ordained sentiments. As a matter of fact, the poet's almost idolatrous relation to language cooperates with another more profound Judaic danger. For if Jewishness is to be identified solely with normative rabbinic religion—particularly as it has become sectarian since European modernity—then the poet's path is the road to *kherem*, religious destruction.

Consider in this light the stern rabbinic admonition in one of my favorite midrashim on *Bereshit*—Genesis 1:1—which appears to have been directed against a Jewish Gnostic and poetic spirit. It starts out by pondering the significance of the fact that the story of the origination of everything and anything, the opening words of the Torah, begins not with *aleph*, the first letter of the alphabet, but with *bet*, the second one, in the word *be-reshit*. It asks: "Why was the world created with a *bet*? Just as the *bet* is closed at the sides but open in front, so you are not permitted to investigate what is above and what is below, what is before and what is behind." One of the amusing things about this passage is that it gives what literary scholars would call an emblematic reading of the image of the letter *bet*, treating it momentarily as a hieroglyph or picture; not a picture of its original pictographic value—"*bet*" of course means "house," and the original Phoenician syllabic sign was derived from such a pictogram—but of an abstract picture of openness and closure. This reading in itself comes dangerously close to being an iconic pun, and therefore open to the charge of image-making. And yet, the forms and numerical values of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet were always exempted from such a prohibition. It is as if all the impulses that, in Greek, Roman, and Christian tradition, went toward the production of significant visual images of the human body, of symbolic objects and eventually landscapes, were, in Judaic tradition, reserved for the imagery of alphabetic letters. But my personal delight at this midrash quite apart, the rabbinic injunction not to inquire about what is above, what is beneath, what was before time, and what will come hereafter is a *kherem*, a destructive ban, against the Imagination itself. For it is precisely these forbidden questions that the poet will always be asking and whose answers he or she must continually supply in the form of fable.

I suppose that what I have been saying implies that all poetry is in some way or another unofficial midrash, a revisionist commentary upon some

kind of canonical text. At the very beginning of Western literary tradition those texts were Homer and Torah, but the great poetry that followed them became part of the canon as well. It is not that great poetry is purely original and minor poetry derivative or allusive to prior poetry. Rather, it is, as all true poets and critics have always known, that great poetry is more original in its way of being derivative. Modernism in poetry—by which, in this instance, I mean romanticism—creates the great fiction that there is a fresh, unopened book called "Experience" that all genuine poetry will henceforth proceed to copy. But that book has itself become worn and dog-eared, and people who today ask honestly but naively to hear of how, say, American Jewish poetry reflects American Jewish experience are simply talking about an old book (dating back to the 1790s in English) without knowing it. The true text of the world is always fresh and always renewing itself. But its pages are as full of poems, pictures, stories, philosophies, laws, and songs as they are of mountains, rivers, railroads, cities, and histories. And all poetry is in some way a continuing midrash on such a book.

The great poet of the English language who almost literally avowed this point was the radical Protestant John Milton, himself enough of a Hebraist to know some midrash in the original. *Paradise Lost* is so great a midrash on Bereshit, and so great a poem, that it remains authoritative whether one is Milton's kind of Protestant or not, and it remains as much a part of nature for any true poet writing in English as the Sahara desert or the Mississippi. This is a truth that I myself came to see only in my mid-thirties, when, after having published three books of verse, I began to understand what poetry really was. But to extend this notion further, I would also suggest that a poet's work—and this may be the hardest notion to grasp—is also a midrash upon his or her language itself.

As long as that tongue is Hebrew, or even Yiddish or Ladino, there is nothing problematic about this assertion: Major Yiddish poetry, for example, will frequently call implicit attention to the various Hebraic, Germanic, or Slavic origins of the words in daily use by means of ironies implicit in deeply significant rhyming patterns. But what is an American poet to do? The English language itself, partly Germanic, partly Romance, veined with Latin and Greek special vocabularies, its writing system and early literature shaped by Christendom, its poetic history shaped by the gradual unfolding of the Protestant Reformation first in England and then in America, its great "rabbis" being Spenser and Shakespeare and Milton and Wordsworth and Emerson and Whitman, its character partaking for the Jewish poet of Hebrew and Aramaic and the Yiddish or Spanish or Arabic of daily life over the centuries all at once—the English language itself is as much the language of *Galut*, but no more so, than the Greek *koine* of two thousand years ago, or the medieval French in which Rashi also wrote. I also should add modern Hebrew to this list: If it were not one of the languages of *Galut*, of the Diaspora, it would have undergone the same kinds of linguistic change that all languages do over two and a half millenia, and could be almost unrecognizably related to the Hebrew of the Pentateuch. The very fact of its having been so successfully but artificially resuscitated as a living vernacular has itself attested to the fact of diaspora, to the interruption of its vernacular history by wave upon wave of conquest and exile. If this is tantamount to saying that modern Israel is still part of *Galut*, than I am afraid it must be so. But it is, after all, diasporic language in which all modern poetry—whatever its linguistic or cultural environment—is written. That is why any American—or German, or Russian, or Israeli—Jewish poet must make his or her language his or her own by wandering into it while quite young, and perhaps getting lost in the forest of that language for many years.

It may be, then, that an American Jewish poet has to spend years becoming an American poet and learning what that can mean before being able, perhaps, to cope poetically with his or her own Jewishness, however problematic a notion *that* might be. This uncertain venture may even give the appearance of wandering away from Jewish identity—at least, as other people construe it—when for the poet it is evidence of just the opposite. For in a temporary or apprentice devotion to impersonality, the young poet learns how to be truthful about self in the only way that poetry can be, by being figurative, rather than shallowly literal about it. One must learn to construct and, what is just as hard, to believe in the good of those Dantean screens. So, if an American poet's Jewishness—whatever that might be—is somehow temporarily shelved, this shelving is done as part of something so deep and so intimate that it cannot pause to explain itself.

Thus, one cannot escape the fact that the history of great American poetry up through the present generation has been intimately involved with the history of revisionist American Protestantism; and the question of how Judaistic notions might be woven into such a tradition is profoundly difficult. The touching paradox inadvertently invoked by Emma Lazarus, the first American poet some of whose poems would reveal her to be Jewish, is interesting in this regard. Writing in 1882, she compared Jewish identity in diasporic nations to the *pi'el* form of the Hebrew verb: "Every student of the Hebrew language is aware that we have in the conjugation of our verbs a mode known as the *intensive*

voice, which by means of an almost imperceptible modification of vowel points, intensifies the meaning of any primitive root. A similar significance seems to attach to the Jews themselves in connection with the people among whom they dwell. They are the intensive form of any nationality whose language and customs they adopt.... Influenced by the same causes, they represent the same results...." But alas, students of Jewish history will feel that this is a German Jew, and not an American one, talking. Emma Lazarus speaks more for the Sephardic and German immigrants of the 1840s and after than she does for the millions who came from Eastern Europe and whose families led the ways of life that would become the stuff of Jewish-American cliché. Also, Jews were no more the *pi'el* of American identity than were the immigrant Irish, or Italians, or Caribbeans, or West Africans, or Norwegians, or Poles. Her final sentence sounds more like Disraeli than anything else: "... but the deeper lights and shadows of their Oriental temperament throw their failings, as well as their virtues, into more prominent relief."

Still, I would adapt Emma Lazarus' remark by saying that poetry is, among other things, the *pi'el* of ordinary discourse. As for the rest of the matter, let it go. In any case, I don't think that an American Jewish poet can write Jewish poetry without thereby writing American poetry. And since, with regard to consciousness of being Jewish, it is useful to know what a commentator as well as a poet had in mind, I will end by quoting and briefly discussing a poem I wrote when some of these puzzles were especially vivid to me. To frame this ending, I can offer only a final word about beginnings.

