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TIKKUN

TIKKUN CONFERENCE (III)

Cherie Brown, Congressman Barney Frank, Cornel West, Chaim Seidler-Feller & Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz on Blacks & Jews; Anne Roiphe on Fundamentalism; David Biale on Who Is a Jew.

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY JULY/AUGUST 1989 $5.00



Abortion
Rachel Biale
Larry Letich
Ruth Rosen

In Defense of Psychoanalysis
Michael J. Bader
Stephen Seligman

Feminism and Monotheism
Marcia Falk
A Response by
Lawrence A. Hoffman

Abbie Hoffman: An Interview
Benny Avni

A Tikkun Worldview
Gary Peller

What Kind of a Jewish State?
Michael Walzer

thirtysomething
Jay Rosen

Translating Poetry
Chana Bloch

Can Judaism Survive the 20th Century?
Jacob Neusner

PLUS

Todd Gitlin on Radical Styles; John Gerassi on Sartre; Joseph A. Edelheit on Rabbis & AIDS; Jeffrey C. Isaac and Marshall Berman debate Modernism; Russell Jacoby on Public Intellectuals; Joseph Edelman on Buying a German Car; Book Reviews by Theda Skocpol & Tony Judt; Fiction by Nicholas Delbanco.



Dangerous Land

Dangerous land. Land of suspicious objects
and booby-trapped beings. And anything can be
the beginning of a new religion: every birth, every death,
every brushfire, every wisp of smoke.
Even lovers must watch what they do and say,
hands held out for a hug, whisper at midnight,
hidden sobs, a glance into the distance, a descent
down the stairs in a white dress. All these the beginning
of a new religion.

Even the migrating birds know this
when they come in spring and fall and do not tarry
like the gods of the earth who likewise do not tarry.
And he who says there was is a prophet of consolation
and he who says there will be is a prophet of wrath.

And from north to south there is no end to summer joy
and warnings of deep and raging waters
with warnings of drought upon the land,
and tombstones lie over the land, like weights
so annals of history won't scatter, like papers in the wind.

—Yehuda Amichai
Translated by Sabina Lask-Spinac

TIKKUN

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Letters

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

ISRAEL

To the Editor:

I agree with you 100 percent that our so-called community leaders—the "big machers" who look down on the average Jew—do not speak for the majority of American Jews. They speak only for their organizations. B'nai B'rith, American Jewish Congress, American Jewish Committee, AIPAC, and other establishment Jewish organizations do not necessarily represent my views.

My wife told me that she saw on TV tonight a group of Israeli soldiers being brought up on charges of brutally beating a number of Arab prisoners after they were taken into custody. When the Israelis were asked why they beat the prisoners, they stated, "We were told to do so." This remark reminds me of the defense for atrocities against civilians that a lot of Germans used in German courts. When they were asked why they did what they did, their standard reply was, "We were ordered to do so."

The first thing the U.S. armed forces taught us twenty-two years ago in basic training was that we had a duty to disobey an illegal order. Our drill instructor even gave as an example the atrocities of the Nazis against civilians. Hence, the Israeli soldiers alleging that they were ordered to beat the Arab civilians is a lot of nonsense. They know that the policy of the Israelis is to contain the disorders, not to brutalize the rioters. Look at the situation in South Korea—where hundreds of student protesters clash daily with police and throw rocks and molotov cocktails at them. However, the South Korean police rarely if ever kill these protesters or shoot them. They are well trained in riot control and know how to deal with these disturbances. Unfortunately, the Israeli armed forces are not well trained in crowd control.

These same so-called Jewish leaders should be ashamed of themselves for backing the iron-fist policy of the Israelis, or otherwise remaining silent! If, Heaven forbid, one tried to criticize the Israeli government, these same so-called leaders would stop at nothing to silence any opposition, including having people fired from their jobs, not printing letters of protest, harassing opposing views of politicians, and branding non-anti-Semitic gentiles as anti-Semites. I think their tactics stink.

These are the same leaders who

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forty-five years ago were silent when our people were systematically being murdered!

Nathaniel H. Goldman
Columbus, Ohio

To the Editor:

Before I subscribed to *Tikkun*, I thought I was a liberal. I am a card-carrying member of the ACLU. I have voted Democrat in every election since 1936. I contribute to liberal causes. I am one of the few pro-choice doctors in the center of pro-life. But lately I am beginning to wonder.

Liberal seems to mean Israel can do no right. Forget that before 1967 the Arabs had the West Bank and Gaza. And they were not satisfied. Forget the Syrian threat. Forget what Syria did in Hama. Forget Syria on the Golan Heights. Forget that Arafat says one thing in English to us, and the opposite in Arabic to his friends.

We all want Israel to be a light to the world. But *I* don't want it to be a *Yahrzeit* light.

Tikkun is rapidly making me a conservative. Don't cancel my subscription. I read it regularly. I hope my blood pressure holds out. I'm furious.

Stephen I. Rosenthal, M.D.
Scranton, Pennsylvania

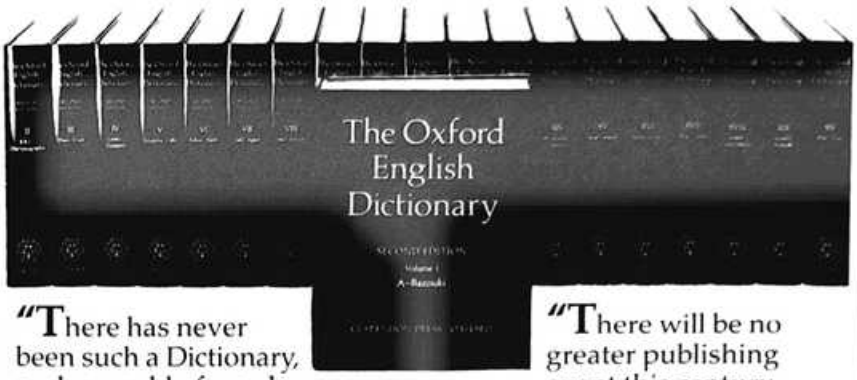
To the Editor:

In the current debate about Israel and the Palestinian Arabs, far too little attention is being paid to the special history and ongoing experiences of Israel's Sephardic Jews. Unfortunately, it is unlikely that a resolution of the many disputes between Israelis and Arabs can take place without the consent of Israeli voters, a large proportion of whom are Sephardic Jews. Those seeking or hoping for a change in the position of the Israeli electorate must be prepared to recognize the legitimate grievances and aspirations of Sephardic Jews, at least to the same degree that they acknowledge the special needs of Holocaust victims, Zionists, or Arabs.

A large number of Sephardic Jews settled in Israel because of the oppression and harassment they received in their Arab countries of origin: for example, imprisonment, physical abuse, and elimination of economic opportunities. As appealing as Zionism may have been for them, it is naive to assume that the majority would have

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abandoned their homes, occupations, or material goods if they had not felt persecuted. The fact that their experiences were not as horrible as those of European Jewry during the Holocaust cannot provide much consolation to the Sephardic men, women, and children who underwent their own daily persecution and who still pay the psychological and economic price for their victimization. The prejudice they subsequently experienced in Israel on the part of some earlier settlers undoubtedly served to increase their resentment.

It is particularly hypocritical and counterproductive for progressive Jews to bend over backward to make sure that the past and present sufferings of Arabs be redressed without demanding similarly fair treatment for Sephardic Jews. Aside from ethical considerations, common sense dictates that this crucial portion of the Israeli electorate not be ignored or taken for granted in the peace process. Without the consent of many Sephardic Jews, no group's grievances will be peacefully resolved.

Murray J. Friedman
New York, New York

To the Editor:

You had good reason to distrust Arafat's speech and his supposed acceptance of Israel. Even if you didn't know why. Not only did the PLO leader not reject terrorism; he stated in front of the world, without the world's noticing, that his organization still plans to replace Israel with a Palestinian state.

In his speech to the United Nations General Assembly, Arafat addressed the subject he knew the United States was waiting for. Therefore, he rejected terrorism and even managed to condemn it—all the while implying it was Israel who conducted the terrorist acts. At the same time, he praised those "sitting before me in this hall who, in the days when they fought to free their countries from the yoke of colonialism, were accused of terrorism by their oppressors, and who today are the faithful leaders of their peoples, stalwart champions of the values of justice and freedom."

Translating from Demagoguery to English, Arafat is saying: "I am not a terrorist. The members of my organization don't commit terrorist acts, and that fact will be recognized one day when we have our own state. Meanwhile, while I condemn terrorism—mostly Israel's terrorism—my organization shall continue to conduct its struggle in the fashion to which it is accustomed, until we reach our goal."

In 1968 the PLO adopted its covenant, which rejects the legitimacy of the State of Israel and calls for "armed struggle" to replace Israel with a Palestinian Arab state. Article 21 of the Covenant expresses the PLO's rejection of "all solutions that are a substitute for the total liberation of Palestine." In 1974, the PLO adopted its ten-point plan for achieving the strategic aims of the covenant. The PLO stated that it would be willing to accept a state in the West Bank and Gaza as a first step in the total liberation of Palestine.

The latest addition to PLO policy, the Algiers resolutions, do not depart from these basic points:

- They cite the UN resolution (181) partitioning Palestine into Jewish and Arab States as justification for *only* an Arab state.
- They accept UN resolution 242 and 338, which guarantee the rights of all states in the region only in conjunction with the "Palestinian right to self-determination," which, in the language of the covenant, means the eradication of Israel.
- They reject "terrorism" but define their own actions not as terrorism but as "legitimate armed struggle."

Arafat never contradicted the Algiers resolutions. On the contrary, he explicitly stated that his words were a reiteration of the resolutions. Only repudiation of the covenant—or of the most rejectionist articles within it, especially article 21—will signify an actual departure from previous PLO policy.

David Olesker
Director, ICAP—an independent institute of propaganda analysis
Jerusalem, Israel

Jessica Kramerman
Tel Aviv, Israel

To the Editor:

Michael Lerner and his crew of apprentice *Kapos* have been perpetuating and proclaiming the same loathsome, verminous message that led inevitably to the extermination of most of European Jewry. Just as Adolf first had to delegitimize his victims before the Nazi killing machine began murdering them, so too do the governments and intellectuals of the world have to delegitimize Israel before wiping it out.

From Ararat to Arafat, a common strand runs through history: one touch of anti-Semitism makes the entire world kin. Once again cries of "Hep! Hep!"—the shout of Roman legionnaires burning Jerusalem and of pogromists torching Jewish shtetls—echo through the night. Israel is the Jew among nations. Of over 160 countries, fewer than twenty-four are open-society democracies respectful of human rights. Among this pitiful handful stands the Jewish state (with 17 percent of its population Arab).

Stop preaching Jewish Jew-hate and start fighting for the survival of that miracle, Israel, whose struggle, faith, and endurance almost redeem this most evil of centuries. Unless you are able—which you are not—to guarantee the absolute safety and security of the people of Israel, you cannot with sincerity advocate their withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza. Willfully ignoring the real struggle, which is not between Israelis and Palestinian Arabs but between Israel and twenty-two Muslim dictatorships—and, beyond that, between Israel and the entire world—you neglect not only the lesson of October 1938 but all of Jewish history.

You concentrate on the "liberation" of the Palestinian Arabs from "oppression." But no hearts bleed for the Kurds, savaged, brutalized, and gassed by Arab-ruled Iraq, which, backed by the Western democracies, has just concluded one of the most grisly and gruesome wars of all time against Islamic Iran. Can you get 157 votes in the UN favoring independence for Brittany? Armenia? Catalonia? Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania? The Tamils? The Berbers? The unification of Ireland? Or any of the other multitude of truly oppressed and exploited peoples, including the Palestinian Arabs under the rule of that plucky king, Hussein, or in Syrian-occupied Lebanon? A world that has no room for Israel does not deserve to exist.

There is only one serious historical question and, naturally, no serious historian to answer it: why, in the twentieth century, is it necessary to murder all the Jews? They are the oldest and most exclusive fraternity in the world, the most productive, creative, and ancient

of races. All through the ages they have produced new gods for old gold, creating an eternal sense of unrepayable debt and obligation that can be extinguished only with their slaughter. Throughout history, the Jews have offered gods to be followed: they provided the Moses, the Jesus, the Mary, the Saint Paul; more recently, they have laid the intellectual foundations of the twentieth century with, among others, Marx, Freud, and Einstein. To paraphrase Benjamin Disraeli, one half of the world worships a Jew (Marx), and the other half of the world worships a Jew (Jesus).

How to define a Jew? Simple. The Jew is what the human race aspires to be. Failing at that, it turns to desecrate and destroy what it cannot attain.

Sidney Halpern
Professor of History
Temple University
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

To the Editor:

While we are aware that Israel's friends in the U.S. are reluctant to express dissent from the Israeli government's policy, we feel that certain occasions require the exercise of your right to speak out, especially on moral issues.

We are a group of parents whose sons and daughters are serving, or will soon serve, in the Israel Defense Forces. These young people are confronted with the impossible task of maintaining law and order in the densely populated cities and villages of the West Bank and Gaza, whose own young people have risen to protest the long period of Israeli occupation and the absence both of civil rights and the promise of any clear political future. In this situation, our vaunted army, based on universal military conscription (which we applaud), has been turned into a repressive police force.

The best of our soldiers are placed in situations where they cannot but carry out orders to beat and shoot civilians, invade homes without warrants, make political arrests without trial, and destroy houses. They act under orders and sometimes in sheer self-protection. This is untenable—morally and physically—and cannot but lead to the brutalization and demoralization not of the Palestinians, but of our children, together with the loss of life and limb on both sides and the breeding of deep mutual hatred.

The Minister of Defense has repeatedly declared that the solution to the problems of the territories is political, not military. It is quite clear that soldiers cannot end the uprising, let alone contribute to any solution. No solution whatever—even annexation or transfer, not to mention schemes of autonomy or statehood (based on good neighborly relations)—can be furthered in this way.

Many of our children are deeply disturbed, as are we, by the disparity between the moral commitment of our society and the demeaning behavior into which we, somehow, have slipped. We feel morally obliged to speak up, and we hope that you will join us, if you agree, in efforts to draw attention to this profound error and its disastrous implications.

Yoel Klemes, Tamar Liebes,
Estelle Schashar
The Organizing Committee of
Concerned Parents of Israeli Soldiers

The Editor Responds:

I agree with Mr. Goldman's sentiments, but it's incorrect to lump all establishment Jewish organizations together and assume that they support the iron-fist policy of the Israeli government. American Jewish Congress, for example, passed a resolution before the intifada began in support of an exchange of land for peace. And the American Jewish Committee, while supporting *Commentary* magazine and refusing to support *Tikkun*, has as executive director Ira Silverman, who privately supports Israeli peace forces. Yet Mr. Goldman's assumptions are understandable because both Congress and Committee are nowhere to be seen when real leadership is needed to critique Shamir or his policies. When Shamir called for a solidarity conference, neither Committee nor Congress made any public statement pressuring Shamir to change his position. When Shamir once again rejected the "land for peace" idea during his visit to the U.S. in March, again there was silence from those few Jewish leaders who were not jumping on Shamir's bandwagon. The reason for this silence, according to some insiders, is simple: though there are some progressives in leadership positions in both organizations who understand that they need to change their image in order to recruit members of the younger-than-fifty generation, the bulk of their big money sources and much of their membership are far more conservative. So the organizations shy away from precisely the kind of high-profile conflict with Shamir that the current situation requires. The net effect is that Seymour Reich and his Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations still appears to speak for all of the organized Jewish community—misrepresenting American Jewish opinion and supporting Shamir's intransigence.

Dr. Rosenthal claims that liberals think Israel can do no right. On the contrary, we are proud of Israel's many accomplishments and have often excoriated Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq for behavior far worse than anything Israel has done in the past two years. But that doesn't relieve us of the responsibility to criticize behavior that we think is not only immoral but also self-destructive. We hope his blood pressure holds out.

Murray Friedman is absolutely correct. The oppression and suffering that Sephardic Jews received in their Arab countries of origin remains a central part of their current consciousness—and the failure of the Ashkenazim who lead the Labor party and the Israeli peace forces to adequately address the resulting psychic scars is one reason the Israeli left is failing.

David Olesker and Jessica Kramerman are right to insist that the PLO speak in one unambiguous voice and that it's hard to trust the PLO when some of its leaders still talk about a Palestinian state as the first stage in a two-stage process to "liberate" all of Palestine. *Tikkun* has called on the PNC to revise its charter. We've also urged the PLO to end *all* military actions against Israel. Yet, as Nabil Shaath of the PNC pointed out in *Tikkun* (May/June 1989), "terrorism" means a violent attack on civilians—and attacks on civilians, not attacks on Israeli military targets, are what the PLO has promised to suspend. We think this is inadequate, and we have called on the PLO to suspend these military attacks as well—but we understand why the PLO thinks it is living up to its promises. This kind of literalism on the part of the PLO may win points at the UN, but it will never win the indispensable element that the Palestinians need in order to achieve national

(Continued on p. 124)

Publisher's Page

Nan Fink

I remember from my days as a psychotherapist and a teacher how each encounter with a client or a student was all part of a creative process. The point for me was to be as helpful as I could be every step of the way. I was concerned that my clients and students end up in a state of greater health or knowledge; but for that to happen I had to make the process itself as creative as I could. Sometimes this work was frustrating because I seldom ended up with tangible results. But it was also rewarding because I was creatively mobilized throughout the process.

Publishing a magazine, on the other hand, involves a very different kind of creativity. Unlike the work I previously did, something concrete is produced from all our labor. The balance of articles in the magazine and the way the published product looks are tangible expressions of our creativity. And as the magazine stimulates people to think, feel, and talk about important issues, it becomes a creative force in the larger world.

However, much of the work involved in creating a magazine does not feel very creative—unless the definition is extended to include things such as doing mailings and figuring out how to cut telephone costs. A huge number of tasks must be done, and many of them are repetitious and frustrating. As with any other project where the goal is to produce a tangible result, it is easy to lose the sense of connection between all the details that must be attended to and the larger creative vision.

Some times are worse than others. Occasionally the cosmic forces seem to go awry, and we become bogged down in equipment bugs and unforeseeable mishaps. The worst moments are when, despite our best intentions, we end up having problems that we can't seem to set straight with a person or an organization. The result is that our creative energy is drained, and we feel frustrated.

A case in point is what has happened with us and the Jewish Committee on the Middle East (JCOME), an organization that calls for Israel to negotiate with the PLO and for there to be a drastic cutback in U.S. economic aid to Israel. Our relationship with this organization started last year when one of its representatives called to reserve space for an advertisement in *Tikkun*. We accepted the reservation and told JCOME to send us its ad.

When the ad arrived, however, it didn't take us long to decide that we didn't want to print it. It contained a statement of JCOME's principles, but that wasn't the problem. Although we didn't agree with parts of the statement, it was not racist, sexist, or offensive (the criteria we use for judging the acceptability of ads).

However, at the center of the ad was a large cartoon that we *did* find offensive. In this cartoon a swaggering, Nazi-like Israeli soldier is standing on a large pile of Palestinian bodies saying, "I'm willing to talk peace, but there aren't any Palestinians to talk peace with." Anyone who reads *Tikkun* is aware that our editorial position about Israel is considerably to the left of the established Jewish world; yet this cartoon was beyond the pale of what we want in the magazine.

Like other magazines, we have an advertising policy that is clearly stated on our rate card: we reserve the right to reject or cancel advertising. When we told JCOME that we wouldn't run the ad with the cartoon, its representative had a fit. "Forget cutting out the cartoon," he said. "Run the ad as it is, or put an explanation in the ad as to why you won't run the cartoon." We said "Sorry," and the ad did not run.

Since that time JCOME has caused quite a ruckus about this matter. It recently placed an ad in several publications accusing us, along with two other magazines, of being "the only publications to refuse to publish our JCOME statement of principles as a paid ad." What rubbish! Remember, we rejected only the cartoon. We've received some letters from our readers asking us what is going on.

In late May I received a very peculiar letter from the chairperson of JCOME, saying, "Unless we can quickly find a way to get past this matter among ourselves, we will soon be publishing a full and detailed record of exactly what has happened between JCOME and *Tikkun*. . . ." This sounded like the kind of "blackmail" that kids threaten each other with: If I don't get my way, I'll do something to hurt you. I answered by once again saying that we would be happy to print the ad, but without the cartoon.

I am confounded by this kind of trouble. Why is JCOME spending its time and energy attacking us? Surely the members of the organization don't want to see their money going into ads against *Tikkun* when there is so much work to be done to bring peace in the Middle East. Although we don't agree on some things, we share a common concern about the plight of the Palestinians. Why squabble among ourselves? It only drains our creative energy and bogs us down. □

The Editor: A Personal Note

Michael Lerner

It's not always easy for me to strike the right balance between moral judgment and compassion. I'd like to tell you a little about the way I can sometimes go astray. On the one hand, I've been advocating "neo-compassionism" as a political strategy. The key to success for liberals and Democrats, I've argued, will be their ability to help people understand that so much of our self-blaming is unjustified, that many of our difficulties that appear to be "merely" personal are often best understood as the psychological consequences of a world dominated by the competitive marketplace. Whether it be the loneliness of being single and not wanting to be, or the disappointments that parents experience when their children are not adequately respectful and appreciative, or the seemingly irrational tensions that suddenly pop up in relationships, or the sense that the loyalty and commitment that used to bind friendships are in decreasing supply, or the stress and lack of fulfillment in work, or the sense that one's life doesn't have meaning and purpose—all these problems are rooted in part in social dynamics that we have not personally created. We can be empowered to change our situation when we stop engaging in self-blame and develop a greater sense of compassion for ourselves and each other.

On the other hand, when it comes to Israel the objective situation sometimes makes one become judgmental. Yes, I have gone out of my way to insist that we all understand the psychological impact of the Holocaust and the legitimate anger that Israelis feel at Palestinians who rejected a state when it was offered in 1948 and who have engaged in inhumane terrorist attacks on civilians for the past two decades. I've tried to acknowledge why it's hard for Israelis suddenly to trust the PLO or to be open to a PLO state when for two decades the PLO has talked of eliminating "the Zionist entity" and even now, after its supposed turnaround in Algiers, still has some of its leaders speaking of using a Palestinian state as simply a first stage in a longer struggle for the "full liberation of Palestine."

But no matter how much I acknowledge our justified fears, its hard not to fall into a very judgmental tone toward my brothers and sisters in Israel, in light of the Israeli army's daily killings of Palestinians. So many of the confrontations, after all, derive from the Israelis' desire to "show who is boss" rather than from the need to keep a minimal security presence to protect Israel. And how can we be less than harsh when we see thousands of Palestinians arrested and kept in inhumane prison camps for months under "administrative detention," hundreds of thousands confined to their homes for days on end under arbitrarily imposed twenty-four-hour curfews, some in West Bank settlements required to wear badges saying "foreign workers" that even some right-wing Israelis recognize as parallel to the yellow star the Nazis required Jews to wear in public, the attacks by settlers on random groups of Palestinians in a fashion much resembling the pogroms we Jews faced in Eastern Europe, Shamir's refusal even to consider trading land for peace? It's very hard to keep an adequate tone of compassion when the situation calls for moral judgments.

And yet I know how easy it is to fall into a misguided and alienating self-righteousness. If I insist today that we give greater primacy to compassion it is only because I recall how destructive it was for me personally and for all of us collectively when the liberal and progressive forces in the late 1960s were perceived as harshly critical of the life-styles and values of American society.

I was reminded recently of how singularly judgmental and stupid I was in that period because an article has been circulating recently to Jewish newspapers that selectively quotes some of the more outrageous things I said and wrote in 1968 and 1969 at the height of my most self-righteous period. In *Judaism* in 1969 I wrote that the Jewish community is "racist, internally corrupt, and an apologist for the worst aspects of American capitalism and imperialism." Presumptuously adopting the famous language of Isaiah, who told the Israelites that God would prefer that they stop bringing sacrifices to the Temple if they continued to live corrupt lives, I mused that the synagogues would have to be shut down to give Judaism a chance to recapture its ethical roots. With all the bravado and self-centeredness that so many of us mid-twenty-year-olds had in the late 1960s, I was aflame with hyperbole and angry judgment.

I'd like to puzzle over how I could have gotten to this point in 1969. Outrageous as my statements were, they emerged from a deep sense of painful personal disillusionment that I had while growing up in the American Jewish world. Only a few of my contemporaries seemed to share the pain—most had disengaged from the Jewish world by the time of their bar or bat

mitzvah; they cared less about its internal dynamics, choosing instead to vote with their feet by walking away. To most of my generation I was an anomaly—someone who at the very height of the New Left experience was still claiming that there was something fundamentally important within Judaism that should not be abandoned, even though it should not be confused with the kind of Judaism being put forward in the Jewish world at the time.

So perhaps it won't surprise you to learn that I grew up in a family deeply involved in the Jewish world. Both my parents were committed and active leaders in the Zionist movement, and my own deep commitment to Israel was fostered by their wise education. What may surprise you is that to be a Zionist in the 1930s and 1940s was *not* to be part of the American Jewish establishment; rather it was to be part of a movement that had many similarities to the movements of the 1960s. Zionism was the national liberation struggle of the Jewish people; but until after the Second World War and the subsequent revelations about the Holocaust had sunk in, many American Jews were no more anxious to identify with a national liberation struggle than American Blacks were to identify with a Black liberation movement when it first emerged in the 1960s. Many American Jews still believed that the best strategy was to assimilate and not make waves.

The quintessential embodiment of this consciousness was the American Jewish Committee, dominated by the wealthiest of American Jews, who claimed that they could best represent Jewish interests by cuddling up to the American ruling class and quietly whispering into its ears a set of pro-Jewish messages. Only in the past decade are we getting a full understanding of how the reliance on this kind of strategy may have prevented American Jews from mobilizing their forces more effectively to save European Jewry from destruction. Historical records now suggest that the Jewish plutocrats may have been more interested in preserving their own credibility with their "friends" in the American ruling class than in aggressively pushing for American policies that might have saved thousands of Jewish lives.

The Zionist movement during this period was the genuine embodiment of the best interests of the Jewish people—and it tended to attract idealists, including many who had been (for good reason) disillusioned with the Communist party and with the anti-Semitism that was never fully purged from the international left. Zionists often perceived themselves as much in struggle with British colonialism and the American ruling elite as any lefty. And in conflict, too, with the ruling elites in the American Jewish community. The fundraisers and bureaucrats who set up endless testimonial dinners to commend their own generosity and wisdom may have already dominated other aspects of Jewish communal life, but they had not yet gained hegemony in Zionist circles.

The Zionist movement was dramatically transformed in the early 1950s, once Israel's existence was secured. Those Zionists who did not actually move to Israel to build a Jewish society began to redefine their political tasks in America. The new goal was to seek power and respectability in America so that they could court political influence that would eventually be used to help Israel. Making money (part of which could be given to Israel) or getting political power was suddenly defined as the new way to be a good Zionist. From challenging assimilation in earlier decades, Zionists were now trying to "fit in" and join the great American self-celebration of the 1950s. A convenient deal: Jews could both "make it" in America and feel that they were doing so for the sake of the Jewish people. My parents did their bit. Active in the Democratic party, which was all too happy to exchange a few pious words about Israel for Jewish money and political energy, my parents were perceived by Democratic party leaders as amongst those Jewish leaders whose support they would have to seek, and they quickly moved up the political ladder. My home was frequented by congressmen, senators, governors, and former and future presidents. I listened intently to the flowery ideals, and then was shocked to discover in the *Congressional Record*, which I read every day, that these same men quickly abandoned the struggle for civil rights, health care, full employment—in fact, almost every liberal program, allegiance to which was supposed to differentiate them from the Republicans. In the name of fighting communism they could vote for military authorizations that then precluded serious funding for social programs. The political hypocrisy of many of these national leaders was matched only by their intellectual vacuity. My parents also saw that many of these people, who were being lauded by the press as the embodiment of liberal idealism and integrity, were empty and corrupt. Still, in my parents' eyes, the tradeoff was worth it: after all, these people were supporting Israel. Maybe their commitment to liberal ideals turned out to be secondary to their anticommunism, but their commitment to Israel remained strong—and for my parents, that was the bottom line. So what if the cost of supporting these characters was that the Jewish community would become implicated in their compromises, involved in supporting their ideologies to the extent that it would begin to convince itself that Judaism and American liberalism were simply indistinguishable? At least it was good for the Jews.

Yet I wasn't convinced on that score either. I remember Adlai Stevenson, having been told he could rest before the political party that would soon begin downstairs,

sitting in my bedroom in his underpants, arguing with me that America should put all its energy into trying to reunite Germany, because doing so would help the United States fight communism. I tried to talk to him about the failure of the American government to engage in a serious denazification of German society after the Second World War, but for him the issue of the Jews, our fate and our fears, was largely irrelevant: for the cold warrior, everything, all values, were subordinate to the anti-Communist crusade. While viewed by millions of liberals as the idealistic champion of democratic values, in my bedroom Stevenson came across as a defender of America's corporate interests, an "enlightened" cold warrior whose primary concern was how best to preserve the world for American investment. If the Jews were helpful, fine; but if their interests needed to be sacrificed (as they had been a decade earlier during World War II), that too was fine. Years later, when others were disillusioned with Stevenson's defense of America's Vietnam policy, I remembered that moment as an early warning that when democratic values stood in conflict with American economic interests, Democratic party liberals of the 1950s chose the latter.

The more I learned from the inside about American politics, the more disgusted I became. I turned to Judaism to find a language to articulate my moral outrage.

Why Judaism? Because within its prophetic tradition I discovered the voice of moral outrage at the corruptions of an established order. That voice was embodied for me both in the roaring articulateness of my own rabbi, Joachim Prinz, whose experience at the hands of the Nazis led him to identify with other oppressed groups whose causes he championed as president of the American Jewish Congress, and in the gentler tones of Abraham Joshua Heschel, whose works I began to study.

Yet the Judaism to which I was attracted flourished more at Camp Ramah, at some Orthodox synagogues, and in the sacred Jewish texts than it did in the triumphant institutions of American Jewish life. I began to understand why my grandfather, a Hasidic rabbi and disciple of Reb Nachman of Bratslav, buried himself in these sacred texts rather than deal with the daily realities of American life in general or American Jewish life in particular. So it was not long before I found myself part of the community of Jews who found within Judaism itself not only a language to critique American materialism but also a basis for a critique of the existing Jewish world. Judaism, I learned, need not be an uncritical glorification of the Jewish people. In fact, the very chauvinism and self-intoxication that I found in the Jewish world, the materialism and anti-intellectualism that dominated many of America's Jewish institutions, were repudiated by the core of the Jewish tradition itself.

I had hoped to find this kind of Judaism flourishing at the Jewish Theological Seminary, where I enrolled in courses while pursuing my bachelor's degree at Columbia. Elected national president of Atid, the Conservative movement's college organization, I began to see the inner workings of the Seminary. I was saddened to find that the Seminary itself was far removed from the prophetic spirit of Judaism. Scientific study of Talmud and Bible, which often distanced students from the ethical imperatives of the prophetic message, a rigid attitude toward ritual, and a distancing from any sense of responsibility for changing the world permeated the Seminary.

My personal experience inside the Democratic party and the Jewish community was painful and disillusioning.

My mentor, Abraham Joshua Heschel, felt the same distress. He repeatedly told me of his own isolation at the Seminary—touted in public as a *tzadik,* a prophet, the most original voice in Jewish theology, he was increasingly powerless to influence the Conservative movement itself or even to attract followers amongst Seminary students. Too many of these students found his passion for God and his commitment to social justice far from the skills they would need to function as "successful" pulpit rabbis. His involvement in the civil rights movement was seen as quaint; but his identification as a leader of Clergy and Laity Concerned About the War in Vietnam isolated him even further at the Seminary. He told me that even though by the late sixties some official Jewish organizations were willing to pass resolutions opposing the war, none of them seemed willing to put serious energy or resources into that struggle. He noted that the Jewish response compared unfavorably with that of the Catholic and Protestant churches, which had backed their antiwar resolutions with money and considerable personal involvement.

In fact, a *larger* proportion of Jews was involved in the movement than Catholics or Protestants. But mostly we were not involved *as* Jews. So when I went to the University of California to pursue a doctorate in philosophy, I found a political movement made up of a disproportionate number of Jews; but they were Jews who had been alienated from the Jewish world for some of the same reasons that had led me into Judaism. They had been exposed to a Jewish life defined by gaudy bar mitzvah parties and fundraising, a world in which lofty ideals were rolled out on ceremonial occasions but rarely played a role in shaping daily decisions, a world in which those who had the most money seemed to have the most communal influence and respect. Most

of these Jews in the movement had never had the privilege of being exposed to the revolutionary content of the sacred texts, had never known the intellectual seriousness and moral sensitivity that shaped our tradition, and had never met the kinds of righteous Jews whom I had been lucky to encounter. They had, quite naturally, identified Judaism itself with the materialism and anti-intellectualism and narrow-mindedness they had encountered in the organized Jewish community, and rejected the whole package.

But when I tried to argue that Judaism really stood for many of the moral values they supported, they asked me to show them living examples of this kind of Judaism. And that grew increasingly difficult in the mid- and late 1960s. I myself was fired from two jobs in the Jewish community, each time explicitly because the rabbi was embarrassed to have someone on his Hebrew School staff who was being quoted in the local newspapers making "unpatriotic" statements about the war in Vietnam.

In later years our opposition to racism, sexism, and American intervention in Vietnam would become standard liberal fare, but between 1964 and 1969, when our positions were "vanguard," the Jewish world seemed indifferent at best, and usually overtly hostile. It was no secret that some of the large donors to Jewish causes were slum landlords, that other Jews benefited from extensive investments in war-related industries, and that still others continued to insist that the best interests of Israel would be served if the Jews gave blind support to the U.S. administration (even while they privately knew that the Vietnam War was immoral and a tragic mistake).

I could tell my friends about Heschel's courageous example, but Heschel himself was telling me privately that he was finding it harder to function within the organized Jewish world. A group of us at Berkeley tried to keep alive a different vision of Judaism: we held a Hanukkah service inside Sproul Hall during the Free Speech Movement's sit-in, we organized freedom seders each year and brought hundreds of Jews together to reaffirm this aspect of their Judaism, we led high holiday services and there rejoiced in the unequivocal statements of our prophets (the traditional Haftorah for Yom Kippur from Isaiah: "Is not *this* the fast I have chosen: to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to loosen the bonds of the oppressed?").

But it became increasingly difficult not to share some of the anger that my friends were feeling at a Jewish world that seemed more interested in achieving respectability than in embodying a moral vision. There were people around me who seemed to rejoice in "trashing" every icon of their past. Doing likewise held little joy for me. I still deeply respected my parents and their commitment, and I had met some very profound and wonderful people in the Jewish world. I had fought against assimilation and had insisted to my friends in the movement that there was a valuable vision within Judaism from which they could learn. So it was very painful for me to see the Jewish tradition being appropriated by apologists for the status quo—all the more so because by the late sixties many of us understood how oppressive and hurtful that status quo really was to American Blacks, to women, to the poor, and to many people still suffering from the impact of economic and political domination. Like so many others, I rejoiced at Israel's triumph in the Six Day War of 1967, but then grew deeply troubled when, instead of using the occupation of the West Bank as an opportunity to negotiate with the Palestinians—now finally free from Jordanian rule—the Labor party leaders denied the existence of a Palestinian people and began to set in place the mechanisms for a prolonged occupation. And I was dispirited to see significant numbers of American Jews, frightened by some anti-Semitic elements that had emerged within the Black liberation struggle, suddenly turn their backs on the struggle for Black equality now that it was moving from a focus on political rights in the South to a demand for economic equality in the North.

It was at this moment, in the late sixties, that the local B'nai B'rith chapter offered its "Man of the Year Award" to San Francisco State President S. I. Hayakawa, the man who had won national fame for his use of massive police force to break the back of a student-faculty strike. (He went on to become one of the most reactionary members of the U.S. Senate, though pro-Israel.) The strike centered on demands for increased enrollment of Blacks and the creation of a college of third world studies. To the three hundred young Jews who demonstrated against the Hayakawa award, the B'nai B'rith presentation represented the worst elements in Jewish life. But in the eyes of most of our young Jewish friends, the award was not an aberration but the quintessence of Jewish life. Shortly after this event I wrote my diatribe against the Jewish world at the request of the editor of *Judaism*, the magazine of the American Jewish Congress.

Looking back, I still believe that much of the fundamental criticism of the Jewish world was based on a correct reading of the distorting effects of the desire to "make it." The tone of that criticism reflected in part the radicalization of the late 1960s and the spirit of ruthless critique of all existing institutions and social arrangements that we in our midtwenties felt empowered to make. At moments it seemed as though the antiwar and civil rights and women's movements were inspired by a prophetic sensibility—and the world is a better place because those movements existed. Those struggles were quite a bit more than a generational rebellion against parental authority; they addressed fundamental societal problems and proposed solutions that have made the

world a better place. If only such a spirit would once again emerge and become a social force in the 1990s. Twenty years later I still think that there was something fundamentally valuable and life-affirming in our willingness to speak truth to power—even if that meant raising very uncomfortable issues and pressing potential allies into facing issues they would have preferred to avoid.

But when I took that same spirit of critique into the Jewish world, my criticisms were too global and lacking in nuance. I did not adequately acknowledge the many principled and idealistic people working in the Jewish community who shared my values and my distress. Moreover, the principles I was enunciating came from the Jewish tradition and had been taught me by Jews active in the Jewish world. Even if the Jewish world wasn't living up to its own ideals, shouldn't it still be given considerable credit for articulating those ideals and teaching them to its young? I also had not acknowledged the incredible pain of the Holocaust and the role that event played in making survival so fundamental a concern of the Jewish people that other moral concerns might take a back seat. So what, I might have asked myself, if the organized Jewish world was somewhat obsessed with self-interest, defense, and survival? Twenty years after the Holocaust it would have taken a miracle for any group to be different! Good enough that this same community had produced a new generation of Jews who had captured enough of the spirit of the Jewish tradition to allow themselves to be led by its moral imperatives to fight for civil rights and against the war.

But worst of all, I had fallen into the same spirit of intolerant judgment that pervaded so much of the New Left of the 1960s. We articulated good moral ideals but then were furious when others did not immediately respond and become the perfect exemplars of those ideals. In our twenties, we believed that there was no obstacle other than selfishness to the moral lives we professed. So we harshly condemned everyone—first the conservatives, then the liberals, then the American people themselves. Finally, we turned on each other, finding in ourselves the unmistakable signs of egotism, racism, sexism, and all the other perversions that we had so ruthlessly critiqued in others. Despairing that we were similarly flawed, we began to treat each other with the same intolerance that made the inner life of the movement seem almost as inhumane (in its backbiting and sectarian squabbling and accusations about who was less sexist or racist or egotistical than whom) as the society we had come to critique. Our inability to accept our own weaknesses and limitations was of a piece with our inability to accept the limitations of the rest of American society, and with my own inability to accept some of the limitations in the existing Jewish world. Eventually, the spirit of self-destructive intolerance led most people to abandon the movements for social change.

Many who left the official organizations of the movement stayed committed to the movement's best ideals. As we tried to make sense of how we had defeated ourselves, I found myself looking to the Jewish tradition—and to the history of a people that, like the New Left, saw itself as a vanguard in the struggle for social transformation (tikkun). Throughout history the Jewish people had screwed up. Yet the Jewish tradition also teaches us that human beings are inevitably flawed, that the task is to serve God even with the *yetzer hara* (the evil inclination), the flawed and self-interested self. In other words, what I had forgotten or not yet adequately allowed myself to hear was the message in the Jewish tradition that would tell me: "Of course people are going to be screwed up, sexist, racist, egotistical, self-centered, needy—but that's who we are, flawed human beings, and that's who will have to change the world. Moreover, it's not only the people at large who are flawed, but also the leaders and organizers, the vanguard. And these leaders and organizers must be willing to accept their own inadequacies rather than ruthlessly trash themselves; otherwise they will never be able to accept anyone else."

Compassion is not meant as a replacement for moral sensitivity. There must still be a place for moral outrage.

I began to recognize that what was missing in our politics was a sense of compassion for ourselves. The problem wasn't that we were too egotistical or too sexist or too racist—though these aspects of ourselves must certainly be struggled against—but rather that we had somehow expected that human beings would magically transcend all these problems, that the very fact that we were part of the movement meant that we must immediately embody the ideals we sought for a future society. And it was this same utopian expectation that made it impossible for those of us who were Jews to accept the inevitable limitations and distortions in the Jewish world.

It might be a wonderful way to start to train ourselves to become effective in politics if we would counter our own tendencies to be unfairly judgmental of our own people, our own families, and ourselves. In this sense, the development of "Jewish Consciousness-Raising" Groups by *Tikkun*'s Committee for Judaism and Social Justice (CJSJ) might be understood not as leading anyone away from politics but as leading them toward a way to be deeper and more effective in mainstream American

politics. It's only by learning how to replace self-blaming with compassion in our own lives that we will have the necessary skill to help others in American society do the same for themselves. And a liberal/progressive movement that does help people develop a sense of compassion for themselves will be a movement that finally gains the credibility it needs to heal and repair this society.

Still, compassion is not meant as a replacement for moral sensitivity, and there must still be a place for moral outrage. Certainly when we see Israel engaging in activities that are not only morally inappropriate but actually self-destructive, we must cry out in anguish. Taking strong stands against Shamir's policies, for example, is not inappropriate—though blaming the entire Jewish people or every Israeli or all of Zionism for what Shamir does is precisely the kind of globalizing that is destructive. Looking at my own mistakes in the 1960s, and knowing how easy it is to fall into these traps once again, I feel that I need to keep careful check on my judgmental tendencies. The task, I believe, is to mix that sense of outrage at injustice with an adequate dose of compassion so that we don't begin to turn on the Jewish people and judge ourselves too harshly. If I personally don't always achieve the right balance, at least it's worthwhile to articulate the goal.

Editorials

Revolutions: France 1789, China 1989

For a moment in May of 1989 hundreds of millions of people, watching students and workers rallying in the streets of China, allowed themselves to hope once again. No matter how hard the ideologues of every form of established oppression try to convince people that the way of the world is is immutable, over and over again the indomitable spirit of the human race reasserts itself, struggles for change, refuses to accommodate. And that's why we are convinced that the brutal repression of the Chinese students by the Communist government will ultimately fail, though there may be months or even decades of further suffering before that "ultimately" is reached.

The legacy of the French Revolution is this: every ruling class knows at the bottom of its heart that its time is limited, that there are human passions and human needs that cannot be extinguished—no matter how hard the established order tries to convince people that they live in the best of all possible worlds, that any change will lead to anarchy or self-destruction, that dissatisfaction reflects personal defects or character flaws or a misunderstanding of the complexities of the world or a failure to apprehend the inevitability of evil.

The need for freedom and self-determination, the need for community and solidarity with others, the need for creativity and understanding, the need to be recognized and affirmed by other free and self-determining beings, the need for purpose and meaning in life, and the need for connection with the spiritual dimension of reality—all these needs are so fundamental to what it is to be human that they can never be ultimately extinguished. The forms that these needs take are shaped by the social, economic, and historical realities of any given time and place. For example, the need for freedom and self-determination may be structured in a capitalist society in such a way that it is typically channeled into a competitive marketplace, so that people feel that their needs are being realized through their ability effectively to compete for money, recognition, or consumer goods. Yet people who shape themselves to succeed in this way have a hard time fulfilling their needs for solidarity, community, and loving relationships.

The good news is that because every system of oppression represses at least some of these needs, no such system can ever last. Ever since the French Revolution, almost every ruling class in the modern world has known, deep in its heart, that its days are numbered, that it cannot hope to pass on to endless generations to come the power and privilege that it has temporarily managed to amass and defend.

The bad news is that this very recognition may in part explain why ruling elites have been so reckless, so willing to risk destruction of the entire planet in order to preserve their current advantages: they have no faith in their own future, and hence they recklessly disregard the consequences of their actions (shown most dramatically in their willingness to destroy the earth's resources and life-support systems in order to increase their own material gain).

The turmoil within most contemporary societies is largely a reflection of the fact that no existing social order adequately promotes our human capacities or allows us to fulfill our fundamental needs. The Western media may rejoice in the manifestation of contradictions within Communist societies, thinking that "the free marketplace" has suddenly triumphed as the secret answer to the meaning of human existence. But they are unable to see the vast human suffering and unhappiness that exist within their own societies or to conceptualize how a competitive market society has generated its own set of contradictions. Their obliviousness would be almost humorous if we didn't know the painful consequences of their attitudes.

This wrongheaded approach is evident, for example, in the media's and politicians' approach to who will

most effectively repress the drug epidemic or who can repress violent crime. Rightfully angry at the destructive consequences of drug use, our society cannot begin to consider the possibility that drug use might not be stopped by repression, because it is reflective of people's deep and pervasive unhappiness. Many Americans find solace through drugs, alcohol, television, and dozens of other mechanisms of escape. For those in power it may be too frightening to ask, "What aspects of this society make people so unhappy that they are willing to break the law and pay dearly for some vehicles of escape?" It may be easier for public officials and the media to define tens of millions of people as criminals than to seriously confront the human needs that are not being met and to consider what changes would be necessary in order to meet them. Liberals often trivialize this discussion by reducing the problem to economic discrimination, and then are confounded when they find that some of those engaged in violent crimes or random acts of violence or heavy drug use are not economically deprived. Nor is it particularly helpful to talk about these issues in terms of "individual rights"—those who support the legalization of drugs, for example, don't usually focus on the fundamental issue of the pain in people's lives that induces them to use drugs, pain that is often rooted in the frustration of these most basic human needs.

In complex and subtle ways virtually every existing social order frustrates our basic human needs.

Nothing can succeed in totally silencing our unmet human needs. That's why when we think of 1789, or when we see the struggle of the Chinese students in 1989, we can't help feeling new hope. The struggle to heal, repair, and transform the world so that it will no longer stifle our human needs, though at times it seems to have been defeated, remains the central item on the collective agenda of humanity.

The reason that the struggle of Chinese students could excite the American public in ways that the Democratic party or sections of the social change movements have failed is not merely a reflection of the American media's desire to expose the failures of communism. Most Americans have lost interest in liberal politics because the liberals and the Democrats fail to present any visionary conception of how things might be changed fundamentally enough to allow our frustrated fundamental needs to be met.

Flashing the "V" Sign: Sedition in Israel?

From the early months of the intifada, groups of Israelis have been traveling to the West Bank to meet with Palestinians and show them that many Israelis oppose Prime Minister Shamir's policies. *Tikkun* editorial board member Adi Ofir helped create "The Twenty-First Year" (of occupation), and *Tikkun* editorial board member Sidra Ezrahi helped create "Israelis by Choice" (a group of former Americans who made aliyah and are now attempting to promote democratic values). These peace groups have regularly helped arrange the "solidarity" visits.

Typically, Israeli peace activists play a cat-and-mouse game with the Israeli army, since the army often declares a "restricted military security zone" around any area that peaceniks intend to visit. The peace forces then try to sneak into the Arab villages through back roads or over hills and farmland; they are often arrested and removed, and then released by the army.

On May 26 the rules were suddenly changed for twenty-seven solidarity visitors to the West Bank. This group, including not only Adi Ophir but also *Tikkun*'s two representatives in Israel (Aaron Back and Beth Sandweiss), were arrested during a solidarity visit after the IDF troops were outraged by the group flashing the "V" sign to Palestinian villagers. They were held for five days and were charged with encouraging Palestinian rebellion (in U.S. judicial terms: sedition). They face long jail sentences for a totally nonviolent act of political solidarity.

Ironically, the very same week a group of West Bank settlers entered a Palestinian village firing guns, wounding several Palestinians and murdering one teenage girl. Israeli civil libertarians report that at least seventeen cases of settler-caused Palestinian deaths have been documented but not prosecuted, and dozens of Palestinians wounded. According to the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz*, right-wing Jewish settlers in the West Bank "are organizing by the hundreds to perpetrate acts of vengeance against Arab villages, and are prepared, for the first time, to physically harm army officers who seek to prevent them from carrying out their illegal actions."

One theory holds that Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin has decided that he must stop the escalation of settler vigilante actions that increasingly have the appearance of random pogroms against Palestinians—but to cover his tracks and not appear too partisan he has decided to crack down on the left as well. Another theory holds that the new level of repression against the Israeli peace movement was inevitable—once a government starts to quash civil liberties, the boundaries defining

who is an appropriate subject of repression usually widen to include domestic dissenters.

Either way, it's a serious escalation of repression against a totally nonviolent Israeli peace movement. □

Dust

Susan Litwack

Constantly reincarnating itself,
it sits on the shelf
where a still parade
of greeting cards offers it
unending praise.
Religiously self-satisfied,
it sinks into the frying pan
like a lost tribe of spices,
settles on silk lampshades
and communes with common drains.
It caresses the bedsheets,
and whole dunes are evolving
underneath the mattress,
burying me softly
in dusty dreams.

I am five at Revere Beach,
caked in black sand,
while my brother towers over me,
a sister pie about to be
basted by the tide, baked
by the stark New England sun
and left for the child-crunching flies.
Have mercy! I confess!
I am not one of the Elect.
We came from the Old Country
and swept into eastern ports
only to spread west,
dust snowballing
on the soles of our feet,
tucked behind our ears,
stuck between our teeth.
It landed where we landed,
architects of survival,
immigrants like us.

I am the messiah at eight,
but no alchemist.
I do not put my faith
in mere, ephemeral flakes.
I simply allow them to coexist.
I bring home the smelly, half-eaten
shells to stink up the stairs
so the neighbors talk.
I don't dust the bottoms, or even
the tops of the chairs every day
or—God forbid—once a week.

I permit base elements to accumulate,
while sun streams in the picture window,
pointing its accusing rays.
Only after threats of deprivation
or death, do I unlovingly erase
the weekly portion of family history.
This is where I write my name,
where my toes dip, and my fingertips
mark their delible entry.

I rub each table leg like a genie,
recite the domestic slave
blessing, and wait.
It takes all morning to do the den.
To finish off the house would require
the lifetimes of our pets,
and I am led to flick-of-the-rag,
guerrilla tactics, until
a dirty turncoat—but free at last,
I wave the white rag
and embrace the birthright
of nomadic carelessness.

For I know in my exhausted heart,
if dust is useless, I am useless;
planting flowers I am digging
an early grave, cavorting
in the same, seamy earth
I was taught to eradicate,
becoming Dustmagus,
dusty-eyed lover, dust-ridden
scapegoat of the family's break
with the Bible's very first page.

Dear God, who gives us our daily dust,
admit to having created
the only skin we accept
to cover our layers of thin,
unrelenting consciousness.
Remember when dust fell from the sky
and our belief that it was manna
saved us from the hunger
of self-righteousness, for a while.

An Interview With Abbie Hoffman

Benny Avni

Abbie Hoffman, the sixties icon who died recently of a huge overdose of sleeping pills, was, in his own eyes, the ultimate Jewish rebel. I met him some three years ago when I was doing a profile on him for a Tel Aviv weekly. One of the first things he said was that the name he and cofounder Jerry Rubin gave to their famed movement, "Yippies"—long believed to be an acronym for Youth International Party—actually came from "Yiddisher Hippies."

The setting for our conversation was perfect, the kind only a media wiz like Hoffman could so effortlessly stage. I said I wanted to interview him about his Jewish roots, so he took me to a New York neighborhood delicatessen on East 34th Street, where the pleasant waitress asked in a Yiddish accent, "Should I pack the rest of the salad for you, Abbie?" He made a point, almost ceremoniously, of having me pick up the check. I was The System.

The music that poured quietly out of aging speakers was a soft version of John Lennon's "Jealous Guy," and Hoffman closed his eyes and sang along a verse. "Let's pray," he said. Then he noted that Lennon, an old friend, was much more radical than his public image indicated, and that he, Hoffman, had always tried to help Lennon become more political.

So everything was set for the two main themes of the interview: New York delicatessen Judaism and sixties radicalism. But, of course, it was the late eighties. Lennon's hit sounded relaxed, Muzak-like. Even I, who as a long-haired teenager watched the American sixties revolution from afar, felt nostalgic and sad.

It should be noted, though, that in that era, when Abbie's road was much more taken, nostalgia was a four-letter word. It was something grown-ups with gray hair did, and we all knew, as Hoffman once said, that you shouldn't listen to anyone over thirty.

We talked about his parents. When his father died, Hoffman was a fugitive. At the funeral there were FBI agents all over the place, waiting under their yarmulkes for the famous son to show up. He never did. He was down in Latin America and learned about his father's death months later. I asked if his father was disappointed in him.

"He was ambiguous," Abbie said. "He wanted me to be a successful businessman. He was a national president of a Jewish organization. And sure, notoriety is a certain kind of success, but he was ambiguous about that. Then came Watergate, and all that was happening to the antiwar leaders was made known to the public. So my relatives apologized, but not my father."

And his mother, he said, never opposed him, no matter how outrageous his ideas were, "except for when I would yell at Israel." The interview took place before the awakening of some mainstream American Jews to the Palestinian grievances and before the intifada. I asked why he would yell at Israel.

"Lots of things about Israel make me mad," he said. "Its militarism; its ties with South Africa and other regimes, like Chile; some questions about them supplying funds for the contras in Central America; certainly supporting the government in Guatemala; supplying the right-wing regimes around the world.

"The only justification seems to be that Israel should be a whore to the world, because only in this way can it survive. And I feel the last four decades have proved me right. Israel lives like a fortress state, isolated from most countries, considered an outlaw nation by the vast majority of the nations.

"I am also critical of Israel because it is a religious state. I believe in a separation of church and state, and the movement growing now in Israel that frightens me is a movement that emphasizes the Jewish state. That is different than a Jewish home. Of course, I am for the survival of the State of Israel, and I believe in a Jewish homeland, but that is different than a state."

Hoffman never made it to Israel. He asked me if something could be organized through some student organization. He said, "I'd be interested to go to Israel, because there is more discussion out there, in the Knesset, in the press, in the universities, in the streets, in restaurants.

"In the American Jewish community there is no discussion. There is no diversity of opinion. And that is

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the heart of the problem, because they can't get Jews on the American football teams—go and beat up the goyim—they have to get their stiff erections through the Israeli army and all its macho show-offing in Lebanon and other places.

"So Israel has a Law of Return for Jews. When I was a fugitive, from '73 to '80, a lawyer by the name of Ben Weinglass, one of my many lawyers, went to see if Israel would let Abbie Hoffman in, and the answer was en-oh. In other words, the Law of Return was for some Jews, not for others."

Benny Avni: Whose answer was that?

Abbie Hoffman: I can't give the names of the people. At that time we couldn't approach the formal Minister of Immigration because they would tell the U.S. authorities, and I was planning to go underground. What was stated to me through my lawyer was that Abbie Hoffman is worth a Phantom and a half, so fuck him.

Avni: Did it hurt you as a Jew?

Hoffman: Sure it hurt me. You measure democracy by the freedom it gives its dissidents, not the freedom it gives its assimilated conformists. I am a dissident. I've been in jail forty-one times. I've been beaten on several occasions. I was tortured by the government of the United States.

I have a tape of Nixon and Haldeman hiring thugs to beat me up. Why? Because "the Chicago Seven were all Jews." Abbie Hoffman is a Jew. They weren't all Jews; I saw them in the shower. When the tape came out it was on the front page of the *New York Times,* and not one Jewish organization said anything.

The Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith would have raised a stink from San Francisco to Tel Aviv, but because this is not the most respected member of the Jewish community, they said, "Let's not think about it"—the same thing as the assimilated Jews did in Argentina fifteen years ago and the German Jews did in the thirties.

Avni: Is that the way you were always treated by the Jewish community?

Hoffman: I am generally written about favorably. They say, "He's Jewish, let's convert him." Jews don't disown you. Goyim disown. So they wanted to convert me.

Avni: What's Judaism for you?

Hoffman: I see Judaism as a way of life. Sticking up for the underdog. Being an outsider. A critic of society. The kid in the corner that says the emperor has no clothes on. The prophet. You are talking to a Jewish prophet who used to be a Jewish road warrior when he was younger.

Avni: So the idea of the Chicago Seven was a Jewish idea?

Hoffman: The organizing movement, the leftists in the civil rights movement, the fight for women's rights, the social progressive movements—a disproportionate number of Jews have been involved in them and involved in the leadership. I mean, if you're gonna be involved, you might as well be a leader.

We get choices. You know you are chosen, especially when you are a first-born son. My father said, "The whole world is wrong and you are right." I didn't know he was trying to make a point so I would assimilate. I thought he was telling me who I was, and I'm supposed to go out and make the world right.

And it still is true. And so first-born males have a choice between going for the *gelt* [money] or for broke. And it's people who have changed society I admire who are Jewish. People who said "Workers of the World Unite," "Hang Your Bosses," or "Every Kid Wants to Screw His Mother," or "E Equals MC Squared"—you know all these Jews who have not chosen to go for the money. They've chosen to go for broke. I will end up broke.

Avni: Will you also change history?

Hoffman: I've already changed history. As a community organizer. I organized at least a dozen projects in twenty-five years that are still there. You might have this image that the sixties was all sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll, and it was a lot of fun. But there were people on my side that got tortured, died, sent to jail, and shot by the government.

In Nicaragua there are 500,000 troops fighting. What's keeping them back is the legacy of the sixties, of rebellion in the army, riots on the campuses, demonstrations short of civil war back at home. The whole history of American intervention, before Vietnam and after, has changed. I was banned in eleven states. Now they respect me. They call me mister.

Avni: Maybe you are not kicking any more.

Hoffman: During the last ten years I've been involved in environmental battles. Look at all the local battles I won under the name Barry Freed. You know, all the names I picked underground are Jewish sorts of names. Mild Jewish names. Freed, Michaels, Samuel. It's interesting. Psychologically, as another person, I still claimed that I was half Jewish.

I was an organizer. Army Corps of Engineers looked at me as a threat. In these local battles I am a pain in the ass. When I go to Nicaragua, when I come back to the airport, all of a sudden my briefcase vanishes and then shows up again. Mysterious clicks on the phones again, petitions circulated to take my American passport away.

Avni: How seriously do you take it?

Hoffman: It's more serious than it was two years ago. Obviously it's not the sixties, when the FBI was breaking into my apartment and everything. Obviously I'm not that kind of a threat. We don't have a war.

Avni: So, maybe American society is better?

Hoffman: No way. It's worse.

Avni: Why aren't you in jail, then?

Hoffman: I am not a practitioner of outrage for outrage's sake, or civil disobedience just to break the law. I am a strategist. One has to make a judgment. Are you on the brink of apocalypse as we were in '68–'69, or are you at a point that you have to concede that Rome hasn't fallen in one day, and you pace yourself? You measure your energy.

Avni: Has your energy changed?

Hoffman: Of course. If I was twenty-eight I would be fighting with the Sandinistas. It's my Spanish Civil War. It's not Vietnam to me, but my heart is not here. My heart is on the mountains in Nicaragua. If I was younger I'd be there.

Avni: Are you tired of fighting?

Hoffman: I'm tired all the time. I need my chicken soup once a day. I'll be fifty in November.

Avni: So why aren't you doing a Jerry Rubin?

Hoffman: At the moment, in the United States, people who want to be rich are a dime a dozen.

Avni: So?

Hoffman: I don't wanna be a dime a dozen. I wanna be none-of-the-above. I want to change history, to change society. The idea of making money to me is of a lesser calling. In *The Big Fix* the question was, "Where is Abbie now?" They found me in Beverly Hills, making millions of dollars as an advertising executive, something that I can easily do. If you can make unpopular causes popular, if you can go against the grain, you understand the communication system and the economic system on a level that very few people do.

Dope will never be so cheap.
Rock 'n' roll will never be so good.
Sex will never be so free.

That's why all the people of my generation who were tried in Chicago are millionaires. I am broke, and I'm gonna stay broke until I die. And you buy me lunch. Jerry Rubin once made a big thing about putting Jewish women down. Then he married a wife so she will look good in a fur coat. It's disappointing. It's like picking up the newspaper and reading that my son has joined the Marine Corps.

Avni: What do you do for money?

Hoffman: I do the same. I give speeches, talk on campuses. I get royalties from my books. I gamble on sports. I handicap. I make $5,000 a year gambling.

Avni: And that's enough for you?

Hoffman: It's not enough. I'd like to have medical insurance. I'd like to have an apartment. I'd like to have a few more of what are considered the basic trappings of middle class. It's a weird state, because I am famous. You'd expect famous to be rich. There is no money in being a dissident.

Avni: What's the problem? Make one Hollywood movie. That will do it.

Hoffman: Well, talk to your Israeli friends at Cannon. As far as people on the left in the sixties—except for Martin Luther King, because he is dead and they can do anything they want to him—I am the most packageable, the most sellable, because I am entertaining.

