Volume 35, No. 1, Spring/Summer 2020

Tikkun

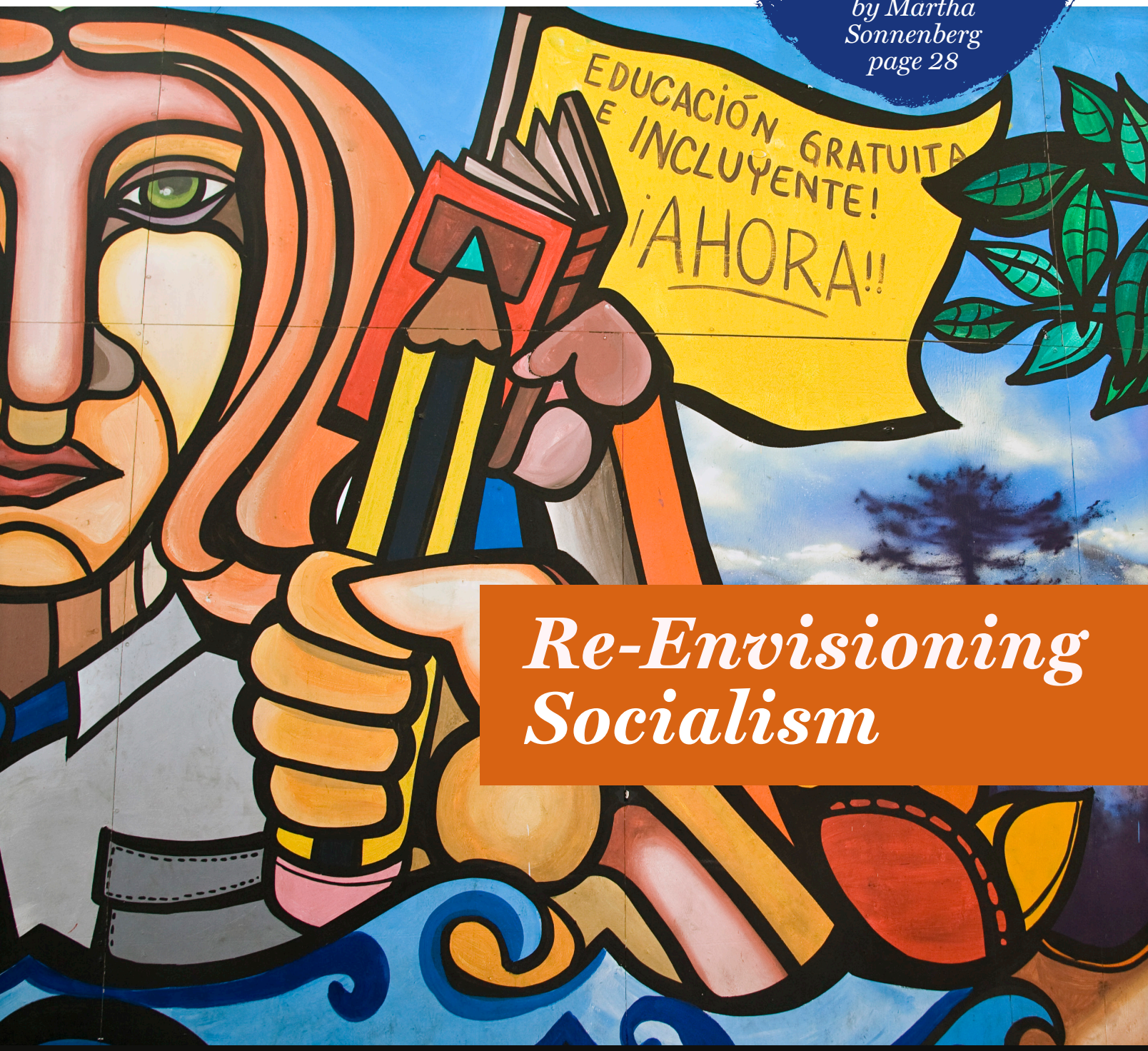
POLITICS+SPIRITUALITY+CULTURE

A Jewish and Interfaith Prophetic Voice to Heal and Transform the World

SPIRITUALIZED SOCIALISM AND SOCIALIST HUMILITY

by Martha Sonnenberg

page 28



Re-Envisioning Socialism

Editorials by Rabbi Michael Lerner on the Coronavirus and What Kind of Socialism Could Win?

Cat Zavis on Love - A Call to Action | Peter Gabel on Getting Off the Marxist Dime

Poetry by Jacqueline Osherow and David Danoff

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FRONT COVER ART
Socialist Mural
Santiago, Chile.
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Readers Respond

Aloha!

I attended Cat's class yesterday at the Visionaries Summit, and I needed to send my joy of it's immediate effects! I stopped to take out my computer before boarding my flight just to share my excitement in the moment with you!

I was in my Lyft on my way to the airport. My driver was a refugee from Turkey who has been here 5 years. Somehow he brought up the need for protection, borders and illegal immigrants and I felt like I was right back in our class!!! I saw the opportunity and decided that it was my responsibility to try my newly given tools out. So, I took a deep breath and anchored into the conversation to be sure I was truly listening.

I listened and asked genuine questions about him feeling unsafe. It led to more insight that he felt that these illegal immigrants had no proper education or skills. I dove into that a bit, yet I could see he was sharing some passion/feeling when he briefly noted that he had 40 years of his life without human rights, so I asked him about how that felt for him, and how he felt once accepted into the US. We noted that he was scared for his life where he grew up and it was sad.

I then asked him, what if someone as dedicated as him to learning and growing came to this country was scared for their life, knowing we have the space for them, would he really feel good about putting up a wall of fear and turning them away to go back to their unsafe environment? He said "no actually" and so I offered him perspectives of ways that we could support these people who don't have the 'skills' or the 'education' that he feels they should have. I also said "what if they may not know english, yet they have the amazing skills of working with the land and growing you healthy food to eat? Or what if they had basic skills to do the things you don't want to do?" I went on to say, what if by allowing more immigrants into our country that opened up a new higher paying position for you to help people from Your country since you know how to speak that language? You could essentially coach them, teach them and help them find the right job so they can feel supported and get integrated into the way we do things here? What if you could help save these people's lives?"

He teared up and said "wow, you are so right. Thank you so much."!!!! He went on to say how grateful he was for our conversation and he now sees things much differently!

YESSSSSS!!!! ALL because of your amazing interactive workshop and stellar guidance! I appreciate you and all you are offering to the world!!

Thank you again. I have signed up for info on any of your upcoming classes!! I look forward to sharing your message and opportunity to jump on with your movement with others on Oahu and see if there are any takers. If there are enough people, maybe we can have you fly out! What would that take?

Have a beautiful week and please know your work is working!!

Blessings & Aloha,
Sarah Daigle

***

"Speaking for the Silenced" by Richard Zimler
This is a wonderful, deeply moving article. I read Richard's book a number of years ago and it was for me an unknown and horrific piece of our history. Last year I stood at the site of this memorial and remembered Richard's story. You should know, as I'm sure he does, that all the local tour guides stop at that spot and tell the gruesome story of what happened back then. Amazing the impact that one persistent person has had on letting the voices of the silent be heard.

Michael Kagan

***

Religions are based on scripture, which is mostly poetry. So it only makes sense that religious conflict must be resolved through poetry, and not through politics, negotiation, or war. I propose that all religious conflicts be redefined poetically, so that they can be resolved without bloodshed, winners, or losers. So let's sharpen our words not our swords, send missives not missiles, and apply our minds to metaphor, simile, rhyme, meter, and prosody, but not pomposity, animosity, ferocity, atrocity, or monstrosity.

Hugh Mann

A NOTE ON LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We welcome your responses to our articles. Send letters to the editor to letters@tikkun.org. Please remember, however, not to attribute to *Tikkun* views other than those expressed in our editorials. We email, post, and print many articles with which we have strong disagreements because that is what makes *Tikkun* a location for a true diversity of ideas. *Tikkun* reserves the right to edit your letters to fit available space in the magazine.

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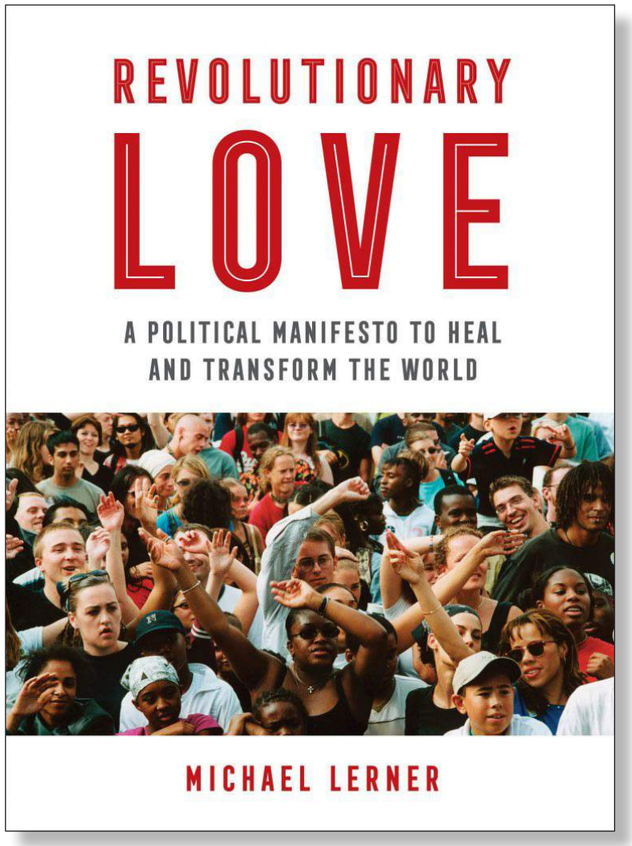

From the social theorist and psychotherapist Rabbi Michael Lerner comes a strategy for a new kind of socialism built on love, kindness, and compassion for each other. Revolutionary Love proposes a method to replace what Lerner terms the capitalist globalization of selfishness with a globalization of generosity, prophetic empathy, and environmental sanity.

Lerner challenges liberal and progressive forces to move beyond often weak-kneed and visionless politics, and a materialist reductionist view of human beings that ignores their hunger for higher meaning in life than the accumulation of money and power, and instead build a movement that speaks both to the mind and the heart, and can reverse the environmental destructiveness and social injustice caused by the relentless pursuit for economic growth and profits. Revisiting the hidden injuries of class, Lerner shows how much of the suffering in our society, including most of its addictions and the growing embrace of right-wing nationalism and reactionary versions of fundamentalism, is driven by frustrated needs for community, love, respect, and connection to a higher purpose in life. Yet these needs are too often missing from liberal discourse. No matter how smart progressive programs are, they cannot be won without speaking to the heart and to the pain so many people experience. By showing how an economy and politics can be infused with an ethos of caring and love, Lerner presents a winning strategy for liberals and progressives in the 2020s and 2030s if they can realize that it's not enough to have smart programs—one must also communicate respect and empathy.

Liberals and progressives need coherent alternatives to capitalism, but previous visions of socialism do not address the yearning for anything beyond material benefits. Inspired by Herbert Marcuse, Erich Fromm, and Carol Gilligan, Revolutionary Love offers a strategy to create "the Caring Society." Lerner details how a civilization infused with love could put an end to global poverty, homelessness, and hunger, while democratizing the economy, shifting to a 28-hour work week, and saving the life-support system of Earth. He urges us to develop the courage to stop listening to those who tell us that the vision of an economy and a society shaped by caring for each other and caring for the earth (Revolutionary Love) is "unrealistic."

TO BUY REVOLUTIONARY LOVE, CLICK BELOW:
www.tikkun.org/buyrevlove

"Michael Lerner takes the universal qualities wrongly diminished as 'feminine'—caring, kindness, empathy, love—and dares to make them guides to a new kind of politics that can challenge the cruelty, competition, and dominance wrongly elevated as 'masculine.' Revolutionary Love opens our minds and hearts to a fully human way of living and governing."

—Gloria Steinem, feminist activist, and author of *My Life on the Road*

"Rabbi Lerner is no innocent romantic about love. His call for a New Bottom Line is of immense importance not only for my colleagues and students in the Christian and Jewish worlds, but for all in the United States, Canada, and Europe who are seeking a path out of the narrow materialist, ultra-individualist, and competitive-acquisitive approach to politics that has severely limited the appeal of both Left and Right in the Western world. This book must be required reading for every opinion maker, every spiritual leader, every political leader, every college student hoping to understand American politics, and any citizen hoping to avoid the drift in Western societies toward reactionary nationalism, fascism, and/or the destruction of the life-support system of Earth."

—Walter Brueggemann, Professor Emeritus of Old Testament, Columbia Theological Seminary

"What is post-socialism? Can we conceive of a society that is actually based on community and love? Michael Lerner can. Anyone wanting to overhaul the inequities and mean-spiritedness of our social system should read this book—and incorporate its message into the array of social-change movements. Going beyond the narrow confines of what we are resisting, this book not only puts forward a positive vision, drawing much from the wisdom of feminists and peace activists, but provides a coherent strategy for how to get there. It liberates readers to go beyond the 'be realistic' command of our ruling elites and to embrace the beautiful and love-filled world that Michael Lerner proposes."

—Medea Benjamin, co-founder of Code Pink

"The caring society is the only realistic path for humanity to survive, and in Revolutionary Love Rabbi Lerner lays out a powerful and compassionate plan for building that caring society. I love this book. Please read it and join with others to build the movement that can enable these ideas to reshape our society that so badly needs this vision."

—Keith Ellison, Attorney-General of the State of Minnesota, formerly vice-chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, and the first African American and Muslim to be chosen as deputy-chair of the Democratic National Committee

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To Overcome Racism, Systemic Change is Needed

RABBI MICHAEL LERNER

After the murder of George Floyd and the demonstrations of anger and rage at this latest victim of the racism that has brought suffering to tens of millions of Africans and African Americans in the centuries since white North Americans created a particularly virulent form of slavery, and after promises of "system change" made by progressive mayors and governors, we hope that the energy for societal transformation actually results in meaningful systemic change in both the short and long-term. Many Americans have been shaken personally and have taken to the streets in hundreds of nonviolent demonstrations (though the mainstream media primarily focuses on the property destruction that are sometimes committed not by the protesters but by others whose real goal is to discredit the demonstrations). The protesters have insisted that we need fundamental system changes to defeat the racism that permeates our society.

This is a development that is a reason for hope. It will take many changes in the system to overcome American racism, and they can't be won unless they are framed in a way that also challenges the class system and the deprivation many whites also face in this society. Here are some of the steps that could dramatically improve the lives of African Americans, all people of color, and a substantial percentage of white Americans:

Credit: Unsplash

1) Systematic societal-wide ongoing mandatory education about racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and xenophobia in all their varied forms, in every school from kindergarten through college, graduate, and professional schools, and technical and job training programs. The media should also be required to provide education on these topics during primetime, and on all social media. This education must include not only a focus on the evils of racism, but also on how it has been used to disempower working people and to divide working class white people and black and brown people. It must also show the hidden injuries of racism and classism, particularly capitalism's justification of inequality—namely, that we supposedly live in a meritocracy. As the research of Tikkun's parent body the Institute for Labor and Mental Health has taught, the meritocratic fantasy, repeated by pop-psychology and pop-religion's version that we each create our own reality and hence have no one to blame but ourselves if our lives are not working in the way we had hoped is central to the pain in the lives of a huge percentage of our fellow Americans. This false narrative leads to massive self-blaming and great psychic pain. The political Right momentarily relieves that pain when it tells people that they are not to blame for much that has gone wrong in their lives or for the selfishness that they often encounter in others. Instead, the Right tells people that it is the fault of some selfish "other" that has made their lives unfulfilling. Instead of recognizing that it is the competitive marketplace that generates and rewards this selfishness, they claim that it is African Americans and people of color, feminists, liberals, and the Left, immigrants and asylum seekers, Jews, Muslims, and the supposedly pro-liberal media that has brought selfishness into lives. A successful education against racism must shatter this worldview, challenge the notion that capitalism is a meritocracy, avoid blaming all whites, and help whites see that whatever privileges they've gotten in a racist society is more than offset by the disadvantages that come to all whites and all people of color. To ensure this is done effectively, this systematic education must be supervised on local, state, and national levels by anti-racist organizations that are sensitive to the psychological issues that make people susceptible to hate groups. This consciousness raising process can begin with us, but it will never be impactful enough until it is taken into our educational systems, the media, and the educational systems.

2) A guaranteed income for every individual to bring everyone up to a level that was the median income level in 2020 (and adjusted each year for inflation and actual cost of necessities). And confiscatory levels of taxation on any incomes above 10 times the median average income.

3) Universal free healthcare for all.

4) High quality housing for anyone in need of it.

5) Funding of schools at the same level as the best schools and supplementing those in poorer areas with the kinds of special educational privileges that students whose parents are able to fund those supplements receive.

6) Drastically reducing police budgets and redirecting those resources to local communities so they can determine how best to support and ensure the safety and well-being of their community. Banning from employment in policing, any police officer who has used excessive force or has engaged in hate speech or actions, and dismissing from police forces other police officers who have witnessed excessive use of force and has not intervened to prevent it.

7) Democratic control of the economy (e.g., thru Tikkun's proposed ESRA Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment to the U.S. Constitution www.tikkun.org/esra).

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8) Replacement of all federal and state judges who have ruled in favor of the current inequalities, and replacement of those judges in the US Supreme Court who have ruled against those seeking equality and power for the powerless (for example, those who voted to accept that corporations have the rights of individuals, and/or those who voted to allow election districts to be reconfigured to allow whites to have more control than people of color, and also replacing those who voted to sustain state efforts for voter repression in all the states where that has occurred, thus impeding free and fair elections and undermining true democracy).

9) Free tuition for schools from pre-school thru college, graduate, and professional schools.

10) "Living wages" for prisoners who do work other than that involved in learning new skills. Full voting rights for anyone in prison and for anyone who has served their time or are on probation. Education of all in prison. Pardons to everyone in prison whose crime has been related to possession or use of drugs, or nonviolent crimes, and creation of support systems for anyone who has been pardoned, furloughed, or otherwise given release from prison.

11) Subsidizing campaigns for elective office of poor people and people of color.

12) Constitutional amendments to overcome any constitutional issues that make any of this unconstitutional

This, and nothing less, is what real system change would look like. And I'm hoping that all this can happen if the new consciousness we've been seeing grows to include the understanding that racism will not be overcome unless we simultaneously care for all people in our society. If we are able to build this kind of national movement that creates this level of systemic change, we will have made a major contribution to overcoming racism.

RABBI MICHAEL LERNER holds a Ph.D. in philosophy (1972) and a second Ph.D. in psychology (1977), is editor of *Tikkun* www.tikkun.org, executive director of the Institute for Labor and Mental Health, rabbi of Beyt Tikkun Synagogue-Without-Walls in Berkeley, chair of the international Network of Spiritual Progressives, and author of 12 books, most recently *Revolutionary Love* published by the University of California Press (more info about this book at www.tikkun.org/lj). Lerner was recently described by Professor Cornel West of Harvard U. as "one of the most significant prophetic public intellectuals and spiritual leaders of our generation.

Credit: Unsplash

Love: A Call to Action

CAT ZAVIS

THE STREETS ARE FLOWING LIKE A MIGHTY STREAM filled with people of all ages, races, genders, and religions in a unified call that Black Lives Matter. We are seeing young and old, black, brown, and white, male, female, and queer, rabbis, yogis, and pastors alike facing police brutality, being attacked with tear gas, bully sticks, rubber bullets, and more, yet they return to the streets day after day, night after night (in the midst of a global pandemic) putting their bodies and lives on the line fighting for the humanity of Black people (and ultimately for the humanity of all of us and our nation). This is a radical, revolutionary act of love.

This love is a powerful antidote to the values on which our country was founded; namely, selfishness, greed, and individualism – me, not we. Today we are witnessing the embodiment of a different worldview – one grounded in love and justice.

This worldview is foundational to most religious and spiritual traditions that teach us that the world was created out of love; that the energy that flows through and holds the universe together is love (gravity is just the scientific name for it!). Human beings are embodiments of that loving energy. According to this worldview, three elements are critical to a thriving society. First, it must be built on a moral foundation. Second, collaboration and cooperation are intrinsic to the way the world works and our survival depends on it. Third, we must create a beloved community that uplifts and brings out the best in each of us. In such a society, we will love the stranger and see the divine in all life. When we see the sacred in the 'other', we will act on their behalf. We

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will stand for and uplift the oppressed. We will actively protect others from harm.

We are witnessing this divine love in human action before our very eyes. In addition to showing up again and again, individuals and organizations are centering the voices of the most oppressed and hurting amongst us. They are uplifting the 'other' in profound ways. They are donating money and asking their supporters and friends to donate money to support the actions and needs of Black people. This is love in action.

Not only are people standing in solidarity, they are also calling for a transformed world with profound systemic change. They seek a world not based in fear and domination, individualism and selfishness, but rather one grounded in love, care, and justice. We see this modeled not only in the ongoing protests and actions, but also in the spirit of generosity that permeates the actions. Strangers opening their doors to protesting youth to protect them from police attacks. White activists standing between police and Black protesters to ensure their safety. Seattle residents reclaiming their streets, feeding each other, engaging in collective educational experiences, and more. We also see it in protesters' demands to defund police and redirect resources to bolster life so that Black communities receive the resources and money they need to thrive.

We all yearn for a world that supports us to be our most loving and generous selves. These protests and calls to educate ourselves about the history of racism in our country and transform the society as a whole help us understand that individual transformation and societal transformation go hand-in-hand. We cannot be the highest embodiment of our selves while living in a morally bankrupt society. Likewise, we cannot wait to create a morally thriving society until everyone has reached a higher level of consciousness. We are being called to both transform as individuals and as a society. This is difficult and messy work. But we humans are up to the task. We can create a world that embodies the highest vision for who we strive to be. And when we do, we will, in turn, find that more and more people embody their highest selves.

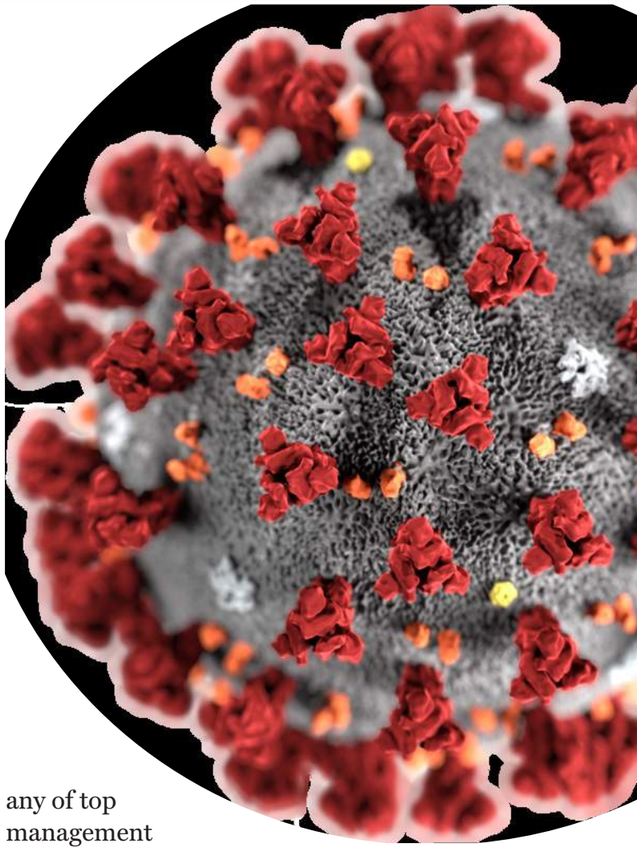
We have a choice. We can continue to live in a society based on the assumption that people are selfish, only care about themselves, are independent actors and greedy, or we can build a new society based on the assumption that people are caring, generous, and want to connect with others. Rather than create laws to protect against what we fear, we can create laws that uplift morality and love in public and private. Generosity can be woven into the law. This society will inspire human beings to be their highest selves. It is beyond time we do so.

People are putting their lives on the line because they feel the burning bush that pulses within them to stand for human life and human dignity. They are putting their lives on the line because #BlackLivesMatter. They are looking in the eye of the 'other' and seeing the divine within. That love calls them to action. Thank God.

CAT ZAVIS is executive director of the Network of Spiritual Progressives and rabbinic student in the Aleph: Jewish Renewal rabbinical ordination program. She provides online video conference trainings in Prophetic Empathy and Revolutionary Love, teaching skills to help move us from fear to love and more. You can learn more at www.spiritualprogressives.org/training or email her at cat@spiritualprogressives.org.

The Coronavirus—Oy and Opportunity

RABBI MICHAEL LERNER



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For two months, scientists and health officials warned President Trump to act, including ensuring we have adequate means to test millions of individuals and sufficient ventilation machines for those who would need them. He ignored his advisers, and instead said that the whole thing was a Democratic Party scare technique for political gain, and only really took notice when the stock market crashed. It was not until the end of March that he even mentioned that the pandemic might still require closure of stores and "non-essential" businesses till the end of April, though many health scientists say it might be safer to extend it through the summer.

Meanwhile, true to form that the Obama-era bail out of Wall Street pioneered, Congressional Democrats supported the first two trillion dollar bailout package which gave a huge amount of money for big business but almost nothing significant for the millions of people who were unemployed, unable to pay their rent or mortgage, and/or unable to pay for food to feed their families, and/or losing their jobs. Nor did the Dems demand "no bailout for corporations that do not pay their employees $15/hour, do not provide healthcare for all employees (and with coverage when they are laid off), and do not help fund local food banks. The Dems should also have required that none of the corporate bailout end up in the pockets of any of top management or investors.

More recently, President Trump has given support to demonstrators who oppose any government imposed closures or rules for public safety from this killer virus. Meanwhile, the states have to figure this out for themselves in

> "What is immediately needed is guaranteed income for as long as the economic meltdown and the struggle to defeat the virus continues."

the face of the huge failure of the federal government to develop a coordinated program to provide equipment or personnel to test for the virus, training of people who can supervise and help in assessment of the testing, more hospital beds, and more education on national and lo-

cal media about why physical distancing is key to reducing the number of people who will die from Covid-19.

It is particularly sad to see middle income working people demonstrating against their local and state government which have mandated physical distancing and closure of workplaces. While I am well aware of the role of

> Our task is to insist on powerful programs to alleviate material suffering while simultaneously conveying to people that we respect them and their needs and understand why...they want the closings to end.

rightwing funders and Republican party opportunists in helping these demonstrators get national media attention and support, at least some of those demonstrators have a legitimate reason to feel that government has abandoned them. It may have seemed politically pragmatic for Democrats to have acceded to demands of Republicans for bailouts that do little for middle income working people and for the poor, but in the eyes of many, the absence of work verges on catastrophe, given their very slight savings. And to be told that their work is "not essential" makes them feel all the more put-down and demeaned. What is immediately needed is guaranteed income for as long as the economic meltdown and the struggle to defeat the virus continues.

Our task is to insist on powerful programs to alleviate material suffering while simultaneously conveying to working class people that we respect them and their needs and understand why, absent other alternatives to secure their incomes, they want the closings to end. And as many of those who are unemployed go back to work once social distancing is no longer legally mandated, we must not let the millions who will not have jobs feel abandoned and become a new constituency for fascist politics. We cannot let the high level of human pain become "the new normal."

There is some ancient wisdom which may or may not apply to this particular reality, but almost certainly does apply to the even worse crisis that lies ahead as both Republicans and moderate Democrats refuse to take the steps necessary to slow down or perhaps even reverse the impending environmental destruction of our planet earth (steps presented in my latest book, *Revolutionary Love)*. The Torah makes the claim that unless we create a world of love, justice, and caring for each other and the planet, the world will not work.