My first book of poems, published when I was twenty-eight, had nothing of what normative Judaism would want to call Jewish content—save, perhaps, for a poem that took off from an aphorism of Martin Buber, and save for a sort of Yeatsian dramatic lyric, written for Orpah, Naomi's other daughter-in-law in the book of Ruth, who goes home to her own people and chooses not to enter biblical history. But when it finally came time to give the book a title, I felt the need for some kind of avowal of my ambivalence about publishing a book—that mixture of ambition and reticence that comes from having at least glimpsed what real poetry truly is, and wondering about one's chutzpah in trying to write it, while at the same time knowing that aiming lower wouldn't make the cost of the arrow worthwhile. A text from *Ecclesiastes* that I had always liked—"As the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of a fool"—seemed appropriate here, but only through a midrash on it which said that "when all other woods are kindled, their sound does not travel far; but when thorns are kindled, their sound travels far," as though to say: We too are wood. With that epigraph, the book was entitled *A Crackling of Thorns*. But in another sense, midrash came through to me in my childhood, not from formal study (I was never anywhere near a yeshiva), but from the Pesakh seder. Even in early childhood, I was made to grasp the fact that the annual scene of rejoicing and remembering was also the scene of interpretation. For me, that may have been an important poetic scene of instruction as well. Over the years I've returned to both the rhetorical form and the interpretative strategy of midrash from time to time.

I suppose that the American Jewish poet can be either blessed or cursed by whatever knowledge he or she has of Jewish history and tradition. I obviously believe in the power of the blessing, but it would be easy for any writer to be trapped in a slough of sentimentality or a homiletic bog. Literalness is the death of poetic imagination, and all groups in the cultural community that speak for Jewishness will always be very literal about what "Jewish experience" is, as will all groups that want to speak for "American experience." Both kinds of experience are for the poet momentary aspects of the protean body of being who one is, and the analogues between American and modern Jewish identity are interesting apart from the almost exponential complications resulting from a combination of the two. These complications of the varieties of experience remain to be explored by practical criticism and cultural history. Being no sort of historian, I have had to invent figures for the kind of Marrano existence that modern poets lead even when they do not seem to. Since such figures are borrowed and reinterpreted from the text of Jewish history, I cannot be sure whether any such figure makes a parable of modern poetic or modern Jewish existence. The invention below will have to speak and withhold, for itself. Some years ago I read of how Cecil Roth, studying the history of the Marranos in Spain, had earlier in this century encountered some ordinary Christian families in part of northern Portugal who burned a candle inside a crock or pitcher on Friday evenings. When he inquired about the significance of this act, he was told that nobody knew why, but that it had always been done in their families. Years later, at the end of a long, avowedly Judaic and American poem—an allegorical quest that meditates on the colors of the spectrum and, at the same time, the seven lights of the lost menorah carried from Jerusalem to Rome—this same figure returned to me, and I to it. I was writing "Violet" (the color on my allegorical spectrum closest to black, to darkness, and to death), and thinking of the poet's eternal task of telling a certain kind of truth, at a time too late for such kinds of truth-telling:

How then can we now shape
Our last stanza, furnish
This chamber of codas?

Here in the pale tan of
The yet ungathered grain
There may be time to chant

The epic of whispers
In the light of a last
Candle that may be made

To outlast its waning
Wax, a frail flame shaking
In a simulacrum

Of respiration. Oh,
We shall carry it set
Down inside a pitcher

Out into the field, late
Wonderers errant in
Among the rich flowers.

Like a star reflected
In a cup of water,
It will light up no path:

Neither will it go out ...
□

LIBERALISM, COMMUNITY, AND TRADITION

(Continued from p. 41)

gists, applies aptly to the bewildering diversity of traditions in a modern society. There are exposed *layers* of tradition, simultaneously visible from many viewing locations. Thus the Reformation (evangelical churches) coexists with the Enlightenment (the ACLU); thirteenth-century scholasticism can be seen in the same cliff wall with nineteenth-century romanticism. Majority traditions do not collapse and die; they simply become minority traditions and go their own way. The rock wall is tilted and all the strata show. What we call "our tradition" is a tradition of traditions, an impure mixture whose very impurity gives solid support to the surface layers and nourishment to their soil.

Communitarian critic Alasdair MacIntyre attaches particular importance to those nonvoluntary traditions into which we are born. A human self, MacIntyre argues, derives its unity from the coherence of what he calls a "narrative." A human life is an unfolding narrative that takes place in what he calls a "setting"—an institution, or a practice, or "a milieu of some other human kind." "But it is central to the notion of a setting," he continues, "that [it] has a history, ... within which the histories of individual agents not only are, but have to be, situated, just because without the setting and its changes through time, the history of the individual agent and his changes ... will be unintelligible." Full intelligibility, then, requires that we place an episode to be explained in a *set* of narrative histories, both a history of the individuals involved and a history of the settings in which they act. Individual life narratives are *embedded* in larger institutional processes and cannot be understood in part or in whole except as part of these larger histories. "What I have called a history," MacIntyre writes "is an enacted dramatic narrative in which the characters are also the authors. The characters of course never start literally *ab initio*; they plunge *in media res*, the beginnings of their story already made for them by what and who has gone before."

MacIntyre then expands his theatrical metaphor in much the manner of the ancient Stoic philosopher, Epictetus: "We enter upon a stage which we did not design and we find ourselves part of an action that was not of our making." MacIntyre proceeds to use the metaphor in a way reminiscent of, though not identical to, that of the ancient Stoics, who emphasized that our duties are determined by the roles we play. Indeed, they suggested that a role is *defined* by the duties that constitute it. A father, for example, is a man whose duties are to.... A soldier is a person whose duties are to.... And so on. Ours is not to choose the role; what is up to us is to play the assigned part well. But that is Epictetus. Here is MacIntyre: "I can only answer the question 'What am I to do?' if I can answer the prior question 'Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?' We enter human society with one or more imputed characters—roles into which we have been drafted—and we have to learn what they are in order to be able to understand how others respond to us and how our responses to them are apt to be construed.... I am never able to seek for the good or exercise the virtues only *qua* individual. I am someone's daughter or son, someone else's cousin or uncle; I am a citizen of this or that city, a member of this or that guild or profession.... Hence what is good for me has to be good for one who inhabits these roles. As such I inherit from the past of my family, my city, my tribe, my nation, a variety of debts, inheritances, rightful expectations, and obligations. These constitute the given of my life, my moral starting point. This is, in part, what gives my life its own moral particularity."

The theatrical metaphor, as MacIntyre demonstrates, is apt and remarkably fruitful. In our twentieth-century world, however, it is easy to exaggerate both the moral centrality and the inevitability of role assignments. It no longer is plausible to maintain that one's position as

a farmer, or soldier, or mother, or teacher, or vagabond, is rigidly assigned and unchangeable in the way one's status as a man or woman, son or daughter, is. We no longer "discover" our situations and their duties simply by observing our parents' place in the world and our heritage from them. The characteristic problem of modern youth is to *decide* what role-commitments to undertake from among many alternatives.

It is unfair to saddle MacIntyre with a simple-minded stoicism, since his more sophisticated views are avowedly Aristotelian, but these examples show how easy it is to exaggerate his genuine insights while attempting to apply them to modern society. It no longer is true that I can decide what I am to do only by first considering who I am, what roles I have been drafted into, what stories I am a part of. With respect to many of life's dilemmas we cannot know "who we are" *until* we decide what to do. Should I, a Protestant, marry this Catholic man and adopt his faith? Should I, an unemployed Minnesota iron miner, move to the Sun Belt and seek a job in the computer industry? Should I make this move even if it means abandoning my local subcommunities? Even if it means leaving my parents behind? These are problems that call for modes of reasoning other than an automatic deduction of duty from station because it no longer is clear to people what their "stations" or pre-assigned social roles are.

Of course, we do inherit some of our group roles relatively unavoidably from the past, but even if we were to admit that our identities are, more or less, as MacIntyre says they are, we still may be the owners of rights and the rightful determiners of our own lots in life. What liberalism is committed to saying about tradition is that the state should leave community traditions alone, neither restrict them nor enforce them. Instead, it should let communities work out their own historic courses, write their own argument (without force) with dissidents and reformers. That is not only the state role that is *just* for all, as the liberal emphasizes; it also is the best way for the traditions themselves to flourish.

Welcome support for the latter point comes from MacIntyre himself. In a passage that could have made John Stuart Mill cheer, he explains how his conception of tradition differs from that of traditional conservatives:

> Characteristically such theorists have followed Burke in contrasting tradition with reason and stability of tradition with conflict. Both contrasts obfuscate. For all reasoning takes place within the context of some traditional modes of thought, transcending through criticism and invention the limitations of what had hitherto been reasoned in that tradition; this is as true of modern physics as of medieval logic. Moreover, when a tradition is in good order it is always partially constituted by an argument about the goods the pursuit of which gives to that tradition its particular point and purpose. . . .
>
> Traditions, when vital, embody continuities of conflict. Indeed when a tradition becomes Burkean, it is always dying or dead.