But now, if you look at the movies in which the theme is youth rebellion, they don't want to avoid the draft. It's the revolution of the fifties. *Back to the Future.* They don't want to touch the sixties at all because the sixties are still too political and too controversial. But there will be a movie about me. [That was before Oliver Stone's *Platoon* changed Hollywood's approach to the sixties. Stone, according to reports, is working now on the final touches of a film about the Chicago Seven, starring Mr. Hoffman as himself.]

Avni: Are you angry at people of your generation who went to Wall Street, then?

Hoffman: I have nothing against people who go to Wall Street, but I am not going to devote my life to that. Like all Americans, I have a fantasy about being rich. Of course, what I'd do with my money is not the same as all Americans. I'm not Mother Teresa. She has a big organization supporting her poverty. I have nothing. No relatives, no friends. I am the Jewish road warrior. I would steal gasoline. If I have to go against the law, I will. I'll do what I have to do, within my limits. If I had enough money, I would travel in the developing world, in Africa, Asia.

Avni: Talking about money, how many dollar bills did you throw on the New York Stock Exchange floor?

Hoffman: Three hundred crisp, but it doesn't matter. That's a myth, a symbolic violence. Recently we made a statement about urine tests. I collected urine from the audience and sent it to the president.

Avni: In the sixties lots of people did things like that.

Hoffman: It doesn't make it less effective.

Avni: It does, because we are in the eighties, and not many people join.

Hoffman: We are not in the eighties; we are in a delicatessen in New York City.

Avni: Right. What I mean is, in the sixties you were young and full of wind, and it worked. The "masses" followed you.

Hoffman: Never the masses. Not even the majority. In 1968, at the height of the sixties, the two most popular Americans on college campuses were Richard Nixon and John Wayne. While twenty thousand went underground to Canada and Stockholm to avoid the war, there were three and a half million Americans who put on uniforms and went to Vietnam. You are never talking about majority. You are talking about enough.

Avni: But your side was "in" in the movies, in rock 'n' roll.

Hoffman: Not in rock 'n' roll. There are more political groups today than in the sixties. Bands like the Dead Kennedys, U2.

Avni: You had Country Joe and the Fish, Bob Dylan....

Hoffman: Bob Dylan? Never. Have a discussion with Jackson Browne today. Compare it to anything Dylan ever said. Or Bono of U2, the Clash, the punk groups. In the sixties the music was radical because we said—because I said—it was radical. Read *Woodstock Nation*.

Avni: But today the young are not radical any more. Nobody will write about a Woodstock Nation. Maybe a Wall Street Nation.

Hoffman: That's true.

Avni: So don't you care? Do you just go on with the same tactics?

Hoffman: I am a Jewish road warrior, just like in the movie but I am Jewish. If I'm alone, I'm alone. But I'm never alone. I'm not alone.

Avni: More isolated?

Hoffman: I am more lonely. People are born again. They got stuck in their life-styles.

Avni: Well, that's more hip now.

Hoffman: But I don't care what's hip. I didn't care what was hip in the sixties.

Avni: But you were.

Hoffman: Look. You are talking to an artist who wants to paint his paintings. Obviously I had to deal with realities, the world of the art galleries and what is fashionable and all that; so I will have a chance to exhibit my paintings on a larger scale, or not do my paintings. Those are problems all artists face. This doesn't mean this phase will be forever.

Avni: Will the sixties make a comeback?

Hoffman: Never. Demographics, economics. Dope will never be so cheap. Rock 'n' roll will never be so good. Sex will never be that free. You could live on forty dollars a week then. Dropping out on your career was easier.

Avni: How do you feel about the New Age movement?

Hoffman: It is mysticism as escape from reality. It has been around for a long time.

Avni: Like the Maharishi for the hippies?

Hoffman: The difference is, for a mystic experience in

California now, you pay a thousand dollars per weekend. The hippies' fashion came from Salvation Army stores. It was cheap fashion, used clothes. Now I can take you to boutiques on the Lower East Side where they are selling clothes that I wore in pictures from the sixties for $600 a jacket. Then the food was cheap, communal living was cheap, life-style was cheap. It was anti-mainstream. Of all youth rebellions, the hippie movement was the most political.

Avni: Most hippies weren't aware of that.

Hoffman: You took life in your own hands; you would make a political statement. So now the sixties are a fashion along with the fifties and forties, which leads me to think a change is coming. But forget the sixties. The demographics is different, so you can't have a youth culture. History moves in waves and curves. I would say Our Side is moving up now, in the last two years.

In two weeks, at the University of Colorado, there will be a pitched battle between police and students over CIA recruiting. There is also a strong movement at Yale—South Africa and local issues. I see it more than anyone in the country. I speak at fifty to sixty schools a year, and I see more activists than anyone in the U.S.

Avni: Will they change, say, the regime in South Africa?

Hoffman: Botha's days are numbered. But will they create a national movement with leaders, with a new Abbie Hoffman, a new Jesse Jackson, Gloria Steinem? The answer is no. But that implies that tomorrow is like today. If the economy bottoms out, we will have a strong upswing in activism, but it will look more like the thirties. If there is an invasion of Nicaragua it will blow up like the sixties, but there will be more violence. Students with career plans are not gonna go to fight. □

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THE ABORTION STRUGGLE: SUMMER 1989

Historically Compromised

Ruth Rosen

In times of crisis feminists never know whom to trust. The good news is that, at both the San Francisco and Washington, D.C. pro-choice marches in April, about 15 percent of the marchers were men—not half, but a considerable improvement over rallies that have taken place during the last twenty years. The bad news is that many men are simply ducking the question or, in the extreme case, becoming fashionably preoccupied with the rights of the fetus.

Take Christopher Hitchens, for example, whose biweekly column in the *Nation* regularly supports all manner of leftist struggle. Hitchens rarely takes up women's issues, but when he does, he sure knows how to stir up controversy. Across the country, feminists felt a depressing sense of betrayal as they read Hitchens's "Minority Report" in the April 24 issue of the *Nation*. As hundreds of thousands of women and men descended upon the capital to protect women's right to choose abortion, Hitchens came out of the closet as a left-wing pro-lifer to offer a grand historic compromise on abortion.

You may ask: Just what is a left-wing pro-lifer? Hitchens has provided an example. It is someone who would swap socialist reforms for women's right to abortion.

Appalled by abortion, Hitchens asks: "What if there were to be a historic compromise between pro-choicers and pro-lifers?" His grand compromise requires that pro-lifers offer a national health service that guarantees free contraception, prenatal care, nutrition and health care for children, sex education in the schools, and a national adoption service.

In return for this (rather short) list of concessions, Hitchens would have pro-choicers give up women's right to abortion—except (à la Bush!) in the case of rape or incest, or if the woman's "mental or physical health is threatened."

So what is wrong with Hitchens's grand historical compromise? Plenty. If Hitchens is interested in pragmatic considerations, then he should know that his historic compromise is, and will be, completely unacceptable to pro-lifers and to the right in general—who don't seem inclined to augment the welfare state. Hitchens's short list of concessions, moreover, constitutes an inadequate response to the many economic and social conditions that discourage women from bearing—and rearing—children. Lack of child care, lack of housing, and men's unwillingness to raise children are also at issue.

But let us leave pragmatism out of it and assume that Hitchens is simply searching for an acceptable ethical position. In that case, his blind spot regarding women's rights and the experience of being female is of embarrassing proportions.

The first problem with Hitchens's historic compromise is that it converts biological difference into a justification for the subordination of women. To state the obvious, women get pregnant; men do not. And when women do, their lives are changed forever—not only for nine months. Giving up a child for adoption is no easy psychological matter. To achieve equality between the sexes, women, like men, must be able to determine the course of their lives. Hitchens fails to see that the right to abortion is integral to the entire complex of women's rights. His historic compromise creates a two-track society in which women alone must bear the burden of the double standard imposed by biology.

The second problem is that Hitchens's compromise in effect allows the state to enforce coercive childbearing, a kind of involuntary servitude. Granting the state such power over women's lives—in the name of socialism, no less!—comes perilously close to creating a left-wing version of Margaret Atwood's brilliant *A Handmaid's Tale*, a totalitarian society in which women's abject subordination is achieved through coercive childbearing.

Hitchens's argument for a historic compromise is also riddled with faulty logic and factual error. At one point he states that "one of the century's most positive developments [is] the sexual autonomy of women." But how can women exercise that autonomy if the state has the right to coerce childbearing? With great authority, Hitchens also announces that "in order to terminate a

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pregnancy, you have to still a heartbeat, switch off a developing brain, and, whatever the method, break some bones and rupture some organs." This is certainly true during the later stages of pregnancy, which is why I personally advocate that abortion take place before the end of the first trimester. But at four weeks? At six weeks? Just which textbooks on embryology has Hitchens been studying?

At another point, Hitchens states that "obviously the fetus is alive, so that disputation about whether or not it counts as 'a life' is casuistry." Yet just a few paragraphs later, Hitchens joins Bush in arguing that he would exempt women who have been victims of rape or incest. Why? "Because not all taking of life is murder, and ... it is immoral and unscientific to maintain otherwise...." Aha. Now it is clear. It is murder if a woman has consented (and God forbid enjoyed) sex, but it is not murder if she has been coerced. (I have much greater respect for the consistent pro-lifer who doesn't care how it happened but simply wants to save life.)

Such is the logic of a left-wing pro-lifer who thinks women's sexual autonomy is one of the century's most positive developments. But positive for whom? Hitchens's historic compromise reminds me of the naive young left-wing men who at first welcomed the women's movement, thinking it was about greater sexual freedom. It was not. It was about equality. One way of obtaining equality was to make sure that the sexual revolution did not remain on men's terms. At the height of the sexual revolution, too many women found that they, not their partners, paid the price for the sexual autonomy Hitchens so admires. That is why women's movements all over Western Europe and the United States have clamored for abortion rights.

As a historian, I grow suspicious whenever men try to discredit the effort to secure women's rights by denouncing women as selfish. This is a long and dishonorable tradition throughout history. The not-too-hidden assumption is that women should sacrifice their own needs and rights in order to service men and the family. When women sought the vote, anti-suffragists called them selfish. When women sought the right to education, men called them selfish. When women demanded birth control, society called them selfish. During the 1950s, critics pilloried working women as the epitome of selfishness. When socialist feminists in China, Russia, Cuba, and Nicaragua argued for women's rights, the revolutionary male elite called them selfish. Hitchens joins this tradition as he concludes his essay: "It is a pity ... that the majority of feminists and their allies have stuck to the dead ground of 'Me Decade' possessive individualism...."

The right to abortion is integral to the entire complex of women's rights.

It is true that some of the most radical visions of the women's movement—redistribution of wealth, class transformation, collective advancement—were transformed and redefined by the Me Decade into an acquisitive individualism celebrating self-realization and self-promotion. But women didn't start having—or demanding the right to—abortions during the 1970s. Throughout history women have resorted to abortion. Poor Jewish women on the Lower East Side during the early years of this century didn't seek abortion because they wanted to advance a career. Nor did the struggle to secure safe and legal abortions during the 1960s have much to do with "possessive individualism." It was a serious effort to prevent women from dying from botched abortions. Hitchens fails to address this issue at all.

Even if Hitchens's historic compromise were accepted, women would still seek illegal abortions. They always have; they always will. There will always be reasons why women want to end pregnancies; legislation will not change that. A longer list of socialist—and feminist—reforms would probably encourage fewer abortions, a prospect I heartily welcome. But women should maintain the right to make this personal decision; it should not be swapped in some grand patriarchal compromise.

Strange that a writer who has written so eloquently of the Palestinian right to self-determination should fail to acknowledge women's right to control their own lives. But the left's blind spot regarding women is nothing new. That Hitchens has revealed it all over again is a scandalous reminder of why the women's movement arose in the first place. □

ABORTION

Bad Choices

Larry Letich

Sixteen years after the right to a safe, legal abortion was granted to every woman in America by the Supreme Court, that right is in a battle for its life. By mid-July, when the Supreme Court will have rendered its decision in *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services,* there's a good chance that the constitutional right to a safe and legal abortion will be lost, to be fought for all over again in the legislative houses of every state in the nation.

Hopefully that won't happen. It's possible that the Supreme Court will act to maintain the status quo on the legal basis of *stare decisis,* that is, on the basis that to overturn *Roe v. Wade* would be to ignore precedent. It's unclear whether an enormous outpouring of support for the right to abortion will affect the Supreme Court's decision, but for now it's the best chance supporters of abortion rights have.

Win or lose, the pro-choice movement must ask itself how it got to this awful and painful moment of truth, with no assurance of winning. How did legal abortion, something that over fifteen million American women have undergone, remain controversial enough to approach repeal?

Has there been a backlash against feminism? Perhaps, but backlash can't provide a full explanation for this turnaround. It's clear that the idea that women can and should be equal to men has permeated our culture. Typical middle-class fathers, even among conservatives, go to their daughters' Little League games and dream of their future careers. Pat Schroeder could think seriously about running for president. Our society has barely begun to institutionalize this new attitude, and we've yet to make any progress in valuing more traditionally feminine contributions to our society; but the momentum is toward more equality of the sexes, not less.

What about the usual suspects—Reagan, the Republicans, and the religious right, with their excellent political organizations? These people, so goes the theory, form a very loud and vocal minority that somehow drowns out the will of the majority.

Some truth here, too. But it's also a sad refrain that progressive and liberal movements have used too often to avoid accepting responsibility for failing to capture the American political imagination.

The disturbing fact that the pro-choice movement must face is that it has failed to communicate effectively to middle Americans why women must keep the right to abortion.

According to a study done by the National Opinion Research Center, which has been polling Americans about abortion for over twenty years, there is a core of people—about 10 percent—who are deeply convinced that abortion is wrong in almost all circumstances. There is a larger group of Americans—30 percent—who are equally convinced that abortion is a right that must be protected. But the vast majority of Americans, including the majority of baby boomers, are ambivalent about the right to a legal abortion. This moral ambivalence has been strengthened by the anti-abortion movement's daily hammering and its ever more creative publicity tactics.

What has the pro-choice movement done in return? It has *ignored* this ambivalence. It has blinded itself to the need to develop a dialogue with the American people, to understand the roots of this ambivalence and respond to it. The pro-choice movement has focused (at least until recently) only on the superficial aspects of the polls—such as the fact that 69 to 73 percent of the population supports the right to an abortion. It has acted as if abortion rights were being hijacked from a complacent but totally supportive majority by a small band of right-wing religious fanatics. Over and over again, however, the public has shown its ambivalence about abortion. Thirty-six states have passed laws prohibiting public funds for abortions, and in some states, Colorado for instance, the restrictions were passed in statewide referenda.

Much of the American public believes that liberalism is amoral and that it has contributed to the ethical decay of our society. This attitude, of course, doesn't reflect the way most liberal and progressive people live or believe. But for a variety of reasons, some good (the value progressives place on tolerance) and some bad (a reaction against the hypocritical morality of the right wing, a holdover from the "I do my thing, you do your

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thing" attitudes of the late sixties), progressives have failed to articulate a clear moral, values-based vision of what they want for America. Without such a vision, Americans can be forgiven for feeling that progressives stand for no morality at all.

Moreover, the abortion issue is right at the core of the public debate between individual rights and old-fashioned moral obligations. It is especially threatening because it calls into question the nature of *women's* role, *women's* morality, and *women's* power in a society that has historically seen women as the "civilizers" of a world run by men.

What can the pro-choice movement do to reach the ambivalent majority? How can the pro-choice movement get off the defensive and begin influencing and molding American opinion?

First, it must understand to whom it speaks. The largest and most important segment of the population is the baby boomers. The fact is, the entire baby-boom generation has grown up. The youngest baby boomers are twenty-five, the oldest forty-three, and the vast majority have gotten past the point where an accidental pregnancy is a serious worry for them. On the contrary, they've been having kids—cute, precious, doted-on little Jennifers and Jasons and Jessicas. Or else they've been spending months with thermometers by their beds and dreams of the baby they're finally ready for. An estimated 1.5 million Americans want a child but can't have one. One can't open a magazine these days without reading about infertility, artificial insemination, in vitro fertilization—and adoption. Somewhere unspoken is the resentment against women who have had an abortion when either oneself or someone one is close to can't conceive and may end up spending thousands of dollars to adopt a child.

Second, the pro-choice movement must confront the ambivalence head on. The anti-abortion messages—"abortion is murder," "a fetus is an unborn baby"—are simple, emotionally powerful, and effective. Moreover, the anti-abortion activists are aided by the medical advances of the past twenty years, which have brought home more vividly than ever the miracle of prenatal development.

Nothing the pro-choice movement is saying or doing is powerful enough to counter these statements. It is focusing almost exclusively on "freedom of choice" and "privacy" arguments—and they're very important and effective arguments, certainly the most important ones from a legal perspective. But alone they're not enough. It's true that the pro-choice movement tested these messages and found that "rights" and "freedom of choice" have positive connotations. But these terms also remind people of all those sixties-liberal-ACLU rights that middle America loves to hate. To many people, compared with even the *possibility* that abortion is "murder," a woman's "rights" seem very unimportant.

The problem with an exclusive focus on the "right" to abortion is part of a bigger problem facing liberals and progressives. "Reproductive freedom" and "the right to choice" are rejected by many Americans because these slogans seem to emphasize the primacy of the individual and neglect other moral considerations. Sadly, these phrases conjure up a vision of self-indulgence and selfishness, which leads many Americans to think that those who favor choice are insensitive to other moral concerns.

"Reproductive freedom" and "the right to choice" seem to emphasize the primacy of the individual and neglect other moral considerations. Sadly, these phrases conjure up a vision of self-indulgence and selfishness.

Americans do not accept the philosophy that each person is an atomized owner of personal rights, a person unconnected to other human beings. Even as they have lived according to this philosophy, they have suffered and are so desperate for messages validating human community that they'll buy anything—cereal, soda, presidents—based upon commercials that deliver these messages. These "community commercials," with their picturesque farmhouses, smiling old people, and families gathered around a table, are one of the hottest trends in TV advertising. People are yearning for community. Liberals and feminists seem to be promising people exactly what most Americans don't want any more—a lonely and empty freedom.

For that reason, it is extremely important that the pro-choice movement begin to reframe its arguments in terms that underscore the fundamental moral vision from which its politics emerge. One way for the pro-choice movement to make its moral commitments more explicit is to focus on the experience of women with unwanted pregnancies. The most vulnerable aspect of the anti-abortionist message is the way it ignores women, treating them as if they were mere vessels for the fetus. The right-to-lifers' underlying assumption (one that fits right in with middle-class experience) is that pregnancy and childbirth are always positive (or at least not destructive) experiences. It is on this false assumption that the anti-abortion movement is most morally vulnerable.

The pro-choice movement should focus on the ex-

perience of a woman who is pregnant against her will. It should argue that forcing women to stay pregnant against their will is abusive. In this way, the difference between a wanted and unwanted pregnancy is similar to the difference between wanted and unwanted sex. In both cases, an experience that in one situation is beautiful and wonderful in another situation is horrific. As difficult as it may be morally for some people to accept abortion, there is a greater wrong—a greater immorality—in forcing a woman to undergo experiences as demanding, intimate, and at times life-threatening as pregnancy and childbirth.

It's fine in the rarefied atmosphere of East Coast intellectual circles to talk simply of a woman's "freedom of choice." But the right-to-life movement (and the right wing in general) has shifted the moral base. The message coming from the heartland is that there has to be a moral calculus involved in the decision about abortion. The argument that unwanted children will live miserable lives, or that nobody will take care of these children properly, or that they'll end up on the welfare rolls, is too easily manipulated into a charge that eugenics is the hidden agenda of the pro-choice movement. But the claim that forced pregnancy will cause extreme pain and suffering, so much so that some women will risk and lose their lives by having back-alley abortions rather than carry the pregnancy to term, has the moral justification for abortion that Americans demand. What's more, it gets the anti-abortionists off their moral high horse and reveals the true lack of compassion in their stance.

This message must be articulated forcefully. Advertisements with words like "forced pregnancy," "suffering," and "violation" not only pack an emotional wallop, but also capture the moral issues that the anti-abortionists ignore. Furthermore, every woman has either had forced sex or else lives with the nightmare that someday it might happen. To link "unwanted pregnancy" to "unwanted sex" is to connect it to a universally hated and morally repulsive experience.

The pro-choice movement needs to focus more on the pregnant woman in general. Until the recent outpouring of articles on abortion, we hadn't heard much about the women who get abortions. We mustn't forget that the people who would be forced to carry their pregnancies to term, who would be forced to endure immeasurable suffering, are precisely that—people, not mere statistics. More specifically, they are women, and only women can humanize the abortion issue. Women, and women's lives, must be heard—in magazines, on television, throughout the media. People must be made to confront the humanity of the pregnant woman.

People also need to be reminded that criminalizing abortion will kill women. Unfortunately, such poor statistics were kept about fatalities from illegal abortions (partially because these abortions *were* illegal) that there are no reliable figures about how many women died and who they were. Still, it would be worthwhile to go into the archives and find the story of *one* woman who died of an illegal abortion. Perhaps a huge funeral march could be organized in her memory, if only to remind Americans that women die from abortions—not nameless women, but women of flesh and blood, women with friends and loved ones, women whose lives were cut short while they were still young.

The next issue is the most difficult but most important one of all. The anti-abortionists have spent sixteen years and countless dollars telling America that "abortion is murder." Watch any anti-abortionist rally or listen to any abortion debate, and you will see that the anti-abortionists' entire argument rests on the idea that a fetus is an "unborn baby." In the latest twist, in a "National Town Meeting" debate on abortion rights televised by PBS on April 9, the anti-abortionists repeatedly referred to fetuses as "preborn babies." However, if one accepts that a fetus is a "preborn baby," one *has* to agree with the anti-abortionists. There is simply no argument.

So, what does the pro-choice movement say in response? On the question of the human status of the fetus, the pro-choice movement's reaction has been a resounding "no comment."

But the American people are *demanding* a forthright answer to this question from the pro-choice movement, and the movement's failure to respond lends tacit support to the anti-abortionist position. The last ten minutes of the hour-long debate was reserved for questions from the audience. Three out of the five questioners brought up the issue of when life begins. The first was a right-to-life woman who said, "Let's just get biological. I would like to ask ... each of you to respond to the question, If it's not a baby at the moment of conception, what is it?" Then an older man—someone I would count as a member of the ambivalent majority leaning over to the anti-abortionist side—said, "There's a basic question that nobody has really answered on the pro-abortion side of the fence. *When does life begin?*"

OK, let's get biological. Most abortions take place between the eighth and twelfth weeks of gestation. At that time the fetus is two to three inches long and weighs less than 1.5 ounces. Its brain, still in the very early stages of development, weighs at most ten to fifteen grams, compared to 350 grams for a newborn infant's and 1200 to 1400 grams for an adult's. A fetus, especially a fetus in the first trimester, when 91 percent of all abortions are performed, is no more a baby than an egg is a chick.

The pro-choice debaters, good liberals that they were, kept saying that the point when human life begins is a religious issue that honest people can disagree about—that some people may feel that human life starts at conception. This answer sounds like—and frankly is—a wishy-washy cop-out. The question is not simply a religious question; it's a moral one as well. In any case, the pro-choicers' response is unnecessarily conciliatory. Of course "human life begins at conception"—just as a building begins when you lay a cornerstone. But the belief that a full human life exists at conception is simply nonsense, no more a question of differing opinions, religious or otherwise, than the statement that the world is flat or that the earth was created in the year 4004 B.C.E.

If human life is something more than a human body, a human form; if it entails a quality of consciousness or existence; then somewhere in the second trimester a human life begins. Before that a fetus is the potential for human life, absolutely precious as such, but without the neural equipment to experience anything we would recognize as a human life.

This is not to claim that there's no moral component to abortion. Most women considering abortion do realize that a potential life must be treated seriously. Yet they also recognize that a zygote and an eight-month-old fetus are in no way morally equivalent. Still, Americans constantly hear the argument that there is no moral way to separate the two, and in light of the fact that the pro-choicers have been unwilling to address the question, these people are beginning to believe the anti-abortionists. The pro-choice movement must be willing to rise above euphemism and speak truth.

Especially if abortion again becomes a matter for each state to decide, the distinction between a zygote and an eight-month-old fetus may become pivotal in the battle to save abortion rights. The viability argument has always rested on shaky ethical ground. In essence, it says that as long as the fetus is totally dependent on its mother for survival, the mother has the right to terminate its existence. This is a hard position to defend morally; the right to survival should not be based on questions of dependence. But if we change the terms of the debate so that they deal with the fundamental question of when life begins, we start to create possibilities other than the yes-or-no choice offered by absolutists on both sides. Legislators, in an eager mood to compromise, will begin to negotiate cut-off dates for legal abortion. Some states' cut-offs will be very early, some will be late; but the overall effect will be to reduce the power of the fundamentalists to mold the debate.

This two-pronged campaign, focusing on women's *need for* (as opposed to *right to*) an abortion, and entailing a serious public inquiry into the human status of the fetus at various stages of development, is the fastest way to reach consensus about abortion, one that takes into account the moral issues most people feel. It might defuse the civil war that we seem to be approaching, and it would also isolate the extreme right wing and set the stage for acceptance of RU486, the pill that induces early abortions.

The communications problems of the pro-choice movement are only a reflection of the broader difficulties that liberal and progressive movements are having in America today. In many ways, liberals and progressives have given up trying to *persuade* the American people to agree with their point of view.

Americans are most responsive to that which makes the most moral sense. For that reason, what is deepest and truest is also what is potentially most popular.

Back in the sixties, the right wing was as popular as—well, as the left wing is now. There's nothing mysterious about this change in political fortune. In the sixties, the right wing morally discredited itself through its opposition to civil rights. Right-wingers looked pretty venal to the average American; they argued for segregation while Blacks in suits and ties and Sunday dresses were shown on evening television getting attacked with police dogs and fire hoses. Then came abortion (along with pornography and the exaggerated evils of suspects' rights), and the right wing was truly born again as the protector of the good and the innocent against the wicked and the licentious. While progressive people offered legal and technocratic answers to America's ills, the right wing grabbed the moral high ground in America's debates.

Liberals and progressives have also experienced a strange failure of the imagination. They seem to be struck by a need to communicate their vision in only the most earnest and humorless way imaginable—a sort of homegrown "socialist realism." With depressingly few exceptions, their brochures, pamphlets, and advertisements fall into one of two categories. They're either bland, apolitical exhortations that self-consciously try to appeal to Yuppies, or they're tomes that seem to say, "Here is three times more information about this subject than you've ever wanted to know. Now that you know the Truth, you'll agree with us or you're a heartless idiot."

Americans *will* listen to a progressive movement willing to reach them. As a whole, Americans are a compassionate people with a deep sense of justice and a great deal of sympathy for the underdog—and, by and large,

the American people have failed us because we have failed them. We've stopped listening to their concerns, and most of all *we've stopped speaking their language.* As in any relationship, all the love and goodwill in the world don't make up for an unwillingness to listen and communicate.

The moral vision that we progressives hold can be the most important weapon in our arsenal. We must not focus on narrow legal and procedural concerns; we need to be up front about our moral commitments, finding ways to articulate them and relate them to political concerns. Americans are most responsive to that which makes the most moral sense. For that reason, what is deepest and truest is also what is potentially most popular.

America has been talking to us all along. It's up to us to find the right words to say in return. If we can listen to what America is telling us, be humble enough to see what we have misunderstood, and express our ideals and our compassion in words that speak to the American heart, then a new political era may begin. □

ABORTION

Abortion in Jewish Law

Rachel Biale

Jewish law (halakha) has no single coherent position on abortion. Instead it presents a number of central opinions that, when carried to their logical conclusions, lead to a range of possible rulings on abortion and to internal contradiction.

Abortion appears in biblical legislation only in the case of accidental miscarriage: "When men fight and one of them pushes a pregnant woman and a miscarriage results, but no other harm ensues, the perpetrator shall be fined whatever the woman's husband may exact from him" (Exodus 21:22). Accidentally induced abortion is treated as a civil matter, and the husband is compensated for his loss of progeny (since, according to biblical law, all his wife's "products" are his property). If, however, "other harm" occurs, namely, the woman is killed or injured, "the penalty shall be life for life" (ibid.). The destruction of a fetus is not considered a capital crime, and therefore, later sources conclude, a fetus is not considered a living person. In fact, the fetus is defined as a part of its mother's body: "*ubar yerekh immo*" ("a fetus is [like] its mother's thigh," Hulin 58a, Gittin 23b).

The fetus has no independent rights, and it may be destroyed to save the mother's life, even as late as the birth process itself: "If a woman is having difficulty giving birth, one cuts up the fetus within her and takes it out limb by limb because her life takes precedence over its life. Once its greater part has emerged, you do not touch it because you may not set aside one life for another" (Mishna Oholot 7:6). Thus the fetus becomes an independent person only when its head or most of its body has emerged (Sanhedrin 72b). In fact, a newborn is not considered fully viable until thirty days after birth, and a neonate's death before thirty days is not mourned like other deaths.

Nevertheless, the fetus is valued as a *potential* life, and thus one may violate the law in order to save its life—for example, carrying a knife on the Sabbath in order to operate and assist in the delivery (Yoma 85b). Consequently, even those halakhic authorities who base their ruling on the principle that a fetus is not a person allow abortion only in the gravest circumstances.

In fact, most halakhic authorities permit abortion only to save the life of the mother. They follow, in one way or another, Maimonides's argument that the fetus is a pursuer (*rodef*) who, like a murderer chasing a victim, may be killed to save the life of the pursued: "Therefore the Sages have ruled that when a woman has difficulty in giving birth one may dismember the child within her womb, either by drugs or by surgery, because he is a pursuer seeking to kill her" (Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Rotze'akh U-Shmirat Nefesh 1:9).

Maimonides's ruling that the fetus is a "pursuer" implicitly undermines the argument that a fetus is not a person. In other words, if the only reason that the fetus can be destroyed is that it is a pursuer, the implication is that it might be considered a person. Although

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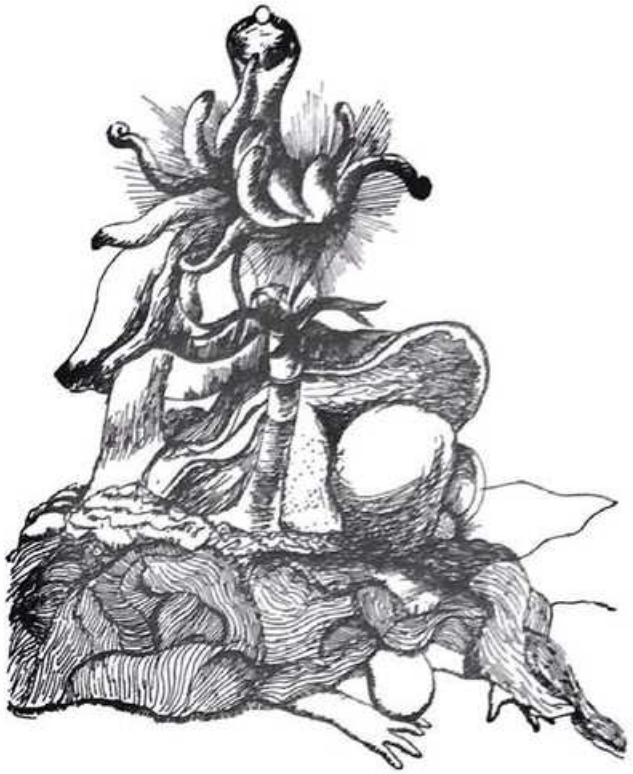
Maimonides did not explicitly draw this conclusion, subsequent authorities did. Rabbi Hayyim Soloveitchik makes this argument more radically than other halakhists when he states: "The reason for the opinion of Maimonides here ... is that he believed that the fetus falls into the general category in the Torah of *pikuakh nefesh* [saving life], since the fetus, too, is considered a *nefesh* and is not put aside for the life of others" (Hiddushei Rabbi Hayyim Soloveitchik to Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Rotze'akh, 1:9). In any case, whether one accepts the talmudic or the Maimonidean position on the status of the fetus, abortion is permitted—required—to save the life of the mother.

In addition to allowing abortion to save the mother's life, the Talmud cites another situation when abortion is permitted: "If a woman is about to be executed, one does not wait for her until she gives birth.... One strikes her against her womb so that the child may die first, to avoid her being disgraced" (Arakhin 7a–b). Thus, the dignity of a condemned woman takes precedence over the life of the fetus, as does the mental anguish she would experience if she were to wait for the execution in order to complete the pregnancy. The implication of this ruling, in the opinion of the more permissive legal authorities, is that abortion may be actively sought and induced in order to save a woman from great suffering, even if that suffering is only psychological. Thus, the eighteenth-century halakhist Jacob Emden allowed a woman who conceived a child through adultery to have an abortion because of her "great need," namely, her anguish at "the thought of giving birth to a *mamzer* [bastard]" (She'elat Ya'avetz No. 43).

Even if an unambiguous ethical argument could be made against abortion, the lack of public consensus and the prohibition against endangering one's life would raise significant halakhic problems.

However, unlike Emden, most halakhists—even "lenient" ones—allow abortion only when there is a *physical* (not psychological) hazard to the mother. Ben Zion Uziel, for example, Ashkenazic chief rabbi of Israel in the 1950s, permitted abortion in a case where a pregnant woman would become deaf if she did not have an abortion (Mishpetei Uziel, Hoshen Mishpat 3:46).

A minority of halakhists, however, follow Emden's example of allowing abortion to prevent psychological harm to the mother. Among more contemporary



halakhists, Rabbi Yehiel Jacob Weinberg in Switzerland permitted abortion of a fetus conceived by a woman infected with rubella, and Rabbi Eliezer Waldenberg in Israel ruled that a Tay-Sachs fetus may be aborted. Neither of these halakhists justified their rulings on the basis of the expected suffering of the baby, a halakhically unacceptable argument since there is no halakhic permission for euthanasia based on arguments of "quality of life." Rather, these rabbis based their decision on the *mother's* anguish at the prospect of bearing a fatally ill or deformed child, for, as Waldenberg argues, "psychological suffering is in many ways much greater than the suffering of the flesh" (Responsa Tzitz Eliezer, Part 13, No. 102).

In short, the halakha does clearly state that the fetus is not a person, not just until the end of the second trimester of pregnancy but until the actual moment of birth. Yet the principle of protecting potential life and the justification of abortion on the grounds that the fetus is a "pursuer" limit even the most lenient halakhic authorities to sanctioning abortion only in circumstances of grave physical or psychological threat to the mother.

The question remains how the halakhic discussion of abortion relates to the constitutional issues raised by *Roe v. Wade*. Much of the discussion of *Roe v. Wade* focuses on the question of whether abortion should be immune from legislative interference based on the rights of privacy and individual freedom. The halakha does not adhere precisely to the constitutional categories of privacy and individual freedom, but some analogies seem evident. One of the halakha's fundamental "metarulings" is: "We do not make a ruling [*gezeyra*] unless the majority of the community can abide by it" (Baba Kama 79b). Indeed, one of the major "pragmatic" arguments in favor of legal abortion has been that the majority of women who seek abortion would not abide by a prohibition; they would resort to illegal abortion. Such abortions force women to put their lives in significant danger, and endangering one's life is forbidden by the halakha. One is required to violate any commandment in order to save one's life, with the exception of the prohibitions against murder, idolatry, and illicit sexual relations. Thus, even if an unambiguous ethical argument could be made against abortion, the lack of public consensus and the prohibition against endangering one's life would raise significant halakhic problems.

The halakha may also be implying that a woman has the right to determine her own fate and the future of her pregnancy when it insists on exempting women from the legal duty of procreation. While men are bound by the mitzvah (commandment) of procreation based on Genesis 1:28 ("be fruitful and multiply") and Genesis 9:7 (the blessing/commandment of procreation to Noah and his sons after the Flood), the Rabbis engaged in hermeneutical acrobatics in order to exempt women from that duty (Yevamot 65b). Although the exact rationale for this exemption is only alluded to, it is clear that the Rabbis felt it necessary not to require women to do something that "puts their lives on the line." The Rabbis were concerned primarily with the physical dangers of childbirth, but they were also aware of the emotional and social dimensions: the ways in which women's lives were devoted to and determined by childbearing.

The Rabbis' determination to exempt women from the duty to procreate left a significant halakhic opening for the practice of contraception (Yevamot 12b). Perhaps the fact that the talmudic statement regarding contraception is descriptive, not prescriptive (which has led to much controversy in post-talmudic rulings on contraception), was on purpose. Just as the Rabbis intentionally refrained from prescriptive rulings on matters of pregnancy and birth, so too did they refrain from offering such rulings about conception and childbearing. Thus we may point to halakhic justifications for the argument that the state or any other legal authority should not legislate in those areas that require a woman to endanger her life. □

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"thirtysomething"

Jay Rosen

Marshall Herskovitz and Edward Zwick are both in their midthirties, Jewish, and married to non-Jews; both have young children. Together they have created "thirtysomething," a one-hour drama just completing its second season on ABC. Their main character, Michael Steadman, is also in his midthirties, Jewish, a father, and married to a non-Jew. Michael is played by a thirtyish actor named Ken Olin, who in real life is Jewish, the father of two, and married to a non-Jew. Herskovitz and Zwick co-write many of the episodes, using their own lives and the lives of their friends as material. Both their wives have written episodes. The actors are all good-looking, educated, middle-class people in their thirties playing good-looking, educated, middle-class people in their thirties. The executives who approved the show at ABC are themselves thirtyish and the parents of young children. "thirtysomething," then, offers an interesting possibility: the TV series as a medium by which a generation communicates with itself.

Something's going on with this show. For one thing, it's a hit in the ratings. About a quarter of the total TV audience tunes in each week (almost nineteen million viewers, heavily concentrated among women ages eighteen to forty-five). More important than the ratings, however, are the reactions. This is a show people actively hate—and watch anyway. Some who are hooked consider it the only thing on TV worth taking seriously. Intellectuals who ordinarily look down on television feel it necessary at least to have an opinion about "thirtysomething," and if you ask them about the show (as I did) they'll go on for fifteen minutes about what's wrong with it. One woman I know makes a point of watching alone each week; that way she feels free to cry. College students gather in groups to watch, and therapists have requested tapes of the show to discuss with patients.

"thirtysomething" is about seven friends, all in their thirties (obviously), all reasonably self-aware, and all with problems that they like to talk about. At the center of the show are Michael Steadman and his wife Hope (played by Mel Harris). They're the ones who've gotten it right. They have a loving marriage, a beautiful baby daughter named Janey, and a large, comfortable house in an upscale section of Philadelphia. The remaining characters define themselves against this (relatively) happy couple, and in particular against Michael. We in the audience are invited to do the same.

One of the most serious indictments of American life is that even an upper-middle-class existence can be radically insecure and spiritually empty.

Gary (Peter Horton) is a compulsive charmer. An ex-radical with an English Ph.D., he continues to seduce women with what one of his conquests calls "a peculiar combination of [long] hair and whimsy." What Gary can't do, of course, is commit. Among those he can't commit to is Michael's cousin, Melissa (Melanie Mayron), a photographer living a bohemian, but ultimately lonely, existence. What Melissa lacks, of course, is a husband and a baby; in their place is a therapist. Ellyn (Polly Draper) is Hope's best friend, a career woman with anxieties enough for several characters. Like Melissa, she is single and not happy about it. Elliot (Timothy Busfield) was Michael's partner in the advertising agency they owned before it went bankrupt this season. He's smart and funny, but he has trouble telling the truth; for a long time, for example, he fails to tell his ex-wife Nancy (played by Patricia Wettig, who is married to Ken Olin in real life) about his affair. Everyone recognizes him as the "irresponsible" type. The marriage soured during the show's first season and the consensus is that it was Elliot's fault. Nancy has been left to raise the couple's two young children, one of whom, the older boy, is acting out the trauma of the divorce. A talented illustrator, Nancy has been trying to revive her career, but with two kids and no help the task is too much for her.

Since their lives have not worked out as well as Michael's, these characters feel a right to complain.

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And complain they do, to the point where the show has become known for its "whining" tone. Here's Jay Leno complaining about "thirtysomething" on the "Tonight Show": "First, I see the wife, and she's whining, 'What about my needs?' Then they cut to the husband, and he's whining, 'What about my needs?' And I'm sitting here saying, 'What about my needs? I want to be entertained. Can't you blow up a car or something?'"

Leno has a point, sort of. It's true that the problems of seven middle-class professionals don't amount to a hill of beans in this world, especially in comparison to the problems of drugs, poverty, AIDS, and homelessness. Still, it's a perverse standard that regards all suffering but the most extreme as somehow trivial or inappropriate. One of the most serious indictments of American life is that even an upper-middle-class existence can be radically insecure and spiritually empty. "thirtysomething" sometimes addresses this problem, more so this past season than the first.

Aware of complaints about excessive whining, Herskovitz and Zwick made an important decision. They decreed that "Michael and Elliot's Company" (that's what it's called) would fail. The collapse of the agency gave Michael something serious to complain about and introduced a fearsome instability into his generally secure world. A number of men I know said their interest in the show picked up at this point, which says a lot, I think, about the appeal of "thirtysomething."

Herskovitz and Zwick think of themselves as courageous auteurs, willing to try things that no one else would do on television. There is a good deal of truth in the claim. Trashing Michael and Elliot's agency took guts because it left an empty narrative space at the center of the show. Daring, too, was an episode in which an argument was filmed and replayed from four characters' points of view. Almost every week "thirtysomething" offers an unusual moment, something a little sharper, more carefully observed, than we're used to seeing on TV. For example, Nancy tries to get some work done at home, but her children keep interrupting her, as real children do; and with each interruption she realizes how trapped she has become, a victim of the economic consequences of divorce.

This is the sort of realism the show repeatedly offers: small, familiar events that illuminate the direction of the characters' lives. But this smallness would be tedium without the strong undercurrent of fear. When "thirtysomething" is compelling, it's often because the characters are afraid of things that truly frighten. The men, for example, are afraid of failing in the ruthless competition that still prevails among them. They frequently take refuge in the safe and relatively contained competition of team sports, where they can humiliate each other (and be humiliated) without real consequences. Michael in particular is prone to childhood fantasies of basketball heroism. An episode about the collapse of his business is interrupted by a dream sequence showing him as a member of the Philadelphia 76ers; he makes the winning shot and is mobbed by his joyous teammates (among them Charles Barkley, a real-life 76er). The men also fear the responsibilities they inherit with relationships, in particular the promise of fidelity, which Elliot could not keep and Gary would presumably find impossible.

Michael has retreated from the public world and has set up a rigid boundary between the 1960s and the present. He mocks any claim to strong principles or cherished beliefs.

For their part, the women are afraid of the choice between career and family, or (in the case of Ellyn and Melissa) of never getting to make that choice and remaining forever single and childless. Hope has Nancy to remind her of her fear of abandonment, while both women can see themselves suffocating in their domestic roles. The women also worry that their creative talents may be illusory, that they are kidding themselves about being illustrators or photographers or whatever. And everyone worries that with a sudden whoosh their lives may be upended. If it could happen to Michael Steadman, then no one, it seems, is safe from economic disaster.

When fears as real and as common as these are addressed in a setting as plausible as "thirtysomething"'s (bonds formed at college or work among a group of people the same age), the potential is created for an unusual kind of communication in which the home life of the audience is relayed, through television, back into the home. "thirtysomething" is occasionally so on target that TV almost becomes a different medium, able to show us that we are not alone, that our personal problems are also social conditions. This used to be called consciousness raising, and it's what separates the show from almost everything else on TV. The relevance of "thirtysomething" to the lived experience of its audience is a remarkable achievement. One of the results, however, is that the show's distortions seem more significant. One such distortion is the handsomeness of the cast. As a reviewer for *Rolling Stone* put it, "There's nothing particularly enjoyable about watching your life reenacted by people better looking than you."

Indeed, outside of Hollywood, no group of friends is

that good-looking. Yet the handsome faces on "thirtysomething" seem right at home on television, where the visual stakes have continually been driven up by advertising and its need to present us with impossible images of beauty. It's helpful to know, for instance, that Mel Harris was actually a model before being cast as Hope (whose very name is a not-so-clever joke on all the women who will never look like her).

One issue "thirtysomething" will never tackle, then, is the social and psychological costs of having the "wrong" body type. Any observer of baby-boom culture knows how much anxiety can be generated, especially among women, by the perception that one is too "fat," and yet none of the show's characters could fairly be classified as overweight. Dealing with this issue would mean tangling with the forces that favor the doomed quest for a perfect body—chief among them being advertising. By casting trim, good-looking people, Herskovitz and Zwick play it safe, and thereby give in to TV's commercial imperative.

But even if the actors were more average-looking, there would still be something annoying about the show. It's partly the sense that real life is somehow cheapened or spoiled simply by its making an appearance on TV. So accustomed are we to the medium's banalizing everything, that what appears on the screen often seems instantly banal, whether, in fact, it is or not. As we experience the hyped-up realism of "thirtysomething," a terrifying thought flips through our minds: good lord, are my problems so common that even *television* can pick up on them?

I, for one, am accustomed to having my tastes anticipated by people who design clothes and decorate restaurants. I accept the fact that certain home furnishing stores know what I want in a new lamp better than I do, and I have learned to live with this preempting of desire. But the preempting of my own speech patterns, as this show sometimes does, is another matter. I get nervous about allowing into my home television characters who occasionally sound like me and my friends, because, at bottom, I don't trust television's motives. The character of Michael Steadman tells me the suspicion is well founded.

Michael is shown to have managed his life better than the others; the traits he demonstrates are the preferred ones—according to the show—if you want to avoid the minefield that personal life has become in the 1980s. And how does he do it? He compromises, because he knows that good things come to those who never insist on anything too strongly. In short, it's helpful not to believe in very much, which is why he doesn't.

Let's look at some of his compromises. What Michael really wants to be is a writer, but instead he compromises and goes into advertising. Advertising is perfect for him. He avoids the agony of trying to become a writer, but still gets to think of himself as a "creative" person, maybe even a "rebel" in comparison to others in the profession. Indeed, he and Elliot opened their own agency because they were just too "creative" for the stodgy old pros at the shop where they met. So they're both rebels, but their rebellion is on behalf of consumer capitalism, for which they create ever more clever appeals.

Elliot, who doesn't pretend to be as principled as Michael, nonetheless makes the mistake of believing too much in their partnership. When the business begins to collapse he pleads with Michael not to give up on their dream. Separated from his wife and his kids, Elliot has nothing in his life to feel good about but the company he co-owns with Michael. But Michael knows what the reality is: the business is headed down, and he refuses to keep it going by borrowing money and trying to cut costs. Michael's business judgment may be sound, but he also doesn't believe in the company the way Elliot does, and so it's easier for him to abandon it.

This fact is confirmed later when the two go hunting for a job. Their first stop is a bargain-basement department store that needs some in-house ads done—flyers in the local pennysaver, that sort of thing. This is not the kind of "creative" design work "Michael and Elliot's Company" was known for. To accept the job would thus be a humiliating defeat, a sellout of their reputation and the principles on which their partnership has been based. Elliot takes one look at the place and turns to leave. For him, it's an open-and-shut case: I may need

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a job, but there are some things I won't do. Michael has a different reaction. He considers taking the job and, if necessary, busting up his partnership with Elliot. That's Michael: no belief strong enough that it can't be discarded under the pressure of events.

Politically, Michael is (what else?) a pragmatist, aware of the tough realities everyone else forgets in their rush to be principled. Here's Michael arguing with Hope over the death penalty (which is at issue because Michael and Elliot are doing some work for a candidate who supports capital punishment): Hope says flatly, "The state doesn't have the right to take life." "Oh, come on," Michael replies, "the state takes a convict and puts him in a hole for sixty years where he's made into an animal, raped, I don't know what—I mean, who are we kidding? That's taking life just as surely as flipping the switch on the electric chair." This is typical of the tack Michael takes: Don't meet a principle with a better principle; assert your superior grasp of reality, before which all principles shrink into irrelevance.

As with politics, so with religion: no belief strong enough to be worth acting upon. In an episode this season about the problems of an interfaith marriage, Michael toys with the idea of going to synagogue and thereby reaffirming his identity as a Jew. He wanders by the place, but he can't bring himself to have a serious discussion with the young rabbi who heads the congregation. In a dream sequence he reimagines the rabbi as a withered old man—thus equating religion with a world that is passing. He never does look the rabbi in the eye and say, "I want to learn what it means to be a Jew." Instead, he ends up confessing to his cousin Melissa a vague belief in God. He adds that he doesn't know what to do with this belief, especially because he's married to Hope, who is not Jewish. This would seem to be an ideal question to put to the young rabbi, but Michael never does. That way he can keep his options open. Whenever he wants to feel religious, he can tell himself he believes in God and insist on Hanukkah as well as Christmas at the Steadman house. What Michael refuses, then, is any system of belief that would forbid or require certain conduct. It is Hanukkah he wants to observe, not Yom Kippur.

We must give Michael credit, though, for truly loving his family. He is a good husband and a good father, and he doesn't resent the sacrifices that devotion to family requires. But he's devoted to little else; his immersion in private life is complete. This is significant because the characters on "thirtysomething," although a little young, think of themselves as part of the generation that came of age in the 1960s. (Michael, teasing Hope, says, "You can take the girl out of the counterculture, but you can't take the counterculture out of the girl." Nancy and Hope are watching the children play, and Nancy sighs: "We didn't change the world; maybe they'll do a better job.")

At least in part, then, "thirtysomething" is a show about how the generation that tried to "change the world" is faring now. Michael, who's faring the best among his circle of friends, did it by retreating from the public world and setting up a rigid boundary between the 1960s and the present. He polices this boundary with a hip, ironic tone, suitable for mocking any claim to strong principles or cherished beliefs. Consider this example: Melissa lets on that she's been going to synagogue and, surprisingly, enjoying it. She finds a "warm feeling" there, she says. "And single men," Michael reminds her, a subtle challenge to the sincerity of her awakening interest in Judaism.

Michael goes further—indeed, all the characters do—in trashing Susannah, Gary's new girlfriend, a community activist who is serious about politics. Susannah gets invited to the Steadmans' for dinner and immediately puts everyone on edge. First she refuses to eat meat, confirming everyone's sense of her as an extremist; then she criticizes Michael and Elliot for agreeing to take on a slimy politician as a client. This impertinence leads the clique to joke about her behind her back, and Michael goes beyond ridicule the following day when he casually informs Gary that his new girlfriend is a "judgmental bitch."

Somewhere in this extreme (and sexist) pronouncement is the voice, not of Michael, or even of Herskovitz and Zwick, but of television itself. As Mark Crispin Miller argues in his new book of essays, *Boxed In: The Culture of TV* (Northwestern University Press, 1988), television has been evolving into an increasingly hospitable environment for advertising. The medium has "gradually purified itself of all antithetical tones and genres," he writes, leaving a TV universe in which the programs rarely offer a serious challenge to the way of life on view in the ads. Susannah, who claims to devote herself to public values, must therefore be dismissed: first by the giggles of the other characters, then by Michael's more aggressive assault.

By keeping a cool distance from all manner of serious belief, Michael, a television character, goes to work on behalf of television. TV is one of the forces that stands to gain when the public realm is abandoned for a safer environment at home—where the link to the outside world is TV. TV benefits as well from what Miller calls "the hipness unto death," that glib and ironic tone by which any claim to seek a better world, a higher truth, or a deeper spirit is easily turned into a joke. Television, then, has an interest in the way the entire culture views the generation that came out of the 1960s—and "thirtysomething" has to be seen in this light. Michael, the expert accommodator, the smart manager, the glib dismisser of politics and public values, is placed at the center of the show in part to refute the relevance of the 1960s to personal life today.

What a different show "thirtysomething" would be if Michael—still the responsible, sensitive family man, still the stable center of his friends' world—were also a public interest lawyer, or a socially conscious journalist, or a biologist for an environmental group. Then "thirtysomething" might be a drama about doing good in the world and getting on with your personal life at the same time—a difficult trick, to be sure, but one that many who came of age in the 1960s have managed. But Michael isn't the type. He's an advertising man, perfecting the world in images only.

Still, what's interesting about "thirtysomething" is that it retains, so to speak, the courage of its compromises. The show's view of the counterculture may be hostile and loaded, but it hardly sees the Yuppie culture as an attractive alternative. Michael and Hope are a handsome and loving couple with nice clothes, a house of their own, and money enough for private child care. But their lives frequently exhaust them, and their fears of sudden ruin can barely be contained. Selling out, then, is no guarantee of a safe haven. This past season a radon scare hit the Steadman home. When Hope gets the news that the readings are high, she says to Nancy, "We're so *stupid;* we thought it would all be perfect, like nothing could touch us." Her mind races on: "And we never had the pipes checked for lead, we never got around to it; Janey could have been drinking *lead* all this time."

The scene ends when Hope, trying to calm herself, goes to call Michael. But Michael does not know what to do. Unable to contain his own fear, he is powerless to ease his wife's, and the look on his face tells us we could be next. At least part of the time, then, "thirtysomething" is sending out a message that cannot be soothed by the next ad that comes up in soft focus, or by the "happy talk" that is sure to follow on the local news. Even for those who have it together, things fall apart: an unusual premise for a television show. □

My Story

David Ignatow

I accept the candle
handed to me out of the dark
where I hear the thunder
of Roman troops. The candle
is lit, floating down
from over the heads
of the fighters against Rome.
I place it in a candle holder
and set the light beside my bed.
In its ray the thunderous troops
recede. I pick up a history
of the Jews and read. My story.

What Kind of State Is a Jewish State?

Michael Walzer

"Wait and see" may well be the best answer to the question posed by my title. The citizens of Israel (Jews and non-Jews alike) are actively engaged in a political process through which the meaning of their statehood will emerge. The process has no fixed or necessary endpoint; the "emergence" of meaning is continuous, incomplete, always contested. But at some point in the future, probably the near future, we will see more clearly than we now can what the weight of Jewishness will be in the life of the state. Conceivably Israel will simply be an Israeli state, Jewishness a feature of its founding but a declining influence on its existence. Or, by contrast, Jewish statehood may turn out to be as normal as early Zionist writers hoped it would be, providing a center for Jewish life and opening the way for a new national culture. Or, by contrast again, Jewish statehood may turn out to be as abnormal as (some) religious Zionists believed it would be—"the dawn of our redemption." In any case, the contest will continue through our lifetime, and while only Israeli citizens can participate in the successive decisions (for the third outcome, however, they would require divine assistance), Jews in the Diaspora can hardly help but have hopes and opinions. What follows is my own opinion. I put it forward with the humility of an onlooker and the passion of an interested party.

I.

How should the adjective "Jewish" modify the noun "state"? The view of religious Zionists is that "Jewish" is a strong or authoritative modifier, so that a Jewish state is one governed, so far as possible, by the requirements of halakha, by the laws of traditional rabbinic Judaism. But this is a curious view, since rabbinic Judaism first took shape as a response to the collapse of statehood. It represented a creative adaptation to new and difficult circumstances (the Roman Conquest and the destruction of the Temple), and one might think that further adaptations are required as circumstances change. What is today called "Orthodoxy" provided the hegemonic structures of Jewish life from the loss of independence until the beginnings of emancipation—but not before and not since. Even during those long centuries of statelessness and oppression, Orthodoxy's hegemony was never total. The authority of the Rabbis was challenged by Karaite schismatics, Sabbatean messianists, Hasidic pietists, and an ever-renewed succession of rationalists and mystics. But in the politics of exile—in communal government and in the legal control of everyday life—the rabbinic understanding of Judaism was dominant. It was the Rabbis who held the Jewries of exile together.

Before the exile, national independence provided the necessary conditions for partisan conflict and political opposition—thus the struggles for power between Sadducee aristocrats and Pharisee sages, and the fierce sectarianism that marked the two centuries before 70 C.E. And today emancipation provides the necessary conditions for dissent and separation—by Reform congregations, for example, whose members decline to be ruled by halakha, or by individual Jews or members of *havurot,* who design their own Judaism, protected by a secular and liberal state. In the years between independence and emancipation, however, the possibilities for Jewish life were cramped and limited. The scattered communities were small, vulnerable, beset by enemies; unity was the first prerequisite of their continued existence. Though there were many conflicts within the communities—between rich and poor, rabbis and lay leaders—sustained political opposition would have been very dangerous. And separation was virtually impossible short of conversion; even intimations of separation—the resort to non-Jewish courts, for example—were viewed as a threat to communal security and were strongly condemned.

So each exilic community was, in a sense, a "Torah state"—but only because of the statelessness and unfreedom of Jewry as a whole. Gentile rulers, who simultaneously tolerated and exploited these Jewish communities, found their unity convenient; it made

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for easy tax collection and cheap government. The great premodern empires practiced a kind of corporate pluralism, and sometimes, at least, the Jews were allowed to organize themselves as one corporation among many and to live according to their own traditions, subject to their traditional leaders. Though the tradition certainly changed over time—more than contemporary Orthodox Jews are ready to acknowledge—it was also remarkably stable, for the conditions of corporate life were repeated in one Diaspora home after another. But emancipation, and now statehood, has changed all that. Shouldn't it also change the role of the modifier "Jewish"?

II.

The Jewish state has its origins in the disruption of the old Jewish ministates—the autonomous communities that first took shape in Babylonia and finally disintegrated, several millennia later, in czarist Russia. No doubt these communities served the Jewish people well, but it is important to recognize that their disintegration was welcomed by a great many, perhaps by most, of their members. The old corporate structures, already in decay, were now felt to hinder rather than protect individual and collective creativity. "Emancipation" was not a sectarian label; nor was it, by and large, a merely partisan choice. The generally liberal/leftist politics of modern Jews expresses first of all a strong preference for states and parties committed to freedom and equal opportunity. Certainly, Jews seized upon the new possibilities of the emancipated life—not only economically but also politically and intellectually. The last two centuries have seen a proliferation of sects, parties, movements, and schools of thought unlike anything in Jewish history except, perhaps, for the sectarianism and party conflicts of the Second Commonwealth.

Having been emancipated by choice, Diaspora Jews are now liberals by necessity. Our commitment to civil rights and liberties, to individualism and pluralism, derives partly from the fact that we are, in all the countries of our exile, a small and still vulnerable minority. But it derives also from the fact that we are now a *divided* minority. The liberal state not only protects us against coercion by non-Jews: special taxes, the denial of political rights, limits on economic activity, intermittent violence, social degradation—all the things that made the old communities so important to Jewish survival. It also protects us against coercion by other Jews, against the community itself. I will offer only easy and familiar examples of this double protection; the list in fact is very long. In the United States today, Orthodox Jews are not compelled to send their children to state (secular) schools, and, at the same time, secular Jews are not compelled to send their children to religious schools. Conservative and Reform Jews organize their congregational life without constraint either by state officials or by Orthodox rabbis. Jews who wish to do so submit themselves to the rabbinic courts; those who don't, don't.

American Jewry can be conceived of as a voluntary association; or as a series of voluntary associations, loosely connected; or as a collection of individuals, differentially committed and identified. In any case, it isn't a corporation, a single, self-governing community, or a ministate. And this is true throughout the Diaspora, even where such old corporate offices as the chief rabbinate still survive. Everywhere, the Jews are divided; the forms of Jewishness (and of Judaism too) are many and various; the institutional structures of Jewish life are independent of one another; no central or authoritative leadership exists. The liberal state tolerates all the versions of Jewishness. It doesn't judge their relative value, nor does it act to enhance or reinforce whatever internal discipline particular groups of Jews accept for themselves. This is what it means to be emancipated.

How should the adjective "Jewish" modify the noun "state"?

Only in Israel do Jews now have a corporate existence. But this is a highly problematic corporatism, for the emancipated Jewishness of the Diaspora has been "ingathered" by, and must now be accommodated within, the new state. All the vibrant variousness of contemporary Jewry has come home, and as a result Jews in the Third Commonwealth are as divided as they were almost two thousand years ago in the Second. And political independence provides once again a public space within which these divisions can be acted out. What kind of an adjective can "Jewish" be in these circumstances? Those who believe that "Jewish" should be a strong modifier would use state power to reverse the process of emancipation, that is, to favor, sponsor, and eventually enforce a single version of Jewishness; or, less ambitious and a little more realistic, they would ask the state to set clear limits on the range of difference. The crucial sign of their intentions (and of their partial success) is the rule of religious courts in matters of personal status: one set of courts, legally authorized to apply halakhic law, with jurisdiction over all of Israel's Jewish citizens. But these courts confront more than one set of Jews.

What the Diaspora has bequeathed to Israel is a number of ways of being Jewish. (Zionism was originally one of the ways, though it soon became apparent that there was also more than one Zionism.) The number includes what was once unimaginable—not only different nonreligious ways, emphasizing language or culture or

nationality or politics, but also different religious ways. For obvious reasons, though nonreligious difference is politically more significant, religious difference is intellectually more threatening to the Orthodox—hence the heatedness of the battle over Jewish identity and membership. Should Israel set out to reduce the number of ways of being Jewish? Is that what it means to come home? These questions are not so easy to answer; they point toward a dilemma. If that's what home means, then Jews could "come home" simply by restoring the corporate rule of the old Diaspora communities. And if that isn't what it means, then Jews can stay home (as they are in fact doing) wherever they already enjoy the fruits of emancipation. What difference do statehood and sovereignty make?