When in my teen years I first encountered this claim as the second part of the Sh'ma prayer in traditional Jewish prayer books (which is taken from Deuteronomy), I dismissed it as mistaken, and some branches of Judaism totally removed it from their prayer books. After all, God didn't intervene to save the Jewish people from the Holocaust, so the whole notion of a God intervening made no sense to me and many others. It was only when I grew older that I realized that the claim was not about a big man in heaven intervening, but rather it was the claim that the Earth itself was an intrinsically ethical/material/spiritual being that would eventually vomit out an unjust civilization. From our human perspective, this claim seems misguided. But if we factor in the 4 billion plus years of Earth, the 10,000 year history of class and patriarchal societies is less than a long moment. The arc of history may indeed be bending toward justice and love while ending what the High Holiday Amida prayer correctly describes as "the kingdom of arrogance."

> Humanity may be, in the next hundred years, be living in the beginning of a new era and the coronavirus may be one of many "plagues" like those acts of nature that Moses interpreted as intended to warn us of the dangers ahead.

Humanity may be, in the next hundred years, be living in the beginning of a new era and the coronavirus may be one of many "plagues" like those acts of nature that Moses interpreted as intended to warn us of the dangers ahead. My thoughts here are not intended to supplant scientific readings and scientific responses, but to give us another dimension to add to our thinking about why we are living in such difficult times. And this crisis moment is only a slight taste of what it will be like in the second half of the 21st century. Having voted for candidates who give lip service to the environment but are not willing to take the steps outlined in my book *Revolutionary Love*, many people will look back at this moment with deep regret for once again not using a huge societal and economic crisis to rethink their certainty that it was "unrealistic" to seek fundamental economic and political change. I don't envy those next generations who will be asking their grandparents or great grandparents "why didn't you embrace a radical version of the green new deal such as *Tikkun*'s Environmental and Social Responsibility Amendment to the U.S. Constitution which would have taken dramatic steps to avert the crisis we are now facing or find other ways to replace global capitalism with a more environmentally friendly economic and political system?"

Some may say: "There was nothing that could have been done, we were all confined to our own personal space and pushed into social isolation." Well, we at *Tikkun* and the interfaith and secular-humanist-welcoming Network of Spiritual Progressives have suggested to anyone who would listen that it was precisely at this moment when most of us were kept from going to work that we had the opportunity to create a new movement committed to a New Bottom Line. Using Zoom and the internet as our organizing tools, we could have spread a positive vision that might have stirred many people out of despair, provided a strategic direction for how to create the caring society. Sadly, that has not yet happened, and as people return to "business as usual," the selfishness of the capitalist marketplace will likely once again feel familiar and like "the real world." And those of us who advocate for the Caring Society will once again be dismissed as unrealistic, or given high praise after we have departed from this earth, but whose ideas will be ignored as people become more absorbed in looking out for number one. We at *Tikkun* will continue to be a voice that says "being realistic" by accommodating to the selfishness of global capitalism is not only an ethical error, it is a path to destruction of the life support system of our planet.

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Hating Jews—the Enduring Curse

RABBI MICHAEL LERNER

Actually, we shouldn't even call it Anti-Semitism, a label given to Jew-hating by WASP 19th century racists who sought to see every group of people in terms of their "race," though subsequent biological and sociological research has shown that the concept of race itself lacks scientific legitimacy.

Hating Jews has a long history and multiple levels of causation. Thus, a campaign to challenge and undermine that hatred has to understand and uproot all the levels.

It started hundreds of years before Christianity emerged. In almost every ancient society, class rule and patriarchy were sustained not only by force and violence, but also by teaching the powerful and literate that there is no alternative to their existing orders, and that in some way the class and patriarchal divisions are built into the structure of the universe itself. Just as it was ridiculous to think that we humans could change the cycles of the sun or moon, so it would be ridiculous to think that slavery and patriarchy could be replaced. No wonder, then, that major thinkers of Roman and Greek imperialist societies hated the Jews. A core teaching of Judaism is that there is a power in the universe, *Yud Hey Vav Hey*, that makes possible the transformation from "that which *is*" to "that which *ought to be*"; and that we, the Jewish people, are the living proof of that possibility of transformation because we ourselves were slaves and then through our attachment to that force became free—proving that the class structures could be transcended. However imperfectly we embodied that in Ancient Israel or now in modern Israel, the reality is that Jews in the Roman and Greek empires were the single most consistent participants in attempts to overthrow the existing imperialists, and have been that ever since.

There were, of course, many Jews who tried to cuddle up to the existing elites and tell them that our liberation struggle wasn't something we took seriously, that it was "merely a religion that we will contain to our Sabbath rituals," but the elites were not buying this story because the central story of the Torah was/is a revolutionary story. So even if Jews didn't believe it, others who heard it from the Jews would be moved by it (as happened throughout history, for example in the way that African slaves exposed to the Biblical story identified with Moses and the liberation story of the Jews). No wonder, then, that ruling elites have frequently taught their own people that the Jews are perverted, evil, embodiments of the devil, or in other ways a dishonest and selfish people who cannot be trusted at best, and at worst are a poison in the society that needs to be exterminated.

> "A core teaching of Judaism is that there is a power in the universe, *Yud Hey Vav Hey*, that makes possible the transformation from "that which is" to That which ought to be."

And because Jews were legally prevented throughout the Middle Ages from entering most occupations or owning land, many Jews lived lives of extreme poverty. The few that were allowed to engage in trade were seen as dishonest because they had bought goods at a cheaper price than what they sold them for.

Along with this came Christianity's turn from a religion of love to a religion embraced by the Roman empire under Constantine, and then by most European societies during feudalism. Christianity taught that Jews had been responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus, and that it was therefore a sanctified religious act to either massacre them (as one strand of Christianity taught and put into practice every year after Good Friday sermons) or, as Saint Augustine advocated, to keep them in poverty and misery to demonstrate what happens to a people that rejected Jesus and "killed God" (whatever that could possibly mean). And when Luther sought to reform Christianity and create what became Protestantism he magnified teachings about the evil of Jews (teachings that helped legitimize Hitler's Jew-hating programs, laws, and extermination policies). Similarly, when Stalin and the elites of his faux-communist regime felt insecure, they turned on their Jewish population in Eastern Europe to purge them from the Communist Party in almost every country that the Red Army had conquered during World War II. Hatred of Jews had transcended every other aspect of communist and socialist beliefs in much of the formerly Christian world and is often an element in right-wing movements, even those to which some ultra-religious Jews have been drawn by their even higher attachment to capitalism.

All ancient history? Nope. How many times have you heard someone say something like "that person tried to Jew-down the cost of something I was selling" or "those Jews care only about money" or the like. The put down of Jews has remained in the mass culture of most societies that have had a legacy of Jew-hating from aspects of Christianity and some parts of the Koran, and has frequently been called upon

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when current elites want to deflect the upset of people living in class societies by blaming the problems on the Jews.

It was only when many Jews, escaping oppression in Europe, sought refuge in the US that this Jew-hating temporarily decreased because there already was a "demeaned other" in the U.S., namely African Americans, so hatred of Jews became a secondary weapon for ruling elites. But when the Civil Rights movement, aided by significant Jewish participation, succeeded in convincing many Southerners that racism was no longer a basis for defending their class divisions, some sectors of Southern elites joined with others who had never left Jew-hatred behind. Yet these elements, mostly marginal in American society for the half century following the 2nd World War, have now reemerged in the Trump-inspired Right, and could play a more mainstream role in the West if elites grow increasingly insecure about their ability to hold on to power. The surge of antiwar, feminist, anti-racist, and environmental consciousness in the 1960s and 1970s drove those elites to use a pop movie star named Ronald Reagan as a way to temporarily recredit the key to their rule, namely the celebration of wealth coupled with the demeaning of the poor and working class people and their labor unions, and the repurposing of racist ideas about African Americans who they demonized as "lazy" and "living off welfare monies that they had not earned".

But when that celebration of selfishness led to the collapse of the investment firms and banks that had enriched the top 1% during the "Great Recession" of 2007-2012, some of them momentarily suspended their racism in order to embrace the anti-ideological and "no drama" Obama to bail them out. Once the meltdown had been stabilized, and the "Occupy Wall Street" movement was marginalized and then largely disappeared, the most frightened of the elites helped fund the Tea Party's take-over of the Republican Party, as a more explicitly pro-wealthy, pro-corporate force. So, when another mass media actor and wealthy realtor named Trump managed to recredit racism against Mexicans and African Americans, it wouldn't be long before he and his supporters would insist that the Jew-haters and racists who demonstrated in Charlottesville were some of the "good people on both sides". This opened the door for fascists and Jew-haters to feel a welcome part of the Right.

Why then did not the liberal and progressive forces step in and do the kind of mass consciousness raising campaign against anti-Semitism that they have done for the past decades against racism, sexism, homophobia, Islamophobia, and more? Here are a few of the reasons (you can find a fuller exposition in my book *The Socialism of Fools—anti-Semitism on the Left*).

First, the Left still retains a crude materialistic definition of oppression—you are oppressed either because your rights are being systematically denied or because you are economically suffering. Just as the Left, due to this limited understanding of oppression in Germany in the 20s and 30s, was totally unprepared for the kind of targeting of Jews in the decades before the Holocaust, so too today, they are similarly unprepared to really take on the task of educating people about contemporary forms of Jew-hating.

Second, the Left sees Israel as "the Jewish state" and given what it has been doing in the past several decades to deny the human rights of Palestinians, it is no surprise that some leftists blame "the Jews" for Israel's policies. And since many Jewish institutions either support or at least refuse to condemn Israeli human rights violations, these leftists tend to see Jews as supporters of oppression rather than as actual or potential victims. Moreover, the presence of Jews in high positions in the economy, the media, academia, the scientific, medical and tech world make it hard for many on the Left to imagine that Jews could ever be in real danger in the U.S., Western Europe, the U.K., or Canada, despite the wave of murders and physical assaults on Jews in recent years.

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These attitudes are a product of massive ignorance of Jewish history (including by many Jews born after the Holocaust) in two important respects:

(1) The notion that having high positions in the economy, the culture, the political system, or the media offers protection was the fantasy nurtured by many Jews in pre-Nazi Germany. But that illusion has now been adopted by many in the West who think that because Jews as a group have more economic success than many others they need not worry about Jew hating.

(2) In regard to Israel, the distorted way Israelis treat Palestinians has been shaped to a significant degree by the massive post-traumatic stress disorder generated by two thousand plus years of oppression and Jew-hating which leads Israelis and many Jews around the world to feel great distrust for non-Jews. That distrust was easily applied to Palestinians who had in the 20th century engaged in armed struggle to prevent the Jewish people from reclaiming what we perceived to be our ancient homeland. It is this distrust that led Benny Gantz, the supposed alternative to Prime Minister Netanyahu, to decide to join the Netanyahu government even though he had more votes than Likud. Gantz refused to embrace an alliance with Israeli Arab political parties which could have given his *Kachol ve Lavan* (Blue and White) party the seats to form a government.

This racism against Arabs is disgusting. I don't excuse Israelis and fellow Jews for their failure to reject the Trump-Netanyahu plans to further take land from Palestinians by annexing parts of the West Bank. I believe all Jews ought to help Palestinians create a viable Palestinian state that includes the West Bank and Gaza, or give all Palestinians living under Israeli rule equal rights including the right to vote for the Knesset and local elections. Yet none of this is likely to happen as long as the Israeli right-wingers and their allies in the U.S. and Europe can point to the insensitivity toward Jewish fears about the growth of anti-Semitism in the Right and in the growing Left culture that sees Israel as nothing but a colonial venture while ignoring the legitimate fears after one out of every three Jews alive in the world in 1940 were murdered by 1945 while most countries

of the world shut their gates to Jews seeking refuge.

Tikkun has been a consistent critic of how the Zionist movement created Israel and its denial of the human rights violations during the Nakba and in the subsequent decades. These abuses have been documented for several of those decades by B'tselem—the Israeli Human Rights Organization, continues to be challenged by Rabbis for Human Rights in Israel and by the courageous work of Rabbi Arik Ascherman and his Torat Tzedek organization, analyzed in the pages of *Tikkun* and in our book *Embracing Israel/Palestine*—free copies of which are available for you, your synagogue, church, mosque, social change organization, or local library if you pay the postage—email alden@tikkun.org and tell us how many you want for people in your book club or community and we'll tell you what it costs for us to ship it to you free except for the cost of postage.

We cannot keep quiet about the suffering of our Palestinian brothers and sisters, and the way Israel almost daily tramples on their human rights, ignoring the most frequently repeated command in Torah, namely, "when you come into your land, *do not oppress the stranger*/geyr, remember that you were 'the other' in the land of Egypt." And since we take this command to be the defining command of Judaism, we don't accept the notion that Israel is "the Jewish state" but instead see it as a state with a lot of ethically and psychologically wounded Jews. We care about them, pray that they can get healed, but do not believe that what they are doing to the Palestinian people is anything less than a striking violation of Jewish ethics and Jewish law.

To see the world in a more complex way is part of what I try to teach to the Left in my book *Revolutionary Love*. It does *not* involve accepting or apologizing for the racists, sexists, homophobes, xenophobes, Islamophobes, or Jew-haters that populate part of the Right (and possibly part of the "moderate" Democrats). But it does insist that some of those who are not yet with us are drawn away from the Left *not* because they have always been influenced by these evil and hateful ideas, but rather because they perceive the liberal and Left forces as hating them, scorning them, acting like we have all the wisdom and those who are not with us are either stupid or suffering from one of these hatreds.

We need to take a different approach to that segment of the population that have aligned themselves with racist, sexist, homophobic, anti-Semitic, Islamophobic politicians not because those hateful ideas are what move them most, but because in some ways those who really are haters have managed to speak to their other psychological and spiritual needs in ways that the Left has not yet really tried to do. I don't expect this to be immediately obvious to many on the Left, at least not till they read *Revolutionary Love* and take Cat Zavis' Prophetic Empathy training (details at http://www.spiritualprogressives.org/training). I know there is a certain relief in calling all these people stupid or evil—it relieves us of any responsibility except to throw epithets in their direction. And of course some of these charges do actually fit for a section of those who are part of the Right. But as someone who lost major parts of my family to the Nazis in the 1940s, I wish there had been a movement of anti-fascist Germans who could have sought to speak to the hearts of the German people before they had voted for Hitler in 1932. Some of it might have been useless, but some of it might have had the impact of undermining the Nazi movement before it was too late. It's far better to assume that some people can be split from the Right than to spend our time denouncing everyone who is not yet with us. Of course, this path doesn't involve accommodating to Jew-hatred or any other form of racism—but it does involve creating a grassroots empathic movement to speak to those who once voted for Obama or Sanders and now feel drawn to the Right.

> "Jew-hating will not disappear until class societies are transformed into the next step for the human race..."the Caring Society."

Jew-hating will not totally disappear until class societies are transformed into the next step for the human race, what I describe in my book *Revolutionary Love* as "the Caring Society—Caring for Each Other and Caring for the Earth." You can order that book from one of the online book stores, if your local bookstore doesn't carry it, or from *Tikkun* at www.tikkun.org/buyrevlove. But one thing seems certain to me: even if Bernie had won the nomination and subsequently had been elected president and took office, the Western versions of the Left can never lead us into the caring society until it, itself, becomes a movement that treats all social change activists and others (even those whose positions and policies we despise) with respect and love. We can and should challenge their ideas, and we must work overtime to repeat that we care and respect them, that we repudiate Hillary Clinton's self-destructive and Left-destructive message that at least half of those who are not with us are a "basket of deplorables".

Our message must be this: we see all people as deserving respect and caring even as we disagree with many of the programs the leaders they vote for have endorsed and even as we disagree with the hate-filled language used by some of them and those they support.

Third, we must encourage the Left to take leadership against Jew-hating just as it took leadership against racism and homophobia. It is time for us to re-educate each other about the depth and breadth of anti-Semitism in the Left and insist that it be challenged. Until that happens, and in a massive way in liberal and progressives circles so that it is visible to everyone outside the liberal and progressives worlds, growing numbers of Jews will feel alienated from the Left and thus withdraw their support from Left movements.

Religio-phobia is deep in the Left and at this point the best I can say is read *Revolutionary Love* and you will understand why making people feel ashamed of their religious commitments or their national pride is the surest way to help Right-wing white nationalists expand their power in the US and in countries from Israel to Germany and from Russia to Chile. *Tikkun* is not a fan of any form of nationalist chauvinism or religious fundamentalism. However, we recognize that nationalism and religions often give many people a sense of identity and a way of seeing themselves as part of something bigger and more valuable than the struggle for individual power and money or identification with the corporation for which they work. So, we need to help create a larger global identity that allows people to affirm their historical culture and religion, while rejecting any more national military or economic conflicts. To the extent that people seek an enemy, let the coming environmental destruction of life on earth and the remnants of selfishness and materialism generated by class and patriarchal societies become our shared enemy.

Toward that end, nation states whose politics and culture have been shaped by corporations, domination, patriarchy, oppression of minor-

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ity populations, and/or extreme inequalities of income and/or religious extremists (those who deny the legitimacy of other religions) are an impediment to global environmental planning, distract attention from building international solidarity, and keep people stuck in mind frames which have led to bloody wars in the past few centuries. **We favor replacing nation states as political entities with democratically constructed environmental districts that can more easily develop regional and global plans for what kinds of products we need and which are the best uses of the resources of Earth which are compatible with survival of the life support system of Earth and caring for future generations.** In developing a global economy that gives attention to the real needs of all people on earth, not just those who have had greater national military or economic power, the replacement of nationalist concerns with concerns to build "the Caring Society: Caring for Each Other and Caring for the Earth" can guide us. It is unrealistic to think we can save life on this planet without dismantling the power of corporations and the power of nation states. Thus, while we want to respect identity groups that have formed around religions like Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and various nation states, we want to separate all of these particular identities from the instruments of economic and political power, which instead should be put into the hands of all the people of the earth equally. And that can only work if a democratic and environmentally sensitive reconstruction of politics is governed by the New Bottom Line in which every institution gets judged efficient, rational, and productive to the extent that it maximizes our human capacities to be loving and generous, kind and compassionate, environmentally responsible and ethical, capable of seeing every human being as a manifestation of the sacred, and capable of seeing the earth not just as a "resource" but also as our mother who evolved life and deserves to be approached with awe, wonder, and radical amazement. It is only in such a society that Jew-hating will be looked at as a disgrace from the past like racism, sexism, classism, and all the other remnants of our long-abandoned and deeply flawed past.

> "...we must encourage the Left to take leadership against Jew-hating just as it took leadership against racism and homophobia."

Capitalist Wasteland - The Worship of Cars and Materialism. Photo by photographymontreal

What Kind of Socialism Can Win and Be Sustained?

RABBI MICHAEL LERNER

It is important to the future of progressives in North America that Bernie Sanders calls himself a Democratic Socialist. Doing so has already de-toxified that word for many people aged 14 to 40. Anyone older received powerful indoctrination in anti-communism which was then equated with socialism. And there was much reason to abhor the communism which flourished in the Soviet Union and the European countries living under Stalinist forms of communism. Bernie Sanders helped break thru some of that distorted vision of socialism, though this indoctrination remained in 2020 a major stumbling block to Bernie ever getting the Democratic Party nomination to run for the presidency.

It could have been very uplifting for American society had Senator Sanders been elected President. (Of course, as a non-profit, we don't endorse any candidate or political party.) But in discussing socialism, we have to observe that what Bernie calls "democratic socialism" is

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really just a principled and updated version of the Left liberal reforms of the New Deal.

Socialism has meant the democratization of the economy, so that working people would own and control the means of production. This is not something that Bernie talks a lot about. Sadly even Bernie's call for Medicare for All has many Americans scared of a New Deal consciousness that might cause some people to lose part of their privileges in regard to health care. The mainstream media and many Democrats have drawn on health care industry talking points, for example, that they will lose their ability to choose the doctor they want, when there is no evidence to support this view. The coronavirus has shown just how critical universal healthcare is. With over 16 million people losing their jobs in just 21 days, we can no longer be fooled into believing that having healthcare from our employers is sufficient to meet our public health needs. To meet the increased need for health care providers, we need to train tens of thousands of healers in hundreds of new training institutions paid for by our society. Providing free tuition and requiring rigorous training (but not the punishing internships where young doctors are often forced to stay awake for 24 hours "on duty") combined with a commitment of these new trainees to serve underserved communities for the first 7 years of their post-specialty work would speedily reduce the societal fear that there won't be enough health care and undermine the opposition of some who say "why shouldn't I do what I can to keep the health care I already have" and hence oppose universal Medicare for All. Perhaps the coronavirus could shake up this kind of thinking by showing us that each of us is vulnerable to infection from those who have the least healthcare, but so far, the Democratic Party moderates and many who see themselves as progressive have failed to force a new discussion of the need for both universal health care as well as many more hospitals and health care personnel.

Global capitalism, and its pervasive messages of individualism and selfishness, and never-ending consumption, influences every one of us in both obvious and hidden ways. When people opt for the narrow pragmatism of the moderate wing of the Democratic Party, many do so because they have absorbed into their picture of "reality" a certainty that everyone else is going to look out for their narrow self-interest, so it would be "unrealistic" to support movements and candidates who seek larger changes—doing that would, they feel certain, only lead to the triumph of reactionaries. This way of thinking by otherwise very decent people about "everyone else" is the triumph of capitalist ideology, and the slippery slope that has pushed political discourse in Western countries so far to the right that a moderate like Sanders is portrayed as a leftie communist seeking to impose Stalinism in the U.S. (Incidentally, America's ruling elites tried to disempower Roosevelt's New Deal in the same way, but in 2020 it worked.)

> "Unless we can develop a progressive movement that concerns itself with providing loving support and caring for each other...none of their more visionary ideas will ever get the power to change our society."

We are often not fully conscious of the ways that the messages of global capitalism poison our thinking and undermine our interactions with others. Many of us are unconsciously influenced by global capitalism's teaching that "me and my needs are more important than the needs of others and the needs of the planet." Activists joining together in the streets, working on campaigns, attending gatherings and protests are all moments that uplift us and help us see and experience the power of "we" rather than the supremacy of "me". Bernie Sanders' campaign forged for many young activists a sense of community through his uplifting message—Us Not Me.

> "A New Bottom Line is one that judges the success of every sector, system, and institution of our society...by the extent to which they maximize love and caring, kindness and generosity, empathy and compassion..."

In my 56 years of activism, I have learned a few things that I believe are worth sharing. Namely, that in addition to the good energies people experience by coming together in activism for peace, justice, and environmental sanity, and no matter how much these experiences temporarily help us move beyond ourselves, when we leave these gatherings, when elections are over, when protests have died down, many of us will return to our lives in relatively isolated families, many of us will feel lost and lonely, seeking an "us" but often only finding relief in capitalism's superficial offerings or in identity groups which flourish on their critique of others who are not part of our particular identity group. Unless we can develop a progressive movement that concerns itself with providing loving support and caring for each other, and makes that just as important as any of its righteous and valuable economic and political programs, none of their more visionary ideas will ever get the power to change our society.

There was a time when the labor movement of the first decades of the 20th century organized picnics and social gatherings for the families of its members. In the early 1980s, Betty Friedan and Benjamin Spock joined with me and Oakland City Council member Wilson Riles, Jr. to create a pro-families progressive movement. It affirmed gay and lesbian families, single parent families, traditional families, and singles too. We were seeking to take the label of "pro-family" from the Right. But people on the Left largely ignored that effort, or even critiqued it with the argument that "pro-families" was necessarily a Right-wing idea. I still think that we need to create campaigns that affirm the efforts people make to create families and create ways for families to meet each other, picnic, potluck, and play with each other, while consciously trying to help each other shift from a "me" culture to a "we" culture. Here are some steps along that path:

One: A vision of the world we want and believe in based on a New Bottom Line. A New Bottom Line is one that judges the success of every sector, system, and institution of our society (economy, government, schools, health care, the legal system) based *not* on the old bottom line of whether they maximize money, profit, and power, but instead by the extent to which they maximize love and caring, kindness and generosity, empathy and compassion, social, economic and environmental justice, peace and nonviolence, and protection of the life support system of our planet, as well as encourage us to transcend a narrow utilitarian approach to nature and other human beings, and enhance our capacity to respond with awe and wonder to the universe and to see the sacred in others and in all sentient beings. Succinctly, this New Bottom Line prioritizes the well-being of the planet and all its inhabitants, as well as justice and peace, over money, profit, and power.

Two: Building a movement that gives equal weight to learning how to be caring to each other and caring to people who are not yet with us. It is this capacity that has made Right-wing churches magnets for millions of people. We

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can't be a church, but we can be a place where people feel welcomed, cared for, and nurtured—a place where we can struggle against capitalist institutions and practices while simultaneously caring for each other. Imagine, for example, if every demonstration, march, or political planning meeting ended with an invitation for people to introduce themselves to people they did not yet know, share about their own personal lives beyond politics, and also share their passions and their struggles. In short, making it part of the movement to be offering empathic and loving connections.

Three: Create a rich cultural movement that incorporates opportunities for meaning and purpose, spiritual and religious depth, and art, movement, and play in our gatherings. Activities and gatherings that include a diverse array of experiences will draw in people from diverse backgrounds and enhance our capacity to treat each other with respect even as we experience our differences together. All of us want to feel that our lives have higher meaning and purpose than simply to maximize money, yet most of us work in environments where we are not afforded that luxury. Our movement can provide that sense of higher meaning and purpose for those who choose to join us. Our movement will truly be inclusive when we can openly welcome religious and spiritual people, not simply on the sidelines, but as spiritual guides who can teach us how to celebrate the grandeur and mystery of the universe, just as we are turning to indigenous tribes to teach us how to treat Mother Nature with care and love. We can do this by holding regularly scheduled gatherings to sing together, read poetry, dance, play, share vegan food, and to celebrate the universe, our own lives, and the good that has already been accomplished by social movements throughout history, to honor those who have given of their time, energy, or money to pursue the good of all, and to affirm our highest beliefs that the world can and will tilt toward love and justice.

When people on the Left wonder why they didn't win in 2016, why Corbyn wasn't elected in the U.K. in 2019, or why Republicans have had so much power in the Congress and the state Legislatures around the U.S., they should ask themselves: "Did we make people feel affirmed and cared for even when they didn't agree with us?; Did we create a movement that itself mirrored the selfishness of the world we say we want to change?" When people feel affirmed, respected, and genuinely cared for, a progressive movement will win.

Socialism in Europe and in the U.S. have been crippled by its materialist reductionist worldview. That worldview tends to dismiss the importance of creating a caring society and creating a world in which people can see how to connect to higher meaning without having to embrace reactionary forms of nationalism or religion. Socialist movements in Europe won higher wages, longer summer vacations, free health care, and still couldn't sustain their control of governments or the enthusiastic engagement of the majority. The elephant in the room that is rarely acknowledged is this: those movements provided "objective caring" in the form of material benefits, but neither the movements nor the governments they led provided "subjective caring" in the form of showing respect for or cherishing our well-being. You could interact with a socialist government or party and find them just as oblivious to your needs, and just as tone deaf to the hunger people have to feel connected to higher meaning for their lives and for creating work that connects to that higher meaning as they had in a capitalist society. As a result, in country after country large numbers of people started to look for meaning in reactionary political movements that offered a vision of community and patriotism, some sense of higher meaning, distorted through the nationalisms they embraced that were destructive and harmful to the demeaned others of those societies or to some set of foreign demeaned others (e.g., refugees or the homeless).

No, I'm not saying abandon the objective caring agenda—it is *also* important. I'm not saying become fascists to win power. What I am saying is that progressives need to raise this dimension of caring and respect and place for higher meaning to a more central place in our agenda. Let's start talking about Revolutionary Love as the framework within which we develop our political, economic, and human rights demands.

At this point, I'm skeptical about whether "socialism" can ever overcome its negative associations—not the associations with communist domination, but its association with a spirit-and-love deflating history that is simply too narrow a base upon which to build a transformative movement. So many people who at one point in their lives encountered the Left and eventually abandoned it precisely because they did not feel the love and caring, did not appreciate the religio-phobia, and rarely heard people talking about the need for a world that was not only economically and politically just but also for a world that supported people to seek higher meaning in their lives and in transforming their work world so it could be serving those higher meaning needs. For that reason, although I sometimes refer to what *Tikkun* is about as "a love-infused socialism," I actually think that a better way of describing what we need as a "love, justice, and environmental sanity" movement, or just "love and justice" as long as 'justice' is understood to include environmental justice for all people on earth.