The same point was made over and over again by Mill. When a tradition is rigorously policed against change, it becomes frozen in orthodoxy, its vital role in human lives snuffed out. Lovers of tradition, then, following MacIntyre, might well make common cause with Millean liberals.

Alienation

The characteristic social malady of our time (it has been said for over a century now) is the disintegration of traditional communities and the resulting widespread "alienation" of individuals. Karl Marx used the term "alienation," which theologians commonly used to talk about man's distance form God, to describe the worker's plight under capitalism in which s/he is "related to the product of his own labor as to an alien object." Social scientists generally use the term in a much wider sense to describe the general feelings of restless loneliness an individual, almost *any* individual, will feel when s/he is cut off from membership in communal groups. There does seem to be a natural human need to associate, to belong, to "identify with," to be accepted, to acquire both membership and status within a group. If, as Sandel and MacIntyre have argued so well, a good part of our own sense of identity is reserved for our affiliations and memberships, our identities will be narrow and "empty" when our social ties are cut, so that the result will be not only estrangement and depression, but a kind of depersonalization as well.

Think of a youth from a small midwestern town who leaves behind his family, his neighborhood, his 4-H club, and his church, to seek his way in New York City. There he finds a tumultuous sea of strangers, with exotic faces and accents, many organized groups but none that appears initially inviting, and no place, at least at first, where he can feel at home, accepted, and secure. His estrangement may be very oppressive—more than mere loneliness, since it is not cured by chance encounters with pleasant and friendly individuals or even random aggregates of individuals. What he craves is a place in a more or less organized group (or in two or three). If, for one reason or another, he cannot satisfy that craving, his estrangement will grow

in severity until, at its limit, he is driven, as Emile Durkheim has shown, to suicide.

Perhaps because this kind of experience is becoming more common, though to a lesser degree, there has been in recent times a nostalgia for the old small town ways that has found expression in our literature and popular culture. This trend lies in stark contrast to one of the predominant literary trends of an earlier period (though still with us) in which the cruelties and hypocrisies of "Main Street" were exposed and condemned. In contrast to the modern alienated youth who can find no place to feel at home, the older literature featured sensitive youths who felt suffocated by hometown pressures toward conformity, their individuality stifled by overwhelming togetherness, their creativity smothered by "herd reactions," their privacy invaded by busybodies.

There seem, at first sight, to be two opposed ways of looking at small-scale communities of family, neighborhood, town, and so on. One can think of the idealized, small, self-contained world as cozy or as stifling, and the wider world of the big city as alienating or as liberating. But these are, like so many of the issues that bedevil our subject, false oppositions. It is true that individuals can be *assimilated*, herd-like, into groups at great cost to their individuality (the danger Mill emphasized), or that they can remain *isolated*, mere "atoms" or "islands," at great cost to the human need to belong and to "be at home" (the danger given equal emphasis by Tocqueville). But there is no reason to think that one or another of these evils is inevitable and that we must line up behind the one we think is the lesser evil. The alternative to assimilation and isolation is the *integration* of individuals into congenial groups that do not smother or trap them, but leave their integrity whole, and their freedom, except for their voluntary commitments, unimpaired.

There are, of course, many differences in temperament among individuals, and a community that is smothering to one person may be exactly what another needs. As a result, society should provide an abundance of subcommunities of all kinds, catering to all needs and tastes, and our political and economic substructures should be encouraging to such a proliferation, deliberately adopting subcommunity-building policies. It is less important that we have a strong, comprehensive ideologically uniform community playing a prominent role in the daily life of its citizens than that we have an abundance of subcommunities that together provide at least *some* place for everyone. The psychological need for a unifying ideology amidst all this healthy diversity would be satisfied by a liberal state built on a creed of mutual tolerance and respect for rights.

The Idea of a Liberal Community

The capacity of diverse small subcommunities to generate an overarching general community is precisely what some enemies of liberalism deny. They argue that without some important unifying bond, small groups tend to fly apart or come into conflict with one another. The liberal, in response, can point to the natural tendency of small communities to generate mutual respect and loyalty. First, s/he can cite the phenomenon of institutional splitting, a consequence of which communities within communities (such as Protestants or Catholics within the Christian community) share generic allegiances. Similarly, s/he can point to the phenomenon of overlapping memberships in virtue of which group members learn to respect the outsider, since, for all they know, that person may be an insider in another of their groups.

Yet even the unity provided by overlapping memberships is not sufficient to mold individuals into the comprehensive community each of them needs. What is required is some common ideology providing a common set of national goals and ideals, and some collective "vision of the good." But the communitarian will respond that liberalism cannot provide the requisite ideology since, by its own choice, it is neutral between competing conceptions of the good life. The role of the state, according to liberalism, is to protect the rights of individuals, alone or in association, to pursue their *own* visions of the good, free of unjust interference from others. It is an abuse of power for it to establish one set of dogmas or prescribe one mode of worship, to regulate private tastes by coercive law, or to proscribe the expression of unorthodox or unpopular opinions. But if liberalism will not take sides with one of the competing conceptions, the argument continues, then it cannot provide one necessary unifying vision, and society will remain a tenuously balanced congeries of constitutive "molecules," not the tighter, more stable union we all require.

The liberal will reply that his or her doctrines *do* contain a unifying "vision of the good," but that the ideal is a *social* good, a conception of how individuals should live together. Liberalism's conception of the *individual* good, on the other hand, is necessarily abstract and variable. The good for individuals consists in the fulfillment of their individual natures, and given the natural diversity of human beings, the concrete nature of the fulfilling life will vary from person to person and is best left for individuals and the groups in which they are "embedded" to work out on their own. The protection of diversity is itself a community interest, the liberal will add, for reasons similar to the reasons that

a balanced portfolio is a prudent investment, or a diverse gene pool a protection of species from epidemics.

The communitarian will have at least three kinds of replies at this point. S/he might claim, first of all, that the liberal's neutral vision of the good is one that keeps people separate rather than one that draws them together, so that it can hardly be as effective a community-builder as more partisan ideologies would be. But the liberal can respond that actually his or her social creed builds more communities, but smaller ones, living in mutual tolerance and respect. The bonds of understanding and forbearance among these diverse subcommunities are what ties them together in an overarching national community. The political faith that makes Mennonite villages and hippie communes part of the same overall national community is their devotion to the rights of the other group, as of all groups, to go their own way in peace. In a sense it is true that communities would be much tighter if we *all* were Mennonites, or all hippies, or all Marxist-Leninists, or all Puritans, or all mystics, if that were possible. But Aristotle's point becomes relevant at this juncture: A group can have too much unity to be a community. A corporate merger of companies, after all, is not a community of companies. A community, at least in the sense of being a form of grouping that answers a basic human need, is, in Aristotle's words, "a harmony of distinct but complementary persons." In the liberal vision, then, a community is a harmony of mutually respectful often radically *different* individuals.

Second, the communitarian might reply that the liberal's social ideal is vacuous. Respect for the rights of others is fine, s/he may concede, but it hardly is a full picture of the social good. If all that any of us did was to refrain from interfering with the rights of others, then, apart from minimal positive duties, none of us would ever *do* anything. And if our sole moral conviction were that interference with liberty without proper cause is wrong, then no one would have a very practical guide for how one ought to live one's life. But the liberal can rejoin that his or her theory does not purport to be a *full* guide to the good life. It is an answer to the more limited question about the rightful scope of state power. Of course, the state's functions are not limited to enforcement. The liberal state can consistently use public *education* to foster respect for rights; to inculcate patriotic pride in being part of a nation that scrupulously preserves individual liberties, and respect for a tradition that has often done so, and for which heroes have died; and to urge public service, charity, and cooperation—virtues that a liberal can praise as consistently as anyone else. The communitarian objection that liberalism not only fails to give warrant to these governmental functions, but that it *cannot* (consistently) endorse them, simply does not make sense. Limitations on government coercion do not have these further restrictive implications. We can use our autonomy, with benign governmental encouragement, to make moral commitments and to help one another. To be secure in one's human rights is not necessarily to be selfish and antisocial. The liberal ideology, in short, is not so much vacuous as formal, and the formal framework *can* be filled with the ideals of social commitment so treasured by communitarians.