In practice, the restoration of corporatism is not a real possibility, not in the Diaspora and not in Israel. Emancipation is an irreversible experience, very much like the Reformation in Christian history: there is no way back to a single unified faith. Hence the establishment of Orthodoxy as the only legitimate version of Jewishness (or as the only legitimate version of Judaism) would make Israel into something other than a Jewish state. We would need a second adjective: an *Orthodox* Jewish state, which is to say, a state for some Jews, uncongenial to the greater number, who would be more free to express their Jewishness in the (liberal) Diaspora than in the homeland. "Jewish" cannot be a strong modifier without also being a divisive modifier and itself requiring modification. A state that was simply "Jewish" would have to reflect the experience of the entire Jewish people, not simply of some subgroup within it. But can there be any substance in such a reflection—anything we can put our hands on, *takhlis,* concrete, practical—given the extraordinary diversity and the internal contradictions of that experience? I will try to answer this question, but first I need to answer another.

III.

A brief digression on Who-Is-a-Jew—the issue is politically and intellectually unavoidable. And it is in answering this question that we are forced in the most dramatic way to recognize the impact of Diaspora experience upon Israeli state policy. The question has to be answered because of the Law of Return, which establishes Israel as a refuge for Jews in trouble anywhere in the world. Zionism isn't only a rescue operation, but it is importantly that. Nor does the Zionist state rescue only Jews; it participates along with other states in international efforts to help different groups of persecuted or stateless men and women. Still, it acknowledges a special commitment to Jews. Hence, who is a Jew? To whom is the commitment made? Who benefits?

The most obvious answer is that the benefit belongs to anyone who meets the traditional requirements of Jewish law—who has a Jewish mother or who has been converted according to halakha. But there is one overwhelming difficulty with this answer. The people who make trouble for the Jews have never felt themselves bound by Jewish law. And if the persecutors ignore the halakhic criteria, how can the rescuers adhere to them? Anti-Semitism has regularly extended to people who have only Jewish fathers (or only Jewish grandfathers) as well as to "irregular" converts. And surely all those to whom it extends are entitled to the refuge that Zionism promises. It may sound perverse, but in deciding who is eligible for Return, the Nuremberg laws are more relevant than halakha.

And if those upon whom Jewish identity has been forcibly imposed are eligible, all the more so are those who voluntarily join the Jewish people and agree to share its destiny. Recall the case of Rina Eitani in the 1960s—a woman who had followed her Jewish husband into a German concentration camp but was denied admission to Israel under the Law of Return because her subsequent conversion did not meet halakhic standards. I would suggest that she became a Jew the moment she entered the camp, for that act bespoke a commitment above and beyond the law: *Your people shall be my people....* To put the matter less dramatically, the Law of Return must cover all those men and women in the Diaspora who suffer or who might suffer *as Jews,* whether Orthodox rabbis think they are Jews or not. Admissions policies can't be governed by the need to preserve the purity of the refuge, only by the need to help the refugees.

IV.

Beyond the requirements of the Law of Return, there is no reason for the Jewish state to take an interest in the religious status of its citizens. But then, again, in what sense is it a *Jewish* state? What can "Jewish" mean if it is a weak or, perhaps better, a liberal modifier? Contemporary American political theorists commonly believe that a liberal state must be neutral in matters of religion, indeed, in all matters (cultural, historical) in which particular forms of life might find expression. That view is right to this extent: that the state provides a frame, a protective structure, and that within this frame individuals and groups cultivate diverse forms of life. The State of Israel, insofar as it is a liberal state, sponsors and underwrites a rich, lively, contentious civil society—which is made up, in its largest part, of Jews arguing with one another. There is no need for the state to resolve the arguments; they can be settled, if

they have to be settled, in nonpolitical ways or, at least, without coercion.

But this is not the whole meaning of statehood. A state also provides public places and public occasions for a common life, and this is always a life of a particular sort, determined by the dominant culture of civil society. Every state has a particular character; a literally neutral state, a state whose common life was evacuated of all content, while (perhaps) not conceptually impossible, is radically improbable in practice and without example in history. So even if the adjective "Jewish" is a weak adjective, it still must modify "state" in *some* determinate way (that's what adjectives do). Not that "Jewish state" must take on a meaning something like "Islamic republic" in its present Iranian usage. "Islamic" is currently a strong modifier, but one can imagine its being weakened, much as "Jewish" has been weakened through the effects of emancipation, sectarian division, and modern secularism. In any case, given these effects, a Jewish state today cannot enforce a singular and uniform Jewishness. It can, however, express in public places and on public occasions—in its official calendar, its evocative symbols, its formal ceremonies, its historical celebrations, its school curriculum—a version of Jewishness (loosely structured, latitudinarian) common or potentially common to all the varieties of Jews. I suppose I should say "almost all," for there are bound to be ideologically driven refusals of commonality: sectarian schism, alienation, and withdrawal. Under conditions of freedom, Judaism will produce its own versions of Amish and Mennonite sectaries, say, just as it once produced the Essenes.

But won't this "common" Jewishness represent the lowest common denominator of Jewish life? Yes, that is exactly what it will and should do, though it need not be "low" in the sense of base or coarse; nor need it be simplistic, sentimental, and empty. Israel's common Jewishness should be, to change my metaphor, a distillation of Jewish history and values in which all (or almost all) Jews can recognize themselves. What content the distillation will have, how rich it will be, depends on the creativity of Israeli Jews—on the continuing work of poets, philosophers, artists, historians, and novelists. Bialik's poems, studied by schoolchildren, suggest one possibility; the appropriation of the Amalek story by right-wing politicians suggests another.

The rabbis and halakhic sages of Israel will also participate in this construction of a common Jewishness. But the effectiveness of their participation must depend upon their persuasiveness. They shouldn't be able, any more than the poets are able, to call upon the coercive power of the state. The sages can be legislators for Israel only in the extended sense given to that word by Shelley, when he called poets the "legislators of the world." Under the conditions of statehood, halakha must become a speculative endeavor, an articulation of a certain kind (not the only kind) of Jewish idealism or even of Jewish perfectionism. It has a possible influence on the common life—of roughly the same sort that Catholic natural law doctrine has on American life when it is applied by American bishops to nuclear deterrence or to the ordering of the economy. Statehood gives the rabbis a new reason to extend and elaborate halakha and to address as wide a range of issues as the bishops do. But the rabbis cannot claim, in the open society that the state frames and protects, the same authority that they once exercised in the closed society of the medieval commune. They have only the authority of their arguments.

Israel represents, as the early Zionists hoped it would, a triumph of the ordinary—which is to say that it occupies the largely unexplored theoretical landscape between exile and redemption.

What this means in practice is that in a Jewish state, where "Jewish" is a weak or liberal modifier, the religious courts (Islamic and Christian, of course, as well as Jewish) can judge only those who agree to be judged. The judicial system should be like the educational system, with parochial institutions always available but never compulsory. State courts will of course be influenced—though to what degree we can't predict—by the Jewish legal tradition; but they will also be influenced, given the history of the Middle East, by Ottoman and British traditions. And, similarly, state schools will teach the history of the Jews but also a more general history. The contrast between what goes on in the parochial institutions and what goes on in the public institutions will never be an absolute contrast between Jewish particularism and civic neutrality. Rather, there will be a variety of particularisms and an always unfinished but nonetheless recognizable common life. The contrast is partial and endlessly contested.

One can imagine a number of stopping points in this ongoing contest, all of them temporary. Jewish Israel may one day look like Catholic Ireland in the days of Joyce—priest-ridden and parochial, the largely negative inspiration of its greatest writers. Or it may look like Catholic France in the age of Jaurès and Clemenceau, anticlerical and secularist, home to the cultural avant-

(Continued on p. 126)

Can Judaism Survive the Twentieth Century?

Jacob Neusner

The twentieth century, until practically our own time, has produced no important and influential Judaic systems. The well-established Judaisms that flourish today—Reform, Reconstructionist, Orthodox, and Conservative Judaism—all took shape in the nineteenth century, and in Germany. Secular Jewish socialism and Zionism also arose in the nineteenth century. How is it possible that one period produced a range of Judaic systems of enormous depth and breadth, systems that attracted mass support and changed many people's lives, while the next three-quarters of a century did not? And, further, what are we now to expect, on the eve of the twenty-first century? I think we are on the threshold of another great age of system-building in Judaism.

Why No New Judaic Systems for Seventy-five Years?

Why no new Judaisms for so long? The stimulus for system-building surely should have come from the creation of the first Jewish state in two thousand years. Yet the creation of this state yielded nothing more interesting than a flag and a rather domestic politics, not a worldview and a way of life such as the one the founders of the American republic, Madison and Hamilton, enunciated.

American Jewry presents the same picture. War and dislocation, migration and relocation—in the past these phenomena generated and sustained system-building in Jewish societies. But the political changes affecting Jews in America, who became Jewish Americans in ways that Jews did not become Jewish Germans or Jewish Frenchmen or Jewish Englishmen and women, have yielded no encompassing systems.

Millions of people moved from one world to another, changed their language, their occupation, and virtually every other significant social and cultural aspect of their lives—and produced nothing more than a set of recapitulations of four Judaic systems, serviceable under utterly different circumstances.

I see three reasons why no Judaic systems have emerged since the end of the nineteenth century. I do not claim that they provide all-encompassing explanations, but I do think they help us answer the question before us.

(1) *The Holocaust.* First of all, the demographic reason, which has two components. The most productive sector of world Jewry perished. Also, the conditions that brought about the great systemic creations vanished with the six million. Not only too many (one is too many!), but the wrong Jews died. What I mean is that Judaic systems emerged in Europe, not in America or in what was then Palestine; and, within Europe, these systems came from Central and Eastern European Jewry. The Jewish population in Eastern Europe was vast. It engaged in enormous amounts of learning; and what's more, it formed a self-aware community—not scattered and individual, but composed and bonded. In short, for the Jews that perished, being Jewish constituted a collective enterprise, not an individual predilection.

In the West, people tend to identify religion with belief, to the near exclusion of behavior, so religion is understood as a personal state of mind. Jews in the West tend to be concerned more with self than with society, less with culture and community than with conscience and character. Under such circumstances, system-building doesn't flourish, for systems speak of communities and create worlds of meaning, answer pressing public questions and produce broad answers.

Yet the demographic explanation cannot, by itself, suffice. After all, today's Jewish populations produce massive communities, 300,000 here, half a million there. Both American Judaism and Israeli nationalism testify to the possibility of system-building even after the mass murder of European Jewry. When we consider, moreover, the strikingly unproductive character of large populations of Jews, the inert and passive ideology (such as it is) of the Jewish communities in France, Britain, South Africa, and the Soviet Union, for instance, it becomes clear that even where there are populations capable of generating and sustaining distinctive Judaic systems, none is in sight. So we must turn to yet another explanation.

(2) *The Demise of Intellect.* The as-yet-unappreciated factor of sheer ignorance, the profound pathos of Jews' illiteracy in all books but the books of the streets and marketplaces, is a second explanation for the decline of Jewish system-building. The Judaisms that survive focus

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on emotional or political concerns—readily available to all. They offer nothing of taste and judgment, intellect and reflection; nothing of tradition and traditional culture; nothing of the worlds in which words matter.

The systems of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries made constant reference to the Judaism of the Torah, even when rejecting it. Jews received and used the heritage of human experience, captured as in amber, in the words of the Torah. So they did not have to make things up afresh every morning or rely only on that narrow range of human experience that is immediately accessible.

By contrast, Israeli nationalism and the American Judaism of Holocaust and Redemption—the two most influential systems that move Jews to action in the world today—scarcely concern themselves with this traditional focus. They emphasize only what is near at hand. They work with the raw materials made available by contemporary experience—emotions on the one hand, politics on the other. Access to realms beyond requires learning in literature; but the Judaic systems of the twentieth century do not regard the reading of books as a principal part of the Jewish way of life. The consequence is a strikingly abbreviated agenda of issues, a remarkably one-dimensional set of urgent questions.

The reason for this neglect is that today's Jews, especially in Western Europe, the Soviet Union, and the United States, but also in Canada, Australia, South Africa, Argentina, Brazil, and other areas, have lost all access to the Judaism of the dual Torah, oral and written, that sustained fifteen centuries of Jews before now. Jews in the European, African, and Australian worlds no longer regard "being Jewish" as a matter of intellect, and, to the extent that they have a Jewish worldview, it has little connection to the Judaic canon.

American Jews specifically have focused their imaginative energies upon the Holocaust, and they have centered their eschatological fantasies on "the beginning of our redemption" in the State of Israel. But they have not gone through the one, nor have they chosen to participate in the other. Not having lived through the mass murder of European Jewry, American Jews have restated the problem of evil in unanswerable form and have then transformed that problem into an obsession. Not choosing to settle in the State of Israel, they have defined redemption—the resolution of the problem of evil—in terms remote from their world. In short, American Judaism is plagued by focusing on a world in which its members do not live.

(3) *The Triumph of Large-Scale Organization.* Third and distinct from the other two factors is the bureaucratization of Jewry that has resulted from its emphasis on immediately accessible political and emotional concerns. Jews who place little value on matters of intellect and learning are placed in organizational positions of power, while those more reflective Jews are given little influence. This stratification prevents system-building because intellectuals are the people who create religious systems. Administrators do not, and when they need ideas they simply hire publicists and journalists who churn out propaganda.

This emphasis on bureaucrats is hardly surprising. In an age in which, to survive at all, Jews had to address the issues of politics and economics, and build a state (in Israel) and a massive and effective set of organizations capable of collective political action (in the United States), politicians, not sages, were needed. And though these politicians did their task as well as one might have hoped, we should not lose sight of the cost. The end of the remarkable age of Judaic system-building may prove to be a more calamitous consequence of the destruction of European Jewry than anyone has yet realized. Not just Jews, but the Jewish spirit as well, may have suffocated in the gas chambers.

The End of the Judaisms of the Nineteenth Century

Among the six great Judaisms of the first third of the twentieth century, all have lost nerve and none retains vitality. Jewish Socialism-cum-Yiddishism is a victim of the Holocaust. Zionism has no important message that is not already available from the Judaism of Holocaust and Redemption. Reform, Reconstructionist, Orthodox, and Conservative Judaisms have all lost power.

Reform Judaism, having sold its soul to the Judaism of Holocaust and Redemption, has lost the source of its energy in the prophetic tradition of Judaism. Western Orthodox Judaism answers questions about living by the Torah in modern society that few people wish to ask anymore. Those who want tradition and also a place in an open society find the answer in a variety of Judaisms. The diverse Orthodoxies now concur, with the exception of the minority around Yeshiva University, that to be Orthodox is to live segregated from and with scarcely veiled hostility to the rest of the Jewish and gentile worlds. Accordingly, everyone wants a place in the center, everyone espouses the ideal that we now identify with Conservative Judaism: that we wish to be Jewish in an integrated society and that we want our Judaism to infuse our lives as Americans with meaning. It is a mediating, healing, centrist, and moderate ideal; an ideal that teaches us to look to the Judaic religious tradition for guidance but to make up our own minds, to live by something we call Judaism but to accept the possibility of change where appropriate, necessary, or desirable.

The institutions of Conservative Judaism, however, are weak. They do not enjoy the financial support of

Jewish laypeople, and much of the Conservative rabbinate is alienated from the movement's central institution, The Jewish Theological Seminary. In fairness, however, the younger generation of Conservative rabbis is starting to overcome this alienation.

What of Reform Judaism? If I had to choose two words to characterize the contemporary state of Reform Judaism, they would be sloth and envy. I call Reform Judaism slothful because it has become lazy about developing its own virtues and so deprives all Judaisms of its invaluable gifts and insights. I call it envious because it sees virtue in others and despises itself. The single greatest and most urgent idea in the Jewish world today is the one idea that Reform Judaism has made its own and developed for us all, and that is the idea that God loves all humanity, not only holy Israel.

Yet the movement still regards itself as second-class and somehow less than a fully legitimate form of Judaism. By "the movement" I do not mean a few theologians at Hebrew Union College who have set forth a solid and substantial rationale for Reform Judaism in both history (Michael A. Meyer) and theology (Jakob J. Petuchowski). I mean the vast number of pulpit rabbis and laypeople who see more observant Jews and think of themselves as somehow inferior, who meet more learned Jews and think less of themselves.

Though less observance and less learning weaken Reform Judaism's claim to Jewish authenticity, I think Reform Judaism has a message to offer all Jews, including the most Orthodox of the Orthodox and the most nationalistic of the nationalists—one that is more important than studying the Talmud or not eating lobster. Reform Judaism defines Judaism as a religion of respect and love for the other, as much as for the self. Reform Judaism teaches that God loves all people, emphasizes the parts of the Torah that deliver that message, and rejects bigotry and prejudice when practiced not only by gentiles but by Jews as well.

The single most urgent moral crisis facing Jewish communities today is the Jews' hostility toward the other, the outsider. The novelist Norman Mailer, writing in the *New York Times* in language reminiscent of the prophetic tradition, stated what I conceive to be the great contribution of Reform Judaism to the life of Jewry everywhere:

> What made us great as a people is that we, of all ethnic groups, were the most concerned with the world's problems.... We understood as no other people how the concerns of the world were our concerns. The welfare of all the people of the world came before our own welfare.... The imperative to survive at all costs ... left us smaller, greedier, narrower, preternaturally touchy and self-seeking. We entered the true and essentially hopeless world of the politics of self-interest; 'is this good for the Jews?' became, for all too many of us, all of our politics.

Mailer concluded: "The seed of any vital American future must still break through the century-old hardpack of hate, contempt, corruption, guilt, odium, and horror.... I am tired of living in the miasma of our indefinable and ongoing national shame." I find in Mailer's comments that morally vital prophetic tradition that Reform Judaism—alone among contemporary Judaisms—espouses. All the worse that today Reform Judaism has lost its nerve. Just when Jewry needs what Reform Judaism has always stood for, the message is muffled.

The single most urgent moral crisis facing Jewish communities today is the Jews' hostility toward the other, the outsider.

Speaking to the Council of Reform and Liberal Rabbis in London last year, Israeli Professor Yehoshafat Harkabi said that there is a crisis in our relationship to the gentiles. In a stunning public statement, Harkabi raised the possibility that "the Jewish religion that hitherto has bolstered Jewish existence may become detrimental to it." Harkabi pointed to manifestations of hostility against gentiles, formerly repressed, but ascendant in the past decade. In the State of Israel, in particular, that hostility takes such forms as these: Chief Rabbi Mordekhai Eliahu forbade Jews in the State of Israel to sell apartments to gentiles; a former chief rabbi ruled that Jews must burn their copies of the New Testament; Rabbi Eliezer Waldenberg, a scholar who has received the Israel Prize in Judaic Studies, declared that a gentile should not be permitted to live in Jerusalem; and the body of a gentile woman who lived as a Jew without official conversion was disinterred from a Jewish cemetery.

Explaining these and many other expressions of antigentile prejudice, Harkabi pointed out that these sentiments are not limited to the State of Israel, and he called for "discarding those elements" of Judaism that instill or express hostility to outsiders. He said, "Demonstrating to Orthodoxy that some of its rulings are liable to raise general opprobrium may facilitate the achievement of a modus vivendi between it and the other streams in contemporary Judaism."

Where are we to find the corpus of ideas concerning gentiles to counter these appalling actions and opinions of the pseudomessianic Orthodoxy of the State of Israel? I find them, these days, mainly in Reform Judaism—a corps of rabbis bearing a moral concern and, more

important, an intellectual system and structure that encourage the Jewish people to think of both itself and the other, to love not only itself but also the outsider. For this reason it is particularly tragic that the Reform movement has become lazy and envious, that it is insecure and accepting of views it should abhor.

And what of Orthodoxy? If the Reform movement exhibits a failure of nerve, Orthodoxy displays a failure of intellect. It is not that the Orthodox are stupid or wrong or venal—merely that their views are irrelevant to the great issues confronting today's world. Except for Yeshiva University Orthodoxy, all of the Orthodox Judaisms of the day (the *haredim,* or ultra-Orthodox, in various guises) exhibit the same enormous incapacity to speak to the Jewish condition.

This is not to suggest that the Orthodox are ignorant of the classical texts of Judaism or that they misrepresent their content. To the contrary, the representation of Torah-true Judaism by the *haredim* is sound on nearly every point. Knowledgeable people can quote chapter and verse of talmudic writings in support of their position on all issues.

And that is precisely why the policies and program of the *haredim,* and therefore of the Judaism of the dual Torah, offer no meaningful option for Jews today. We must ask whether the Torah in its received or authentic or accurate version, as the *haredim* represent it, can serve in the twenty-first century. I think it cannot.

The Torah omits all systematic inquiry into the three critical matters of contemporary life: politics, economics, and science. Thus, any Judaism today that authentically realizes the Torah, oral and written, demands that Jews live only a partial life and that those Jews living in Israel dismantle the Jewish state. Jews living in the Diaspora, for their part, lacking a position on politics and economics and science, must simply retreat into ghettos, having no way to cope with the formative forces that shape the world today. The *haredim* want to make us all Amish, and the Jews are not going to agree, even though, right now, more than a few would like to walk out on the world as it is.

The three most powerful and formative forces in all of human civilization today are democracy, capitalism, and science; and on these three subjects the authentic, classical Judaism, accurately represented by the *haredim,* either has nothing at all to say or says the wrong things. The *haredim* can make their extravagant claims on the rest of us only by being parasites: we do the politics, the economics, and the science so they can live their private lives off in a corner.

If we are going to live in the twenty-first century, we require not only the Torah but also economics, politics, and science. World Jewry has no choice but to turn its back on the *haredim.* Would that God had made the world so simple as the *haredim* think it is. So fond farewell to the fantasy that the authentic Torah of Sinai, as the framers of the Babylonian Talmud read it in the seventh century, is, or can ever be, the authentic Torah of the twenty-first century. We shall do and we shall hear, indeed: *today.*

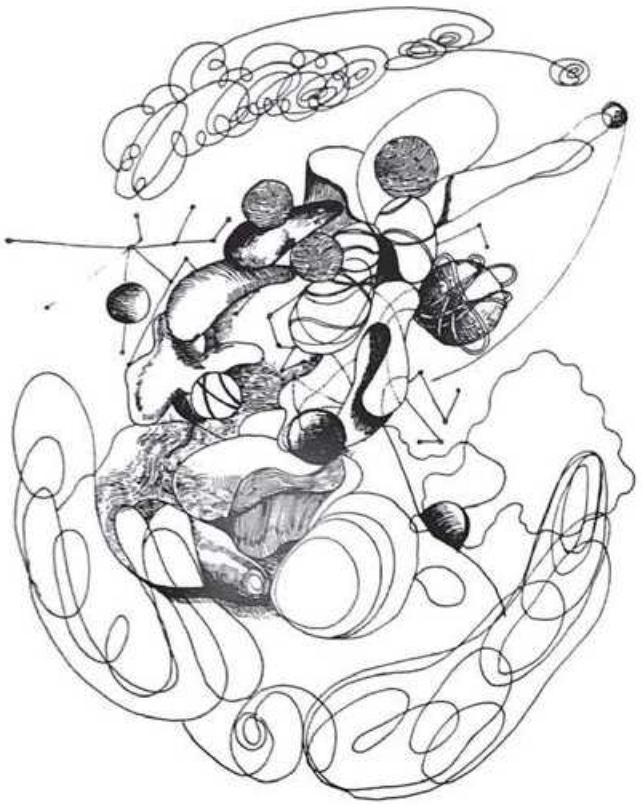


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And Yet: Tomorrow

Were the story to end with the creation of the new Judaisms of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, we would face an unhappy ending. But the advent of the twenty-first century marks the beginning of a new age of Judaic system-building. The vital signs are beginning to appear. I point to the formation of a distinctively Judaic politics, taking shape around *Tikkun* magazine, and another among the intellectuals of the right as well. These two intellectual perspectives present two of the three prerequisites of a vital Judaism: a worldview and a way of life. Both of them join the everyday and the here-and-now to an ideal in which people can find meaning in their life together. Whether these political Judaisms can take root in the social worlds of large numbers of Jews and thus constitute not merely theologies and life patterns but "Israels"—that is, social entities—remains to be seen. Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist, and Western Orthodox Judaisms, as well as Zionism and Jewish Socialism-Yiddishism, all formed not merely intellectual positions but social worlds. Their strength lay in transforming organizations into societies, so to speak. So far, *Tikkun* and *Commentary* express more than a viewpoint but less than a broad social movement.

I point further to the *havura* movement, the renewal



of Reconstructionism with Arthur Waskow and Arthur Green, the development of an accessible Judaic mysticism by Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, the development and framing of what we may call a feminist Judaism. Each of these extraordinarily vital religious formations gives promise of establishing a Judaism: a worldview, a way of life, realized within a social entity that calls itself (not necessarily exclusively) "Israel." All of these religious formations have identified urgent questions and presented answers that, to the framers, prove self-evidently valid. So I think the long period of no new Judaisms is coming to an end, though it is much too soon to tell which Judaisms, in North America at least, will inherit the greater part of Jewry.

The new Judaisms of the acutely contemporary age will succeed as we increasingly overcome the demographic and cultural catastrophe of the Holocaust. We have in North America a vast Jewish population increasingly capable of sustaining a variety of Judaisms, and we are facing a renewal of Jewish intellectual life in a way that might have stirred envy in even the proudest Jews of Germany and Poland between the Wars.

The possibility of the development of new Judaisms is helped by the decline of the power of the political and communal organizations that have dominated American Jewish life in the twentieth century. The corporate model for organized Jewry has shown its limitations. The decay of B'nai B'rith; the demise, on the local scene, of organizations such as the American Jewish Congress; the retreat of the Federations from the ideal of forming "the organized Jewish community" and their transformation into mere fund-raising agencies—these are all indications of decreased organizational power. Jews no longer find interesting a Judaic existence consisting of going to a meeting to talk about something happening somewhere else. Merely giving money, for instance, to help another Jew help a third Jew settle in the State of Israel has lost all credibility. People want hands-on engagement, and the corporate model affords the opposite.

The rejection of the corporate model and the affirmation of the place of the individual at the center of activity now marks the mode of organization of every important new Judaism today. The *Tikkun* conference in New York City is an example of that fact. I see no clear counterpart in the political Judaism of the right, which seems to me to be fragmented in social circles such as those surrounding *Commentary,* the *National Review,* and *Chronicles*. Professors of Jewish origin in the new National Association of Scholars, for example, hardly form the counterpart to the social formation made visible at the *Tikkun* conference. In this regard the left has provided the right with a model.

We no longer live in what Max Weber called a bureaucratic "iron cage," and the fulfillment of our calling to be Israel comes only through our immediate and complete engagement with our highest spiritual and cultural values—whatever our Judaism tells us these are. We have, in other words, survived the twentieth century. □

We at Tikkun *identify in large measure with many of the critiques of psychoanalytic theory and practice that have been developed by social change activists. Nevertheless, many progressives have found within psychoanalytic theory, or within variously modified forms of psychoanalytically based therapy, an important and potentially liberatory basis for their work. The attack from the right on psychoanalysis often comes in the name of a narrow form of empiricism, a rigid and reductive approach to science. The attacks from the left, while often articulating critiques with which we agree, sometimes ignore the ways that a more sophisticated version of Freudian theories has already moved far beyond the sexist distortions and conservatism of more rigidly orthodox Freudianism. Many people who today practice psychotherapy, including those who use therapies that were developed in conscious opposition to the Freudian model of treatment, incorporate insights and interpretations that borrow from elements of psychoanalysis.*

The discussions in this section are a response to some of the more recent attacks on psychoanalysis and are part of Tikkun*'s ongoing discussion of these issues.*

Is Psychiatry Going Out of Its Mind?

Michael J. Bader

Psychiatrists and the general public increasingly understand mental illness in biological terms. Newspaper articles appear monthly touting the discovery of a neurobiological or genetic cause of emotional or behavioral problems ranging from schizophrenia and depression to stuttering, eating disorders, aggression, cynicism, addictions, and anxiety. Theories that explain the causes of mental suffering in psychological or social terms, such as psychoanalysis or family systems theory, are increasingly regarded as passé. Psychological and social models of mental illness are seen as unduly blaming families and children alike for problems that neither are ultimately responsible for. In 1987, the *New York Times* ran a special four-part series on schizophrenia that concluded that "the old notion that families were to blame for causing the disease has given way to the notion that biological factors play a major causative role." A month later the *Times* reported on depression in similar terms: "It has become clear that severe depression can result from a shortage of certain natural chemicals in parts of the brain."

Families of the mentally ill have banded together in organizations such as the National Association of the Mentally Ill (NAMI) to educate the public about the biological basis of mental illness, seeking to take the family "off the hook." As one NAMI official recently wrote in a letter to the *Times,* "Recognition has been long overdue that this terrible brain disease [schizophrenia] is the fault neither of the victims nor their families, but is of neurobiological or genetic origins." NAMI has even gone so far as to join with others in attempting to have the license of a Maryland psychiatrist, Peter Breggin, revoked after Breggin appeared on the "Oprah Winfrey Show" arguing against the use of psychoactive medication and against the use of the medical model in treating the mentally ill.

As any mental health professional who has worked with schizophrenics or with profoundly depressed or manic patients knows, antipsychotic, antidepressant, and antimanic medication can be of great therapeutic value. But, in spite of the innumerable "discoveries" that the mass media report, we are no closer today than we were ten years ago to "curing" patients. In fact, the "scientific" claims are grossly overstated in the interest of promoting the competitive interests of one professional group—psychiatrists. This group's zeal in arguing for a biological model of mental illness has the effect of directly or indirectly devaluing attempts to understand the psychological and social meanings of patients' suffering.

Biological models for understanding the cause and treatment of mental illness, particularly the more severe disorders such as schizophrenia and depression, have gained hegemony in modern American psychiatry. This marks a dramatic change from the fifties and sixties when American psychiatry was dominated by the influence of psychoanalysis, a theory and practice that

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locates the source of psychopathology in a patient's family dynamics. Today, almost every psychiatry department in every major medical school in America is chaired by someone committed to biomedical research and treatment. In the fifties and sixties, these same positions were usually held by psychoanalysts. One major medical school in California saw its psychiatry chairman, an internationally renowned psychoanalyst and clinical researcher, replaced by a psychiatrist whose background was not in clinical work but in electrophysiologic studies of the nervous system of slime molds. In earlier years, the teaching of the psychodynamic techniques of psychotherapy was the core of the psychiatric residency. Today, by contrast, clinical techniques that emphasize psychopharmacology are considered prize assignments, and residents are often unable to discuss the psychological meaning of a patient's symptoms or family life. At recent meetings of an organization composed of the directors of psychiatric residencies in American medical schools, serious proposals were debated to make training in psychotherapy optional to psychiatry residents since it has been "established" that psychopharmacology, not psychotherapy, is the treatment of choice for so many patients. Articles are beginning to appear in professional journals arguing for the merger of psychiatry and neurology. The pendulum has swung from the total rejection of neurobiology in the 1940s and 1950s to its celebration in the 1980s.

Before analyzing further the repressive consequences of psychiatry's scientific orientation, I want to make clear that American psychoanalysis as an institution has also participated in self-serving practices under the guise of science. In direct opposition to Freud's own beliefs, psychoanalysis became the monopoly of physicians when it was imported to the United States. This medical emphasis, as Russell Jacoby notes in *Social Amnesia* and in *The Repression of Psychoanalysis,* has certainly had repressive consequences for psychoanalytic theory-building in the U.S. Nevertheless, psychoanalysis at its best—a theory of unconscious meaning and conflict, of the social construction of internal mental life—is radically different from and opposed to the biological reductionism sweeping psychiatry and our popular culture. Psychoanalysis and biological reductionism have to be analyzed on their own merits and not primarily on the basis of the political practices of the groups promoting them—except insofar as these political motives substantially shape the theoretical claims.

The move toward a biological understanding of mental illness is related though not reducible to a concerted effort by the psychiatric profession to strengthen its weakening hold on the field of mental health. For complex political and economic reasons, in the last ten years insurers, government health care planners, and corporate underwriters have sought to cut medical costs, and psychiatric benefits have often been the first to go. When mental health coverage has been included in these newer, pared-down health plans, it has often been limited. In this context, conflicts have arisen as to which mental health professionals are to be covered. Psychiatrists have fought to restrict various forms of reimbursement and privilege to medical doctors, thereby excluding from coverage others who arguably have equally good or better abilities to deliver some form of care: providers such as psychologists, social workers, and counselors. With the shrinkage of the health care dollar and the disproportionate cutbacks in mental health benefits, battles over distribution have intensified and interprofessional rivalries have escalated. Payers and health planners have raised questions about the cost effectiveness of high-priced psychiatric services when compared to similar, less expensive services offered by non-M.D.s. Non-M.D.s themselves are increasingly better organized and are challenging psychiatry's monopolistic practices on a greater number of fronts than ever before. A recent example of this challenge is the attempt by psychologists to gain hospital-admitting privileges in California, a move opposed by psychiatrists and currently under judicial review.

With its economic base shrinking and its professional status under attack, psychiatry has reacted by attempting to redefine its boundaries and stake out a privileged territory that will ensure its safety and supremacy in the mental health marketplace. Psychiatry has needed to be accepted by organized medicine, from which it became estranged during the post-World War II years of psychoanalytic hegemony and during the tumultuous community-mental-health years of the 1960s, when forces within psychiatry itself attacked the medical model on behalf of a liberal vision of social change.

This objective has been achieved with the help of the ideology of biological reductionism. Psychiatrists have been able to argue that their reimbursements shouldn't be disproportionately reduced because mental illnesses have been shown to be as biologically based and as biologically treatable as any other reimbursable medical condition. Psychiatrists' fees should therefore continue to be greater than those of non-medically-trained therapists, they claim, because only their training provides access to and understanding of the latest revelations concerning the biological foundations of mental illness.

Psychiatrists and health-policy planners are constructing new models of service delivery consistent with the new fiscal constraints of insurers in which all patients with psychological problems must first be evaluated and, if necessary, treated by a psychiatrist in case a biological disorder is involved. This process will insure

the centrality of the M.D. in all aspects of mental health services. Furthermore, as the media increasingly tout the biological basis for most mental disorders, support grows for greater funding of neurobiological and psychopharmacological research. As a result, psychiatry—the mental health profession most associated with this area of research—also grows in status.

I do not mean to imply that all or even most psychiatrists acquire a biological orientation for selfish reasons. I *am* arguing, however, that the leaders of organized psychiatry are quite conscious (as are other mental health professionals) of their declining status in the marketplace and are promoting and marketing the aspect of psychiatric practice—namely, their medical background—that they believe privileges them over other practitioners. This approach coincides with a genuine technological explosion, which has helped buttress the psychiatrists' claims. Individual psychiatrists may make their treatment decisions based on good intentions and a firm belief that the patient's best interests are being served, but the philosophy and training informing these decisions are deeply influenced by complex political, economic, and ideological pressures that shape the psychiatric profession as a whole.

Correspondence Versus Causation

The proponents of biological psychiatry make two related claims. First, they argue that mental illness is caused by biological processes in the brain (genetically inherited, most likely) that interact with the environment to produce the symptoms of mental disorder. The weight assigned to the environment may vary, but the essence of the claim is that a biological process or state causes a psychological process or state. In other words, the biological state is assumed to be prior to the emotional one, both temporally and ontologically. Second, proponents of biological psychiatry claim that since the cause of certain mental illnesses is biological, the most appropriate and effective treatments are also biological—involving, in most cases, the use of psychoactive medications.

Studies of the neurobiology and pharmacology of schizophrenia, manic-depressive illness, depression, anxiety, phobias, obsessive-compulsive disorders, and so-called borderline conditions fill the pages of the major psychiatric journals and are routinely reported on by the print and television media. The brains of schizophrenics are found to have too much of the chemical dopamine, a substance that transmits signals between nerve cells; the brains of depressives have a deficiency of or an altered sensitivity to the neurotransmitters norepinephrine or serotonin. Specialized computerized imaging techniques have been developed to replace X-rays and are used to show that the brains of schizophrenics have a different size and shape than normal brains. The newest radiological tool, called the PET scan (Positron Emission Tomography), can actually depict which areas of depressed patients' brains are less metabolically active than the corresponding regions of normal brains.

A theory that says that parents shouldn't take any responsibility for their children's emotional and mental problems prevents us from critically confronting the way that social institutions ravage our lives.

As the chemistry and structure of the brains of disturbed patients are analyzed with increasing sophistication, the claims of those doing the analyzing get more bold. Ross Baldessarini, a leading psychopharmacologist, asserted as long ago as 1977 that "effective [medical] treatments now exist for most of the major psychiatric illnesses." The 1985 edition of the *Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry* informs us that the "necessary genetic component" of schizophrenia and affective disorders has been discovered and is widely accepted.

It is important to keep in mind that when researchers or reporters describe a biological *basis* for a psychological problem they are always implying that the biological is more "basic" than the psychological, that this more "fundamental" level of reality produces the behavioral or psychological reaction. This is biological reductionism, which suggests that the more we are able to explain psychological or social behavior on the basis of smaller and smaller levels of analysis—ultimately leading to the level of molecular biology and genetics—the closer we will get to the truth.

This, however, is not the only way of viewing the relationship between biology and psychology. Using a more cautious or critical perspective, we might say that it is possible to speak only of correspondence between these two radically different levels of experience, not causation. In the most general sense, human psychology is a function of the human brain. Consciousness, love, sadness, and conflict are all impossible without the brain. Further, it is probably the case that my brain is in a different state when I'm writing than when I'm sleeping or jogging. In other words, there should be some very general *correspondence* between brain and mental state if one takes seriously that we are biological as well as social beings. But this does *not* say anything whatsoever about causality or temporal sequence. It is not possible to prove that the brain state always precedes the mental state or vice versa.

It is always theoretically possible that the mental event in question precedes the brain state being described. Depression, for instance, might lower brain activity in certain areas of the brain and thereby account for the differences found by the PET scan or assays of brain chemical levels. Researchers like Marian Diamond have conclusively proven that enriched environments can increase brain size and complexity. Neuroanatomic studies of patients with multiple personalities—a syndrome widely accepted to be of psychogenic origin—demonstrate variations in such brain processes as blood flow, electrical activity, and neurotransmitter levels among the different personalities of the same patient. Even the best studies of the genetic transmission of schizophrenia and depression, which appear to suggest that these disorders may be partially hereditary, have been criticized on methodological grounds and have not even come close to demonstrating *what* is inherited that might later produce the mental illness in question.

Although the logic of the reductionist argument is faulty, its purpose is clear. Richard Lewontin, Leon Kamin, and Steven Rose use an interview from the February 1981 issue of *Psychology Today* with two leading psychiatric researchers to illustrate this purpose. Paul Wender and Donald Klein argue that "for each schizophrenic there may be ten times as many people who have a milder form of the disorder that is genetically ... related to the most severe form.... Eight percent of Americans have a lifelong form of personality disorder that is genetically produced" and that should concern the public, which "is largely unaware that different sorts of emotional illnesses are now responsive to medications." In other words, since schizophrenia has been proven to be genetic, and since genes affect biology, schizophrenia and related "personality disorders" should be treated with drugs. But as Lewontin, Kamin, and Rose point out, even if the first statement is true, it doesn't follow that biology is the primary cause of schizophrenia, that social or interpersonal conditions might not be the more important factor. Furthermore, even if the biological "derangements" are etiologically significant, we know that altered psychology and behavior can change brains, and so it in no way follows that drug treatments are the only effective form of treatment.

Drugs and the Reductionist Fallacy

Researchers often erroneously link theories of biological causation with the necessity for biological treatments. The logic is this: Drug X helps some symptoms of schizophrenia—say, agitation. Drug X is found to interact with metabolic pathway Y in the brain. Therefore, a disorder of metabolic pathway Y is deemed an important cause of schizophrenia. In reality, no such conclusion is logically warranted. Steven Rose, a radical neurobiologist, offers a good analogy: aspirin reduces the pain of a broken bone by inhibiting the synthesis of the chemical messenger prostaglandin, which is found all over the body. In what sense can it be said that the prostaglandin synthesis causes the broken bone? If aspirin also reduces the pain of a toothache, does it follow that the "cause" of a toothache and of a broken bone are similar? The discovery of how a drug acts in the brain says nothing clear about the cause of the symptom it treats, particularly—as is true with psychiatric drugs—if the drug has such a diffuse effect throughout the brain.

The practitioner and the lay consumer need to put the actual efficacy of these drugs in some kind of perspective. The antipsychotic medications, for instance, are clearly effective in reducing the terror, agitation, and aggressiveness of an acutely psychotic or schizophrenic person, and are often the precondition for any successful psychotherapy to occur. Claims that these drugs ought to be the "treatment for schizophrenia" are problematic, however. For example, it is widely acknowledged that delusions—the core of schizophrenia—are often *not* eliminated by medication, nor are common symptoms such as apathy or withdrawal. Tranquilization, in other words, while often important, does not cure the symptoms of schizophrenia. In fact, it is increasingly the case that high doses of medication are used more because they hold someone together in the absence of adequate social and psychotherapy services than because they have an antischizophrenic effect. As mental health services become less available, psychotic patients are given medications in doses and for durations that would not otherwise be advisable. In other words, medications increasingly fill the gap left by therapists and other mental health providers; they are a kind of "better than nothing" solution—a necessity, not a virtue.

Studies that compare the effects of antidepressants with a placebo on depressed patients show that an *average* of 60–70 percent of those treated with medication improve as compared to 30–40 percent of those treated with a placebo. This is clearly a significant finding and suggests that these medications are useful. Little attention, though, is paid to the astonishingly high placebo rates of depressed patients who get better either spontaneously or by virtue of the purely psychological effects of taking a pill or being the object of research attention. Further, the possibility exists—but is never studied—that medication, by physiologically altering one's mental state, might be psychologically interpreted by the patient in a manner that then leads to improvement. It seems that to the extent that findings support a psychological theory of depression, they are not subjected to the same intense scrutiny.

The Social Consequences of Biological Reductionism

The biological reductionism sweeping psychiatry has important social and psychological consequences that social critics and professionals alike need to understand. Every form of medical technology used by psychiatry on the mentally ill in the last fifty years has been justified on scientific grounds. From insulin coma therapy to electroconvulsive therapy to psychosurgery, dangerous and dehumanizing treatments have been linked to various discoveries about the biological basis of mental illness. This model of the mind locates the problem within the individual, not within the family or society, and it does so in a way that suggests limits on the individual's capacity for self-transformation. Intended or not, this worldview tends to justify the difficulty of changing someone's behavior on the grounds that the innate behavior is a result of biological deficiencies.

This argument understandably falls on welcome ears. People who have worked with schizophrenic patients for any length of time confront the apparent intractability of the disorder and naturally look for explanations that account for the patient's profound resistance to change and for their own chronic feelings of professional failure. Sitting with a depressed person week after week, and watching one's empathy, insight, and advice fall on deaf ears, can lead a therapist to find explanations that mitigate his or her own feelings of guilt, responsibility, and ineffectiveness. Crisis clinic workers struggling to pull together vanishing community resources for their psychotic walk-in patients only to find these patients returning in identically bad shape two months later need a theory that accounts for this frustrating recidivism.

A theory that blames genetically transmitted biological deficiencies fits the bill perfectly. Such a theory implies that it is not the therapist's fault for failing to cure the patient and that the kind of intense emotional involvement that psychotherapy demands is misplaced from the outset. Instead, the psychiatrist can justify the more familiar and emotionally distanced role of diagnostician and pill dispenser, helping the patient and family understand and adapt to the "illness." Nonmedical psychotherapists, in turn, are given a justification for giving psychiatrists the responsibility of treating their depressed or schizophrenic patients. These psychotherapists are relieved of their own helplessness, their nonmedical role now being restricted to a focus on secondary psychological symptoms. Crisis clinic workers can also protect themselves by viewing their charges as permanently damaged people who would function better if they would only take their proper medication. At a time when the frequency and duration of psychotherapy is being drastically reduced by those who fiscally underwrite these services—which makes the work of people in the mental health professions increasingly difficult—the rationalizations that the ideology of biological reductionism has to offer are particularly helpful.

What is the effect on the patient of this view of suffering? Biological reductionism is, after all, conveyed to patients both explicitly and implicitly. In addition to the increasingly frequent practice of directly *teaching* patients about the biology and pharmacology of their illness, the process of giving a patient medication conveys multiple and subtle hints about how the therapist views the patient's problem. If, for instance, a psychiatrist fails to examine the *meaning* of medication to the patient, the patient may think the doctor believes that the main problem is a biological deficiency.

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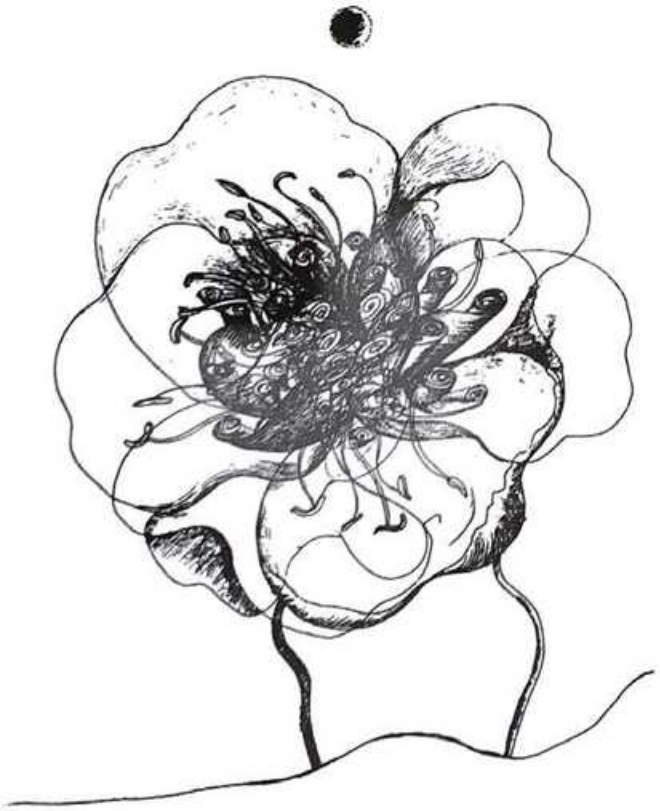
The problems with this attitude become apparent when one recognizes that patients who are profoundly depressed or schizophrenic often have powerful fantasies of being deficient, damaged, helpless, "bad," and incapable of changing their feelings. Biochemical theories about neurotransmitter "deficiencies," which locate the main problem in "things" over which one is helpless, such as brain chemistry, reinforce these pathogenic fantasies.

Granted, this biological approach can be relieving to a patient for several psychological reasons. First, it displaces a frightening sense of badness and responsibility onto the patient's brain. It's as if the patient's unconscious mind were able to say: "Since I need to punish myself for being such a horrible and destructive person, it's a relief to know that it's only my brain; and further, if these medications make me feel bad or unpleasantly sedate or numb, I'm being properly punished anyway." Second, a patient who doesn't feel fully human, perhaps because of a lifetime of being treated as such by narcissistic or psychotic caregivers, often is terrified of human intimacy and recognition. Being treated in an "objective" way by a doctor whose focus is only chemistry and not psychology can therefore be reassuring. Third, a patient who cannot tolerate his or her longing for love and care-

taking may find in the medication not a chemical answer to a chemical deficiency but a symbolic unconscious answer to an intrapsychic or emotional emptiness—an answer that makes the patient feel better. After all, the patient may accept and rely on medication and the theories that support its use for psychological reasons that have little to do with the theories of the treating or research psychiatrist.

The problem is that the gratification that some patients get from biological approaches to their condition may ultimately point to their resistance to change. When one's sense of self is confirmed, one may easily feel partially understood and get some relief, while one's underlying distortions are left intact.

On a broader scale, biological psychiatry functions as an antidote to burdensome feelings of responsibility that affect people in our culture in various ways. On an obvious level, if the problem is biological it is not social. People's families, work environments, and economic stress don't produce severe depression or psychosis; their brain physiology does. Further, society doesn't need to fault itself or its leaders for cutting funding for long-term treatment facilities since our current success with psychoactive drugs makes such treatment unnecessary anyway. Biological reductionism is a twist on blaming the victim: here the victim isn't even a person; it is someone's genes or biology. Consequently, the victim, as well as the victimizer, is exonerated.



These issues of responsibility are starkly revealed in the growing political and educational lobbies representing the mentally ill and their families. Groups such as NAMI and the National Depression and Manic-Depression Association wield increasing clout in political and funding circles. In addition to their laudable efforts to eliminate the social stigma of schizophrenia and manic-depression, these groups strongly lobby for increased research into the etiology and treatment of these disorders, *provided* that the etiology is biological and the treatment medical. Families are often understandably eager to get out from under terrible feelings of guilt and responsibility, and this movement offers an effective method. Any theory that contradicts this approach by saying that families are profound forces in psychological development, healthy or pathological, is treated as if it blames the parents.

Both approaches are distortions. The fact that parents and families can and regularly do pathologically affect the emotional development of children and are more than capable of making their children schizophrenic and depressed does not mean that parents are evil or that their children are weak failures. As much as psychoanalysis locates the etiology of psychopathology in the family, it also debunks the prevailing morality that sees people as good or evil, perpetrators or victims. Parents can also be victims of their own families, and children have psychological desires and conflicts not purely of their parents' making. But the movement today that exonerates everyone, and instead blames genes and neurotransmitters, views psychology as an enemy seeking to make families and patients feel like moral failures.

A theory that says that parents shouldn't take any responsibility for their children's emotional and mental problems prevents us from critically confronting the way that social institutions ravage our lives. It makes it difficult for us to recognize the most personal and "interior" forms of alienation in our culture, and the unconscious distorting and emotional violence within family life. Contrary to the protests of family groups and biological ideologues, saying that families hurt children can convey the greatest sympathy for all parties involved. Parents, after all, experience and raise their children in social contexts not always under their control, and under the influence of intrapsychic conflicts and damage suffered at the hands of their own families.

What we need is an approach to psychiatry that neither places the burden only on the family's shoulders nor dismisses the notion of family and societal responsibility altogether. Without such an approach the exonerating ideology of biological reductionism will continue to reign, representing another step in the progressive collapse of critical thinking that marks our culture today. □

Assault on the Couch

Stephen Seligman

In the century since psychotherapy's invention, its critics have drawn their arguments from a wide spectrum of viewpoints. For defenders of traditional conceptions of privacy, talking about inner dilemmas is a breach of family and personal boundaries. Men who ask for help are often regarded as weak, and emotional self-disclosure is relegated to a depreciated world of women. In public life, consultation with a therapist carries the stigma of "mental instability." (Michael Dukakis's prompt denial of accusations that he had suffered from depression emphasizes this prejudice.) The complexities of self-exploration fly in the face of a widespread desire for quick, practical solutions to personal and social problems, no matter how entrenched or subtle these problems may be. Thus, for example, the experiences and environments of those who abuse drugs are responded to with the banality of just saying no.

Leftists and feminists have also been among the skeptics. While affirming the value of probing beneath the surface to challenge conventional modes of thought and communication, they indict the mental health system for controlling the powerless and diverting attention from the true sources of individual distress—political and economic injustice. From this point of view, Freudian psychology mystifies and reproduces a destructive social order rather than promoting the conditions for changing it.

Recently, one aspect of Freud's thinking—the "seduction hypothesis"—has been the subject of a particularly heated debate. Early in his work, Freud turned away from the unearthing of actual childhood events that caused overwhelming psychological injury and began to analyze his patients' fantasies in order to discover the sources of their distress. Contemporary critics have interpreted this shift as a thinly veiled strategy of victim-blaming, citing current research showing that child abuse—especially the sexual abuse of girls by their fathers and other male relatives—is much more common than was previously believed. Freudians are accused of reproducing the initial conditions of abuse under the guise of offering a cure—inviting trust and exposure and then assaulting the disclosure of truth as nothing more than a distorted fantasy.

Jeffrey Masson has been in the forefront of this critique. Until fired in 1981 as projects director of the Sigmund Freud Archives, Masson unearthed previously suppressed material that documented Freud's departure from the hypothesis that his female patients had been seduced as girls. Although a storm of controversy followed Masson's exposé, his work has served, together with a general recognition of the frequency of child abuse and the writings of such feminists as Diana Russell, Alice Miller, and Judith Herman, to spur a subtle reorientation among many psychotherapists. Therapists are now more likely to inquire about the possibility of such incidents and to encourage patients' expressions of anger and protest rather than to analyze the distortions or motives that affect memories of abuse. Although some critics have misused the new revelations to discredit the entire psychoanalytic edifice, Masson's passionate scholarship has contributed to a critical recognition of the variety of injuries inflicted on children that have so often been overlooked by those appearing to help them.

In *Against Therapy: Emotional Tyranny and the Myth of Psychological Healing* (1988), Masson has extended his attack to cover psychotherapy as a whole. Now, nothing but abolition will do. He argues that therapy inevitably reproduces the power inequalities that are the true sources of individual suffering; it thus conceals the fundamental political realities that bring people to therapy in the first place. Even the most politically aware therapists, he maintains, cannot help but oppress their patients.

Sandwiched between two brief theoretical polemics, the bulk of Masson's book details, at length, a series of abuses of psychotherapeutic power. These abuses range from the dreadful confinements of rebellious women in nineteenth-century European asylums, through Freud's famous Dora case, to reports of abuses by recent stars of the psychotherapeutic galaxy—including the "humanist" Carl Rogers; Fritz Perls, the founder of

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Gestalt therapy; and Milton Erickson, a charismatic "grand old man" of family therapists. Masson also includes a chapter on Carl Jung's Nazi sympathies. Although unable to conclude whether Jung was motivated by conviction or expediency, Masson cites numerous examples of the Swiss analyst's participation in the psychiatric organizations of the Third Reich.

Masson's attack, while impassioned, doesn't make his case stick. The news that Freud mistreated Dora is quite old by now, and the reports of others' atrocities, while chilling, do not prove that therapy always harms its patients. Similarly, knowing about Jung's flirtation with the Nazis may raise questions about the most extreme implications of his sometimes romantic and mythologically oriented metapsychology, but it does not discredit the entire psychotherapeutic edifice any more than Martin Heidegger's nazism discredits all of phenomenology or Werner Karl Heisenberg's efforts on behalf of Hitler's war discredits all of theoretical physics.

Masson's theoretical arguments are even less compelling. They recall the more reflexively antiauthoritarian positions of the New Left and neglect the extensive and subtle discussions of personal power and domination that have emerged from the psychoanalytic left and feminist intellectuals. His opinion that the therapeutic relationship is essentially an arena for domination and exploitation rests on two arguments—a class analysis and the commonly held view that power inequalities are inevitably corrupt. As members of a professional group whose privilege is derived from the suffering of its patients, therapists, he argues, cannot help reinjuring their patients. The intrinsic limitations of the therapist-patient hierarchy thwart the best of intentions.

This stance does raise an issue that is often neglected in everyday psychoanalytic practice. But when Masson declares his lack of interest in the fact that psychotherapy sometimes does provide relief and the possibility of change, he displays a cynical ignorance of how conscientious individuals manage to do humane, progressive work under adverse political circumstances. Radical social theorists have discussed the multiple and contradictory effects of "helping" professions such as social work, psychotherapy, and medicine; these professions meet some immediate human needs while also stabilizing inequitable social systems. Although such efforts do not in themselves challenge the oppressive features of the political system, they do not always conceal them. When therapy encourages patients to trust their own instincts and helps give them the confidence to pursue their own goals, it can encourage confrontation with harsh social and sexual realities. Personal insight and self-esteem are not intrinsically opposed to political awareness and activity.

Impediments to social consciousness often present themselves in the form of individual feelings of inadequacy and alienation. A lesbian woman in therapy with one of my colleagues sought to reassure herself that she was correct in thinking that her colleagues were indeed homophobic. But she first had to sort out the ways in which her own self-hatred led her to agree with her tormentors. Other patients have been able to stop oppressive sexual practices when they become aware of how inner scars compel them to manipulate others in order to preserve their own sense of emotional safety. Although many therapists do exert a variety of subtle and not-so-subtle pressures on the side of conformity, psychotherapy is a more open form than Masson would have us believe.

In those situations where political and cultural oppression are clearly at the root of the problem, therapy can be equally helpful. Many victims of child abuse could not endure the painful process of remembering and reflecting without the protective support of a concerned therapist. This includes children who report severe forms of abuse only after carefully determining whether the therapist can be trusted to help them in this most sensitive of self-disclosures. And what would Masson say to those victims of torture and those witnesses of political murder in Central America and elsewhere who suffer from nightmares, persistent anxiety, and other crippling symptoms associated with their terrifying memories? Psychotherapists from throughout the Americas have enabled such people to gain some control over their haunting images by helping them review their experiences at a pace slow and deliberate enough to avoid the overwhelming pain that merely remembering traumas brings on.

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It would be easy to dismiss Masson's book as no more than a supplement to the already impressive historical record of psychiatric abuses. However, the issues he raises do deserve attention; the same elements that give the therapeutic relationship its extraordinary power are those that intensify the risks of abuse. The secluded intimacy of the relationship and the fact that the patient approaches the therapist in a state of need do create possibilities for exploitation that are paralleled only in the parent-child relationship and in other situations more overtly characterized by domination and oppression. For example, although sexual relationships between patients and therapists are already subject to severe professional sanctions, they are currently so frequent that some organizations of psychotherapists are demanding they be criminalized. In addition, the private nature of conventional therapy—

reflecting the general isolation of individual consciousness from collective life—makes it easy for both therapist and patient to omit social factors. Therapy does sometimes function as a "haven in a heartless world," which veils our sense of collective powerlessness by allowing for a bit of individual change.

These realities account for the considerable appeal that views such as Masson's have engendered among many patients in psychotherapy, as well as among therapists struggling to integrate their clinical practice and their political values. These therapists include many feminists, supporters of the radical therapy movement, and people who have called attention to the widespread abuses of such psychiatric practices as psychosurgery, shock treatment, and involuntary hospitalization. Many self-help groups, often using the addiction-oriented "twelve-step" model of Alcoholics Anonymous, also criticize conventional psychotherapy as authoritarian; AA meetings typically proceed with little formal structure or leadership. This antiauthoritarian sentiment is also reflected in those left organizations that attempt to change authority structures in the belief that such structures reproduce the very conditions activists want to change.

Self-help groups and such egalitarian therapeutic forms as peer counseling can indeed support and even transform their participants, encouraging many of the same personal changes as does traditional psychotherapy. However, they are not without problems. Painful tensions may arise over competition and attempts at leadership. The strain of listening to others' problems may prove overwhelming for those who are in acute crisis or who are chronically needy. Even, as in peer counseling, when one-to-one attention can be provided, both conscious and unconscious personality patterns can impede even the most compassionate and carefully conceived efforts to provide nonprofessional assistance. People who deeply mistrust those upon whom they depend and who retreat from all offers of help demonstrate that the circle of internalized alienation cannot be broken by good intentions alone. When Masson reports that psychotherapy repeats the destructive dynamics of individual histories and cultural systems, he is describing a phenomenon that is not exclusive to therapy; the repetition of past experience occurs throughout our personal and social lives.

And, with a trustworthy therapist, the psychotherapeutic relationship can fulfill some of its promise. It can offer a person in emotional pain an opportunity to learn about past abuses without having to suffer them passively. As the relationship deepens, the patient can feel increasingly free to reflect on problematic ideas, emotions, and self-images, and can begin to play them out in the therapeutic context. Instead of merely re-enacting the patient's disappointments and deprivations, the careful therapist can interrupt the patient's distress by linking it to earlier wounds. The personal focus may constrain the exploration of social issues, but, in return, it allows for a deeper recognition of the earliest childhood influences, which indeed represent some of the culture's most profound incursions into the developing self. When therapists are aware of the social nature of all individual experience, personal exploration need not exclude or obscure that truth.

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For one young man I treated, who had been brutally ordered around by his parents, personal history and social factors converged in the context of his therapy. His adult behavior reflected the obsequiousness he had developed as a child to avoid his parents' abusive taunting. When his boss insisted he work overtime on a routine basis, the man told me that he would have to stop therapy because he would never be free during regular clinic hours. I considered making special arrangements to see him after hours. But before doing so, I explored his reluctance even to attempt to negotiate a more reasonable work schedule. As a result, he concluded that he was repeating his accommodating style from childhood instead of demanding his rights under the union contract. He then filed a successful grievance and began to understand further how his feelings about his earlier experiences influenced his everyday behavior.