What can you do? Please get and read my book *Revolutionary Love*. Then invite friends to read the book chapter by chapter with you. If you email us, we can send you a guide for how to lead such a reading group. Then take the training Cat Zavis offers to help you develop the skills to become an activist in building "the Caring Society". You can find details for how to join her training at http://www.spiritualprogressives.org/training. And/or if you have access to foundations or other sources that could fund us to do this work and build the movement that is needed, please help us get that support. And please make an annual donation to *Tikkun*.

> **What I am saying is that progressives need to raise this dimension of caring and respect and place for a higher meaning to a more central place in our agenda.**

You'll surely see articles in this "re-envisioning socialism" that have very different approaches than mine. That has always been our approach in *Tikkun*—to promote a variety of perspectives, trusting our readers to decide for themselves which parts you can embrace and which parts not.

Meanwhile, I thank the God of the universe for giving me this opportunity to bring together in one site some of the most brilliant spiritual progressives who have always been the backbone that has made *Tikkun* win awards and challenge the powerful in Western societies, and in Israel and Palestine as well. I understand God as all that was, is, and will be and witnessed by us as that aspect of all that is conscious which makes possible the transformation of "that which is" to "that which ought to be." Not a big man in heaven, but the force of transformation and healing that we call *tikkun*. It is in the name of that force that I offer you blessings for the coming years.

P.S. Please feel invited to send these editorials to everyone you know, and ask them to join with us to build a love and justice movement. If they want to know more about Revolutionary Love before ordering the book, invite them to go to tikkun.org/lj. If they don't want to get involved, but appreciate our perspective, ask them (and you) to make a generous donation at tikkun.org/donate.

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Spiritualized socialism and socialist humility

MARTHA SONNENBERG, MD

Two old men sit on a park bench in heaven, gazing down at the earth below. The first, Karl Marx, says, "Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it." The second man, Rabbi Hillel the Elder, laughs, gives Marx an affectionate slap on the back, and says, "Yes, yes, my friend! But if I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, who am I? If not now, when?"*

*Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," Eleventh Thesis, and Hillel, Pirkei Avot, 1:14

The word "socialism" is currently experiencing a rebirth, but it is a word that often evokes either a Pavlovian response of approval or disapproval, depending on conventional political positions, or outright confusion. The confusion is compounded by the limited characterizations of socialism that abound in the incessant punditry of the media, on the right as well as on the left. This paper has two goals: a) to bring some clarity to that confusion, especially for a new generation of social activists drawn to the idea of socialism, and b) to articulate the need for a renewed socialism, consistent with but enhancing socialist humanism—a psychologically and spiritually informed socialism that can have real meaning for the complex 21st century world in which we live.

> "Freedom," said Trinidadian Marxist C.L.R. James, "is creative universality, not utility...The end toward which mankind (sic) is inexorably developing by the constant overcoming of internal antagonisms, in not the enjoyment, ownership or use of goods, but self-realization."

The most commonly understood conception of socialism is that of economic redistribution of material goods and wealth, to achieve economic equality throughout the society. A facet of this economic definition is that the means of production in society would be controlled by the many (or the working class or the state) rather than by the few. These primarily economic definitions of socialism reflect the importance of material conditions and economic justice, but they neglect an equally important aspect of socialism, the humanistic essence of socialism. That essence is about human emancipation from the realm of necessity, *beyond* material and objective reforms, to the realm of liberation. The different definitions are not just a matter of emphasis. At issue is a profound philosophical and existential difference in viewpoints about the nature of human being. The economistic definitions of socialism are based on notions of human beings as defined by their economic circumstances, and primarily motivated by the desire for material well-being and access to justly distributed wealth. The humanistic notions of socialism, while not denying the need for material wellbeing, are based on the idea that human beings are thinking, sentient, creative beings, motivated by a desire for freedom to fully express their authentic selves, and capable of determining their own history in achieving that freedom. "Freedom", said Trinidadian Marxist C.L.R. James, "is creative universality, not utility...The end toward which mankind (sic) is inexorably developing by the constant overcoming of internal antagonisms, is not the enjoyment, ownership, or use of goods, but self-realization." This is essentially a spiritual notion of human activity articulated in secular terms.

The difference between these two conceptions of socialism and their attendant notions of human being has political significance as well, related to the question of *how* socialism comes about. The economic and materialist view is commonly associated with an *elitist* socialism dispensed from above with primarily administrative measures—either in authoritarian/totalitarian societies, or in the liberal policies of the social-democratic parties, e.g., the European social democracies. Elitist socialism is rooted in the assumption that people need experts to create socialism *for* them, denying their creative capacity. The humanistic view of socialism, on the other hand, is more commonly associated with a *participatory and demo-*

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cratic process, created from below by popular activity—rank and file, community, grassroots, and other spontaneous forms of social activism.

> "...spiritualized socialism places the consciousness, the psychology, the feelings and desires, the relationships and activity of human beings at the forefront in understanding the possibilities of social transformation."

WHAT IS SPIRITUALIZED SOCIALISM?

What is a spiritualized socialism? And even before that, what is spirituality? Spirituality, for our purposes, reflects the deeper meanings by which people live, the sense of awe and wonder at the natural world and all living things, the "radical amazement" of which Abraham Joshua Heschel spoke. It means the appreciation of "something" that is beyond our complete understanding, but which gives meaning, inspiration, and depth to our lives. Spirituality means accepting that some things such as individual and social transformation, dreams, artistic creation, poetry and music, or love, cannot be explained by science, technology, measurements, or intellect. The feminist writer, bell hooks, describes spirituality as "the idea that there is an animating principle in the self—a life force (soul) that when nurtured enhances our capacity to be more fully self-actualized and able to engage in communion with the world around us." (*All About Love*) An important part of this spirituality is the desire for authentic human connection, the feeling that one is a part of a larger and meaningful collectivity, in which all are mutually accepted and recognized. Spirituality, in this sense, has nothing to do with organized religion or religious institutions—but the fact that so many people express faith in Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, or other religious traditions, indicates that belief in a spiritual component to life is important. It is something that both current and traditional notions of socialism have neglected, to its detriment—it may partly explain the negative impressions that the word "socialism" evokes in so many people.

We can think of spiritualized socialism then as a socialism that encompasses and is enriched by attention to these spiritual aspects of life, a socialism that does not deny the importance of economic justice, but does not restrict its meaning to economics. Economic reductionism uses abstractions like economics (class, labor, the 99%), structure (nations, corporations), and institutions (religious, political, military, financial) to understand society. In contrast, spiritualized socialism places the consciousness, the psychology, the feelings and desires, the relationships, and activity of human beings at the forefront in understanding the possibilities for social transformation. Spiritualized socialism speaks to our internal processes, our psyches and our dreams, as well as to our external circumstances. Coupling thought and feeling, spiritualized socialism touches the aspirational part of being human, the part of each of us that longs for the freedom to be the person we want to be, and for recognition of one another's authentic being. Rabbi Michael Lerner has been at the forefront in recognizing and writing about the need for a spiritual component to socialist politics.

How people deal with that longing or with its suppression has significant consequences. Fear of rejection of that longing for liberated authenticity, as Peter Gabel has articulated in *The Desire for Mutual Recognition*, leads people to the creation of "false selves," behind which fears are denied and our innermost desires are hidden and suppressed. This internalization of our own oppression leads to detachment from, rather than connection with, others; it is commonly manifested in fear, apathy and cynicism, depression and despair—all masks worn by our disheartened beings. This state of chronic despair may well be the predominant emotional response to our current state of being. A socialism that distances itself from the psycho-spiritual realm, and does not acknowledge or try to understand these problems, loses its ability to engage and connect with people. While it is true that corporate and capitalist society promotes and benefits from perpetuation of our "false selves", a spiritualized socialism searches for a deeper understanding of *how* that occurs, how these "false selves" sink their social and psychological talons deep into our being, so that we can learn to free ourselves from those talons. A spiritualized socialism looks at the ways in which people may resist that process and reach for authenticity. Frequently, as Peter Gabel points out, this freeing of people's authentic selves, the connection with others, occurs in the midst of social movements.

OUR SOCIALIST INHERITANCE—IMPORTANT PRECURSORS

Still, it remains difficult to define spiritualized socialism, not for lack of trying, but because it is a moving *process* that continues to evolve, that takes on new elements, new language and culture over time. Part of the "trying" to understand and clarify the meaning of spiritualized socialism leads us to acknowledge some of its important precursors, who may not be known to a younger generation of aspiring socialists. In remembering the past, and its connections to the present, we stand a better chance of creating the future we desire.

GRAMSCI, REICH, DUNAYEVSKAYA, FROMM, AND KARL MARX

The creation and maintenance of internalized oppression brings to mind Antonio Gramsci's concept of "cultural hegemony". Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) was an Italian Marxist philosopher who developed much of his political theory in essays written while he was imprisoned by Mussolini from 1929 to 1935, and collected in *The Prison Notebooks*. Gramsci's thought was still rooted in the Leninist concepts of vanguard leadership, and his analysis was still grounded in an essentially economic and external view of social change. Nevertheless, his thinking was a significant departure from the economic determinism of the Italian Communist Party, in that he realized the importance of cultural processes in affecting people's consciousness. Gramsci's "cultural hegemony" described the ways in which the "manufacture of consent" in oppressed classes was shaped by the cultural institutions of capitalism, the media, education, and religion. While he wrote about the power of cultural hegemony to shape ideas and beliefs, Gramsci importantly also recognized that people were not totally defined by the power of dominant hegemony; he saw that in their resistance to oppression, people created their own "counter hegemony", a new consensus of resistance. The #MeToo movement would be a contemporary example of counter hegemony, resistance to the dominant patriarchal hegemony.

Going back further, we see the roots of a humanized socialism in the writings of Karl Marx (1818-1883). The problem has been that so much of Marx's thought has been distorted, oversimplified, or misrepresented. The notion of Marxism as a "science" of materialism, of economic reductionism, comes primarily from the orthodoxies and dogmatism of Soviet Marxists, which extracted the humanism from

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Marx, and replaced it with "scientific theory". This view of Marxism, essentially a structural-functionalist view of history, defining people as determined solely by their socio-economic environment, has become, sadly, the most commonly held view of Marxism today. In addition to its history with Soviet dogmatists, this view of Marxism is also perpetuated by reformist and revisionist socialists, as well as by opponents of socialism. It has been iterated and reiterated by theorists like Eduard Bernstein, Marxist theorist of the German Social Democracy (1850-1932) and more recently, Louis Althusser (1918-1990), who while critical of some aspects of Stalinism, nevertheless saw Marxism as a science guided by experts.

A distorted Marxism has been presented as economic justification for a totalitarian state apparatus which called itself a "workers" state, but which in fact oppressed people as much, if not more, than did capitalism—this we can see in Soviet Stalinism or Chinese Maoism. In the European social democracy version, distortions of Marxism and socialism take the form of managed and planned economies offering significant social and economic reforms. In the U.S. today, we see politicians of all stripes touting Medicare, the New Deal, and Social Security as examples of socialism, either to good or bad ends. Of course, there are undeniable and real benefits to people in these reforms, but they are developed, not by the people themselves, but by policy makers who are acting, more or less, in the interests of "the people". And as they deliver their reforms they still maintain and reinforce the power of capitalism and its institutions. In practice, whether totalitarian or social democratic, these state forms of socialism or social democracy prevent people from making their own history and deny that they are even capable of doing so. And lest there be any doubt that Marx did *not* equate socialism with economic reform alone, or better pay and higher wages, he wrote that "an enforced increase in wages…would be nothing more than a better remuneration of slaves and would not restore, either to the worker or the work, their human significance and worth." *(Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, EPM)*

Of course, Marx himself was influenced by the 19th century world in which he lived. He was unable to address the psycho-social manifestations of capitalist oppression, and he remained detached and aloof as a social observer, unable to include himself in the emancipatory process he envisioned. Further, because he was oblivious to the patriarchal hegemony of which he was a part, he neglected the role of women in the social reproduction of labor, unable to see women's caregiving, child-raising, and other nurturing interactions that both sustained and humanized the male laborer (Nancy Fraser, "Behind Marx's Hidden Abode", *New Left Review*, 2014).

While acknowledging these limitations, it is still important to recognize what was politically and philosophically unique in Marx's approach, and that is his emphasis on the worker as a *real human being*, not objectified as a source of work output, value, or profit. For Marx, this real human being had thoughts, feelings, desires, imagination, creative impulses, and spirit, and whose human potential was obstructed by the role that capitalism imposed upon the worker. The worker "is reduced both spiritually and physically to the condition of a machine." (EPM "Wages of Labor") For Marx, alienated labor represented the negation of the worker's inherent human essence, the need to engage in activity that was a meaningful expression of self as well as the means of connection to others. This human essence was "not only the five senses, but also the so-called spiritual senses, the practical senses (desiring, loving, etc.) in brief, human sensibility and the human character of the senses…" (EPM, "Private Property and Communism."). Marx asks and answers:

> "What constitutes the alienation of labor? First, that the work is external to the worker, that it is not part of his nature, and that, consequently, he does not fulfill himself in his work but denies himself, has a feeling of misery rather than well-being, does not develop freely his mental and physical energies, but is physically exhausted and mentally debased…" (EPM, "Alienated Labor")

Marx's analysis, however, did not lead him to portray human beings as *only* alienated. On the contrary, because Marx ultimately saw human beings as creative beings, he also saw them as capable of superseding that alienation, as subjective agents of their own history. This relationship between circumstances which negated human essence and the struggle for transcendence of those circumstances to something better is, in Hegelian terms, the "negation of the negation". This was the heart of the Marxist dialectic, a dynamic and decidedly non-deterministic way of looking at human activity. Human beings, while alienated and affected by their circumstances, also *reflected and thought* about those circumstances, and that thinking, that consciousness, influences how they act, and therefore they could, in turn, *change* their circumstances:

> "The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstance and upbringing and that, therefore, changed men are products of other circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that circumstances are changed precisely by men…" (Third Thesis on Feuerbach)

Marx's notion of human activity and alienation still deals primarily with external aspects of that negation, rather than with internal and psychological aspects. A spiritualized socialism can look beyond Marx's concept of alienation with a deeper and more psychological and spiritual perspective.

Image courtesy of Kevin Walsh/Flickr.

Following from Marx's concept of the human need for self-activity, was the methodology with which he viewed society and class, not as abstractions external to human beings, but as relationships among living human beings. When society is viewed in this way, as relationships among real people, then transformation of that society is no longer mystified and unachievable, but instead becomes immanently possible.

We owe a great deal in understanding Marx's humanism to the thought and work of Raya Dunayevskya (1910-1987), who was an early translator of the Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts (EPM) (1844)*. In her book, *Marxism and Freedom*, (1958) Dunayevskya rescued Marx from the Soviet determinists, and showed that Marx was ultimately concerned with the freedom of humanity. Contemporaneously, during the 1950's and early 1960's, some members of the German "Frankfort School," like Herbert Marcuse and Erich Fromm, also showed that Marx's analysis went beyond the merely economic, as they opened areas of culture and psychology to a Marxist perspective. Fromm, in particular, wrote

> "...if we look at how people are surviving and living their lives, we will also see the possibilities of liberation often hidden in the cultural crevices of their lives, even before overt resistance occurs."

extensively against the tendency of "making a dead saint of Marx and to restore him to the position of a living thinker." He struggled with other members of the Frankfort School, Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer, not always successfully, to recognize that for Marx, the essence of humanity was human self-activity, and thus the goal of socialism was the achievement of independence and freedom for humankind.

Another important contribution to the expansion of socialism beyond the merely economic, and more closely approximating a spiritualized socialism, came from the Austrian psychoanalyst, Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957). In his work, both *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, and the pamphlet, "What is Class Consciousness?" Reich explained the failure of the German Social Democracy (SPD) to resist fascism by the failure to appreciate the importance of psychology, dismissed by most socialists of the time as "counter-revolutionary." In explaining why the German people were untouched by the "message" of the Social Democrats, Reich said:

> "...this unhappy state of affairs is due to our clinging to old, worn out, ossified, dogmas, words, schemes, and methods of discussion, and that this clinging is in turn due to the lack of new ways of posing problems, new ways of thinking..." ("What is Class Consciousness?")

In their "ossified dogmas", the SPD was oblivious to the importance of "the psychical structures of the human beings", with dire consequences. Reich went on,

> "While we presented the masses with superb analyses and economic treatises on the contradictions of imperialism, Hitler stirred the deepest roots of their emotional being...we acted like mechanistic, economistic materialists." ("What is Class Consciousness?")

The relevance of this perspective today is immediately apparent. The American Left scratched its collective head, wondering where it went wrong, and how people could have voted for Trump, clearly not in their own economic or social interests. But Trump addressed people on an emotional level, and assuaged their hunger to feel a part of something, albeit in reactionary and racist terms, whether it be to get rid of the immigrants, or Muslims, or to Make America Great Again. And as with the German social democrats, the American left has had little to offer in its place—talking about "the 1 percent" has not been enough.

So the contemporary desire for authentic expression of self and for social and spiritual interconnectedness must be taken seriously.

It builds upon Marx's notion of the essence of human being as a striving for self- activity and connection with our "species being," and makes it meaningful in a 21st century context. We can see how contemporary society distorts and undermines human interactions. And if we look at how people are surviving and living their lives, we will also see the possibilities of liberation often hidden in the cultural crevices of their lives, even before overt resistance occurs. It can be seen in the folksongs of African American slaves, in the musical genre of the Blues, in the radical theology that buttressed the Civil Rights movement, in women's wearing of bloomers in the 1900's allowing them more physical activity and thus opening their social horizons, in the women's consciousness raising groups of the 1970's, challenging women's' domestic roles. It can be seen in the struggles for trade union democracy, fighting a labor bureaucracy for the rights and safety of rank and file workers, and for social issues which transcend the limits of negotiated contracts, or in the gay communities in large cities that set the stage for Stonewall uprising and full gay pride. This dynamic process between what is and what can be both individually and socially, contributes to the essential vibrancy of all movements for change.

THE CRITIQUE OF VANGUARDISM: ROSA LUXEMBURG AND OTHERS

Understanding socialism as the self-activity of people means appreciating the creativity with which they act to resist oppression and move towards liberation of their lives. Through this lens, we view social movements and social activism in new ways. Thus, social theories or ideologies which promote vanguard leadership of movements and organizations, or the primacy of cadres, "experts", managers and bureaucrats in forming policies, are revealed for their denial of human agency, of real people in creating social and political movements, and in determining their own history.

One of the first to critique the vanguardism developing in Soviet society, even before Stalin took power, was the Polish-German revolutionary, Rosa Luxemburg (1871-1919). Luxemburg saw the mass strikes taking place in Europe in the early 1900's as evidence of the importance of peoples' spontaneity in creating revolution. She saw the early tendencies of Soviet vanguardism as impediments to the spontaneity of people in creating something new in their work and in their lives. Socialism, she said, "... cannot be dictated, introduced by command." In her classic pamphlet, "The Mass Strike, the Political Party and Trade Unions," Luxemburg countered those socialists who believed themselves indispensable to the creation of militant trade union organization: "A rigid, mechanical, bureaucratic conception will only recognize struggle as the product of a certain level or organization. On the contrary, dialectical developments in *real life* create organization as a product of struggle."

Luxemburg, a prescient political thinker, was also not afraid to bring feeling, emotion, spirit, and passion into her political activity—she resisted the cold, sterile culture of the socialist movement of her time, and urged her comrades to open their minds beyond the limited perspective of "politics"; she felt that "such one-sidedness also clouds one's political judgment, and above all, one must live as a full person at all times." She recognized that in the struggle for human emancipation, political activists themselves must acknowledge their own needs for emancipation. This insight was an important precursor to a spiritualized socialism.

There have been more recent socialist and Marxist theorists who have emphasized the importance of human self-activity, among

them the Trinidadian Marxist, C.L.R. James, the Americans, Grace and James Boggs, the British Marxist historian, E.P. Thompson, and the South African poet and social critic Mphutlane Wa Bofelo. All of these men and women have articulated, in various forms and formats, the importance of *human agency* in making history and the tendency of vanguardism to deny that human agency. The critique of vanguardism does not promote an anti-leadership or even an anti-organizational position, but has emphasized the need for wise leaders to seek *reciprocity* in relationship with the rank and file of organizations and social movements, to promote transparency and democratic processes in decision making, and to *learn* from the real struggles and initiatives of men and women. One could say that the critique of vanguardism has stood for socialist *humility* as much as for socialist humanism.

"One could say that the critique of vanguardism has stood for socialist humility as well as socialist humanism."

THE ISSUE OF CLASS, AND 21ST CENTURY SOCIALISM

There is another persistent and fixed belief, among traditional socialists, that the working class is an unchanging category and is the only class that has the power to overthrow capitalism. That may have been true and meaningful in the 19th century, even the early 20th century—but it cannot hold in the complex world of the 21st century. The traditional industrial working class has diminished in size, and the nature of class (and class consciousness) is itself being transformed. Newly acknowledged forms of domination and oppression exert their forces on multiple intersectional aspects of social being—class, but also race, ethnicity, sex, gender, and religion. Today's socialism must have meaning for, and be expressed by, those beyond the traditional industrial working class. Thus have contemporary movements for freedom taken on new dimensions, often with a more spiritual approach, with attention to the quality of relationships among people, with a healing approach to the survival of the planet, with a demand for an end to patriarchal domination and racism, and freedom of sexual choice and gender expression. This is not to say that rank and file struggles within the traditional working classes are no longer meaningful, but that they are not the *only* transformative force. Today industrial workers are joined by teachers, healthcare workers, domestic workers, transportation workers, hotel workers, food production workers, communication workers, professionals, intellectuals, spiritual leaders, and small business people, in cities and in rural areas, among women, immigrants, students, and LGBTQ communities—by *all of us*. A renewed socialism of the 21st century must have sensitivity to new kinds of consciousness which arise, sensitivity to the lives of people and how they experience their oppression, and how they strive to get beyond it—in their social movements, their language, their slang and vocabularies, their songs, their poetry, their diverse and vital cultures, and even the mistakes that they will inevitably make along the way. In short, a spiritualized socialism must be *curious,* must pay attention to contemporary manifestations of the creative self-activity of people. We see these creative manifestations in the incredible power of the #MeToo movement, in the Black Lives Matter movement, in the Poor Peoples' marches, in the "March for Our Lives" movement of young people against guns and gun violence, and in the worldwide actions of youth for the survival of the planet. In this way, with new forms of resistance, spontaneous organizational groupings, openness to the imaginativeness of people in creating social alternatives to what appears as "reality," a spiritualized socialism can flourish, beginning our collective journey to the world we all want.

THE CHALLENGES OF A SPIRITUALIZED SOCIALISM

Spiritualizing socialism requires courage and honesty in confronting our own fears about ourselves or about others, openness to new forms of resistance to oppression, and a willingness to change, as uncomfortable as it sometimes may be. The challenge of spiritualizing socialism is acknowledging that we who want to transform society must ourselves be transformed. This means we do not see ourselves as experts, or a vanguard, or as separate or detached from others who are striving for change. The challenge of spiritualizing socialism is attending to our internal realities, our psychological, emotional, existential realities, as well as to the external circumstances in which we find ourselves. Grace Lee Boggs wrote:

> "To make a revolution, people must not only struggle against existing institutions. They must make a philosophical/spiritual leap and become more "human" human beings. In order to change, transform the world, they must change/transform themselves" (Grace Boggs, *Living for Change*, University of Minnesota Press, 1998)

As we struggle to become "more 'human' human beings", we begin to understand our own internal contradictions between our false selves and our authentic selves, between fear of the "other" and desire for connection with others. We *learn* from the historical and contemporary experiences of real men and women who did just that: the Parisian masses in the Paris Commune of 1844, the striking women textile workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts, who in 1912, marched for "Bread for all, and roses, too," or from Rosa Parks in the Montgomery Bus Boycott challenging the notion that "the colored section" was an immutable fact, and vitalizing the civil rights movement.

It takes courage to challenge the hegemonic hold that the appearance of reality has upon us. It takes courage to maintain confidence in our abilities to transform society, at the same time maintaining humility in the presence of ongoing struggles. Again, we *learn* from the creativity of people in the midst of struggle, and glimpse visions of how alternative realities might look. During that same Montgomery Bus Boycott, Montgomery's black citizens, *not* the boycott leaders, organized alternative modes of transportation on their own, so people could still go to work. (Forbes, Dec. 2016, "How Cars Saved the Montgomery Bus Boycott) Similarly, during the recent Oakland Teachers Strike, teachers worked with community members to create "solidarity schools" in the city's recreation departments, so children could be educated without breaking the strike (Post News Group, Feb, 2019).

The challenge we face is to live *in* our vision of the world to which we aspire. We try to avoid the demoralizing effects the legacy of fear, and the power that "false selves" can have in undermining social movements, lest we be destined to recapitulate movement failures of the past. We try to avoid dehumanization of those with whom we disagree, even those struggling alongside us (witness the debilitating aspects of factionalism and sectarianism on the left), lest we diminish the world to which we aspire. If we do not attend to this psychosocial and spiritual dimension of our existence, if we remain tied only to the material, economic, and external structures and aspects of society, we will be unable to sustain the transformative power and

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spirit of our authentic interconnectedness, and our movements will wither, succumbing to apathy, inertia, pessimism, cynicism, and bleak and dreary organizations that cannot inspire anyone.

WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT?

There is an additional and critical challenge of spiritualizing socialism. As important as is our understanding of the humanism of Marx and others in socialist history, we note that there is a *still* a paucity of feeling, emotion, and spirituality in that humanism. A spiritualized socialism must *transcend* previous humanism. Today we need a socialism that can aspire to *heal* the black hole of fear and cynicism that dominates the contemporary world, a socialism that is not afraid to nurture and not afraid of spirituality. What is missing is love. Love is the essence of the mutual recognition we yearn for, and it is love not confined to the relationship between two people, but felt in community, in nations, and among the world's population. We need a socialism that does not turn away from, but welcomes, the power of love, as Rabbi Lerner writes in his new book, *Revolutionary Love: A Political Manifesto to Heal and Transform the World.*

This concept of love is well defined by M. Scott Peck in *The Road Less Traveled*, as "the will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth." Love, therefore, is recognized as a profoundly social and transformative emotion, and one that has the power to connect people, and to counteract the fear driven divisiveness that traumatizes and incapacitates all of us.

How we behave toward ourselves, and toward others in our personal lives, in our movement, as well as toward those who may oppose us is *as* critical, maybe *more* critical, to social transformation than the goal we are trying to achieve. We are at a turning point in human history, and the survival of our humanity as well as the earth's survival requires a radical change in how we approach social transformation. That radical change includes a renewed, refreshed, and spiritualized socialism. The transformation we desire cannot be limited to a change in the form of property, or of economic redistribution, but must be *more* (roses too!)—a transformation in the nature of human relations and the nature of being human. If not now, when?

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Rethinking Democratic Socialism

PETER HUDIS

TWO OPPOSED DEVELOPMENTS DEFINE TODAY'S POLITICAL LANDSCAPE—the growth of rightwing xenophobic nationalism that is undermining the very fabric of political democracy, and the rise of a new generation of activists reaching for a socialist alternative to the racism, sexism, inequality, and environmental destruction that defines all forms of capitalism. These contradictory developments raise a host of difficult questions. Does the growing threat of the Right, so starkly expressed by the likes of Bolsonaro, Orbán, Erdogen, Modi, and of course Trump, mean that efforts to save liberal democracy must take priority, even if it means putting aside for now the promotion of explicitly socialist politics? Or is the rise of the far Right a reflection of the bankruptcy of neoliberalism, rendering quixotic any opposition that remains within the confines of its political structures and formations?

These questions pose anew *the relation between democracy and socialism*—an issue that has long vexed the left and which continues today. In the words of one recent study, "the *enigma of democracy*, as a form of transition to socialism and as a form of organization of a socialist society and its political avant-garde per se, has not been solved."[1] For many years most socialists took it for granted that a democratic republic is a necessary precondition for forging an alternative to capitalism, since it provides the political space needed to advance the class struggle. Marx, Engels, Kautsky, Luxemburg, and Lenin all held this position.[2] But the last 100 years has shown that it is one thing to support democracy as a path to socialism and quite another to treat it as *the very form*

> "...the last 100 years has shown us that it is one thing to support democracy as a path to socialism and quite another to treat it as the very form of organization of socialism."