The communitarian might accept these arguments but still make a third reply. Even if liberal ideology is neither divisive nor vacuous, it is still incomplete. In other words, liberalism's communal vision simply is not sufficiently inspiring. S/he might point out that patriots have given their lives for their God, or their king, or their country "right or wrong," and then question whether similar devotion ever could be shown toward an abstract system of rights. On this point there can be no other proof of the pudding but its eating. Liberal rhetoric is hardly in short supply, and while little of it is poetic, much of it is passionate. Pericles' funeral oration and Lincoln's Gettysburg Address may not compare in eloquence to the speech Shakespeare gives Henry the Fifth at Agincourt (where the appeals are to comradeship in arms, honor, fame, and glory), but they nonetheless have dampened many an eye in the rereading. There is genuine ardor in the liberal slogan attributed to Voltaire—"I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it"—and inspiration in John Stuart Mill's celebration of human diversity in *On Liberty*. There is little doubt that people can be and in fact are moved by the more eloquent liberal appeals, and moved in the direction of brotherhood and community. American patriotism might be composed of a number of elements, including love of place and love of ancestors, but among these elements are also gratitude for liberties unknown by one's ancestors in foreign lands, and pride taken in the American system of constitutional rights itself.

I have tried to defend liberalism against the charge that it *cannot* provide a unifying, community-building ideology. Liberalism is compatible with community, but is that all that can be said for it? As a matter of internal logic, I think it is possible that *is* all that can be said for it. It is very difficult to demonstrate liberalism's inherent moral superiority to various illiberal alternatives. But as a practical matter, in our particular historical context, I think a great deal more can be said for it. For societies like our own, the products in large part of inconclusive religious wars and tempestuous political struggles, with large and diverse populations unable to reconcile their differences except by grudging tolerance, no other ideology will work as

well. No other ideology would be neutral toward the substance of the differences, and a partisan state would be more divisive than unifying. □

The article is based on a chapter of the forthcoming Harmless Wrongdoing *(New York: Oxford University Press, June, 1988), which is the fourth volume of* The Moral Limits of the Criminal Law.

ISRAEL: INTO THE ABYSS?

(Continued from p. 55)

the annihilation of the Amalekites, so now "God's throne is defective" as long as the Amalekites' heirs, the Arabs, are left to live and prosper. And Dr. Mordekhai Nisan of the Hebrew University cites passages from the *halakha* to show that Arab transgressions against Jews should be punished by law, while those committed by Jews against Arabs must not be subject to judicial sanctions (*The Jewish State and the Arab Problem*, in Hebrew, Tel Aviv, 1986, pp. 127-147).

These are not isolated statements. Coming as they do from the pens of prominent theologians and scholars, they carry considerable weight. To be sure, most right-wing parties distance themselves from these fulminations. The feisty Tehiya MK Geula Cohen—"the Jewish Apasionara"—told me that she rejects Kahane's "Judaism with racist elements." So did Moshe Katz, an aide to Ariel Sharon, and Prof. Ben Shlomo of the GE. I have no reason to doubt their sincerity. Yet when all is said and done, the right-wing ideology, taken as a whole, comes perilously close to that of Kahane and other rabbinical notables.

The Sacred and the Profane

There are differences between the GE, the radical right-wing parties, and within the Greater Israel movement in general.* Some place emphasis on "security considerations," others on "promises" spelled out in the Bible (or by His Majesty's Government in 1917). Yet more unites than separates them.

The seventy-eight-year-old Israel Eldad who, like Shamir, was a member of the high command of the "Stern Gang" (Lehi) in the 1940s, is probably the most articulate spokesman of an ideology that borders (as he is not loath to admit) on a species of fascism. A short, vigorous man, an eminent scholar, Eldad makes no apologies for Lehi's convoluted ideology,† and staunchly defends Lehi's policy of "individual terror," which he says was modeled after that of the Russian Socialist Revolutionary party. "Forty years ago I said that once we begin to kill the Johnnies and Tommies, their mothers will kick up a row: 'Why should our sons be murdered for the sake of the bloody Jews?' And I was right. In 1948, Ben Gurion was the one who proclaimed a Jewish State. But we made it possible for him to do it." (*Pace* Mr. Eldad, the SR never advocated the killing of the Vanyas and Mishas, but only of highly-placed Tsarist officials.)

Though Eldad refuses to join any political party ("I'd have to swallow too many toads"), his views inform the right-wing ideological credo writ large. Zionism, he explains, was never "a normal liberation movement ... engaged in a struggle against imperialism on its own territory." "A messianic movement seeking redemption" in the "nationalist" sense of this term, it struggled for its land "from without." In Eldad's version of history, the British promised a Jewish National Home "on both sides of the Jordan, and broke their promise in 1922." (Not true. The British had never formally accepted the Zionist definition of a Home. The word "State" was avoided by the Zionists and British alike. The British Mandate, accepted by the House of Commons and by the League of Nations in 1922, which excluded areas east of the Jordan, cannot, therefore, be regarded as a "broken promise" to the Zionist Organization.)

According to Eldad, the notion of "a Palestinian nation is nonsense." "How can you compare," he goes on, citing Golda Meir, "a great nation like ours with the Arabs?" His prescription is as simple as it is bold: "Transfer all of the Arabs living in Greater Israel in return for the 800,000 Jews living in Arab lands." The niceties of "transferring" (that is to say, expelling) more than two million unwilling Arabs do not concern him. "Transfer," he says, is as much an international as a traditional Zionist concept. Then there is *aliya*: millions of Jews "are bound to come here sooner or later." On what possible grounds, I ask him, are you making such sweeping predictions? He replies by quoting Ben Gurion: "In Eretz Yisrael, he who does not believe in miracles is not a realist."

Almost without exception, every right-wing theoretician or politician I spoke to evoked Ben Gurion's *obiter*

*On the Gush Emunim, see Ehud Sprintzak, "The Genesis of Zionist Fundamentalism—the Case of Gush Emunim," *Orim*, New Haven, Autumn 1987, pp. 8-27. On the Greater Israel movement, see Rael Jean Isaac, *Israel Divided*, 1976, The Johns Hopkins University Press.

† The leader of Lehi, Abraham Stern, was an admirer of Mussolini. In 1940, unlike the Irgun, he declared "British imperialism" to be the Jews' main enemy—so much so that a year later his emissaries approached the Germans with the proposal for collaboration against the British. Stern was killed in 1942, and a new leadership took over command. Later on, with the Irgun launching its own war against the British, the Lehi split into several factions, one of them pro-Soviet and dedicated to the establishment of a "Socialist Hebrew State." Shamir, incidentally, was already active in the Lehi when it approached the Nazis with the offer of collaboration.

dictum. I quote from my notes:

Geula Cohen (Tehiya): Israel's sovereignty must be imposed on all of Eretz Yisrael. The talk about annexation is nonsense—how can you annex something that is yours? So is all the talk about a Palestinian nation—today the Arabs want Judea and Samaria, and tomorrow the Israeli Arabs will want *their* state. So, too, are all the Cassandra warnings about the "demographic danger": We heard these voices twenty years ago, and what happened? 300,000 Arabs went to Jordan, that's what happened.* Had we been firmer in the past, all these riots wouldn't have taken place. Let's send the Arab refugees to Jordan, and then tell the others that they can apply for citizenship—not all at once, mind you, but by quotas—provided they learn Hebrew and the Talmud and swear allegiance to the Jewish State. In the meantime, we'll settle the territories with the help of a huge *aliya*. You think that's unrealistic? Do you know what Ben Gurion said? The Jews who don't want to come here are rats, suffering from moral AIDS. I have nothing but pity for those Jews who don't want to participate in the glorious revolution of their people.

Prof. Ben Shlomo (Tel Aviv University; GE theoretician): Beatings are a normal way to restore law and order. Why make greater normative demands of us than of any other nation? The hand-wringing of the Israeli left is a rejection not of this or that policy, but of the very essence of Zionism. Because what is the essence of Zionism? It is our right to all of Eretz Yisrael. Jews in the *galut* must heed the call to participate in a historical process of redemption. If they don't, it may mean the end not only of Zionism, but of the Jewish people. Do you know what Ben Gurion said? ...