Even in cases where therapists are guided by the often controversial psychoanalytic assertion that it is sometimes useful to maintain a posture of restraint and authority in order to promote greater insight, many therapists are flexibly supportive toward their patients. One such case with which I'm familiar involved a divorced man who told his therapist that his son's child care teachers were concerned about the boy's compulsive and persistent habit of showing his genitals to other children. The therapist's inquiries about whether this behavior could possibly reflect sexual abuse led the father, who had been somewhat detached from his son, to discover that his ex-wife's new boyfriend had indeed been sexually inappropriate with the youngster. As the father proceeded to take the necessary steps to protect his son during the subsequent period of therapy, the therapist again returned to his more "neutral," exploratory stance. Although the father often demanded that

the therapist be as directly helpful as he had been in raising the issue of abuse, the therapist maintained an analytic distance and interpreted these feelings in the context of the patient's experiences of his own father, in whom he was frequently disappointed. The father was soon able to see how his own distance from his son repeated his relationship with his distant father, and he was able to increase his own capacity to be available to the boy.

Although some psychotherapists still adhere to the view that patients become more self-aware only when therapists frustrate their desires, most therapists view exploration and support as part of a single process. Thus, in everyday practice, the therapist's authority is not uniformly oppressive but provides a flexible template through which the patient can experience hierarchy in a variety of ways—ranging from protection, nurturance, and understanding, to deprivation, threat, and abuse. This situation corresponds to the child's complex experience of the parent, and the capacity to evoke the multiplicity and depth of this experience is what gives therapy some of its special power. Similarly, social authority is not uniformly destructive, despite its profound and sometimes crushing costs. Cultures and families offer a variety of human possibilities, and the therapeutic situation provides a microcosm of such potentials in a specific historical context. Masson's absolute equation of authority and abuse isolates only the most destructive of these experiences and projects them onto the whole. He thus ignores the more benign aspects of both therapy and society, and paints a picture of both that lacks all subtlety.

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To affirm the potential of psychotherapy is not to dismiss its pitfalls and dangers. In fact, Masson's emphasis on horror stories diverts attention from the more mundane abusers—those therapists who encourage an unrealistic hope for quick and complete relief from profoundly rooted suffering, and those therapists who use the therapeutic relationship to pursue their own narcissistic agendas. Psychotherapists are not immune to the same personal and historical forces that have distorted their patients' lives.

Faced with such challenges, many therapists monitor their reactions more or less continually, attempting to avoid re-creating the patient's and their own oppressive experiences. This process helps them to refine their awareness of how their own personalities and power interact with their patients' inner worlds. Such self-reflection is increasingly part of standard training and practice, and it has spawned an expanding body of literature about "countertransference."

In this way, the therapist works to establish and maintain an unconventional, asymmetrical relationship in service of a fundamental goal: that the patient feel adequately protected from the conscious and unconscious risks associated with desires, such as those for intimacy, recognition, sexuality, and power. The therapist's relative inaction and self-discipline promote an atmosphere in which the wounds of the past—whether individually or socially registered—can be understood rather than actually re-experienced or re-created. Ideally, patients learn to appreciate the value of memory and imagination rather than to deflect them anxiously; they can better discriminate between past and present, can realign blame and self-destructiveness, and can conceive of new, more autonomous, and truly connected forms of power, need, and desire.

Less ambitiously conceived, psychotherapy is a valuable source of support for people who cannot turn elsewhere. At its worst, it is a casual tampering with the tender and profound, an arena for the abuse of the already wounded, and an apology for oppression.

Psychotherapy has indeed become, for some, nothing more than one of an array of balms that we apply to the gaps and scars left by a culture that provides increasingly limited opportunities for community and human connectedness. But in the age of postmodern nihilism, when the pressures to avoid historical and introspective consciousness have become increasingly potent, the psychotherapeutic ideal—that finding out the truth about ourselves will make us freer—supports the humanistic struggle to maintain authenticity and hope. Simply to abandon this ideal, at a time when larger movements for liberation offer little hope for redemption, is to neglect wounds that may be soothed and even healed, however imperfectly. □

Toward a Feminist Jewish Reconstruction of Monotheism

Marcia Falk

The dilemma of monotheism for feminist Jews is more profound than at first we may have thought. It is not just that monotheism has been perverted, throughout Jewish (as well as Christian and Moslem) history, to mean male monotheism; this problem would be relatively easy to correct. We would add female images to our language, change "he" to "she" and "God" to "Goddess" (at least part of the time), and substitute *Shekhinah* for *Adonai* in our prayers—or come up with new feminine names for Divinity. Would that it were so easy! Unfortunately, the rather obvious gender problem in our God-language is the surface manifestation of a deeper and more complex difficulty.

Nor is it just that in Jewish theology oneness has been confused with singularity. Elsewhere I have argued that any single-image monotheism is idolatrous, since all images are necessarily partial and the exclusive use of any part to represent the whole is misleading and theologically inauthentic. I have gone on to suggest that only with a great number of images can we come close to an authentic expression of the monotheistic principle. Authentic monotheism, I have suggested, entails "an embracing unity of a multiplicity of images." Such multiplicity not only celebrates pluralism and diversity; it diminishes the likelihood of unconscious forms of idolatry, such as "speciesism" (I use this term to refer to human devaluation and domination of other species of life). I have specifically argued that anthropocentrism in Jewish God-language is as idolatrous as sexism: that we cannot have an authentic imaging of a monotheistic Divinity that uses exclusively personal terms, even if those terms include female representations. By taking the idea of *tzelem elohim*—humanity as created in the image of God—too literally, and deducing from it that *we alone* bear within us the spark of Divinity, we contribute to the belief that our human species is "godlier" than the rest of creation, and we give license to humanity's domination of the planet.

But all these caveats are still not enough. What I want to examine here is a problematic premise that underlies many of our theological images, even new images born of feminist re-visioning: the postulation of Divinity (any Divinity) "out there" that is not coextensively "in here," in the *entirety* of here.

Although Judaism sometimes speaks *conceptually* of God's immanence—in much Hasidic teaching, for example—the theological *imagery* in Jewish worship is overwhelmingly the imagery of transcendence. In the theology of the traditional prayerbook God is portrayed, vividly and dramatically, not as part of the world but as apart from and above it. God is sovereign, the world is God's dominion; God is creator, the world is God's creation. Because I believe—as Nelle Morton eloquently argues in *The Journey is Home*—that ideas are what we think and images are what we live by, I am convinced that this imagery of transcendence accurately reflects historical Jewish perceptions of the relationship between God and world. I would venture to say that for most religiously concerned Jews "God" is a term that, in a deep though not necessarily conscious way, applies to something "out there"—be it concerned or apathetic, personal or impersonal, powerful or impotent. Indeed, the definition of theism as the belief in a deity above and beyond the world has probably determined for many Jews whether they call themselves theists or atheists.

Even today, our efforts at imaging immanence are very limited. At most, we have tried to picture God as within *us*—that is, within the *human* individual or community—not within the whole of creation. And when we image God as within us, as some new feminist and other "alternative" Jewish liturgies commendably try to do, we still often conceive of God as *separable* from us—as in this example from the Kehilla Community Synagogue *Prayerbook for the High Holidays*: "Our Guide deep within us, / O hear us and give us / compassion and mercy and peace." Thus, when we speak of God as inside us, we still tend to envision God not as something *permeating us* but rather as something *other than us*, someone or something we can localize and isolate, petition and address.

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In Judaism, this definition of God as *other than the world* is so ingrained that it may even seem self-evident, tautological. Yet, from a feminist perspective, it is problematic. Because Judaism sees God as perfect and the world as imperfect, the dualism of God and world is always one of inequality, and ultimately one of hierarchy. Thus, this theological premise supports and perhaps even spawns the hierarchical dualisms that split the world into two unequal halves.

The basic sexist dualism of male and female is the most pervasive and perhaps most fundamental representation of this problem. In Judaism's stories of the relationship between God and world, God is consistently imaged as male, the world (earth, people of Israel) as female. Thus maleness is associated with creativity, power, knowledge, and will; while femaleness is identified with object, matter, weakness, and even evil. The otherness of God in Judaism extends beyond sexism, however; it underlies a complex organization of reality that everywhere sanctions polarized relationships of inequality and domination.

Consider for a moment the following *piyyut* (liturgical poem), which is found in the traditional *makhzor* (High Holiday prayerbook), and from which I translate, as literally as possible:

O God and God of our fathers,
forgive us, pardon us, grant us atonement—
For we are your people (nation) / you are our God
We are your sons / you are our father
We are your slaves (servants) / you are our lord
We are your congregation / you are our fate (lot, portion)
We are your inheritance (possession) / you are our destiny
We are your flock / you are our shepherd
We are your vineyard / you are our watchman
We are your work (the product of your labors) / you are our creator
We are your female lover / you are our male lover
We are your special one (treasured property) / you are our relative (close one)
We are your people (nation) / you are our king
We are your favored (exalted) one / you are our favored (exalted) one

The first thing that strikes us as we sing or chant this poem is its incantatory structure, built on the repetition of *anu / atah*—we are this, you (masculine) are that. This emphatic repetition works its theme on our ears and into our psyches, our imaginations: humanity and Divinity (here represented specifically as the people of Israel and God) are two, separable, *related through opposition*. The long list of metaphors employed here to describe the relationship between God and Israel is drawn from many aspects of societal life and structure: peoplehood, family or patrilineage, slavery or servitude, community, inheritance, animal breeding, agriculture, artistic creation, sexual love, property ownership, government, and even friendship. In every realm, the relationship is symbolized by a hierarchically linked pair (or a pair that we are supposed to understand as hierarchically related): people and God (this is the central metaphor, and the one least recognized *as metaphor,* that is, the "dead metaphor" that controls the series), sons and father, slaves and lord, community and fate (a case of concrete and abstract), inheritance and destiny (another such case), sheep and shepherd, vineyard and watchman, artifact and artist, woman and man, property and owner, subjects and king. Only in the final line of the poem do we find an equal, reciprocal relationship—favored one and favored one—although we should also note that this line, more explicitly than any other line in the poem, implies an unequal relationship between Israel and the other peoples of the world (since this God may conceivably have other children, other subjects, other flocks, other possessions; but he can have only one favorite).

Thus the distinction between God and world which is reflected in this *piyyut*—and which, I would argue, has been at the core of Jewish theology until the present day—sets a pattern that does not allow us to see the distinction between self and other in a positive or even neutral way. Rather, this distinction becomes the basis of hierarchy and domination. When the self is hierarchized (not just differentiated) from the other, it *must* see itself as superior—or else inferior. Just as we see ourselves as inferior in relation to God, so we view ourselves as superior in relation to others. The self projects negativity outward, onto the other, so that the self (like God) remains all-good, while the other (like the world) is the source of badness. This type of projection, which is rooted in our theological model, forms the psychological basis of pernicious social structures, including sexism, homophobia, racism, classism, anti-Semitism, and Jewish anti-Gentilism (chosenness).

Yet Judaism teaches a passion and commitment to justice, through a central and significant body of teachings that have been inspirational for many feminist Jews, and that have even, for some of us, parented our feminist concerns. "Justice, justice you shall pursue, so that you may live" says the biblical voice of God, words that embrace both process and ideal in an ever-renewing commitment to *tikkun olam,* repair of the fragmented world. Where does this idea come from? If Judaism is built on a theology of domination, where is the theological source for the principle of justice? Where can one turn for theological support for the passion to make the world whole?

Despite all I have said about Jewish theology, I believe

that the source of justice and of the passion for justice is to be found in monotheism—in *authentic* monotheism, not that which is imaged in the standard Hebrew prayerbook. For what does monotheism posit? Monotheism posits a single, infinite Divinity that embraces and extends beyond all that is knowable. What does monotheism mean? What are its true implications? I believe monotheism means the *affirmation of unity* in the world. Within the human family, monotheism means that, *for all our differences*—differences that I celebrate and honor—I am more like you than I am unlike you. It means that a single standard of justice applies to us equally. It means that we—with all of creation—participate in a single source and flow of life.

How, then, does monotheism come to support the patriarchal order? It seems that monotheism supports patriarchy by *deviating* from its own primary insight. When patriarchy takes the principle of unity and splits it into two—when God is removed from the world and set above it, when Divinity is no longer inherent in us but exists as an ideal outside ourselves—both God and world are exiled. The problem, in other words, is not the oneness of Divinity but the otherness of Divinity. The problem is in our imagery of transcendence, through which we disempower ourselves as we portray God as power over us.

As a feminist Jew, then, I seek a return to the fundamental insight of the religion—the perception of unity in the world. Unity of all elements of creation, unity of creation with creative source and power. This perception can be restored only through radical re-visioning, *re-imaging* that brings us back to the root of the monotheistic idea.

* * *

My own journey as a poet to enact this feminist Jewish vision has led me to write new Hebrew *b'rakhot* (blessings) to substitute for the traditional, formulaic ones that have idolized the image of a male lord/God/king ruling over the world. I begin with the traditional formulations, seeking what is meaningful in them as links to Jewish culture and history. Although I reject the traditional naming of God as *adonai eloheynu melekh ha-olam,* "lord our God king of the world," I find other elements of the *b'rakhot* moving. For example, I like the picture found in the second phrase of the most common Hebrew blessing, the *motzi,* which is said before beginning a meal: *Barukh atah adonai eloheynu melekh ha-olam / ha-motzi lekhem min ha-aretz,* "Blessed are you, lord our God king of the world / who brings forth bread from the earth." The image here of bread being drawn out of the earth calls to mind important associations between the earth and our food, the earth and ourselves. As we are made of the stuff of the earth, so the earth provides our nourishment. As we care for the earth, so it provides for us.

But with what sense of Divinity do I connect this image, this moment? Surely not with God as sovereign, which is the image embodied in the formulaic address that appears in all traditional Hebrew blessings (a formula known as *shem u'malkhut*). Rather, I feel connected at this moment to nurture, source, home. And so the biblical word *ayin,* "well" or "fountain," with the figurative meaning of "source," an image rooted in the earth, rises to my consciousness. And I make the image *eyn ha-khayyim,* "wellspring or source of life," to point toward Divinity here.

Now that I have my images, where do I begin my *b'rakhah* (blessing)? Perhaps the most important element of change in my *b'rakhah* is that, instead of using the traditional opening, the passive form which states God's "blessedness," I take back the power of blessing. Instead of *barukh atah,* "blessed are you [masculine]," or even *b'rukhah at,* "blessed are you [feminine]," I say *n'varekh,* "let us bless," active and gender-inclusive. My wish is to reaffirm the living community of voices, to remind us of our own power to bless. To affirm the Divinity *in* our voices even as it flows out beyond us, the Divinity that is us and also greater than us, the whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. The whole within which we wish to create mutual and reciprocal relation. And so my blessing for the meal becomes: *N'varekh et eyn ha-khayyim / ha-motziah lekhem min ha-aretz,* "Let us bless the wellspring of life / that brings forth bread from the earth."

I create and use new images—images such as *eyn ha-khayyim,* "wellspring or source of life," *ma'yan khayyenu,* "fountain or flow of our lives," *nishmat kol khai,* "breath of all living things," and *nitzotzot ha-nefesh,* "sparks of the inner, unseen self"—to serve as fresh metaphors for Divinity. With these images and still others, composed of all the basic elements of creation—earth, water, wind, and fire—I hope to help construct a *theology of immanence* that will both affirm the sanctity of the world and shatter the idolatrous reign of the lord/God/king. Today I find that every blessing I write journeys toward yet another image of the Divine, and embarks on a fresh search for the hidden places in my life where Divinity may be awakened.

At the same time, the specific language of my images and the structure of my prayers are drawn from traditional Jewish sources, which give historical connection to my labor and, I hope, to the products of my labor. The desire for this connection is deep; being a Jew feels almost as fundamental to my self-definition as being female. Yet it is not just a matter of early-formed identity; I continue, as a feminist, to choose Judaism, despite its

problems, because I know that all real relationships entail struggle—and my relationship to Judaism is one through which I continue to grow.

In the end, Judaism's emphasis on unity is a crucial source of awareness for me: it is the foundation of empathy and connectedness; it is the principle that expresses the integrity of existence. As a poet in pursuit of images to affirm both diversity and unity, I know that the journey is just—ever—beginning. As a feminist Jew, I hope that if, through community, we support and continue such pursuits, embracing all our truths as parts of a greater whole, we may approach a truly whole and diversified, inclusive and pluralistic, vision—and give voice to authentic monotheism. □

A Response to Marcia Falk

Lawrence A. Hoffman

Only with trepidation do I accept *Tikkun*'s invitation to respond to Marcia Falk's thoughtful consideration of the implications of monotheism. The trepidation derives from the broader question of whether men have any legitimate role to play in discussions of feminist concerns. In the end, certainly, women have to define their own issues without men's passing judgment on the validity of women's experience. Along the way, however, what contribution, if any, can men make? At what point can men either support or object to a feminist's reformulation of Judaism, not because it is feminist, but because it is a reformulation with which men as well as women must contend?

Surely Falk's claim that the "theological premise [of monotheism] supports and perhaps even spawns ... hierarchical dualism" is such a reformulation. Her claim, as I understand it, is that monotheism unaccompanied by pantheism, that is, without the caveat that "the one God of all" is also the "all," must lead to a clear distinction between God and "all," which is to say, a necessary dualism. Furthermore, since, by definition, God is perfect but we are not, the dualism in question becomes hierarchical. The rest, as they say—men dominating women, humans dominating nature, and so forth—is history.

I see no way to gainsay Falk's patently obvious demonstration of this hierarchical perspective in traditional Jewish texts, especially our liturgy, which reflects the thinking of the men who wrote it. The High Holiday *piyyut* to which she refers makes her case rather neatly. As she says, the binary opposites in each line are related "through opposition." She prefers to correct our imagery, therefore, by drawing on what she calls "*authentic* monotheism's ... own primary insight ... the perception of unity in the world," which traditional images of transcendence mask. Rather than prayers of opposition, we should have inclusive liturgies, wherein God and the "all" somehow coalesce harmoniously.

I confess at the outset to some uneasiness about the principle of opposition to any and all forms of opposition, without which, for example, even the linear logic of argumentation would be impossible. Some things really are better than others: truth over falsity, virtue over vice, and equality over domination. These are binary oppositions arranged hierarchically; but both Falk and I would probably support the values they entail. So hierarchy is to some extent a necessary component of language, thought, and ethics. The question that feminists have appropriately raised is when and how hierarchies become misused by virtue of our taking them for granted as necessary or desirable, when, in fact, they are neither. The prime problematic hierarchy is men's domination over women, which Falk wants to trace to the image of a perfect transcendent God who stands in authoritarian opposition to us dependent and imperfect humans.

My second problem is Falk's assumption that she can disentangle "authentic" from "inauthentic" monotheism. In other words, even if we assume, with her, that monotheism can lead either to the notion of a single transcendent deity or to "the [pantheistic] affirmation of unity," it is not clear to me on what basis we choose one over the other, labeling the one we like "authentic." We have every right to state a preference, but let us be clear about what we are doing: we are like modern commentators on the text of Jewish tradition, choosing one

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reading over another at least as much because of our own predilections as readers as because of something inherent in the text we are interpreting. There is, as I say, nothing wrong with that, but coming clean about what we are doing helps us recognize that our options go far beyond a choice between "either transcendence or immanence." The choices open to us include a good number of nuances to these polar opposites. I want to suggest only one of them, an option that allows us to retain God's distinctiveness from creation without denigrating creation. This approach is, moreover, fully in keeping with feminism's accent on relationship.

Let us begin by admitting Falk's case against the bulk of the standard liturgy. Elsewhere (*The Art of Public Prayer: Not for Clergy Only*) I have described the view of human nature that Falk details as a necessary consequence of what I call "The Limit Game." In sum, my claim is that traditional rabbinic Judaism adopted the basic binary opposition of *mutar/asur* (permitted/forbidden) as its map of the world, the result being that everything on earth was characterized as allowable or not, and God was envisioned not only as "One" but also as a sort of "Rulekeeper" of the universe. In my analysis, we need not deny God's transcendence (in the philosophical sense of God's being separate from us rather than situated within us); we need only reconceptualize the nature of that separation between God and us, which is to say, replace the notion of Rulekeeper with an image more amenable to modern sensitivity. Thus, the *piyyut* Falk cites is prima facie evidence *of a particular type of monotheism but not of monotheism in its essence.*

The model I suggest is that of covenantal relationship, as advanced by Martin Buber. God is uniquely God in that, by definition, God can be known only in relationship and can never be adequately described outside of relationship. To be sure, the knowledge that we get by relating to any "other"—including God—presupposes that the otherness of the two parties should not deteriorate into hierarchical opposition. Nevertheless, two lovers, friends, or partners never make the mistake of confusing themselves with each other; the last thing they want to do is deny that the other exists in his or her own right, independently—which is to say, philosophically transcendent in the same way that God is transcendent to creation. The point is that "transcendent" need not mean "great, mighty, and awesome," a liturgical image born of Rulekeeper mentality, which I decry as much as Falk does. But it does denote a being that exists independently and enters into relationship with us.

There are, naturally, liturgical consequences to these reflections, including the willingness to pare from our liturgy instances of hierarchical limitations to true relationship with God. But the consequences do not entail doing away with traditional monotheistic conceptions of God as Person. Indeed, it is essential to retain a conception of God as Person, since it is primarily as Person that we know God in the first place. I have no difficulty addressing my prayers to God as Mother and Father to us all, and all the more so, as the many wonderful images Falk gives us in her remarkably sensitive poetry. But I need not give up the traditional *Barukh atah* (or *Berukhah at*) since, without the rulekeeping mentality of the Limits player, I can affirm the sanctity of God without denying my own. Unlike Falk, I cannot find it in me to abrogate entirely to myself "the power to bless"—unless, of course, I want also to claim that I am God: precisely what, in the pantheistic sense, Falk does maintain but, in the monotheistic sense described here, I do not.

God can be known only in relationship and can never be adequately described outside of relationship.

To be sure, there is much else at stake when it comes to our words of prayer: matters of theology, morals, and aesthetics intertwine in ways that I am not addressing now. My remarks are limited to the specific claim that transcendent Jewish monotheism is *necessarily* hierarchic. My response is that monotheism can equally well be imaged as relational. Such an approach seems to me quite in keeping with the feminism of writers like Carol Gilligan, who tell us that whereas men are trained from boyhood to see the world as a hierarchy, women learn from girlhood to experience the world as a set of relationships.

I believe myself to be in partnership with Marcia Falk, for whom I have the highest regard. We both are committed to facilitating worship for people who find themselves alienated from the prayers of our tradition. We apparently differ on the logic of monotheism and on the limitations of appropriate forms of blessing. But, to take a line from her own thoughtful analysis, I would say that "[d]espite all our differences, we are more alike than not." If ever there were a *makhloket leshem shamayim* (a difference of opinion for the sake of heaven), this is surely it; and I dare hope that like Hillel and Shammai, who precipitated the first great set of arguments of this sort, *elu ve'elu divrei elohim chaim*—both Marcia Falk and I speak the words of the living God. □

After *The Last Intellectuals*

Russell Jacoby

"What about Garrison Keillor?" The question, drained by the journey from a Wisconsin phone through a radio station hookup to my telephone, barely reached me. I tried to focus, to think. My book, *The Last Intellectuals,* had just been published. I was in the midst of a book "tour." Not the blue-chip package, much bemoaned, much enjoyed: ten cities, plush hotels, television shows, and book signings. This was the El Cheapo version, rarely mentioned, frequently used: no hotels, no lunches, no cabs, no book signings. Also: no expenses. This tour requires the authors to field questions from call-in radio shows across the country while remaining comfortably at home.

I was trying to concentrate because I was in a funky California beach town gazing out my window into the harsh sun. The wind was blowing sand and trash up the street. A few thousand miles away, a snowed-in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, radio listener was on the line to a call-in talk show. The host was saying something like, "Yes, that's a very good point. Isn't Garrison Keillor a public intellectual, someone who plays a role you claim no longer exists? What do you say to that, Mr. Jacoby?"

I was trying to gather my thoughts. How was I to participate in a discussion with unknown people, from unknown places, on unknown radio programs—on a telephone, no less? It required an imagination I lacked. Moreover, my two-year-old was about twelve feet and two doors away; I could hear him banging. In ten seconds he would be grabbing at the phone, a favorite activity. I wondered how it might sound: my desperate effort to keep him at bay without alerting radioland; his angry cry. If not this interruption, there were sure to be others. I was sitting in my messy study, looking at bills, old notes, open books, and a disintegrating universe. How could I think?

The arrangements for this and several other shows had been strikingly casual. A radio station inquired whether I was interested in participating in a call-in program at a certain time and date, usually several months away. I looked at my real and mental calendar; both seemed open. That was about it. No one checked to see if I would be at home. What if I forgot? At 10:00 A.M. the day of the interview I might be showering. What if I had a "call waiting" telephone service, and during a forceful reply I were insistently buzzed and took the call? "Mom?! Could I call you back?" This might be OK with Mom, but what if it were a job assignment or offer? Could I seriously explain that, well, this is hard to believe, but at that very moment I was "on the air" and could they please call back in thirty minutes? Or would live radioland simply disappear with a click? These thoughts weighed on me.

I realized this: writing about intellectuals does not lead to the fast lane of real book tours. I rarely doubted it; now I knew it. Only intellectuals care about intellectuals. "Put intellectuals into a book title," an agent informed me, "and forget about sales." Several reviewers compared my book to Allan Bloom's best-selling *The Closing of the American Mind.* They were off the mark by about 490,000 copies. Still, sparks flew: intellectuals may not buy the books, but they do the reviewing; they were drawn to a book about themselves. Everyone wanted to review my book. This is a kind way of stating that many couldn't wait to blast me. They lined up. I had touched a nerve.

I was a little surprised, though I should not have been. My book was polemical; it named names, critically appraising American intellectuals, especially younger ones—my (our?) generation. As the reviewers took aim, I dreamt I reversed the thesis: instead of offering a critique, I sang praises of younger intellectuals; instead of "decline," I argued for the "rise." I was endlessly toasted, partied, thanked. In the era of the computer, reversing my argument was simple. I commanded my computer to remove all the negatives and to substitute "rise" for "decline." My next book.

I thought my thesis responsible, if not sober; many have commented on the passing of independent writers. Using a generational grid, I surveyed twentieth-century literary critics, philosophers, social commentators, economists. Those born around 1900, whom I call classic American intellectuals—the Edmund Wilsons, Dwight Macdonalds, Lewis Mumfords—wrote forcefully on

Russell Jacoby's most recent book is The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe, *which has been published in paperback (Noonday, 1989).*

diverse subjects for the educated public; they were iconoclastic and independent, keeping a distance from universities. The next generation, born around 1920, might be called transitional. The Irving Howes and Daniel Bells bear the imprint of urban culture; their writings are direct, often elegant, the essay and memoir being the preferred form. Although rarely holding advanced degrees, by the 1950s many of that generation's intellectuals joined universities as the possibilities for independent writers worsened.

These earlier intellectuals wrote to be read because they saw themselves as belonging to a larger community; they prized a supple and direct prose. Some younger intellectuals still do, but fewer and fewer. The most recent thinkers and writers, born since 1940, have become professionals, mainly professors with disciplinary loyalties. They have little reason to write for the educated public. Often the reverse: to academics, readable prose hints of shallowness, a suspicion that can derail a career. In other words, one classic American type—public intellectuals—should be listed as an endangered species. As I saw it, younger intellectuals are virtually missing from public life. The wider culture is the poorer without them.

The dearth of young public intellectuals is surprising. Younger intellectuals belonged to the sixties generation, the least conformist, the least tolerant of conventional lives. More than any other generation, the impolite sixties intellectuals were destined to overturn culture. Surprise! After the smoke has cleared, they—we!—have become a more professionalized, buttoned-up group than were earlier American intellectuals.

Last July an acquaintance, a sociologist, sent me a paper he had written. News of Jesse Jackson's candidacy and the Democratic National Convention, soon to be held in Atlanta, filled the atmosphere. This acquaintance, a former Students for Democratic Society (SDS) activist, included with his essay a note that closed, "See you in Atlanta!" I was startled and embarrassed, for he seemed to assume I was joining some nationwide protest in Atlanta. I pictured the buses pulling out at dawn across the nation; but I knew nothing about it. I asked around. I learned he was referring to the annual meeting of sociologists, also scheduled for Atlanta in August.

The evolution from the streets to hotel conventions and campus parking lots is neither new nor disturbing. People grow up; they also need jobs. Nevertheless, the younger generation has accepted or even embraced professional roles to a greater degree than have earlier American intellectuals. The earlier models have faded. To be an intellectual means to be a professor of something with primary loyalty to a discipline. As graduate students, we often heard about "the field": where it was going, what was needed. Young intellectuals have become historians, literary critics, sociologists.

People got excited. They called me names. One witty New Yorker revealed I lived in California.

To be sure, they have become labor historians, deconstructionist literary critics, Marxist sociologists, radical economists, dialectical anthropologists, feminist theoreticians, left geographers, anarchist political scientists, Leninist philosophers, and so on. It would require stunning arrogance to dismiss their contribution. That is not the point. Rather, their writings smack of the academy and its imperatives; the idiom even more than the issues breathes of seminars, lectures, and conferences. This style renders their work almost closed to the uninitiated, the educated public that once constituted an interested audience. Let there be no misunderstanding: the issue is less motive than circumstances.

Only after it became an empire in the later 1950s could higher education fully sustain—though not necessarily financially—its inhabitants: it provided enough colleagues, conferences, and journals to occupy the busiest souls. Evidently it was always possible, no matter how small the field or college, to snuggle inside a discipline. Yet the limited size of the academic universe had always tempted its ambitious intellectuals to step out, not up. Earlier intellectuals such as John Dewey or Lionel Trilling or Richard Hofstadter were professors, but they obtained an identity as urban and public intellectuals.

I found it revealing that today an educated cultured person would stumble if asked to name an important or creative younger philosopher or literary critic or sociologist or economist. Who are the successors, I asked, to the Edmund Wilsons, the Lewis Mumfords, the John Kenneth Galbraiths? What happened to sociology since C. Wright Mills? Philosophy since William James and John Dewey?

These questions were not diplomatic. People got excited. They called me names. One witty New Yorker revealed I lived in California. Others spluttered and shook. Why the fury? They were insulted. In my less than upbeat survey of younger intellectuals I failed to mention that Professor So-and-so, his or her friends, and their journal constitute breathtaking exceptions; they are lucid, original scholars fully participating in public life. I was not simply wrong; they were living proof I was wrong. "Look at me! Look at us!" they cried.

The very first review efficiently cured me of reveries. In the *Village Voice Literary Supplement* (*VLS*), Walter

Kendrick, an English professor, heaped scorn; he flunked me on writing and reasoning, but the nub seemed to be that I left him and the *VLS* out of the picture. "There's plenty of intellectual activity going on in America now," stated Kendrick, *VLS*'s then senior editor; "the very existence of the *VLS* (a *public intellectual* journal) proves that the situation isn't quite as bleak as Jacoby maintains." Proves?

Kendrick closed with rolling drums: embrace the glorious future. He informed "self-appointed gloomsters like Jacoby" that "we'll have to live in the future whether we like it or not, and it's worse than useless to maunder on about the dead virtues of the past." This by a professor who has written about psychoanalysis.

Kendrickism surfaced in almost all the reviews by younger intellectuals; it can be identified by the following: (1) delusions of grandeur. Openly or covertly the reviewer advances self, friends, colleagues, and journal—and in one case husband—as conclusively disproving my thesis. (2) futurism. The future is here, beautiful, inescapable; any efforts to appraise losses are hopelessly retrograde. I was charged with "nostalgia," a capital crime in the left-liberal criminal code.

Reviewers nominated scores of journals and intellectuals that invalidate my argument; the periodicals ran from *Humanist Sociologist,* the *New Republic, Radical American,* and *Daedalus* to *Performing Arts Journal*—and *Tikkun.* The individuals covered the map. "Bad news, Mr. Jacoby," Mark Falcoff wrote in the *American Spectator;* "there is a whole new crop coming along" of young (conservative) intellectuals. (His first ten nominations: Nick Eberstadt, Joshua Muravchik, Scott McConnel, David Gress, Bruce Bawer, Mary Tedeschi, Mark Lilla, Roger Kaplan, Suzanne Garment, Terry Teachout.) More bad news, announced Richard Kostelanetz in *American Book Review*: due to my "appalling ignorance" I failed to salute an emerging generation. (His first ten: David Horowitz, Tom Disch, Henry Flynt, Thomas Fleming, Richard Morris, Dick Higgins, Ishmael Reed, Stewart Brand, Michael Hudson, Marjorie Welish.)

The real bad news is the endemic failure to think in social terms. The issue is not the merits of one, two, or six intellectuals, but the cultural trajectory. Reviewers, however, preferred to reach for their address books. To be sure, generalizations require specifics. But they also require more: a willingness to think beyond individuals and groups. It is fair, even necessary, to identify counterevidence and countertrends, but the "counter" should not be confused with the whole. This confusion always bedeviled the left: every strike or protest announced the onset of revolution. No one doubts the complexity of cultural life. History is not a one-way street; some commute "against" the traffic, but this fact does not negate the rush hour.

Moreover, the countertrends often seem less than convincing. To trumpet postmodernism and poststructuralism, for instance, hardly proves all is well. Do these disciplines engage a wider audience? Do the postmodernists write to be read? Do they even try to? Richard Wolff, an editor of *Rethinking Marxism,* faults me for failing to pay fealty to the "new combinations of Marxism, poststructuralism and postmodernism." He admits the writing is inaccessible, the excitement professorial; but this is understandable. Why? Because "to uphold radical and Marxist ideas and to develop them ... quite predictably produce writings out of tune with the prevalent presumptions and desires of the postwar public: 'bad' writing in the eyes of many." He anticipates that "clearer writing follows as more people struggle with the materials." Is this a countertendency? Rethought Marxism? It smacks of elitism and positivism: the future will bail out intellectuals.

I was sitting in my messy study, looking at bills, old notes, open books, and a disintegrating universe. How could I think?

I did not write *The Last Intellectuals* to celebrate intellectual passivity. A description should not be confused with a blessing. I would be happy to reissue *The Last Intellectuals* with a new preface stating that a fresh group of public intellectuals has rendered it obsolete. Is it possible a flourishing *Tikkun*—magazine, conference, writers—requires that preface? Might *Tikkun* and its supporters, among whom I count myself, be hastening the opening of a new phase? I hope so. Yet I am sketching cultural shifts over almost a century. Even the most enthusiastic discussion of *Tikkun* must concede that the magazine cannot singlehandedly reverse history.

Many reviewers (and some callers) offered some telling criticisms. A professor phoned the radio show, rejecting the view of the university as a retreat and refuge; she argued that teaching itself is a public activity. A good point. Millions pass through college classrooms and presumably enter society the wiser for it. Almost every school boasts of at least one "famous" teacher—famous because of lectures, zeal, ability to inspire. These teachers are unknown outside their campuses but have an incalculable effect on their students.

Incalculable is the rub, however. It is impossible to evaluate an almost completely invisible activity. Has an increasing impact of teaching by intellectuals compensated for a dwindling public presence? Are intellectuals influencing culture, not in books and magazines but in

college classrooms? How can this be decided? Moreover, it is hardly news that major universities, no matter the lip service, belittle teaching; brilliant teaching does not help schools gain grants or visibility. Any young professor devoted to teaching eventually gets the message or the boot.

An irritated caller, and several reviewers, contended that narrowness rendered my book inconsequential: I excluded too many varieties of intellectuals, particularly scientists. Scientists such as Jeremy Bernstein and Stephen Jay Gould are elegant and accessible authors, but I am not convinced they have (yet) succeeded earlier humanist intellectuals. Nevertheless, the matter is open: is it possible that the energy that once fueled the traditional humanities now heats the sciences?

Some critics charged that I failed to acknowledge the new cultural forms and that I pine for the older intellectuals. They noted that vigorous and popular music, political cartoons, stand-up comics, video, alternative cable, and gay, female, and black culture have replaced the parochial culture of old white intellectuals. There is more here than I can shake a stick at. Nor do I want to shake that stick. I hardly deify past American intellectuals and their contribution. Nor do I write off developments by Black and feminist intellectuals. Nevertheless, no matter how they are judged, do these intellectuals constitute a refutation of my argument or merely a qualification?

And Garrison Keillor? Millions more listen to him than ever read, much less heard about, Lewis Mumford. But is Keillor a replacement for past public intellectuals? Or just something different? I began to stammer something about the nature of public intellectuals. The doorbell rang; I heard footsteps; my boy was yelling 'Daddy.' The end was near. "I am very sorry," said the radio host. "We have no more time." My book tour was over. □

Indian Giver

Andrew Bard Schmookler

When I was a kid there was an expression you don't hear much anymore: Indian Giver. It meant someone who gave a gift and then expected to get it back.

It was a pejorative term, and I suppose the expression has fallen into disfavor because people think it is an ethnic slur against the Native American. But recently, after reading Lewis Hyde's *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* (1983), I've come to understand that it is not the name itself—Indian Giver—that shows our ethnocentrism. It is our thinking that there is something wrong with being an Indian Giver.

The root of the matter is that the Indians had a different sense of ownership from ours. And different does not mean worse—particularly in this case.

Among the Indians, a treasured object would be the "Gift"—something that would move among the tribe's members, never *belonging* to anyone. So an Indian might pass the Gift to an Englishman who, with his sense of property, would think, "Great! We can keep this in the British Museum." The Englishman is into accumulation, and so he is annoyed when an Indian, seeing the Gift in the White Man's house, keeps it moving by taking it with him.

In the Indian Giver and his counterpart, the White Man Keeper, we see two ways of relating to the goods of life: as things that flow on through, or as things that are stored and possessed.

We all know how the contest between these two approaches to life turned out. Those who were into acquisition acquired the homelands of those who were not. The continent is now possessed by those with a sense of possession.

But to say that the way of possession has triumphed is not to say that *we* are the winners. Not if we ourselves are possessed by the spirit of possession. We live in the richest country in the history of the world, but it seems we're always hungry for more—as if our things were themselves so much stored up happiness. As if money, embodying all the gratification we have delayed, were a promissory note that promised a future of fulfillment. Like magic.

I remember seeing on television a few years back a feature on some Hollywood mogul with 250 telephones lining his Beverly Hills estate, as if by magic his owning those phones assured that he would forever be connected with the world. And then there's Imelda Marcos's amazing collection of three thousand pairs of shoes—as if she thought that, by magic, she herself would last until all those shoes were worn out.

But life is not like that. As the saying goes, "You can't take it with you." Anyone who insists on fighting that fact of life is sure to end up a loser.

Life is a gift that is not ours to keep. All we can do is pass that gift along in our tribe, which alone endures.

The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. There is the archetypal Indian Giver. □

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Jean-Paul Sartre: Hated Conscience of His Century

John Gerassi

No intellectual, no writer, no man is more hated by academics and newspeople, by eggheads and politicians on both sides of the Atlantic, than Jean-Paul Sartre. Nor is this new: Sartre has been hated by them for half a century. But as long as he was alive, his pen easily deflected their barbs. In France, where he could take to the podium or even to the streets if they tried to stifle his counterattacks, the media had no choice but to report his retorts. In England and in the U.S., however, Sartre was dependent on the fair play of his critics. He got none. They smeared him, distorted him, ridiculed him. When all else failed, they tried to silence him altogether—by ignoring him in the U.S., by attempting to murder him in France.

At first, after the war, Sartre was turned into a "national asset"; in *What Is Literature?* he even complained that "it is not pleasant to be treated as a public monument while still alive." But he was soon damned by the left and the right. In 1948, Britain's censor banned his play *No Exit*. In 1947, Pierre Brisson, editor of the right-wing Paris daily *Le Figaro,* expressed delight that "the cohorts of Maurice Thorez [longtime head of the French Communist party] insult him and proclaim him to be the writer of the failures, while the warring faction of the right wing talks of exorcising him, of covering him with sulphur and setting him on fire on the parvis of Notre-Dame, which would be the most charitable way of saving his soul." In 1946, Pope Pius XII put all of Sartre's works on the Index (meaning that any Catholic reading any part of them was automatically excommunicated). That year, too, the Soviet government officially objected to a production of Sartre's play *Dirty Hands* in Helsinki on the grounds that it was "hostile propaganda against the USSR." The play remained forbidden throughout the Eastern bloc for decades, and when it opened in France it elicited this judgment from the Communist daily *L'Humanité:* "Hermetical philosopher, nauseated writer, sensationalist dramatist, demagogue of the third force,* such are the stages of Mr. Sartre's career." That year Georg Lukács, the highly touted Hungarian Marxist philosopher, added: "Existentialism reflects, on the level of ideology, the spiritual and moral chaos of the current bourgeois intelligence." Summarized Alexandr Fadeev, head of the Russian Federation of Writers, at the 1948 Wroclaw Peace Conference: Sartre is "a hyena armed with a fountain pen."

Today's "leftist intelligentsia," who inject morality into Yuppie avarice, are lusting for bourgeois respectability.

In France, by then, the Communists had already condemned him. The most "learned attack" came from Henri Lefebvre, that professional party hatchet man who had smeared his closest friend, the novelist-journalist Paul Nizan, for being a police informer, because Nizan had refused to soften his anti-Nazi stance when Stalin signed the Russo-German pact. Now, in 1945, Lefebvre went after Sartre, defining him as "the manufacturer of the war machine against Marxism." (No longer a Communist by the sixties, Lefebvre never apologized to Nizan or Sartre, yet he is still respected as a great intellectual in France—perhaps precisely because of that.)

In 1945, meanwhile, the French government had thought enough of Sartre's wartime resistance activity to offer him the Legion of Honor; Sartre refused. Four years later, André Malraux, onetime Communist sympathizer turned Gaullist mouthpiece, denounced Sartre as a collaborator even though he, of all people, knew better. After all, Sartre had tried to entice Malraux into joining his resistance group in 1941 when Malraux was still enjoying the good life on the French Riviera. In

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*Earlier that year, Sartre had helped launch and was principal spokesperson for the Revolutionary Democratic Assembly, which hoped to keep France divorced from the aggressive policies of both Russia and America.

April 1949, Catholic writer François Mauriac intimated in print that Sartre was a foreign agent. The very next month he offered Sartre a seat for "immortals" by having him elected to the most elite forty-member Académie Française; Sartre scoffed at such a chance to "learn equality" among those who spend their waning years bragging about their "superiority." He also turned down an offer to join that other most prestigious bastion of French culture, the Collège de France.

Sartre offered the intellectual no peace, no self-satisfaction, no contentment, nothing but hard work, and not even the hope of victory.

But the worst insults from fellow French intellectuals were provoked by Sartre's rejection of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1964. In private correspondence to the Nobel Committee, Sartre had said that he would turn down, with equal intransigence, the Lenin Prize, were it ever offered to him, and on the same public grounds—that the Lenin and Nobel were equally politically motivated. When the Nobel Committee ignored Sartre's warning and awarded him the prize anyway, and when Sartre published the correspondence, ex-Communist-surrealist André Breton nevertheless denounced Sartre for being part of "a propaganda operation in favor of the Eastern bloc." But that sally was nothing compared to the onslaught unleashed by the usually mild-mannered Christian philosopher Gabriel Marcel. Said he, presumably with Christian charity: Sartre was an "inveterate denigrator," a "systematic blasphemist" with "pernicious and poisonous" views, a "patented corrupter of youth," the "grave-digger of the West."

By then, Sartre was used to much more formidable attacks. After *Paris-Match* had run an editorial entitled "Sartre: A Civil War Machine," hundreds of war veterans marched down the Champs Elysées chanting "Fusillez Sartre! Fusillez Sartre!" ("Shoot Sartre!") On July 19, 1961, a bomb went off in Sartre's apartment at 42 rue Bonaparte (but did little damage). Six months later, on January 7, 1962, a more powerful bomb, detonated on the wrong floor, destroyed much of the apartment and either obliterated various unpublished manuscripts or gave the inrushing firemen the opportunity to pilfer them. Sartre was not home when the bomb exploded. His mother, who had moved in with him after her husband, Sartre's stepfather, had died, was in the bathroom where the heavy wooden door protected her. The suspicion about the manuscripts arose when some of the manuscripts from that period turned up at auctions, but Sartre, who was admittedly very careless about his possessions, never kept track of what he no longer worked on.

None of these attacks stopped French students from reading Sartre. And, as they did, his reputation and influence grew. In the Anglo-Saxon world, however, these attacks had their effect. His plays were rarely performed, his novels hardly read, his philosophy almost totally ignored. Dominated by logical positivists and empiricists, Anglo-Saxon university philosophy departments have long been reluctant to take seriously any epistemology or ontology, much less Sartre's, that is based on phenomenological descriptions of reality. A. J. Ayer, for example, dismissed all of existentialism as "an exercise in the art of misusing the verb 'to be.'" In a Columbia University philosophy class taught by the eminent Ernest Nagel, I remember spending hours deciding whether Bertrand Russell's sentence "Is the present king of France bald?" was a meaningful question (whether the verb "to be" predicated existence). Similarly, both Iris Murdoch and Mary Warnock put Sartre down for not playing the game the way they do—for using descriptions instead of logic as a philosophic method. Warnock, who dismissed Sartre as "not an original thinker," objected to what was a proof for Sartre—namely, "a description so clear and vivid that, when I think of this description and fit it to my own case, I cannot fail to see its application."

What bothered these philosophers about Sartre's approach, indeed about any approach that began with the "I" situated *in* the world, was that it risked defining truth according to its human relevance, which is precisely how Sartre defined it. In other words, the approach transformed the so-called dichotomy between object and subject into a dialectic in which each had its own being yet were inseparable—exactly what Sartre hoped to show (not prove) through his phenomenological description. For Anglo-Saxons who want to uphold the purity of "objectivity," this method is very dangerous because it may lead to interpreting speeches, events, indeed all of history, according to class interest. The conclusion may well be—and Sartre emphatically thought so—that for all their liberal, even socialist pronouncements, intellectuals such as Ayer, Warnock, and the others were part and parcel of the bourgeois state and their work ultimately defended that state.

But these philosophers were at least respectful. They sometimes even disagreed with one another. Thus while Ms. Warnock claimed that philosophy "has perhaps always been something of a sideline for Sartre himself," Denis O'Brien, an expert on Hegel and president of Bucknell University, insisted that, on the contrary, "Sartre was fundamentally, uncompromisingly, and incessantly a philosopher." But then, analytic philosophers wouldn't

respect O'Brien since they never did like Hegel very much; during my ten-year undergraduate and graduate stint at Columbia, Hegel never once earned the right to his own course. Still, better rejection at Columbia than praise at Berkeley, where Denis Hollier had this to say about Sartre's trilogy: "The war puts an end to the clinical narratology of the hypnagogic story." (That sentence may have put Professor Hollier's students to sleep, but it sent Professor Alexander Leupin, another high-minded critic, this time down at Louisiana State University, into orgasmic ecstasy—and enticed Yale to print the piece.)

In the U.S. Sartre's most efficient assassin was Germaine Brée, an expert on the contemporary literary scene in France. Infatuated with Albert Camus, Brée felt that she therefore had to demolish his main critic, Sartre. So, in a popular text, *Sartre & Camus,* which gained immense influence in academia, she condemned Sartre for dealing with authority "callously," "pompously," "typically." At least Camus, she wrote, never was guilty of making a judgment on the basis "of class." On the other hand, "Sartre's hatred of bourgeois life," she went on, "reveals the streak of irrationality that underlies many of his judgments."

Brée ridiculed Sartre for his supposed fear of psychoanalysis, but she then scoffed at his apparent neuroses when she learned that, on the contrary, Sartre quite welcomed the idea of analysis. She passed off his opposition to General Matthew Bunker Ridgeway as head of SHAPE as "trite" because in her view no one could seriously have objected to the general's war-making in Korea, and then she tried her best to discredit Conor Cruise O'Brien for correctly calling Camus a "colonialist under the skin." Finally, she damned Sartre because he "never to my knowledge supported any political candidate who had the slightest chance of winning nor has he ever supported any action taken by the French government"—thus naively handing Sartre the best compliment he ever received.

The effect of Germaine Brée was somewhat offset, it is true, by such erudite critics as George Steiner in England and Arthur Danto and Robert Denoon Cumming in America. Cumming, for example, tried to explain why Americans, who want to turn everything, including poverty and exploitation, into a personal, individual problem, are disturbed by Sartre for whom "nothing is sacred, ... not even the Freudian theory of the superego."

But such counterattacks could never dislodge Camus from the pinnacle of the literary hierarchy in England or America. There, he was admired mostly because he focused on individual despair and individual hope, never on class conflicts. He disturbed no conscience. On the contrary, he soothed the self-involved and the self-indulgent by generalizing individual problems (whereas Sartre concretized universal problems, forcing each of us to be responsible for all). No wonder, then, that someone like Bobby Kennedy discovered Camus "in the months of solitude and grief after his brother's death," as Jack Newfield reported. "By 1968, he had read, and reread, all of Camus's essays, dramas and novels.... He memorized him, meditated about him, quoted him, and was changed by him." Kennedy's favorite passage (which he underlined) from Camus's *Notebooks* was: "Living with one's passions amounts to living with one's sufferings.... When a man has learned—and not on paper—how to remain alone with his suffering, how to overcome his longing to flee, then he has little left to learn." The passage eloquently reveals Camus as an Algerian *pied-noir* (French colonial descendant), as a metaphysical sufferer who never understood the human causes of pain—which is why he never supported the Algerian people's struggle for independence.

It got worse after Sartre died. David Caute, a British "expert" who pretends to be a leftist but spends his time trying to ridicule genuine leftists, cast off Sartre as an "incestor manqué." (Too bad Sartre didn't have a sister, he wrote.)

Concealing the fact that Sartre carefully avoided her because, he said, she was "an arrogant imperialist witch," Mary McCarthy told the *New York Times* that Sartre "didn't care for people." Which elicited this brilliant non sequitur from the New "Philosopher" Marcel Gauchet: "We want the Christian West to be on top." After which, most French reactionary critics felt free to let loose. Perhaps the best attacks were issued by the writer Olivier Rolin, who decided that "Sartre lacked courage" because he always maintained the unpopular viewpoint, and by Clément Rosset, who bewailed the fact that he could never find in Sartre's work "a solid philosophical or clear political position."

Even the editors of *Libération,* the Parisian daily Sartre had kept alive for years with his own money and scores of exclusive interviews and articles, now turned against him. Reinterpreting his end-of-life musings, they decided that Sartre had abandoned the poor and the powerless, the rebel and the revolutionary, to support the French reactionary left—which, in reality, he had always despised. Or was it that these editors now wanted to court the powerful and established in order to be more politically "relevant"?

And haven't the *New York Review of Books* writers preferred similar contortions? Do they really think, as John Weightman claimed, that "Sartre was entirely wrong" in his feud with Camus, or do they simply like the fact that Camus, by avoiding commitment, never dirtied his hands, thus giving the *Review* its "moral" justification to do likewise? Is it true that "Sartre has not been forgiven for the retrospective embarrassment

caused the leftist intelligentsia for his visceral hatred of 'bourgeois' society, an attitude that now seems corrosive of democratic values," as one *New York Times* critic concluded? Or is it that today's "leftist intelligentsia," who inject morality into Yuppie avarice, are lusting for bourgeois respectability—and bourgeois honors?

Sartre did hate bourgeois society and did reject its honors—from the Legion to the Nobel (which compelled *Time* to snort stupidly: "reverse snobbery"). To his death he insisted that the job of the intellectual was to criticize the powerful and defend the voiceless. Few famous and no rich ever agreed, then or now. But today "intellectuals" are not embarrassed to be wealthy and powerful. Thus, in France and in the U.S., these service folk of the established media must show that "the ideology" of commitment of their immediate forebears is, as the *Times* put it, "indeed dead and that for them, private life is worthy of literary celebration."

Sartre knew, as all of us do, that the rich get richer only because the poor get poorer; but unlike the rest of us he would never have stopped shouting it at the top of his voice.

That celebration of private life, decided David Leitch with acute plebeian depth in the *London Sunday Times,* is why Sartre had lost touch with the young. He so wrote on the very day that fifty thousand of those young gathered spontaneously to pay their respects upon Sartre's burial. As they marched across Paris, they attracted another fifty thousand slightly older mourners—the greatest testimony to the relevance of an intellectual the world has ever seen.

"How is it possible," asked the philosopher István Mészáros, "for a solitary individual, whose pen is his only weapon, to be as effective as Sartre is—and he is uniquely so—in an age which tends to render the individual completely powerless?" The answer: his "passionate commitment to the concerns of the given world." With Sartre, there were no escapes, no ivory towers, no retreats into false "objectivity." Those who had no power knew he fought for them and with them. Those who concealed their responsibility knew they could never say "I can't help it." The job of the intellectual, Sartre said over and over, is to criticize, to oppose, to denounce. And he cheerfully accepted his resulting solitary fate, just as the writer André Chamsom had moaned during the Spanish Civil War that "the duty of the writer is to be tormented." Or, as Hemingway put it when he was still an idealist in 1935: "A writer is like a Gypsy, he owes his allegiance to no government. If he's a good writer, he will hate the one under which he lives. If the government likes him it means he's worth nothing."

Sartre offered the intellectual no peace, no self-satisfaction, no contentment, nothing but hard work, and not even the hope of victory. In *The Words* he wrote: "For a long time I took my pen for a sword; I now know we're powerless. No matter. I write and will keep writing."

But he was wrong. He had a lot of power. The proof? All those who hate him. All those who followed him to the cemetery of Montparnasse. All those who love him, like French writer Françoise Sagan. Listen to an excerpt from her "Love Letter to Jean-Paul Sartre":

> You've written the most intelligent and honest books of your generation, you even wrote the most talented book in French literature—*The Words.* At the same time, you've always thrown yourself doggedly into the struggle to help the weak and the humiliated; you believed in people, in causes, in universals; you made mistakes at times, like everybody else, but (unlike everybody else) you acknowledged them every time.... In short, you have loved, written, shared, given all you had to give which was important, while refusing what was offered to you which was of import. You were a man as well as a writer, you never pretended that the talent of the latter justified the weakness of the former....
>
> You have been the only man of justice, of honor and of generosity of our epoch.

So why is Sartre so hated by most academicians, most writers, and all politicians? Simply because, since 1945, Sartre was against. Against power. Against the dehumanizing system, all systems. Against elections, which he insisted "serialized" and atomized voters while making them believe they were being "fused" into a group. Sartre, like his hero Hugo in *Dirty Hands,* was never reconcilable to any establishment. Despite French revisionism, despite current biographies, which try to reintegrate him into France's great but extinct tradition of bourgeois thinkers and moralists, he remains apart, the irreconcilable enemy of Communist hacks and bourgeois apologists, of Lefebvre and Camus, Althusser and Malraux, Lévi-Strauss and Lacan.

Sartre bothered everyone when he was alive. He would bother us even more today. He always insisted that we cannot call ourselves socialists or humanists if we oppose the right to self-determination of any people anywhere. Alive today, he would have agitated for self-determination for Armenians, Estonians, Lithuanians, Cambodians, Puerto Ricans, Hawaiians, Palauans, Tahitians, Caledonians, Irish, Welsh, Corsicans, Basques;

and he would have condemned us for not doing likewise. He would never have used the crimes of Stalin to justify or just ignore the crimes of Reagan, Thatcher, or Mitterrand. He would have denounced the French murders in the Pacific, the American murders throughout the Third World.

Sartre knew, as all of us do, that the rich get richer only because the poor get poorer; but unlike the rest of us he would never have stopped shouting it at the top of his voice. He would have asked us why we keep counting and recounting the murders of Stalin, why we rarely count the dead in Argentina (40,000), in Brazil (30,000), in El Salvador (100,000), in Guatemala (100,000), in Chile (60,000); why we do not denounce our own country which has two million homeless. And he would have asked the rest of the world's intellectuals why they praise a country like the United States that offers no health insurance at all to 27 percent of its people, why they remain silent when their country allies itself with a government that distributes more deadly drugs to U.S. citizens through its official agencies (the CIA, DIA, DEA, NSC, and so forth) than do all the mafias and gangster governments of the world combined. Why, Sartre would ask us all again and again, do you who, like me, ferociously defended the right of Israel to exist, not today denounce its policies against the Palestinians, whose right to self-determination cannot be questioned?

No wonder Jean-Paul Sartre is the most hated conscience of our century. □

Covenant

Sharon Kessler

In the desert
where old legends
conspire, we
are making fresh
tracks in the sand,
carrying our burden
to some resting place.

Above
the black crest
of rock,
an arc of slow fire
rises. Morning again.
We march forward,
a tribe of mute warriors,
daughters of a race
so lost
no legend tells of us.

We too heard voices in the wilderness
but we built
no tabernacle
to contain them.

The sign of the covenant
is not incised upon our flesh,

but deep in the one heart
of our body
the everlasting bush burns
and is not consumed.



The Rabbi and the Abyss of AIDS

Joseph A. Edelheit

Mary Catherine Bateson and Richard Goldsby in *Thinking AIDS* note that "AIDS will cause psychological and social reactions that may change the character of human social life." AIDS has already forced us to raise questions that we have had no reason to ask before. Asking such questions and confronting the challenge of discovering answers are themselves a transformative process that changes individuals no less than AIDS will "change the character of human social life." Bateson and Goldsby illuminate the transformative character of AIDS and the sobering awareness that, once transformed, one stands on the edge of an abyss opened by the questions that can come only from the people touched by AIDS.

Mine is but a small voice in a growing chorus of those who are aware that life is completely different since the advent of AIDS; our work with AIDS has transformed us. This awareness opens us to the reality that we are living through a caesura, a rupture in history in which our behavior, attitudes, and beliefs will change. Rabbi Eliezer Berkovits challenged us with the following insight from the experiences of the Shoah; the transformative character of AIDS renews this challenge:

> The human being, as a potentiality, and the world that [s/]he encounters, are the raw material out of which selfhood emerges. The reality of [wo/]man is never given; [s/]he has to shape it for [her/]himself out of what is given to [her/]him. How [s/]he does it, that alone determines the quality of [her/]his humanity.

The first question I remember still rings in my ear. The young woman called on behalf of her brother who was gravely ill in the hospital with PCP, pneumocystic carinii, the pneumonia most frequently related to the HIV virus. He had wanted to see a rabbi; could I please visit him? I asked whether he was affiliated, if he had a rabbi. I did not want to interfere with someone else's congregant.

I was told that the man's rabbi had rejected him shortly after he had been diagnosed with AIDS, saying that there was no place in Judaism for him. I refused to accept that statement. It was impossible—no rabbi could possibly say that; no rabbi could have done that. Slowly but perceptibly I accepted new insights, and I struggled with a new awareness of a different kind of suffering. I ask myself again, I ask anyone who will listen: Can a rabbi help rekindle a soul that has been smashed by another rabbi's homophobia? If rabbis are ignorant and sometimes homophobic, who will reach out to those homosexual Jews who have been turned off by our callous silence? Are there enough rabbis and laypeople who will hear the call of those in need?

This was the first person with AIDS (PWA) to teach me by his patience and his extraordinary courage. He held his hand out to me, and I tentatively and fearfully reached back. Months later I held his hand as he died, and I faced a new set of questions. His mother told me in the hospital room that she could not tell the people at the school where she was a nurse that her son had died of AIDS; therefore there could be nothing in the eulogy about her son's illness or about his gay Jewish identity. How do you deliver eulogies in euphemisms? And how do you help people struggle through their grief when they mask its source?

Once you've done a funeral for a PWA, you realize there are new questions about Jewish customs and the halakhic interpretation of rituals. Does one include a homosexual lover as an *avel* (mourner)? Does one give a *kria* ribbon (traditionally worn by immediate family members) to a lover? A gay Jewish man, at the funeral of a Jewish PWA, asked me whether he should say *kaddish*. Is *kaddish* an obligation, not simply an option, for a homosexual lover in the way that it is for a spouse? I quickly reviewed in my mind all of the laws about those people who are categorized halakhically as mourners, but nothing in the Jewish tradition has a response to this question at this moment. I said, "Yes, you are obligated to say *kaddish*." Have I abused my rabbinic authority? Have I misinterpreted the law? Each question is "radically" new, always raw.

There have been more funerals and more PWAs and more questions. What does one do about the embalming of a PWA—when the state requires a steel casket liner without embalming? What does one say to a Jewish funeral director plagued by ignorance and prejudice

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when he or she says that a PWA's remains, without a steel casket liner, will infect the people in the chapel? What does one do after a Jew has died from AIDS, when his Methodist lover asks for a memorial service in the synagogue? Who is the "rabbi" for a gay Jew who has died from AIDS but who was so alienated from the Jewish community that he had not affiliated for twenty-five years? Should a rabbi facilitate a memorial service in a Methodist church since there is no synagogue that is open to the unaffiliated? I answered the question by leading the services at the church, and then I did another service for him at the cemetery crypt. I continue to ask the question now: What does the statement from Isaiah—"My house shall be a house of prayer for all peoples"—really mean? Should we understand that statement to exclude PWAs, gays, and lesbians?