A 1911 Industrial Worker (IWW newspaper) publication advocating industrial unionism that shows the critique of capitalism. (Public domain)

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Lenin at rally in 1919. (public domain)

of organization of socialism. For statist and authoritarian Marxists, democracy was a "cumbersome mechanism"[3] that must be cast aside in the transition to a new society (as with Stalin, Mao, and "Marxist-Leninist" regimes in the developing world). Meanwhile, Social Democrats who supported political democracy abandoned the struggle for socialism in advocating Keynesian measures of income redistribution within a capitalist framework. The failure of both to create a viable alternative to capitalism calls on us to grapple anew with the enigmatic relation of democracy and socialism—beginning by rethinking, as a *philosophical* project, what *is* democracy and what *is* socialism.

Liberal democracy has obvious advantages over non-democratic systems, but it suffers from a severe limitation: the inability of legislation on the political or parliamentary level to fundamentally transform the property, class, and human relations of the capitalist mode of production. Capital, as Marx never ceased to emphasize, is the all-dominating force of modern society. Capital is self-expanding value (the latter signifying wealth measured in money) since monetary capital is invested with the aim of securing a higher return. If particular units of capital fail to achieve this, they are deemed "unproductive" and are destroyed (through wars or recessions and depressions). Capital is neither natural nor transhistorical: it becomes dominant only in societies characterized by a peculiar social form of labor—*alienated labor*. What this suggests (at least to those who follow a Marxian analysis) is that while it appears on the surface that the political state is the determining element in capitalism, it is actually dependent on the social relations of civil society. Democratic legislation can alter various aspects of capitalism, but it cannot transform its fundamental nature so long as the production and reproduction of social life is based on alienated social relations. Where the latter prevails, human relations take on the form of relations between things, and capital assumes a life of its own, irrespective of human needs and natural necessity.

The gains achieved in bourgeois or liberal democracy can therefore only be maintained in the long run by extending democracy to the *economic* sphere, which enables the populace to create freely associated conditions of life and labor. This constitutes a move toward what the young Marx called "true democracy." The achievement of true democracy is what enables socialism to first come into existence.

Socialism is often portrayed as a "fair" redistribution of value by redirecting the surplus product from the owners of capital to those who produce it—the working class. This is completely understandable, given the urgent need to redress the untenable social inequality that defines contemporary society. However, while a social democratic policy of income redistribution has obvious advantages over "free market" capitalism, it suffers from a severe limitation: it focuses on the distribution and consumption of value while failing to call into question the social relations that are responsible for value production (and hence the dominance of capital) in the first place. Popularizers of Marx often repeat the adage that "labor is the source of all value," but strictly speaking this is incorrect: it is not "labor" as such, but a specific *form* of labor that is the source of economic value. If actual labor time were the source of value we would be told to work as slowly as possible, since the greater amount of actual labor time embodied in the product, the greater would be its value. But this never happens because the value of a commodity is determined not by the expenditure of actual labor time but by the *socially necessary labor time* needed to produce it on the world market. The latter is a social average that imposes itself as an external force upon the laborers, which they are compelled to conform to under penalty of being condemned as "unproductive" workers.

Socialism therefore does not consist of transferring surplus value—the difference between the value of the product and the value of labor power—from the capitalists to the workers (either through progressive taxation or outright expropriation). The reason for this is that *it is impossible to redistribute what does not exist*. The effort to effect a "fair" redistribution of surplus value implies the continued existence of value production. And value production implies the continued existence of alienated labor—labor subjected to socially necessary labor time. In a word, *surplus* value follows from *value* production—not the other way around. The unequal distribution of property, money, and material wealth that so defines today's capitalism follows from the nature of value production. As Marx wrote in his 1844 Manuscripts, "Although private property appears to be the reason, the cause of alienated labor, it is rather its consequence, just as the gods are originally not the cause but the effect of man's intellectual confusion."[4]

It is therefore no accident that those who emphasize the redistribution of value instead of its abolition fall short of Marx's humanism. As Raya Dunayevskaya wrote,

> As Marx put it…as long as there exist 'power over individuals,' private property must exist. To Marx, private property is *the power to dispose of the labor of others*. That is why he so adamantly insisted that to make 'society' the owner, but to leave the alienated labor alone, is to create 'an abstract capitalist'…the abolition of private property means a new way of life, a new social order *only if* 'freely associated individuals,' and not abstract 'society,' become the masters of the socialized means of production.[5]

Those who conceive of socialism as a "fairer" redistribution of the surplus product make the same mistake as those who uncritically embrace liberal democracy: they fail to grasp the underlying dynamic of capitalist social relations. This does not mean we should not fight for a fairer redistribution of the social product, any more than we should not fight for defending and expanding the political space provided by liberal democracy. But we must do so from a broader philosophic and strategic horizon than found in standard debates concerning the relation between democracy and socialism.

One figure that can inform these ongoing debates is Rosa Luxemburg, long renowned as one of the most creative thinkers in the Marxist tradition. Of particular importance are a number of her writings originally composed as part of her work in the Polish revolutionary movement that have only recently come to light and which will be made available in the English-language *Complete Works of Rosa Luxemburg*.[6]

Luxemburg is renowned for her many theoretical and political contributions, but it is important to view her in the context of her times. She was as much a product of the Second International, with all its contributions and limitations, as other Marxists of the period, such as Plekhanov, Kautsky, or Lenin. Like them, she never questioned the need for a single, unified "vanguard" party to lead the revolution. However, her approach to organization took her beyond the confines of many of her fellow socialists, even if this was not always the defining issue in her differences with them.[7] In being highly suspicious of overly centralized and hierarchical forms, she did not view the role of organization as shepherding the masses toward socialism by benighted leaders. She rejected the notion that socialism would arise from some blind, unconscious process (as was the case with the transition from feudalism to capitalism); instead, she argued, socialism is the first social formation that arises from the free, conscious deliberation of the oppressed. For this reason she held that political parties are needed to *enlighten* the masses about the essence of capitalism and socialism instead of lecturing them like a schoolmaster. She wrote of the 1905 Russian Revolution,

Portrait of Rosa Luxemburg, circa 1895 and circa 1905. (public domain)

> To bring about a revolution, one thing was needed: that the working class understood that abolishing capitalism was its duty, and that it joined the struggle as an organized body with unity of purpose. Such understanding and organizing have made and will make forward progress, as the capitalist economy develops and capitalist states form relations.[8]

Understanding and organizing go hand in hand, since while existing material conditions make socialism *possible* they do not suffice to make it *actual*. Although she strongly supported spontaneous freedom struggles, she did not counterpoise spontaneity to organization, as if one renders the other superfluous. She understood that revolutionary parties are needed to develop an *organization of thought* that provides the *humus* from which future spontaneous struggles can spring. As she put it in *Reform or Revolution* (1898), "No coarser insult, no baser defamation, can be thrown against the workers than the remark, 'Theoretical controversies are only for academicians.'... The entire strength of the labor movement rests on theoretical knowledge."[9]

So how is such knowledge and consciousness to be developed? What methods and means are called for? She addressed this in 1906:

> During the fight, as victims fall all around, as the proletariat bears down on its enemy, it *learns*, it educates itself. A victorious outcome depends on the degree of that consciousness. How, then, do members of the proletariat become conscious? They read pamphlets, appeals, and periodicals. They listen to speeches by people who give advice on various things. They must *weigh for themselves* which of these things is right, for such consideration is the basis for choosing what path to take.[10]

Revolutionary consciousness is promoted "by people who give advice on various things"—the intellectuals—which the masses "weigh for themselves" in deciding "what path to take." But what ensures that they will choose the right path? She writes,

> The most important precondition for raising proletarian consciousness within the struggle itself is the exercise of the freedoms of assembly and of the press. That is to say, the proletariat fights for the freedom to gather, discuss its affairs, and, through freely printed publications, learn to know its friends and foes. If the first condition of raising the proletariat's awareness is that workers wrest from the hands of the government the freedoms of assembly, speech, and the press, then *the second is to take full advantage of those freedoms, so that the ranks of fighting workers engage freely in critical discussions.*[11]

Taking advantage of the freedoms provided by liberal or bourgeois democracy—*and fighting to attain them where they do not exist*—is essential for gaining *revolutionary socialist* consciousness. It is a vital precondition for being mentally and spiritually prepared for uprooting capitalism. But this does not mean that the struggle for socialism must be confined within the parameters of liberal democracy, as if the former can commence only once the latter is secure. Instead, she held that the absence of democracy in Russia, and the failure of the liberals to effectively oppose the tsarist state, meant that the battle for democracy rested on the shoulders of the socialist movement.

However, since any socialist movement is bound to face fierce opposition from the powers that be, how should the working class respond to its taunts and physical repression? "Red Rosa" did not refrain from proposing the most energetic—and where necessary, *forceful* measures—to defend and advance the workers' movement. She rejected any pacifist illusions about "turning the other cheek." At the same time, the politically mobilized and armed working class saw no reason, she argued, for sacrificing democratic debate and discussion on the altar of the struggle for power:

> **"...(Rosa Luxemburg) understood that democracy is not a mere means to "make the revolution" but is indispensible for the creation and development of socialism itself."**

> The freedom to speak and publish is one precondition to the attainment of consciousness by the proletariat; the second is that the proletariat not put any restrictions on itself, that it not say, "We can discuss this, but not that." Conscious workers the world over understand this, and they always try to give even the worst of their enemies the right to freely explain their views. They say, "Let even the enemies of the working people voice their own views, so that we may respond to them, and so the working masses can work out for themselves who is a friend and who a foe."[12]

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The notion that even "the worst of their enemies" be given "the right to freely explain their views" became central to her critique of the Bolsheviks in her 1918 booklet *On the Russian Revolution*, in which she attacked Lenin and Trotsky for closing down opposition newspapers and parties (including those on the anti-capitalist Left) and imposing a single-party state. Yet she supported the Bolshevik seizure of power and continued to work with Lenin and his colleagues even after issuing her sharp critique. This did not make her a "Leninist" any more than an "anti-Leninist" (such terms did not exist at the time in any case). It made her an independent voice that did not shy away from sharply criticizing an ongoing revolution even when encircled by imperialist powers and counter-revolutionary forces determined to crush it. And this is because she understood that democracy is not a mere means to "make the revolution" but is indispensable for *the creation and development of socialism itself.*

One of the striking features of Leninist currents (of whatever variety) is the tendency to proclaim the need for political democracy when out of power while dispensing with it upon seizing it. Contrary to a widespread myth, Lenin was not an anti-democratic authoritarian from start to finish: he consistently defended democratic rights within his party and for society as a whole before 1917. But not afterward! It is not hard to see why: political tendencies that are shut out of power tend to view democracy as a friend since it enables them to survive and grow, while it treats it as enemy after seizing power since the freedom to criticize and protest can bring it down. But in that case democracy is treated as a mere *instrument*—not as an indispensable condition of human development. In the absence of any ethical or philosophical standard to guide political action, the reduction of democracy to mere instrumentality leaves radicals without any ontological foundation for measuring the validity of their actions. All "truths" become relative, subject to the whims of political fortune and personal self-interest. State power—and/or the maintenance of one's political party—becomes an end in itself.

Luxemburg (like Marx) had a very different approach to democracy since she viewed it not as a mere instrumental *form* but as inseparable from the *content* of socialism.[13] Socialism is not the mere replacement of private ownership of the means of production with public or statist ownership. It is about the *laborers* owning and controlling the means of production as the necessary *first step* for eliminating alienated labor, class domination, and the augmentation of value and profit are ends-in-themselves. None of this can be achieved unless the populace has effective and not just nominal control of the process of social production and reproduction—*a task that cannot be achieved without thoroughgoing democracy*. The past 100 years has verified this, since not a single "socialist" regime that concentrated power in the hands of the state and suppressed democracy succeeded in producing a transition to socialism. They instead paved the way for just another variant of capitalism—*state-capitalism*.

Luxemburg's view of the relation between democracy and socialism, while composed in a radically different social and political context than what faces us today, provides direction for rejuvenating the socialist project. She wrote,

> Social Democracy recognizes that persecution for belief or lack thereof is a barbarity incompatible with civil freedom and civilization. Oppression of conscience is the worst form of oppression … That is why workers everywhere oppose religious persecution with all their might. Every adult person should have complete freedom to believe what and how he likes. Religious adherence or non-affiliation is a matter of conviction, of a person's conscience and spiritual happiness. No one has the right to peer into someone's conscience and demand that he believe a certain way and no other way. Therefore, Social Democracy demands that the laws of state ensure full *freedom of conscience*.[14]

Rosa Luxemburg grappled with the problems of her time; we have to grapple with ours, which in many respects are markedly different. We don't have a mass labor movement such as existed in her time, nor do we have an international association of socialists spanning dozens of countries and including millions of people. But we do have many things missing in her time: an understanding that issues of race and gender are as crucial in the construction and deconstruction of capitalist social relations as that of class, an understanding of the deleterious impact of promoting economic growth at the expense of respect for nature and the environment, and most of all, the experience of seeing so many revolutions and revolutionary movements go by the wayside when they fell short of a vision of human emancipation from all forms of alienation. We now know—or at least *should* know—that socialism is either the realization of human capacities or it is nothing. Since the spirit as well as the letter of so much of her work points in precisely this direction, she will doubtless continue to inspire those searching for the promised land of the new society after having spent so many decades wandering aimlessly in the desert.

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Footnotes

[1] Alexandros Chrysis, '*True Democracy' as a Prelude to Communism: The Marx of Democracy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 3.

[2] For more on this, see my Introduction to J.P. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg* (New York and London: Verso Books, 2019), ix–xxiii.

[3] Leon Trotsky and V.I. Lenin infamously used this term to justify their suppression of democracy following the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917.

[4] Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, in *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, vol. 3 (New York: International Publishers, 1975), 279–80.

[5] Raya Dunayevskaya, *Marxism and Freedom, from 1776 Until Today* (Amherst, NY: Humanities Books, 2000), 59–60.

[6] Three volumes of the *Complete Works of Rosa Luxemburg* have appeared so far (published by Verso Books, 2013, 2015, and 2019), in addition to a 600-page companion volume, *The Letters of Rosa Luxemburg*, co-edited by Georg Adler, Annelies Laschitza, and Peter Hudis. The *Complete Works* is expected to total 17 volumes.

[7] For more on this, see Peter Hudis, "Luxemburg and Lenin," in *The Palgrave Handbook on Leninist Political Philosophy*, edited by Tom Rockmore and Norman Levine (Basingate: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 201–30.

[8] Rosa Luxemburg, "Pod znakiem Socjaldemocracji." Czerwony Sztandar, No. 24, March 1905. I wish to thank Joseph Muller for the translation from the Polish original. This article, as well as other previously unavailable writings of hers quoted here, will appear in the forthcoming fourth volume of *Complete Works of Rosa Luxemburg* (New York and London: Verso Books).

[9] *Social Reform or Revolution, in The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, edited by Peter Hudis and Kevin B. Anderson (New York: Monthly Review, 2004), 130.

[10] Rosa Luxemburg, "Krytyka w ruchu robotniczym," *Czerwony Sztandar*, No. 39, January 9, 1906.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] For more on this, see Peter Hudis, "What is Democratic Socialism? What is Socialist Democracy?" in *The International Marxist-Humanist* [https://www.imhojournal.org/articles/what-is-democratic-socialism-what-is-socialist-democracy/

[14] Rosa Luxemburg, "Remarks at Jena Congress on Relations Between the Party and the Trade Unions, with Reference to the 1905 Revolution in Russia," In *Protokoll über die Verhandlungen des Parteitages der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands. Abgehalten zu Jena vom 17. bis 23. September 1905* (Berlin: Vorwärts, 1905).

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From Ability to Willingness: Freeing Socialism from Its Patriarchal Roots

MIKI KASHTAN

"In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labor, and therewith also the antithesis between mental and physical labor, has vanished; after labor has become not only a means of life but life's prime want; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-around development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly—only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in its entirety and society inscribe on its banners: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!"

– Karl Marx, Critique of the Gotha Program

I WAS BORN IN TEL-AVIV IN 1956. The Kibbutz movement, the most extensive voluntary experiment in socialist living I know of, was thriving despite still licking its wounds from the traumatic ideological wars in the early 1950s, as the horrors of Stalinism became more known. All through the 1960s, the years of my conscious childhood, I was in a kibbutz for several weeks every summer, connected with the "Society of Children" (children lived in their own houses based on age) through my cousin. I often witnessed forms of radical equality which I now know to have been enforced through ideological pressure. The degree to which the boundaries of the individual sphere were shrunk, such that more resided in the communal, made an indelible impression upon me. All the children wore the same clothes, taking from the laundry room whatever was in the clean pile, independently of what they brought to the laundry. Everyone ate together in the dining room. This was before Holocaust reparations and television destabilized the ethic of ideological self-sacrifice and passionate conviction that had been the hallmark of the movement. The changing geopolitical alignments post Six-Day War, and a host of other internal and external factors, eventually led to the near dissolution of the Kibbutz movement. Although close to 300 kibbutzim still exist, the overwhelming majority of them are fundamentally privatized and individualized.

Not too long afterwards, starting when I was about sixteen, I implicitly adopted the view of human nature and of life that makes capitalism justifiable. I felt active disdain for the idea that people could be motivated to contribute for any reason other than self-interest. I saw it as naïve, possibly dangerous. I was also slightly misanthropic myself, believing that the best I could hope for personally would be to find a few decent human beings I could trust, along with myself, and no one and nothing else. I also believed that, given how immoral and uncaring we were collectively (with the exceptions above), what had happened in history is the only thing that could have happened, and that it emerged, naturally, from who we were.

I was critical enough politically to choose to leave Israel in 1983 so as to not have things done to Palestinians in my name. Socially and philosophically, however, I remained bound to my cynical views until feminism entered my life in 1985. The results were a sudden and ongoing revamping of much that I previously believed. I voraciously read *Beyond Power* by Marilyn French and soon thereafter *The Chalice and the Blade* by Riane Eisler. Patriarchy revealed itself to me as a series of events, not an unavoidable permanent reality. I became acquainted with life before patriarchy, and, for the first time ever, could begin envisioning a world beyond patriarchy.

SOCIALISM AND FEMINISM

Though I had been periodically immersed in a hotbed of socialist experimenting, I didn't have any real understanding about socialism, nor deep thinking about any of the issues raised, until well after I started wearing the feminist badge. This left me with clarity that no amount of socialist revolution, by itself, would undo the inherent domination built into relations between men and women, between adults and children, and between different groups of people, such as those clumped together under the dubious category of race. By the time I was working on my dissertation, whose focus was challenging the centrality of reason and rationality in western civilization, I knew enough to know that Marx, despite his profound critique of capitalism, was also at the same time a product of the Enlightenment, and he neither

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theorized nor questioned putting men's activities at the center of analysis and according no significance to the experience and activities of women. In some fundamental way, he positioned women's work and relationships outside of the sphere of historical analysis, as if they neither influence nor are shaped by the unfolding of history. One thing he misses as a result is the possibility of understanding the origins of gifting within mothering, as Genevieve Vaughan has since done.

The world of his future is an "association of free producers." Those producers are men. No women, no children are part of that producer paradise, even though in his days women and children often worked in factories. Without the women and the children, it would be hard to create concrete models of how needs can be attended to, models that are simple and intuitive within Vaughan's understanding. Mothering, according to her, is based on other-orientation, through which need in one (child initially) spontaneously generates willingness in the other (mother initially). Except in unusual circumstances, (or, more recently under conditions of capitalism which has convinced many women otherwise, to the detriment of babies worldwide) there's never been a reason to coerce mothers to breastfeed their babies. Were Marx to take seriously the activities and experiences of women, and even of children, he may well have found pathways to the free future he envisioned that didn't require coercion along the way. As far as I can tell, there's never been an experience in which communities based on freedom and significant relationships of care emerged through coercion. If we sow coercion, we are unlikely to harvest freedom.

ABILITY AND NEEDS

How is it that coercion came into being in an environment oriented towards a free future? In my understanding of this very central question, way too many factors have contributed to this tragic result. Here, in this article, I want to focus on only two of those factors, both of which are present within the innocent-sounding and so often repeated sentence within the quote that opens this article: "From each according to his *ability,* to each according to his *need.*"

How ability and need are determined, and especially how much trust fuels that determination, is key to whether freedom and community flourish or die. When individuals are free, within their communities, to assess their own needs and ability, and have those assessments trusted within and beyond the community, resources can flow effortlessly and efficiently. Given the rampant mistrust that capitalism

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emerges from and which it deepens, ability and need have so far required an external authority that would determine them. Both in the immense socialist states and in the kibbutz movement, this meant lack of freedom (even while some vitally important basic needs have been attended to, in important ways, better than in capitalist societies).

This reality has left me with enormous questions: What will it take to envision, and then to create, a future "Beloved Community" in which coercion is truly absent? How far can the principles of maternal giving be extended into actual organizing principles of an entire society? And how will we ever reclaim the necessary trust in ourselves, each other, and life after millennia of patriarchy?

Children on Kibbutz in Israel circa 1934. (public domain)

I don't know the answer to any of these questions, nor do I believe that anyone else does. What I do know is that the more we envision boldly; the more we challenge within ourselves the deeper assumptions of scarcity, separation, and powerlessness that patriarchy rests on and capitalism intensifies; and the more we experiment, individually and collectively, with living *as if* the world we envision is already here, the more likely we are to answer these questions and create at least small pockets of a livable future.

Having engaged in all of these endeavors for years, one principle has emerged for me as foundational both to the future and to the path that leads to it. I call it the principle of willingness. In the most minimal substitution, this principle would result in changing one word only in Marx's original: "ability" will be replaced with "willingness." And removing the word "his" would go some way toward addressing the invisibility of women's work and contributions. However, this minimalist reframing is insufficient for one more reason, since it still leaves the question of how to assess need. A broader reframing, and a principle that is already in use in the work and learning communities I am a part of, is: resources flow from where they exist to where they are needed based on willingness. Or, only that for which there is wholehearted willingness will be done. And whenever we discover that we have slipped, or don't know how to live these principles, we aim to mourn and deepen our search for strategies that do fit the principle.

In my book *Reweaving Our Human Fabric: Working Together to Create a Nonviolent Future,* I include a detailed vision of a future where this principle, and a few others, are core features of human life and where money and coercion are absent. Because of how little I've found in our current way of living that matches this vision, I primarily offer it in the form of twelve fictional stories that describe—through following a day in the life of twelve characters positioned in that future—how this principle

applies in care for and distribution of natural resources, in coordination of transportation, in workflow, in food production, in garbage collection, and more.[1] This is not a utopian, conflict-free vision. Rather, it's a world made up of human beings like us, with their relationship challenges, workplace difficulties, conflicts over resources, and more. What's different is how things are done, what the priorities are, and how the challenges are attended to when full collaboration and togetherness are the norm. Even when rare and extreme situations result in people being locked up to protect safety, such "prisons" would be staffed by people with exceptional relational capacity who would lovingly support those who are there while they recover from whatever led to the acts of violence that landed them there, from the impact on them of knowing what they have done, and the impact of that on those they had harmed, including engaging directly with the people they had harmed when possible, and from the impact of being locked up. In this imagined and very real-seeming environment, the very social structures and systems embed principles that put needs and willingness at the center.

TRANSFORMING DEMAND: PUTTING NEEDS AT THE CENTER

I once engaged in a two-hour discussion with two friends about the first page of *Das Kapital*. What we got out of it is a simple understanding of the seductive power of capitalism: the illusion that if we only have enough money, then no one can tell us what to do, and we are free.

One of the complexities that many cite for why a needs-based approach may be fraught is that it's difficult to actually know what we need. It is much easier to do the sleight of hand that economics does, which is about reducing needs to demand in the fundamental equation that governs our lives. This reduction involves two parts, both of which create unfreedom. One is the deliberate manipulation of our emotions and desires that capitalism depends on, and the other is the singular role of money as the primary pathway to meeting needs.

The unfreedom created by the former mechanism rests on planting within us a sense of lack and hunger for "more," while at the same time making market-based solutions appear as the only ones available, and thus making them ever more desirable. In such an environment, it is extremely difficult to know what we really want, and even more difficult to know why we want it.

> "In a full gift economy which acts as a feminist alternative to patriarchal socialism, giving is based on availability of resources released into the flow with generosity and willingness, and receiving is based on the presence of a need."

The unfreedom created by the latter is perhaps more obvious: no matter how well we know our needs, if we don't have access to money that would allow us to convert our needs into a market demand, we won't be able to get our needs met. This is because capitalism grows the economy by severing us from direct relationship with nature and with our communities and leaving us alone and isolated from each other, competing instead of collaborating, and, usually, in permanent anxiety about having enough money, or more money, to be able to attend to our needs.

In my work with thousands of people around the world, people consistently find more freedom after connecting with the "why" of what we want: our fundamental human needs, *before* any market-based solution and capacity to attend to the needs are present. If we are ever to create a world in which people assess their needs and communicate about them as part of new resource flow systems, this internal freedom is vital for us to be able to function within diminishing resources on a finite planet with a continually growing human population.

TRANSFORMING SUPPLY: DISCOVERING THE JOY OF GENEROSITY

One of the other arguments made against the feasibility of free and connected resource flow is the view of human nature that feeds and justifies our current systems, concisely summarized by the term *homo economicus*: that we are all ultimately seeking the narrowest possible definition of self-interest. According to this view, neither care for others nor care for the whole are human motivators. As Adam Smith said: "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages."[2] Simply put: we give in order to receive.

If we want to transcend the exchange paradigm and restore flow, we will need to uncouple giving from receiving, so we can give without the expectation of receiving, and receive without the obligation to give. In a full gift economy, which acts as a feminist alternative to patriarchal socialism, giving is based on availability of resources released into the flow with generosity and willingness, and receiving is based on the presence of a need.

Marshall Rosenberg, the person who brought Nonviolent Communication to the world, often

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invoked the image of giving "with the joy of a little child feeding a hungry duck."[3] Every time I heard him use it in a workshop, a ripple of resonance extended through the room: we easily recognize that free flow, and the attendant joy. What makes for that joy? In one word: freedom. We can only access the joy of giving, the true fountain of abundant generosity, when we are free *not* to do it. Given patriarchal socialization, which is based on shame and obedience, such freedom is rare.[4] Instead, we are all too often motivated by constraints, incentives, obligations, fear, shame, desire for reward, or the like. Even when not, we fall into habits, respond to impulse, or react to what others do. Many people, when I name this entire laundry list of motivations, realize to their discomfort that little of what they do is fully motivated from within, from clarity about their clearest and deepest needs, their purpose, and their values. I've already mentioned that the capitalist market economy interferes with our capacity to receive, and to then attend to our needs outside the market through making requests in relationship with others. As with the difficulty in uncoupling receiving, here, too, patriarchy, through the mechanism of internalizing shame, obedience, and control, tampers with our ca-

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pacity to give by creating conditions where we either give out of obligation or refuse to give out of reaction to the inner pressure to give.

Like the journey to full, unconditional receiving, reclaiming that initial joy, with the capacity to give from simple connection with a need we are meeting in another, is a path of liberation. All that's needed to get the power of it is to take a moment to remember a time in which we gave unconditionally, without any expectation to receive. Whenever I ask people to do this, I see smiles spreading across the room. There's no reason for us not to slow down just enough to notice that source of goodwill, and act from it, against any internalized voice that judges it as being taken advantage of. As the best antidote to resentment about giving too much, somewhere along the path we need to also find and care for our actual and true capacity, which becomes easier the more we are able to recognize our needs, and thereby also honor our limits.

TRANSFORMING EXCHANGE: FINDING WHOLEHEARTED WILLINGNESS

The next bit of the puzzle of how to restore flow is about finding the way to match resources to needs. This is where willingness emerges as a potent principle, replacing both the supply and demand graphs and notions such as value, deserve, and fairness.

