(te•kun) To mend, repair and transform the world

TIKKUN

After L.A.: *Cornel West, Ramona Ripston, Mickey Kaus, Jim Sleeper, Eric Mann, Cynthia Hamilton, Michael Katz, Lawrence Mead*
Reviews: *Chris Lehmann, Adam Goldgeier, Stuart Klawans*

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY JULY/AUGUST 1992 $6.00

Can the Democrats Be Stopped from Blowing It Again in 1992?



Probably not ...

but not for the reasons you think.

Not because of Perot, and not because of Clinton's mistakes, but because they do not understand the ...

Politics of Meaning

(analysis and platform page 7)

Plus

Todd Gitlin on ending history; Ronna Kabatznick on why diets don't work; Letty Cottin Pogrebin and Bob Fitch debate whether progressives should support Clinton; Arthur Green on mystical theology; Akiva Eldar on the Israeli elections

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Notes from the Truck

My dream was a smokestack and the clouds went on forever, pink, blue. Then a house burned.

I am on the road. I have the radio going. She is on my mind. Across the land, on my left, is a windmill. I could sleep, I think. I could stop the truck, dig a hole and sleep.

When the smoke rises it becomes a lamb, right there, in the sky, where the clouds don't move.

I dig in my pocket for gum. I'm hungry. She is sitting in her room with the lights off and a piece of toast by her bed. I am on the road, dying of hunger.

The lamb's eyes are green. A man with no hair says, "You will reach a point in the universe where the only sound is a moving train."

My truck runs well, a new truck. I wash it every Thursday and sing it a little song.

If the land is a desert then I remember the saying, "And the bush was not consumed." But if I am alone then the pain will be strong. Still, when I look from the vehicle there are empty oil fields and bunches of dry trees.

The radio is all talk. I can find no music and this is hard for me to believe. It is hard for me to believe that 1500 miles east she eats alone and wonders about the telephone bill, the ironing that needs to be done, the diary she cannot find.

After the lamb there is the word for lamb which is not lamb. Still, this does not matter. The beast crawls toward a hole that used to be full with water.

She is alone. I am alone. We have this experience more often than not. When we are together we get into the bed and squirm. If there is rain it wakes us. If the teapot is quiet it wakes us. The thing about making love is that it is making love.

When I cross the bridge over the dry riverbed there is an eagle in my rearview mirror that I notice for the first time. The heat too. It strikes me in my throat.

The smokestack is gone. All of a sudden I am inside the foot of the lamb. I am the bush inside the lamb. The smoke is no longer smoke and the sky is full of wool.

Matthew Lippman

TIKKUN

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY — VOLUME 7 NUMBER 4

2 **Letters:** JFK; Jewish Renewal?; Scandals in the Organized Jewish World; the Media and the 1992 Elections; Verifying Religion

4 **Editorials:** A Victory for Peace in Israel; the Democrats, the Elections, and the Panic of 1992

Special Focus

7 **Platform for a Politics of Meaning** Will the Democrats blow it again in 1992? Probably. Progressives will continue to be isolated until they address the psychological, ethical, and spiritual needs of the American people. In a detailed platform covering health care, education, aging, economic and foreign policy, and more, *Tikkun*'s editor **Michael Lerner** shows what a progressive, values-oriented politics might look like. Additional platform ideas by **Jay Rosen** and Episcopal minister **Stephen J. Chinlund.**

Articles

27 Ronna Kabatznick **Hunger's Many Meanings** Lurking beneath all the gimmicks and marketing strategies that have made dieting a multimillion dollar industry is the unresolved pain of a society starved for meaning.

29 **Current Debate Should Progressives Support Bill Clinton? Letty Cottin Pogrebin** sees the 1992 presidential election as a golden opportunity for progressive forces to put the divisive and self-destructive politics of purism behind them. Not so, says **Robert Fitch:** The Democratic party betrays progressive ideals.

37 Akiva Eldar **What Price Victory? Labor and the Election's Missing Peace** In casting their lot with Yitzhak Rabin, Labor strategists have sacrificed much more than their recent electoral track record.

39 **Roundtable Domestic Policy After the L.A. Riots Cynthia Hamilton, Michael Katz, Mickey Kaus, Eric Mann, Lawrence Mead, Ramona Ripston, Jim Sleeper,** and **Cornel West** debate what kind of workable politics of race, responsibility, and social reform can be pulled out of the fire after the insurrection in L.A.