The first time I preached on AIDS was on the eve of Rosh Hashanah, and I was asked all sorts of "professional" questions about rabbinic sensitivity to politically controversial issues. Is it permissible to change the wording of the prayer *U'netaneh Tokef* because as a prayer of providential theology it now sounds harsh and cruel, as if God were using AIDS as a punishment? I shared with the congregation my own introduction to AIDS and how it had already changed me, and I beseeched them to look into their hearts and confront their own prejudice, fear, and ignorance. Some of them were shocked, even angry. Yet others were deeply moved. Then more questions—how could you do this on the eve of Rosh Hashanah? The questions were always a "mild" form of chastisement. Should a rabbi take a leadership role on issues that are not explicitly dealt with by the Torah? Had I abusively tampered with a sensitive medieval *piyyut* (poetic prayer) from the High Holiday liturgy when I rewrote the *U'netaneh Tokef*? I was beginning to understand that there is a difference between being a rabbi "before" and "after" the advent of AIDS. Randy Shilts is correct in *The Band Played On*: there is a "before" and an "after"; most of us just don't realize we are already living in the "after."

There was the board of trustees meeting at the synagogue at which someone got up and challenged me, asking me whether I wanted all the homosexuals in Chicago to join our congregation. Wouldn't the congregation change, and didn't I know that homosexuality was a sin according to the Torah? The questions conveyed such contempt; I stood alone, and the board was silent. I answered: Yes, Leviticus 18:22 does refer to homosexuality as an abomination, but Deuteronomy 22:5 says that a woman wearing a man's clothing is an abomination, too; your wife and daughters wear slacks—are they an abomination? Then I was asked: If I cared so much about gays, would I start "marrying" them? That was a question that I had not yet heard asked in that way, though I was soon to hear it again and again. I started to listen to it differently.

All rabbis, especially those who care for the dying and bury the dead and attend to the grieving, must ask: How shall we relate *differently* to the living, when the living are gay men and lesbian women? Can we ever read Leviticus 18:22 in the same way? Is it ethical for us to refuse to read it, to expurgate it from the text of the Torah? What shall we do when that weekly Torah portion comes again?

The first time I went on a TV show about AIDS and the Jewish community, I tried to explain why there was confusion, apathy, and fear. The question from the interviewer, a question one hears again and again and again, was: "Why is AIDS a Jewish problem and not merely a human problem?" One can answer the question in terms of the lives of Jews as PWAs, as lovers, as parents, as grandparents, as sisters and brothers. And another question: "But how many Jews are we talking about? Five percent? Ten percent?" How does one answer that question? Why is AIDS a Jewish problem? Because there are Jews dying of it, Jews living with it, and Jews grieving over it. All of this is obvious. Why is any problem a Jewish problem? Did we ask how many Jews needed to be discriminated against in the South in the fifties and sixties for civil rights to be a Jewish problem? Did we ask how many Jews had to die in Vietnam for that to be a Jewish problem? Do we ask how many Jews are homeless when we proclaim that homelessness and poverty are a Jewish problem? Must there be a *pasuk* (verse) in the Torah that defines the problem as Jewish for it to be a Jewish problem? Must 10 percent of those touched by AIDS be Jews for us to recognize a new reality? Should rabbis and Jewish leaders be concerned only about Jewish problems, narrowly construed?

Should a rabbi be obligated to teach about AIDS in religious supplementary schools when students are already learning about it in public schools? One enraged mother argued, "Why should you take time away from teaching Torah by teaching about AIDS?" Then she took her child out of the school. Should a rabbi, a Jewish educator, and a Jewish school be responsible for teaching about sexuality with an equal emphasis on celibacy and condom use? Would such an educational program also include teaching about "safer sex"? Is it a Jewish problem if there is a *sakana* (danger) that can be decreased?

In Illinois, rabbinic involvement with the AIDS epidemic became a reality when every premarital couple was required to take an HIV antibodies blood test. How does a rabbi handle a young male who turns to his fiancée and says, "I guess you ought to know before we have the HIV test that I had a chance homosexual

encounter." What does a rabbi do when a young man calls crying three days after an initial premarital session and admits that he had joined his fraternity brothers in going to a whorehouse and obviously had had high-risk exposure? Is the rabbi obligated to tell the fiancée, and what if either of them tests positive? Should I, as a rabbi who requires Tay-Sachs testing, require the HIV test before marriage in case the couple chooses to have children? Nothing in the Torah, the Talmud, the *Shulkhan Arukh,* or any of the commentaries on these texts answers these questions. No professor at the Hebrew Union College ever taught me anything about this. Yet there are people who come to me whose eyes glisten with tears and whose hearts race as I try to explain that the HIV antibodies test is not an AIDS test, and that they should go to a doctor they trust and not to a street clinic. I explain what an ELISA test is and what the Western blot confirmatory test is. Each time I speak to a premarital couple, I worry about their emotional strength when their sexual behavior of the past ten years is tested.

How do rabbis teach other rabbis about AIDS? We rarely talk together about sexuality and IV drug use, and certainly not in graphic terms. Is there an issue of *z'nut* (immodesty) which impedes rabbis from addressing these worldly matters? When one is trying to achieve communal rabbinic support for an AIDS education program, should ideological differences compromise rabbinic integrity? Is it possible to have an AIDS program that does *not* emphasize the use of condoms, since premarital sexual activity is not permitted by the traditional rabbinate? Should the organized Jewish community support AIDS education programs that, in order to achieve Orthodox support, ignore homosexual behavior? Was it appropriate for me to be compelled to accept the title "doctor" in lieu of "rabbi" in order to teach a group of Orthodox rabbis about AIDS and premarital counseling? Is it significant that major rabbinic organizations seem to find time to discuss almost every important issue in the Jewish *and* secular world *except* AIDS?

How does a rabbi answer questions about becoming involved in community task forces on AIDS? Should rabbis try to set up a Jewish communal or interfaith coalition on AIDS? Should rabbis spend outside, noncongregational time involved in such community organizations? Why have there been so few rabbis consistently involved in these projects? Most rabbis honestly face the crush of many pressing commitments. Still, some rabbis have suggested that AIDS is too controversial, and besides, it involves them only intellectually—they haven't met any PWAs. Other rabbis simply never respond to the many letters and calls. There *are* too many AIDS meetings, yet there are still not enough meetings for all of the problems that AIDS brings us. Sometimes those people who have been transformed by dealing with AIDS feel lonely, angry, and resentful that they are carrying the burden of AIDS for others.

Dennis Altman, in his provocative essay "Legitimation Through Disaster," has noted that AIDS paradoxically has legitimated the gay community more than it has ever been legitimated before. Thus, even though we have all tried to separate AIDS from the gay community, those of us who have done AIDS work are necessarily drawn closer and closer to that community. Will Jewish leaders have any choice but to confront the valid claims of gays and lesbians? Are we ready to engage in more than merely supporting the already existing network of synagogues that have a special connection with the gay and lesbian Jewish community? How will we respond to the needs of gay and lesbian rabbis? What should we do with the liturgies for life-cycle events as they pertain to gay and lesbian Jews?

We do not yet have any referential categories that explain the extraordinary range of questions provoked by AIDS. We do not know how to evaluate the daily, weekly, and monthly statistics. Knowing how many people have died from AIDS does not begin to help us cope with those who are living with AIDS. Have we even begun to ask how we will help those who will die to do so with dignity?

Our lack of any analogue to the transformative character of AIDS adds an extra element of frustration. One possible analogue to the radical social change we will continue to experience is the issue of racism and civil rights. Those of us who are touched by AIDS may be experiencing what only a vanguard of people prophetically understood from 1955 to 1957, before civil rights became the tidal wave that changed America socially, economically, and emotionally. We must now come to accept that these same kinds of changes are on the horizon, as the pressure of the AIDS epidemic provides the crucible within which some of the moral foundations of the twenty-first century will be forged.

Rabbis, Jewish educators, and Jewish lay leaders are like everyone else. We weren't more ready than anyone else for AIDS, and many of us may feel that AIDS is bigger than we can handle politically, morally, emotionally, and psychologically. Still, the changes that the AIDS epidemic has wrought cannot be reversed. We cannot stop asking questions about AIDS merely because they don't lie explicitly within Jewish tradition. We cannot simply say that homosexuality is an "abomination." And we cannot, as Jews, be responsive to AIDS and deny the transformative nature even of the questions themselves that are provoked by the epidemic. □

The Politics of Translation: Amichai and Ravikovitch in English

Chana Bloch

Some lines in a love poem of Yehuda Amichai's, "A Precise Woman," illustrate very neatly a problem all translators grapple with: literal versus "free" translation. Amichai writes in praise of his beloved:

> Afilu tsa'akot ha-ta'avah lefi seder,
> akhat akharey ha-shniya ve-lo me'urbavot:
> yonat bayit, akhar kakh yonat bar,
> akhar kakh tavas, tavas patsua, tavas, tavas.
> Akhar kakh yonat bar, yonat bayit, yona yona
> tinshemet, tinshemet, tinshemet.
>
> Even her cries of passion follow a certain order,
> one after the other:
> tame pigeon, then wild pigeon,
> then peacock, wounded peacock, screeching peacock,
> then wild pigeon, tame pigeon, pigeon pigeon
> thrush, thrush, thrush.

The word I've translated as "thrush" is *tinshemet* in Hebrew, and its dictionary definition is "barn owl, barn owl, barn owl." What is one to do? I lifted mine eyes unto the Bible, whence help often comes. But *tinshemet* appears only three times in the Bible, and no one seems to know what it means. In Leviticus 11:18 (and Deuteronomy 14:16), the *tinshemet,* along with the vulture and the bat, is listed among the unclean birds that we are prohibited from eating; in the Bibles I consulted, it is translated variously as "swan," "water hen," and "little owl." To add to the confusion, a little later in the same chapter of Leviticus (11:30), the *tinshemet* appears in a list of unclean creeping things; here I found it translated as "mole" and "chameleon."

When I turned back to the Hebrew, it struck me that Amichai was not thinking of any of these "abominations" (though a case could be made for that large-eyed night bird, the owl). I asked him whether he chose *tinshemet* primarily for its sound, and he confirmed my guess. *Tinshemet* is based on the verbal root *nasham,* "to breathe," and in this context the sibilant *sh* suggests breathing—or heavy breathing, I should say. So I found "thrush," perched between albatross and zebra finch in my trusty thesaurus. But since I'm a little shaky on the names of birds—I know a hawk from a handsaw and an owl from a pussycat, that's about it—I was relieved to see that *Webster's* identifies the thrush as a European bird, which brings it within Amichai's purview. Then I discovered, in his "Seven Laments for the War Dead," that Amichai once read about the thrush in an old German zoology text. And so it came to pass that the lady recovers from her passion—in English—like a thrush.

This example illustrates the point that in translation it is often the spirit of the word, not the letter, that is called for. It also suggests that a "free" translation is not always the result of an unfettered flight of the imagination. You open the Bible (or rather, the Bibles), the concordance, the dictionary, the thesaurus, the complete works of the poet—and let your fingers do the walking. Then you can fly.

* * *

A problem all translators of Hebrew poetry must confront is that of biblical allusion. Israeli readers, who are required to study the Bible—even in the secular public schools—from their earliest years, have no trouble with such allusions.

There is clearly a difficulty, however, in English. I am reminded of the discussions about staging Pyramus and Thisbe in *A Midsummer Night's Dream:* how do you bring in the Bible without frighting the ladies? Bottom and his friends come up with two kinds of solutions. Starveling, on the one hand, recommends cutting whatever is likely to be troublesome; Bottom, on the other, plumps for elaboration and explanation. "Write me a prologue," he begs.

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A translator of Hebrew poetry often faces these two choices. Let me offer an example of each. The first comes from Amichai's "Seven Laments for the War Dead":

Adon Beringer, she-bno
nafal ba-te'alah, khafaruha
zarim bishvil oniyot, la'avor ba-midbar,
over derekh sha'ar yafo, leyadi.

Mr. Beringer, whose son
fell at the Canal that strangers dug
so ships could cross the desert,
crosses my path at Jaffa Gate.

In the second and third lines, *nafal ba-te'alah khafaruha zarim,* Amichai echoes one of the oldest poems in the Bible, the "Song of the Well" from the Book of Numbers:

Ali be'er, enu lah:
be'er khafaruha sarim

Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it:
The princes digged the well.

(Numbers 21:17–18.)

This biblical verse is familiar to Israelis, first of all because they have to study it—perhaps to memorize it—in school. They are even more likely to know a version of it in the popular folk dance-and-song, *be'er ha-sadeh khafaruha ro'im* (in this case, it's a "well dug by shepherds"). The biblical poem about digging a well in the desert and the hopeful song from Israel's pioneer days are both heard in Amichai's line about the Suez Canal, the scene of deadly battles in the Yom Kippur War; they serve to intensify, by contrast, the poet's sorrow for the fallen soldier. Encountering a biblical allusion of this sort in Hebrew, one becomes an archaeologist, tunneling down and discovering older and older strata right beneath one's feet.

Much as I admire this line, I must admit it's the sort of thing that can drive a translator to distraction. Suppose I were to mimic the archaism, echoing the language of the King James Version, and say Mr. Beringer's son "fell at the Canal that strangers *digged*": what exactly would I achieve? No readers would understand why I availed myself of the King's English unless they already knew the Hebrew verse. They certainly wouldn't have the exquisite literary pleasure of hearing three different texts resound together, as they do in Amichai's poem. All they would gain is a threepenny archaism to prove that the translator had done her homework. If they were attentive readers, they would probably be puzzled; perhaps they would even wonder if the translator had made some mistake. In a case like this, to paraphrase Bottom's friend, I believe we must leave the allusion out, when all is done.

On the other hand, there are times when the translator needs to elaborate, to "write a prologue" of sorts, in order to bring the allusion home to the reader. One of Dahlia Ravikovitch's recent poems is about an unknown man who was shot in the Hebron marketplace and left to die because no one knew his identity; the Jews assumed he was an Arab, the Arabs a Jew. The last stanza reads:

Ki yimatse khalal ba-sadeh,
ki yimatse khalal ba-adama,
ve-yat'su zekenekha ve-shakhatu egla
ve-et efra ba-nakhal yefazru.

If a dead body is found lying in the field,
if a body is found in the open,
let your elders go out and slaughter a heifer
and scatter its ashes in the river.

These lines are based on Deuteronomy 21:1–9; without reference to the Bible, their point would probably be lost on many readers. Exactly how much help does the reader need in confronting a biblical allusion? A footnote didn't seem quite enough in this instance. Crucial to the meaning of the poem, though not explicitly mentioned, are some lines at the end of the biblical passage:

And all the elders ... shall wash their hands over the heifer.... And they shall ... say, Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it.... And the blood shall be forgiven them.

(Deuteronomy 21:6–9.)

When Ariel Bloch and I translated this poem, we decided not only to name the passage in question but also to quote from it at some length. Then we moved the quotation from the notes at the end of the book and set it as an epigraph to the poem. Finally, we talked about changing the poem's title. The educated reader of Hebrew would recognize the title, "Egla Arufa," as biblical and would know that Ravikovitch is writing about the community's response to the loss of a human life, about guilt and collective responsibility and ritual absolution. A literal translation into English, "Beheaded Heifer," has no such implications. Casting about for a title that would have something like the same resonance, we considered taking a phrase from the biblical verse I've just quoted: "Our Hands Have Not Shed This Blood." This phrase points up—perhaps too insistently?—the question of our communal unwillingness to come to terms with our responsibility. We also thought of "Scattering Ashes," from the last line of the poem, which suggests a familiar ritual for laying the dead to rest. We finally settled on "Blood Heifer" because it summons up the archaic ritual of the Hebrew title, and thus underscores, by contrast, our community's painful confusion.

I have been talking about what it means to uproot a poem from its homeland and send it into exile. "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" Not every poem is able to make a new life for itself under such conditions.

Let me offer an example from Yiddish. A few years ago I was asked to translate some poems by Abraham Sutzkever for *The Penguin Book of Modern Yiddish Verse.* On the list of poems assigned to me was "Di Blayene Platn fun Roms Drukeray" ("The Lead Plates at the Rom Press"), which Sutzkever wrote in September 1943 in the Vilna Ghetto. The Rom Press was one of the great Jewish publishing houses of Eastern Europe, famous for its editions of the Talmud as well as of modern Yiddish and Hebrew literature. Sutzkever's poem is based on the Jewish underground's plans to melt down the lead printing plates of the Rom Press and turn them into ammunition. The first stanza sounds like this:

> Mir hobn vi finger geshtrekte durkh gratn
> zu fangn di likhtike luft fun der fray—
> durkh nakht zikh getsoygn, tzu nemen di platn,
> di blayene platn fun Roms Drukeray.
> Mir, troymer, badarfen itst vern soldatn
> un shmeltsen oyf koyln dem gayst funem blay.

The subject of the poem may be summarized in the last two lines of this stanza: "We dreamers must now become soldiers / and smelt into bullets the spirit of the lead."

I was reluctant to undertake this translation, not only because of the declamatory tone, which doesn't travel easily, but also because of the rhythm, which is very regular, very emphatic in Yiddish; the poem asks to be set to march music. Since Sutzkever is a master of prosody who delights in subtle effects, we can assume he has deliberately chosen this drumbeat regularity. The great temptation for a translator is to make the rhythm more subtle, that is, more palatable to the reader of English. But if you use slant rhyme and tone down the march rhythms, you misrepresent the original. On the other hand, if you faithfully reproduce the thumping rhythms, the reader will more than likely assume you've done a poor job of translation. You can hardly add a footnote saying, "Dear Reader, the rhythm is like that in Yiddish, too. Sutzkever did it on purpose. I did it on purpose." This is a no-win situation for a translator. There's no way to be true to the original and, at the same time, to make a poem that doesn't sound clumsy in English.

I had an exchange of letters about this poem with Ruth Wisse, one of the editors of the volume, along with Irving Howe and Khone Shmeruk. Ruth's argument almost convinced me:

> Sutzkever became a folk hero in the ghetto for reasons that had nothing to do with subtleties, though the poem is actually far subtler than it appears, despite the rhythm and militant rhyme. [So he ought to be] represented by at least one poem of a hortatory public nature. On the one hand, we want the volume to contain the best poems. On the other, if as finicky a poet as Sutzkever modified his idea of poetry to this degree for these reasons, can we falsify the record with only nature, Israeli landscape, ruminations, exotica, aesthetic credo?

As an editor, of course, Ruth Wisse was perfectly right in wanting to include the poem. But as a translator, I didn't feel equal to the task. I wrote back to say, "Please find someone else." But not without a twinge of guilt. I asked myself: Does my responsibility to the vanished culture require that I make the attempt? Do I have the luxury of aesthetic choice?

* * *

Recently I found myself on the other side of the fence—or, to be more exact, on both sides of it. Ariel Bloch and I just translated and edited a collection of Dahlia Ravikovitch's *The Window: New and Selected Poems,* drawing upon five volumes of poems published between 1959 and 1986. In the 1986 volume, *Real Love,* there's a section of overtly political poems, under the heading "Sugyot be-Yahadut bat Zmanenu" ("Issues in Contemporary Judaism"). At first we omitted all but one of these poems—on aesthetic grounds, we told ourselves: they seemed to us declamatory and shrill (as is often the case with political poetry), far less complex and subtle than most of Ravikovitch's work. This view was supported by Ravikovitch herself, who said in a phone conversation that many of these poems were "newspaper verse." "They were good when they were written, at the time of the war in Lebanon," she told us. "But now, six years later, some of them seem outdated, too sharp; they don't all hold up as poems." She left the editorial decision to us, with the understanding that we would make the decision on aesthetic grounds.

We had decided to include only a token sample of these political poems when our good friend and colleague Chana Kronfeld made us rethink the whole question. To omit these poems, Chana suggested, would be tantamount to censorship. As it happened, I'd had an experience of censorship in Israel, where I lived between 1964 and 1967. I'd written a journalistic account for *Midstream* about my experiences as an American in Jerusalem in the period just before the 1967 War, and I was told I had to have it cleared by the censor. This gentleman, wearing his army khakis, sat behind a little gooseneck lamp and read through my piece as I stood waiting for his stamp of approval. He paused for a

while over some sentences in which I had written that people were crowding into the supermarket to stock up on imperishables—sugar, flour, macaroni, matza, cooking oil. "Now, how will that look in *khutz l'aretz* [abroad]?" he said, half to himself and half to me. "Won't it create the wrong impression?" I was caught between conflicting emotions. As a witness, I was committed to telling the truth, the *whole* truth; to omit what's disagreeable is a form of lying. At the same time, I understood his anxiety that the whole truth might in some way be problematic. That memory came back to me when I heard the word "censorship."

At the kitchen table, Ariel and I wrestled with the issues. *The Window,* we told ourselves, is a collection of *New and Selected Poems,* its purpose is to give the reader a notion of Ravikovitch's best work. Many readers will be drawn to the political poems because they are so shocking, perhaps to the neglect of the other poems. We imagined the reviewer who would fasten on a line like *Tinok lo horgim pa'amayim,* "You can't kill a baby twice," as an occasion to talk politics, instead of attending to a body of work written over a period of thirty years.

On the other hand, these poems represent a real turning in Ravikovitch's career as a poet. Much of her earlier work is about her personal suffering and has been faulted for solipsism; in these more recent poems, she brings her sensibility and power of expression to new subjects: the sufferings of women, the anguish caused by war, the resemblances between the plight of the Palestinians and that of the Jews, the moral dilemma of the Israelis. Such a dramatic turn in her work cannot be glossed over without seriously distorting the picture. Precisely because we were putting together a representative collection, we had an obligation, a responsibility, to include the political poems.

Even the aesthetic argument against these poems wasn't entirely convincing to us. Granted, we included what we consider to be Ravikovitch's best work, but clearly some poems in the manuscript are better than others. Besides, we wondered, aren't the political poems somewhat more effective than we at first admitted? They certainly make us feel uncomfortable; isn't that a sign of their power? And finally, is our standard of judgment really just "aesthetic"? Isn't it colored by some underlying anxiety?

There's the rub. These poems were written in Hebrew for an Israeli audience that has the competence—the knowledge of the language, as well as of the literary and political context—to make sense of them. To translate them into English is to thrust them into a different milieu, where they may very well be misunderstood, perhaps even misused.

Consider the following lines from Ravikovitch's "New Zealand":

> Kvar en od ta'am lehastir:
> anakhnu nisayon she-lo ala yafeh,
> tokhnit she-nishtabsha,
> krukha be-ratzkhanut rabba midai.
>
> No point in hiding it any longer:
> we're an experiment that didn't turn out well,
> a plan that went wrong,
> tied up with too much murderousness.

Given the "sanctity" of the Zionist dream, "an experiment that didn't turn out well" is almost a blasphemy. Here Ravikovitch gives voice to her anger and frustration in Hebrew, in the closed circle of the family, where all angers start. I first heard words like these over Friday night chicken in Jerusalem, where I lived with my family between 1984 and 1986. What does it mean to send such words out into the world?

There is no doubt that they may be misunderstood. When I quoted this stanza to an American who is a devoted Zionist, he became incensed: "How could Dahlia say the experiment has failed? Why, of all the states established since World War II, Israel is clearly the most successful! And what's this stuff about going off to New Zealand [the ostensible subject of the poem]? Doesn't she know there are race wars in New Zealand?"

We were more troubled, of course, by the anticipated response of readers who are by no means sympathetic to Israel. "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph" (II Samuel 1:20): If we "publish" these poems in the streets of Berkeley and New York, won't some people rejoice, perhaps even triumph? Is that what we want? Is that what Dahlia wanted?

There are some further difficulties in the stanza I have just quoted. The last line here reads *krukha be-ratzkhanut rabba midai.* In our literal version of the poems we had first translated the Hebrew noun *ratzkhanut* as murderousness. But the syllable-counter inside me, the little metrical abacus, got all rattled: "You can't say 'murderousness,' Chana. Too many syllables, too many s's. Try 'savagery.'" Who was the tempter who whispered that? Wasn't I secretly glad there were too many syllables, too many s's, so we'd have to go looking for another word, one we could live with more easily? But then is "savagery" really more bearable? And by how much?

Other possibilities we considered were "too much murder in the air" and "too much murder on everyone's mind." Both are strong, though not strong enough. *Ratzkhanut* is not just something in the air, like pollen: the Hebrew word refers to both the mentality and the action. "Murderousness" sounded odd to me; though I found it in *Webster's* and the *OED,* I wasn't sure I'd ever heard it spoken or seen it in print. Finally, it was the very

clumsiness of the word that appealed to me. Glibness, ease—perhaps those are the real dangers when we are talking about painful realities. "Murderousness" carries a certain measure of conviction in its very awkwardness.

There's one final difficulty in this line. What does Ravikovitch mean by *ratzkhanut rabba midai,* "too much murderousness"? Is "too much" simply a loose way of saying "a lot of"? In that case, should we smooth out the logic in English, in order to prevent further misunderstanding? Or is she saying, rather, that the very existence of nation-states inherently involves a certain level of murderousness; that a low level, while not desirable, may be tolerable, like a low rate of tar and nicotine? We followed the Hebrew phrasing exactly, hoping that our readers would come up against that question on their own.

* * *

In one of her recent poems, "Jewish Portrait," Ravikovitch writes about the Diaspora Jew who "looks around in fear." Was that, we wondered, our initial response in confronting these political poems? "How will it look to the *goyim*?" was one of the theme songs of my childhood, as the daughter of Russian Jews in the Bronx, and of Ariel's, as the son of German Jews in Nahariya.

Our final decision about what to include was in some way influenced by the poems themselves. In the most haunting of Ravikovitch's new poems, "Hovering at a Low Altitude," the speaker presents herself as a witness to the rape of a young Arab girl, and describes herself satirically as watching from a distance and doing nothing:

> Makhshevotai ripduni bi-rfida shel mokh.
> Matsati li shita pshuta me'od,
> lo midrakh regel ve-lo ma'of—
> rekhifa be-gova namukh.
>
> My thoughts cushion me gently, comfortably.
> I've found a very simple method,
> not with my feet on the ground, and not flying—
> hovering
> at a low altitude.

"My thoughts cushion me gently, comfortably"—the irony of these lines was painful to us. In deciding about which poems to include, we didn't want to "hover at a low altitude"; we didn't want to make a "comfortable" choice. The decision not to be political would have been, after all, a political decision. □

Four Poems by Dahlia Ravikovitch

Translated and edited by Chana Bloch and Ariel Bloch.
Excerpted from The Window *(The Sheep Meadow Press, 1989).*

New Zealand

No point in going to Africa now.
Plagues, famine, the human body can't take it.
Brutality. They flog people with bullwhips.
Asia—it would make your hair stand on end.
Trapped in the mountains, trapped in the swamps.
The human body can't take it,
who's got the strength?

As for me,
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures
in New Zealand.

Sheep with soft wool, softer
than any wool,
graze there in the meadow.

Truehearted people herd sheep there,
on Sundays they go to church
in their quiet clothes.

No point in hiding it any longer:
we're an experiment that didn't turn out well,
a plan that went wrong,
tied up with too much murderousness.
What do I care about these people,
or those—
screaming till their throats are hoarse,
splitting fine hairs.
Anyway, too much murderousness.

I'm not going to Africa
and not to Asia, either.
I'm not going anywhere.

In New Zealand,
in green pastures, beside the still waters,
generous people
will share their bread with me.

Blood Heifer

If one be found slain, lying in the field, and it be not known who hath slain him, the elders of the nearest city shall take an heifer, and shall strike off the heifer's neck. And all the elders shall wash their hands over the heifer and say, Our hands have not shed this blood. And the blood shall be forgiven them.

He took one step,
then a few steps more.
His glasses fell to the ground,
his skullcap.
Managed another step,
bloody, dragging his feet.
Ten steps
and he's not a Jew anymore,
not an Arab—
in limbo.

Havoc in the marketplace; people shouting, Why are you murdering us?

Others rushing
to take revenge.

And he lies on the ground: a death rattle,
a body torn open,
blood streaming out of the flesh,
streaming
out of the flesh.

He died here, or there—
no one knows for sure.
What do we know?
A dead body lying in the field.

Suffering cleanseth from sin, it is said,
man is like dust in the wind,
but who was that man
lying there lonely in his blood?
What did he see,
what did he hear
with all that commotion around him?
If thou seest even thine enemy's ass
lying under its burden,
it is said, thou shalt surely help.

If a dead body is found lying in the field,
if a body is found in the open,
let your elders go out and slaughter a heifer
and scatter its ashes in the river.

You Can't Kill a Baby Twice

By the sewage puddles of Sabra and Shatila,
there you transported human beings
in impressive quantities
from the world of the living to the world
of eternal light.

Night after night.
First they shot,
they hanged,
then they slaughtered with their knives.
Terrified women climbed up
on a ramp of earth, frantic:
"They're slaughtering us there,
in Shatila."

A thin crust of moon
over the camps.
Our soldiers lit up the place with searchlights
till it was bright as day.
"Back to the camp,
beat it!" a soldier yelled at
the screaming women from Sabra and Shatila.
He was following orders.
And the children already lying in puddles of filth,
their mouths gaping,
at peace.
No one will harm them.
You can't kill a baby twice.

And the moon grew fuller and fuller
till it became a round loaf of gold.

Our sweet soldiers
wanted nothing for themselves.
All they ever asked
was to come home
safe.

Hovering at a Low Altitude



I am not here.
I am on those craggy eastern hills
streaked with ice,
where grass doesn't grow
and a wide shadow lies over the slope.
A shepherd girl appears
from an invisible tent,
leading a herd of black goats to pasture.
She won't live out the day,
that girl.

I am not here.
From the deep mountain gorge
a red globe floats up,
not yet a sun.
A patch of frost, reddish, inflamed,
flickers inside the gorge.

The girl gets up early to go to the pasture.
She doesn't walk with neck outstretched
and wanton glances.
She doesn't ask, Whence cometh my help.

I am not here.
I've been in the mountains many days now.
The light will not burn me, the frost
won't touch me.
Why be astonished now?
I've seen worse things in my life.

I gather my skirt and hover
very close to the ground.
What is she thinking, that girl?
Wild to look at, unwashed.
For a moment she crouches down,
her cheeks flushed,
frostbite on the back of her hands.
She seems distracted, but no,
she's alert.

She still has a few hours left.
But that's not what I'm thinking about.
My thoughts cushion me gently, comfortably.
I've found a very simple method,
not with my feet on the ground, and not flying—
hovering
at a low altitude.

Then at noon,
many hours after sunrise,
that man goes up the mountain.
He looks innocent enough.

The girl is right there,
no one else around.
And if she runs for cover, or cries out—
there's no place to hide in the mountains.

I am not here.
I'm above those jagged mountain ranges
in the farthest reaches of the east.
No need to elaborate.
With one strong push I can hover and whirl around
with the speed of the wind.
I can get away and say to myself:
I haven't seen a thing.
And the girl, her palate is dry as a potsherd,
her eyes bulge,
when that hand closes over her hair, grasping it
without a shred of pity.

PAPERS FROM THE TIKKUN CONFERENCE (III)

In the last two issues we have printed several papers and addresses from the Tikkun *Conference, which was held in December 1988. Our presentation of conference material is concluded with this special section. We regret that we do not have the space in the future to print more of the many interesting and important ideas that were presented at the conference.*

PAPER: LIBERALISM AND ITS CRITICS

Tikkun and Progressive Liberalism

Gary Peller

One of *Tikkun*'s real strengths as a magazine, and as a center for progressive Jewish thought, is its openness to a wide range of political views and sensibilities. Civil libertarians, feminists, socialists, Marxists, social democrats, and Democratic party liberals are all heard in *Tikkun*. There is no "official" *Tikkun* dogma of the correct way to look at the world.

At the same time, amidst the diversity of views, *Tikkun* has introduced and encouraged a very particular kind of progressive politics, an approach reflected most strongly in its editorial pages, but also seen in many outside contributions. This new political thinking is characterized by attention paid to people's emotional needs, to family relations, to the relevance of religious belief and spiritual insight for political life, to the psychodynamics of power underlying social alienation and passivity, to the loss of confirmation and meaning people feel in their everyday lives, and to the need for progressives to respond to authentic aspirations people have for a moral vision in which they can feel part of a community collectively re-creating social life. The position has been called "neocompassionism" or the "politics of transcendence." For simplicity's sake, I will just refer to it as "*Tikkun* politics."

Now this new approach has caused uneasiness among some, and fellow progressives and liberals rather than right-wingers have often been the ones who have reacted most sharply. For example, when Betty Mensch and Alan Freeman wrote about the limiting effects of the public/private dichotomy in liberal ideology, Paul Starr saw "an image of collective tyranny rarely seen this side of Jonestown" (*Tikkun,* March/April 1988). When Peter Gabel, Mensch and Freeman, and I criticized what we saw as the colonizing power that scientific discourse exercises in the debate between creationism and evolution (*Tikkun,* Nov./Dec. 1987), letters to the editor accused us of engaging in the same kind of irrationality that characterized fascism, the KKK, nazism, and other reactionary movements (*Tikkun,* May/June 1988). And when Edward Rothstein wrote about the New York *Tikkun* conference in the *New Republic,* it was Michael Lerner's intermingling of Judaism and politics that he found most troubling: "[T]he claim of any intrinsic connection between politics and religion can only lead to a distortion of both" (*New Republic,* March 6, 1989).

These reactions, though sometimes extreme, should not be surprising. Critics are correct when they sense that this new discourse is fundamentally different from the ways that liberals and progressives have usually understood politics. *Tikkun* politics is not traditional progressive liberalism with new topics, such as the family and spirituality, sprinkled in to keep up with the times. While we support the progressive agenda for welfare, better housing, child care, antidiscrimination efforts, and strong protection of human rights, we are simultaneously engaged in an effort to get liberals and progressives to rethink their most vital assumptions about politics, power, and the meaning of social reform.

We believe that the traditional progressive politics has failed to comprehend the central importance of people's widespread feelings of powerlessness and alienation as an obstacle to the possibilities for meaningful social change. The progressive liberal agenda has not inspired popular passion because it conceives of politics in too narrow a way, as concerned solely with the distribution of government benefits and the protection of individual rights, and thus it fails to present a vision that enlivens progressive proposals with a sense of shared purpose and community by connecting them to people's everyday

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lives and experiences.

The overarching liberal vision is that progress means enforcing various borders—borders between reason and passion, objective scientific knowledge and subjective personal intuition, public politics and private religion, the liberty of the individual and the coercive power of the community. Within this tradition, justice consists of people's being treated neutrally in public affairs, as citizens, while being free to be particular and subjective in private life, as individuals. Religion is banished from the public realm because its knowledge is subjective and particular, and therefore its presence in the public realm would constitute a tyranny of a part over the whole; science is elevated in the public world because its knowledge is objective and universal. Racial and sexual discrimination are fought against because they represent irrational prejudice; neutral procedures of selection are elevated because they are supposed to treat individuals on their own merits. And thus, when writers in *Tikkun* argue for the relevance of religious intuition and spiritual insight to public life, or assert that science has itself become an ideology of hierarchy and power, or contend that the emotional breakdown of family life and friendships has a social, political dimension, liberals see a violation of deeply assumed borders between politics on the one hand and objective truth and private liberty on the other.

This sense of patrolling borders is also evident on the philosophical level, in the shared dualities that mark each liberal category of knowledge. I am going to be ridiculously simplistic here, but I want to draw attention simply to the basic outlines. First of all, this worldview is characterized by a particular ontology which conceives of individual subjects existing in meaningful form prior to social groups. Similar to this ontological separation of the individual from the group is the epistemological separation of objectivity and subjectivity: true knowledge is not the particular intuition of people, but the universalizable proof of reason. Associated with this ontology and epistemology is a liberal genre of social theory that explains how groups come into being and relate to one another. The shared assumption here is that groups are secondary to individuals, so that various social groups (ranging from the state to marriage) are formed on the basis of the consent of formerly separate individuals who express their desire to join with others. And, finally, the liberal tradition has an associated political theory of freedom, focused on the preservation of individual liberty from the demands of the collectivity and holding that the best way to accomplish this goal is to prevent the state from imposing contingent values, such as religious beliefs, on individuals.

Those of us seeking to transcend the limits of the liberal worldview start with a perception that the problems of our current social reality are more profound than simply the lack of appropriate government programs or the insufficient protection of particular individual rights. Rather, we take as a primary task the need to respond to the alienation, disengagement, and powerlessness of people's day-to-day experience of social life; to the way that we experience our jobs, our friendships, our families, and ourselves; to the loss of the sense that liberalism initially promised that the world is not fixed and necessary but contingent and open to change—that we can make and remake the world by working together.

In our contemporary society, the typical experience of work, say, is not one of engagement and choice, where we feel a part in the creation of our structures of social relations, but rather one of playing out some role that has been written for us by someone else, we know not whom, to which we adapt ourselves to fit the external demands of whatever our job description is. And the formal democracy of unionism has not, in most places, changed this basic lack of meaning in our work lives. In the same way, the common experience of politics is not an engaged sense that we are part of the day-to-day collective construction of the terms of social life. Rather it is the episodic, alienating isolation of standing in solitary voting booths in order to guarantee the privatization of the political moment, standing outside any actual participation like voyeurs in a closet, punching holes in pieces of paper for candidates we don't really like—as far as we can tell, since they are presented to us through the mediation of professional image production. The problems of our polity are poverty, homelessness, and the continued domination of racism and sexism, but what seems to hinder attempts to transform our world is a deeper sense that things can't change because we aren't even connected to them, that our ways of relating to each other are external to us, that there is a core necessity to our basic terms of social life—otherwise our rights will be threatened or the trash won't get picked up. This is the general sense of disengagement and resignation that needs to be transcended if our social life is to be meaningfully transformed.

Liberalism, at its birth, represented many of the same truths that we hold most central. As a rhetoric of critique against status-based feudal life, liberal ideology was a revolutionary and powerful assertion of the contingency of social life—of the idea that the forms of human association can be radically different and, conversely, that human relations are not objective and fixed, with an immanent order flowing from nature, but instead are rooted in social choice and thus can be remade by human will. As a political theory and an intellectual tradition, liberalism was first and foremost a critique

of existing social power, a historic assertion that power has no Divine authority but must answer at the citadel of reason. And in more contemporary contexts, this tradition has had heroic moments when people stood up during the McCarthy period for freedom of speech and thought, and during the civil rights struggles of the fifties and sixties when liberals powerfully articulated the injustice of racism and the virtues of equality.

The problem is that, today, this tradition no longer inspires or demands reform and resistance. The flaw of the liberal agenda is not only that it ignores a particularly important dimension of our social lives by failing to address the powerlessness and alienation that has come to characterize our public roles. The difficulty is deeper than that. Today liberalism has become part of an American cultural ideology that legitimates as neutral the basic terms of our social relations and therefore contributes to a sense of necessity about existing ways of being together, even as it suggests reforms for exceptional deviations reflected in "discrimination" against particular groups. The feudal invocation of Divine authority has been replaced by the enlightened authority of Reason and Science, but they play the same roles—to justify as necessary and impartial what is really social and contingent.

Tikkun politics is threatening to people who are used to thinking of social justice according to the traditional categories because our approach denies the virtues of maintaining the borders of liberal ideology. First of all, we are critical of the universalizing notion that it is possible to have a public life that would be simply neutral to particular groups or interests. The constant tendency is to treat as objective and uncontroversial, as free from the marks of power and will, aspects of our public lives that we think are inevitably political and socially constructed—like the idea that, but for race or gender discrimination, people are treated "on their own merits" in work life; or that, once religious explanations for genesis are excluded, the remaining evolutionary account is neutral or objective; or that, so long as the government has been kept out, our social relations are the result of our private choice. In each of its central oppositions, the liberal ideology is oriented toward a place that would be universal, free from the particularity of politics and history, rational as opposed to intuitive, neutral instead of biased, objective instead of partial, scientific and secular rather than intuitive and religious. But this point of view beyond point of view, this universe of reason beyond the particularities of time and place, simply does not exist.

This is not merely an academic issue about the intellectual possibility of an Archimedean vantage point. The epistemology of liberalism takes on a lived form in particular institutions, as the discourse of rational impersonality becomes the actual voices of those in authority: the voice of the "expert" educational administrators in school board meetings, of the "neutral" judge in court, of professional doctors relating to lay patients and corporate executives to workers, and, finally, of a widespread cultural neutrality ultimately symbolized by the accentless and disembodied network news anchor speaking with the authority of impersonality. But every time such a point is presented, the claimed universality and objectivity are really the creation of particular people with particular interests and histories and ideologies.

The progressive liberal agenda has not inspired popular passion because it conceives of politics as concerned solely with the distribution of government benefits and the protection of individual rights, and fails to connect to people's everyday lives and experiences.

By orienting itself toward this vantage point of neutrality, the liberal worldview obscures the ways that our social lives are inevitably political and contestable, precisely because they are created by us and therefore can be created differently. For example, the idea that combating racial domination consists simply of removing irrational discrimination against people of color misunderstands what is at stake. It is not simply unequal treatment that constitutes the ideology of white supremacy, but, on a deeper level, the arrogance that once such invidious discrimination has been removed the remaining distribution of jobs or other benefits would truly reflect some objective, acultural, neutral standard of "merit." To the extent that the traditional liberal approaches understand injustice as consisting only in treating clearly identified groups with bias, they uncritically legitimate the more general ways that American institutional life is unfairly structured in hierarchies that elevate some people and marginalize others under the guise of a neutral rationality that is presented as beyond politics and free from the marks of social power. To recover the possibility of mass engagement and interest, we must begin to recognize that social relations are contingent across the board—not simply in the possibility of subjective discrimination, but more profoundly in the way that "objective" criteria of merit and reward are constructed.

The distortions of the liberal ideology go beyond this tendency to legitimate particular social relations as

neutral and objective. The liberal outlook also misses the everyday politics of our social lives by filtering understanding through a sharp dichotomy between a private, individual realm where we are supposed to be free from power and a public, social realm where we are subject to necessary social force. Within the terms of liberal political ideology, the alienation people feel is systematically misperceived as either a "private" matter or a "neutral" public necessity, and thus the politics of everyday life is made invisible, and the politics of public life is put out of reach.

Liberalism's border between the individual and the group forms the ideological infrastructure within everyday consciousness for the experience of alienation I described earlier. In its most important dimension liberalism is neither an ontology nor a political or philosophical theory; rather, it is a lived ideology about how to be in the world, about how to understand the self in relation to others. In this everyday dimension, liberalism exists as the set of categories we use for experiencing and making sense of the world.

The central notion is that, as individuals, we are separate from the groups in which we find ourselves, and that our public lives are sharply distinguished from our private lives. Group life, viewed through this filter, is at first alien to us, threatening to rob us of our identities, of our freedom to make what we want of ourselves. So we come into group life distrusting others and seeking protection through "rights" that mark the boundaries between self and other. In making this qualitative distinction between public and private, the individual and the group, the subject and the object, we take the public, social roles we play as normally objective, external to us, part of the demand of the other, precisely because we know we did not choose them. We already knew what the role "manager" or "worker" meant before we began playing it. Conversely, we think of our private time as subjective, as free from social power. The trade-off for playing out our public roles without any sense of real meaning or engagement is that when we go home, into our private realm, we are supposed to be free to be ourselves, to act on our individual desires in the realms of sexuality, family life, religious experience, friendship, and play.

One consequence of shaping our understanding of social life in this way is a constrained view of the borders of politics, of the regions of social life appropriate for social struggle. By translating our "private" lives as based on individual choice and autonomy, the liberal ideology tells us that these issues are not political at all because they should have nothing to do with the exercise of social power. To make private choices the subject of public politics is to engage in moralism, and that's what conservatives do.

But this translation of our experience is false. Just as our public relations can never be neutral and objective, so too are our so-called private lives inevitably constituted by social power. This is true in one sense because our public roles directly influence our private lives. To the extent that we experience public life as the need to shape ourselves to be acceptable to demands rooted outside, in the objective, out-there forces of the market or some bureaucracy, we begin to form ourselves with an eye to how others will see us and we lose touch with our authentic feelings separate from this process. Part of our difficulty in forming friendships and long-term intimate relationships in our "private" lives is rooted in the effect of our public roles on our core identities.

The influence of the social in our "private" world goes deeper than this spillover from the public world. Social power, reflected in the very terms we inevitably use for understanding ourselves and each other, is constitutive to our private roles themselves. We approach each other, even in the private realm, according to a public language for perceiving each other—as friend, lover, neighbor, parent, child, stranger, and so on. Our freedom simply to be ourselves is constrained by how others see us and by our need for their acceptance and confirmation. And each of these private roles carries with it a social meaning about the appropriate boundaries, bearing the terms upon which acceptance has been institutionalized.

This is not to say that there is nothing to the individual that ever distinguishes her from the group—only that there is no way to mark off this distinction either in theory or in day-to-day experience. The attempt to separate it out—the animating concern of liberal political thought—inevitably misrepresents what is socially constructed and political as individual and private. Notwithstanding the role liberal ideology played in building resistance to the oppression of feudal life, in today's world the category of "private liberty" can just as easily mean the misrepresentation of social power as mere individual choice and the tendency to blame ourselves for unhappiness that is in fact rooted in social structures.

Of course, *progressive* liberalism now recognizes as public and political certain economic relations that nineteenth-century liberals saw as private. According to the classical liberal ideology, if a worker and an employer "chose" a particular wage and working conditions, the state had no business interfering with their "rights" because the wage was too low, the working conditions too unsafe or oppressive, or the resulting distribution of wealth too lopsided. The New Deal reflected the widespread rejection of this apologetic ideology. It marked the recognition that economic life is not privately chosen but publicly constituted by the distribution of property and entitlements flowing from

the state itself, and that one's economic status is the result not of a natural market meritocracy, but of politics. Today's liberals are progressive in their view of the state as an active participant in the achievement of social welfare. Thus progressives attempt to get the government to make economic life more egalitarian even while they maintain traditional liberal vigilance in keeping the state out of areas of individual liberty and private choice.

The problem is that, despite its progressive economic policy, contemporary liberalism retains the traditional idea that justice consists in the separation of the public and the private. Progressive reform has meant the transfer of economic issues to the political arena, but also the preservation of the underlying liberal metaphysic of individualism.

The contemporary feminist movement, where the slogan "the personal is political" originated, has powerfully revealed the social politics of "private" life. Here the attack on the ideology of the public/private metaphysic has been deeper and more subversive to the liberal worldview because the focus has been on the way the very paradigms of privacy—the family, home life, sexuality, and personal fantasy—are the products of the social power of patriarchal assumptions. We do not join in family life and sexual relations as autonomous, freely choosing monads acting on our individual, presocial desires. Our family roles and our sexuality, like it or not, are infused with social understandings of what it means to be a man or a woman, a parent or a child, gay or straight, a mother or a father, a "housewife" or a wage earner. Even what we find erotic is socially constructed by what the social world has told us about ourselves and our partners, about the normalcy of domination and hierarchy. Whatever one thinks of the particular reform proposals of the feminist antipornography movement, there is no denying that its proponents have powerfully articulated the constitutive nature of social power in what many of us take to be our very most private relations, and have demonstrated that the liberal vision of government neutrality, the attempt to keep the state out of our "private" realm of liberty, is therefore not really neutral but is instead a stance that simply pays deference to the status quo power structure of gender and sexuality.

The liberal ideology fails to recognize that politics is at stake not simply in who will be elected or how state power will be exercised, but more fundamentally in how our everyday social roles are constructed and reproduced. Both sides of the liberal dualisms—that everything can be understood fundamentally as public or private, subjective or objective, individual or social—exclude the possibility that social relations are never either "chosen" or neutral, but rather are socially constructed and thus bear the marks of a history of struggle and the contingencies of a future that could be different. Liberalism began as a critique of power, but in both its intellectual and everyday ideology its vision of where power is exercised has been limited to the formalized state. But power is at stake across existential space: in sexuality, in workplaces, in schools, in hallways and on street corners, and in the myriad social hierarchies within which we find ourselves. Instead of responding to the widespread and unfulfilled need people have to feel a part of their social lives, contemporary liberal discourse understands reform only in the sense of remedying the exceptional discrimination, and therefore it fails to connect the domination of the victims of "discrimination" to the widespread powerlessness people feel that their social lives are beyond their control or influence. A new, transformative politics must recognize this broader agenda and thereby connect the widely experienced pain and estrangement of masses of Americans to the particular struggles on behalf of the poor, minorities, and women.

To some, crossing the borders of liberal ideology means "collective tyranny," where the state will regulate every aspect of our private and public lives according to the whim of the majority. *Tikkun* politics thus seems to threaten whatever freedom our liberal culture has achieved. But we recognize that the liberal tradition has helped institutionalize important freedoms. We don't think that people should be thrown in jail for expressing their views or that kids in school should be forced to pray to others' deities. But we also don't think that it is desirable to render public schools, and the public world generally, antiseptic, impersonal, and alienating to who we are and where we come from. Each attempt to achieve a neutral public life has actually produced new castes separating the secular, the reasonable, the cosmopolitan, and the enlightened from the religious, the redneck, the uneducated, and the parochial.

In short, the fear of "collective tyranny" ignores the ways that our social relations are already collectivized according to the liberal discourse of power that poses as objectivity itself. Our freedom cannot depend on enforcing borders between the public and the private, because drawing the borders is itself a political decision to regulate with one form of social power rather than another. Protecting "private" economic rights in traditional liberalism meant exposing ordinary working people to the "collective tyranny" of the economically powerful; protecting the privacy of family relations means exposing women to the tyranny of patriarchal power. Moreover, seeing "collective tyranny" in attempts to uncover the suppressed politics of everyday life betrays a narrow attitude toward politics—a vision of politics in which the only means of exercising social choice is

by voting for one candidate or another. But politics could mean more than voters choosing a central government out there. It could mean being engaged, all of us, together, in the construction of our social roles as we live them day to day in the institutions in which we find ourselves.

We want to help articulate a politics that responds to the powerlessness that people feel in their everyday lives, that comprehends all the places where power is at stake, and that reinspires us to believe that we can remake the world. We want to resist the liberal border patrol that tells us that our subjective and particular values are inappropriate for public discourse and that our personal lives are simply the result of autonomous choice. Part of this project means articulating progressive legislative proposals and engaging in electoral campaigns. But such activities can also confirm the alienating sense people have of the world's being ruled by alien forces unless these activities are connected with a transformative vision of a shared social struggle to recover power and meaning in everyday life.

We want to overcome the sense that the public world of politics stands outside ourselves as some abstract and distant community. Thus we reject the artificial association of the spiritual and the moral with the private sphere. We want to spiritualize the political world and politicize the private one. It is time to recognize that the liberal borders themselves enforce a colonization of everyday life. □

An earlier version of this paper was given at the *Tikkun* conference.

PAPER: RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM

The Real Issue Behind Who-Is-a-Jew

David Biale

With the formation of a new national unity coalition between Likud and Labor, the Who-Is-a-Jew issue has once again been relegated to the political back burner, a development that American Jewish organizations will no doubt regard as a great victory. But this immediate achievement should not obscure the fact that more profound underlying issues remain unsolved and that what appears on the surface to be a victory may conceal cancerous self-delusion.

There was a striking irony in the rush of American Jewish leaders to criticize Israel publicly and even to mobilize non-Jewish members of Congress to pressure Israeli leaders over the issue of Who-Is-a-Jew. In many cases, the very same leaders who viciously condemned those who had raised questions about the occupation of the territories and the handling of the Palestinian uprising were among the most vocal about Who-Is-a-Jew. When a symbol of their ostensible self-interest was at stake, they had no compunction about "Israel-bashing" (to use their favorite pejorative), but when it is Palestinian children who are being beaten, beatings that can scarcely be called symbolic, their moral sensibility fails them. Who-Is-a-Jew was much more important to them than the real question: What is a Jewish state?

But moral issues aside, American Jewish leaders got it wrong, even from the point of view of pure self-interest. Judging from the concern that these leaders evince over Reform and Conservative conversions, one would think that tens of thousands of American Jews were immigrating to Israel every year. In truth, no more than a handful of converts would be affected by a change in the Law of Return. Of course, it could be argued that a change in the law might affect Diaspora Jews in the event that anti-Semitism were to create the need for a mass exodus to Israel. But such a claim is the last thing that American Jews wish to advance in public, nor is it, in any case, likely.

The intifada, on the other hand, has the potential to affect quite vitally the self-interest of American Jews. One might imagine a scenario in which Israel adopts more and more extreme policies to suppress the Palestinians, including mass expulsions. At the same time, the PLO continues to develop its political initiative, calling for a two-state solution. The United States, which has now finally begun contacts with the PLO, becomes thoroughly fed up with Israeli intransigence and begins to apply serious pressure. American Jews, in such an event, would find themselves politically isolated and

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threatened with the loss of the considerable power they have accrued over the past several decades.

Why, then, was the proposal to change the Law of Return the cause of a threatened break between Israel and the Diaspora? The decision to legislate an Orthodox definition of Who-Is-a-Jew would have no bearing on the vast majority of Diaspora Jews whose Jewish identities have never been accepted by the Orthodox. Indeed, the controversy was really over an essentially marginal and technical revision of an underlying reality: Israel *already* is a theocracy with respect to issues of personal status. A Reform or Conservative convert may be able to immigrate to Israel under present law, but he or she will not be able to marry there because marriage must be approved by an Orthodox rabbinic court. Why have the organs of American Jewry not protested more vigorously in the past over the hegemony of the Orthodox rabbinate in Israel? Why was the proposed change, modest as it was in relation to the existing power of the Orthodox, such a mortal threat?

Surely the answer is not merely that any change in the status quo threatens the power of Diaspora Jews in Israel's religious sphere: they never possessed such power in the first place. Nor is it the fear that Israel's gates may be closed to potential immigrants, because there are so few immigrants anyway. It seems to me that there are in fact several reasons for this sudden discovery by American Jews of their own political voice. In the last few years a series of events has successively shaken uncritical Diaspora Jewish support for Israeli government policy. The Lebanon War, the Pollard affair, and the intifada itself raised serious questions in the minds of many American Jews about whether support for Israel and support for its government must be the same thing. To be sure, few of these Jews were willing to voice such doubts publicly, and those who did were frequently subjected to the contemporary equivalent of the medieval *herem* (ostracism). But the ascendancy of the Orthodox provided at last a legitimate avenue for the coalescence of all the vague and even unconscious feelings of American Jewish alienation from contemporary Israel. A sideshow from the thornier issues confronting Israel, the threatened amendment of the Law of Return served as a displacement of all the unarticulated anger and doubt that have been accumulating since Menachem Begin came to power in 1977. Here, at last, was a way to express all these feelings while remaining at the same time safely within the American Jewish consensus.

An additional, more problematic reason for the uproar lies in the fact that Israel has become the cornerstone of American Jewish identity. American Jews require Israel, for, without the identity provided by the Jewish state, these Jews would be forced to find a new way to define themselves. Here lies a host of illusions that American Jews must overcome if they are ever to constitute a fully autonomous Jewish community. Let me explain what I have in mind by analyzing the statement signed by virtually every non-Orthodox Jewish organization at the height of the Who-Is-a-Jew controversy. The signers start with a ritual affirmation of their "devotion to the State and the people of Israel." They continue:

> We are one people, with a single destiny. We reject any effort to divide our people by legislative action of the Knesset. All Jews, including those of us who are not citizens of Israel, are affected by the possibility of a change in the definition of who is a Jew under Israeli law.... [Any change in the Law of Return] would inflict enormous damage, real and symbolic, on the Jews of the Diaspora.

The very notion that a change in the Law of Return would "inflict enormous damage ... on the Jews of the Diaspora" reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of the meaning of Israeli sovereignty for the worldwide Jewish community. It presumes the Orthodox view of a halakhic state, as if a state proclamation could define the identity of a Jew either inside or outside Israel any more than it could compel that Jew to believe in God. The Knesset is not a Sanhedrin; it is a secular parliament with no more authority over the Jewish people *as a whole* than the British Parliament. Those Diaspora Jews who believe that their Jewish identity is threatened by an act of the Knesset impute too much power to a secular government, and in the process reveal how shaky their own Jewish identities are.

In the American Diaspora the potential exists for a dynamic Jewish life independent of Orthodoxy.

The contention that the Jewish people is "one" is equally fallacious. This brave declaration is perhaps the most beloved stock-in-trade of our communal propaganda. Indeed, it is also the argument of the Orthodox forces pushing for a revision of the Law of Return. In an advertisement in the *New York Times,* Orthodox organizations argued that Jewish unity can be achieved only by adhering to the one standard that "all" Jews accept: halakha. This argument, as ludicrous as it is, is no more ludicrous than the opposite contention that the question should be removed from the political arena, as if the Orthodox can be stuffed back into their yeshivot. In both cases, the presumption is that some magical formula can be found to guarantee the "unity of the Jewish people."

The truth of the matter is that the Jewish people is *not*

one people. With the breakdown of medieval rabbinic hegemony, the Jewish world has fragmented and returned, in a sense, to the pluralism that characterized it in the late Second Temple period, before the emergence of the rabbis as the sole Jewish authorities. Zionism has tried to overcome the fragmentation of modern Judaism by proposing a new form of national identity but, as the Who-Is-a-Jew issue demonstrates, this new identity is surrounded by confusion and illusion. Among a host of other divisions, Israel is wracked by divisions over religion and ethnic origin. And the failure of Zionism to "negate the exile" has left the Jewish world divided between Israel and the Diaspora. One may bemoan this lack of Jewish unity or celebrate it as healthy pluralism, but the beginning of wisdom lies in recognizing this modern reality.

The controversy over an Orthodox revision of the Law of Return conceals the real question—a question about the Law of Return itself, that is, about the very confusion inherent in a modern state's defining itself as Jewish. The Law of Return includes a clause that allows the State of Israel to exclude from automatic citizenship any Jew who is known to have acted against "the interests of the Jewish nation." But what are the "interests" of the Jewish nation? Are they equivalent to the interests of the State of Israel? Isn't it possible for the interests of the "Jewish nation" to conflict with the interests of the "Jewish state"? And who defines the interests of the Jewish nation in the first place? The Knesset? The rabbis?

All this confusion might be removed if Israel defined the issue not as Who-Is-a-Jew, but rather as Who-Is-an-Israeli—that is, as a legal question of citizenship rather than as a religious question of identity. But such a rephrasing of the question demands a new conception of the State of Israel. As the Palestinian Israeli writer Anton Shammas has correctly pointed out, the state that was established in 1948 was not the State of Israel (despite its name) but the state of the Jewish people. Had an Israeli identity been created with the state, all citizens would have "Israeli"—instead of "Jew" or "Arab"—stamped on their identity cards under the category of "nationality." Only such a redefinition of the state along pluralistic lines, constitutionally separating synagogue and state, might prevent the rabbis from using the state apparatus to define who is a Jew.

For those who fear that such an Israeli state would no longer satisfy the need either for a Jewish state or for a state whose majority culture is Jewish, I would suggest that, like any state, Israel would continue to set its immigration policies according to certain criteria. Jews would obviously be particularly welcome. The civic religion of the state would be informed by Jewish symbols, as it is today, and as America is informed by secularized Christian symbols. But the state would not be Jewish in the sense that Iran is Shi'ite Moslem. It would have to create a program of affirmative action to make its Arab citizens full citizens, much as the United States has begun, albeit with only partial success, to integrate its minorities. If American Jews were secure in their identity, they would not fear such a pluralistic redefinition of Israel.

The creation of a modern Jewish state need not require the abandonment of Jewish history in favor of non-Jewish models. The nineteenth-century Jewish Enlightenment (Haskala) developed ideas that can still serve as an inspiration for a democratic Jewish state. The Haskala may be defined as a movement of cultural assimilation or religious reform, but its cardinal characteristic was *political*: the *maskilim* (reformers) rebelled against the coercive power of the medieval Jewish community and sought to render the rabbis politically impotent. The Haskala's political theory, which advocated emancipation of the Jewish community, derived from this revolt against the hegemony of the rabbis. What the Haskala sought to create was a noncoercive Judaism. In Eastern Europe the Haskala developed a nationalist dimension and sought to create a public space for a nonrabbinic Jewish culture based on a revival of the Hebrew language. In this way, the Haskala laid the groundwork for the Zionist movement.

Zionism was a continuation of the Haskala's revolt against the rabbis. The secular Zionists saw the Jewish religion as a phenomenon of the exile, and as the main cause of Jewish passivity and quietism. Yet, in another sense, Zionism took an ambivalent position toward the Haskala. It regarded the movement of Jewish Enlightenment as a misguided attempt to integrate into European society at a time when anti-Semitism was on the rise. In the Zionist view of modern Jewish history, Jewish nationalism was a product of the *failure* of the Haskala's program of emancipation: with emancipation by the European state blocked, autoemancipation remained the only viable option for the Jewish people.