Daniella Weiss (GE activist): The [local] Arabs are supported by all Arab states, by the PLO, by Russia, by the Western world—by all the world, as a matter of fact. But we shall win. We have determination, we have faith, we have come here to fulfill a dream, and we have no guilty conscience about it: after all, we were in Hebron and Shamron (Nablus) before we moved on to Tel Aviv and Haifa. If we are still in a minority in Judea and Samaria, let me remind you that we had been in a minority when we first came to the Holy Land—and we survived. So shall we now. Do you know what Ben Gurion said? ... We have come here not because of comforts and we haven't been offered any material incentives. I know some people say it, but it's a lie.†

Moshe Katz (aide to Sharon): Sharon knows and understands the Arabs better than anyone else. And he has a plan: If the Arabs don't like it in Judea and Samaria, let them go to Jordan, overthrow Hussein, and take power. Then we'll negotiate with them. We are a merciful people, but we're not going to let ourselves be pushed around. The Arabs will have to understand that we're here to stay—and eventually they will, if we're firm and tough.

While the right has its own "moderates" and "hardliners," disputes spring largely from differences in temperament and values. The "moderate" GE Rabbi Yoel Bin-Nun, for instance, is disturbed by the appalling conditions of life in the Gaza refugee camps, and advocates resettling the refugees in "the territories" (i.e., West Bank). Israel Harel, editor of the settlers' journal *Nekuda*, also a moderate, worries—as does Ben Shlomo—about the prospects of a large-scale *aliya*. Yet his worry is cast in self-evident "truths": "In Europe or elsewhere," he says, "no people would waive its claim on its land because another people was living there." (Not even if that people constitutes 97% of the population?) And Bin-Nun, in answer to my question, asserted that Israel must eventually be "governed by the laws of the Torah." Of course Bin-Nun's interpretation of the Torah is radically different from Kahane's. But his goal of a theocracy is closer to the thinking of the Orthodox Mea Shearim's occupants than to that of the vast majority of Jews—secular and religious—who accept the principle of the separation of Church and State.

1967 and All That

"On the seventh day after the start of the Six Day War," says Prof. Leibowitz, "Israel was faced with a choice: was the war one of conquest or defense? It chose the first. It was a fateful and ill-fated decision."

The belief that the current crisis in Israel stems from the nationalist euphoria that swept over Israel after the Six Day War and eventually brought the Likud into power, and that the history of the *Yishuv* (the Palestine Jewish community before 1948) and of Israel was, as one of my friends put it, "an unqualified success story" is shared by many Israelis. It does not detract from the extraordinary achievements of the builders of Israel to

*True. But Jews still comprise only three to four percent of the total population in the West Bank, and no perceptible change is in the offing (unless, of course, the Arabs are "encouraged" to leave).

†Not quite. Mrs. Weiss is correct that there is no difference between mortgage rates offered to prospective settlers in the West Bank and, say, in the Negev. For the kind of material incentives offered only to the West Bank settlements see Meron Benvenisti, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-65.

suggest that this theory, like the one about the exclusively moral nature of the *halakha,* leaves something to be desired.

True, the Greater Israel ethos received a powerful stimulus from the acquisition of the West Bank in 1967. Yet it clearly tapped sources imbedded in left-wing—and not only Revisionist-based—ideologies. Its disciples have included members of the socialist Ahdut Avoda and—still to this day—large chunks of the LP. (The late Moshe Tabenkin, a Kibbutz member and leader of the Ahdut Avoda, said in 1970: "If someone says we have no right to Judea and Samaria because there is an Arab majority there, then there was no moral basis in the past for our settlement ... Why was settling Mishmar Haemek socialist implementation, and doing the same thing in the Jordan valley today fascism?")

Similarly, the series of sordid political and financial scandals that have rocked Israel in the past few years have had many precedents. Ariel Sharon, whose "personal responsibility" for the Sabra and Shatila butchery was clearly established by the Kahan Commission, was not the first Israeli official found guilty of committing atrocities and then quietly restored to grace (he is now Minister of Trade and Industry.) IDF and security officers have again and again been protected by successive cabinets, be they Labor or Likud. Both the recent case in which the Shin Beth (secret service) chieftains successfully conspired with leading Cabinet Ministers to hush up the murder of two Palestinians, and President Herzog's pardon of Jewish terrorists found guilty of murdering Arabs are examples of the double standard of justice that has flourished in Israel over the past twenty years.

However, as Ehud Sprintzak, Professor of Political Science at Hebrew University, demonstrates compellingly in his soon to be published paper "Illegalism in Israeli Political Culture," contempt for the legal norms of a democracy, indeed for the rule of law, has been a consistent feature in the Yishuv and the State "since time immemorial." He traces it to a variety of factors, such as the authoritarian traditions in the countries from which "the Founding Fathers of Israeli Zionism" came, the values of the *shtetl,* with its suspicion of "the law of the Gentiles," the "Bakshish Culture" imported from the Orient, the "naive socialist ethos" of the early idealistic pioneers, with their "ideological animosity towards formal and legal bureaucracy" associated with "capitalism," and the tendency to elevate one's party above the rest of society (i.e., patronage and *protektsia*—"connections"). All these tendencies have intensified in the post-1967 Israel, in which one part of the population enjoys political rights, while another is deprived of freedom of speech and assembly, the right to travel without special permits issued by the military, or the right to equal employment.

Nothing struck me more during my recent stay in Israel—not even the harrowing problem of "the territories"—than the price Israel may pay for its "illegalist" and short-sighted attitude towards its "own" Arabs. There are about 750,000 of them and, according to demographic projections, by the 1990s they will comprise about 22% of the total population of Israel.

Separate talks with Abdel Wahab Darousha, an LP MK who on 22 January left the party in protest, and Muhammed Watad, Mapam MK and the assistant to the mayor of Nazareth, a Rakakh member, brought home to me the magnitude and emotional force of these grievances: the memory of massive land expropriations for security purposes, lack of government funding for industrial development which has turned many Arab villages into "dormitories," the exclusion of Arab workers from most of state (or privately) owned enterprises, blatant housing discrimination, minuscule budgets for schools and municipal services, and the barring of Arabs from virtually any positions in the political structure of the country.

Some of these practices, such as exclusion from the IDF, are understandable: For years Israeli Arabs could be considered, and many in fact were, allies of hostile Arab countries. Yet other practices—in areas such as housing and employment—are clearly repellent and are turning the Israeli Arabs, who would prefer to remain in Israel and who have little culturally in common with their West Bank brethren, into sullen adversaries of the state. (The hitherto more "loyal" Druze, who are allowed to serve in the army, are also beginning to chafe at the bit.)

One man who understands and admits to having "wronged" the Arabs is Prof. Joseph Ginat, advisor on Israeli Arab affairs to Shimon Peres. Yet Ginat told me that he was "astonished" at the reaction of Israeli Arabs to the insurrection in Gaza and the West Bank. Despite his vast knowledge and understanding, he "hadn't expected" the outburst of militancy by the teenagers throwing stones and petrol bottles at the Israeli troops, or the thousands of women ululating in the streets of Nablus and Ramalla. One can only marvel at the short-sightedness of even sophisticated Israelis who have been sitting on top of a powder keg without realizing that it was bound to go off any moment.

Into the Abyss?

I have said enough to indicate where my own sympathies lie. They lie with the "opposition," including people like Benjamin Tammuz. If ancient historical claims were to guide international relations, then why not hand over the territory stretching from the White

to the Black Sea to the champions of "Greater Ukraine," or Iran and a chunk of Turkey to those who dream of a "Greater Armenia?" In addition, I suppose, a good part of the United States would have to be given back to the Indians. "Samaria and Judea," we are told, had once been inhabited by the Israelites. Quite so—but for the past hundreds of years it has been populated by Arabs. Ah, say the proponents of Greater Israel, but so were the lands now settled by Jews. True, but this either invalidates the claims of both the disciples of Greater Israel and of Greater Palestine—or renders both claims equally valid.

Essentially, the "opposition" is waging a war against some of the most pernicious ills that afflict Israeli society—the addiction to ideological dogmas, jingoism, the erosion of moral sensitivity, the imperviousness to the dictates of common sense. As a young Zionist, the eminent Holocaust historian Israel Gutman said he had thought the Jews would never repress another people. Their own sufferings would serve as a deterrent against such behavior. "Now," he said, "I know that I was innocent."