These notions, deeply embedded in our basic orientation to any distribution of resources, keep us tethered to market economies. What we call 'value' is a placeholder for what we care about in terms of our own essential needs, what we hope will attend to them. This notion allows us, if we have the requisite money, to rationalize our choice to exchange it for something we want. What we call 'deserve' is a placeholder for need, and allows us to accept dramatic inequalities that create hierarchies of whose needs count. What we call 'fairness' is a placeholder for our care for the whole. It's the hardest one to shift, because the shift implies acknowledging that we can never force fairness anyway, and also that insisting on fairness contributes to conflict and war more often than it contributes to mutual understanding and collaboration. The only alternative to fairness I know is focusing on what's possible instead of what's fair.

I see wholehearted willingness, which leaves us without resentment, which often feels magical and liberating, and rarely is actively sought, as one of the keys into a future that works. It is what makes it possible to shift from the either/or of domination vs. compromise that rules the world of collaboration and negotiation to the possibility of full integration presciently discussed by Mary Parker Follett over 100 years ago as she researched and coined the terms power over and power with. Full integration happens, reliably, when we take into consideration all the known needs, all the known and predicted potential impacts, and all the known resources, and when we hold all this information in togetherness with all stakeholders to any particular resource allocation puzzle. What then emerges is a solution that finds everyone in a place of willingness. This solution may not be anyone's *preference*, and yet everyone may be willing to agree to it precisely because it attends to the needs within the resources and with the least amount of undesired impacts.

ZOOMING OUT TO A WORLD IN CRISIS

Given how difficult it is, in our current system, to exit the market logic of exchange, it's no wonder that most of us, most of the time, feel most comfortable in transactions where the giving and the receiving cancel each other fully; where no one owes anyone anything. Leaving it to individuals alone to create this transformation will fail for as long as our current patriarchal systems continue to reinforce the consciousness of scarcity, separation, and powerlessness through how they operate, through socialization, and through narratives that are replicated everywhere.

Patriarchy birthed this consciousness of scarcity, separation, and powerlessness and embedded it within every system that has been invented since, ranging from states to markets, from legal to educational systems, and from economic to cultural spheres. Ultimately, it is this consciousness that I believe is driving our current escalating and intersecting global crises, because we've been on a collision course of trying to control life and ourselves, interfering with flows, converting natural abundance to artificial excess coupled with manufactured scarcity, extracting beyond replenishment, and pitting us against each other in endless wars.

I don't believe that individual solutions to systemic problems are feasible. At the same time, like just about everyone else I read, watch, or talk with, envisioning systemic change radical enough to reset the patriarchal paradigm and gentle enough so that a gradual shift can happen while averting collapse is currently beyond my imagination's capacity.[5] I know this: all previous empires have collapsed; none voluntarily; none while seeing what was coming. I see no reason to believe that the current empire(s) will have any other fate. The question for me is not whether or not system change will happen. It's only whether we might find a way to make it produce less suffering than it's likely to produce, than it's already producing in vast sections of the world. Catastrophes related to climate change, political anxieties, migration-related horrors, and more are already the present for millions of people. I don't see any scenario under which we fully avoid mass suffering; only some still possible forks in the road in terms of just how much suffering, and how much of life will survive.

THE CHALLENGE

Patriarchy and capitalism have won some deeply significant battles that make any change immensely daunting. Their combination has resulted in the reduction of work to jobs; learning to schools; care to customer service; creativity to innovation; governance to nation states; Earth's abundance to property; needs to rights and to consumption; and sharing/flow to exchange and accumulation.

We have all but forgotten the commons as an organizing principle of relationship with life and community; collaboration based on mutual care in attending to needs as a primary mode of engagement with other humans; trust and participation as a way of making decisions; and immersion in all these activities as an approach to learning and creativity.

Our institutions, both political and economic, are reinforcing scarcity, separation, and powerlessness, and keep most of us now, most of the time, in some baseline activation of our survival mode of fight, flight, or freeze. Choice and collaboration are dramatically less available in such conditions. When we create movements, we often reproduce the dominant forms of command and control vertically and competition horizontally.

Meanwhile large scale applications of socialism, rooted in the luminous promise of a brighter future, have failed to engage with its patriarchal roots. For the most part, they have remained beholden to controlling nature and to industrial, extractive economies, albeit based on state planning instead of profit maximization. Some needs have been met better in

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socialist milieus, and others less. And we have not gotten closer to restoring our capacity to live in harmony with life while caring for each other within the commons.

This all means to me that if we want to have a different outcome from one more version of patriarchal systems, we will be called upon to change how we work for change, not only what change we are working for. We cannot plant tomatoes and harvest corn.

PREFIGURATIVE COMMUNITIES

For this reason, I am focusing my own energy on supporting myself, individuals, and communities I am part of in transforming patterns of scarcity, separation, and powerlessness into flow, togetherness, and freedom. If not all of us perish; if enough of life survives; there will be an ever growing need to collaborate. In the largest experiment I've been part of co-creating in the last two years—an online community we have named Nonviolent Global Liberation—we are continually experimenting, in particular, with the principles I have outlined in this article. We are getting better and better at not doing anything out of fear or obligation, and allowing things not to happen at all— we call it "the void"—rather than artificially and resentfully propping up systems and agreements for which there isn't really enough willingness. We see miracles of people stepping into roles we didn't imagine they would, and we have heartache where precious projects languish for lack of wholehearted capacity. Both are part of life. Both are part of the difficult journey of recovering from our addiction to "predict and control" patterns.

Between individuals and global systems we find communities, and my hope lies precisely there: in the revival of the commons, in the growing awareness that collaboration is key, and that facilitated conversations and wise systems support willing collaboration and flow without requiring billions of us to heal from trauma and learn how to collaborate individually. I feel nourished by the many vibrant and imperfect experiments, large and small, sprouting all over the planet, that provide living evidence that more collaboration and more flow are indeed part of our makeup. I am especially heartened to see how much becomes possible after collapse, as is evidenced by what was unfolding in Rojava until the recent attacks on it by Turkey. Rojava became an autonomous zone within ravaged Syria, focusing on bottom-up and feminist governance that came into existence in a failed state. I am heartbroken and tragically not surprised by the efforts to undermine everything the people of Rojava have built. Still, the future is not yet written, and I trust that having faith in possibility can only support us all, wherever we are, as we remain part of the teams that are writing it.

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Footnotes

[1] Three of those stories are available online at http://thefearless-heart.org/store/reweaving-our-human-fabric/.

[2] Adam Smith, The Wealth of the Nations, Book 1, Chapter 2.

[3] https://www.azquotes.com/quote/1185025.

[4] See the article "Parenting without Obedience" by Miki and Arnina Kashtan, in Tikkun, Winter 2019

[5] In his newest book, Revolutionary Love: A Political Manifesto to Heal and Transform the World, Rabbi Michael Lerner puts forth such a path and vision. You can read more at www.tikkun.org/revlove.

Tim Mossholder/Unsplash.

Towards a Trauma-Informed Socialism; or, How to Crush the Creeping Tide of Fascism with a Revolutionary Politics of Compassion

JOSH LOWN

SOCIALISM IS SEEING A REBIRTH IN THE PUBLIC CONSCIOUSNESS IN RECENT YEARS. Much of this attention can be explained through the success of Bernie Sanders and the rapid growth of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). To put the attention solely on the Sanders campaign or the DSA would be reductive. Socialism has a long and active history in the United States, with organizers from socialist and communist organizations playing major roles in historic labor strikes and the civil rights movement. But the term socialism carries with it a ton of baggage, much of which is a holdover to Cold War fear mongering about Soviet Communism and nuclear war. In this sense, to be clear, I will

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be using socialism as a stand in for all related forms of communitarian and liberatory political structures.

The rise of socialist organizing in the form of the Socialist Rifle Association, the DSA, Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL), Black Rose Federation, and recent labor strikes by auto workers, teachers, students demanding radical action against the coming climate disaster,

> "One cannot understand the effects of capitalism without also understanding the effects of trauma. And if we are to build a more just and equitable world, then it must be envisioned through this lens."

indigenous communities standing up against further attempts by the state to destroy what little has been left to them, have continued to spark hope in building a more just and equitable world. But with our current times showing even further cracks in the validity of the capitalist structure, how should socialists respond? We know how the other side is responding: with sharp rises in authoritarian and fascist sympathies and violence. Is there a common thread we can pull to strengthen our critical analysis of the system and assure the world on the other side of the crisis is ours?

What is often missed by contributors to both sides of the debate between capitalism and socialism is the essential ideology that differentiates each system. Our adherence to socialism does not stem from hopes for better industrial output, efficient mechanisms of production, or its ability to lift individuals out of poverty. To argue on those terms is simply to agree with the outrageous assertion that those attributes are fundamentally important to the functioning of a cohesive society, as if the argument is an intellectual discussion between different economic systems. To make these arguments is simply to cede ground to those who are currently profiting off of the misery of the working class and the economically vulnerable majority of citizens. Could it be true that systems with more worker control over the means of production lead to overall increases in production value and efficiency in the workplace? There is quite a bit of historical and empirical evidence to say so, but what are we really winning if it's true?

To make this argument is to admit defeat from the start; it is to divorce the means from the ends. Ours is not a politics of production and value. On the contrary, ours is a politics of compassion. We believe in a socialist society not because it can outproduce a capitalist one, but because we believe humanity (and for that matter, all life) is valuable in and of itself. What a trauma-informed approach critiquing capitalism allows us to see is the human tragedy inlaid in the structure. One cannot understand the effects of capitalism without also understanding the effects of trauma. And if we are to build a more just and equitable world, then it must be envisioned through this lens.

TRAUMA AND CAPITALISM

One doesn't have to explore too far into the literature to find a breadth of writers critically examining our relationship to capitalist modes of production, and offering guiding philosophies on how to build a better world. From Marx and Engles, Lenin, Kropotkin and Bookchin, as well as a multitude of current scholars, each leaves an important mark. But what is often left out is the very human cost of engaging in a society that operates in a neoliberal capitalist manner. If we hope to build a better, more equitable society, we need to first acknowledge the trauma embedded into the system.

What is trauma? Though specific definitions may differ across clinical and academic circles, a traumatic event may be best understood as an event that ruptures our sense of self, a violent disruption between ourselves and our bodies. It creates a space between who we are and the physical space we hold in the world. It is both an existential and physical experience. Traumatic experiences can cause our bodies to slow down metabolically, cause our immune systems to dysfunction, disrupt short and long-term memory, and cause us to feel chronically unsafe. Trauma is inherently a dehumanizing process that alienates us from all aspects of the natural world and human engagement itself.

While a traumatizing experience can be one that occurs in one single, often life-threatening moment, this is a very selective definition of the problem. Traumatic experiences are often more complex, accruing over time. Trauma typically has a "piling on" effect, where the original incident causes a series of other events, each one obfuscating and intensifying the effects of the original traumatic experience.

This is particularly true for individuals who are economically vulnerable, where the accumulation of toxic stress and traumatic experiences makes it increasingly difficult to find stability in the world. The breadth of research into Adverse Childhood Experiences has shown us that accumulating traumatic experiences throughout your life, such as experiencing abuse or having a close family member incarcerated, has serious effects on your overall health and well-being throughout your life. And as we accumulate traumatic experiences, our alienation from the world grows, creating a sense of loneliness that we now know carries with it its own serious health risks. Epigenetic research has also begun to show how these traumatic experiences are being passed on generationally through our genetic code. It may well be the case that communities are bearing the emotional scars of colonialism, imperialism, and other forms of historic and generational state-sanctioned trauma. Simply put, traumatic experiences in life, whether they are directly experienced, witnessed, or perceived, have lasting effects on our lives, maybe across generations.

Credit: michael stahl/flickr

Poverty, thus, isn't simply an economic condition, it is an inherently traumatic experience. With the recent report that around 40% of Americans are only one paycheck from financial disaster, we cannot understate the traumatic effect of always feeling as though your world is about to collapse. The same is

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true for each of the disasters and crises we are facing on a regular basis: climate catastrophe, police violence, institutional racism, homelessness, the opioid crisis, the creeping rise of far-right fascist violence, and historical scars of colonialism in the (continuous) attempted genocide of indigenous peoples. Behind every crisis brought on through capitalism's virulent hunger for profit lurks a trauma that impacts nearly every community. The human face of capitalism is that of a mass of people struck with fear, overworked, and nervously awaiting another crisis. It is here that we can firmly grasp one of our best ways of understanding capitalism: that it has a psychological and physiological impact on everyone under its thumb. Capitalism not only creates trauma, but it relies on it.

Photo courtesy of Cat Zavis

WHAT IS TO BE DONE

It is not enough for us to simply critique capitalism as if it were a thought exercise, a trap into which many socialist academics and activists fall. If we acknowledge that our current system perpetuates systems of oppression and exploitation, that living in our current system is an inherently traumatic experience, then we must provide a way out. We must offer a solution that aims at abolishing the structures of power and control that dominate each of us, in particular those of us who are receiving the brunt force of the capitalist system.

Perhaps a better way of thinking about this is through the lens of trauma treatment. In the realm of trauma therapy, there generally exists two trains of thought: (a) changing our thought patterns in how they related to the traumatic event(s), or (b) changing our relationship to the traumatic event(s). In the former, the goal of treatment is to accept that the events happened, but also to accept that the problem is more centered in how we react to and think about the experience. This, of course, is a purely individualistic solution: the point of treatment is to change our thought patterns in a way that accepts the world as it is and change ourselves.

The goal of the latter treatment, however, is much different: to change our relationship to the event, not how we react to it. This distinction may seem subtle, but it is nonetheless important. By changing our relationship to the event, we can thus accept that, while the event happened, the problem itself lies in the event and not in how we react to the event. Our reactions, thus, are perfectly normal given the extraordinary circumstances that caused the reactions. It is a solution based on a philosophy of empowerment; it is a solution postulated on liberation.

If we expand these options on a mass scale, we can thus see the two options that lay before us: simply accept that this is the world as it exists and that our individual actions are in need of changing, or understand that the problem lies in what is happening to us, and that we must change our relationship to the problem. It is the difference between individual change and collective change; of homeostasis and emancipation. It is, in the common parlance of political ideology, the struggle between reforming the current neoliberal capitalist structure in order to lessen the traumatic impact for as many individuals as we can muster, or to no longer accept the narrative that trauma is a given. A trauma-informed perspective asks us to create a new narrative, one replete with love, compassion, and connection with and for ourselves and each other as a whole. An acceptance of a liberatory, trauma-informed politics means reorienting all of the current relationships away from consumption and domination, and towards one another.

A trauma-informed socialism must first then prioritize the building of strong, cohesive, and compassionate communities. Simply focusing on winning political office, passing policy, or even convening in marches every so often is not enough. The epicenter of our struggle towards developing a more equitable future for everyone must take place where the effects of capitalist violence have been the most devastating. This also means prioritizing the work that needs to be done to rebuild those communities most devastated: communities of color and indigenous communities.

A trauma-informed socialism also forces us to begin reimagining the idea of what community is. Instead of locations within cities that we live, we can begin viewing communities as larger and more inclusive, without boundaries or borders. A focus on communal control of the structures of power means that each person has access to everything that is needed: food, housing, mental and physical health treatment, etc. It means that access to these things is in the best interest of everyone, and no longer limited to those who have the ability to afford it. It means abolishing oppressive state structures such as the police, ICE, and systems of incarceration. We can instead transform them into community-oriented emergency responders who focus on crisis de-escalation, restorative justice, and mediation, replacing prisons with emergency, short-term, and long-term mental health treatment facilities.

Capitalism has taught us all to accept that we aremost successful when we struggle alone, that success is individualized and personalized fulfillment. It has sold us a fake reality, the costs of which continue to destroy communities and violently perpetuate a hierarchy rooted in domination and exploitation. It has alienated us from our sense of community and our sense of self. That isn't by accident. The neoliberal system works when we are divided and categorized. But this is just simply not true. We are not isolationist by nature; we are inherently communal creatures. And it is time we acknowledge that, and begin to stop accepting a world void of compassion and care and instead create a world flowing with compassion and love together.

JOSH LOWN is currently a PhD student at Boston College's School of Social Work, where he plans on studying the protective and risk factors at play in creating strong and cohesive communities.

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A Socialism of Collapse in the Anthropocene

BAYO AKOMOLAFE

...these are posthuman times...

-Rosi Braidotti

XENOPHOBIA, CLIMATE CHANGE, AND THE PROMISE OF SOCIALISM

In August 2019, a new wave of riots swept through Johannesburg in what observers identified as 'xenophobic attacks' on migrants from other parts of Africa. This violent uprising of machete, torch, and song snaked its way through the streets, in broad daylight and under the cover of darkness, marking other black bodies with a red-eyed vengeance—demanding these strange 'others,' these *makwerekwere*[1], return to where they came from. At least 12 people—including South Africans—were left dead in its wake. The diplomatic reprisals were swift. The rest of the continent bristled and hissed at South Africa's anti-foreigner sentiment: Nigeria recalled its Ambassador; Air Tanzania diverted its flights away from Johannesburg; pop stars across the continent cancelled their gigs and reprimanded the vigilante mobs on the internet.

This wasn't the first time. It happened most notably in 2008, with a death toll of more than 60 people and hundreds of thousands displaced. The question then is, how did the Rainbow Nation, Mandela's experiment in crafting statehood, become the "global capital of xenophobic violence"?[2] Analysts have scrambled to see patterns and explanations in the clouds of dust left by these pogroms against African migrants. From noticing the impacts of neoliberal globalization on social reproduction, to acknowledging the toxic manipulations of the ANC (in which South African politicians opportunistically blamed other Africans for the woes of the poor)[3] and the colonial legacies of Apartheid in reinforcing a victim-based identity, and even cultural frameworks around witchcraft (in which, according to Jason Hickel's analysis, people see foreigners as 'witches' disabling productivity)[4], theories abound.

Some analysts also suggest global changes such as climate change play an oversized but underappreciated role in shaping nativist politics today. Climate disruption mediates politics, instigates refugee movements across the globe, stresses modern institutions and processes, and fosters a milieu in which fascism and dangerous nationalistic tendencies can thrive. As capitalist externalities (such as the hidden environmental effects and labors, costs and invisible subsidies that don't make it into balance sheets) threaten to destabilize the algorithms of the status quo, flailing against a political-economic system that proliferates painful exclusions, socialism is re-entering the conversation in a powerful way—though one may argue it never left it. Fourteen thousand kilometres west of Johannesburg, in the United States, presidential candidate and democratic socialist Bernie Sanders has premised his surprisingly resilient 2020 run for the White House on these curious connections between climate and socialist politics. Bernie's socialism flows from an emancipatory tradition that critiques capitalist systems as inhumane, and values humans as intrinsically worthy of attention, care, and celebration regardless of their positioning in a capitalist hierarchy. "Education is a human right! Universal healthcare is a human right!" Bernie bellows in massive gatherings that have increasingly attracted and appealed to young people who are exhausted with the anonymity of Calvinist capitalism.

Bernie's spiel ties together the urgency of global changes, the structural injustice of unbridled bare-knuckled market-deregulated capitalism, the prophetic and expansive promise of (democratic) socialism as an alternative, and the methodology of solidarity and struggle against the "1%" as a means to freedom. He has effec-

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Bernie Sanders. Image courtesy of Gage Skidmore/Flickr.

tively deployed a reading of climate change as an ironic incubator for climate deniers, who then explain their fascism as a necessary measure to curb the infiltration and excesses of "illegals," minorities or any group that threatens the established order of things. By reducing complex and deleterious climactic effects to the sins of non-white others, President Donald Trump has sought to draw a tight circle around people who look like him. A metaphysics of superiority. Bernie's socialism wants to scratch open that circumference in the sand, and draw a wider circle to include more people.

BUT SOCIALISM FOR WHOM?

But socialism enacts exclusions of its own. It is not apolitical, neutral, or 'natural.' It has historically been premised on, and instigated by, a reading of the world that centralizes humans, human languages, human technologies, human cultures and meaning at the heart of the social world. An anthropocentric social universe. But who gets to be 'social'? French sociologist Bruno Latour poses this question in his bid to "reassemble the social." His critique of traditional sociology springs from noticing that the term 'society,' which sociology seeks to study in a scientific manner, presumes too much: that such a collective appears already made, preemptively explaining why we behave in the ways we do. In the stead of a smooth and premature concept that underlies all we do, Latour introduces to us a complex conglomeration of 'actors,' human and nonhuman, in networks acting upon other networks. What constitutes the social is always in flux, always up for grabs, and always to be read in terms of particular networks of bodies acting upon or being acted upon.

In this sense, Latour (and he is not the only one that does this), by calling attention to the "sociology of the social," releases from its incarceration the nonhuman world, the parliament of things—sentient and non-sentient—to which we do not ascribe agency despite their contributions to the 'social' that are invisible to the modern imagination. Chairs, clouds, bacteria, computers, trinkets, software, neon lights, viruses, slices of pizza, and specks of dust are constructors of the social. Suddenly, the Trumpian wall that boundaries the realm of the 'social' away from the realm of the 'natural' becomes porous and fluid, instead of fascist-hard and dismissive. Feminist writers such as Rosi Braidotti, Karen Barad, Donna Haraway, Isabelle Stengers, Stacy Alaimo, Catherine Keller, Astrid Neimanis, and Vicki Kirby go further in framing posthumanist theses that reject the self-referential, essentializing move that situates humans as the centre of the world. 'Humans' are contingent upon, and emerge from, a matrixial web of co-becoming.

On the other hand, the philosophical tradition of humanism attaches great importance to humans, and treats them as autonomous selves separate from other selves and the natural world at large. The intrinsic spiritual worth of the self is, by definition, not derived from some 'outside' source but is essential to the self's selfhood. However the question of an 'outside' has preoccupied and shaped conversations in more recent times, given the peculiar ways the so-called Anthropocene and its endemic environmental changes pressure us to revisit our fond presumptions of ontological independence and suzerainty over nature, and of the neat binary of an 'inside' versus an 'outside.' Put differently, it now seems impossible to delink the 'outside' from the 'inside.' It seems the Great Inside of human subjectivity—that province of privacy that is sacrosanct to the calculations of modern citizenship—has never been as sanctified as we've been led to believe. Like a Mobius strip, the inside world folds into the outside, and vice versa. Mind is material and embodied, and matter is semiotic and dynamic. Emotions, cognition, consciousness, intentionality, and morality are conventionally thought of as human properties; posthumanist analyses however reframe these so-called hard-wired attributes as relational effects or environmental matters. For instance, there are studies showing how the hardness or softness of furniture (along with a slew of other apparently non-consequential situational factors) could have powerful effects in shaping perception and ethics.

By privileging an analysis of the universe as deeply relational, entangled and entangling, the aforementioned writers, congregating around a neo-materialist flag, de-exceptionalize humans while suggesting that the actions of the world around us cannot be relegated to dumb cause-and-effect movements outside of the agential vitality of the human. This opens up a whole new set of questions, research possibilities, and speculative fabulations. If these nonhuman/more-than-human actions are vital, animated, motivated, and interested, what is meant by 'human' is called into question. Where does the human stop and nature proceed? What is the terrain of the social? Do waste products in a refuse dump have a socialism, a politics of their own? Should we consider the 'rights,' politics, and social influences of bees on the ways we carry out performing the capitalist project? Can we entertain the possibility that when a tree falls in the forest, there's always *someone* (or *something*) there to hear it?

A POSTHUMANIST SOCIALISM OF COLLAPSE

Hegel bequeathed us with a promissory dialectic, which signalled that the fleeting fluctuations of the imperfect, of the 'phenomenal,' would one day give way to the perfect stillness of the noumenal. And thus, we would finally know peace and freedom. His student, Karl Marx, wrapped Hegel's near-inscrutability with the bones, tendons, flesh, and skin of the historically marginalized worker, who shall one day topple capitalist imperialism and gain freedom. With the Anthropocene, something traversal, not fully available for holistic analysis, and which can only be seen in part, disrupts the freedom plot. Like a comet streaking across the sky, something messianic turns the algorithms of struggle on their heads. The halo of interpretive purity and analytic distance is broken—and through the collapse, the breach, flows the posthuman.

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> The implications of a posthuman ethos for seeing the social anew and revisiting the promise of socialism cannot be overstated.

Since the early 90s, posthumanism has gained body as a constellation of new questions and new concerns. Prior to this, continental philosophy was almost entirely focused on language, semiosis, culture, cognition, and consciousness. At least in western universities, the material world was hardly ever considered or noticed. It got in the way of proper thinking. Not anymore. The implications of a posthuman ethos for seeing the social anew and revisiting the promise of socialism cannot be overstated.

As such, the environmental changes that characterize the Anthropocene are not merely to be engrafted upon the pre-existing body of the 'social'—since the 'social,' along with the 'human,' is indeterminate, non-essential, and complex. These ecological shifts challenge our definitions of agency, open up conversations about the sociology of the social, and reframe socialism. Climate change is, for instance, not simply a mute externality swirling 'outside' the human: climate change is the deterritorialization[5] of the human, the calling into question of the human figure. By the human figure, I do not simply mean the hominoid shape, I mean the assemblage of processes/bodies that reinforce the paradigm of 'Man' (specifically, the white male). I mean the post/modern project of assigning identity, the privileging of language over matter, the troubling denigration of the environment as a source of resources, the instrumentalization of thought and pathologization of neuro-diversity, the linearization of time, and exclusionism of agency. This is the territory of 'Man' that the posthuman undercuts. The Anthropocene tells us that we are not separate, exceptional, or independent. It says we are entangled with the world around us. It says the social is weirder than we can imagine, and—as such—justice is indeterminate. Always yet-to-come.

Image by Pexels from Pixabay.

In spite of its rhetorical commitments to redistribution, to economic justice, and political power granted to the invisible, socialism is caught in the gravitational pull of humanism. It does not notice the *immigrants at the border*, the non-indentured servitude of objects around us, or the posthuman 'subject.' By swimming in the curdling milk of anthropocentricity, socialism leaves out from its analysis and struggle for freedom the contributions of the more-than-human world—particularly how fondly ideational articulations and abstractions of concepts like justice and freedom are tied up in material arrangements and are not as stable or as clear-cut as we might think.

In not so many words, socialism needs a new metaphysics. I would argue what this metaphysics of socialism needs is a metaphysics of entanglement, of the more-than-human, of a theological *excessiveness* whereby 'God' spills through ideological containers, and is inter-carnated in everything—just as everything is inter-carnated in 'God.' I write not of a 'kingdom of God' but a 'kin-dom of God,' to deploy Catherine Keller's lyrical phrase. What is needed is a theo-politico-economic movement that recognizes the metabolic rift that modernity occasions between western political imaginaries and the 'world's doings.' What is needed is a coming down to earth, a humility at the gaping yawn of climate collapse. A hesitation to close the loop neatly and too tightly around our explanations and discussions. A willingness to allow for a world that stretches beyond, resists, challenges, displaces, and queers our interpretations of it.

This is the ethics of collapse: that we have come to the 'end' and the 'edge' of *holistic* analysis; that a full picture is no longer possible. That the many projects of socialist analysis—the identity of classes, the dialectics of working class struggle, the inherent value of the human and the muteness of the world that surrounds human communities—must now allow for a wilder world than justice could possibly comprehend.

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Footnotes

[1] A South African offensive onomatopoeic term for foreigners, or "babblers"

[2] https://www.spiked-online.com/2019/09/19/the-ugly-truth-about-the-new-south-africa/[3] https://www.azquotes.com/quote/1185025.

[3] https://africasacountry.com/2018/08/xenophobia-trumps-ubuntu-in-south-african-politics

[4] chrome-extension://oemmndcbldboiebfnladdacbdfmadadm/https://static1.squarespace.com/static/59bc0e610abd04bd1e067ccc/t/5cb6dc87eb3931724de22890/1555487882269/Hickel+-+%27Xenophobia%27+in+South+Africa.pdf

[5] Might be read here as decomposition.

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What is Socialism? Answers from a Humanist, Marxist Point of View

KEVIN B. ANDERSON

In dialectical thought going back to Socrates, it has often been useful to define something by indicating what it is not, and from there, getting closer to a true definition of the issue at hand. This method of presentation is different, of course, from that in traditional textbook learning, but it is utterly appropriate to the discussion of socialism, a subject both complex in its own right and overlaid with so many conflicting perspectives and interpretations.