In a still deeper sense, Zionism broke with the Haskala over the question of Jewish political power. While the Haskala rejected the very idea of Jews' wielding political authority over other Jews, Zionism resurrected the medieval *kehilla* (community) on a new basis. To be sure, there is a world of difference between the medieval Jewish community and a sovereign state, but in one respect they are identical: power resides in the hands of *Jewish* leaders. In the Middle Ages the rabbis and other Jewish leaders might coerce their subjects by means of the *herem,* while the modern state uses fines and imprisonment; but the two communities share the power to coerce.

The consequence of the Jews' return to political

sovereignty is that Jewish identity is now, once again, subject to governmental dictate as it was in the Middle Ages. Even if the founders of Zionism had no intention of recreating the *kehilla,* they unwittingly opened the door for the rabbis to return to political power: once Israel defined itself as a *Jewish* state, it created the possibility that a Jew might be defined according to halakha. By failing to adopt the Haskala's principle of the separation of religion and state, Zionism undermined its own secular imperative. In the end, what we are witnessing now is the latest battle in the old Kulturkampf between Orthodoxy and the Haskala.

From the point of view of the Orthodox, the State of Israel offers a golden opportunity to recapture the power they lost at the end of the Middle Ages. It is often argued that the ultra-Orthodox reject the State of Israel. It is certainly true that they do not accept secular Zionism, but, with the exception of the extremists in Neturei Karta, the ultra-Orthodox very much *do* accept the state now that it exists; but they see it as a very large and powerful version of the medieval Jewish community. From a halakhic point of view, it is incumbent on the rabbis to seize control of any Jewish community in which there is the power to enforce halakha. Thus, the ultra-Orthodox are anything but uninterested in politics and in the state, for the halakha in all its medieval manifestations is quintessentially political.

It is, however, a fundamental error to see the Orthodox parties in Israel and their supporters elsewhere merely as medieval fossils. The very term "Orthodox" is modern, and the movement it signifies represents a conscious reaction against modernity rather than a direct continuation of the Middle Ages. The oft-quoted saying of the nineteenth-century Hungarian rabbi Moses Sofer that "the new is forbidden by the Torah" is itself an innovation. More to the point, the organization of the Orthodox into political parties such as Agudat Israel reflects a shrewd adoption of modern political methods. In fact, the ultra-Orthodox were apparently the only parties to engage in grass-roots precinct work in the recent Israeli elections, and this attention to democratic political organizing played an important role in their success. It is this synthesis between the desire to reestablish medieval religious authority and the methods of modern politics that makes all contemporary religious fundamentalism, including the Jewish variety, so dangerous.

The rise of the religious parties suggests that a striking reversal has taken place in the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora. Secular Zionism saw the Diaspora as the seat of religion, and Israel as the creator of a new Jewish culture independent of religion. Today it remains true that a much more vibrant nonreligious Jewish life can be found in Israel than in the Diaspora. But if the Orthodox in Israel strengthen their political power, Israel will become identified with the religious pole of Jewish identity. In Israel, the Orthodox have established their hegemony over the sources of the Jewish tradition, and the secular Israelis have, for the most part, accepted that hegemony. Religious coercion in Israel has meant, and will mean even more in the future, a deep chasm between secular Israelis and traditional Jews. As the secular and religious go to opposite sides of the barricades, as tradition comes to be equated with the rigidity of ultra-Orthodoxy, Jewish secularism will increasingly lose its dialogue with the tradition. The rich potential for secularism in the traditional sources, exemplified by the way the *maskilim* read and reinterpreted Moses Maimonides, will be lost. Divorced from the sources, a dynamic secular *Jewish* life will become more difficult in Israel.

In the American Diaspora, however, the potential exists for a dynamic Jewish life independent of Orthodoxy. The lack of ideological hegemony on the part of the Orthodox already allows for greater freedom of interpretation of Jewish sources. Would it be too prophetic to predict that, here in the Diaspora, a genuine Jewish secularism, finding its roots and drawing its energies from the pluralistic sources of the tradition, may yet emerge side by side with more religious forms of Jewish spirituality?

Freed of the rabbinic coercion the Orthodox have reestablished in Israel, American Jews have become, in effect, Jews by choice. They may freely choose whatever identity they please, including (perhaps for the first time in Jewish history) not being Jews, without converting to another religion. Perhaps this change explains American Jews' great sensitivity to the Orthodox attempt to exclude those "Jews by choice" who have chosen non-Orthodox routes of conversion: their conversions are simply ritualizations of the condition of all American Jews. By turning their objective reality into a conscious self-definition, American Jews can stop worrying about the attempts of the Orthodox to define them by an act of Knesset. In short, it is time at long last to take responsibility for the consequences of the decision that all Diaspora Jews have made not to live under a Jewish government.

But whether the leaders of American Jewry will have the courage to embrace the historic challenge of this new reality remains doubtful. As long as their sense of identity is yoked to the Israeli electorate and to acts of Knesset, they will remain incapable of articulating what Jewish history now demands: a return to the Haskala's ideal of freedom for Jews from all rabbinical coercion. Indeed, it is time to develop a new version of the Haskala's whole philosophy of Judaism. Such an alternative to the resurgence of ultra-Orthodoxy does not,

however, mean a rejection of the State of Israel. Far from it. Instead, a self-confident return to the Haskala will not only strengthen the Diaspora, but it will also aid the forces of Enlightenment in Israel's permanent Kulturkampf. □

PAPER: RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM

The Whole Truth

Anne Roiphe

Fundamentalism, the oh-so-sweet certainty that your truth is the truth, that the word has been given and must not be changed, that law and order will follow the revealed truth—this fundamentalism, the tranquilizer of ambivalence, the amputator of doubt, is with us again. If the Enlightenment, if Newton and Darwin, Einstein and Freud, cut off the Medusa's head, look how it has grown again and turns all our old endeavors to stone.

Today we are talking of religious fundamentalism, but perhaps the adjective confuses us. In reality there is only fundamentalism; and all fundamentalism even if it does not speak of divine revelation is religious, or uses our religious natures, our desire to believe and believe absolutely, our temptation to remove those who differ from us, who threaten our convictions with their opinions, their ways of life. Communism can be fundamentalist. The commissar who has a purpose, who knows, who knows without a shadow of a doubt what is good for humankind, can be as dangerous for all living things as was the crusader who believed that his own salvation was worth your death. Capitalism can be fundamentalist. The followers of economic theory who can watch with calm as the numbers of homeless multiply across the nation and the infant mortality rates rise from county to county; those capitalists who believe in the system and not in the details of human experience, who are willing to tolerate the torture of children in jails in Chile, in Argentina, in Honduras for the sake of fighting communism or saving capitalism—they too express a form of fundamentalism. There are feminist fundamentalists who know how society was formed and whose fault it is that we've gotten ourselves into this mess. There are fundamentalists who know that women were not meant to hold the Torah, who have likened women who hold the Torah to pigs. There are nationalistic fundamentalists who believe, either because it was written in the Bible or because their Zionism demands it, that territorial compromise is impermissible. There are fundamentalists who know who is a proper rabbi and who is an impostor. The quality that they all share is certainty.

The human being has a way, an unfortunate way, of assuming the powers of divinity in many writings, convictions, and attitudes. If a position is believed absolutely enough, it takes on the quality of divine revelation. It slips, as it were, from the human mouth to the burning bush of political, nationalistic, economic, or racial assumptions. The things we want to believe tend to get codified and become scripture, such as the little book of Mao's sayings, or our own Old and New Testaments, or the papers of Freud, or the writings of Adam Smith. Then the scripture must be taken literally. It must be defended against all doubt, all attempts to revise, to reason, to adapt. The rigidity of the belief reflects the fear that if anything is altered the entire structure will fall. If the window is opened the hurricane will enter. The religious fundamentalists, the *haredim* and the born-agains and the Children of God and the followers of Allah who can produce a crowd as quickly as a writer can produce a metaphor, who can create visions and speak in tongues, who know what is the right thing to wear for all occasions, what is the right thing to do with sex, what is the right thing to do with women, when to send little children into the mine fields and where to transfer the Arabs and how exactly to control the people's impulses and desires—these fundamentalists are multiplying in this day and age despite the fact that a CAT scan can visualize the inside of a human brain and a neutron can fission itself into our mass death.

Reason, Darwin counting the slow changes in the skeletal structures of turtles; reason, the faculty of thought that demands evidence and deduction, that exercises individual discretion, that looks for truth

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through testing and observation, that unites human beings as a species rather than dividing them into tribes of warriors with different totems to lead them into battle—reason has been overwhelmed.

The Holocaust did it. The development of technology beyond human morality did it. The failure of reason is everywhere apparent in this century, and what does that leave but passion, nationalism, religious fervor—convictions that are deeply felt, convictions for which one might kill or be killed. Reason has proved a false comfort, a false friend, an inadequate companion. Reason said that the Germans could not possibly be planning a Final Solution. Reason said that harmony was natural and would find a way. Reason said that bombs would not be dropped for the sake of destruction alone. Reason said that if the ozone were in danger people would find a way to preserve it. Reason, Plato's broken promise to the Western world, is the Siamese twin of freedom; freedom of choice, freedom to speak and think and act in a myriad of ways, has its difficulties. It makes the galaxy appear cold, indifferent; it makes our lives seem small and possibly meaningless. It makes us lonely; it makes us responsible for our individual actions but leaves us without absolutes to guide us, to soothe the conscience and redeem the guilt. Most terrible of all, reason allows us to die, die our own individual, permanent deaths. It is this that so much of the world finds intolerable.

Without the golden keys to paradise, little children might not be able to go out into the mine fields. Holding their keys, they march forward, soldiers of God. Fundamentalist religious groups believe in the resurrection of the individual body, and they also believe in what is called end-time, the end of history as we know it and the beginning of God's reign on earth. This promise of paradise, personal and communal, is one we all understand. No one wants to die. The fundamentalist positions protect our immortality, and with that, they promise control of impulses, control of choice. Belong and you will not die. No wonder fundamentalists are so militant. They are protecting their very lives, their immortal lives. Of course political fundamentalists—nationalists and Maoists and Marxists and Khmer Rougists, and so on—are not offering immortality, but they are promising an end-time. There is a utopia, a promised land of milk and honey. The end-time they believe in, the one that comes after the revolution, the one that may bring as much chaos as the wars of Gog and Magog, will bring the people, the nation, into a perfected and eternal happy state. Political fundamentalists are just like religious fundamentalists avoiding death. They do so by merging themselves with the group, the nation, the common good. They too will do anything to preserve their eternal life, to further the group as it moves toward utopia. Having placed their future with the future of the group, they too avoid death.

It is important that, as we remaining nonfundamentalists wander about and as we champion those who offer reason and doubt and freedom, we remember that we are also selling individual death; and that makes our view most unpopular, putting us at a disadvantage compared to those who will empty the graves when the Messiah comes or who will welcome the nation into the Paradise of ever after. Until men and women can come to terms with their own deaths we will always have a fundamentalist force on this globe. Until then, the fundamentalists will be strong, stronger than we are—because we offer no way around dying.

Fundamentalism answers a need, a modern need; it fills a yawning hole in our spirits, the one left when the Enlightenment exploded on us.

Freedom brings responsibility; it requires that we make choices, that we find our way among the conflicts of the world and hold our minds and our bodies steady. We in this century are burdened by freedom; we are in flight from freedom even in America where our rhetoric tells us otherwise. How hard it is today to preserve the Bill of Rights in the face of forces in this country that would tear it up if they could. We want certainties; and certainties, if they are to be certain, must be imposed on others. A certainty that can coexist with its opposite certainty is no certainty at all.

We are so tired of freedom. Look at what it brought us: death and destruction, poverty and pain, choices beyond tolerance, the chaos of the sixties, the failure of the Vietnam War, the loss of faith in America the good, the loss of conviction that the white man is the best man, that Adam is white and still the boss of Eve.

Fundamentalism answers a need, a modern need; it fills a yawning hole in our spirits, the one left when the Enlightenment exploded on us, when we stood in the rubble of the Second World War and found Satan. The Satan we found was called Hitler; it was called Stalin; it was called colonialism or imperialism or anti-Semitism. The evils were really evils; and they had triumphed over humanism, over morality, over decency. We saw evil everywhere but in ourselves, where it was almost unbearable for us to admit its strength, its power to destroy. The Satans became someone else—the gooks, the Blacks, the whites, the Jews, the imperialists, the

Catholics, the Protestants. Today many believe in devils again and burn them, burn them without trials, and in the name of Allah or Adonai or the White Race or the Military or the economic doctrine of choice. When Ben-Gurion allowed the religious parties a place in the Israeli government, he clearly thought their power would wane. He was wrong, because Zionism—which was his religion, his fundamentalism, his way of avoiding death—lost its fervor, lost its clear path to utopia. A normal state, like other normal states, could not be an end-time, a spiritual fountain, a place to avoid death. The ultrareligious have become more numerous in Israel because fundamentalism fills the need, carries on an ideal, keeps the chosen people from death, keeps them alive forever.

We nonfundamentalist people have doubts about our truths. We have positions, but not positions for which we would harm or silence others. We have opinions, but opinions are not the same as truths; and for the most part we are people who know we are going to die, and we are able to live anyway. There is some honor in that stance but no immortality; and it looks as if we will be abandoned, with only our honor to defend us as humankind raises its communal fist against the blasphemers. □

PAPER: BLACKS AND JEWS

Black–Jewish Relations: A New Vision

Cherie Brown

In looking at the history of Black–Jewish relations, we should recognize that the romanticization of the civil rights movement as the era of strongest Black–Jewish cooperation may keep us from seeing the significant headway being made today between Blacks and Jews. We can do effective coalition building only with true partners. And now, maybe for the first time, Blacks and Jews are coming to each other as partners in the dialogue. Coalition building is not always easy. It often involves painful expression of tough emotions and issues.

When the Jewish Theological Seminary calls, as it did last week, to invite me to train rabbinical students in Black–Jewish coalition building, I realize that there is for the first time an increased desire for more effective alliance building between Blacks and Jews.

Twenty years ago, I spoke at synagogues in Los Angeles, trying to encourage Jews to speak out against systematic attacks on the Black Panther movement, but many Jews would not listen. Ten years ago, I tried to launch an initial Black–Jewish dialogue in the Boston region, but the leadership links between the Black and Jewish communities were nonexistent. The dialogue failed. Many of those leadership links now exist, and Black–Jewish dialogues are taking place in cities throughout the United States.

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The media have played a role in sensationalizing the difficulties between Blacks and Jews, convincing many of us that the tensions are insurmountable. Four years ago, the "CBS Evening News" with Dan Rather decided to run a short segment about Blacks and Jews. The American Jewish Committee, in cooperation with the National Coalition Building Institute, had just produced a videotape of our work between Black and Jewish college students at Brown University. We had the only documented material about Black and Jewish young people. When the CBS producers arrived in Boston, even as they were getting out of their car they said to us, "The kids hate each other, don't they? You have scenes of Blacks and Jews throwing oranges at each other, don't you?" When the producers viewed a scene of two Black students participating in a role play, practicing how to dispel the myth in the Black community that Jews own all the power and wealth, the producers said to each other, "We know those kids really think that." As it became clear that the producers were going to distort all the positive efforts presented in the dialogue, I refused to let them use the video material. They threatened me, claiming that I was just like the Israeli censors, trying to hide the truth. I am aware that the producers visited ten to fifteen cities where cooperation efforts between Blacks and Jews were being undertaken, but the final story that was broadcast on national television did not include any of these efforts. All that the report showed was a clip of

Alan Dershowitz, a professor at Harvard Law School, who claimed that when the Black students at Harvard Law School invited a PLO speaker, it was "Get-the-Jews Week at Harvard." The other segment on the broadcast quoted James Baldwin saying that Jews are simply white and do not care about Black issues any more. It is no wonder that we are left confused about the status of Black-Jewish relations.

We need to stop talking about Black anti-Semitism. It is *not* Black anti-Semitism; it is anti-Semitism, and it exists within the Black community. When we understand anti-Semitism more accurately from a progressive analysis, we find the tensions between Blacks and Jews to be more understandable and therefore easier to reduce. Blacks and Jews are systematically pitted against each other. Jews in the United States have risen economically to fill what might be called "middle-agent" roles within the class structure. Jews are the teachers, social workers, managers, professionals, shopkeepers. We exert daily control over the lives of other oppressed peoples, among them Blacks. To Blacks it appears as if Jews are the major power. Jews are not a part of the corporate elite, but in their current jobs they become an easy target for Black resentment.

Both Blacks and Jews have mythical, unreal visions of the other group's power. I wish Black people in the United States had the kind of power that those Jews who feared Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign claim they have. I wish Jews had the kind of permanent, unshakable political voice that Blacks claim they have. By exaggerating each other's power and influence, both groups are weakened; they fail to join to defeat the major forces of corporate power in the United States.

It is also important to identify the psychological dynamics that go hand in hand with the class differences. At one workshop at Columbia University, I listened to a dialogue between Black and Jewish students that I think captures many of the psychological barriers preventing Black-Jewish understanding.

Most of the Black students participating in our workshop had recently attended a rally at Madison Square Garden at which Reverend Louis Farrakhan spoke. They were eager to tell Jewish students how meaningful it had been for them to be in an audience of twenty thousand fellow Blacks. The Jewish students responded, "Do you know what it is like for us to hear Blacks being encouraged to chant, 'Who killed Jesus? The Jews killed Jesus'?" The Black students shot back, "Don't insult us! Do you think that we're that stupid to buy all those slogans about Jews? We ignore his anti-Jewish remarks." The Jewish students answered, "Do you think, with all of our history of anti-Semitism, that we can easily say, 'Oh, great! We'll just trust you'?"

When we Jews come at Blacks with our anxieties, concerns, and mistrust, Blacks think that we're being paternalistic, that we do not believe they are smart enough to do their own thinking. When Blacks try to reassure us that there is no real danger, we hear their reassurance as a blanket dismissal of our legitimate concerns. We hear in their comments an unaware anti-Semitism and a lack of understanding of the historic basis for our insecurities.

Blacks and Jews can be won over to effective alliance building, not by denying the very real economic and psychological barriers between the groups but by tackling these barriers head on.

Five years ago at the University of Pennsylvania, Black students told Jewish students that they did not have time for Black-Jewish dialogue because they wanted to focus their primary attention on Black concerns. Blacks often fear that linking racism with other issues becomes a convenient way not to have to deal with racism. Too often, these fears have been justified.

For Jews, the decision of Blacks not to engage in Black-Jewish dialogue reinforces Jewish isolation. Other oppressed groups have not always understood the ongoing nature of Jewish oppression and have left Jews out. As a result, Jews react to their increased fears of isolation by making further demands on Blacks. Blacks experience these demands as unaware racism.

We need to understand how these intergroup dynamics are played out in daily relationships between Blacks and Jews. When I first began to co-lead workshops with a Black colleague, we had a challenging time working together. Whenever I became anxious during a workshop, I would try to take charge of the situation and offer remedies to the problems at hand. As a Jew, I had been trained to respond quickly to difficulty. When I acted like this around my Black colleague, she perceived my behavior as racism—which it was: I was not trusting *her* competence. The more anxious I became, the calmer she became. As a Black raised in Harlem, she had been trained to remain calm when faced with difficulty. I resented her reassurance, feeling that she was dismissing my anxiety and leaving me alone to deal with it; and I experienced this as her unaware anti-Semitism. Until we understood each other's histories and learned how to be helpful to each other, we were unable to work together as effectively as we wished.

This leads me to my final point: the need for a

systematic methodology that can identify and help Blacks and Jews work through their unconscious negative attitudes and behavior toward each other. Research that I have done has shown that personal storytelling was the most reliable method of altering negative stereotypes. Stories that included the honest sharing of specific encounters with racism and anti-Semitism, especially when those stories were told with emotion, were the most effective.

For example, my Black colleague, Arlene Alan, and I were invited to lead a program last year at the University of Maryland, following six months of tension between Black and Jewish students. Cuome Toure (formerly Stokely Carmichael) had been invited six months earlier to address the students. During his presentation he said, "The only good Zionist is a dead Zionist." A Jewish student in the audience stood up and said, "I'm Jewish and I am proud to be a Zionist!" The Jewish student was assaulted, and a large scuffle broke out between Black and Jewish students which made the six o'clock and the eleven o'clock evening news. Neither Black nor Jewish students had been able to speak to each other for the next six months.

At one point in our workshop I brought up to the front of the group the very Jewish student who had claimed six months earlier to be a proud Zionist. I asked him to share what it had been like for him the day Cuome Toure had come to campus. He responded, "My father left Germany in 1939; the whole time I was growing up he tried to tell me how frightening it had been to be in Germany in the late thirties. I didn't understand what he was talking about. After all, I'm twenty-one, and I have never felt that kind of fear as a Jew living in the United States. But the day I heard Cuome Toure speak I felt the kind of fear that my father had been talking about." The Jewish student was visibly shaken, and he began to cry.

After he sat down, a Black student, the head of the Black organization that had brought Cuome Toure to campus, stood up, looked over at the Jewish student, and said, "When you were speaking, I felt that I could remove your face and put a Black face there; and he would be saying the same thing." The Black student also had tears in his eyes.

Following this storytelling, participants were taught specific skills for effectively interrupting racist and anti-Semitic slurs and jokes. Then the participants were taught how to take emotionally charged political issues that have divided Blacks and Jews, such as affirmative action, and to seek common concerns.

All of my experience demonstrates that Blacks and Jews can be won over to effective alliance building, not by denying the very real economic and psychological barriers between the groups but by tackling these barriers head on. Such alliance building will require two major efforts: first, an accurate understanding and analysis of anti-Semitism and racism that outlines the particular way in which Blacks and Jews are pitted against each other in a class system; and second, a method of healing that enables Blacks and Jews to listen fully to each other, to understand from their hearts the pain of each other's past and present oppression, and then to learn concrete, specific tools for becoming more effective advocates for each other. Only then will an effective coalition, a coalition between equals, be formed. □

PAPER: BLACKS AND JEWS

Blacks and Jews in the Political Arena

Barney Frank

I understand that there are problems between Blacks and Jews on college campuses and in some other arenas. And we must defend ourselves in them. But I am not so pessimistic about the relationship between Blacks and Jews in the political arena. The efforts by people on the right to break up the liberal Black–Jewish coalition have, on the whole, been unsuccessful. I read an article by Irving Kristol printed in *Commentary* in which he basically says, "Look, Jews, we've got to knock this off with Black people, because they're not really such good friends of ours, and let's line up with the right wing instead."

These conservatives argue that the right will be best for Israel and that we can make strong alliances with people like Jerry Falwell. There are, they admit, small concessions that must be made to these allies, like

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acknowledging that America is a Christian nation.

Once, when Congress held an all-night session to deal with a school prayer amendment, I was a newer member of the House and hence was drafted to chair one of the sessions in the middle of the night. It was six in the morning and I was in the chair when Congresswoman Marjorie Holt told the House: "Mr. Chairman, we must have school prayer to demonstrate that this is a Christian nation." A reporter later asked me how I felt, hearing that, and I told him—for publication—that my thoughts were, "If this is a Christian nation, why do they have to get a poor Jewish boy out of bed so early in the morning to chair the House session?" A friend of mine said, "Because it *is* a Christian nation, that's why they got you out of bed—they don't want to do it themselves." Later, after the press had made this a big story, the Congresswoman apologized to me and said, "I meant to say this is a Judeo-Christian nation." I responded, "Marjorie, I've never met a Judeo-Christian. What do they look like? What do you send them in December—what kind of card?" My view is that this is not a Christian nation, or a Judeo-Christian nation, or a Buddho-Judeo-Christian nation, or anything of that sort; it's a plain old do-whatever-you-want nation, and that's a good kind to have.

The point is that America is a country in which there is no majority, and in which each of the many minorities has rights fully equal with those of everyone else. When Irving Kristol says that we should agree that this is a Christian nation, he is giving an example of a very unfortunate tendency on the part of many of the conservatives to indulge the right in sentiments and actions that they would severely criticize if they came from the left. Consider the relative tolerance with which a large number of our conservative Jewish friends have responded to many of the recent policy moves of the Reagan and Bush administrations that have gone counter to traditional Jewish positions.

Suppose that Morris Abram, former head of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, had fallen victim to a sleeping sickness in May and had not been awakened until January, at which time we told him: "Look, Morris, the president has announced that we should begin conversations with the PLO; he has also ruled that Soviet Jews are no longer automatically entitled to refugee status, and in fact our Executive Branch has been rejecting the refugee applications of many Soviet Jews, refusing to admit them to the United States; and by the way, the new chief of staff at the White House is the only governor among fifty who refused to criticize the UN resolution that said Zionism is racism." My guess is that Morris's response would have been, "Oy, Jesse Jackson won the election."

If the left had done what Bush has done, there would have been an incredible outcry. I still want to hear from these Jewish conservatives about Richard Nixon—the man who sent one of his chief officials, Frederic Malek, to count the Jews (he didn't do that because he wanted to know how many places to set for the Seder). He sent Mr. Malek to count the Jews so that they could be fired. When Abraham Foxman of the Anti-Defamation League pooh-poohs that and says that Nixon's man was only following orders (which I can hardly believe he said, though he apologized for it), we must realize that if any Black mayor in the country had sent a chief aide to count Jews in the local government for the purpose of reducing their numbers, Jewish leaders would have been outraged, and justifiably. The lack of protest against Nixon's action indicates an incredible double standard. Or consider the move by the Department of Education not to fund a video about the Holocaust. One of the reviewers said the video wasn't fair because it didn't give the Nazi or Ku Klux Klan point of view. Yet there has been little protest from the conservatives in the Jewish world about this statement.

In the one area of current concern where Jewish interests really are threatened—from the Phyllis Schlafly and Jerry Falwell types—we have Blacks lining up to help us, supporting our interests.

Today we face a strong offensive from the Christian right. Even some Orthodox Jews who do support school prayer are beginning to understand that the agenda of these Christian rightists is very narrow: if these people succeed, if we do have school prayer, it will not be the Sh'ma. If they impose their religion, it will not be our religion. Black leaders join with us on this issue, stand with us in Congress, and send their local leadership to join us. So here, in the one area of current concern where Jewish interests really are threatened—from the Phyllis Schlafly and Jerry Falwell types—we have Blacks lining up to help us, supporting our interests. The *Commentary* crowd doesn't understand how dangerous a person like Pat Robertson is. Here's a man who tells us he prayed a hurricane away. How many other adult Americans do you know who think "Rain, rain, go away" is a serious statement? The right wing threatens the civil equality that Jews have achieved—and Blacks are one of our strongest allies in resisting that threat.

Although there has been hostility toward Israel amongst Blacks, the majority of Black members of

Congress have been very supportive of Israel. From our side, Jewish members of the House, because they care about supporting Israel, have sought seats on the Foreign Affairs Committee; and in that position they have played an important role in advancing the antiapartheid legislation, legislation that has been led by a coalition of Blacks and Jews. There were meetings between Black and Jewish members of Congress about how to increase aid to Black Africa without cutting aid to Israel, and about how to put pressure on Israel to stop selling arms to South Africa without adding to illegitimate anti-Israeli feelings.

I think it's important for Blacks to continue to speak out strongly against Louis Farrakhan and anti-Semitism. And it's also important for Jews to resist people in the Jewish world who, for their own political purposes, want to exacerbate Black–Jewish tension.

If there really were more things that divide us than unite us, if the underlying constituencies in the Black and Jewish communities really opposed an alliance, that alliance would not be around for long. What you see in Washington is a reflection of reality: the actual social, political, and economic agendas of the great majority of Jews and the great majority of Blacks are perfectly congruent in this country. □

PAPER: BLACKS AND JEWS

Blacks and Jews: Troubled Times on the College Campuses

Chaim Seidler-Feller

Despite my numerous commitments as a Hillel director to teaching, counseling, and promoting an array of possible modes of Jewish expression, the problem of interethnic tensions in general, and Black–Jewish relations in particular, has compelled an increasing amount of my attention during the past three years.

It is indeed true that UCLA is the most ethnically diverse campus in the country, with more than half of its student body representing people of color. Yet, I would be disingenuous if I were to blame demographic factors for a conflict that has asserted itself both on campuses and in major urban centers throughout the country.

The issue, then, is a societal breakdown that features discord between Blacks and Hispanics; between Asians on the one hand and Blacks and Hispanics on the other; and, also, between Blacks and Jews. This tension has been nurtured, in part, by an economic program during the Reagan years (the period during which the conflict has surfaced and intensified) that widened the gulf between the haves and the have-nots, and a social policy that reversed the halting progress made toward racial equality in the 1960s and early 1970s. The conflict is the legacy of a determined effort to promote the value of self-interest, and it is the function of a climate of increasing intolerance that surrounds us.

I cannot help but imagine that there are people who relish the disharmony and who are in reality orchestrating the factionalization and fractionalization of American society.

As to the particular aspects of the rift between Blacks and Jews, the experience at UCLA is most instructive.

- Last year, the Black Student Alliance sponsored an educational forum on Zionism, at which the main speaker declared to the resounding applause of the Black attendees: "The best Zionist is a dead Zionist."
- When Cherie Brown came to the campus to lead a workshop on intergroup relations, the Black students staged a walkout together with their Latino allies, leaving the Jews to talk to themselves.
- In an editorial published in the Black student newspaper, *Nommo,* two years ago, the editors wrote: "Zionists are buddies with the fascists in South Africa and the U.S. They are not only responsible for the repression of Arab people, but African people as well. Here at UCLA, they control the Academic Advancement Program. This is the main reason why AAP has become 'mainstreamed.' The result is an institutional apartheid

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where the majority of African and other third world youth are denied equal access and opportunity because they are poor."

• And then, there was the Farrakhan visit in March 1988, perceived by the Jewish students as an expression of Black hostility toward Jews. In response, the Jewish student leadership organized a candlelight vigil that was attended by over a thousand students, faculty, and staff, and that was addressed by representatives of state, city, and student government, as well as by a host of other civic and university personalities—all of whom denounced Farrakhan's racism and pledged to muffle his voice. The organizational overkill and the vehemence of the effort appeared to emanate from the special satisfaction that the Jewish students drew from the opportunity to turn the tables on the Blacks and to accuse *them* of racism (after all those years of taking a beating, the Jews could finally sock it to the Blacks).

Although everyone at UCLA is very much aware of the fact that the aforementioned confrontations were planned by a small core of Black political activists, these encounters bespeak a resentment that is deeply felt within the entire Black community. There is a curious and troubling finding in the sociological literature that suggests that, contrary to the rule that the more educated one is the less anti-Semitism one will harbor, Blacks manifest increasing levels of anti-Semitism the more education they attain.

More than in any other adult environment, Blacks and Jews confront each other constantly at the university. And it is precisely at the university that the vast discrepancy between Jewish achievement and apparent Black failure is so evident. I refer not only to the number of Jewish students in the best American universities, but also to the disproportionately large Jewish faculty contingents and, most especially, to the current preponderance of Jews in university administration. At UCLA, for example, the four senior vice-chancellors are Jewish, the provost of the college is Jewish, the assistant vice-chancellor for student affairs is Jewish, the dean of the graduate school is Jewish, and so on. Wherever a minority student turns, he or she finds a Jewish administrator sitting in a position of authority, an administrator whose decisions will determine his or her fate. This is what the *Nommo* editor meant in his revealing assertion that at UCLA they (the Jews) control the Academic Advancement Program—that is, the Jews have too much power.

No wonder, then, that in the face of a declining number of Black college entrants and graduates (at UCLA six of every ten entering Blacks drop out before completing their degree), and in light of an absolute decline in the number of Black Ph.D.s, Blacks feel dominated and overwhelmed by Jews at the university and conclude that any system that could produce such inequity must be prejudicial. (The statistics are devastating: in 1976 one million Blacks constituted 9.4 percent of the U.S. total college enrollment, while in 1984, with the number remaining constant, the percentage dropped to 8.8 percent; in the same period, overall minority enrollment increased from 15.4 percent of the total to 17 percent. At UCLA there were seventy-four Blacks graduating with professional degrees in 1976, and only forty-five in 1984; there were thirty M.A.s and M.S.s in 1976 compared with twenty-two in 1984.)

There must be a denunciation by Black leaders of all anti-Jewish rhetoric, including the "Zionism is racism" equation.

In and of themselves the numbers are an insufficient explanation for the profound nature of the enmity. It is only when the statistical reality is considered in light of the present political propensities of Jewish students and the larger Jewish community that the source of the hostility becomes clear. Many Jewish students have embraced conservatism—there are twice as many registered Jewish Republicans among the eighteen to twenty-five group than among the total adult Jewish population—and they have forged alliances with the fraternities, voting with them against minority candidates and minority interests. The Jews on campus have made it; they have triumphantly entered the white establishment and are no longer considered to be an ethnic minority. And they are fighting a turf war with the invading outsiders.

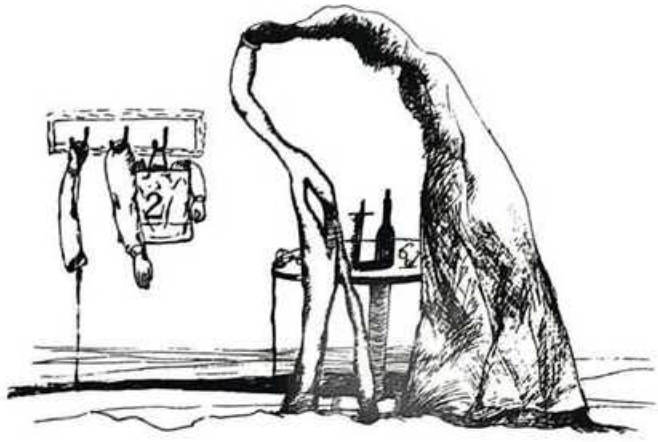
The situation is only exacerbated by the fact that the Jewish community has been so visible in its opposition to affirmative action, seeming to take the leadership in the struggle against what Nathan Glazer once called "reverse discrimination." Blacks understandably feel betrayed. Jews claimed to be their friends and convinced them that the only pathway into American society was the road of educational achievement (just as they did it); then, when Blacks tried to enter, Jews appeared to slam the door in their faces.

The symbolic significance of the perceived Jewish rejection of affirmative action cannot be underestimated. Affirmative action is for the Blacks what Israel is for the Jews. Therefore, although Israel's military trade with South Africa is most certainly another factor in the hostile relationship between Blacks and Jews, the anti-Israel rhetoric is merely a code for a hurt that is being suffered directly, right here at home. There is a type of symmetry to the argument of "if you deny us *our* affirmative action, we will condemn *your* Israel."

So, notwithstanding the history of cooperation between Black and Jewish congressional caucuses and the limping Black–Jewish dialogues and the recent public attempts at promoting a process of healing, the animosity, anger, and resentment expressed by young Blacks and Jews is very real. Neither group of students has any historical perspective, and both groups' knowledge of the dynamics of the civil rights movement is woefully deficient and biased. These students are the "generation without memory," to quote Anne Roiphe; "the orphans of history," as Paul Cowan, may he rest in peace, so felicitously called them. These students lack the basis for coalition building: the Blacks don't seem to care much, and the Jews—who until recently were guiltily concerned—are growing impatient. To quote Henry Kissinger, "If they want to go it alone, *let them* try." Well, they *have* tried and, in Jonathan Kaufman's words, "the Rainbow Coalition is the only progressive movement in recent American history that was created and sustained with no meaningful Jewish involvement." (Maybe that explains the acute aversion of Jews to Jesse Jackson: he had the chutzpah to do it without Jewish support and to almost get there before "one of our own" even had a chance.) The prospects of the continued alienation of Blacks from Jews, however, casts a shadow over the vision of a pluralistic tolerant America; and it most definitely jeopardizes the future viability of the Democratic party. For there is no evidence that the next generation of Blacks and Jews, those presently being educated on the campuses, will have any inclination to join as allies.

What, then, are some of the ingredients needed to facilitate the recovery of mutual respect, as well as a commitment to Black–Jewish cooperation on campuses and in the society at large?

- There must be a reversal of the organized Jewish community's opposition to affirmative action. Now that Jews have made it, they can afford to be generous.



- There must be a denunciation by Black leaders of all anti-Jewish rhetoric, including the "Zionism is racism" equation. Engaging in self-criticism is an important component of a trusting relationship, and leading Blacks—including Jackson—have not demonstrated their capacity to be self-critical.
- There must be the establishment of a nationwide network of campus-based progressive Jewish alliances that can reach out to Black students and rebuild the bridges.
- There must be a Black willingness to make the Jewish issue a community priority.
- There must be, among Jews, a de-demonization of Jesse Jackson; in other words, Jews must come to terms with him as a legitimate American leader.

In addition, it is necessary for both Blacks and Jews to refrain from organizing their identity around their victim status, because of the following reasons:

- It tends to make suffering the organizing metaphor for each group's identity.
- It traditionally functions as a justification for aggressive and even violent behavior.
- It promotes what Glenn Loury calls "comparative victimology"—the competition between the two groups as to whose suffering is greater. Jews must begin to accept the fact that they are no longer victims and that their never-ending claim that they are is a defense against the accusation that they are sometimes victimizers.

Once the repair work has commenced, a new coalition that is action- and project-oriented ought to be constituted. Such a body might do the following:

- It might consider an economic development venture, jointly funded and administered by Blacks and Jews, for the purpose of generating entrepreneurial opportunities in the Black community.
- It might sponsor and subsidize trips to Africa and Israel for groups of Black and Jewish students.
- It might work to reconstitute the Democratic party.

Finally, in this new environment, Blacks and Jews could reassess the meaning of their ethnicity and construct an identity that is composed of an intense particularity that is not separatist, and of a broad universalism that is not assimilationist.

This brings to mind a mishnaic teaching from Tractate Sanhedrin: "Therefore was Adam created alone, to teach that no one can say that my father was greater than yours, for we are all the children of one father and mother." But the Mishna continues: "Great is God: for a human stamps many coins with his/her seal and they all look the same, whereas God placed God's stamp on Adam and every human being is different. Therefore must one say, 'For my sake was the world created!'" □

PAPER: BLACKS AND JEWS

Black–Jewish Dialogue: Beyond Rootless Universalism and Ethnic Chauvinism

Cornel West

What is most striking to me both about *Tikkun* and about this conference is that they focus on the failure of empty internationalism and rootless universalism, that is, on the refusal to think seriously and critically about one's tradition and identity. In the period in which there was a stronger alliance between Blacks and Jews, some of that alliance depended on both sides' identifying with a form of universalism that did not highlight questions of identity. There is no going back to such a period. If there is going to be a renewed connection between these two communities, or even a sensible dialogue, it depends on our ability to remain sensitive to the positive quests for identity among Jewish Americans and African-Americans.

We need to be aware of the complex interplay between universalism and particularism so that we can avoid the traps of tribalism and ethnic chauvinism. We can no longer raise the banner of internationalism—a banner that should and must be raised—unless that internationalism is filtered through our particular experiences.

We live in a society that is characterized by increasing racial polarization and rising anti-Semitism. Blacks and Jews still remain the two peoples that are most loyal to progressive politics in this country. Both peoples have long histories of exploitation and oppression, degradation and devaluation. For us today the central question is, "What is going to be the *moral content* of our identity and the *political consequences* of it?"

When we look back, we have to acknowledge that there has always been anti-Semitism in the Black community and anti-Black racism in the Jewish community. But there was also, particularly in the period from 1945 to 1965, some serious attempts to build bridges and forge alliances that would run counter to these destructive tendencies. The turning point away from this alliance was in the period from 1965 to 1968, with the emergence of the Black Power movement, which perceived Jews simply as whites and began to push white activists out of the civil rights movement. Supporters of Black Power increasingly began to see the world in terms of the American empire pitted against Third World liberation movements—a profoundly Manichaean perspective, a simplistic dualistic perspective. There is a sophisticated way of looking at the U.S. as an empire as well as a sophisticated way of understanding Third World liberation movements, but the sophisticated version was not always what we heard in those early days when Blacks were seeking to assert their identity.

In 1967 Harold Cruse published *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual,* which remains highly influential to this very day. The book contained a scathing attack on the role of Jewish particularism, with special focus on the Jews' role in the Communist party, U.S.A. This was another sign of the growth of particularistic consciousness in the Black left. The loss in April 1968 of Martin Luther King, Jr., was significant in this respect because King promoted the legitimacy of Zionism to the Black community. King spoke explicitly about the importance of Blacks' learning from and promoting the progressive version of Zionism. With that loss we saw a crescendo of Black critiques of Zionism—most vulgar, though some sophisticated. I'm sure that a *Tikkun* audience understands that many critiques of Zionism are tinged with anti-Semitism. *But some critiques do transcend it.*

After 1968 we saw three major arenas of Black–Jewish tension. First, there was the issue of community control. In the sphere of education, this struggle was perceived as an attack on Jewish educators, but the community control issue extended also to an attack on Jewish entrepreneurs in the Black ghetto (particularly since a developing Black business class had an interest in freeing up space so that it could progress).

The second issue was affirmative action, which pitted many conservative Jews against Blacks *and* liberal Jews. It is too often ignored that many liberal Jews support affirmative action. For example, Thomas Nagel, a professor of philosophy, has put forward some of the most powerful critiques of the opponents of affirmative action, in the name of Kantian morality. This doesn't mean that we should forget about the neoconservative Jewish figures who argue against affirmative action. But we also need to understand their opposition as reflective

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of the boomtown character of Jewish ascendancy to the middle classes in a short thirty-year period. Many Jews expressed a deep anxiety about the reintroduction of quotas when those same quotas had been previously used against Jews in the anti-Semitic structures of higher learning. Yet when the previous anti-Semitic structures began to fall, Blacks perceived Jews as securing middle-class status in an astonishing manner. Blacks who were entering the mainstream found a disproportionate Jewish presence in the upper middle class of American society—in law, in medicine—in part because Jews worked hard to take advantage of the opportunities that had recently been opened to them.

Many first-generation Black middle-class persons began to wonder, "When are Black folks going to move into these institutions, given that there are a finite number of places?" Since they knew they could not count on the "rationality" of white employers or administrators to overcome the history of past discrimination, they had to rely on affirmative action—and the attack on affirmative action, no matter how principled, *was* an attack on Black progress.

The third issue was the Black critique of American foreign policy. This critique coincided with the emergence of conservative forces in Israel after the 1967 and 1973 wars—first as a conservatizing influence in the Labor party, then as the triumph of Menachem Begin's right-wing coalition—and the increasing identification of Israel with an American foreign policy that was dominated by cold war preoccupations and a refusal to see anything good in Third World liberation struggles. This connection to American foreign policy made it easier for many Blacks to identify Israel as a tool of American imperial interests.

These were issues that tended to weaken the Black–Jewish alliance, but we should also note that there has persisted in America a very real alliance in the political arena. In fact, many Black elected officials would not be in office today if it were not for the Jewish voters who, in alliance with Black voters, helped put them in office. The grand example of the late Harold Washington looms large here.

Black anti-Semitism and Jewish anti-Black racism are real, and both are as profoundly American as cherry pie. All of us who are Americans must struggle against the devaluation of the Jewish people, which persists in the myths and symbols of what it is to be a citizen of this country. Blacks have a deep moral obligation to fight against anti-Semitism. And Jews have the same duty to combat Jewish anti-Black racism.

Black anti-Semitism is also a degraded people's resentment of a downtrodden people that is moving quickly up the social ladder. One sees this resentment in Louis Farrakhan, who evokes the image of alleged Jewish unity and homogeneity (certainly a myth!) in the process of asserting that if Blacks could be like Jews and create a sense of achievement and dignity among themselves, then they could succeed in similar fashion.

We need to avoid the traps of tribalism and ethnic chauvinism yet still affirm Jewish and Black particularism.

The state of siege now raging in Black America, the sense of frustration and hopelessness, pushes people to look toward a leader who speaks in bold and defiant terms. The Black elected officials tend not to speak to these deep needs. Farrakhan tries to fill the vacuum—and this obsession with Jewish achievement and Jewish accomplishment is one of the means by which he tries to do this. I've argued with Farrakhan's people—first, insisting that they understand that Jews are human beings, but, second, trying to point out to them that Jews are not as important as Black Muslims think when it comes to the actual operation of economic or political power in this world. If you want to talk about power, start with multinational corporate America.

Farrakhan is a radical anti-Semite, but he is not a Nazi. It's important to make this distinction, because if every anti-Semite were a Nazi, we'd have to reconstitute the Allied Forces. Farrakhan says terrible things about the Jews, but he does not advocate that people physically attack Jews. He is different from the neo-Nazi skinheads who advocate the actual physical injury of Jewish human beings.

Jesse Jackson must, in turn, be understood as part of a Southern Black American Protestant tradition. Blacks in the South had very infrequent contact with Jewish people. Struggles in the South were primarily between Blacks and whites, with both sides being Protestant (there were not even that many Catholics in the South). Jesse's own perceptions of American Jews are shaped mostly by his encounters with the Jews after 1965, and the experience of American Jews in the period since 1965 is very difficult to square with the larger context of Jewish experience in the modern world. When Jesse sees Jews he doesn't think about the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492, the expulsion of Jews from England in 1290, or the expulsion of Jews from France in 1306. He sees Jews on the move in the middle classes. He doesn't seem to grasp the legitimate fears or the paranoia of American Jews, nor does he seem to understand the psychological impact of the Holocaust on Jews during the past forty years.

I do not believe Jesse Jackson is an anti-Semite; but there are shadows of anti-Semitic sensibilities shot through his language. In principle, he would struggle against anti-Semitism, demonstrate against it. But it's very problematic to have a leader of left-liberal forces in America who has this kind of baggage. It's in some ways a tragedy.

In Jesse Jackson we have someone who highlights the unprecedented business attack on working and poor people in this country, one of the few people who emphasizes this issue and speaks with power and passion about it. How do we evaluate and assess such a figure who uses as his social base the most loyal group in America to progressive politics—Black Americans? Do we support him, hoping that he will continue to grow and move beyond the shadows of anti-Semitic sensibilities, or do we oppose him and then align ourselves with figures who won't talk about the business assault on the poor? Or do we try to tease out some of the Black elected officials who are much more sensitive but who have as encompassing visions as Jesse Jackson—the Bill Grays of this world? That's another option. Or do we wait for a third, extraparliamentary figure who boldly and defiantly challenges corporate power, racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, sexism? At the moment, I remain a critical supporter of Jackson's efforts to change America.

The future dialogue between progressive African-Americans and Jewish Americans will be difficult. On the international front, the conservative form of Zionism that regulates Israeli policies on the West Bank and Gaza Strip warrants wholesale rejection and fundamental reorientation. Palestinian national self-determination must be confronted and accommodated by all who take seriously Jewish national self-determination—on moral and political grounds. Similarly, Blacks must criticize the atrocities in Kenya, Uganda, and Ethiopia—not simply the ugly realities in South Africa—with the same moral outrage with which they criticize those atrocities committed against Palestinians as a result of the Israeli government's policies. On the domestic front, the Black-Jewish alliance must be rejuvenated and reconstituted—especially in the labor movement, among Black womanists and Jewish feminists, among Black Christians and Orthodox Muslims and religious Jews, and in the new emerging group of American left-liberal activists now led by Jesse Jackson. The first step is to break the ice with engaged dialogue, openness to change, and constructive attempts at collective thought and action. This is the road to substantive internationalism and rooted universalism. □

PAPER: BLACKS AND JEWS

Class, Women, and "The Black-Jewish Question"

Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz

I do a lot of speaking in the women's movement about anti-Semitism and racism, and I find I need to explain that anti-Semitism is a form of racism—which shouldn't be news to people, but it is. Because feminists have for some years committed themselves to fighting racism—this is not the place to debate the sincerity or effectiveness of this commitment—I try to establish a continuum of racism that includes racism against Jews, a continuum on which the separate but related lines of race and class are traced. The problem is that most Americans are groomed to be ignorant about class structure and class oppression. So the related but distinct issues of race and class are fuzzed and confused, and this fact in turn confuses the meaning and danger of anti-Semitism.

Here's how it works. Rich WASPs are taken for granted—as perhaps entitled? Poor WASPs and other poor whites—the rural white poor, for example—are simply invisible. Poor Jews are a contradiction in terms. Most Americans see racism as identical to economic oppression; they see race and class as the same thing. They also see Jews as excessively economically privileged. It's obvious: *How can racism have anything to do with Jews?* In fact, the logic goes, not only is anti-Semitism an entirely different animal from racism, it's trivial,

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since it's only directed against privileged, powerful people. Indeed, if Jews are the rich and people of color are the poor, then healthy and essential class antagonism distorts into anti-Semitism—a phenomenon August Bebel observed in Europe many years ago: *Anti-Semitism is the socialism of fools.*

This is not to say that anti-Semitism is caused by capitalism; it is, however, a convenient channel for discontent.

It's unfair that the abuses of capitalism are blamed on Jews. But for us to combat the anger's manifestation without also combating the anger's cause—economic injustice and cruelty—is likewise unfair.

I don't think I need to point out that there is a severely stratified class structure in this country and that many Jews are located somewhat advantageously in it. I may need to say that most of these comfortable Jews are men or affiliated with men, that many Jewish women—especially single mothers—and old people are poor, and that Jews endure about the same rate of poverty as do other immigrant groups who came to the U.S. at the same time. I don't think I need to say that a large part of the Black community—perhaps half—has been systematically and increasingly locked into extreme poverty. As the proportion of homeless women with children increases—and, in New York City, for example, 90 percent of the homeless are people of color—this phenomenon will only get worse.

How this adds up: when it comes to Jewish-Black relations, some of what stands between us is class.

But that is not what seems to stand between us. What seems to stand between us is Black anti-Semitism and Jewish racism. I do not minimize these realities. Two examples:

- Steven Cokely (a Black aide of appointed Mayor Sawyer in Chicago), who claimed that Jewish doctors are giving AIDS to Black people;
- ZBT, a mostly Jewish fraternity at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, which held a slave auction in which pledges wore blackface and Afro wigs.

We should just hold a moment of silence in horror at both of these events.

But Black anti-Semitism is a subdivision of American anti-Semitism, or Christian anti-Semitism, or sometimes Islamic anti-Semitism. Jewish racism is a brand of American racism, or white racism, or sometimes European racism. The Cokely incident is symbolic of the struggle for power in Chicago city politics following the death of that compelling unifier Harold Washington. The fraternity incident epitomizes campus backlash, validated by people like Allan Bloom with their great white male books. Neither Black anti-Semitism nor Jewish racism is so special in itself, although both are especially destructive in their implications.

Let me take another tack. I am not one who believes in group paranoia; I believe in the fundamental soundness of suspicion and fear. I'm forty-three years old. The camps were opened the month before I was born. Why shouldn't I be afraid? At the same time, I know that the U.S. tests products on people of color in Third World countries. I know food and drugs deemed unsafe here are marketed abroad. I read in the paper recently about a doctor in Dayton, Ohio, who for years performed unnecessary experimental surgery on the sexual organs of hundreds of women without their prior knowledge or consent, and dozens of other doctors knew and did nothing. So when Steven Cokely claims that Jewish doctors are giving AIDS to Black people, what stands out is, first, a real fear that Blacks will be experimented on in deadly ways, and second, that Jews are being scapegoated for this fear.

Similarly, last year, when a Black priest, Reverend Lawrence Lucas, at a New York City rally, attacked Jews as "those who are killing us in the classroom ... look at the Board of Education ... it looks like the Knesset in Israel," he underscored two points: first, the New York City school system is desperately failing to meet the needs of Black children; and second, Jews are being scapegoated.

I'm not going to answer, "Why blame the Jews?"—a question with no answer. I want to point out how the media exacerbate Black-Jewish tension: there are lots of discussions of the Black-Jewish conflict, but they boil down to the same old rehash of incidents; like the mall bookstores with ten thousand books—only it's ten different titles, a thousand copies of each.

How many of you know who Albert Raby is, for example? He died recently, fifty-five years old: he was the organizer who brought Dr. King to Chicago; he ran Harold Washington's successful campaign for mayor; he was co-chair of a group of Blacks and Jews formed to deal with the fallout from Cokely's remark. Albert Raby was an important man in the history of Black struggle, in the history of Chicago, in the history of Black-Jewish relations, and about three people at this conference have heard of him. But how many have heard of Louis Farrakhan?

Or, think of the difference in attention—the way the mainstream Jewish establishment lovingly dwelled on

details of conflict between Jackson and Jews, downplayed attempts at conciliation, and only briefly reacted to the news about Bush's campaign being full of Nazis. This is a double standard. I, for one, may find Black anti-Semitism more personally painful than I do white ruling-class anti-Semitism, but I do not find it more dangerous.

Let me be clear. Cokely's statement made me sick, not just because of the trouble I knew it would stir up, but because I have a well-developed realistic sense of Jewish terror. But if, as progressive Jews, we want to heal the Black–Jewish conflict, we need to deal not only with the anti-Semitism of the Cokely incident but with the fear behind the remark. *Jews must not be scapegoated for Black concerns, but we must help our communities address themselves to these concerns.* I'll come back to this.

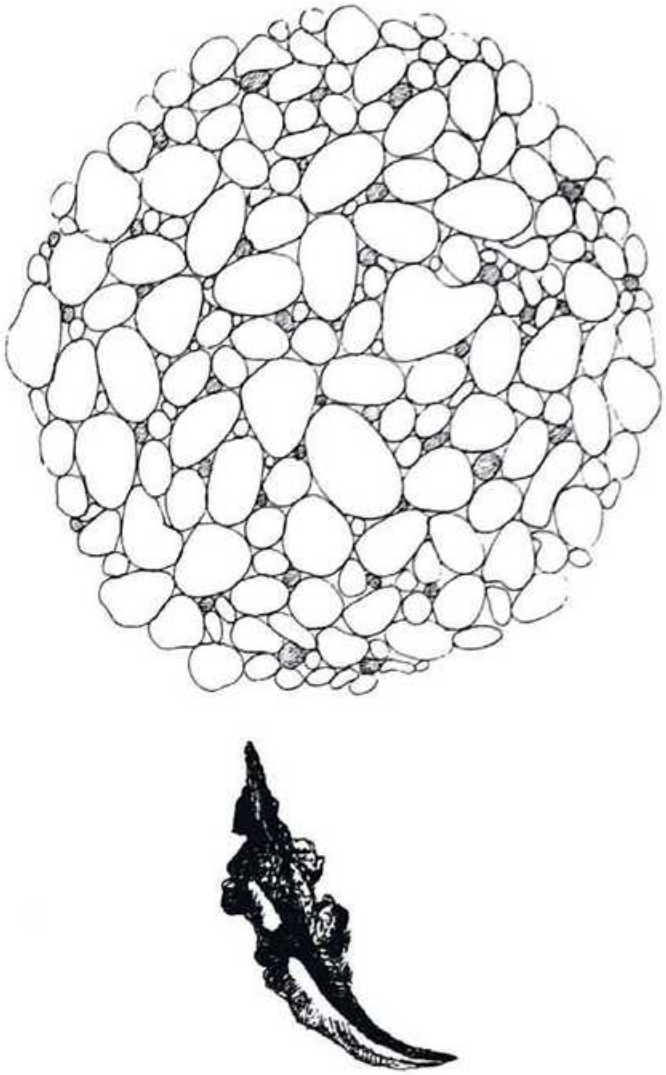
I want to talk about basic stereotypes, the ones that make me intensely nervous even to say them because of how they have been used against my people and against Black people: the Jewish landlord and the Black rapist. Jews are rich and Blacks are violent.

Historically these stereotypes originate in very different ways. The Jewish landlord originates in a grain of truth, probably in Harlem, where some members of the Jewish community retained stores and houses after they'd moved to other neighborhoods—houses where Black people lived, stores where Black people bought. The Black rapist, on the other hand, originates in the white South's fantasy. No southern Black man with his mind intact would have raped a white woman, given the danger of such an act; but the myth of the Black rapist has served to terrorize and lynch Black men, to constrain white women, and to oppress Black women by making their particular vulnerability to white male sexual abuse invisible and unspeakable.

Never mind what any economic analyst can tell you; most owners aren't Jewish. Never mind what any woman could tell you; *any* man walking behind her on an otherwise empty street might be a rapist; and many rapists are men of privilege who rape in the form of sexual harassment and coercion, not to mention abuse of their own children.

But stereotypes have a powerful life of their own. The landlord, symbol of privilege and exploitation. Landlords stand in for all exploitative owners, that is to say, for capitalists: those who make money, hoard money, live at the expense of others. And Jews are peculiarly associated with money.

The rapist, symbol of urban violence—and Blacks are peculiarly associated with both sex and violence. Perfect. It's revealing that the Black rapist is always thought of as raping white women, since this assumption ignores statistics, which show that Black rapists tend to



rape Black women, as white rapists rape white women. Rapists choose women to rape based on accessibility and on whether they—the rapists—think they can get away with it.

So why is the rape victim in this myth white? Because she symbolizes white men's property, sexualized to avoid the awkward fact of economic inequity. (Her whiteness, his blackness also cleverly conceal the essentially *patriarchal* nature of violence against women.) The concern is not with any woman's safety, but with Black men's theft of white men's property.

So as landlords stand in for all exploitative owners (those who make money), rapists stand in for all thieves (those who steal money, the have-nots, the threatening clamorous underclass).

You see where these stereotypes connect fundamentally with class. If the problem is Jewish greed, if the problem is Black immorality, then capitalism itself is not the problem. So let me say clearly that capitalism is a problem, and the Jewish–Black problem will be a problem as long as there are economically oppressed peoples.

We could spend a lot of energy on why it's unfair that the abuses of capitalism are blamed on Jews. It is

unfair. But for us to combat the anger's manifestation without also combating the anger's cause—economic injustice and cruelty—is likewise unfair. I also believe it's stupid and destructive.

The landlord and the rapist, the Jew and the Black, are men. Where are the women?

Many of you teach on campuses, and I hope you are aware of the upsurge in attacks on Jewish women under the rubric of JAP, that favorite laugh for Jewish male comics. The Jewish American Princess is the contemporary version of the Jewish mother, who at least was nurturing, while the Jewish American Princess does nothing but nag and consume—this at a time when Jewish women, like other women, are working outside the home in unprecedented numbers. She's not sexually subservient. She's a woman who doesn't submit.

Inside the Jewish community, the JAP epithet is clearly backlash by men who seem not to understand or care that the term is not only sexist (and, of course, racist against Japanese people) but anti-Semitic. Outside the Jewish community, the Jewish American Princess not only functions as a magnet for anti-Semitism; she also takes the rap for capitalist consumption. She is the scapegoat—often quite literally she is excluded by signs that proclaim *No JAPS Allowed Here,* and in one instance in Arizona a woman's husband killed her and went free on a "JAP defense" obtained by the same lawyer who got the killer of Harvey Milk and George Moscone acquitted on a "Twinkie defense."

In the Black community, I see the stereotypes of the Black matriarch (remember the woman Pat Moynihan blamed for undermining Black manhood, instead of honoring her for helping Black people survive) and Sapphire the whore (who will probably soon be blamed for spreading AIDS). I also see a similar backlash against assertive Black women—though not on the scale of Jewish men trashing Jewish women. Take Alice Walker, who has got to be the most generous person on the face of the earth and who believes practically everybody has the capacity to change, and she has been viciously attacked as hateful toward Black men because she writes about father-daughter incest, battering, and, god forbid, lesbian love.

Outside the Black community, the common stereotype of Black women is the welfare mother sucking the country dry. It's her fault that taxes are high; she brings up her kids wrong; she's sexually irresponsible; she doesn't understand protein (as though anyone on food stamps can "understand" protein). All the ravages of capitalism are blamed on her. She is the passive version of the rapist/mugger: he takes money, she spends money not her own. She is the poor version of the Jewish American Princess; she's a parasite who does nothing but consume, the main difference being she can't consume very much.

So again we have the greedy, evil moneybags, and the inferior, immoral leech; one is blamed for capitalism, the other for capitalism's fallout.

When Jewish and Black women step outside these stereotypes and are themselves, I believe that we—and many other ethnic women—have not only our differences to deal with, but also some similarities, similarities that can help us learn from and support one another.

I want to look at women in another way, as potential sources of solutions. Let me say baldly that the women's movement is ahead of the mixed left on this issue for a couple of reasons. One, despite *Tikkun*'s editorial a few months ago stating that the women's movement never became a mass movement, the women's movement *is* a mass movement. Amorphous and not always full-bodied in its analysis, it nonetheless has changed the lives of millions of women—and men—and brought women from many different communities into contact with one another. There is barely a city in this country that does not have explicit women's activities taking place, and in all these places a challenge is being articulated and strengthened to combat racism and, to a lesser extent, anti-Semitism.