In early January I drove to Nablus and several GE settlements. The area was still relatively quiescent, but there was no mistaking the rage of the Arabs and the settlers' thirst for "direct action." A month later, in an Arab-owned and Arab-driven car, I went to Gaza and saw the indescribable squalor of its refugee camps. I saw young children reaching for stones to throw at our car, much as their Jewish peers in prosperous nearby Ashkelon, which I visited two hours later, amused themselves by hurling stones into the Mediterranean. I spoke to the Arab doctors in the Gaza hospital and to patients in blood-soaked bandages. The doctors eschewed emotive language, simply describing some of the brutal acts committed by Israeli soldiers on the grounds of the hospital.

The Palestinian uprising is not abating, Shamir's complacent predictions notwithstanding. If anything, it is spreading like a raging forest fire. And so is the ferocity of the Israeli response. We must first suppress "the riots," says Rabin, and then seek "political solutions." Granted that "riots" must be stopped, and that the use of some force is unavoidable. But what possible excuse is there—save that hoary and patently fallacious argument that "Arabs only respect force"—for the acts of wanton brutality by the IDF? And why must the search for "political solutions" be postponed until that distant (and unlikely) day when the uprising dies down? Why not seek them *now*? Or is Sharon, who has made no bones about his own "solution"—a massive show of force, perhaps thousands of casualties, and then the "transfer" of a million and a half Arabs—to step into the picture?

I have focussed in this article on two opposite poles—the "peace camp" and what might be called the "ultra-right." But it must be emphasized once again that the arguments mustered by the latter differ but slightly from the ideas espoused by the Likud. The manipulative approach to the "Diaspora" (come to Israel or stuff our coffers and forever hold your peace), the stress on territorial expansion, and the disdain for and fatal blindness to the force of Palestinian nationalism has been part and parcel of mainstream Zionism as well—even though its left wing has voiced them less stridently and implemented them with considerably more caution than the right.

The radicalization of the "peace camp" may be regarded as a desperate attempt to rid Zionism of its most destructive ideological ballast and to strengthen its finest—which is to say most humane and pragmatic—components. The right wing, on the other hand, espouses Zionism's doctrinaire and "romantic" legacy, plainly more attractive than that of the "pragmatists." It appeals to the age-old anti-Arab animus (especially on the part of many Oriental Jews), to simplistic notions about "security," to a perverted interpretation of the Holocaust that views the entire world as an implacable enemy of the Jews, to intoxicating nationalist and religious visions and to the belief in brute force as the *ultima ratio* of a nation's survival. Whether reason and the notion of a small but better Israel will prevail remains to be seen. One thing seems clear: any attempt to hold on to both the pragmatic and romantic sides of the Zionist legacy can only redound to the benefit of the latter.

To side with the "peace camp" is not to absolve the Arabs from *their* share of responsibility for the present impasse. However reprehensible and myopic the policy of Israel, the fact remains that the Arab states have shown not the slightest concern for the plight of the Palestinians, and have in fact exploited it cynically for their own propaganda purposes. If Israel has a record of missed opportunities, so have the Arabs. Still, the ball is in Israel's court now, and its very survival may well depend on whether it seizes the initiative, and not seek refuge behind a cloud of recriminations.

Nor is siding with the "peace camp" tantamount to accepting its arguments as received truth or maintaining that the counter-arguments are devoid of all merit. The overwhelming majority of Arabs—certainly in the "territories"—may indeed be consumed by a fanatic hatred of the Jews. Perhaps the refugees from Gaza do in fact want "to go back to Jaffa." Perhaps Benvenisti was right when he told me that many Israeli "doves" underestimate the bitterness of what he calls the "tribal war," in which both sides are blinded by obsessive and elemental hatreds.

Or perhaps more and more people, including Likud

voters and politicians, are beginning to shift to a more realistic perception of the options open to Israel? Perhaps Peres will find the courage to assume the mantle of leadership, make common cause with Ratz, Mapam, and other similar groups, jettison the obsolete Allon plan, and finally tell his countrymen (and not only the odd sympathetic American reporter, strictly "off the record") what he knows full well—namely, that there is simply no other option, no other choice but to negotiate with the PLO and accept the principle of a Palestinian state? For none of the various scenarios now being bandied about—"autonomy," the "Jordanian option," a "Palestinian entity" (whatever that means), or a resurrected version of the Allon Plan, which would maintain Israeli control over nearly forty percent of the West Bank, have any chance of satisfying the Palestinians' quest for self-determination.

Finally, American Jews must realize that the only way they can help Israel become once again a democratic state, is to support unequivocally the "peace camp" and not Shamir, an erstwhile disciple of indiscriminate terrorism, who now claims that Israel can be saved only if it keeps a million and a half Arabs under permanent subjugation.

Arab states, whose disdain for Palestinian aspirations is one of the major causes of the insurrection, are willy-nilly closing ranks with the Palestinians, who will resist any attempts to exclude them from discussions that are to determine their future. Fatah's armed attacks in Israel may be at once savage and politically stupid. All the more reason, therefore, to test Arafat's often repeated assertion that armed struggle is not incompatible with his desire for a negotiated settlement.* At the very least, a dialogue with the PLO would demonstrate whether it is serious about its claims or not.

"Security" is a powerful argument—but in the age of missiles, a few hundred square miles of territory do not security make. (Though some territorial adjustments might be necessary.) To quote Zeev Schiff: "What I am afraid of most is not regular but ethnic missiles. I don't want to have them in my country—I can protect myself far better when they are outside the country." Or Moshe Maoz, a recognized authority on the Palestinian Arabs: "They may hate us, but we must negotiate with them. You don't negotiate with friends—you only negotiate with enemies." And, once again, Yehoshafat Harkabi: "You make the best deal you can."

The Arab-Jewish conflict, as I have tried to argue in this article, is not the sole blight afflicting Israel. But only its excision will make it possible for that country to get its house in order, and to go on. It is an awesome task. Geula Cohen has already warned of a "civil war," and many West Bank settlers are likely to try to fulfill her prophesy if the Israeli government ever is impelled to make good on the formula "land for peace." The problem of Jerusalem alone, with its 125,000 Palestinians, is mind-boggling. Nor do other problems, such as that of the Gaza refugees, admit of easy solutions.

Nonetheless, these problems must be tackled, and tackled soon—before the Israeli Arabs fully ally themselves with their Palestinian brethren, before the youthful radicals in the territories reject the counsels of the PLO, or the Islamic fundamentalists take over the struggle. Otherwise each week that passes may prove yet another step towards the yawning abyss. □

*See Anthony Lewis' interview with Arafat, New York Times, March 13, 1988, p. E27.

REFLECTIONS OF A RELIGIOUS ZIONIST

(Continued from p. 60)

What, then, is required of us in "premessianic history" so that we can prevent slaughter but not, God forbid, engage in it? Buber has reminded us of the spiritual features of this problem; Leibowitz has warned us of the realistic dangers of our innocence in the world in which we wish to live our national life. The question of power and its proper use remains a religious one and should engage particularly those who take seriously the sovereignty of God and the link in our tradition between the strength that God gives us and the peace with which He blesses us.

The ingathering and rehabilitation of our people in its land also raises many religious questions. It demands that we confront the spiritual dislocations occasioned by new landscapes and new cultural proximities. It also requires us to see that the land is not empty and that there are others here too. The problems cannot be solved by speaking of our "rights" and comparing them, in one way or another, with the "rights" of Palestinian Arabs. Buber and Leibowitz have suggested that "rights" are not in the lexicon of our tradition and that recourse to this language cannot solve conflicts. Buber noted that our tradition speaks of *a task* to fulfill one's obligation as a covenantal community to the land and within it; Leibowitz states that the religious person sees the holiness of the land in the halakhic obligations imposed by the Torah—it is a land sanctified by the commandments. In either case, one cannot ignore the claims of other people in the land. They cannot be expected to fold their tents simply because of our consciousness of a sacred task or a halakhic obligation.

Finally, the legitimate Zionist demand for creativity threatens our Jewish culture, which is classically religious, with the danger that the distinction will be blurred between the sacred and the profane. If and when that happens, such religious categories as messianism may

become simply a cover for national self-interest, and redemption may be conceived as a real-estate affair. Religion, declares Buber, is not simply something that a secular nation "has" in the museum or in the closet, to use when convenient, to "be proud of" on festive occasions; it must be lived, through the panorama of our national life, and therefore, in our new situation, it must be open to change. And, as Leibowitz states, Judaism makes demands; it requires that the Jew be prepared to do everything and anything in the service of God. It leaves to other religions, he posits, the comforting message that God will do anything for humans, that their sole obligation is to confess their sins. A messianism that gives us material benefits while making demands on others is therefore a false messianism that deserves to be called neither Jewish culture nor Jewish religion.