In the discussion below, I will base myself on two main considerations. One, does socialist theory accurately describe what faces us today and offer a positive alternative? Two, to what extent are various socialist ideas and practices in accord with the perspectives of Karl Marx? This assumes, at least provisionally, that Marx's thought remains an important yardstick by which to measure both the state of contemporary capitalism and the best manner in which to transcend or sublate [Aufheben] it. The need for such a recourse to Marx is by no means certain to most commentators, above all in the USA. But as the great socialist humanist Erich Fromm once wrote, in lines that unfortunately still ring true today: "It is a sad comment, yet one which cannot be avoided, that... ignorance and distortion of Marx are to be found more in the United States than in any other Western country."

SOCIALISM IS NOT CAPITALISM

Capitalism's antithesis is socialism, which aims to abolish and replace it on a positive basis with a new humanist society. Too often, however, attempts at socialism, whether reformist or revolutionary, land us right back in capitalism (French social democracy, Russia, China, etc.), because they hit only at the surface manifestations of capitalism, and do not uproot it completely. Often, this was because the understanding of capitalism was itself limited. But what is capitalism?

The most obvious, glaring feature of capitalism is exploitation, which is the source of today's obscene levels of economic inequality. Capitalism is the most efficient mode of production ever created by human beings, far more so than feudalism or the ancient Greco-Roman slave-based economies. Rather than the whip, although versions of it are still used as well, labor is more often dominated by the silent compulsion of the labor market and, once on the job, by impersonal bureaucratic management. No previous mode of production has produced as much material wealth as has capitalism. And no system in history has produced such yawning economic gaps between those at the top and those at the bottom. This is not because those at the bottom are typically worse off than before capitalism, but because modern capitalism has created fortunes that feudal lords, Roman patricians, or Chinese gentry could not have imagined.

According to Marx's famous law of value and surplus value, the labor of workers adds value to the raw materials furnished to them. His prime example is the modern capitalist factory, where he specifies how wages are actually calculated, in a process he sees as theft. He examines the issue at two levels. At the first level, that of the labor market, which operates outside the factory, outside the sphere of production, capital seeks to pay the workers the minimum necessary for their immediate survival and reproduction (mainly child rearing), or even less, by setting them in competition with each other in a race to the bottom. This ceaseless quest by capitalists for cheap labor is a product of the competition they themselves face with other capitalists to lower their labor costs. At Marx's second level of analysis, we are no longer outside in the labor market, but inside the factory, inside production. Only at this point, in discussing how capital extracts value (and later profit) from workers, does Marx discuss productivity, how much value labor actually adds to the raw material. Here, the cost to capital of a day's wages is equivalent only to a very small portion of the value actually added by workers to the raw materials during the workday. The rest of the value created, once other costs like raw materials and rent for the factory are deducted, is *surplus value* (some of which becomes profit). This surplus value is based upon the *surplus labor time* the workers are forced to work, far beyond the small

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amount of labor time that adds sufficient value to the product to equal their wages. Marx calls this smaller portion of the workday *necessary labor time*, in contrast to the rest of the workday, which comprises that surplus labor time that amounts, as he sees it, to a free gift to capital. Moreover, capitalism keeps pushing that necessary labor time in a downward direction, under the pressure of what Marx terms "socially necessary labor time," forcing workers to work harder and harder as the system develops. After Marx's death in 1883, these processes became even more pronounced, with innovations like assembly lines or cobots, a 21st-century term for "collaborative" robots that work alongside humans. These developments force workers into a breakneck pace that never slows, not even for a moment.

Early capitalism extends surplus value (and profits) by radically lengthening the working day, in this way creating large quantities of surplus labor time relative to necessary labor time. For example, a sixteen-hour workday might comprise four hours of necessary labor time and twelve hours of surplus labor time, a real bounty for capital. Once these inhumanly long workdays brought workers to the breaking point, labor unrest broke out and laws were passed limiting the working day to ten hours. In response, capitalism moved toward labor-saving machines. In this second phase, the necessary labor time shrinks, since with industrial machinery workers can create enough value to equal their wages in far less time. In this example, a ten-hour workday might comprise one hour of necessary labor time and nine hours of surplus labor time.

In both cases, a huge portion of the workday is surplus labor time, just as much a free gift to capital as was the unfree and obligatory corvée labor conducted by medieval French peasants. But when the peasants performed several days a week of free labor in the feudal lord's vineyards to "thank" him for his protection, the exploitative relationship was utterly clear. Peasants did not think of themselves as having the same economic freedoms or opportunities as their lord, especially since they were tied to the land. Under capitalism, something similar occurs, but it is deeply hidden under the wage system, as described above, with the discrepancy between the value of a day's work as calculated in the labor market and the much higher value that same day's labor generates inside production. This veiling process, where the actual value labor creates in production is hidden by the wage system, is part of what Marx terms commodity fetishism. In this sense, capitalist labor relations are not fundamentally different from the unfree labor of peasant or slave-based economies. Modern capitalism also masks its domination in another way, with a formally free labor system based upon wage labor, and in which workers can quit at will. But they soon realize that other jobs that have similar or even worse forms of exploitation are what usually await them.

Moreover, modern machine industry is no boon to the working class in another sense, since from this time onwards capitalism is marked by permanent, mass unemployment. As machines replace people, and automation and robotization come along, this is only exacerbated. At one level, mass unemployment stabilizes the system, giving capital another whip over the workers who are told to obey or be replaced. But at another level, permanent mass unemployment threatens the very basis of the system, leading those at the bottom to question its viability. This is exacerbated further by the periodic economic crises that wrack the system.

A second core feature of capitalism, alienation, is in a sense logically prior to exploitation, for alienated labor undergirds the entire productive apparatus that exploits workers and creates value and profits for capital. From his earliest

Still from Modern Times, Charlie Chaplin

> As the youthful Marx of 1844 sees it, creative and freely organized cooperative labor is at the core of who we are as human beings, central to our species being or essence.

writings onward, Marx took over the concept of alienation from his philosophical mentor, G.W.F. Hegel. Creative labor forms a major part of our identity as human beings and the human being is often defined as a tool-making animal. While other animals perform labor, sometimes systematically and cooperatively as in the labor of ants or bees, human beings do so in a conscious, planned manner that changes fairly rapidly (at least in evolutionary time) according to historical circumstances. Moreover, human labor is inherently creative, not merely repeating the same patterns over and over again. We combine our muscles and our minds together to produce our sustenance, and have been doing so ever since hunter-gatherer days. As the youthful Marx of 1844 sees it, creative and freely organized cooperative labor is at the core of who we are as human beings, central to our species being or essence. Two decades later, in *Capital*, he writes,

> A spider conducts operations which resemble those of the weaver, and a bee would put many a human architect to shame by the construction of its honeycomb cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is that the architect builds the cell in his mind before he constructs it in wax. At the end of every labor process, a result emerges which had already been conceived by the worker at the beginning, hence already existed ideally.

This does not mean only physical labor, for the earliest humans also produced art and probably some forms of religious and scientific knowledge, as seen in the symbolic expressions found in cave paintings and our early migration patterns attuned to the seasons and probably planned out by rudimentary scientific observations connected to some sort of cosmology.

To Marx, alienation is based upon a radical separation between mental and manual labor, with some of us relegated to stoop labor and others to the more intellectual, creative side producing our sustenance. To be sure, this has occurred in some form at least since the pyramids, but in these early class-divided societies most people farmed and did so with their own tools and land. While the long hard

Image courtesy of Rowan Heuvel/Unsplash

work of farming meant they could not attend Socrates's philosophy seminars, they were able to use both their minds and their muscles to plant and harvest crops, and to plan this activity from year to year. They used tools, rudimentary machines like ploughs, and draft animals to do so, all of which they commanded. This changes radically under capitalism, especially by its industrial stage. Capitalism separates mental labor from manual labor more completely than previous systems. The human worker is increasingly reduced to a bee or ant-like existence, while a very few people involved in more creative labor do so on behalf of a small sliver of society that forms the dominant classes. And even that creative labor is increasingly channeled and homogenized. A major source of that homogenization is the fact that workers no longer control their tools, their means of production. In fact, the machines in the factory come to dominate the worker, who become their "mere appendage," as Marx and Engels write in the *Communist Manifesto*. (Charlie Chaplin's iconic film "Modern Times" offers a humorous but profound interpretation of this form of alienation.) Under this subject-object reversal, human workers experience a very acute type of alienation during the process of work, one of our core life activities. As Marx deepens the concept of alienation in *Capital*, he writes of a fetishized existence wherein human relations are as relations between things. How many who have worked at the lower end of society, whether in production or service, have been told when they asked a question or made a slight criticism: "Your job is not to think or question but to work exactly as we tell you to do, and if you don't like it, there's the door"? Moreover, the most modern technologies use machines, to which no question or complaint can be directed, to take over much of this supervision, tracking us every millisecond of the workday.

> "Even at higher rates of pay, workers are still exploited and also robbed of almost all creativity and meaning at work. They are alienated from their species essence as free and creative beings."

Part of the power of the term alienation is that it describes not only the low-wage exploitative factory work found in nineteenth-century Europe and the twenty-first century Global South, but also the higher-wage blue collar work sometimes found in the economies of North America, Western Europe, and Japan. Even at higher rates of pay, workers are still exploited and also robbed of almost all creativity and meaning at work. In this way they are alienated from their species essence as free and creative beings. Even the creative professions are subject to elements of alienation, albeit not the full version of it found in factory work.

In this sense, alienated labor courses through all aspects of capitalist society as a defining element, from the bottom nearly to the top. Moreover, the level of alienation only increases as the system matures. And as the young Marx wrote, alienation runs even deeper than private property as a defining feature of the capitalist system.

A third core feature of capitalism is the racism, imperialism, and war that accompany it at every stage. Modern capitalism begins about 500 years ago with Columbus's rapacious colonization of the New World, soon followed by large-scale slave plantations worked by kidnapped Africans. Capitalism also begins with throwing the peasants of Western Europe off the land, first in England, in order to form capitalist agribusinesses like giant sheep farms that produce wool for export. This increasingly replaces subsistence farming by smallholder peasants subject to a tax in kind or in labor to their overlords. For its part, slavery on a large scale and as a central feature of the productive apparatus of society is not new. But modern capitalist slavery, as Marx notes, is the most cruel and inhuman form of slavery ever seen, because it combines the brutality of ancient forms of slavery with modern forms of value creation and the relentless pressure of socially necessary labor time. (On this, see my article, "What Marx Understood About Slavery," *Jacobin*, September 9, 2019 https://jacobinmag.com/2019/09/slavery-united-states-civil-war-marx) Modern slavery also forms the institutional basis for modern racism, an unprecedented and obscene gradation of the entirety of the world's population into "superior" (whiter) and "inferior" (darker) peoples. Marx creates the term primitive accumulation of capital to describe this process of wealth creation via modern slavery and the uprooting of the peasantry. A few centuries later, as modern industrial capitalism comes to the fore, the leading industrialized countries reach out and subjugate the less developed ones, coming to dominate not only Africa and Latin America, but also the still somewhat powerful empires of China, South Asia, and the Middle East. Super exploitation based upon cheap labor and forcible extraction of raw materials helps capital to accumulate at ever higher levels by around 1900.

However, there was then and is now no single completely unified capitalist system, but rather a number of capitalist nation states and national empires. Competition over colonies and for control of the world economy results in inter-imperialist rivalry, culminating in World War I. Revolutionary uprisings follow the end of the war, especially the anti-capitalist revolution in Russia in 1917. In response, capital in some countries backs fascist and Nazi parties, which promise to forestall the revolutionary threat. They build upon centuries of racism based upon slavery and colonialism, targeting Jews as the "other" inside the industrialized world, whom they blame for unemployment, crime, and chaos, promising to place the Christian, white popular classes back in the saddle, with good jobs on the way. This kind of politics allows extremely reactionary movements to gain a popular base, far wider than that of

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traditional far-right ones like monarchism, by appealing to and fomenting anti-Semitism and racism as ways of diverting class anger away from capital and the state. Nazism gains its greatest popular strength in Germany after the global economy collapses in 1929. Its genocidal ideology and practices are in this sense a product of capitalism, a morbid response to its deep crisis and degeneracy. Fascism and Nazism also import the brutality and super exploitation of imperialism back into the heart of Western Europe. If Nazism is a product of the economic and social crisis of capitalism generated by war and the Depression, then imperialism and racism are longstanding structural factors that help make it possible.

A fourth core feature of capitalism is its gender subordination and its regulation of sexuality and the human reproduction of the species. Although many preliterate and pre-class societies seem to have enjoyed a measure of gender equality, class societies, going back to the ancient world, have enforced male domination. Capitalism does so in a particular way, according to its needs. Whereas pre-capitalist societies the world over tended to carry out most production in family or clan groups, capitalism radically separates home and work. In an early phase, male workers go out of the home to workshops and factories, eventually not returning until the end of the workday. This aspect of capitalism heightens the gendered division of labor, confining women to household management and small-scale food production. Over time, however, a countervailing pressure exerts itself, as capital draws women out of the home as well in order to work in the factories. This recourse to female labor becomes more pronounced with machine production, as less heavy lifting and more manual dexterity is required. In this phase, capitalism narrows some gender differences, as large portions of the population, both female and male, become workers. However, this transformation is differentiated by class, as it is the women from the popular classes who work outside the home, while the more middle- and upper-class women remain for several more decades primarily in non-waged employment. Over time, this too fades, as middle- and upper-class women take on white collar and professional occupations. At all levels, some women break into highly paid positions previously limited to men as a result of protracted struggles in social movements and in the courts. By this century, middle- and upper-class women are often employing low-wage women of color to do part of the domestic household labor neither they nor their partners are able or willing to perform. Thus, while male domination continues under capitalism, the successive forms it takes are different from those in precapitalist societies. Sexual relations also become more individualized, with pleasure rather than procreation alone increasingly seen as moral, normal, and healthy. Whole areas of life, like same-sex relations, also undergo huge changes under modern capitalism, losing some of their shadowy existence, with many legal barriers falling in recent years as a result of determined struggles. At the same time, sexuality is colonized increasingly by capital, in myriad ways ranging from the cosmetics industry to corporatized LGBT pride days and women managers and capitalists taking their place at the heights of the system. As these changes in sexuality and gender relations have emerged, reactionary fractions of capital have played upon the concomitant anxieties of parts of the populace, similarly to how fascism and Nazism did so during the last century.

A fifth core feature of capitalism is the strengthening and centralization of the state, until it reaches modern state-capitalism. As with gender oppression, state domination is much older than capitalism. Historically, the state crystallizes around a ruling class with a body of armed men who work full time for it and who enforce its will on the underlying population. Thus, the ancient Roman or Chinese states defended the landed aristocracy and the modern capitalist one defends what Marx called the bourgeoisie, the small stratum that owns and controls the means of production—the chief economic institutions—of society. The state undergoes several changes under capitalism. With modern means of communication and surveillance, the state becomes more successful than ever at controlling the population, even at the granular, day-to-day level. (Think of Chinese face recognition software that can monitor even small crimes like littering.) The state also develops greater-than-ever military strength, undergirded by capitalist industrial production and technology. Think of how the vast productive apparatus of the USA ultimately defeated Hitler's Germany by manufacturing unheard of numbers of tanks and planes for its forces and those of its less developed ally Russia. The state also takes over more benign activities, like mass education and social welfare. As capitalism moves through various phases, from early competition among many small enterprises to monopoly capitalism, the state strengthens and centralizes in tandem with the centralization of capital itself. This process culminates in the tendency toward state-capitalism, where giant state bureaucracies come to the fore, whether in totalitarian forms like Nazism or Stalinism, or more democratic ones like Roosevelt's New Deal. (On this point, see CLR James, Raya Dunayevskaya, and Grace Lee Boggs, *State Capitalism and World Revolution* and Dunayevskaya, *Marxism and Freedom*.) Since the 1950s, the most powerful modern states each possess enough nuclear weapons to destroy most life on the planet, with the decision to use them in the hands of individual state leaders. It is hard to think of a more complete destruction of democracy or of a more total concentration of power in the hands of the state. All of this is made possible by the same advances in technology that power the modern capitalist industrial system, in what is often termed the military-industrial complex.

Karl Marx. Image courtesy of thierry ehrmann/Flickr

A sixth core feature of capitalism is environmental destruction. To be sure, precapitalist pastoral and agricultural societies certainly cleared forests, degrading the environment in this and other ways. But modern capitalism operates at an entirely different level. It destroys the environment relentlessly and with the same efficiency with which it exploits labor. Its appetite for surplus value is literally limitless, what Marx calls accumulation for accumulation's sake. This makes capitalism a unique destroyer of the environment.

WHAT IS SOCIALISM?

If socialism is the positive and emancipatory antithesis of capitalism, then what is involved in actually going beyond capitalism in a posi-

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tive way? A genuine, humanist socialism would need to bring to a halt or abolish not only economic exploitation and alienated labor, but also racism and imperialism, sexism and gender subordination, the modern state, and environmental destruction. Here we are faced with a dilemma. On the one hand, it is hard to see how racism, sexism, environmental destruction, and the abuses of the modern state could be abolished fully without abolishing capitalism, their economic foundation. On the other hand, it is hard to see how abolishing capitalist exploitation and alienation would automatically abolish racism, sexism, environmental destruction, and the modern state. Let us examine these issues briefly.

Socialism as practiced over the last century and more has been almost always state-centric. This was obviously the case with those forms of socialism that emerged from Leninism, whether in Russia, China, or elsewhere. Even though Lenin had written of the need to abolish the state in favor of workers councils or soviets that governed through direct democracy from below, this idea was quickly scrapped during the civil war that followed the Russian revolution, never to return. However, the pre-Stalinist Soviet Union advanced the cause of anti-imperialism by backing movements in India, China, the Middle East, and elsewhere against European, US, and Japanese colonialism, while also taking measures to support oppressed racial and ethnic minorities both at home and abroad. The early USSR also strongly supported women's rights. It was the first major political entity to legalize abortion and enacted many other measures to emancipate women. Its anti-racist and women's liberation agenda was largely scrapped under Stalin, under whom Russia evolved into state-capitalist totalitarianism. Maoist China was fully Stalinist from day one and therefore completely state capitalist, although it did free China from over a century of imperialist domination, also taking many measures to emancipate women from a patriarchal system whose ideological roots stretched back over two millennia. These forms of socialism are clearly anti-democratic. Moreover, they mercilessly exploited their workers and peasants in a drive toward rapid industrialization. After a ruthless destruction of this sort, comparable or even greater in its ferocity than what Marx described as the primitive accumulation of capital in Europe and the Americas, these states sometimes achieve successes in an empirical sense. This was seen in Russia's defeat of Hitler and development of modern nuclear weapons that put it on a par with the USA, or the way the Maoist system threw off foreign domination and helped lay the foundations for the economic behemoth that is twenty-first-century China.

Partly in response to such oppressive forms of socialism, in the last few decades, many have adopted the term "democratic socialist." These latter forms of socialism eschew revolutionary dictatorship and promise grassroots democracy. In contrast to Stalinism, they favor multiparty elections, mobilization from the grassroots, and free internal debate within their organizations. In addition, in contrast to the politics of feminism, anti-racism, and environmentalism that dominated leftist discourse and practice since the 1990s, these movements put class and the critique of capitalism back at the center. But they sometimes do so in ways that run the danger of class reductionism, dismissing as merely liberal those movements against gender subordination, racial oppression, or environmental destruction that fail to explicitly target capitalism. Moreover, democratic socialism invariably calls for strengthening the state, at least those parts of the state that support education, social welfare, and the like. In the USA, it sometimes amounts to nothing more radical than a return to Roosevelt's New Deal

"The Marxist-Humanist notion of socialism cuts much deeper, challenging the hyper-modernism of statist socialism."

or a support of the social policies of contemporary Canada or Sweden. To be sure, this means opposition to neoliberalism, but not to capitalism itself.

And in a fundamental though often missed affinity with Stalinism, democratic socialism centers on getting the state to control capital in a way that is supposed to benefit the working people. Thus, both Stalinism and democratic socialism are forms of statist socialism that are inadequate to the challenges facing us today. Nor do they share the depth of Marx's total critique of capitalism. Finally, these statist forms tend to glorify modern technology and to view scientific progress in uncritically positive terms.

The Marxist-Humanist notion of socialism cuts much deeper, challenging the hyper-modernism of statist socialism. What would socialism mean in this context? Above all, it would mean the re-creation of meaningful, creative work by narrowing the gap between mental and manual labor. Everyone would do some physical and some mental labor, and all would have the chance to develop their capacities in ways foreign to capitalism and other class societies, where the most complex and interesting forms of learning are relegated to just a few drawn mainly from the elites. As the young Marx and Engels wrote, in a communist society, one would hunt and gather in the morning, farm or herd animals in the afternoon, and engage in intellectual discourse in the evening.

This comprises more than combating economic inequality while maintaining capitalism. As the young Marx wrote in his little-known essay on suicide, "it is the conceit of the benevolent bourgeoisie that the only issues are providing some bread and some education to the proletariat, as if only workers suffer from present social conditions, but that, in general, this is the best of all possible worlds." While few today believe in the type of capitalist progressivism Marx is attacking here, his core argument still holds: Are we just trying to slice up the economic pie differently, which would be no small thing, or are we trying to radically change the very nature of work and life?

However, it is important to note that such a radical change, such an overcoming of alienated labor, does not mean a total rejection of advanced technology and related aspects of modern society. Who would not want high speed rail or the Internet? Who would want to return us to working mainly in agricultural labor or hunting and gathering, without advanced medicine, mass literacy, and so many other features of modernity that make our lives more livable even under capitalism, and which could work miracles in a society beyond capitalism?

At the same time, Marxist-Humanist socialism recognizes that capital accumulation as a relentless process has to be brought to an end if it is not to work us to death and to destroy the very basis of all life, our natural environment. Part of this involves critiquing science and technology when they are in the service of capital. Because far right discourse has openly attacked science, especially evolutionary biology and climate science, socialists today sometimes forget or downplay the deleterious effects of science and technology under capitalism. In the past century, scientific and technological revolutions have brought us not only some clear benefits, but also nuclear weapons. Even the "peaceful atom" hailed in the 1950s has resulted in nuclear power plants, with their disastrous meltdowns, in addition to the ongoing danger of nuclear waste and proliferation.

Chairman Mao Zedong proclaiming the People's Republic of China on 1 October, 1949. Image courtesy of Oriharal/Wikimedia.

As discussed above, science and technology in the service of capital have also brought about workplaces that monitor every second of the workday, way beyond even what Fordist assembly lines achieved a century ago. Moreover, robotics, following in the wake of automation, is eliminating jobs at a staggering rate, while also heightening the alienation of labor for those who remain employed.

Another factor related to an uncritical stance toward science and technology is a type of scientific atheism, which Marx never supported as a political project, that rejects all forms of religion as hopelessly reactionary. This can be seen in the writings of people like Richard Dawkins. Not only can it be mobilized in the service of Islamophobia, as can be seen especially in France today, but such scientific atheism also makes dialogue between socialists and progressive people of faith much more difficult. Operating like a sledgehammer, scientific atheism fails to differentiate between fundamentalist and reactionary forms of spiritual politics—the Christian right, Islamic fundamentalism, Hindu revivalism, or rightwing Zionism—and more progressive forms of religion and politics like Latin American liberation theology, Black liberation theology, the progressive Judaism typified by *Tikkun* magazine, or Gandhian satyagraha.

Scientific atheism's cookie cutter approach parallels the class reductionism found in some currents of socialism. Fostering working class unity across racial lines against capital is terribly important, but this cannot occur without acknowledgment of both the historical depths of racial oppression and of the leading role of people of color in combating not only racism but a variety of other oppressions. This is what led Dunayevskaya to formulate in the 1960s the concept of "Black masses as vanguard," as historically the leading force for progressive social change in the USA. We need to look in similar fashion at oppressions connected to gender and sexuality. How deeply rooted are these, not only in capitalism, but going back millennia? How central have women's struggles been to social movements and revolutions, from France, to Russia, to the Civil Rights Movement in the USA?

In this light, what would a genuine, humanist socialism actually look like? Marx gave us a good general outline in texts like *Critique of the Gotha Program*. There, he elaborated basically three stages on the road to full communism. (The best guide to these matters is Peter Hudis, *Marx's Concept of the Alternative to Capitalism*.) The first of these stages still has one foot in capitalism, and the key example Marx had in mind was probably the Paris Commune of 1871, which instituted a radical democracy for a few months before being crushed by rightwing republican forces. The Commune established direct democracy, with elected representatives subject to immediate recall. It abolished the police and the standing army in favor of a citizen's militia, thus effectively abolishing the state in favor of a communal system. The Commune also validated takeovers of factories by democratic committees of workers where their owners had fled, authorizing the workers to resume production of crucial commodities like bread. The Commune was a transitional form, not full socialism, in the sense that it did not take over the banks, it kept using wage labor, and it did not grant women formal voting rights, even though their voices were indeed powerful in the popular assemblies.

The next stage, which Marx calls the first phase of communism, involves the abolition of value production and of the state, with the means of production collectively and democratically owned and administered. People continue to work, not for wages, but for a nonwage type of remuneration. In this system, which has just transitioned from capitalism, work is remunerated based upon how much time or intensity is involved, but much of the millennia-old division between mental and manual labor has disappeared. Thus, highly intense work like brain surgery, or caring for autistic children, or operating a jackhammer are remunerated more highly than the same number of hours expended upon less intensive labor. But at a general level, there is a tendency toward the equalization of remuneration for all occupations. Still, some serious economic inequality remains, as some are able to work more or harder than others and therefore reap greater rewards. However, this inequality is nowhere near as marked as it is under capitalism or previous class societies.

The third stage, which Marx calls the second phase of communism, overcomes the last vestiges of inequality and alienation remaining in the previous one. Here, the hierarchical division between mental and manual labor has disappeared. Productivity in the positive sense has increased. By now, the social product can be distributed purely on the basis of need, from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs.

With such measures in effect, the state, economic exploitation, and alienated labor would have disappeared. However, this is a very abstract model that needs to be fleshed out with concrete examples and experience, and also to be brought up to date.

What are some examples of further concretization on a humanist, Marxist basis? Hierarchies of race, gender, and sexuality would need to be addressed explicitly, as they in fact were in some of Marx's other writings, with the exception of sexuality. (On this, see my *Marx at the Margins* and Heather Brown's *Marx on Gender and the Family*.) But the level of consciousness concerning race, gender, and sexuality is much higher today than in Marx's time and those issues would need to be addressed more

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completely. Thus, overcoming of hierarchies due to race, gender, or sexuality would have to be incorporated more into the various stages of communism.

In addition, the environmental effects of economic production of any sort, at whatever phase of communism, would need to be addressed explicitly. Again, Marx was no uncritical productivist and in fact held many positions compatible with the ecological movement of today. (On this see, Kohei Saito, *Karl Marx's Ecosocialism*.) But this could be addressed with greater specificity today, on the basis of advances in our knowledge about environmental destruction and sustainability. Not only would we need to examine the position of the worker in production and the distribution of the social product, as well as issues like abolishing the division between mental and manual labor, but also whether production is sustainable or not.

It is often said that socialists neglect race, gender, sexuality, state oppression, and the environment in favor of an exclusive focus on capital, class, exploitation, and alienation in ways that amount to class reductionism. Of course, as discussed above, this has sometimes been the case. At the same time though, the proponents of such critiques of socialism, who sometimes claim to be even more radical than the socialists, need to ask some questions of themselves. Can racism be fully abolished under capitalism? Can subordination on the basis of gender and sexuality? Can state oppression or environmental destruction? Or are all of these so interconnected with capitalism that we need a total view, that of a Marxist-Humanist socialism that, far from class reductionist, incorporates into its critique of capital and class, and of alienation and exploitation, a full-bodied critique of racism, sexism, heterosexism, transphobia, and environmental destruction?