There's another aspect to this picture. Lesbians have always formed a disproportionately high number of cross-class, cross-race, cross-culture relationships. Often these relationships retain familial status even after breaking up. Many of us maintain very close ties with our home communities. So these relationships spin out into networks of family connections, including in-laws and children; and inside these relationships much pain is felt raw. Dealing positively with Black-Jewish tension is not abstractly desirable but concretely necessary.

Not surprising that some of the most hopeful developments in Black-Jewish relations have been among feminists. Out of conflicts in the women's movement have come dozens of dialogue groups, coalitions, and various attempts to work through some of these issues; and because women have been working on these issues, we've reached some places that have not been reached by the mixed left.

The other source of solution is inside the Jewish community. If we approach the problem from the source of the division, namely class, we will look for leadership to those in the Jewish community who share concerns with members of the Black community—for example, women, seniors, and gays. What this means is that Jewish men have to step back and listen to the concerns of the whole Jewish community, not just the part that's comfortable for or visible to them. *Healing the Black-Jewish split will also challenge the hierarchy and sexism*

of the Jewish community, including the progressive Jewish community.

What will our agenda look like? It will be a long list including: medical care, day care, decent employment, housing, affirmative action (all this talk of Jews opposing affirmative action when Jewish women have always supported it), reproductive rights, protection for sexual preference, AIDS research and treatment, prevention of violence against women, urban safety, sensible foreign policy (no intervention on the side of repressive governments, foreign aid as the right of developing nations), antiracism legislation and protection, separation of church and state, and a strong education platform—from public schools through college. How many in this audience were educated through the free City College system? I was. That option no longer exists. It is a disgrace that the percentage of Black college students, after an upward surge, is decreasing.

What will pull us together is hearts outraged by injustice and committed to generosity.

We Jews need to articulate strongly a pro-Jewish antiracist voice to address not just our common ground of discrimination and race hate but our not-so-common ground of economic inequities. *And we need to do this visibly as Jews.* Many of us who are working against racism and on various progressive issues don't identify ourselves as Jews and we should find ways to do so. A very related part of this work is building Jewish pride and solidarity.

Jewish visibility is critical when it comes to the issue of South Africa. The battle against apartheid is, of course, very important to the Black community, and Israel's relationship with South Africa is a sore point in Black-Jewish relations. We need to publicize that the Israeli left, like the left here, is working on sanctions against South Africa. We should also name as Jews those Jewish South Africans who have fought and continue to fight against apartheid: people like Ruth First, Nadine Gordimer, Abie Nathan, Albie Sachs, Helen Suzman, Janet Levine, and a South African organization called Jews for Justice.

I believe that the politics of most Blacks today and the politics of progressive Jews are basically similar. This is common sense. Blacks are the most predictably progressive group on the majority of political issues. But what will pull us together is not an instant or easy trust. Nor is it nostalgic longing for equal victim status (a resurrection of Leo Frank, the lynched Jew) or revisionism (embarrassed erasure of Judah Benjamin, the financial brains of the Confederacy, the progressive Jews' nightmare). I believe what will pull us together is hearts outraged by injustice and committed to generosity.

A character in a story of mine—a woman much like myself—on the subway in New York thinks: "Today I'm here in Hymietown as Jesse Jackson was stupid enough to call it and never be forgiven for by people every one of whom has heard *shvartze* once in her or his life without protest." *The time for self-righteousness is over.*

I want to remind us all of some words of Che Guevara which I thought I understood when I first heard them at age twenty but which I believe I am coming to understand now: "At the risk of sounding ridiculous I need to say that the true revolutionary is guided by feelings of great love." Examine if you will the discomfort many of us have come to feel with the word "revolutionary"—whether because of the rhetoric or from healthy Jewish suspicion—but hold onto the injunction that acts of solidarity from the heart are what's needed. Where our hearts, or hearts in our community, are closed by fear and bitterness, we need to do the hard, important work of opening them as big as possible. That's our Jewish job. □

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FICTION

The Brass Ring

Nicholas Delbanco

Vastation: that was the word in his head. He had used it once before, when young, and his father's friend complained. "You mean *de*vastation, don't you? Why don't you write what you mean?"

"But it's a word."

"Vastation?"

"Yes. It's what Catholics say, I think, when they can't locate God. When they can't find him anywhere. It's the absolute absence of God."

"Except you're Jewish," said Meyer Rosen. "Jews have no right to that word."

"It's in the language, isn't it? The dictionary." Frederick Hasenclever raised his voice. "You don't *have* to be a Catholic to use a dictionary."

"I don't use one when I'm reading." Meyer Rosen nodded. "Devastation's what you mean. That's why you don't sell many copies of your books."

They were standing in the living room of the Rosen apartment, by the jade plant and the Käthe Kollwitz, across from the self-portrait by Kokoschka. Kokoschka's gaze was baleful; his eyes appeared half-closed. It was hot. The party was in honor of Frederick's father's sixtieth birthday, and his relatives were eating shrimp and drinking Campari and soda and white wine and exclaiming at the view of the East River from this height—how traffic on the Triboro was crawling, how the skyline changed each year, how well he, Fred, was looking without that awful beard he wore for his book jacket picture, and did he want to look like a rabbi, and how was he liking New Hampshire, what courses did he teach?

There were aunts and cousins and business partners and his younger brother, Arnold; there was cold roast beef and turkey and beet salad and pâté. "The thing I'm proudest of," his father said—when it came time to offer a toast—"is friendship. Is my family and friends. Is the memory of my beloved wife Lilo, and how wonderful you were to us last year." Briefly he faltered. "Is how much a friend my sons remain to me, and matter to each other, and I don't say I've deserved it but will try. Your friendship, Meyer and Ilse, who made this occasion. Everyone"—he raised his glass—"there's nothing you could ask I wouldn't give you. Gladly. The suit off my back."

"That's because it's worn out," Rosen called. He was the host; the guests laughed. He was an investment banker, with a collection of Nolde watercolors in the bedroom; he and Hans Hasenclever had been friends since their shared childhood in Berlin. He wore a blue monogrammed shirt and a dark blue foulard and was taking a proprietary interest in young Freddy's progress; he wanted to know the marketing strategies for this new novel; just because you use the word "vastation" doesn't mean you shouldn't sell....

"I thought you said," said Frederick, "that *was* the reason."

"One of them. The other is the sales force, the way they choose to market."

"It does my heart good," said his father, nearing, "to see the two of you like this. Conferring together, the businessman and the artist. It meant so much to your mother"—he squeezed Frederick's cheek—"that we should stay in touch. That's what they mean by *present*. A gift. To see you here this way."

"I have to leave, Dad. Soon. First thing in the morning, I mean."

"You hear that?" Rosen chortled. "All those shiksa horse-girls in the hills. Our Freddy is spreading the word. Our Freddy is filling their heads. Go with God," he said. "And then may God help you. 'Vastation.'"

For twenty-five years he did teach, moving to Northeastern and Amherst and finally Columbia. His father died. Arnold moved to the West Coast. Meyer Rosen, too, was dead—though Fred heard this only second-hand and somehow imagined the old man, a fatter, less placid Bernard Baruch dispensing strict opinion still from the park bench by the river. He smoked cigars, then a pipe. He married one of his students—an Episcopalian from St. Paul, whose paper on Fitzgerald had been suffused, he wrote her on the margin, with an insider's insight. Sarah came to his office next morning. "Why did you say that?" she asked.

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"What exactly did you mean?" She fingered the fringe of her skirt.

Their marriage was childless; it lasted three years. She left him for a contractor from Minneapolis with whom she had gone sailing and played hockey as a girl. Colin had been waiting; he was her one true beau. Frederick, by contrast, with his "Jewish bonanzas of mouth-love," was simply not her scene. She had been reading "The Time of Her Time." If she left now, Sarah told him, she could go with no hard feelings or regrets. She read Werner Erhard, too. She knew it would be painful, but they could let bygones be bygones, and there's no time like the present to start with the rest of your life.

Two years later he married again—this time a divorcée with three children of her own. Lavinia owned a fabric import firm and an apartment on Park Avenue into which he barely fit, with his additional records and bulky red Selectric, and his books. She liked the fact that he worked at home and could answer the phone; she loved the way he got on with the kids. And he did enjoy the ritual of making lunch and helping with homework and meeting them for ice cream and then coffee and then cocktails while Lavinia was traveling; he stayed while she made buying trips to Bangkok and Bombay. Once he joined her, and his gleaming lacquered wife seemed scarcely less foreign to Frederick than the sari-swathed hostess at the Ashoka Hotel. He was, he realized piercingly, alone and far from home; he had flown across the world to join a woman in New Delhi of whose history he was as innocent as the woman handing him his key. When they divorced, in 1982, it was uncontested; he was fifty and bearded again and issueless, the author of six books.

His reputation, if small, felt nonetheless secure; he had twice been nominated for the American Book Award. He contributed to literary quarterlies and joined symposia and, having received grants himself, dispensed them for the National Endowment for the Arts or the Bush Foundation; it was a pleasure, he would say, to give other folks' money away. He lived on Claremont Avenue, in a Columbia-owned apartment, and watched with what he thought of as dispassion while his students grew famous and rich. Their pictures were in magazines, often—*People, Newsweek, Esquire, Time*—and he himself would sometimes be mentioned as having put the seal of his approval on their prose. He went to movies based on their books, or for which they wrote the screenplays, and their publishers sent him the glossy promotional packets that heralded success. They stared at him—the girls, the gifted boys—from supermarket racks. His own work appeared without fanfare, and sometimes he remembered Rosen's bluff conviction that the market could be rigged.

As he settled more and more into middle age (his morning bagel in the toaster oven, his decaffeinated blend from Zabar's, his baldness no longer a sorrow), Hasenclever asked himself if he had missed some turning, or failed to face some challenge; his most recent novel was titled *The Brass Ring*. The book was about a German-Jewish refugee who changes his last name in order to succeed. He does so, in the advertising business, but then discovers that his lack of honesty has barred him from promotion; the owner of the agency is an old German Jew. The two of them engage in discussion, wrote the reviewer for the *Nation*, "bordering on the Talmudic. These authenticity mavens have a sideline in TV. What seems at stake in Hasenclever's work is the quiddity of things, the suchness of gesture as act. And his elusive hero is not quite the protagonist, nor even the old mogul Lehrman. We sense a shadowy third figure—the one who grabs the ring, the carousel horseman with prayer shawl and *peyes*, the groping compassionate self. . . ."

Was there mockery in this? What in heaven's name, he asked himself, did the reviewer mean by "quiddity of things"? What shadowy "elusive hero" could he have created, and what sort of "devotional author"—a tag from the review in *Newsday*—has no faith in God? That a writer is his own worst critic may be conventional wisdom, but it is nonetheless wrong. Hasenclever knew himself; he was fifty-six years old, farsighted, and there was nothing to see.

In New York for an audition, Arnold came down with the flu. It was January 3. He had flown in from Seattle and felt "punk" all flight, as if the pressure in the cabin were calibrated wrongly; he went straight to the hotel. He took aspirin, drank scotch. When he tried to stand, his feet hurt so badly he could not stay on them. He tried to dominate the pain and distract himself by walking in the hall. Then he kept his feet above his head. He stood on his head; he took cold and scalding baths. His knees felt as though they were crushed. He took a taxi to the emergency room of the nearest hospital and was barely conscious by the time he arrived. They saved his life. He pieced all this together later, lying in intensive care unable to breathe, speak, or move. He had what was variously described as Acute Idiopathic Polyneuritis and Landry's Ascending Paralysis and Guillain-Barré Syndrome. He could move his eyelids; that was all. He conveyed his needs by blinking while the nurse held up a chart. It could take him half an hour to spell, "Right elbow," for instance, or "Rub foot."

The prognosis was uncertain; those who did not die at once had a chance of full recovery. The recuperation period could last up to two years. After three weeks of intensive care, he was transferred to the Institute for

Rehabilitation Medicine, the "Rusk." He would improve. Hasenclever learned all this from Arnold's third wife, Ginger; her voice was reedy, high. Ginger was calling from Phoenix. She and Arnold had been separated for six months. She was living with a systems analyst for an engineering firm in Phoenix; he gave her a sense of security that Arnold never gave. "He wants to see you," Ginger said. "He's ready for company now."

"Company?"

"I called. I was up there just last weekend."

"I'm sorry. I was out of town."

"Don't worry. He's insured."

"Will he know me?" Hasenclever coiled the cord. "Why didn't I know this before?"

"He has trouble focusing. He didn't want to worry you. He's lost a lot of weight."

"Is there something I can do for him? Bring, I mean?"

"Chocolate. You mustn't be shocked."

He tried to imagine a catheter, a tracheostomy, a view dictated by the pillow's placement at the neck.

"And now he's being wonderful. He's got his sweet tooth back." Her voice changed pitch, increased. "His eyes, Fred, it's astonishing. They positively *shine*."

The cord was black.

"He wanted me to let you know. He didn't want a visit when it was so terrible. He's getting better now."

"Yes."

"I was named as the person to contact, but you're the next of kin."

He pressed his nose. He closed one eye and saw only the flat of his hand. They had played tennis together. They ate and gesticulated and collected each other at airports with a shared assumption of mobility so common as to go unnoticed until gone.

Room 504 had five beds. A nurse was lifting Arnold's leg. She lowered it and covered it with sheets. His face was bright. He needed a shave. The flush on his cheeks made it appear as if he had been exercising or out in the sun. He turned his head. He could do that. "Well, well," he said. "Look who's here. About time, schmuck." His voice was a rough whisper. There was a tube in his throat; another tube curved down toward his mouth.

"I'm Susan," said the nurse. "You're his brother, right? We haven't met."

"Hello."

"This is a good time," she said. "I was just finishing."

"Bye-bye," said Arnold. He said it audibly. "See you tomorrow."

"Same time, same station. If you don't stand me up."

"I wouldn't do that."

"One day you will," Susan said. "I'll be coming here to work and you'll be in the Bahamas."

"I'd take you with me, darling."

"They all say that." She took an armful of linen from the chair by the bed. She blew a kiss and moved away. Hasenclever sat.

"She's wonderful," said Arnold. "Everyone's been wonderful."

He loosened his tie. "That's impressive."

"Wonderful. They had to turn me every six hours. Maybe more often—I lose track of time. But I never lost the knowledge of how wonderful they were." His eyes glistened; he did seem grateful. "Tell me everything," he said.

"I brought you chocolate. Ginger told me to fatten you up."

"For the kill," said Arnold. "That must be what she means."

He slipped two Toblerone bars out of his jacket pocket. His brother, like their uncle, had blue eyes.

"That's wonderful," said Arnold. "Perfect."

"Would you like some?"

"No. Not now." Infinitesimally, he shifted his head. "Put it in the drawer over there."

Then there was silence between them. Hasenclever heard a television behind a curtain in the room. Someone muttered, sleeping; a wheelchair hummed past. Arnold demonstrated the workings of the tube beside his mouth. He sucked and spat at it, and the television turned on. He made sucking motions, and the channel switched. So did the volume and contrast control. Then he spat decisively and the machine went blank.

"Tell me when you're tired. I don't want to tire you out."

"Five minutes."

"As long as you want."

"I knew I wouldn't get the part. There's nothing for me in New York. I don't even know why I came."

The blue intensity of Arnold's gaze had slackened. His speech slurred. Hasenclever said, "I'm going now," and he did not object. "Come back," he said. "You can watch me work my automatic reader. It turns the page. It does everything but tell me what to read."

"Take care of yourself."

"Yes."

"Not to worry." He patted the bed. "You'll be doing Errol Flynn remakes. You'll be turning cartwheels. . . ."

Arnold made no answer. Hasenclever left. Two women in wheelchairs had come face to face by the first nurses' station; they could not negotiate the turn. They backed away from each other, then forward, like bumper cars at Playland or a county fair. A travel poster for Biarritz hung in the waiting room, as did a poster of Sesame Street's Big Bird. He pressed the elevator button repeatedly, waiting. By the gift shoppe he breathed freely and waved at the policeman. A one-armed violin player, his bow held in his mouth, took money in a hat.

Frederick went often to the Rusk. Wanting air, he told the cab to let him off on Thirty-fourth Street and Second Avenue. Then he walked. Weekend fathers stood in line for that day's double feature or—as spring progressed—bought hot dogs and pretzels at a soubrette. Inside, the elevator might disgorge a bald Black legless woman laughing. "The phone," the woman told him. "I got to use the *phone*." On the second floor a man with a walker would enter; he made a "Brrr" sound repeatedly, spraying. Porfirio in the bed beside Arnold was a double amputee. He cried out in Spanish, sleeping; he beat at the bed with his fists. A green cart made delivery of what looked like fruit.

It had had, his brother told him, the flavor of a dream. There was a night nurse whose right arm Arnold focused on: the puckering flesh at the elbow, the bracelets and wrist. At first he did not know the date or time or, absolutely, where he lay; he had seven doctors. They had announced their number as if there were safety in numbers and he would be reassured. They succeeded each other, conferring; they stood at the foot of his bed.

Often there were students also—deferential, intense, wielding clipboards. They turned him cautiously. They could help him, he had been certain; they knew what was wrong and the procedures by which he could and would be cured. They raised his feet and rotated his arm and sponged him down and asked him, if he understood, to signify by blinking. He blinked. This was an involuntary mechanism as well as voluntary, however, and sometimes when he blinked they asked him please to blink again while they consulted the chart. The danger of not blinking is that you go blind.

Arnold gained weight. He covered his mouth while he ate. He could eat salami, but he had trouble with crackers. He learned to open jars and cans, and he cut out coupons and stirred jello in physical therapy; he drank from a wine glass because of the stem. He had periodic spasms of exhaustion, but his progress was surprising, week by month. He had focused purely on working his way back to health. Frederick admired this resolve.

Still, there did seem something fretful about the way he exercised and ate, as if his comfort and well-being were of universal interest. He hoped to pass unnoticed in the street. But he also expected to be made much of, fussed over; he wanted to be left alone and also wanted pampering. He was happy hearing music—Gershwin, early Mozart, the Goldberg variations. Frederick purchased a Walkman, and brought tapes. His brother sat in the wheelchair leafing through books: the autobiography of Alec Guinness, photographs of Burma or by Margaret Bourke-White. He studied faces intently but seemed unwilling to read. His eyes were weak, he said. The once animal exuberance about him had gone.

"My artistic children," their father liked to say. "My writer and my actor. Thank heaven you won't starve." Arnold liked performing, even in high school, and studied jazz dancing and how to stage fights. He had been a gymnast—tight, springy-muscled, strong on the parallel bars. Frederick, the studious one, had not known what to make of this dervish—Arnold on the diving board or parapet—since he did not like diving and feared heights. Laurence Olivier, according to Arnold, said an actor requires physical strength; it is the first tool of the trade.

His parents' generation died in Bergen-Belsen or Dachau. His generation died of myocardial infarction or lung cancer, or they died by their own hands.

He went to Juilliard and LAMDA and joined repertory companies in Chicago, San Francisco, and Seattle; he never did play Romeo or Hamlet, and now he was missing Macbeth. That was how he measured age; he hadn't given up quite yet on Prospero or Lear. Not that he played Shakespeare much, but Shakespeare wrote a part for every age of actor; you could measure your life by his parts. Meantime, Arnold worked. He did the odd commercial and the sidekick in a series that ran for eighteen episodes; *Billy and the D.A.* had been the name of the show. Once Hasenclever, late at night, saw him on TV. His brother was being a drunk. He said "Melancholy baby" often to the pianist; he rolled his eyes and tugged at his collar and slurred, "Play me one for the road. One more time."

The maimed were everywhere about the Rusk, pitching themselves at the traffic or bravely up on skateboards or sunning in wheelchairs in doorways. He saw his brother routinely; the policemen in the lobby knew Hasenclever's name. Arnold improved. Visiting hours were late, and often there were others in the room—though not often there for him. Arnold's roommates came from Puerto Rico and had large families. Their daughters played canasta every day. Porfirio, who had no legs, was excellent at cards; he had worked as a croupier.

At times the men met in the hall. "Are they crowding you?" asked Frederick. His brother shook his head. "The first thing you get rid of is the need for privacy. That goes so quickly you wouldn't believe it."

"What next?"

"Pride."

"You should be proud of yourself."

Arnold smiled. He used a wheelchair now that he could guide by buttons.

"It's slow."

"'Slow but steady wins the race.'"

He ceased smiling. The play of attitude across his face seemed somehow volitional, as if he prepared himself to frown, then frowned. The elevator opened. A woman on a hospital bed lifted her right hand. She did not move her head. The linoleum was marbled, mottled: red and black.

"You're getting better."

"Yes."

"Remember what Dad used to say? *'Wenn Man eine Operation durchgemacht hat, dann braucht Man ein bißchen Erholung.'*"

"I don't remember, no."

"'After an operation, it takes time to recover.'"

"Now tell me how much I've grown," Arnold said. "Since the last time you visited, tell me how grown-up I seem."

"I'm sorry."

"Don't be."

"Are you in pain?"

He shook his head. When they first brought him to his bed, he fell asleep; when he woke the pain was gone. He had felt nothing else, except in the "procedures"—the nasogastric tube replacement, lumbar puncture, EMG. What he felt was shock, drugged puzzlement, a disembodied floating that was like relief.

"How long will they keep you?"

"Here?"

"Yes."

"I've got to figure out," said Arnold, "where to go to next. And when I stop improving, that's when I get sprung."

A Black orderly with an anchor on his forearm cuffed the wheelchair. "Hey," he said. "How goes it?"

"It goes."

Hasenclever rolled his wrist so he could check his watch: six-sixteen.

"It's boring," Arnold said. "You can't imagine how boring this is. I can beat an egg by now. And I'm sanding wood. They change the sandpaper each week, so it takes more strength. I position checkers on a checkerboard."

"Do you swim?"

"A little. Mostly in the pool I practice how to walk. And then there's the tilt table. They've got me at ninety degrees."

The note of pride and the exacting accuracy were familiar; he seemed truly on the mend. The Puerto Ricans laughed. They crowded to the elevator, bearing pineapples. "I'll take you," Frederick said. "If you want a place to stay when you get out of here, you come with me."

Arnold turned his wheelchair. His room was the fourth on the right. "It's kind of you."

The writer stood. He adjusted his sleeve. Each gesture felt adroit to him, the coordination fluent to the point of mockery. "I mean it. You can stay."

Deracination, he told his students, is the commonplace condition of contemporary man. It is the rule, not the exception, in our mobile time. How many of us live where our parents' parents did, and have no need to improvise an answer to the question, "Where do you come from? Where's home?" The executive and migrant worker are alike in this. Voluntary exile is a subtle, sapping thing. The tree dissevered from the root can take a transplant, possibly, but the root system must be handled with some care.

By April, using crutches, Arnold managed stairs. There were none in the apartment. There were hallway runners, however, and the doorjamb to the bathroom was pronounced. Hasenclever studied the rooms closely to see how his brother might fit. He prepared what used to be the maid's room and was now a storage closet. The apartment faced a corner: south and east.

Experts from the hospital arrived on May 15—in order to evaluate facilities, they said. A brother and sister, Koreans, they came from the outskirts of Seoul. "This is a most nice apartment," they chorused, shedding coats. He tried to examine the space with their eyes, to see what they, measuring, saw. They told him that the patient would be ambulatory but would require handle insets in the shower stall. Arnold could arrange his transfer from the wheelchair with a transfer board; he had practiced getting into and getting out of cars. They had a sample kitchen on the first floor of the Institute, as well as a model living room and bedroom and dinette and bath.

The rollaway bed was too low. It should be set on blocks. The passage to the kitchen would be difficult to manage, and Hasenclever should remember that the patient would have difficulty lifting food from the refrigerator shelf. This would not continue. His provisions should be stored—the juice half-poured, the cereal measured, the berries within easy reach—on the bottom shelf. "The juice half-poured?" he questioned them, and they nodded, smiling: half a glass.

Frederick agreed. His guests accepted tea. Only while they measured the kitchen table's height did he start to say that such precision seemed excessive; Arnold had a life elsewhere, and would leave. But as they left him, bowing, nodding, it came clear to him the stay would be indefinite. He would be his brother's keeper, he told the Koreans. They laughed.

He was working on a book about a country of the mind called "Brasil." It was a nation ruled by a provisional junta, but the junta did want unity, so there was perfect union—if provisional, if fleeting—in city and in country, for the elderly and youthful, male and female, rich and poor. Such distinctions fell away. The artisan—the man in a wine shop, fresh from his potter's wheel or lathe, come to dispute at noon—might also be a senator or scholar or priest. Here flourished just such a union of the political, artistic, and religious life as Yeats dreamed in *A Vision* might have occurred in Byzantium. Yet you can't go back to Constantinople—so Hasenclever's hero sang. We've changed its name. We call it, now, Brasil.

I thought they call it Istanbul, said his antagonist; on my map that's how it's spelled. The traveler flourished his atlas, explaining. Here's the White Sea, Vastation, and here the Despond Slough. Leander swam the Hellespont, using something like a breaststroke, to gain his promised land. O ye of little faith, said Hasenclever's hero, though you close your eyes it is not night; that you fail to hear a waterfall does not render the waterfall silent. The citizens of our republic listen for a music that is not a marching band's.

I admire such a passion, said the girl. Indeed, it feels exciting—here she squeezed his hand—but I don't know how to swim yet and don't trust the vasty deep. She ran her fingertips lingeringly down the skin graft on his forearm where the numbers had been burned. Trust it, says the artisan, and pours unwatered wine.

He brought balloons and streamers. He festooned the entrance foyer, as if for a child's birthday, crisscrossing crepe paper at the center. It formed a canopy. The colors were pastel: yellow, orange, white, and green. He cut the letters WELCOME out of colored paper, draping the sign from the crepe. He bought noisemakers and leis and conical paper hats and Taittinger champagne. He bought more cheese and salami than they could possibly eat.

Hasenclever worked in what he recognized as a frenzy of avoidance, rolling back the rugs. He diced onions and hard-boiled eggs for caviar; he put two bottles of the Taittinger on ice. He cut lemon into wedges, placed the caviar and sour cream in bowls, unwrapped the melba toast. When Arnold arrived he was waiting. The buzzer announced him. He went to the door. An attendant stood behind the wheelchair. They both were wearing raincoats, and Arnold had a lap robe also. Its pattern was tartan, its colors green and black. His cheeks were red. He had been recently shaved. There were indentations at his temples; his lower lip slanted, his eyes seemed half shut.

"We made it," the attendant said. "I'm Bob."

"You made it," the writer repeated, and Arnold said, "Hello."

The balloons were an embarrassment. The crepe was in the way. He wheeled toward the WELCOME sign and stopped before it, staring.

Bob said he was heading out and Arnie was a trooper and ought to take it slow. You ought to seen him leaving—all those nurses kissing him, that candy he left at the desk. Hasenclever gave him twenty dollars, and Bob straightened his cap and withdrew.

The chandelier was on a rheostat. He increased the light.

"You know what Susan asked me? 'How many assholes have you met—twenty, twenty-five?'" Arnold's voice was low. "I said I used to meet that many every morning; I must have known ten thousand in my life. And she said, 'Guess what, every one of those assholes can walk.'"

He shook himself out of his coat. Frederick retrieved it. "Are you hungry?"

"No."

"Let's go into the living room," he said.

The carpet that he thought of as too thin was an encumbrance. He steered his brother to the coffee table, angling widely past the couch. Then Arnold transferred to the couch. He rearranged his feet. Arnold was crying, he saw, had been crying since arrival, making sounds in his throat as if a bone were caught there. Hasenclever bent above him, but he shook his head. He fled to get the caviar, the salami and champagne.

In the kitchen, too, time telescoped. He saw his parents everywhere, as if they were alive. His mother and his father washed their hands. Lilo stood in the kitchen, complaining about the fashion in which her husband cracked eggs; he was spilling the egg yolk over the rim of the bowl and was careless of the shell. "It's good for the digestion," Hans proclaimed. "You don't want too much egg yolk. You use too much salt."

Repeatedly the writer asked himself if he had failed them, how he failed; what was Arnold doing somewhere else and therefore unprotected? Could he have protected him? Could it have been helped? A baby passes by a stove and reaches for the kettle and is scarred for life; a second's hesitation at the crossroads and the train keeps coming and the driver dies. Lavinia's children were grown. They sent him birthday cards. Between them, the brothers had married five times. He made his way back to the living room, balancing the tray. Arnold had recovered. A blue balloon by the window inched past the sill, then fell.

Yet Hasenclever had been spared; his life was a constant such sparing. Others died. They crossed the street or crossed a supermarket's second aisle or a line they had been warned against by someone with a cross-hatched scope who lay in a duck blind or tower. They were blown up while waiting for tickets or buying magazines.

His parents' generation died in Bergen-Belsen or Dachau. They died in Auschwitz and Sachsenhausen and Munich and Berlin. His generation died of myocardial infarction or lung cancer or on New Year's Eve in Saugatuck and Valentine's Day in Nashville, skidding; they died behind the wheels of Corvairs, Rivieras, Datsuns, convertibles, jeeps. They died by their own hands. They placed their heads in ovens or jumped at onrushing subways or from the Golden Gate Bridge. They died by misadventure with the toaster; they crashed in airplanes and buses and Boston Whalers at the jetty at low tide. They used cyanide carelessly, attempting to fumigate bees. They misused the shotgun or leaf mulcher or linseed oil or heroin or ladder or the station wagon on ice.

Meyer Rosen joined the party in his mind. He approved of the champagne. Hasenclever opened the champagne, not popping the cork but releasing it. Then he poured. "Go with God," said Rosen. "Didn't I tell you to travel? You need a dictionary, though. *'Entschuldigen Sie, Mein Herr, wie kommt Man zum Post?'* 'Excuse me, sir, where is the post office?'" Ginger was doing the rhumba, or perhaps the tango; he could not be certain. She was going to Brazil, she said, or maybe Argentina; she practiced in the hall.

Their mother brought a dish of mussels with a separate bowl for broth. The broth had parsley floating in it, and a fleck of parsley appeared on her thumbnail. He remembered how she diced the scallions and the garlic and the parsley, the feel of her cutting board afterward sluiced down with lemon, the buttery brine in their cups. He could taste and see and feel and smell and even hear them; they were a tactile presence, a part of him inalienably, the marrow of his bone and pith of his eyebrow and muscle and ligature and teeth. □

RECOLLECTION

Wherein Is Related My Encounter With a Swabian Windmill

Joseph Edelman

After what happened I began to ask myself: "How could an inanimate object be spiteful and malicious? How was that possible? A person, yes, but a physical object? Something made of sheet metal and steel?"

But that was literally what I was up against. Here was I, a veritable Don Quixote taking my stance in a conflict with lifeless matter. I became so possessed with anger that no soft answer could turn away my wrath. I can identify the source of the provocative events that put me on the firing line, as it were: Tyrone Carlton Gainsburgh! That was the name on the card he handed me when he moved into the French Provincial house next door. He was about fifty, of undistinguished physiognomy, an engineer or, as he more succinctly put it, "a missile expert." He was also, despite the quaintness of his moniker, a Jew.

Our contacts, in the main, took place across a high fence separating our respective gardens. Saturdays and Sundays he devoted to his begonias. He was a nut about begonias. One fine day he gave me the benefit of his pragmatic philosophy.

"You're retired, I heard, and you're not yet fifty. That's wrong! A man should do constructive work."

"Like missiles?" I muttered under my breath.

"Yes, indeed, a man must work," he went on. "And what's more, everything about him must reflect his character: his home, his garden, his car."

I began to shrink at the mention of the last object. He was striking home.

"I see you drive a Chevy. That's no car for a man like you."

"What kind of car should a man like me drive?" I asked meekly.

"A Mercedes, of course!"

"But it's German."

"Don't be absurd. One mustn't carry prejudices forever."

"Unto the tenth generation," I murmured, remembering the biblical imprecations.

"What did you say?"

I shook my head, staring at him open-mouthed.

"We must forget the past. I married a German woman. Didn't Israel accept almost a billion in reparations? What about Werner von Braun? Look what he's done for our country."

His logic was irrefutable. My prejudices vanished into the stratosphere; my resistance broke. That was the beginning of my encounter with that legendary windmill from Stuttgart, my precious Mercedes.

In a matter of weeks my wife and I flew to that staid and sober city. Soon

Joseph Edelman, lawyer (retired), has had articles, short stories, and poetry appearing in various periodicals.

I found myself in a luxurious bucket seat of soft leather behind the wheel of that engineering miracle my neighbor had lauded to the automotive skies. "Remember it's the car of cars. Trouble-free! Like floating on air! And people will judge you accordingly. . . ."

Ah, how well I remember Gainsburgh's memorable words. My wife, usually too voluble, now sat beside me eloquent in taciturnity. The car seemed to have an immediate effect upon her mood. Chevy, Cadillac, Mercedes—it was all the same to her. She was always awkward in arithmetic, could not add to a thousand, and people, with or without money, were all the same to her, except that those with money, she said, always wanted more.

It was quite another matter for me, I must confess. I beamed as I drove off.

"Not bad," I said, nudging my wife. I threw out my chest and smiled. "What a far way we've come from the West Side of Chicago."

Suddenly it happened, twenty minutes from our starting line. The back door sprung open, and the car veered off the road. My dispatch case containing all my documents and files flew out, bouncing and banging along the Swabian highway. I could feel my hair turning gray as I caught sight of my personal papers flying in the Swabian wind. Across my wife's bemused face an I-told-you-so smile flitted momentarily.

That was the first of a series of incidents, but only a dress rehearsal of what came tumbling after. We drove on to Munich, then Dachau. Incident number two took place at Dachau. I turned the ignition key. Motor—Dead! I was at it half an hour outside the burning memories of that hellish concentration camp. On, off, with periods of rest between; for you mustn't flood the delicate carburetor, so I was told. Finally, we telephoned a Mercedes service station. The mechanic turned the key. The motor purred at once. Right then I knew I was dealing with something more than sheet metal and steel. A premonition! I saw the specters, the whole bloody lot. The Nüremberg defendants—ghosts of Goebbels, Goering, Streicher, Hitler. But it wasn't until the next incident that I virtually felt a fifth column inside that exquisite leather and wood-paneled interior.

We visited friends in Mougins in sunny Provence. They greeted us warmly, but reserved their more sanguine greetings for the car, actually caressing the semiprecious hood.

"My, it's a beauty!" they exclaimed.

I parked the beauty a slight rise above their villa, taking precautions to put a rock in front of each rear wheel and giving an extra pull at the emergency. I wasn't taking any chances. Naturally!

An hour later we heard cries on the terrace. As though I didn't expect another misfortune. It was a neighbor, a film producer. "Monsieur! Monsieur!" he shouted as though the glowing world of Provence had come to an end. We ran like mad. But there was nothing to see. The beauty was gone. It had simply slid down the hill and turned over on its side.

The rest of this miserable tale even now, some ten years later, makes me writhe in anger. In Spain, going up the spiral of Montserrat, a minor landslide punctured the roof of the car. In Norway, a Finn, overloaded with aquavit, hundred proof, ripped off a front fender coming around a blind curve near Trondheim.

By the time we returned to California, the feeling was mutual. I had no affection for the beautiful beast and vice versa. The first night back, outside the Beverly Hills Hotel where I had stopped at a red light, comic actor, Joey Fay crashed into the back of my cursed Mercedes and tore off the bumper and taillights. Several days after it came out of the repair shop, spanking new once again, sprayed and waxed, we drove to Shelter Island, San Diego. A pretty young woman gave a repeat performance of Joey Fay, in exactly the same vulnerable backside. She apologized profusely. Her spiked heel had slipped off the brake. Two weeks later in Santa Barbara, a police lieutenant crashed into the rear of the car. Giving me a sheepish look, he said his brakes gave way, and he felt like penalizing himself with a book full of tickets.

Finally, I came to a decision. "I'll get rid of this monster," I said to my wife. She smiled her best Mona Lisa smile. "Perhaps I should drive. It might not feel the same about me."

"Oh, yeah!"

She took over. Her very first stance behind that Swabian monster was disastrous. I gave directions as she backed out of our very ample garage. But the wheels pulled and jerked, and I could see some devilish creature propelling our destiny. Result: the whole right side, which hitherto had been the sole survivor of every previous casualty, was now scraped and mangled. It was the biggest repair bill yet. Two weeks later my wife broke down and wept. The reason: at the Safeway supermarket in Carmel Valley, a child dashed a loaded shopping cart against the starboard side of the car—yes, the very same side—just as we were approaching from the opposite flank.

"That's the end!" I said. "I hate this monster!" Thereupon, with the full force of my new western boots I delivered a violent kick at the scratched and dented door and almost broke my big toe in the process. Then in a basso crescendo I snarled: "Hitler!"

Only one enduring aberration has remained from this whole gruesome experience: Tyrone Carlton Gainsburgh! Whenever I drive down to Southern California—which I do about every three months—I go to great pains to avoid the street where he lives with his prize begonias. □

Book Review

Images Wild

Todd Gitlin

All Consuming Images: The Politics of Style in Contemporary Culture by Stuart Ewen. Basic Books, 1988, 306 pp.

The sharp divide between image and reality, mask and face, false and true consciousness, is a standby of modern thought. Hegel, Marx, and Freud, for example, each said in his respective way: the world may *look* like this (history, ideology, neurosis) but it *is* actually something else, something "underlying" (spirit, class relations, drives). Surfaces are misleading, irrational; the search for bedrock is necessary, rational. Ordinary consciousness is idolatry, window shopping: a shopping mall consciousness. Reality is a job for the Supertheorist, who can "penetrate," "get to the bottom."

Does all thought make comparable distinctions? For a long time, images have been credited with a mysterious and dangerous value—which is probably why the Second Commandment banned them, Plato suspected them, and Christianity, with the cross, enshrined them. But the image/reality distinction becomes universal and urgent in modern times—and peculiarly puzzling too. For the profusion of images seems the very business (in both senses) of modernity. When citizens are formally free to sell themselves on the open market, impressions count. The authority of images has an ancient history, but only in modernity does the production of images become routine.

That is why a good date for the founding of modernity is 1839, the year of the first photographs. By now, the portrait is no longer something only the rich can afford; it is available to anyone who can pay for the studio sitting. Advertising, movies, TV, billboards—the resulting profusion of images becomes the world of *homo urbanis*. By the twentieth century, in industry or politics, a great deal of the "reality" that society produces is, in fact, packaging; sophisticates grow used to enclosing "reality" between quotation marks. A whole second world comes into existence—there is the material plane and the plane of representations, and the two seem equally vast, equally rich. Family albums, ads, and movies alike have the power of seeming to transform the ordinary into the transcendent. By peeling away from things, images seem to partake of magic. Writers in the Platonic tradition are displeased—some sort of blasphemy is at work. But the world of images does not displease writers who like the hurly-burly of modernity—Walt Whitman, for example, who took the trouble to write a poem denouncing Hegel's "terrible doubt of appearances."

Dazzled by images, modern thought is also spooked by them. The fear is that images debase, conceal, even cannibalize reality. One critic has written, for example, of the fear that in the era of photography

> the image would become more important than the object itself, and would in fact make the object disposable.... Every conceivable object of Nature and Art will soon scale off its surface for us. Men will hunt all curious, beautiful, grand objects, as they hunt cattle in South America, for their skins and leave the carcasses as of little worth.

The author of this statement is neither Walter Benjamin nor Susan Sontag but Oliver Wendell Holmes, writing in 1859. I owe this fact to Stuart Ewen's interesting and frustrating book, which is among other things a history of modern design and a compendium of apropos quotations. For the most part, Ewen identifies himself with the Platonist, Holmesian, rationalist style of theory, a style which reaches its modern acme in Herbert Marcuse—spiritual father of a whole generation of critical spirits, including Stuart Ewen. In Marcuse's world, false consciousness has seeped so deeply into daily life that no one—well, hardly anyone—can begin to envision an alternative. Mind-numbing, body-confining work has been coupled to a fun culture—"repressive desublimation." Ewen's first book, *Captains of Consciousness* (1976), argued that advertising and Americanization had more or less deliberately diverted the working class from its proper class-conscious mission. *All Consuming Images* is also filled with evidence of the chilling intentions of corporate-minded strategists and designers, and with a rhetorical tendency to assume that their manipulations are irresistible. In much of this book, Ewen still follows Marcuse, deploring false consciousness and crediting it with Pharaonic powers. In the world of official style, facades mislead, images betray. In a long aside on modern architecture, Ewen writes (and I have added emphasis):

> From below, the pedestrian is overcome by awe. For some this is exaltation. For others, an uneasy sense of threatened or diminished humanity. In either case, it is *but a feeling*. The aestheticization of value leaves little space for the exercise of critical reason or socio-economic analysis. Power resides above the canyons, but for most it is incomprehensible.

But analysis this grim poses four intertwined problems for all cultural theorists with a New Left inclination—how to account for themselves, justify

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activism, believe in democracy, and find sources of possible change. And so, in his new book, Ewen tries to scale the wall of the Marcusean cul-de-sac. Style, he writes, has a "curious capacity ... to serve as a mark of privilege and a device of democratization simultaneously." On the dark side, alienated work thwarts freedom, desire, and what Roland Barthes called "the dream of wholeness"—whereupon official, advertised style steps in with (Ewen's nice phrase) a "decoration of independence." The official style smothers rebellion. But popular style presumably nourishes it. In his populist mood, Ewen quotes approvingly one of his Hunter College students, "Stefan J—," who defends his skinhead style as "a way of making a statement ... a reaction to the long-haired hippie style which had gone from being the rebellious style to a conformist one ... damn rebellious.... To a skin, one way of rejecting the power structure is to get rid of as many fashionable things as possible." "In Stefan J—'s testimony," Ewen adds breathlessly, "there is an air of autonomous culture. While buying ... combat boots may constitute consumption, the commodity is being employed as part of an oppositional cultural politics." Stefan J—, it seems, need not read *Capital* to overcome false consciousness; all he needs to do is wear his combat boots when he heads over to midtown.

Trying to break out of a Marxian Puritanism in which images are condemned as frivolous because they belie "the real," Ewen flirts with a romance of stylistic rebellion. In doing so, he is not alone—a riot of this kind of writing has come out of British popular culture and film studies in the last decade, to the greater glory of punk, among other discordant styles. Dick Hebdige's *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1979) is the canonical text. As I write, I pick up the Winter 1988–89 issue of *Film Quarterly* and read in an article by David James:

> [I]n the early eighties certain extremely marginal forms of punk and pornography did in fact sustain opposition to the aesthetics of the hegemony and to commodity culture. Marking a survival of sixties' utopianism, these forms of erotic and music video ... constituted a survival of the project of the classic avant-garde—the turn of cultural practice against the status of art in bourgeois society as defined by the concept of autonomy and against the distribution apparatus bourgeois art depends on.

It is hard to know which is worse, the prose or the idea.

How did things come to this not-so-pretty pass? After the sixties, two things happened simultaneously: youth revolt became an institution—each cohort revolting against the previous cohort's style—and radical politics was stymied. Leftists clung to the prayer, or conviction, that a sufficiently angry youth culture would constitute, by itself, radical politics—keeping alive a flame that the working class had long since let flicker out. This fantasy is based on a serious misreading of the relation between radical politics and youth culture in the sixties. Then, thanks to the Vietnam War, the two movements converged. The trinity of sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll seemed to promise that avant-garde culture would fuse with a revolutionary assault on capitalism—or even become that assault all by itself. The surrealist manifestos came back to earth, this time destined for a constituency extending beyond the intellectual coteries of the avant-garde. Legions of baby boomers carried the old hope that you could shock the bourgeoisie and overthrow it at the same time. Culture *was* politics—and, in the sixties, a case could be made for that claim.

But twenty years on, avant-garde shock has become routine, and avant-gardists have to go farther and farther out to prove they haven't been taken in. Meanwhile, some of yesterday's outriders of youth culture have become theorists scavenging the clubs and the back alleys for a "resistance" they are convinced, a priori, must exist. Failing to find radical potential in the politics of parties or mass movements, they conjure it in subcultures, even in popular styles. Some have found the grail in sitcoms, some in slash movies, some in the pace of MTV, some in the long tracking shot, and some in punk, pornography, what have you. All they agree on, Hegelian to the core, is that "it"—"the resistance"—must exist.

Whenever I hear exotic youth culture defended as "oppositional," I reach for my common sense. What kind of opposition is this? What does it stand for? What does it have in mind for people whose aesthetic is different? Beneath the romance of style, the revolutionary Other has been smuggled back into the scheme as the unwitting carrier of historical rationality. Thus, to return to *All Consuming Images*, a Marxian metaphysic of labor value rumbles along under the pages like a never-ending subway. At his best, Ewen wants to move beyond the classical model of consumer goods as distractions from The Revolution. "On the one hand," he writes, "style speaks for the rise of a democratic society, in which who one wishes to become is often seen as more consequential than who one is. On the other hand, style speaks for a society in which coherent meaning has fled to the hills, and in which drift has provided a context of continual discontent." The essence of modern style is change, Ewen argues, "one way by which we perceive a world in flux." These are important points. Likewise, Ewen is quite telling when he discusses streamlining, credit, and "commercial paper" as forms of abstraction that dominate American culture. But underneath, I sense, lies a nostalgia for hard-and-fast material things—a pre-post-industrial economy. Nostalgia of this sort is the occupational hazard of radical social critics. Who doesn't want to find a still point in the churning market economy?

Avant-garde shock has become routine, and avant-gardists have to go farther and farther out to prove they haven't been taken in.

Ewen writes at a moment when many theorists and artists so deeply question whether it is possible to know or recover anything beneath images that they revel in doubt. The image becomes everything—it's images all the way down. Trumping Andy Warhol's painted reproductions of commercial art, the photographer Sherrie Levine shoots pictures of famous pictures—meaning to raise the question, In what sense does the photographer create anything in the first place? The French

theorist Jean Baudrillard, all the rage from academic quarters to the *Village Voice*, imagines—and finally exalts—a world in which nothing has intrinsic value, everything is made for exchange and impression, and the representative object is "the simulacrum," the copy for which there is no original. The essential thing in itself has dissolved. A cultural trapdoor opens beneath our feet.

When theoretical discussions are framed in such terms, I sympathize deeply with Ewen's desire to find cultural bedrock; but since social life is coated with images—the mind itself and feelings are wallpapered with them—it is not at all clear where standards of value are to be found. As Ewen himself says in an offhand, last-minute recognition, "[T]he flourishing diversity of images has opened people's eyes to a wide variety of new possibilities, new ways of imagining." But such tributes to style rattle around loose; they are not integrated into his argument, which is more about closure. In the end, Ewen grows murky. He wants to criticize style in the name of "our own experiences"—but which experiences, understood how, are "substantial"? If feeling is the essential determinant, how do I know which of my feelings to take seriously? Ewen wants to overcome "the dominance of surface over substance"; he wants "a reconciliation of image and meaning, a reinvigoration of a politics of substance." But what would that be? The reason for Ewen's failure to be clear is that "surface" and "substance" are fatally blurred in our very categories of understanding. So no one who writes about these matters, in fact, has done better than Ewen. As he says, "The way out of this confusion is difficult to imagine."

Inside an argument that keeps clamping down, a Coney Island of the mind is bursting to get out. *All Consuming Images* is overstuffed with fine riffs from the history of architecture and design, and with some marvelous readings of texts—the "Charlie Chaplin" in which the free-spirited tramp sells IBM PCs; the Rita Hayworth poster fusing desire and alienation in *The Bicycle Thief*. Ewen also recognizes that when culture pivots on celebrity, celebrity deserves an analysis of its own—toward which he delivers some excellent pages. Following Warren Susman's valuable *Culture as History*, he realizes that "the phenomenon of celebrity reflects popular longings. In celebrities, people find not only a piece of themselves, but also a piece of what they strive for."

The insight deserves to be extended. That striving—for pleasure, for happiness, for identity—is not induced from on high by the marketers; it *is* a great deal of American culture. We desire what we miss; style makes its empty promises. In the age of Trump, this Regilded Age, the public world is filled with corporate logos and charlatans. We hire our confidence men and women, then, weary of them, turn the rascals out and hunt for replacements. Style is the siren who also sells earplugs stamped with her logo. Finally, this is a problem with style as politics: yesterday's counterimages are tomorrow sold over the counter. □

Book Review

Why the Liberals Lost

Theda Skocpol

The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930–1980, edited by Steven Fraser and Gary Gerstle. Princeton University Press, 1989, 311 pp.

The 1980s have been a perplexing and demoralizing decade for everyone on the broadly progressive side of American life. Successive rightist victories have apparently signaled an exhaustion of the liberal forces which seemed hegemonic as recently as the late 1960s and early 1970s. Many intellectuals have an overwhelming urge to look several decades backward, toward the New Deal, as the alleged starting point for whatever has now ended.

Aged liberals and neoconservatives can examine the past with pure nostalgia—celebrating the policy-making triumphs of their contemporaries who shaped and inherited the New Deal's accomplishments. But looking back is far more challenging for intellectuals of the "New Left" or "sixties" generation. Many in this group once thought of liberalism as The Enemy, not anticipating that much worse lay ahead (and not understanding how much worse lay behind and alongside modern American liberalism). These intellectuals are now in midlife, facing uncertain and often hostile tendencies within as well as beyond the professional worlds where many of them seem to be securely ensconced. Moving beyond either celebration or condemnation, they must reconsider the possibilities and limits of liberalism in order to understand the alternative political directions that America might take from here.

The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order exemplifies both the breadth of vision and the blinders that intellectuals

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from the sixties generation can bring to the daunting task of reconsidering U.S. history since the Great Depression. Capably edited by Steven Fraser, an editor at Basic Books, and Gary Gerstle, who teaches at Princeton, the collection includes empirically rich and intellectually provocative essays by a dozen authors who for the most part are employed at assorted universities (and in one case at the *Washington Post*). In the words of its editors, the book offers "a historical autopsy" of the New Deal "as a dominant order of ideas, public policies, and political alliances" whose "ghost still hovers over a troubled polity."

Most of the authors in *Rise and Fall* hold what might be called a post–New Left, cultural interpretation of the subject—an argument not so much about the New Deal itself, but about its destiny. Their basic purpose is to make sense of trends in the United States since the 1960s. Why, these authors ask, did New Deal–descended liberalism (which seemed so powerful when we were young) suddenly collapse?

The answers point to the connections between economics and culture. New Deal liberals, we are told, were seduced by the domestic expansion that was propelled by World War II and its aftermath. They gave up the idea of a strong state that would restructure capitalism, settling instead for mild Keynesian techniques devoted to saving capitalism through mass consumption. Macroeconomic successes fostered a secular religion of mass consumption and individual fulfillment married, ironically, to bureaucratized work and expert professional manipulations of an otherwise intensely privatized family life. In her essay, Elaine Tyler May offers some brilliant speculations about how the psychological climate of the cold war intersected with consumer capitalism to encourage American men and women to turn inward, to look for security and satisfaction in nuclear families built around sharply differentiated gender roles.

Thus, the New Deal order brought to the fore, in the editors' words, the values of "secularism, rationalism, and emphasis on individual expressiveness," a thoroughly nontraditional culture that briefly reigned in the America of the 1950s. Yet even as this culture triumphed, the seeds of the New Deal's destruction were being sown. According to these authors, three factors were most prominent in causing the destruction. First, the South was never fully integrated into the New Deal order, even as "civil rights" were promised to everyone and racial problems kept simmering. Second, at the very moment of its greatest organizational triumphs through the CIO, the "culture of resistance" of the industrial union movement was, in Steve Fraser's analysis, undercut by a "profoundly conservative" commitment to obtaining economic security for working-class families. After World War II, organized labor became subordinated within a bureaucratic and managerial capitalist order, which ended organized labor's role as an important force for social reform. Third, according to Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, the privatized consumer culture and the rigid cold war antinomies of the 1950s ironically fostered the moralistic and antiauthoritarian New Left of the 1960s. The young radicals fizzled out organizationally, but they left enduring marks on American politics.

Completing the story of the New Deal order's demise, Jonathan Rieder's essay on "The Rise of the 'Silent Majority'" shows how racial and lifestyle tensions, since the 1960s, have detached from the Democratic party the southern whites and northern working-class ethnics who had historically supported and benefited from New Deal economic and welfare policies. These groups, Rieder argues, never agreed with the secular rationalism of the New Deal, and they defected when liberal elites advocated affirmative action for Blacks and tolerance for "Acid, Abortion, and Amnesty." At the end of the 1980s, the editors of *Rise and Fall* tell us, in "the lexicon of American politics, 'liberal' now bears the opprobrium once reserved for 'communist.'"

Much as I admire the broad sweep of the anthology, I also find its central thrust overly single-minded. A holistic account of "the New Deal order" tends to downplay the political conflicts that originally shaped the New Deal *and sharply limited its reformist possibilities*. Such an account attributes too much about postwar U.S. history, right down to the present, to an undifferentiated "liberalism" understood as the product of the New Deal's inherent flaws. We do not gain an understanding of what alternative possibilities existed for consumer-oriented capitalist democracies during the Keynesian Era.

The New Deal was not really shaped by liberals. Conservative southern interests were always central to the Democratic party and to the congressional coalitions that narrowed the scope of New Deal policies during the Great Depression.

The political and ideological limits of the modern U.S. economy were set only in the second half of the 1940s when social democratic forces in the labor movement, in intellectual circles, and at the edges of the Democratic party suffered defeat. The "survival of capitalism" was not at issue; but the fate of specific policies had profound consequences for the political future. Either the United States would evolve into a full-employment welfare state or it would become a more privatized version of mass-consumption capitalism, in which the wages and welfare of "core" workers would flow through large corporations, while marginal workers were left to fend for themselves with only minimal public protection. Only after Congress eviscerated or killed such key pieces of reform legislation as the Full Employment Bill of 1945, the Wagner-Murray-Dingell social insurance bills of the same year, and Truman's proposals for national health insurance did the nation clearly take the more conservative route.

As Nelson Lichtenstein argues, in one of the best contributions to *Rise and Fall,* this political turning point meant that organized labor would henceforth put most of its energy into bargaining with employers for wages and benefits rather than into building a universal welfare state. It also meant that, henceforth, American economists would no longer think it realistic to advocate direct state interventions in markets. Gradually, "commercial Keynesians," who were committed to

stimulating the economy via tax cuts and automatic budget stabilizers, displaced "social Keynesians," who had wanted to use a high level of social spending and full-employment planning to ensure continued expansion.

As my collaborators and I have explained in *The Politics of Social Policy in the United States,* the New Deal was not really shaped by liberals. Conservative southern interests were always central to the Democratic party and to the congressional coalitions that narrowed the scope of New Deal policies during the Great Depression. World War II also hindered New Deal reformers, even as the conflict was aiding the cause of liberals and social democrats in many European nations. In the U.S., the economic expansion of the 1940s strengthened state and local governments and boosted congressional authority in relation to the Executive Branch. Wartime strikes and local reactions against federal power left New Deal liberals—many of whom had become virtual social democrats by the end of the war—more vulnerable than ever to their conservative opponents in Congress.*

New Deal liberals should not be held responsible for creating a flawed postwar order. What happened was that their ideals were *defeated politically,* and many of America's later problems can be attributed to this defeat. Had the United States created a comprehensive full-employment welfare state in the late 1940s, labor unions would have continued to expand. And the transition of rural Black sharecroppers into urban dwellers and industrial workers would have been cushioned both by a stronger labor movement and by social policies that could have softened the racial conflicts that ended up tearing the Democratic party apart.

What I am questioning is the very notion of a New Deal order stretching from the 1930s to the 1980s. If some sort of ideological, economic, and political "order" did lock into place, it was fostered chiefly by America's political experiences and policy choices during and right after World War II. As exemplified by the G.I. Bill (not even mentioned in this volume, despite its critical role in fostering private family homebuilding and the individualistic consumerism associated with it), these policy choices were more of a bipartisan hodgepodge, mediated by complex executive–congressional compromises; than they were anything recognizably "liberal," no matter how one defines the term. The economic and social policies of the postwar United States cut off, and often reversed, many lines of policy begun during the domestic New Deal of the 1930s.

Our assessment of the New Deal's potential will be more respectful, and more historically accurate, if we realize that some of its goals were defeated rather than successfully institutionalized or inherently flawed. This point matters because there may be analogous opportunities in the future to forge social democratic policies compatible with capitalist growth. In addition, the U.S. experience in World War II and the cold war should draw us to analyze the shifting balance of global power, economic transformations in Japan and Europe, and ideological upheavals in the state-socialist powers. As in the past, alternative political outcomes in the United States will be profoundly affected by the ways Americans experience and interpret changing international realities.

If we regain a full sense of the political conflicts and choices of the past, perhaps we can also look more hopefully to the future. In contrast, *Rise and Fall* ends on an unremittingly pessimistic note, apportioning some blame to both New Deal liberals and sixties radicals for the current triumph of privatist and inegalitarian politics. The editors say virtually nothing about alternative possibilities for the future, declaring simply that

> [t]he old order is dead. Nothing with the same combination of programmatic coherence, ideological credibility, and mass political appeal has risen to take its place.... [A]fter eight years dedicated to the pursuit of private interests the very concept of "commonwealth" is scarcely credible. The year 1988 recorded the lowest voter turnout in any presidential election since 1924.

It seems that the editors can see no option but to wait for another external shock like the Great Depression to bring a renewed "burst of political energy" such as the New Deal.

But, surely, this approach is both too simple and too pessimistic. Even if it is true that the United States is currently in a phase that faintly resembles the 1920s, the future is sure to bring economic and political challenges very different from those of the 1930s and 1940s. Among the social forces that will, in political ways, address the new realities are several that could embrace a reform agenda in the best spirit of the New Deal tradition. These forces include employed women and dual-worker families, employees displaced by new international competition, and middle-class citizens with deep concerns about the environment and foreign policy. Intellectuals from the sixties generation will be there too—armed with whatever insights they can gain about the past and its lessons for the future. □

*Alan Brinkley argues in *Rise and Fall* that New Deal liberalism lost its transformative potential after the idea of state regulation of markets was given up in the late 1930s and early 1940s. He sees an undifferentiated "Keynesianism" represented in a direct capitulation to mass-consumption capitalism under corporate auspices. Yet a glance at postwar Scandinavia reveals that growth-oriented capitalism and social security for workers' families could be achieved through high levels of taxation and social spending and strong public commitments to worker retraining for full employment, but without direct state ownership or administrative regulation of markets. Something along these lines was the vision of American social Keynesians between 1937 and 1948.

BOOK REVIEW

You Say You Had a Revolution

Tony Judt

A Cultural History of the French Revolution by Emmet Kennedy. Yale University Press, 1989, 448 pp.

> Macbeth: Avaunt and quit my sight. Let the earth hide thee. Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold.
>
> Lady Macbeth: Think of this, good peers, but as a thing of custom. 'Tis no other; only it spoils the pleasure of the time.
>
> —*Macbeth,* Act 3, Scene IV

Like Banquo's ghost, the French Revolution haunts the France of President Mitterrand. It can hardly be ignored—July 14 this year marks the bicentennial of the capture of the Bastille, and France is awash in literary and audio-visual acknowledgment of the fact. There is a government commission charged with the task of organizing and promoting the matter, led by Jean-Noel Jeanneney, a prominent historian and former director of Radio France. Yet the whole affair is shrouded in self-doubt. Should the Revolution be commemorated, celebrated, or merely analyzed? Whose Revolution is it anyway? Right-wing papers and magazines have predictably taken the occasion to remind their audience of the more unpleasant features of the Revolution (mass drownings in the Loire, injustice, murder, rapine, and so on); but few on the left seem enthusiastic about invoking the Revolution *en bloc,* which leaves them endlessly squabbling over those parts worth salvaging and those (the Terror, Jacobin extremism) best excluded.

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Yet, once upon a time, and well within the adult experience of France's present political class, the legacy of the Revolution was unambiguous. It was the undisputed *fons vivus* of contemporary France—the source of the nation, the Republic, the ideals of freedom and equality, the modern French state and its institutions, the very people themselves. Against and in denial of it were gathered the religious and monarchical opponents of secular republican democracy, well represented in the persecutors of Dreyfus at the turn of the century and in the architects of collaboration and worse in Vichy France.

The Revolution gave to the language of the Enlightenment a radical, social meaning that was to color all public discourse in nineteenth- and twentieth-century France.

The family of the Revolution included anyone who claimed descent from it, stretching from conservative republican parties to the Communist movement. Divisions within this community reflected divisions within the Revolution itself (Jacobins, Girondins, and so on), and modern French history and politics were but the updating (and, prospectively, completion) of the internecine struggles of the 1790s.