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The Six Day War was a watershed in the history of Israel and religious Zionism. The great and speedy victory was universally perceived as a moment of salvation, and by some as the veritable inauguration of messianic times. For certain people, all of modern Jewish history seemed to have gained its true perspective: the successive waves of aliyah and the pioneering restoration of the land to fertility; the Holocaust as "the birth-pangs of the Messiah"; the defeat of seven Arab nations in 1948; and then this unprecedented deliverance from nightmarish memories and the fear of a new Holocaust. Religious Zionists, who were, after all, also religious *Jews*, were suddenly perceived to have, perhaps, a better understanding of events, to have been backstage with the Producer of this historic drama. Maybe there really was a Messiah. *And maybe the future was beginning now.* Even ultra-traditionalists, except for the fringe groups, were impressed. Clearly, there had been miracles. Now the religious Zionists could breathe more easily, be more impressed with themselves. No longer falling between the chairs of secularism and traditionalism, they were, it was now plausible to say, *a bridge*. God was leading His people back to their land and they, the religious Zionists, were suited, indeed destined, to articulate His prophecy. The land needed to be settled and never, God forbid, returned. Indeed, since God was restoring it to *us*, we would cause another war each time we returned it.

A young, vibrant, and idealistic group of religious Jews now came to see itself as the true embodiment of Zionism. These Jews were the settlers of Gush Emunim, no less observant than "the Yeshiva world," but also the pioneering heirs of what they saw as the now-decadent Labor movement. Amos Oz could fume at their usurpation of *chalutziut,* and the left-wingers could scoff, but they would show the "true meaning" of Zionism: as messianism, as traditional Judaism, *halakha* and all. There was no crisis of Judaism, only a confusion of the Jews. All was well. The right-wing Likud was happy to have the young people of Gush Emunim as their court theologians; the Labor movement, to its spiritual and electoral detriment, especially among Jews from Islamic countries, continued to think that disdain for religion was enlightened, and remained, for the most part, condescending. Gush Emunim still was religious Zionism to them, only more distasteful, no longer as "moderate" as in the old days of the "historical partnership" (i.e., coalition agreement) between Labor and the *Mafdal* (National Religious Party).

One should be careful not to create diabolical theories about Gush Emunim. The values their adherents represent are undoubtedly present in the Jewish tradition, their love of Eretz Yisrael is Jewishly legitimate, and many believe that the Arab population can be decently accommodated in a Jewish state within the halakhic framework of *ger toshav*, the "resident alien"—that is, those non-Jews who observe the Noachide laws of morality and therefore have civil rights in a Jewish commonwealth according to traditional halakha. And, needless to say, they are well-armed with prooftexts for their positions, however embarrassing this fact may be for those religious Jews who disagree with them.

Nevertheless, Gush Emunim seems consistently to make the wrong valuative choices, choices that constitute the "religious Zionist input" into our present troubled situation. Supporters of Gush Emunim, and the Orthodox Zionist establishment that gives them its enthusiastic or tacit support, err, I believe, on three levels of Jewish-Zionist discourse. First, their recourse to the sources that they deem relevant is innocently dogmatic rather than dialectical. Second, they assume that the tradition has ready solutions to contemporary macroproblems of Jewish polity. And third, they misconceive the aims of Zionism and therefore cannot make a religious contribution to resolving the tensions inherent in these aims. In other words, they misunderstand the nature of modern power, of modern Jewish nation-building, and of modern culture.

The innocent-dogmatic approach to the sacred sources of our tradition is based on the assumptions that (a) texts have no situational or historical context and thus are always applicable in principle; (b) sacred texts are unambiguous; and (c) the value each text embodies is not to be weighed against other, opposite, values, embodied in other sources. These assumptions obviate the need for a deliberative process in which contexts are compared, meanings are elicited from texts, and priori-

ties are established with regard to the choice between valuative opposites (for example, truth and peace).

Gush Emunim can cite sources commanding the conquest and settlement of Eretz Yisrael, and such a command is indeed an element of our tradition, imbued with the sanctity of Torah. They can cite the medieval scholar and commentator, Nachmanides, who ruled that one may not return to gentiles any part of Eretz Yisrael that has been acquired from them. Nevertheless, the biblical norm of conquest must be examined for its present *applicability*, for its levels of *meaning* and parameters of appropriate interpretation, and it must be measured against other texts that demand the pursuit of peace and consider peace ultimately to take precedence over even "justified war." In such a deliberation we may find that a "text of conquest" applies only to the land in the time of ancient idolaters; it may apply only when no other political or moral considerations are relevant, such as when sheer survival is involved, and it may address itself to one of the rare cases where a specific covenantal demand gives it priority over peace—i.e., giving Israel the opportunity to build a holy society in Eretz Yisrael, based on the Torah, as it is commanded to do. This last commandment obviously is not exactly appropriate to a modern secular society that does not accept the yoke of the commandments.

As for Nachmanides, it must be clear that his position is part of the deliberative enterprise of all Jewish generations—to understand the Torah. No single policy flows from it, even for those who refuse to differentiate between a commentary or halakhic ruling and between the Bible and Talmud themselves, for even they (and especially they!) are, as stated above, not applicable until examined deliberately. Thus, for example, a great talmudic sage of the previous generation, Rabbi Avraham Dov Shapira of Kovno, utilized the prohibition "against return of even an inch" to urge negotiation with the British in 1937 on the basis of their partition proposal of that year (the Peel Proposal), which was the most minimalistic offer that was ever made to the Zionist movement. His argument was that whatever the nations offer us must be accepted; otherwise we are, as it were, relinquishing parts of Eretz Yisrael.

The halakhic tradition, codified in the Diaspora, does not have ready-made solutions to many complex problems that Israel faces each day. Our tradition does have fundamental theological principles, relevant precedents that await application, methods of deliberation, and moral guidelines, but it seems to lack clear-cut norms for solving the macroproblems of our society. This problem is intrinsic to a religious-legal tradition that is driven by a moral "thrust" and that strives for comprehensiveness in a complicated and changing world. Nachmanides, in his commentary on Deuteronomy 6:18, which demands "doing what is just and good in the eyes of the Lord," deals succinctly with this comprehensiveness and complexity, though he of course lived before the pervading consciousness of change that characterizes our era:

> . . . even in those matters where He has not [specifically] commanded, give careful consideration to do what is good and just in His eyes, for He loves the good and the just. And this is a weighty matter, for it is impossible to make mention in the Torah of all behaviours of a person with his neighbours and friends and all his business dealings and social and political arrangements, but after He mentioned many of these, such as not to engage in talebearing, and not to take vengeance . . . and so forth, He went on to say that in general one should do what is good and just in everything . . . ."

Are there criteria for knowing what is "good and just" besides the commandments themselves? Rabbi Kook suggests a crucial criterion. "The fear of Heaven," writes the rabbi, "must not suppress man's natural morality, for then the fear of Heaven is no longer pure." Moreover, he writes:

> The Torah was given to Israel, so that the gates of her light—clearer, more extensive and holier than all the gates of light of man's natural wisdom and natural moral spirit—will open before us, and through us, to the rest of the world. But if we deafen our ears so that we cannot hear the simple call of the Lord which is potentially proclaimed through all the natural gates of light, which are in every man's reach, because we think that we will find the light of the Torah in a Torah which is severed from all the light of life spread over the world and planted in the splendid soul of man, then we have not understood the value of the Torah. Of this it has been said: "foolish people and unwise" (Deut. 32:6) which is translated by Targum Onkelos: "A people who received the Torah and did not grow wiser."

The State of Israel requires religious Zionists to engage in new halakhic explorations, a new return to the sources in order to discover what is "good and just in His eyes" and how the light of Torah may be blended with the light of life. Only then can we hope to find in the Torah the uses and misuses of power, the ways to build a society that will yet be a light beckoning to Jews throughout the world and the foundation stones of a culture in which the holy will be renewed and the new will be sanctified.

Gush Emunim and all too many "spokesmen" for

our religious tradition appear not yet to have confronted either modernity or Zionism. One often wonders whether the Zionists among them have embraced the national movement because they wished to be saved from the Enlightenment, from the need to encounter the world. That would be a supreme irony for Zionism as a modern movement. And for Judaism it will be a tragedy if its teachers are men who "received the Torah but are not wise."