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Getting Off the Marxist Dime

PETER GABEL

When we are born, and over the course of our childhoods and early adulthoods, we are, without being conscious of it, folded into ways of seeing and thinking about the world that are simply taken for granted by the culture around us. These received ways of seeing and thinking form a kind of envelope that, because we are initially inside of it, constricts our capacity to apprehend the world as it actually is in its Being. For example, if our sense of the nature of reality is shaped within the liberal or progressive sectors of the culture, we are likely to initially simply accept Darwin's theory of evolution with its notion that the world is comprised of biological species which evolve by adaptation through a process of natural selection. If I, for some reason, happen to be having a conversation with someone about evolution and I say, "actually although I think natural selection can sometimes play a part in evolution, I actually believe there is a spiritual force in nature striving through the evolutionary process to become conscious of itself as love," the person I'm speaking with is very likely to look at me as if I'm stark-raving crazy. The reason

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for the reaction is not so much that what I am saying is so outlandish, but rather that it fails to participate in a Darwinian world-view that in our sector of the culture is simply taken for granted as true.

On the Left, and here I am speaking about the socialist Left, this same taken-for-granted credulity is given to Marxism—and here I mean not just orthodox Marxism, but Marxism with all the additions that what is called Western Marxism has brought to the theory—for example, the additions of progressive psychology

> "...we have to let go altogether of the notion that there is something called "the economy" that is a kind of moving thing, driven by material need that is producing society, social structure, and the inter-relationships of human beings."

(capitalism causes alienation of people from each other and repression of psychological needs) and "the relative autonomy" of ideology (capitalism produces screwed-up ideas that justify the system and are a relatively independent force in preventing progressive social change). From the more orthodox Marxists to the more liberal and multi-factor Marxism of the last hundred or so years, the fundamental taken-for-granted assumption is that behind everything there is something called "the economic system" driven by material interests that leads to the division of society into classes, the creation of the competitive market, and the exploitation of the powerless by the powerful as the latter seek to pursue and maximize their own material self-interest. From inside this portion of the cultural envelope, the economy is perceived as a kind of thing that is the fundamental driving force behind everything—"it" leads to exploitation, alienation, the formation of justifying ideologies, and the manipulations of politics and other operations of the State.

While the satisfaction of basic material needs has to be at the center of any thinking about the processes that shape social reality—we are in part material beings that must survive physically through the acquisition of food, shelter, and physical safety—I think we have to let go altogether of the notion there is something called "the economy" that is a kind of moving thing driven by material need that is producing society, social structures, and the interrelationships of human beings. That thing-like approach to the economy is actually created by the theory itself, an externalizing metaphor that obscures what is actually taking place inside the human beings who are co-creating the social world—the lively, interactive region of our interbeing—one aspect of which is addressed to our collective material survival. If instead of beginning by simply accepting the validity of this externalizing metaphor of "the economy" and if we let ourselves plunge into a description of the socio-economic world from the inside, from within our interbeing, we may be able to illuminate the reality of what is taking place as a living milieu rather than as something that is presupposed to be a series of effects of the economic mechanism.

Seen through this interiorizing lens, we may see that what gets called the economy is actually a circulation of *fear of the Other* which utilizes hierarchy, including the class hierarchy, to monitor itself in order to allow for material survival without having to depend on other people whom we long to connect with but whom we are terrified of. Seen through this lens, the economy is a circulating rotation of social alienation allowing us to feed each other at a distance, at maximum arm's length—a

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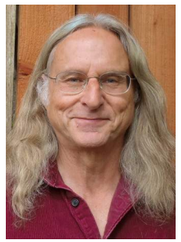
paranoid circulation of mutual distancing that functions like a spinning top, always on the verge of falling over, always kept spinning by the concentrated effort of the mini-rotation of each individual firm and in the last hundred years, of the synoptic conduction of the maxi-rotation of the State. The whole thing forms the existential truth of the intersubjective whirling we are accustomed to calling the capitalist system. But it is not really a system, only a system-like living patterning or flow whose predictability and normal functioning requires constant work by all participants who secretly all long in their hearts to escape from it. The economy *is* the conflict between desire and fear ricocheting through a vast web of living interactions, or better a vast hologram of moving existential interspace. And because it is not a thing but a flow of social alienation masquerading as a thing, our revolution must gradually dissolve it rather than overthrow it. And this we must do by generating social presence (to each other) that manifests and then increases the confidence in each of us that the Other—this other person, that other person—desires the love and affirmation and mutual recognition of each other's authentic humanity that we ourselves desire. And that we accomplish by generating a new spiritually conscious social movement that reverses the ricochet of the fear-saturated rotation of the alienated patterning, and births the new mutuality of being-here together, of being fully present to each other, that we all long in our hearts to bring into being. This new milieu of reciprocally affirmed social presence is the carrier of what Michael Lerner in his new book calls revolutionary love.

Having said this, Marxism and critical economic thinking still does have a value: to be able to partially predict the ongoing behavior of the flow of social alienation. Will the ruling class still seek to maximize profits by minimizing costs with all firms in a given industry competing with each other for market share, leading to the exploitation of workers' labor, the mobility of capital overseas seeking cheap labor, the pursuit of cheap resources in distant lands through toppling governments and through desecrating the earth? Yes, but only as a manifestation of the maintenance of a rotation of social alienation made predictable through a fear-saturated mind-control that is never stable, always being surpassed and challenged by the revolutionary impulses of the longing in everyone's heart across the globe, requiring perpetual vigilance by those on the side of fear who suppress their own longing for a fundamentally different world from the one

they feel compelled to trap themselves in. In other words the supposed "economic facts" of "the capitalist system" are actually porous and unstable processes that might, like a spinning top, tip over and that are vulnerable to activism and change. Marx himself recognized that the actors in his version of the capitalist system wore "character masks," performative appearances of personhood that legitimized one's role in the exploitative economy (*Capital*, Vol. 1, Ch. 24). But what he did not see is that this masking expressed an underlying fear of becoming truly present to the other, to any other, a presence that would have exposed one's vulnerability and longing for love and affirmation and sacred comradeship. *The mask is the thing rather than the division of labor through which it is enacted*. The Achilles heel of capitalism is the pressure of the desire for a healing mutuality of presence that pulses through each of us at every moment and has since our birth when we encountered the first other person, who (inadvertently) brought the world as it then was and still is to us as our social fate, and hurtled us into the donning of the mask by which we learned to keep the other at an (unstably safe) distance. And through the family we began to learn how to monitor that mask in ourselves and others through deference to an imaginary authority above us (projected into and then carried by the father, the teacher, the boss, the President) which we imagine ourselves to exist "underneath".

Marxism describes porous and unstable processes enacted by masked actors trying to maintain mutual distance through the mediation of symbols like "money" (everyone is born, randomly, with an imaginary "amount" with which to negotiate the world of social separation and fear). And because these processes are porous and unstable, we can potentially organize each flow for love rather than the replication of separation. The firm, the market, the State, the belief in capital itself as an imaginary governing power are all unstable, all capable of dissolution to the extent that we can come to see them as existential pseudo-cement rather than as the things that Marxism would turn them into. Of course it is much more difficult to spark and sustain movement toward love and mutual recognition inside the living terrain of those most committed to maintaining the fear-system (the ruling class family, the corporate boardroom, and other locations of mutually protective false-self pseudo-recognition and material safety)...but the important thing to see is that it is not impossible to do so because we are not talking about a thing-like system functioning according to external interests, but rather multiple, spiritually alienated locales seeking to maintain their own survival and safety in a fear-saturated world in which each character with his or her or their mask peers out from a withdrawn true self at a rotating world committed to the inevitability of fear reproducing itself, monitoring itself, denying the desire and longing with each and all of us that it is our task to affirm and give confidence to.

That redemption, that I write of today on Erev Yom Kippur, is what it will really mean to spiritualize socialism, to bring a new socialism into being that carries forward the evolution of human consciousness toward the realization of the unity of all being and the universal love that all of us actually long for, if we can admit it.

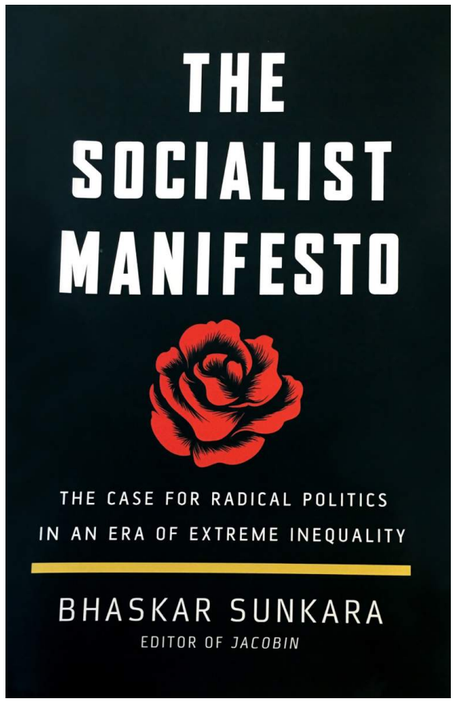


PETER GABEL is editor-at-large of *Tikkun*, and has been, along with Rabbi Lerner, one of the most significant theorists shaping Tikkun's directions. His most recent book, *The Desire for Mutual Recognition: Social Movements and the Dissolution of the False Self* has pioneered a new direction in social theory for those seeking to heal and transform our world.

What is Socialism Today?

A Reflection on Bhaskar Sunkara's *The Socialist Manifesto* (Basic Books, 2019 or Verso)

RONALD ARONSON



THE AGING NEW LEFTISTS AMONG US HAVE A RIGHT TO CELEBRATE: socialism has become mainstream. After a lifetime of saying the word softly, sometimes apologetically, while immersing ourselves in the other movements of our times—for peace, Civil Rights, feminism, labor, gays and lesbians, and now the environment—for the first time in almost 100 years it is possible to be an American activist and comfortably talk about something called socialism. We have many to thank for this change—Bernie Sanders, of course, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Rashida Tlaib, those who have kept Democratic Socialists of America alive or recently joined it, and those around *Jacobin*—but above all the millions of mostly young Americans who have decided to disregard upbringing, self-interest, ideology, and common sense, and instead dare to think that living under a different system might be better.

Why is this happening? It is an astonishing reversal. As the "end of history" was proclaimed in the early 1990s (meaning the closing of alternatives to capitalism), the British Labour Party renounced its totemic Clause IV calling for the "common ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange." Europe's political parties with "socialist" and "social democratic" in their name embraced free-market capitalism, giving up altogether the project of changing the world.

But now, miraculously, at the cashier's line in the supermarket, or the barber shop or hairdresser, or wherever people might casually talk politics, we can say "I'm a socialist" and find that we're not only listened to but may even evoke agreement. There is no need to hide anymore. Because they are busy making it happen, the mostly young people at the center of this wave may not be aware of just how remarkable is this new normal.

THE SOCIAL-HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Consider the forbidding context out of which socialism's resurgence emerges. First, over the past generation, the world's great individualistic society has if anything become more individualistic. The political, economic, and

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ideological cultures have been pointed sharply away from solving collective problems collectively. We are deeply immersed in what Zygmunt Bauman called the "individualized society,"[1] what Ulrich Beck called the "risk society,"[2] and which I have described as characterized by the "privatization of hope."[3] We live our lives, and America's children are being raised, without developing a sense of solidarity with other people or the wider world. We learn to shift for ourselves at work and as consumers. Young people grow up in a culture of single-minded entrepreneurship, are uneducated about belonging to a wider community, and highly literate about making their way on their own.

Second, the working class has been transformed. From its beginning in the nineteenth century, socialism centered on the industrial working class being brought into being by capitalism. For Marx, the proletariat held the key to the future in its struggle for survival against the bourgeoisie. But Marx's proletariat has been subjectively and objectively changed, reduced numerically, and in fact never became the vast majority Marxists expected. In the United States it became America's great middle class, then in the last generation lost ground, was defeated and fragmented, became part-time, ostensibly self-employed, and subjected to the humiliations of contractual labor. In the United States labor unions now only represent a little over ten per cent in the private sector and well under a quarter of the working population. The "gig" economy, characterized by the "precariat", a class insecure in its employment and income, and the proliferation of entrepreneurship, takes us even further from Marx's working class.

Third, socialism today has almost no connection with its historical roots. Younger socialists have no direct link with any previous socialist movement. During the 1960s many of us spoke about the New Left inventing itself without the benefit of earlier models or ties to the previous generation of socialists and communists due to the rupture effected by the Cold War and McCarthyism. The European social-democratic welfare states tried to create a responsible and restrained capitalism blessed with high standards of living and social security. They provide a number of ideas for our own movement, but they never sought radical change and today virtually all of them are on the defensive or in retreat. As is obvious in Bhaskar Sunkara and Sara Leonard's exciting collection of essays, *The Future We Want: Radical Ideas for the New Century,* our new generation of socialists is imagining a postindustrial socialist society with little linkage with previous socialisms.[4]

America's hypertrophied individualism, the shrinking of the traditional working class, and the absence of socialist roots: these are some of the reasons why the bubbling up of socialism has been so thoroughly unexpected. In such unwelcoming terrain, why then is it happening? Despite Bernie Sander's indefatigable efforts, why did it take until 2015 for him to find a significant national audience? And what has made it possible for the word "socialism" to find a hearing in the second decade of 21st century America? For Sunkara, editor of *Jacobin* as well as author of *The Socialist Manifesto*, there is nothing surprising or puzzling about this because "as long as we live in a society divided into classes, there will be natural opposition to inequality and exploitation" (262, all page references correspond to the Basic Books kindle version). He sees socialism as being about working class resistance to class society, and there is no question that "we live in a world marked by extreme inequality, by unnecessary pain and suffering, and that a better one can be constructed" (10). For him this seems the obvious explanation for today's reappearance of socialism.

For Sunkara, this is a simultaneously moral and material response to living under capitalism. Similarly, in the conclusion to the collection of essays, *The Future We Want*, Sunkara and Peter Frase spoke more pointedly of this historical moment and the current generation "facing rising inequality and diminishing economic prospects. . . Those who have entered the job market in recent years face lower employment rates, worse wages, and higher debts than those who preceded them."[5] This moral and material critique echoes what young activists are saying today. Today's rise of socialism is commonly accounted for by outrage at their objective material situation. And we know that there are plenty of reasons for discontent: the end of the post-World War II economic expansion, the financial meltdown of 2008, the wave of mortgage foreclosures, the decline in wages, the financialization of the economy, the off shoring of industrial production, the automation of production, growing poverty and inequality. Many current issues are specific to young people, including the expansion of student debt and the lack of opportunities for college graduates. Furthermore, young people seem especially attuned to the climate crisis and the role corporate capitalism plays in it. And there is no doubt that one of the attractions of socialism is that most Americans now see capitalism as a corrupt and unethical system, one that favors the 1% at the expense of everyone else, especially the have-nots. Between the financial manipulations that lead to the Great Recession, the absence of punishment for the perpetrators, the bail-out of the banks and the auto corporations, the wave of mortgage foreclosures, the Citizens United

Credit: Cat Zavis. Climate Strike, SF 2019

decision allowing corporate money to flood the political process, the galloping inequality ever since, and the tax cuts for the rich, it is easier today than at any time since the Gilded Age to see capitalism as morally bankrupt. However, there is a further and important element in the younger generation's attraction to socialism, as I've argued in *The Nation* and *Salon*,[6] and that is a rejection of the self-centered cynicism of their upbringing. It is not as if they grew up in a culture of citizenship and then veered to the Left as they came of age. Rather, their socialist identity is being generated seemingly out of thin air. This is happening not only for all the obvious economic reasons, but also because they are rejecting the prevailing individualist neoliberal culture. The striking fact is that many young people raised to compete in today's environment and brought up explicitly to see themselves entrepreneurially are rejecting this upbringing. They are going against their training and learning to see themselves collectively.

I am suggesting that today's socialism is not only about economics or the lack of future prospects, but a stance, an orientation, a change in consciousness, an identity formed *against* the prevailing individualism. It is first of all a statement that we belong to a larger world than ourselves. The individualism being rejected is increasingly experienced as being a caricature of reality. Neoliberal ideology and the demands it makes on us has grown so extreme that it no longer fits the humans it is being applied to or the reality they are living. It is falsified by experience—despite the social energy invested in it, and despite the assiduous remaking of economic, educational, cultural, and psychological realities to bend people towards it. The question about how an interest in socialism can develop among young people raised in this individualist culture is a bit like looking at the telescope through the wrong end. If so much in our political and ideological landscape is designed to minimize one's lived sense of belonging to a wider world, seeing the world and themselves *socially* is the defiantly healthy response of people who cannot continue living any longer in the unsustainable fantasy that we are all separate and on our own. In the age of total connectivity and environmental crisis it makes utterly no sense to reassert the patently ideological claim that individual atoms each pursuing their own self-interest somehow magically add up to a coherent social life, that the fate of each of us is up to each of us alone. We recognize ourselves as being too interconnected for that, and young people especially know this. Neoliberalism has had its own agenda over the past generation—serving those at the top of the economic and political system—but the lies justifying their wealth and power bear no resemblance to the experience of living, breathing humans and their lifeworld.

The white-haired old man Bernie Sanders is for many young people a grandfather figure rooted in a deeper and more collective place than most of the current generation's parents. Belonging to a different history, he lives and speaks a truth many of them have been trying to forget. He connects young people with their own unlearned past, reminding them of the political demands entailed by their present electronic interdependence, and helping them draw some of the obvious conclusions from their instant and constant participation in a global society whose environment is seriously at risk. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Rashida Tlaib are wholly contemporary incarnations of this reality. They remind us that even if young people today have not inherited a socialist tradition, they have inherited identities and traditions of constant contestation dating back to the 1960s by women, African Americans, Native Americans, minorities, antiwar activists, and gays and lesbians. All of these movements remain unsatisfied and, along with climate activists, are an almost-daily presence among us.

Credit: Cat Zavis. Climate Strike, SF 2019

In an ecologically threatened world shrunken by travel and even more by instant and constant communications, we are together as never before and public to each other in ways impossible to avoid. Increasingly for everyone, and especially for young people, despite individualist upbringing we are together as humans have never before been together, making a mockery of the "individual society." Despite the demand that it is up to each of us to solve the society's contradictions personally, the need for social solutions for social problems becomes obvious. The sense of belonging together becomes obvious. The demand for fairness becomes obvious. For whoever cares to see, there is no alternative to seeing ourselves together and living in a fragile world.

"SOCIALISM" TODAY

Thus "socialism" has been placed on the agenda today. If opioids are a socialist issue, if climate change is a socialist issue, if inequality is a socialist issue, what do people think when they hear the word? According to a Harris poll for "Axios on HBO" "socialism" registers approval by 40% of all Americans and a majority of women ages 18 to 54. The pollsters were aware of the problem of definition, so they offered a few to their respondents, asking whether any of the following were "considered a part of a socialist political system".[7]

Universal healthcare: 76%

Tuition free education: 72%

Living wage: 68%

State-controlled economy: 66%

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State control and regulation of private property: 61%

High taxes for the rich: 60%

State-controlled media and communi cation: 57%

Strong environmental regulations: 56%

High public spending: 55%

Government "democratizes" private businesses (that is, gives workers control over them to the greatest extent possible): 52%

Democratically-elected government: 46%

System dependent on dictatorship: 49%

Workers own and control their places of employment: 48%

Among these definitions some are viewed descriptively, some positively and some negatively, and some are seen at the same time from opposing perspectives. But what the largest percentage of respondents identify as "part of a socialist political system," and probably mostly positively, are essential features of welfare-state capitalism: health care, free education, and a living wage. Among the more contested features, describing socialism as entailing democracy is opposed by those connecting it with dictatorship. State control and regulation figures highly, whether viewed positively or negatively (over the media and communication, private property, the economy, or the environment).

A Gallup poll carried out in September 2018 adds an interesting note about the public's current conception of socialism compared with during the high tide of McCarthyism and the Cold War in September, 1949.8 Today 23% of those polled thought of socialism in terms of "Equality—equal standing for everybody, all equal in rights, equal in distribution" compared with 12% in 1949. In 2018, 17% saw it meaning "Government ownership or control, government ownership of utilities, everything controlled by the government, state control of business" compared with 34% in 1949. In 2018, 10% saw it in terms of "Benefits and services—social services free, medicine for all" compared with 2% in 1949.

Two things are apparent from both of these surveys. First, the common sense of socialism today does not focus on abolishing the capitalist system. It does not entail social or government control/ownership of the means of production. Of twelve supposed "features of a socialist political system," aside from the call for a living wage only two (of the bottom three) have to do with the original conception of socialism centering on the working class demand for control over the means of production: workers' ownership and control of private businesses. Similarly, compared with 1949, people today tend to think of socialism in terms of greater equality, expanded rights and liberties, and the provision of certain universal social goods. Second, despite Bernie Sanders' frequent reference to the working class, "socialism" today does not necessarily evoke either a movement of, or one primarily oriented towards, workers as workers.

> "...socialism today does not necessarily evoke either a movement of, or one primarily oriented towards, workers as workers."

THE SOCIALIST MANIFESTO AND MARXISM

And yet this is precisely the project of Sunkara's *Socialist Manifesto*. His Marxism aims at a *workers'* party and a *workers'* movement. It does, however, kick off on a remarkably un-Marxist note. He begins in a light, frequently jokey vein, as if to say that thinking about socialism can be fun, and even include imagining. The first chapter is one fantasy atop another in which he goes to work for the family of singer Jon Bon Jovi, the Bongiovi pasta sauce company in New Jersey, then leaves to enjoy a worker's life in Sweden, "the most humane social system ever constructed" (23), then returns to New Jersey to witness and participate in major historical changes over the next twenty years—first to a social-democratic and then a democratic socialist America. He imagines himself as a worker going back to a democratized and socialized Bongiovi plant and eventually an entrepreneur pursuing a more personal path. Besides giving us the sheer pleasure of fantasizing a Left-wing government with Bruce Springsteen as president and imagining work in a better and then much better America, this chapter leads us to think about what life might be like under socialism, and to think about the difference between social democracy—a much reformed capitalism—and democratic socialism—a genuinely democratic society no longer dominated by capitalism.

This is obviously not at all the grim Marxism of "revolutionary" leftist sects. Moreover, it is energizing and enlivening in a more theoretical way: its wholehearted embrace of day-to-day struggles concerning limited issues. The heart of the book (160 of 265 pages) focuses on specific histories of socialist and communist movements, parties, and states in order to draw lessons for today's socialist activists. While Sunkara's study of revolutions concludes in a wholly negative way ("The system that emerged out of the October Revolution was a moral catastrophe" (183)), the main point of the entire story is about the "structural dilemma of social democracy"(137). It was "always predicated on economic expansion" (138) and thus developed a stake in capitalism's profitability. The Swedish Social Democrats, among others, "forgot a core tenet of Marxism: that the contradictions of capitalism, and its tendency toward crisis, cannot be resolved within the system" (138-9).

Sunkara is determined—and this is one of the book's important strengths—to hold on to both horns of the dilemma of social democracy: to struggle for improvements within the capitalist system while understanding that real change means going beyond the system to democratic socialism. He stresses that socialists will have to fight for, and celebrate, improvements within the system, without pretending that these are economically or morally sufficient. Both Marxism and history teach that "even if we're content to simply reform capitalism, those reforms will be continually undermined by capital's structural power. Addressing that dilemma will mean pressing on to democratic socialism" (260). Although he is not clear about what it means to "press on," Sunkara refuses to be either a Pollyanna or a cynic about the moderate path reality usually imposes.

In particular, he cheers the kind of "class-struggle social democracy" practiced in the mainstream by Bernie Sanders and Jeremy Corbyn: sharply identifying the social class controlling the society, engaging in electoral politics within the system, and fighting for "nonreformist reforms." Hopefully these will "not only benefit workers in the short term but can empower them to win the battles that enacting them will provide" (242). He also cheers the important role played during the 2018 West Virginia teachers strike by socialist organizers, many of them members of DSA.

Despite the many light touches of *The Socialist Manifesto*, and its' clear endorsement of struggling for limited welfare-state reforms, at its

core is one of Marxism's essential themes: "We simply cannot have an emancipatory politics within capitalism that doesn't revolve around the class whose labor makes the system run" (246). Yet for all its clarity and focus, how can many of us avoid feeling left out by Sunkara's particular take on Marxism. Why, we might ask, can't Sunkara say "include" rather than "revolve around"? Obviously, this hegemonizing of the working class seems an essential part of Sunkara calling himself a Marxist, but it will have a familiar troubling ring to many of us.

This is because first of all, for over a generation the political passivity and fragmentation of the American working class has been much

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discussed, studied, traced, analyzed, and theorized by Marxists and non-Marxists, sociologists and political scientists. Summing up much of this literature over twenty years ago in *After Marxism*, I presented its cumulative argument: "capitalism and its working class have changed in ways that make key premises of Marxism obsolete."[9] Specific points I mentioned were that the anticipated immiseration of the working class has not taken place, class structure has not simplified, workers have become fragmented rather than unified, the industrial working class has shrunk, not grown, and workers' experience has changed to the point where identification as worker has become less and less important. In the contemporary world it had become impossible any longer to make a case for the revolutionary potential of the working class. Sunkara certainly knows of these analyses and the many others that have been produced more recently, so in light of the careful attention he gives to other issues it is shocking to read his offhand dismissal: "The working class has changed over the past hundred fifty years—but not as much as we think" (244).

This statement plays a crucial role in *The Socialist Manifesto*, because it allows Sunkara to reassert the old Marxist hegemony of the working class. And that enables him to reject "the shaky ground of social movements, [based] on the premise that we can build a 'movement of movements' in which the workers' movement is one element but not necessarily the decisive one" (250). And of course this means the primacy of self-consciously socialist organizers: "Better than others, we can perceive class relations and how they offer common avenues of struggle." (243).

But to many of us, a "post-Marxist" perspective might seem to work just as well, and in fact be more inclusive. After all, it is 2020, and the onetime workers' movements, mass parties, and socialist states that made Marxism a historical presence for a hundred years are now nowhere to be found even if an exciting teachers' movement did surface last year. We know that Marxism's ideas and analyses are still relevant, including some of its understandings of capitalism and historical materialism. But it no longer retains its essential trait as a union of theory and practice that once made it a historical force and by which its relevance has always been judged.[10]

In order to call himself a Marxist, Sunkara has selected certain elements of Marxism, raised them to the status of a credo, and softened or ignored others. In the process of trying to create a coherent mobilizing working-class vision for today, he subsumes all oppressions as secondary to class oppression, and insists that they can only be truly fought against within a socialist movement. In fact, to make his argument he must distort the history of the last fifty years, claiming that because class-based movements were defeated, since the 1970s and 1980s "narrower, identity-based struggles to address injustice have filled the void" (255). Is this an appropriate way to characterize the women's movement, or the Civil Rights movement? Insisting on the hegemony of working class-centered politics distorts his perspective. "Without the bedrock of a class politics, identity politics has become an agenda of inclusion-

> "However universal and generous the ultimate intentions of this kind of Marxism, its effect is to belittle other movements and their issues."

ary neoliberalism in which individual qualms can be addressed but structural inequalities remain" (256).

However universal and generous the ultimate intentions of this kind of Marxism, its effect is to belittle other movements and their issues. Yet, as I argued in *After Marxism*, a "post-Marxism" is possible that accepts that class and capital must be vital elements of an eventual radical coalition without necessarily being the essential one, and those of us who believe this are able to function among other activists without succumbing to claims of working-class hegemony. Indeed, despite making such claims, Sunkara himself betrays an awareness of the limitations of working-class capacity today. He seems to acknowledge that the working class can no longer be claimed to be the agency of transformation possessing the power, courage, creativity, and wisdom to bring about a transformation from capitalism to socialism; rather, he refers only in one place to "the disruptive capacity of labor" (251), and in another says that today's "different and divided" working people "still have the power to rattle the system and win real gains."[11] Precisely: workers can "rattle the system," but can they overthrow it and create a new one? Sunkara reflects today's diminished expectations. But if so, why claim working-class hegemony over all other movements, rather than frankly calling for collaboration and unity with other forces? And speaking of the other oppressions that have been occupying American movements, why insist on trying "to bring them into a broader workers movement" (256)?