But the last two decades have seen precipitate changes in this comfortable political topography. Marxism is dead in France; the Communist party has been reduced to a marginal actor and has been replaced on the left by a Socialist party led from the center and indebted for its rebirth to a man notoriously light on ideological baggage. The presidential Fifth Republic established by De Gaulle is now universally accepted, and its special combination of republican forms and monarchical content (which so enraged its opponents in earlier years) has put an end to the institutional conflicts that were so central to the legacy of the Revolution. Because politics is no longer about the very structure of society but rather about the business of generating and distributing limited social resources, the old forms and their accompanying language (left/right, socialist/liberal, democratic/hierarchical) seem oddly inappropriate. France, it has been suggested, has "caught up" with the rest of the West.

All this has been well reflected in the historiography of the Revolution itself. Indeed, historians are prominent and influential agents of opinion in France, providing an important clue to the mortgage laid upon contemporary France by its revolutionary past. Dominated by Professor François Furet and his students, the historiography of the Revolution in recent years has been acutely "deconstructive," in the commonsense meaning of the term. The revolutionary catechism of three generations of left-wing historians—the account of the years 1789–1794 as a "bourgeois" revolution, with everyone from the aristocracy to the *sans-culottes* assigned an immanent social and historical identity—has been exploded. There has been a subtle and enlightening concentration on the self-invention of the Revolution, the way in which the Jacobins, in particular, imagined into being various abstract categories ("people," "counterrevolutionaries," "the national interest") and then acted upon their proclaimed existence. Revolutionary language, the discourse of politics, thereby replaces social conflicts and political goals as the motor of revolutionary action. The legacy of the Revolution, for Furet and others, has been not a particular society (for,

socially speaking, the Revolution altered remarkably little) but a very special way of *conceiving* of society. This, it is suggested, is the Revolution's main bequest to modern France, and it accounts for the myths, the irresolvable and violent conflicts, and the often frustratingly abstract nature of French political discourse.

There are other accounts, of course. Furet is opposed, on the one side, by the last remaining proponents of the old interpretation, and on the other by his former friends in the *Annales* school whose vision of history in the structurally continuous *longue durée* consigns the Revolution to little more than a footnote. But because Furet's interpretation takes the Revolution seriously while undermining the ideological claims of its protagonists, it is naturally the one that has had the greatest public impact. It leaves unresolved, however, the larger question that all recent histories implicitly address: how do you describe and give recognition to a revolutionary legacy whose importance is declared to lie in its own mythology?

American historians of the Revolution are relieved of this burden. But they share certain other constraints with their French colleagues. They too struggle constantly to give shape to a historical moment that their own research has tended to dismantle. For a long time the dominant mode in the U.S. was social history; it had the virtue of casting new light on many neglected aspects of eighteenth-century history, and it contributed significantly to the general undermining of the old, positivist account of the Revolution as an agent of progress and change. But fashions in the American historical profession have moved on and the current preference is for "cultural" history. Like other recent historical trends in the English-speaking world, this change owes much to French innovations. But it has characteristics, and problems, of its own. Emmet Kennedy's new book, *A Cultural History of the French Revolution,* is symptomatic in this regard.

What, after all, is "culture"? The arts, literature, beliefs? The forms in which they are inscribed (public institutions, language, educational establishments, the church)? High culture (theatre, poetry, design, philosophy) or low culture (popular songs, superstitions, daily life and its rules)? For Kennedy, and for many of his fellow historians, the answer is all of the above, which means that his book is ambitious and hopeless, a compendium of everything (rather like G. M. Trevelyan's definition of social history as history "with the politics left out"—though Kennedy even includes some of that, too).

There is nothing unworthy about such an undertaking—indeed, it is courageous and mostly admirable. But the author writes badly, wavering between the sententious and the bland, and always in a labored and soporific syntax. He is also an unreliable guide to the aesthetic aspects of the "higher" culture, capable of asserting that the "eighteenth century was ... bereft of good poetry," which is rather hard on André Chénier, not to mention the poetic geniuses just across the English Channel. But the book is, in the end, undermined not by its shortcomings but by its ambitions. For the author seeks to establish Braudelian categories for cultural history—short-, medium-, and long-term significance and so forth. And here the outcome is predictable: the short-term cultural impact was tiny, since the Revolution produced little in the way of high culture, and altered in few respects the daily world of most of the population. In the medium term, we got the legacy of a few abstract concepts together with the Romantic movement, while the long-term result was political republicanism and the altered place of religion in public life.

Well and good. And true. But what has "culture" to do with this? The word is superfluous, except in its restricted and traditional usage as the description of artistic production. Beyond the accumulation of information, Kennedy's book adds very little to our sense of what the Revolution was, or meant, or left behind upon its completion. It is hard to resist the conclusion that the new historical categories of "political culture," "low culture," and even "cultural history" are inherently problematic. To justify their use, historians perennially claim for them more than they can deliver. A history that brackets popular medical lore with a computerized list of theatrical performances in Paris requires a sustained epistemology, a theory of what all this is about and how it is interrelated. Otherwise it is just a mess. Fortunately Kennedy (following Lynn Hunt's *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution,* 1984) offers us a solution, albeit by inadvertence. The "cultural" account of the Revolution tells us little, but it does point to the Revolution's one unambiguous legacy: political republicanism. Expanding a little on this point, we might say that what the Revolution undoubtedly did create and transmit was politics (*not* a "political culture," which weakens the force of the observation). On this point, American historians agree with their French counterparts.

There is a further common trait in the historiography: the French Revolution seems often to be the subject around which categories and approaches tend to collapse, despite working well enough for earlier (and later) periods. Our grasp of the past becomes uncertain when we write about the complex events of the late eighteenth century. And this fact, perhaps, indicates paradoxically one aspect of the French Revolution about which we may feel confident: the Revolution is difficult to pigeonhole and package, precisely because it was the moment when the very categories of modern history itself were born. It is one thing to describe a grand transition from one sort of society to another (as in the decline of Rome or the revolution in China). But when it comes to writing about the transition, in the political sphere, from one sort of society to *our* own world, things become murky; and the way to make sense of the process is colored by whatever understanding we have (usually not articulated) about ourselves and our own experience. The French Revolution bequeathed us not only modern politics, but whatever apparatus we now have for political (and therefore historical) analysis.

Whatever it calls itself, any serious historical account of the French Revolution is also an engagement with the various ways in which the modern world, our world, tries to explain itself to itself. A younger generation of historians in France understands this point and has begun to write the sort of *intellectual* history not seen in France for over a century—that is to say, the history of political and philosophical concepts (as distinct from that tired genre, the conceptual history of politics). These historians seek to understand what became of liberal political thought in France, once so fertile and

all but invisible after 1840. Why, they ask, have moral arguments in France so often turned upon historical rather than ethical premises? A prominent discussion of this theme can be found in the recent work by Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, *La Pensée, 1968*. This sort of investigation takes historians beyond Furet's concern with the Jacobins' "invention" of radical politics and into interesting and difficult terrain—long neglected by the French intelligentsia at whose hands moral philosophy and its history received short shrift.

Unfortunately, intellectual history in the U.S. has in recent years been polarized between those who write social history of literature, and the advocates of the so-called linguistic turn who are obsessed with the form of language use but are radically uninterested in the content of the ideas themselves. This is a pity, because the history of ideas, conceived as a historically sensitive account of the self-understanding and self-criticism of past communities, is now uniquely placed to make sense of the French Revolution, given the present intellectual uncertainty and political transformations in France (most notably the reelection of a Socialist president and the formation this year of a left-center government). True, earlier attempts to write of the relationship between ideas and the Revolution were often so crass as to give the whole enterprise a bad name; claims made for Voltaire or Rousseau as the "father" of the Revolution seem now merely jejune, while the suggestion that the Revolution bequeathed to us, unproblematically, the Rights of Man and assorted worthy abstractions is precisely the sort of unreflective (and self-serving) anachronism attacked by Furet and others. All the same, the legacy of these concepts has, more than anything else, colored the post-Revolutionary experience in France, and it constitutes that very special public culture to which we are all indebted.

Here, surely, is the terrain on which historians might hope to contribute to France's self-understanding as the modern nation enters its third century. We are still surprisingly ignorant of just how political concepts such as "democracy," "rights," "republicanism," and the like took their peculiarly French form in the troubled decades following the fall of Napoleon. Why did the heritage of the Enlightenment in France diverge so sharply from the experience of Britain or the United States? For our insights on such matters we continue to depend on Tocqueville (who is much in fashion in Paris just now). We could do worse, of course, but the interesting question is why the same Tocqueville was utterly ignored in his own land for so long.

There were two reasons for this neglect. First, he emphasized the fundamental *continuity* of French history, pointing out that the Revolution pursued and accentuated certain aspects of French public life that were already characteristic of the Ancien Régime, notably the centralized state and the corresponding weakness of intermediary institutions and the absence of any separation of powers. Second, Tocqueville's approach was precociously structural, concerned with social forms and practices rather than with ideas and intentions. This approach put him rather out of sympathy with his nineteenth-century contemporaries on both ends of the spectrum. But from the vantage point of the late twentieth century, we can see that his insights were essentially correct. The Ancien Régime was more complex than its successors wished to believe, and revolutionary France is better seen as its heir than as its gravedigger, socially, culturally, and even ideologically.

On the other hand—and here the renewed interest in the history of ideas has exerted an important claim on our attention—the Revolution was also a decisive break. It gave to the language of the Enlightenment a radical, social meaning that was to color all public discourse in nineteenth- and twentieth-century France (and, in passing, distort the later historical understanding of the Enlightenment and the Revolution alike). Terms such as "natural rights," "society," "social duties," and the like, products of the eighteenth century's fascination with the newly emerging "social sciences," acquired specifically political connotations as a result of the experience of the 1790s. They were then further transformed in the political melee of the years 1830–1850, the generation in which were drawn up the main battle lines of modern French ideological politics. Because this was also the era of the great liberal histories of the Revolution, history and politics became inextricably interwoven in the ideological consciousness of left and right alike.

It should now be clear why the recent ideological "thaw" in Paris provides a renewed occasion for rethinking the cultural meaning of the Revolution. Historians are largely free of the pressure to see the events of 1789–1799 as either a radical break or an element, despite itself, of continuity in the deep structures of French public life. The events were, quite simply, both, depending upon the arena of your investigation. In social terms, there was almost certainly less than met the eye; given that for the nineteenth century and its radical heirs the "social" had primacy, this argument might once have sounded dangerously close to the claim that the Revolution "changed nothing." But society consists of more than the sum of landholdings, tax-rolls, and rates of industrialization or demographic increase. It is also the product of the language it employs to describe itself, and in this respect the Revolution altered everything. But for this fundamental change to become clear, a lot of dust had to settle; even now, as the present situation in France indicates, confusion and disagreement persist. The history of this confusion is also, of course, the history of modern France. In this sense, the true cultural history of the French Revolution *begins* in 1815—and it awaits its historian. □

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Current Debate: Is Modernism Destructive?

Why Postmodernism Still Matters

Jeffrey C. Isaac

Marshall Berman writes with eloquence and grace about modernism ("Why Modernism Still Matters," *Tikkun*, Jan./Feb. 1989). Modernists, he tells us, "celebrate and identify with the triumphs" of the modern world in the arts, morals, economics, and politics. Modernism enjoins us to do what the Bible said only God could do—"make all things anew." It is in this sense Promethean. It opposes modernization's "betrayal of its own human promise and potential," and it calls for "more profound and radical renewals." The watchword of modernism is transcendence: "The fact that 'all that is solid melts into air' is a source not of despair, but of strength and affirmation. If everything must go, then let it go; modern people have the power to create a better world than the world they have lost."

This narrative of progress and of the triumph of human dignity and empowerment certainly has much appeal. Berman powerfully connects this narrative with the politics of the sixties. And he evocatively links it with the street life of the contemporary city. Berman is at his best when criticizing the pretensions of that new counter-orthodoxy, "postmodernism." His diagnosis of the current generation of academic postmodernists is apt: "This generation appropriated and deepened all our radical negations but ignored our radical hopes." And his celebration of the persistent efforts of ordinary people to remake their world is moving.

Yet I fear that Berman misses the point of much of postmodernist criticism. If our only choices are the street people Berman lionizes and the effete people of the postmodernist ivory tower whom he dismisses, then I suppose I am with Berman. But I think that, however inane, faddish, and nihilistic much of self-styled postmodernism is, it has identified a real problem. And I guess I am not convinced that the choices Berman presents us are our only alternatives. His own reading of modern and contemporary history, and his appropriation of such thinkers as Dostoyevsky, Nietzsche, and Freud, is too blithe for my taste. Finally, his celebration of the accomplishments of modernity, both in the streets and in more official places, strikes me as overly sentimentalized.

Apropos of Berman's invocation of the sixties, a good place to begin would be an observation made by C. Wright Mills in *The Sociological Imagination*:

> Our major orientations—liberalism and socialism—have virtually collapsed as adequate explanations of the world and of ourselves. The two ideologies came out of The Enlightenment, and they have had in common many assumptions and values. In both, increased rationality is held to be the prime condition of increased freedom. The liberating notion of progress by reason, the faith in science as an unmixed good, the demand for popular education and the faith in its political meaning for democracy—all these ideals of The Enlightenment have rested upon the happy assumption of the inherent relation of reason and freedom.

Mills is articulating his own sense of a civilizational crisis caused by the two world wars and the balance of terror that followed, calling into question the value, indeed the very meaning, of such things as science, rationality, and human freedom, a crisis underwritten by the bankruptcy of the major political traditions of modernity. I would like briefly to elucidate this sensibility, and in doing so to indicate what I take to be the limits of Berman's argument.

I.

Berman quotes Marx's Promethean celebration of the achievements of the bourgeoisie—"All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned." Now this was and still is a noble attitude, exalting the capacity of humans to make and remake their world, to recognize all aspects of the material and social reality as historical products subject to human transformation. And yet I find it striking that Berman can so blithely embrace such a utopian, historicist, *nineteenth-century* vision as his own. Marx writes about the bourgeoisie's "subjection of Nature's forces to man," of its ceaseless "revolutionizing [of] the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society." But from the vantage point of the late twentieth century, in the wake of Verdun and Dresden and Hiroshima, in the wake of Three Mile Island and Chernobyl, is it possible to be so buoyant about the human ability to "subject" nature's forces to our own purposes? In 1620 Sir Francis Bacon asserted: "Human knowledge and human power meet in one; for where the cause is not known the effect cannot be produced. Nature to be commanded must be obeyed." In 1776 Adam Smith celebrated the implementation of this dictum in the productivity of the industrial factory system that vastly increased the "wealth of nations." In 1945 Hannah Arendt caustically observed that "the concentration camps are the laboratories where changes in human nature are tested." The pin factory gives rise

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to the corpse factory, which transforms into mere human flesh both victim and victimizer.

I don't mean to suggest any inevitability here. This is simply one eventuality, though the one that actually came to pass, made possible by the Prometheanism of modernity. And not simply by modernity's characteristic attitude toward technology, but by its attitude toward politics as well. When celebrating the modern impulse to play God, to make all things anew, Berman should not forget that this imagery was persistently employed in the early modern period, most infamously by Hobbes in his *Leviathan,* as a justification for the sovereignty of centralized, bureaucratic states. Thinkers as diverse as Arendt, Claude Lefort, Jurgen Habermas, and Esstratios Poulantzas have pointed out the dangers of this imagery. In fact, it is the tormented liberal apostle of the bureaucratic state, Max Weber, who provided some of the most plaintive and foreboding insights into its ominous potentialities. On this point Berman is silent.

It is also notable that, while he invokes Marx's *Communist Manifesto,* Berman has nothing to say about what are probably its two most pronounced features—its class reductionism ("All previous history is the history of class struggle") and its understanding of history as the necessary unfolding of progress. Berman is also silent about some of the *Communist Manifesto*'s glaring historical errors, including its dismissiveness of the problems of colonialism, nationalism, and warfare. And, more important, Berman says nothing about the tradition of political theory and practice that the *Communist Manifesto* spawned—Marxism. Many things could be said in praise of this tradition, which has certainly inspired a large number of the emancipatory movements of the modern age, but many in criticism as well. Most of the criticism regards Marxism's unabashedly modernizing impulses, and most of it has already been discussed ad infinitum by Marxists themselves. I would note only one piece of criticism, what E. P. Thompson and Steven Lukes have both called the moral vacuity of Marxist discourse, which they have argued derives in no small part from the narrative of historical progress, leading from class society to communism, in which the discourse is embedded. These thinkers have argued that Marxism is a tradition that exalts historical transcendence but provides no coherent account of either the moral ends of such human empowerment or the limits of permissible conduct in the pursuit of empowerment. These are of course complicated issues. But there are few political theorists writing today who draw so cheerily from the *Communist Manifesto* as Berman does. Moreover, Berman's general celebration of the effort to *continually remake the world* is striking in its indifference to these questions. Why should we strive to continually remake the world? Are there no limits to this aspiration? The barbarous political history of the twentieth century is surely no comfort with regard to these matters.

II.

I think Berman gets some of his history wrong. He writes that "the first wave of postmoderns was composed of the people who invented the 1960s." But in fact there is at least one other prior generation of postmodernists, a generation well-described by Albert Camus:

> We were born at the beginning of the First World War. As adolescents we had the crisis of 1929; at twenty, Hitler. Then came the Ethiopian War, the Civil War in Spain, and [the Hitler-Stalin pact at] Munich. These were the foundations of our education. Next came the Second World War, the defeat [of France], and Hitler in our homes and cities.... Now that Hitler has gone, we know a certain number of things. The first is that the poison which impregnated Hitlerism has not been eliminated; it is present in each of us. Whoever today speaks of human existence in terms of power, efficiency, and "historical tasks," spreads it.... Another thing we have learned is that we cannot accept any optimistic conception of existence, any happy ending whatsoever. But if we believe that optimism is silly, we also know that pessimism about the action of man among his fellows is cowardly.

This last line is important, for Camus, and the kind of intellectual he represented, did not give up on human commitment and agency. But his humanism was a chastened one; he was skeptical about the effort to completely *remake* the world, especially on a global level. It was not the noble impulse to enhance human dignity that he repudiated, but the Baconian imagery. This is the task of *The Rebel,* which seeks to analyze "the astonishing history of European pride" that eventuated in "a period which, in the space of fifty years, uproots, enslaves, or kill[s] seventy million human beings."

Camus is not alone in this sensibility. The early Sartre shares it, as do Arendt, Ignazio Silone, George Orwell, Simone Weil, Theodor Adorno, Reinhold Niebuhr, Arthur Koestler, and Walter Benjamin. Listen to Koestler:

> To talk of "ups and downs" is self-deception; we are not on a mountain railway but in a blind alley.... [We are witnessing] the end of our historical era, the period which began with Galileo, Newton, and Columbus, the period of human adolescence, the age of scientific formulations and quantitative measurements, of utility values, of the ascendancy of reason over spirit. Its achievements were gigantic; the spasms of its death struggles are terrifying.

Or, apropos of Berman's Marxian Prometheanism, listen to Benjamin:

> This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned towards the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.

One cannot find among these writers a common vision. But one can discern a common sensibility: that the aspirations of the modern age, the Promethean vision celebrated by Berman, has been dashed to smithereens by the bloody

and disillusioning events of the twentieth century. One finds this sense even among certain Marxists. Such an awareness is not comforting. In the words of Norman Jacobson, it deprives us of our pride and our solace. While this awareness does not lend itself readily to a political program, and while it would seem inconsistent with the dominant political agencies of the modern world, it is not necessarily apolitical. One can act upon such an awareness—and act with conviction—on behalf of the values of human dignity and freedom. But one cannot act with historical confidence, celebrating past struggles and optimistically anticipating the future, secure in one's faith in the transformative capacity of human beings. If I had to summarize *this* postmodern sensibility, I would say that humans have the power to act for good or evil, and there is nothing either inside ourselves or in our historical circumstances that can guarantee which path we will choose. Humanism is a double-edged sword.

III.

For all of the verbal aerobatics and pretentious nihilism of many contemporary postmodernists, thinkers such as Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault have a profound appreciation of this problem, and I'm afraid that Berman's criticism of these thinkers, with which I am sympathetic, gives them short shrift. The "disappearance of the subject" was not invented or even discovered by Derrida. It has its roots in the totalitarian personality analyzed by Arendt and in the Cheerful Robots of advanced capitalism diagnosed by Mills. It also has roots in the gender and racial differences that were overlooked for too long in philosophical conceptions of rationality and political conceptions of agency. It is no longer possible to subscribe to any essentialist reading of human nature, and the popularity and influence of postmodernists is due in no small part to the fact that they give voice to this awareness. Writers like Derrida and Foucault have a profound grasp of the ambiguities of social reality, of the ways in which different discourses, like Berman's discourse of modernism, establish differences (like "Man" over and against "Nature"), and the ways in which these differences empower or disempower (think of the landscape of northeastern New Jersey, for instance, in light of Marx's celebrations of bourgeois "subjection" of the forces of nature). I don't want to go too far. As many writers have noted, postmodernism, at the same time that it exposes certain conceptual distortions and relations of power, tends to deprive us of the means of effectively criticizing these problems or of believing that we can do any better. This is part of the nihilism that Berman rightly deplores. But the effort to "deconstruct" modernity is nonetheless an important one.

This point is indeed recognized by many of the most vigorous humanist critics of postmodernism. Thus, both Charles Taylor and Peter Dews have noted the affinities between the work of Foucault, on the one hand, and Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's *The Dialectic of Enlightenment,* on the other. Habermas, in his *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity,* has seen fit to engage in a sustained, and appreciative, critique of postmodernism, largely endorsing its criticism of the modernist "philosophy of the subject" but seeking to reconstruct an alternative theory of enlightenment and emancipation. Albrecht Wellmer, an associate of Habermas, puts the matter well. We cannot afford, he insists, to ignore the limitations of modernist thinking identified by postmodernists. Rather, he contends, "we must think the moral-political universalism of the Enlightenment, the ideal of individual and collective self-determination, reason and history, in a new fashion. In the attempt to do this I would see a genuine 'postmodernist' impulse towards a self-transcendence of reason."

Wellmer is with Berman in recognizing the important accomplishments of the modern world. But he also acknowledges their limits. And their limits, according to this view, are not to be overcome simply through further efforts at "more profound and radical renewals," because what is at stake, and what needs to be reconceptualized, is precisely the terms—the agencies and the agendas—in which such renewals are thought out. What is at stake is what it means to be a human, and whether or not the modernist ideal of self-determined individual and collective transformation of the world can be reconstructed in the face of the tremendous intellectual and political traumas inflicted upon it in the twentieth century—traumas for which it cannot escape culpability.

IV.

Berman largely avoids politics by attending to the dynamism of everyday life—in the street, in the theatre, and elsewhere. Or, at least, he attends only to the politics of the ordinary. It is important to insist that the lives of ordinary people, in their struggles against adversity, in their disappointments and successes, are meaningful, and Berman does so with brilliance. But it is striking how convergent he is on this point with the postmodernists whom he dismisses. It was, after all, Foucault who with great bluster proclaimed the death of the state in modern society, who argued for the importance of the "capillary" practices of everyday life, who insisted that the days of the "general intellectual" who articulates public causes were long gone, and all for the better.

It is ironic that much of Berman's discussion seems to concede these points. Berman celebrates contemporary modernism in the streets, but he has little to say about such things as political parties, mass movements, and the state. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with his approach, but it is precisely when we deal with such subjects that we begin to appreciate the force of the postmodern sensibility; for, as Mills noted, the dominant traditions of Enlightenment modernism—liberalism and socialism—seem to be bankrupt. Certainly these traditions continue to exist. And they continue to accomplish some good things—the advancement of civil liberties, public education, public goods, welfare entitlements, and so on. But they are not supported by powerful and persuasive intellectual systems. They are not the repositories of mass civic commitment or public vitality. And they are most certainly not the agencies of universal enlightenment and human emancipation. In the face of their decline, we have witnessed in the past twenty years a whole series of "new social movements" articulating principles of racial, gender, and sexual liberation; ecological sensitivity; disarmament and peaceful coexistence among nations; international justice and solidarity; and authentic religious community. These

movements do not speak with a single voice, and the languages that they use are often quite different from the language of Enlightenment modernism. They often employ different organizing strategies, they frequently focus on extraparliamentary concerns, and they are sometimes antistatist. In short, they defy many of the principles and expectations of modern political thought. Indeed, sometimes they are even antimodernist.

Now, my point is not to celebrate all of these movements as backyard revolutions that together might constitute the basis for a transformation of American politics. To the contrary, my point is that these movements have no necessary unity at all. They articulate widely disparate, sometimes incompatible, policies and visions. Still, they all give expression to a profound dissatisfaction with politics as usual.

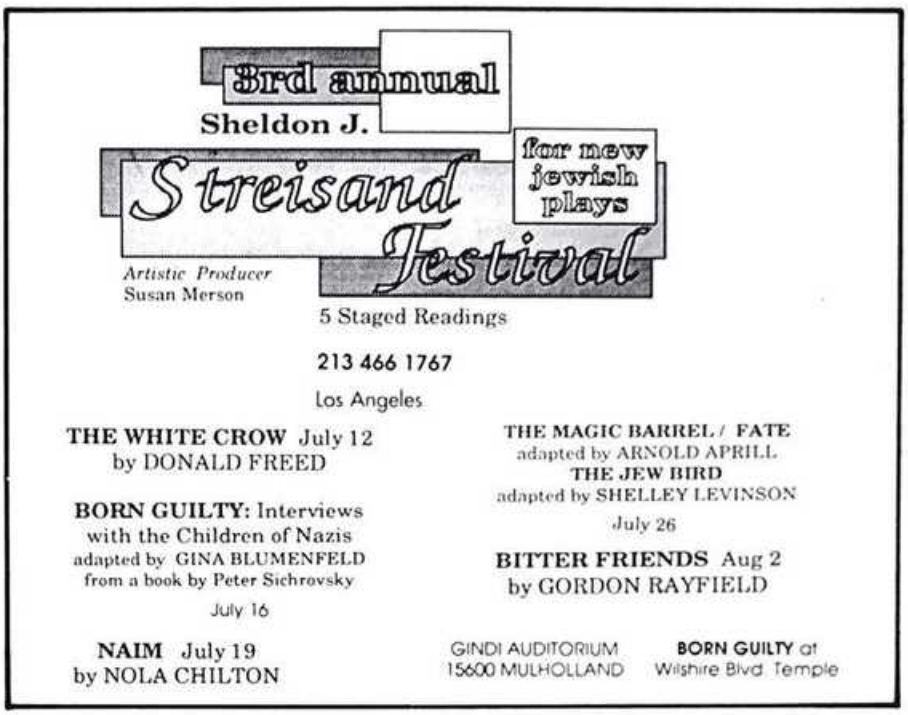
The major institutions of our society are, I hope it needs no arguing, in disarray. Premodern religious or communal orthodoxies and particularist political strategies are no solution to our public problems. But our greatest challenge is what Dewey long ago called "the eclipse of the public." And this is not simply an organizational problem. It is an ideological one, indeed in some senses even a metaphysical one. How should we think of ourselves as beings with needs, capacities, and limitations? How should we envision the institutions that might embody the best of our capabilities? What are the possible agencies of such changes, and how might they be mobilized? These are urgent questions of contemporary political thought. They require us to rethink our ideological commitments; our conceptions of parties and movements; our understandings about the relationship among local, regional, and global social change. In this sense they are "postmodern" questions.

V.

Living for the city. This is a wonderful image, and Berman has consistently managed to bring the world of the city—New York City—to life. I too am from New York, and so I appreciate Berman's imagery. The streets of the city are teeming with people, with characters, with hustlers, with panhandlers, each one with a story. When I step out onto the street in Manhattan my blood starts pumping faster. The city is certainly modern space par excellence, something Berman argued eloquently in *Dissent* a few years back (Fall, 1986). And yet I fear that here too Berman is guilty of sentimentalizing. Indeed, in some sense this issue condenses all the others and most clearly marks my differences with him.

I now live in Bloomington, Indiana. I have lived here for the past two years. Indeed, I moved here just as *Dissent*'s special issue "In Search of New York" (Summer, 1987) went to press, and it was one of the first pieces of mail I received in my new environs. It was a strange, sad experience to read about the city in which I had lived my entire life, having just left it for the heartland of America. I found Berman's essay, in which he enjoins New York intellectuals to "take their stand in public places" and "act as the consciousness and conscience of their city," to be particularly moving. But here's the rub: it was the "modernization" of New York City that squeezed me, and a good part of an entire generation of intellectuals and others, out. Unlike many New York intellectuals, I did not have a rent-controlled apartment on the Upper West Side. I had a family to raise and could not afford to buy a house in any of the five boroughs. For years I had to live on Long Island, making three-hour commutes on poor public transportation, stepping over homeless people on my way to work, fearing crime, despairing about the low quality of the public schools my children would likely attend, unable to afford quality child care. I am not from the boondocks, and my views are not the product of media demonology about New York. They are the product of my experience. And the New York that I experienced was very different from the one described in Berman's writings. It is not that his New York doesn't exist. It is just that it does not correspond to what large numbers of New Yorkers encounter in their ordinary lives.

Every time I return to visit New York I am struck by the physical decay of the city, by the cutbacks in public services, by the quiet desperation of my friends and family and of the people I encounter on the bus, on the subway, on the street. In addition, a specter haunts New York—the specter of racism. The city, once the jewel in the crown of modernity, is looking more and more like a social and political wasteland, where the maggots of class and racial division eat away at a withered social body. I am not sounding the death knell of New York. But it is simply impossible for me to look at the city and blithely conclude that "modernism is alive and well." The city is not now, if it ever was, deeply affected by the kind of intellectual progressivism that Berman supports. I have no doubt that New York will continue to be the center of public intellectual life, but I



suspect that given the city's decay, New York's attraction will weaken for future generations of intellectuals. American cities are as firmly in the grip of the cynical nihilism that Berman deplores as are any other institutions in American life. There may be a way out. And if there is one, it will of course draw inspiration from many of the modernist themes that Berman articulates in his writing. But finding a way out seems possible only if there grows a massive effort of public awakening, empowerment, and reconstruction. And here we return to the political questions raised above.

VI.

This brings me, finally, to *Tikkun*. The medium, Marshall McLuhan said, is the message. And it strikes me as far from accidental that the medium of this discussion about modernism and postmodernism is *Tikkun*. One day someone will write an interesting intellectual history, explaining why it is that sometime in the 1970s and 1980s a generation of radicals nurtured on Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud *chose*, in good modernist fashion, to return to their communal and religious Jewish roots. It is certainly paradoxical—a bunch of intellectuals, inspired by the project of what Marx called "a ruthless criticism of everything existing," hoping to reshape the world in a more "progressive" direction, suddenly reappropriating a heritage nearly four thousand years old.

We all have our own understandings about why we as individuals have felt this need and chosen this path, and we also have historical explanations for why so many of us have converged upon it. A major function of *Tikkun* is no doubt to encourage speculation and dialogue about these questions. What is striking and undeniable is that while the ideology of the Enlightenment was the repudiation of tradition and the stripping away of the illusions of prejudice (pre-judice, or pre-awareness and pre-judgment), we have thought it imperative to reappropriate and reconstruct tradition, and to use the prejudices of our Jewishness as a guide for living in the world, both privately and publicly. We employ the critical tools of modernism upon the premodern values and practices of our ancestors in order to construct a postmodern Jewish identity for ourselves.

This approach is, I confess, quite strange, something I have not yet fully figured out. I refuse to abandon the critical ideals and universalist principles of modernity. And yet I also refuse to repudiate my distinctive Jewishness and my particular identity as a member of *this* historical community. For me this is not a religious but a cultural identity, though for others it is undoubtedly different. But what I think binds us together is both a certain sense of identity and a belief that particular identities, even in their religious forms, are not mere illusions or impediments, anachronisms to be swept away before the altar of Progress. Whatever our religious beliefs, we refuse to pray before that altar. And so we refuse to say with Berman that "if everything must go, then let it go." We refuse to celebrate the melting of all that is solid into air. For we believe that such an attitude has helped produce many of our current problems. And the chastened modernists inside us know that only with the aid of some preexisting, *solid* materials can we seek to reshape our world for the better.

There are of course many people who look upon such an enterprise with scorn. Critics on the right see it as an effort to compromise the orthodoxies, religious and political, that have long governed the Jewish community. In the eyes of these critics we are like aliens, threatening the communal body with critical, progressive, secular, and universalist ideals. Critics on the left, liberal and socialist, see our enterprise as an absurd if not dangerous effort to compromise the modernizing, rationalistic principles that have long guided radical politics. In the eyes of these critics we come perilously close, if we have not already descended, to communal chauvinism. The terms of this criticism, it should be obvious, simply recapitulate the debates marking the rise of the Enlightenment—*either* tradition *or* reason. To be a traditionalist is thus to insulate oneself with a dogma, to view the agent of any kind of rational social criticism as a latter-day Voltaire seeking to lay waste to all that exists. And to be a modernist is to seek to melt all that is solid into air, to view anyone who identifies with tradition of any sort as a latter-day medieval Scholastic if not an incipient Ayatollah.

These views mirror each other, and what is wrong with both of them is their failure to understand that neither tradition nor reason is given by God. Both are attributes of historically situated human beings, beings who create and reshape traditions through the use of their critical faculties, and who develop these faculties only through an engagement with a solid universe that provides them with both opportunities and limits. Traditionalists cannot understand the critical faculties; modernists cannot understand the limits. But, as I have suggested, contemporary history requires that we understand both.

Such an outlook is not, like Berman's, modernist; but neither is it premodernist. It is postmodernist. But the adjective here merely modifies the noun; it does not obliterate it. Much of what Berman says is valuable and important. But his vision, rooted in the nineteenth century, is also deeply problematic. This is not simply his problem. It is our problem, as inhabitants of the world that this vision has spawned. And I don't believe that it can be solved simply by calls for more of the same—for further transformations of the world, as if we somehow confront it ex nihilo. As Camus put it, the key problem of our civilization is "whether man, without the help either of eternal or rationalistic thought, can unaided create his own values"—a rebellious, modernist aspiration in pursuit of which we can easily fall back upon a "rationalist" narrative of historical progress. This is why, Camus insisted, "if rebellion could found a philosophy, it would be a philosophy of limits, of calculated ignorance, and of risk. For he who does not know everything cannot kill everything." Such a vision is not comforting. But contemporary history is no cause for comfort. This is why we must seriously, soberly rethink the imagery and the principles that have animated modern social and political life. And this is why postmodernism still matters. □

A Response to Jeffrey C. Isaac

Marshall Berman

I am glad *Tikkun* has printed Jeffrey Isaac's intelligent and passionate essay. I'm sorry I missed him while he was in New York, and I hope we will all be hearing more of his voice. I am responding here to only a few of the issues he has raised.

I share most of Isaac's values. I believe, for instance, that "racial, gender, and sexual liberation; ecological sensitivity; disarmament and peaceful coexistence" are vital necessities; that we must create our own values and can't count on the rising tide of history to lift us up and carry us along; that no happy endings are guaranteed. The only problem is that this credo sounds just like the "Enlightenment modernism" with which Isaac has no patience. If "new social movements" can help to realize these values in the contemporary world, more power to them! Spinoza, Montesquieu, Diderot, Kant, and many others would be glad. But these movements are likely to find surer footing and a better sense of direction if they know where they are coming from.

Unlike Isaac, I don't think Enlightenment modernism is to blame for any of the mass murders of the twentieth century ("traumas for which it cannot escape culpability"). Alas, mass murder appears to be one of the most venerable traditions in the history of the world. Movements, armies, and states of every description have engaged in it, sometimes as a clear instrument of policy, sometimes apparently as an end in itself, sometimes just for fun. Right before the dawn of the Enlightenment, one of the most dreadful mass murders in all of history took place: the Thirty Years War, which wiped out as many as twenty million (though maybe, as some historians argue, it was "only" ten million) of the thirty million people alive in Germany in 1618. The crusaders and predators of those days glossed over their murders with old-fashioned religious zealotry and newfangled *raison d'état*. The Enlightenment strove to show people that the human emotions and rationality that they share matter more than the diverse faiths or nationalities that pull them apart. This idea got through to plenty of people, but not to the *Fuehrers* of our century or their mobs of followers. However, in the nuclear age, with the specter of world annihilation haunting us, the Enlightenment has taken on a new life; it burns most brightly in the peace movement that Isaac celebrates. If the peoples of the world learn to live with each other rather than blow each other up, it will be because we have caught up with that old Enlightenment modernism just in time.

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Alas, mass murder appears to be one of the most venerable traditions in the history of the world.

Isaac recites a litany of manmade disasters and asks, "Why should we strive to continually remake the world? Are there no limits to this aspiration?" It is a reasonable question. The trouble is that our modern technology, economy, and society are always changing, whether or not Isaac or I (or anybody else) wants them to. One of the paradoxes of modernity is that, even if we want to impose limits on human activity—and we certainly should—we are forced to continually remake the world in order to maintain these limits, to keep them from turning into empty forms, to preserve their human meaning.

Isaac closes with a lovely aphorism from Camus, "For he who does not know everything cannot kill everything." If only I could believe this! My problem is that I grew up in the Kennedy years, when an inner circle of sophisticated liberals, who professed a skeptical metaphysics rather like Camus's, came very close to blowing up the world. The world didn't blow up in 1962 only because Khrushchev, who professed a totalitarian metaphysics, pulled back from the brink, bringing political disgrace to himself but saving our lives. My point is that no metaphysics, however agreeable, can prevent us from becoming mass murderers, because that danger is inherent in the organization of modern politics and social life. We simply have to keep a close watch on each other, and on ourselves.

I like Isaac's discussion of the way in which "in the 1970s and 1980s a generation of radicals nurtured on Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud *chose,* in good modernist fashion, to return to their communal and religious roots [emphasis in original]." If only Isaac remembered that this was and is a *modernist* Judaism, modernism might not give him so much grief. This modernist Judaism supersedes an earlier mode which believed that we would have to renounce our Jewishness in order to become authentically modern. This weird idea is unique to Jews as far as I can tell: can we imagine Joyce feeling that he had to stop being Irish, or Stravinsky Russian, or Virginia Woolf English, or Frank Lloyd Wright American, or Kurosawa Japanese? But so many Jews, including some of the most creative ones, have believed that *we* are uniquely obliged to make this human sacrifice.

This was never the only, or even the primary, Jewish modernism. Think of the modernism of Ahad Ha'am, Martin Buber, Freud, Kafka, Chagall, Isaac Babel, Bruno Schultz, Gershom Scholem, Mordecai Kaplan, A. J. Heschel, the Singer brothers, Grace Paley, Cynthia Ozick, Philip Roth, and many others. But their triumphs, and those of other people like them, were never enough to stop the mass of self-inflicted wounds. Maybe now at last, forty years after the birth of Israel, we are secure and grown-up enough to participate in the modern world, even enjoy it, without leaving ourselves at the door. □

LETTERS

(Continued from p. 5)

self-determination, namely, the confidence of the Israeli people that a PLO-dominated Palestinian state could be trusted to live in peace with Israel. Still, our call for the PLO to engage in further confidence-building gestures may fall on deaf ears when Palestinians witness the Israeli army killing and wounding Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.

Sidney Halpern resembles many post-Holocaust Jews in seeing anti-Semitism as the one strand running through history and unifying all peoples against us. Given the unspeakable atrocities committed against us, and the failure of the rest of the world to respond when we were being shoved into the gas chambers and crematoria of Europe, we identify with the pain and outrage that all Jews still feel. Yet our past suffering does not warrant the Israeli occupation of the West Bank or the oppression of the Palestinian people, and a paranoid worldview that considers everyone our enemy is likely to create precisely what it fears. Israel needs strength and security—hence *Tikkun* has insisted that a Palestinian state must be demilitarized. But Israel is not well-served by people who cannot distinguish between the real enemies of the Jewish people and those who are merely critiquing policies of the current government. If Jewish right-wingers see those aligned with the Israeli peace movement as indistinguishable from Hitler, it's no wonder that they come up with scenarios for Israel that turn potential allies into enemies.

Would that right-wingers listened to the anguish of The Organizing Committee of Concerned Parents of Israeli Soldiers. It is precisely because we have listened to their appeal to "speak up" that we have been receiving hundreds of hate letters from the likes of Sidney Halpern.

Welfare Reform

To the Editor:

Howard Jacob Karger and David Stoesz recognize ("Welfare Reform," *Tikkun,* March/April 1989) the need to realign the "welfare" system with basic American values. In my mind, a perfect system would encourage work, provide an adequate safety net, and help strengthen families. Our current AFDC program has failed on all three counts. The Family Support Act of 1988 is a step in the right direction, though I recognize that many pieces of the puzzle are missing.

First, the authors are correct in stating that their complete reliance on a community development approach to providing services and benefits will be met by apprehension, even by liberals. As the War on Poverty experience taught us, there is great diversity at the local level with respect to the numbers, experience, and competency of community-based organizations, just as is true of State welfare agencies. The Family Support Act, however, recognizes that some states can rely successfully on a network of local organizations to provide services; therefore, the act allows states to contract with private organizations, including community-based organizations, to administer the JOBS program.

Second, the authors understate the case for child-support enforcement. The child-support enforcement provisions are among the most important reform elements of the 1988 Act. The composition of the AFDC population has changed dramatically since the program was established, and since the program's period of rapid growth in the 1960s. Most welfare families today are headed by divorced or never-married women rather than widows, and these women have a right to expect that every reasonable effort will be made to establish and collect child support on their behalf. Most welfare recipients hate welfare, but without child support there is little chance that a significant number can afford to leave the welfare rolls. The child-support provisions are necessary improvements to the child-support system. I find the authors' argument against garnishing wages weak; I cannot believe that a significant number of fathers will quit work just so they do not have to provide support. How will these men support themselves? *Children are the lifelong responsibility of both parents.* We need to get that message out. It is unfair that mothers on welfare currently shoulder the burden that should be shared by two.

Third, I cannot agree more with the authors regarding the increasing poverty and declining income of working families at the bottom of the economic ladder. Unless we provide income supplements to the working poor, there is little hope that we can make more than a dent in the welfare rolls. For this reason, my first act in the recently convened 101st Congress was to introduce, along with Senator Albert Gore (D., Tenn.), the Employment Incentives Act of 1988. Over the first five years, this act would, if enacted, provide close to $34 billion in direct income supplements to families who are working but living in or near poverty. This bill, in combination with minimum-wage legislation and a plan to provide access to health care for the uninsured, is a necessary partner to the Family Support Act. These pieces of legislation will support and encourage work, and help strengthen families.

Representative Thomas J. Downey
Acting Chairman
Subcommittee on Human Resources
Committee on Ways and Means

To the Editor:

Karger and Stoesz's critique of last autumn's Family Support Act is cogent and to the point. However, their article also contains a couple of errors and misrepresentations that are worth correcting.

Karger and Stoesz assert that William Julius Wilson has "discarded academic protocol and acknowledged that many minority communities are literally imploding." If this is to be taken as an admission that the "culture" of the Black inner city is the major culprit in the exploding rates of unemployment, crime, and teenage pregnancy, I do not think that they have read Wilson's book, *The Truly Disadvantaged,* very carefully. While Wilson does waffle on the issue (substituting the notion of "concentration effects" for the old truism "culture of poverty"), he ultimately believes that the "pathological" culture of the Black inner city will evaporate when decent jobs are made available. Granted, this implies an exceedingly ephemeral notion of culture. But it leads Wilson to propose solutions that focus on the need for employment rather than the remaking of people's "behavior." At the same time, he does so with an odd sexist twist.

Wilson holds that the "problem" of female-headed families is the result of

a shrinking pool of marriageable men. Why are they unmarriageable? Because they are unemployed—give men jobs, and men and women in the Black inner city will get married in higher numbers once again. Wilson ignores the fact that women throughout America are increasingly opting to raise children outside of marriage—not that it is an easy or often happy alternative, but it is frequently a necessary one. The main point is that women, for a variety of *good* reasons, need to have options in the world of work and family life. This means that Black women in the inner city deserve decent work opportunities—just as men do—and they need to have child care that does not leave them fearing for the well-being of their children.

It is on these last points that Karger and Stoesz are conspicuously silent. It is fine to suggest WPA-style community work projects, but for whom are they intended? If they are intended for female heads of households, who is to take care of the children? Should certain women *not* have the option to stay home with their young children because they are poor? Why threaten the fragile families of the inner city still further by forcing female heads of households into the work force?

The failures of the left on the question of urban poverty have not resulted from the neglect of "tough questions such as the social control of the underclass." Members of the underclass do not need to be "controlled"; they need the same opportunities that the rest of us receive—to be productive and to construct family life as they see fit.

Peter Goldsmith
Director of Studies
Lecturer, Afro-American Studies
Princeton University
Princeton, New Jersey

To the Editor:

Karger and Stoesz make two mistakes: first, they fail to indicate the affirmative possibilities of mainstream programs, and, second, they see community development as a sound alternative to current welfare reform.

From 1945 to 1965, people with moderate and poor incomes registered small gains in income shares. These gains reflected high employment levels and rising wage levels and were visible in the rising *relative* wage levels of women and minorities. After that, wages and salaries, interest, and profits became more unequally distributed, and the tax system grew less progressive. Only dramatically rising social security and other income transfers tended somewhat to correct for an increase in inequality. Without improved income transfers, inequality would have been far worse. The status of the aged presents a dramatic illustration of what was achieved. The percentage of poor aged (14 percent) is half of what it was in 1965, owing largely to improved social security.

So one should not ignore the possibilities for progress through mainstream income transfers. There will certainly be an attempt to cut these transfers back, as Karger and Stoesz say, and that attempt must be fought, but progress is possible as well. President Bush has proposed a $1,000 refundable tax credit for families with children. It may be a move worth supporting. In time, it might come together with the Earned Income Tax Credit in a mainstream subsidy that favors poor families with children—a type of subsidy that among western industrial countries only the United States lacks.

Widespread discontent about our health system opens another real possibility for progressive reform. Indeed, some type of legislation will almost certainly be enacted—and it will, no doubt, be represented as reform. The task for progressives will be to distinguish movement toward a genuine national health system from a variety of proposals that will be described as such.

Karger and Stoesz's hope of making community development a basis for welfare reform is romantic. Federal money, or its lack, is at the heart of the problems of welfare departments. Little would have pleased the Reagan government more than to lay the administration of welfare on local voluntary or quasivoluntary organizations, setting a sum of money on a stump, thus capping costs and denying further responsibility. Moreover, it isn't clear that welfare clients, now deeply humiliated if not denied the assistance to which they are legally entitled, would be treated better by these new community development entities. Especially in the context of the borrowed traditionalist vocabulary—"social contract," "responsibility," and "productivity" (but when have welfare recipients ever been free of such demands?)—recipients might be treated worse than they now are by welfare departments, if that is possible.

I make this plea for welfare recipients. They are hassled; they go hungry and sick; day by day some lose their homes. Whatever progressives emphasize for the middle or long run, we should not casually risk making their circumstances worse.

Alvin L. Schorr
L. W. Mayo Professor
Case Western Reserve University
Cleveland, Ohio

Karger and Stoesz respond:

We appreciate the care with which Congressman Downey, Professor Goldsmith, and Professor Schorr considered our position on welfare reform. As a group, however, the responses are problematic, given their authors' unwillingness to acknowledge three prerequisites to authentic welfare reform. First, contrary to liberal orthodoxy, a portion of the poor is not like the middle class, a reality starkly evident in the American underclass. Second, a primary obstacle to improving the life chances of the poor is a pernicious welfare bureaucracy that is perceived by taxpayers *and* welfare recipients as siphoning off vast sums of money that could be put to better use. Third, welfare proposals that fail to consider the current economic reality—for example, the creation of vast numbers of minimum-wage jobs—are doomed to failure. The inability of liberals to grapple with these issues leaves any welfare reform proposal ripe for ideological attack.

Representative Downey's $34 billion Employment Incentives Act, while arguably justifiable, is unlikely to see the light of the House floor because of liberal intransigence on these issues. (Senator Kennedy's modest—by comparison—$200 million Minimum Benefits for All Workers Act stalled in committee.) At the heart of the problem is the liberal insistence that all of the poor exhibit mainstream behavior and have mainstream aspirations, a presumption that is exploded by anyone with enough courage to stroll down New York Avenue in the nation's capital. When a significant number of the poor fail to live up to bourgeois standards, liberal welfare proposals founder on the shoals of social reality. For example, after several years, proponents

of child-support enforcement can claim recovery of no more than 15 percent of expenditures for Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). While some fathers *choose* not to fulfill their familial obligations, on an annual wage of less than $6,500 a year (the minimum wage) some fathers of kids on AFDC simply cannot. At best, child-support payments taken out of a minimum-wage paycheck will have only symbolic value. If policy makers believe that a token payment has moral value, then who are we to argue?

Proposals now on the table, a $1,000 tax credit for poor families with children, for example, will not address the life circumstances of underclass Americans who either can't wait for a tax refund or couldn't care less about complying with something as irrelevant as an Internal Revenue Service filing deadline. Similarly, liberal proposals focused solely on providing "decent work opportunities" for the underclass are inadequately conceived so long as the proposals fail to recognize that people without essential work skills and inclinations will not take advantage of them without some compelling reasons.

So, back to our premise: Why not cashier the public welfare bureaucracy for some bold experiments in social reconstruction? Unfortunately, liberals who remember the turbulent days of the Community Action Program are unlikely to embrace a community development strategy for welfare reform. Yet the times are propitious for doing just that. There is little doubt that Jack Kemp will place Urban Enterprise Zone legislation before this Congress, and that offers liberals a chance to offer some creative proposals for contending with the underclass problem.

Of course, liberals can opt for conventional prescriptions for alleviating poverty: pumping megasums into programs that are irrelevant to many of the poor, and that are administered by an archaic bureaucracy that has no stake in whether these efforts succeed. That route is familiar and safe. But liberals have to do more than that if they are to command once again the middle ground in the welfare policy debate. Liberals must jettison traditional income-maintenance strategies and deal seriously with problems presented by the underclass and the welfare bureaucracy. Progressives ultimately stand to gain more from being realistic about the substantial problems confronting American social welfare than by indulging in romanticism. □

WHAT KIND OF STATE?

(Continued from p. 37)

garde. The adjective "Jewish" doesn't by itself rule out these (or many other) possibilities. But if we give it its broadest sense, allow it to incorporate the full range of Jewish experience in the modern world, then it points toward a liberal state in which clerics and anticlerics, rabbis and secular intellectuals, peacefully (I don't mean harmoniously) coexist.

V.

Liberalism, however, isn't only for the Jews. We still need to ask how the adjective "Jewish" can modify a state that includes Arabs as free and equal citizens. Obviously, if "Jewish" is a strong adjective, the inclusion of Arabs is impossible; at best, they would be granted the same kind of corporate autonomy that Jews enjoyed (some of the time, in some places) in the centuries before emancipation. Like the Jews again, they would be denied civil rights. But we have reason to know that arrangements of this sort make for a precarious and vulnerable existence; having ourselves escaped from them, we would have difficulty explaining why we were prepared to impose them on another people. In any case, corporate autonomy works best under conditions of benevolent absolutism or imperial rule; it isn't compatible with democratic self-government.

So: How can a Jewish state, committed to democracy, include Arabs? Some people, worrying about this question (it needs to be worried about!), decided long ago that it was necessary to find another adjective. Since states need adjectives, since political communities must be identified in some determinate way with their own citizens, we must look, they argued, for an identity that predates or transcends the Arab/Jewish distinction. The number of possibilities is fairly limited—Semite, Canaanite, Hebrew, Israeli—and none of them is quite satisfactory. For names of this sort are not matters of mere willfulness, used and disused as we please. Of course, they don't correspond to essences; names and identities are social constructions. But they are constructed over many years and many generations; they tap into the deepest levels of collective self-consciousness. There is no contemporary (or, for that matter, historical) group of Arabs and Jews that answers to the name of Semite or Canaanite; Hebrew is the name of a language that Israeli Jews and Arabs speak, but not the name of a people or a culture; and Israeli is a name still to be tested, an indication of civic status, not yet of cultural or (for the Arabs at least) of national belonging.

It is probably better to acknowledge the separate identities of the two peoples rather than to search for some artificial unity. The Arabs are a minority that should be included in Israel much as Jewish minorities, after emancipation, are included in states where most of their fellow citizens are non-Jews. Or, more generally, Arabs should be included much as any national minority is included in a "liberal" state shaped by, and in some sense for, the majority nation. There are many examples of such inclusion, enough of them problematic, however, so that some further description is required. I will try to indicate the conditions that might justify this particular kind of majority rule. But I don't mean to suggest that these conditions already exist, either in Israel or

anywhere else.

Consider, then, the life of an ethnic minority in a country, say, where the public calendar, the evocative symbols that mark public occasions and public spaces, the history taught in the public schools are all of them alien to the minority members, all of them determined by another ethnicity. The minority members are citizens, nonetheless, with full rights not only of ethnic association and religious worship but also of political participation; they are not discriminated against in either public or private employment, nor are they subject to any special laws that don't apply to everyone else. They can organize, publish, petition, agitate, and vote. But because they are a small group, easily outvoted, they have a very limited capacity to shape the culture of their "own" country. There are, I suppose, kinds and degrees of "own-ness." Arabs and Jews in France do not expect to find their own history taught in the public schools—as they would, say, in Algeria or in Israel. French men and women who have stayed behind in Algeria and chosen Algerian citizenship do not expect public celebrations (or a holiday from work) on Bastille Day or on Christmas. But none of these people are degraded by their negative expectations, nor does liberalism require us to deny the place of French history in French schools or of the Islamic calendar in Algerian public life.

Standard American liberalism holds that the state is allowed its civic symbols and historical celebrations only so long as they are narrowly political, focused on itself. But it must not appropriate the symbols and celebrations of any subgroup of its citizens. The citizens have their own social, cultural, and religious life, which the state systematically ignores. This is a view that nicely fits the American experience, where the state is, almost from the beginning, independent of the groups that supply its citizens and where all its citizens belong, so it is commonly said, to one or another minority. But the American experience is historically uncommon; most states are closely connected to a particular national majority; symbols and celebrations are shared by the state and the nation, and it is hard to mark off what is civic or political from what is social or cultural or even religious. A state of this sort can still be liberal, open, and pluralist, guaranteeing the rights of individuals and groups without discriminating among them. But it will have a particular identity that isn't shared in the full sense by all its citizens. Members of minority groups will argue about this identity—as "Third World" Americans do, for example, when they hold that Western culture should be de-emphasized in the public school curriculum (an argument suggesting that even the United States has its public particularism). But they cannot be guaranteed victory in such arguments: they have only the right to make their case as persuasively as they can. To study someone else's history in school, so long as the student is free to study his or her own history outside of school, is neither degrading nor oppressive. The particularities of public education can certainly be made degrading for this or that minority, but that is an outcome relatively easy to avoid.

There is, then, nothing necessarily discriminatory in the inclusion of Arabs in a Jewish state (where "Jewish" is a weak or liberal modifier). The fact that the Jews are a religious as well as a national entity, however, makes for special difficulties. Who can imagine, for example, Muslim and Christian Arabs ever joining with goodwill in the singing of *Hatikvah,* a song that expresses a peculiarly Jewish yearning for Zion, as much religious as nationalist in spirit? How does one teach the history of the Jews, which is also, but not only, the political history of the State of Israel, to both Jewish and non-Jewish citizens? I can't answer such questions, though I can imagine a number of accommodating and liberal answers. The greatest difficulty, however, lies in the constant temptation to find some institutional match for the coexistence of nation and religion, to move Judaism to the center of the political stage—and so to drive non-Jews to the margins. The Jewish equivalent of the church-state conflict pits those who would yield to this temptation against those who would resist or repress it. Though the conflict is obscured by external dangers, it is likely to grow more intense in coming years. But it doesn't have to be resolved (nor does the state have to be triumphant) before there can be a liberal regime. As the history of the French Third Republic suggests, the conflict can itself be acted out in a liberal fashion, through the characteristic arrangements of democratic politics. This means, of course, that Arab citizens will play a part in determining its outcome, just as Jews and Protestants played a part in the French case.

But this defense of the liberal nation-state will succeed only in countries where national minorities are relatively small—like the Jews in the United States or the Arabs in France or, if we turn to near-liberal though non-democratic Third World countries, the Copts in Egypt or the Chinese in Indonesia. What we might think of as liberal particularism won't work, or won't readily work, with very large minorities. For then statehood would need two distinct and possibly inconsistent modifiers—that is, it would have to be binational in character. Binationalism is obviously not impossible; Belgium is a relatively successful example of it. But Cyprus and Lebanon are examples closer to the realities of the contemporary Middle East. The alternative to binationalism is partition: two states, each with its own adjective. In both these cases, politics follows culture; and follow it must, unless the state undertakes a Kulturkampf against some subset of its own members.

Hence the choice that faces Greater Israel today: it can become a non-Jewish or a half-Jewish state (whatever binationalism means), or it can become a small Jewish state living side by side with a small Arab state—"Little Israel" and littler Palestine, each including an Arab or a Jewish minority while also claiming its own national identity.

There is, of course, a third possibility: Greater Israel can become an illiberal or an antiliberal Jewish state. Then the Arabs would have to be wholly excluded, not only culturally but also politically, their fate either subordination or expulsion. For the Arabs of Greater Israel can't plausibly be called a national minority; they are substantially a nation. Hence there is no way, so far as they are concerned, in which "Jewish" can be a liberal adjective; it indicates not merely an unfamiliar public culture but an actively oppressive politics. I am inclined to argue that, given current conditions, it can't be a liberal adjective for the Jews either; that is, as the Jews' relationship to the Arab minority now stands, it can't represent a distillation of Jewish history and values in which all Jews might recognize themselves. Jews who are fully aware of their own (Diaspora) history might well come to identify with the Arabs rather than with the Jews of Greater Israel. Indeed, if the policy euphemistically named "transfer" were ever put into effect, wouldn't the exiled Arabs be more like the Jews of Spain in 1492, and the Jews more like the Spaniards?

VI.

Years of exile and persecution have bred among the Jews, or rather among some Jews, a burning desire for a turnabout of just this kind. This desire has left its mark on religious literature and also on some versions of secular—for example, Revisionist—politics. Religiously, this desire takes the form of a messianic triumphalism, a vision of redemption as hegemony, the rule of Israel over the "nations." All this, thankfully, only in the end of days, after Armageddon; and, like one of the Rabbis cited in the Talmud, I hope not to live to see it. If there is redemption short of Armageddon, it will have to take a very different form, more like those pastoral and peaceful visions that also figure in the Jewish tradition. In any case, the dichotomy between exile and redemption isn't very helpful in our present circumstances. The Jewish State of Israel is neither the one nor the other. It really represents, as the early Zionists hoped it would, a triumph of the ordinary—which is to say that it occupies the largely unexplored theoretical landscape between exile and redemption. One has only to visit Israel to learn what most of its citizens know very well and are more than ready to say: these are nothing like messianic times. All that the present moment offers is a chance, a *chance,* for a normal Jewish life.

For many Orthodox Jews, however, Jewish normality includes religious coercion—much as Christian and Islamic normality does in the eyes of zealous believers. What can we say to such people? There are two arguments against coercion. The first, which I have not tried to make here, holds that religious commitment and personal freedom are closely, perhaps necessarily, connected. Faith must be free. This is an argument that can be read into the Jewish tradition, on some nonstandard interpretations of that tradition. But it probably presupposes a liberal understanding of both religion and personality, and it won't appeal much to people with different understandings.

The second argument is more practical and institutional in character: it holds that coercive methods, in the aftermath of emancipation, are radically ineffective. There is no going back, as I have already said, to medieval corporatism; nor does coercion offer any way forward to a redemptive politics. It can make only for local ugliness: cruelty and high-handedness tempered by hypocrisy and corruption. What is necessary now—what life in a Jewish state both requires and makes possible—is halakhic revisionism. Just as the Rabbis reconstructed biblical law to meet the conditions of statelessness, so now rabbinic law must be reconstructed to meet the conditions of liberal statehood.

This reconstruction will leave Judaism without an overt political role—without a claim on the resources of the state to punish blasphemy, say, or idolatry, or violations of the Sabbath, or to enforce the rulings of rabbinic courts on such matters as marriage and divorce. Halakhic observance will be, as is true in the Diaspora, entirely free. Still, I have tried to deny what many liberals take to be the necessary corollary of religious freedom—that is, absolute state neutrality. I see no reason why Judaism, and secular versions of Jewishness too, should not play a part in shaping the political culture of the Jewish state. It should be an occasion for pride, not moral anxiety, for example, when talmudic conceptions of equity are invoked in the course of a Knesset debate about taxation. We should be eager to have the Hebrew Bible read and critically discussed in the state schools. The public celebration of a holiday like Hanukkah should not be taken as an affront to liberal sensibilities. At the same time, of course, talmudic conceptions of equity will have to compete with other conceptions; Plato's *Republic* should also be required reading; no one can be compelled to celebrate Hanukkah. Jewish statehood requires nothing more than this. But we can also say, without embarrassment or apology, that emancipation, liberalism, and pluralism don't require anything less. □

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