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The spiritual dignity of Judaism as a religious societal conception is being put to the test. The idea of Holy Land in Judaism must be, as both Buber and Leibowitz have shown, moral, not mythic. This is the land in which we are commanded to live a collective holy life, a life that will sanctify God's Name. Religious Zionism must keep its eyes and its energies on that task and that challenge. And the task cannot be met, it cannot even be undertaken, without seeing and meeting with our Arab neighbors, who also have an attachment to this land.

In speaking to them, we cannot base ourselves on any principle but that of moral reciprocity. True, that principle may not have been clearly articulated in explicit terms in our tradition. But we do have many *halakhot* that focus on ethical reciprocal relations between Jews and gentiles based on the principle of *m'pnai darkai shalom*, practices required "for the sake of peace [ful relations]." This principle may not exactly be moral reciprocity, but it too can be justified by the understanding that the ways of the Torah "are the ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace." Perhaps this was not the most appropriate or most pressing value in 1948 when we were attacked for wanting to have a state in our land. But now, for the sake of our moral standards and our sanity, and perhaps for our very survival in our commonwealth, we have to seek out those Arab leaders who now admit to our claims on the basis of moral reciprocity—and admit to their admission of them. Indeed, giving up part of our land is traumatic; it will be accompanied by a sense of pain and bereavement. Also, trusting Arab assent to a moral reciprocity *that includes Zionist Jews* is a risk. But it is a trauma we must undergo and a risk we must take—because we have no choice. Our return to our land was designed to enable us to rule ourselves, not to rule others. Here we must educate our children towards a moral, Jewish view of national life. Here we wish to sanctify God's Name, as He has promised and commanded, to save our Judaism from its exile. That is the prophecy that should have priority today, and we must interpret it in the light of our best moral understanding. This is a challenge that we would wish on no one but ourselves and that we cannot impose on anyone but ourselves.

Religious Zionists believe that God is restoring Israel to its land in our generation and that, in the words of the psalmist, "we were as dreamers" in this astounding event of salvation. This belief is shared even by those religious Zionists who agree with the position outlined above. But these latter religious Zionists also believe that dreaming must not slip into lazy and dangerous fantasy. Buber, in a letter to Ghandi, once wrote that our return to our land, a religious need and potential blessing, does not mean that God gives "any portion of the earth away, so that the owner may say as God says in the Bible, 'For all the earth is Mine.' (Exodus 19:5). The conquered land is, in my opinion, only lent even to the conqueror who has settled on it—and God waits to see what he will make of it."

The question of what we "will make of it" seems to me the crucial question facing Judaism and Zionism in this era. The religious Zionist believes that God is waiting to see what we will make of it. The situation seems more suited to fear and trembling than the contented self-confidence that parades as unsullied faith. But fear alone is not enough. God's Name in the world is a task as well as an anticipation, and if we cannot apply Torah in a manner that testifies to a heart of flesh, in all things and with all people, then God's Name will not be sanctified through us, and the Land of Israel will revert to its state before there was a Torah—it will become, once again, "the land of Canaan." Jews who think Ezekiel is still important, and who refuse to be comforted by the simple answers of people like Ariel Sharon or Woody Allen, have their work cut out for them. □

BUBER

(Continued from p. 79)

Buber's absolutely unchanged position at the level of the "thousand small decisions." Here is a model moment in the history of social criticism, when a critic is forced to respond to the failure of his largest hopes. It is not that Israel's victory in its war of independence was a defeat for *Ichud*; the war itself was the defeat (the loss of the war and the consequent destruction of the Jewish community in Palestine would have been a greater defeat, as Buber recognized when his "heart trembled"). When the fighting was over, a sympathetic Jerusalem shopkeeper greeted Buber with a line that has many echoes in the lives of twentieth-century critics: "Oh! An utter political rout like the one your circle suffered is no common thing. It looks as if you'll have to face the facts and resign yourselves to total silence for the time being." Buber did not resign himself; he

seems no less active and outspoken after the war than before, at least until age and illness began to limit his activity. In fact, the defeat was not an "utter rout," for the people to whom Buber was committed were intact and free, possessed, indeed of a new capacity not only to "jump and intervene" in world politics, but also, if their leaders possessed the necessary moral imagination, to seek peace with their Arab neighbors. So Buber accommodated himself to statehood and remained a critic of the state—the actuality now rather than the idea, policy rather than program.

The announcement of his accommodation has an oracular tone that annoyed, and still annoys, many of his readers. "I have accepted as mine the State of Israel, the form of the new Jewish community that has arisen from the war. I have nothing in common with those Jews who imagine that they may contest the factual shape which Jewish independence has taken. The command to serve the spirit is to be fulfilled by us today in this state, starting from it." But not ending with it: That simple statement rather than the high-sounding "I have accepted" makes the crucial point. Buber called upon his political friends to work on the new ground of the state "to make good all that was once missed ... to free the blocked path to an understanding with the Arab peoples." Binationalism soon reappeared in his writing as federation: if he could not associate nations in a single state, he would seek to bring states together in a larger association. But at the very end of his life, in his last published essay, he called only for a "confederative union" of Israel and the nearer Arab states, which would allow, he wrote, "a considerably larger national autonomy" than would federation. He came gradually, I think, not only to accept the state but also to value sovereignty—never, to be sure, as a good in itself, but as a necessary instrument for doing good. Ours is the first generation of Jews in two thousand years, he wrote in 1957, that has the prerequisite for fulfilling the Jewish "mission," that is, "the independence of a strong nucleus ... the power to determine for itself in no small measure its institutions, its modes of life, and its relations with other nations."

Buber set very high standards for the use of this power, and the new state did not live up to them. His critical writings after 1948 are a litany of protest. Most often they take the form of open letters, public statements, and memoranda addressed to state officials, reminding them of their moral responsibilities. These responsibilities are breathtaking in their scope. If the new state is to be a "Jewish state," Buber writes, it must subject "its whole social life to [God's] rule, which means the realization of justice and truth both in its internal and external ... relationships."*

What is most attractive in Buber's post-1948 writing is his readiness to attend to the details of this extravagant subjection to follow God's rule. Binationalism had been for him a kind of theoretical guarantee of peace and justice; federation and confederation represented something less in his mind; and statehood was entirely open-ended, power and possibility, nothing more. We have reached a goal, he wrote in 1949, but it is not called Zion. "We have full independence, a state, and all that appertains to it, but where is the nation in the state? And where is that nation's spirit?"

He was still a Zionist, that is, still in search of Zion, but the search, at least as it is revealed in his published writings, seemed less programmatic than it once was. It was more a matter of one thing after another; "the realization of justice" meant acting justly in this instance and the next one. It meant taking the initiative in resettling Arab refugees, ending martial law in Arab areas, rejecting reprisals against Arab civilians, opening opportunities for Arabs in the professions and the Israeli civil service, and so on. These demands didn't add up to a resolution of the Arab-Jewish conflict. What lay behind them was more an "orientation" than a blueprint or a theory. If Buber still denied the idea of tragedy, he did so now almost entirely on what I earlier called the "lower plane," the plane of everyday decisionmaking.

Success as the world measures it is not the measure of social criticism. The critic is measured by the scars his listeners and readers bear, by the conflicts he forces them to live through, not only in the present but also in the future, and by the memories these conflicts leave behind. He doesn't succeed by winning the people over—for sometimes it simply isn't possible to do that—but by sustaining the critical argument. Often enough Buber felt like a prophet in the wilderness, but the right response to this feeling, he wrote, is not "to withdraw to the role of silent spectator, as Plato did." Instead, the prophet must keep talking. "He must speak his message. The message will be misunderstood, misinterpreted, misused; it will even confirm and harden the people in their faithlessness. But its sting will rankle within them for all time." Those lines have a certain romantic élan, and while I am inclined to resist romanticism in social critics, the élan is irresistible. Paul Mendes-Flohr's collection of Buber's critical "messages" suggests that his work still carries a sting. And if there are readers in whom that sting rankles, the people can't be entirely faithless. □

*An account of what Buber meant by justice in internal relationships can be found in his *Paths in Utopia*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), first published in 1949, a year after Israel's war of independence. This is Buber's most important work on political theory, a strikingly secular defense of communitarian socialism, with an epilogue on the kibbutz. Curiously, its arguments play little part in his Zionist criticism.

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