In fact, the crucial unasked question of *The Socialist Manifesto* is about the actual historical relationship between the various "identity politics" movements and today's revival of socialism. Obviously much research needs to be done about this, but just as obviously fifty years of struggles for equality and self-determination—by African Americans, women, gays and lesbians—had to enter deeply into the unconscious and conscious mind-set of young people who would discover socialism over the past decades. Giving workers priority over themselves turns things topsy-turvy because their identities and demands are at the core of today's socialism. Certainly organizing workers as workers will be a vital part of any future movement of transformation, but so will all the others.

I've also mentioned other sources of opposition today. Sunkara focuses on capitalism's intrinsic instability and inequality, but not other contemporary dynamics generating opposition. One of these is climate change, which is rendering ever larger places uninhabitable. Another is its runaway consumerism, choking us with unnecessary goods and imprisoning us in debt to pay for them. Another is its relentless commodification of every inch of physical and increasingly mental and spiritual space. And I've written about the "privatization of

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Credit: Cat Zavis. Climate Strike, SF 2019

hope," resulting from artificially elevating the individual and undermining the social. Each of these increasingly powerful capitalist dynamics brings both dreadful consequences and movements in response, and none of them can or should be classified as primarily affecting the working class. They are not specific working-class issues, but everyone's issues.

And yet they are socialist issues. While continuing to exploit workers, capitalism's arena of depredation and conflict has been irresistibly spreading and deepening. Any adequate analysis of capitalism today, whether we call it Marxist or not, must take account of all this, and must help equip us for struggles against it.

Which means letting go of the working class as the talisman of a socialist movement while understanding non-class and more general problems and possibilities of action. Sunkara gives little attention to these concerns, and little respect to the political movements of the last half-century. It is as if these generations barely existed, both their struggles and victories. In short, even while shaping an admirable understanding of the limits of some of the terrain in which we're fated to operate, and stressing the importance of small gains, Sunkara squeezes the issues of our time into a narrow box. Most of us will have no choice but to ignore this kind of Marxism unless it decides to stop "revolving around" the working class but rather "includes" it along with the rest of us oppressed by capitalism. After all, overlooking key areas of our collective life and assuming that workers' struggles must have hegemony over them can only undermine the socialist identity young people are developing. It is a recipe for failure, bad blood—or worse, irrelevance.

WHAT *IS* SOCIALISM?

To carry my argument a step further, I want to re-emphasize the earlier point that Bernie's movement, the presence of Rashida Tlaib and AOC in Congress, the rise of DSA, and the growth of *Jacobin* are not primarily about, or even precursors of, a Marxist understanding of socialism but are rather something different, if related: the recognition that we are all social beings and an immense variety and range of resources and facilities already belong or should belong to us in common as members of the society: air, water, all land that is not privatized (and potentially *all* by eminent domain), the spaces in which the media operate, as well as parks, public spaces, schools, universities, libraries, hospitals, and other public facilities. It is no small thing, especially when much of this is in danger of privatization today, to lay claim to this living heritage as we defend its social character. Nor is this some lesser concern, not truly "socialist." We also need to expand this socialized sector—by enacting Medicare for all, for example, or winning free higher education. Further, and this is one of Sunkara's important insights, as long as the economy is owned and controlled privately, the society's socialized sectors are constantly under threat, as for example allowing prisons and schools to be run privately and for profit. Accordingly, before we seek to map out what a socialist economic system might look like, we are required to constantly defend the already socialized sector of society. Thus calling ourselves socialists is less a statement about our ultimate goals or a set of structures we wish to create—who can say confidently what they look like?—and more about our identity and commitment to values and politics that take the social seriously.

This entails connecting the dots between all of the areas and people under siege today, and developing a holistic vision of who we are—in fact, of the many groups of "we" that we are. This entails compassion as well as a deep sense of solidarity with humans and with nature. There is no compelling reason, out of obeisance to some past vision, to center this on the working class, except when and where this is specifically relevant. Yes, workers will be a necessary part of a future socialist movement, as workers *and* as citizens. Even Sunkara places the socialization of the means of production a million miles from any socialist struggle we can meaningfully project—perhaps in his fantasy of the future, but nowhere else.

Which means that our movement will have to free itself from *The Communist Manifesto*'s anticipation of working-class victory and vision of the classless society. This has no realistic possibility of being achieved and in any case is too narrow a vision given how the world and its oppositional movements have evolved. Yes, Marxism helps us in thinking critically about the capitalist system, especially its inequalities and its crises, and encourages us to see ourselves socially and historically. It helps us to look at the system and the society holistically and structurally. Consciousness is growing about the society's specific evils and the need for an alternative to capitalism, whatever its specifics. This alternative goes by the name of socialism. But in this revival, whether or not a Marxist movement of the working class exists is less important than the fact that the working class and everyone else, as well as the environment, are in deep trouble under capitalism.

Along with this is a growing appreciation of the ideas of historical materialism: that economic structures and priorities decisively influence the shape of other institutions, of politics, of culture, and of people's values. Underlying this is the fact that we are seeing ourselves socially and historically, not individually. This is why Jean-Paul Sartre once said, speaking of Marxism, "We cannot go beyond it because we have not gone beyond the circumstances which engendered it."[12] So, recalling another of his famous statements, even if Marxism is no longer "the philosophy of our time," we can say with confidence that it is destined to continue as *a* philosophy of our time.[13]

But there is another reason why many on the Left still center themselves on Marxism – it's a reassuring conviction that the good society is coming into being. Yet this is, and always was, an illusion. In hard fact, Marxist movements never pointed to a classless society. The power and security of their vision turned out to be an illusion. Our new socialist movement's hope will not be based on "iron tendencies bringing about inevitable results,"[14] as Marx once said, but rather on possibilities and contingencies. Rather than claiming predictive power it will at most talk about what may happen and what can happen. But neither will it rest covertly on a quasi-religious faith which refuses to identify itself and can nowhere be argued.

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Where then can we find our bearings? As Sartre understood near the end of his life when he abandoned the Communist party Marxism he had spent thirty years interacting with, Marxism's eclipse has made it necessary to look elsewhere for political encouragement, to an outlook that "possesses no Marxist element. I mean, it is not an end that is defined in terms of the present situation and then projected into the future, one that will be attained by stages through the development of certain facts today."[15] He was asking where radicals can look for encouragement if the present is not unfolding towards the good society. This, after all, was the prophetic dimension of Marxism that usually went unspoken but was indeed the glue that held it together.

In his last days Sartre sought instead a moral rather than historical grounding for hope in the future, and in the process entered into a dialogue with former Maoist leader Benny Lévy, then en route to becoming an orthodox Jewish rabbi. Sartre became convinced that if a better world is not coming into being, radicals will have to find hope in our goals and our values. This means grounding ourselves in a sense of justice and righteous anger, a profound conviction about right and wrong, and experiencing our connection with the struggles and victories of previous generations. However we come to define it, socialism will have to base itself on our core value: our sense of human solidarity.

RONALD ARONSON was an editor of *Studies on the Left* in the 1960s, an activist in New American Movement in the 1970s, and a member of Democratic Socialists of America and New Jewish Agenda in the 1980s. Among his books are *After Marxism, Living Without God*, and *We: Reviving Social Hope.*(https://www.tikkun.org/the-hope-we-create-reflections-on-ronald-aronsons-ideas-on-reviving-social-hope) He is an editorial associate of *Tikkun*.

Footnotes

[1] Zygmunt Bauman, *The Individualized Society* (London, 2001).

[2] Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* (Thousand Oaks, CA, 1992).

[3] Ronald Aronson, *We: Reviving Social Hope* (Chicago, 2017).

[4] Sarah Leonard and Bhaskar Sunkara, *The Future we Want* (New York, 2016).

[5] Ibid., 173.

[6] Ronald Aronson, "Corbyn and Sanders Show That Neoliberalism Has Failed to Privatize Hope," The Nation, July 26, 2017. "Why are Two Old Socialists like Bernie Sanders and Jeremy Corbyn leading the 21st Century Left?" Salon, August 1, 2017.

[7] Harris poll done for "Axios on HBO".

[8] Frank Newport, "The Meaning of "Socialism" to Americans Today" The Gallup Poll October, 2018.

[9] Ronald Aronson, *After Marxism* (New York, 1995), 57.

[10] Ibid., 41-67.

[11] Or the ability to engage in "a mass struggle from below and messy disruptions to bring about a more durable and radical sort of change" (*Socialist Manifesto*, 39).[12] Ibid., 41-67.

[12] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method* (New York, 1963), 30.

[13] See my discussion of this in "The Philosophy of Our Time," *Boston Review*, November 2018 https://bostonreview.net/philosophy-religion/ronald-aronson-philosophy-our-time.

[14] Karl Marx, *Capital*, Preface to the First German Edition (Moscow, 1961).

[15] Jean-Paul Sartre and Benny Levy, *Hope Now: The 1980 Interviews* (Chicago, 1996) 106.

Image Credit: Scott97006/flickr

Stumble Stone

JACQUELINE OSHEROW

She tells the story every time we meet
though she's not given to repetition,
despite her age. (Erika turns eighty-eight

on her next birthday; our connection
is my friend, Carol, whose father
grew up with Erika's mother in Berlin.

They got back in touch after the war
and the closeness between the families
continues a generation later.)

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It's a wartime story: Erika's
out with her mother on an errand,
ten years old, almost oblivious

of wartime trauma. *I didn't understand*
and there, in front of them, on the street,
is Carol's grandmother: *Our dear, dear friend*;

it had been so long since we'd met;
to see her standing there, I was so happy
Erika ran to her, her arms out

she was like a grandmother to me
and the older woman pushed her away
saying *You don't see me. You don't know me*,

protecting the child, presumably.
(It was illegal to have Jewish friends.)
She was deported soon after. I'm hazy

on why she hadn't joined Carol's parents
and her older sister, an infant, when they'd gone
to the States—eleventh-hour emigrants—

as Carol's other grandmother had done.
Francizka Maass, by the way, was her name.
I only learned it from the stumble stone

(hidden by rain-soaked leaves the day I came;
I asked a woman leaving a house nearby
who knew it, cleared it off, made it gleam):

Franziska Maass, Geboren Moses 1880
Deportiert 14. 12. 1942
Ermordert in Auschwitz (no year, no day).

It was bronze, small, still fairly new.
Carol had come over for the ceremony,
(affecting, but quick; it seems, they do

quite a few of them in a single day)
her sister was there, her sister's daughter,
Erika too, *like one of the family*.

Indeed, that's how Carol had described her.
To me, she proved a godsend. She's a marvel—
sharp, self-possessed, and though quite proper,

so very welcoming on my arrival,
full of suggestions, information:
which museums to see, how to travel

the complex web of public transportation
which she still uses, at almost eighty-eight.
I visit her apartment; she visits mine

and always, eventually, that moment on the street.
I was ten years old/I didn't understand
She runs to her beloved friend, arms out—

I watch her face tense for the coming wound—
and is pushed away yet again.
She becomes that little girl for a split second:

uncomprehending, nonplussed, stricken,
so completely is her weathered face
mastered by that childlike expression.

We meet for the last time on a gorgeous
December afternoon, almost balmy
for a walk by the canal near her house ...

We cover a lot of ground (Erika's spry).
I tell of various outings, a sumptuous
day trip to Dresden: the green treasury;

the new treasury; Giorgione's Venus
(a painting I have always longed to see),
until we're walking in semi-darkness

our conversation wide and leisurely.
In no hurry to part, we stop for coffee,
sit down—the only ones in the cafe

and then—as if by ordinance—the story:
the wartime street, the jolt of catching sight
of Carol's grandmother, *so happy*.

She's running now, flinging her arms out,
and now rebuffed—*I couldn't understand*—
but her face looks less hurt than resolute;

this time her story doesn't end . . .
What's happening? There's an appointment?
I'm mystified, on strange, unsolid ground

and can't quite follow. What appointment?
All of a sudden, she and her mother
are standing in Frau Mauss's apartment

that very evening. The rest is blur.
It's only Erika's question I remember
repeated over and over and over and over:

How could we hide her? She was our neighbor.
Everybody knew who she was.
over and over: *How could we hide her?*

I'm mystified, completely at a loss.
How could we hide her? She was our neighbor.
There's rising panic on Erika's face

but I can't look away *how could we hide her?*
I don't know how to hear what I'm hearing.
How could we hide her? She was our neighbor—

The implications are past enduring.
Still I don't take them in. I'm hollow, numb,
desperate to soothe, be reassuring.

I don't think she ever gave me room
How could we hide her? . . . Everyone . . .
One long beseeching continuum

punctured by a single revelation . . .
Though what did she reveal? I'm still not certain
Frau Maass might not have *asked* to be hidden;

Two stumble stones in Budapest. Image courtesy of Nan Palmero/Flickr.

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maybe they'd come for some possession
to safeguard it for her—just one suitcase
allowed per person per deportation.

It's possible that's all it was,
the idea of hiding just bitter hindsight—
the loop of regret after a loss

though it would explain that moment in the street
if Franziska had been hoping they would hide her—
crucial, in public, to dissociate

(she'd smooth it over with the child later).
The more I think, the less is certain,
starting—how did I miss this?—with the year

inscribed (I took a photo) on the stumble stone.
I open the file. Check the date.
Nineteen forty-two. Twelve fourteen.

Clearly, if Erika was eighty-eight
in December, 2016—she wasn't ten
but fourteen years old out in that street.

A real discrepancy, ten from fourteen.
Not—don't mistake me—to impute deception
but it does offer new illumination:

a child is so judgmental at fourteen,
so quick to blame, so full of certainties
without the power to put them into action.

How much better to have been oblivious,
safe within a simple, cushioned world.
Surely she'd have seen herself as guiltless

had she actually been a ten-year-old
as she was at the beginning of the war—
unless that's what she meant? *Ten years old*

in 1939, the first of September?
Ten years old when the war began?
It is, in fact, the way you remember

as you get older—a prolonged duration
telescoped to one abiding instant.
Perhaps for Erika that one rejection

or, rather, that one furtive *appointment*
was the defining moment of the war.
Certainly a rebuff would have been prudent,

if Franceskza was hoping they'd hide her.
Had Erika's mother turned her down?
And still, after the war, found Carol's father?

Resumed her friendship with Franziska's son?
How could we hide her. She was our neighbor?
In truth it's not an unfair question . . .

Everyone knew who she was. How could we hide her?
Odds are huge that they'd have been turned in.
apparently, only about a quarter

of the Jews who were in hiding in Berlin
actually made it to the war's end.
Probably this scenario was common:

Rumors. Even the calmest people frightened.
A disappearance. Another disappearance.
A last-ditch entreaty to a friend

and eventually a city choked with penitents,
mostly gone now, of course, except for those
who were wartime children and adolescents.

They all have stories I suppose.
Why not let it rest? She's an old woman.
I don't even know the facts. Not even close.

Why this compulsion to write it down?
But think of that herculean persistence
in getting to the end (so that's the reason

for all those tellings) her very last chance—
at least with me: our final afternoon.
What was she after? Proof of her innocence?

Or was that litany of questions a confession?
She was fourteen years old. She's innocent.
Did she want compassion? Here's compassion.

I'm awash in it. Drowning in it. Spent.
But why this overpowering unease,
this sense of being, at once, deficient

to a human being in need and traitorous
to the already many times betrayed.
I'm powerless in any case. Forgiveness

is the province of the wronged; even God
can't offer it, unless the wronged refuse
(three times, I think it is, then God will yield)

or so—as Yom Kippur approached—they taught us
in Hebrew School year after year,
But why am I bringing up forgiveness?

Forgiveness has no application here;
she was fourteen years old. She's innocent.
But nonetheless, her pain is clear.

So why I am so slow, so hesitant?
What's at stake here? Everyone's gone.
Is this my tale I'm telling? How a dormant

heart six decades shut cracks open
a terrifying—if tiny—crack
and I'm half desperate to make it deepen,

half, once and for all, to shut it back . . .
A fourteen-year-old child suffers grief
and is still, at nearly ninety, heartsick.

Why not give her all I have to give?
What could she have done? She's innocent.
Why should she grieve and grieve and grieve?

Forgiveness has no meaning here. She's innocent.
Why deprive her? What could it achieve?
But I'm shut down, immobile, silent,

outwardly completely unresponsive,
How could we hide her . . . like a distant chant,
prescribed by a confessor as corrective

to an eleventh-hour penitent,
recitation itself the palliative.
Here's my prayer: that it be sufficient

or, at least, offer genuine reprieve,
that—the wronged long gone and God intransigent—
it won't matter that I can't forgive.

JACQUELINE OSHEROW is the author of eight collections of poetry, most recently *My Lookalike at the Krishna Temple* (LSU Press, 2019). She's received grants from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Ingram Merrill Foundation and the Witter Bynner Prize from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. She's Distinguished Professor of English at the University of Utah.

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Summer linden trees. Image courtesy of Pixabay

The Fragility of Hope

DAVID DANOFF

Robert Frost's ovenbird—that drab, unprepossessing warbler—,wondered as springtime gave way to summer, then fall, what to make of a diminished thing. In her new book of poems, *My Lookalike at the Krishna Temple*, Jacqueline Osherow poses a similar question: as life goes on, how do you keep singing? How do you keep creating something new from the old ingredients?

Osherow has long been a master of what could be called stealth formalism. At first glance her poems appear casual, offhand. But look closer: her line endings are studded with rhymes. Her rhythms are subtly metrical. For years she has written elegant, effortless-seeming sonnets, villanelles, sestinas. A favorite form in her earlier books was terza rima—Dante's churning gears of interlocking triple rhyme—which she used to spin out long poems ranging across time and space, from Renaissance Italian art to the trees in bloom outside her Salt Lake City home, from the Hebrew poets of medieval Spain to her youth and rambling travels. But in this book her singing is less extravagant. Terza rima only emerges in the closing section about a trip to the Alhambra palace. Through much of the book Osherow favors short lines, sometimes no more than a word or two, inching down the page. The style is stark and unadorned.

Perhaps this
is what motivated
the Kotzker Rebbe?
the desire to
achieve complete
attention?

The darkness, it turns
out, is even more at odds
than we, hourly wavering
from jubilation … to what
can only be described
as melancholia.

She returns often to images of decline, disappointment. There are contrasting gestures of renewal (often drawn from the natural world), but the renewal is tentative, doubtful; she doesn't go in for false hope. In "Autobiography With Joseph," she mirrors her own experience over the past 40 years with Joseph's:

Sometimes there are
only stars, waiting
to bow down. Sometimes,
there are only fat oxen.
But then, with no warning,
they've thrown you
in a pit, sold you, bound
you in Egyptian jail.

Summer flourishes, then ends with the frost. The night is adorned with stars, and yet the stars are falling. What's more, the world is not an orderly pattern of ups and downs, but rather a sort of manic, indecisive whiplash between extremes, an echo of our own internal confusion.

In another poem, she describes with comic brio the sight of a meteor above her garage, originating in the constellation Orion—"his fly button pops? a sleek new nickel slips from his pocket? or a last drop falls as he gives himself a shake"—before moving into a description of the death by suicide of her daughter's friend. The details are painful, exact: embracing the girl's mother as she takes out the trash, the memorial service full of old school friends, the memories of "a girl I still see as a twelve-year-old claiming floor space in my daughter's tiny room some giggly seventh-grade sleepover weekend," before returning to the shooting star she glimpsed on the night the girl died. She wrestles with the urge to derive some meaning from the experience.

I was tempted
to read it as an omen—she had joined them—
except of course that it was heading downward.
For some kinds of anguish, there's no balm,
no recourse, no deliverance, no sign.

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One of the things that leavens her writing and keeps it from descending into a mere litany of grief is Osherow's abundant wit. No matter the subject, her voice remains lively, wry, and warm. Her poems are charming and often playful.

> Why so hesitant, spring? What's the problem?
>
> I've never known you quite this shy.
>
> You're like a new girl in junior high,
>
> avoiding the hallways, the lunch room,
>
> strangely oblivious of your own beauty
>
> or perhaps afraid of it, keeping it hidden.

She's quick to puncture her own pretensions, as in a long poem about linden trees. The incongruous scent of the trees in bloom outside her home in Utah reminds her of an earlier trip to Darmstadt—her long-delayed first visit to Germany—which inevitably brought dark thoughts to mind:

> My daughters have been known to make bets
>
> before dinner parties about how many minutes
>
> will pass before I bring up the holocaust.
>
> (You're an easy target when you're obsessed;
>
> usually, the winning number's about twenty.)

The poem's argument twists back on itself, then twists again. Is this sort of obsession with the prevalence of suffering right, or wrong? Clear-sighted, or perverse? "Surely, if not in Darmstadt, then in another city ... some of those millions were smelling linden ... as they were being herded onto trains?" "Surely it can't be good to infuse one of earth's loveliest offerings—a linden tree in June—with human beings at their very basest." "But doesn't every good thing have its measure of imperfection lurking in the wings?" Horror lives with rapture, too closely entwined to be detached. She concludes the insoluble dilemma with a self-contained couplet that's part carpe diem, part koan:

> It can't last too much longer, this perfume,
>
> but here, just now, my linden tree's in bloom.

Probably the most moving quality of Osherow's writing is its forthright honesty about her own limitations. Her attention, as she laments several times, is often fragmented, her understanding partial, her instincts off-kilter—but she is a fearless observer and chronicler. Her poems, with their digressions and asides, their jokes and whiplash extremes, embody her unflinching effort to make sense of the world. In the closing sequence at the Alhambra, she's overwhelmed. She repeats as a sort of refrain: "Where exactly do I put my eyes?" The experience is so rich, so perfect; it's too much. Terza rima flows for pages, alternating with short-lined passages of austere vision.

> on the walls
>
> of the Alhambra
>
> appear all
>
> known variants
>
> of patterned
>
> symmetry
>
> in two dimensions,
>
> distinctions I
>
> can barely fit
>
> my brain around

Lost in this earthly paradise—paradoxically formed from innumerable small tiles placed in a finite series of patterns that engender endless possibilities—her thoughts ricochet through time and space. Childhood memories of assembling blocks on the floor, leading to later ambitions to comprehend the world through her writing, give way to uneasy reflections on the Jews' expulsion from Spain and present-day Jewish/Muslim tensions. She recognizes the fragility of hope in the face of all the world's suffering and violence. But the beauty of the Alhambra is real:

> Still, look at this exquisite place. It glows.
>
> I've returned again for the nighttime tour;
>
> the patterns, in this semi-light, disclose
>
> a rare affinity with the obscure,
>
> a thousand pathways to a distant truth
>
> which here feels unusually near.

The music of the heavenly spheres may seem muted, perhaps forever lost, but she asserts:

> I, for one, believe it's there...
>
> that they've just stopped a while to catch their breath.
>
> Soon, they'll be singing in my ear.

Throughout her new book, Osherow fights to hear that singing—and if she can't quite hear it, to still believe it's there. The lyricism of youth is past. She's looked too deeply into the pain of the world, and she has suffered—in ways both obvious and only hinted at—too much to find it easy to exult. The mental illness, estrangement, and death of her ex-husband, which she has written about elsewhere, hover over these poems like a pervasive shadow. Her own world was shattered, and now she sees cracks everywhere. But still, she keeps assembling the pieces. This is a beautiful, sad, truthful book by one of our finest poets.

DAVID DANOFF lives in Maryland and works for the federal government. His poems and reviews have appeared in the Yale Review, Poet Lore, the Raintown Review, Measure, and elsewhere.

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HERE IS WHAT A FEW FORMER PARTICIPANTS HAVE SAID ABOUT THE TRAINING:

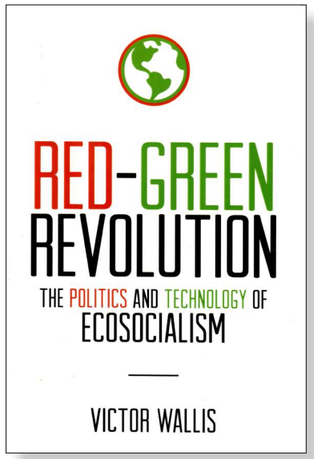
"The materials you had us view and read and ponder were thoughtfully curated. They allowed us, as participants, to get a broad overview of what we're going to be up to in these next several weeks. They are written/presented from a perspective of kindness and inclusion, while still remaining intellectually rigorous. **I was moved to tears** to be a part of this group - helping to turn our world around, by learning more about history, ourselves and how to listen/speak more deeply. **I am grateful beyond words** for the work you have done to create this most amazing (and so very necessary) course. **Thank you for your vision, your work, your courage, and your ongoing commitment**." – *Heidi Van Ert*

"Thank you! **The training was invaluable to me. It was very accessible, understandable, and inspirational!** If you dream big, this course is for you. Everyone was very supportive and open to new ideas." - *Vanessa F.*

TO LEARN MORE AND TO REGISTER GO TO: www.spiritualprogressives.org/training

Tikkun Recommends

Red-Green Revolution:
The Politics and Technology of Ecosocialism
Victor Wallis
Political Animal Press (Toronto, Canada)



What does socialism have to offer the environmental movement? Victor Wallis argues that as long as environmental movements remain steeped in and beholden to capitalist interests, with its emphasis on market incentives (e.g., cap and trade) or regulations, they will fail to bring forth the transformational changes needed to save our planet and to ensure the well-being of all its inhabitants. Applying a Marxist analysis to environmental concerns, he offers us a way to challenge environmental interventions that try to balance the never-ending wants of the capitalist marketplace with the real needs of the environment.

Wallis points to three ways ecosocialism can help save the environment and transform our society. First, socialism begins with an "analysis of the role of key capitalist institutions . . . in promoting and maintaining wasteful/destructive patterns of resource consumption." Second, socialism provides a holistic understanding of the way society functions. "In particular, it suggests how the practices (and/or conditions) of various sectors of society are interconnected, and it demonstrated the need for a comprehensive approach to any change of priorities" And third, it exposes the "deleterious role of the corporate-sponsored 'green' organizations [and] provides a basis on which to surmount the fragmented status of the existing grassroots environmentalist constituency."

In the chapter, Beyond "Green Capitalism", Wallis explains the "crisis tendencies" in capitalism and its global expansion as "(1) increased concentration of economic power, (2) increased polarization between rich and poor . . . (3) a permanent readiness for military engagement . . . and (4) . . . the uninterrupted debasement or depletion of vital natural resources." He rightfully argues that there is an inherent contradiction between being 'green', which prioritizes the health of the ecosphere, and capitalism, which fosters growth and expansion. This chapter lays out some of the problems with promoting renewable energies and instead argues for reduced energy consumption, with its necessary changes in our lifestyles.

According to Wallis, a comprehensive ecosocialist movement can help bring together different social change movements that can bridge the class and race divide. And like *Tikkun* and the Network of Spiritual Progressives, he promotes simultaneously articulating a long-term vision while working for immediate improvements. His book is a significant contribution to discussions about what is needed to create a world that works for all beings and the planet.

Unfortunately, Wallis fails to address the psycho/spiritual suffering that people face in our society. The competitive marketplace depends, for its legitimacy, on a set of distortions which have been so deeply infused by much of the media and education system into the consciousness of most Americans (including many liberals) that they now appear to be "common sense". So very many decent people repeat these messages to their children and their friends: that we live in a meritocracy, that you have to look out for yourself, and that you are only as worthy as your paycheck. These messages often paralyze people and make them certain that fundamental change is impossible. Moreover, Wallis misses the fact many people yearn to live lives of meaning and purpose but those fundamental needs are not addressed in Left politics and discourse and are absent from even the most engaging socialist theorists. They are discussed in great detail in Rabbi Lerner's new book *Revolutionary Love: A Political Manifesto to Heal and Transform the World.*

Reading Wallis and Lerner together will provide you with a wealth of information, psychological insights and strategies you can draw on to challenge capitalism and capitalist ideology and to create an eco-spiritual socialism that could provide the foundation on which to build a loving and just society that works for all. We encourage you to invite friends, neighbors, co-workers, and/or members of your political and spiritual community to read them together – it would be a great gift to them! We have been helping to organize book groups for Revolutionary Love. Please email Alden at alden@tikkun.org if you would like to join a book group or if you would like book discussion questions for each chapter of Revolutionary Love.

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