45 Arthur Green **The Aleph-Bet of Creation: Jewish Mysticism for Beginners** How does the multiplicity of Creation arise from the unity of the Creator? The Kabbalistic tradition's answer is as simple as ABC.

48 Haim Chertok **Desert Scorn: Bedouin Life under Israeli Rule** Israel is pursuing an aggressive campaign of displacement and resettlement apart from the Occupation—against its own Bedouin citizens in the Negev.

Reviews

53 Todd Gitlin on Francis Fukuyama's liberal-democratic ideal; Chris Lehmann on Los Angeles and the postmodern condition; Adam Goldgeier on the fall of scientific reason; Stuart Klawans on Yiddish cinema

Fiction 35 *Light of This World* Ehud Havazelet

Column 48 *Jewish Feminism* Judith Plaskow

Poetry: on the inside front cover: **Matthew Lippman** lives and works in Brooklyn, New York; on page 30, **Deborah Brody** lives in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Her poems have appeared in the *Greensboro Review;* on page 34, **Debra Weinstein**'s first book of poems is called *Rodent Angel.* She has been a fellow of the MacDowell Colony and Yaddo; on page 71, **Linda Zisquit** is a poet and translator living in Jerusalem. Her first collection of poetry will be published this fall by Broken Moon Press.
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Letters

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

JFK: THE ASSASSINATION

To the Editor:

I write to clarify some points in your interview with Peter Dale Scott ("The Assassination and the Coverup: What Really Happened?" March/April 1992).

Scott mentions my letter to the *New York Times* of January 20, 1992, which states that President Kennedy intended to withdraw from Vietnam, and you then ask Scott why I waited so long to make this public. The fact is that I made the same statement over and over again many, many years ago.

In a news conference on September 2, 1963, President Kennedy stated that although the United States was furnishing South Vietnam aid and advisers, he did not intend to make Vietnam an American war. "In the final analysis," Kennedy said, "it is their war. They have to win it or lose it."

After Kennedy was killed, President Johnson made it clear to people in his administration dealing with Vietnam that he had dropped Kennedy's last three words. Johnson would stick with Kennedy's policy of giving South Vietnam aid and advisers; but if it did not work, he would do something else.

I submitted my resignation in January 1964, but it was not until early 1965 that Johnson actually changed Kennedy's policy by bombing North Vietnam. Before that time, all I could have said was that Johnson, unlike Kennedy, had not said anything about accepting a South Vietnamese defeat.

The first opportunity I had to speak out on the decision to make Vietnam an American war was in testifying before Senator Edward M. Kennedy's subcommittee on refugees in September 1965, where I called Johnson's decision to bomb North Vietnam a "tragic mistake." From that time on, I took every opportunity that came my way, whether in speeches, articles, or books, to condemn Johnson's decision to make Vietnam an American war—most extensively in my memoir of the Kennedy years, *To Move a Nation, The Politics of Foreign Policy in the Administration of John F. Kennedy,* which was published in 1967.

Robert Kennedy, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and many others have said that

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President Kennedy told them that he was determined not to let Vietnam become an American war. But it is difficult to make yourself heard. Scott mentions that William Rust, in his book *Kennedy in Vietnam,* systematically ignored the fact that Kennedy, before his death, had begun to implement a plan to withdraw from Vietnam. That is true. Rust interviewed me twice for that book and for a magazine article that preceded it. I told him the truth about Kennedy's plans. Rust did not mention what I told him, and on several other points he distorted what I said. When I wrote a letter to his magazine repeating what I had actually said to Rust, the editor refused to publish it.

Roger Hilsman
Former Assistant Secretary for
Intelligence and Research
Department of State
New York, New York

To the Editor:

As a certified Dealey Plaza obsessive, I found your recent symposium on the JFK assassination a welcome departure from the usual "balanced debate" about the nuts and bolts of the killing itself. That debate will necessarily continue, of course, but there is at the same time a strong, long-standing majority view that the evidence indicates conspiracy and cover-up. From this perspective, the central question is not "Who killed JFK?" but rather "How can we ever hope to find out?" *Tikkun*'s focus on the politics of the assassination is basic to this latter question.

The interview with Peter Dale Scott clarifies why the issue is so highly politicized nearly three decades after the event. Whether or not it explains why JFK was killed, the fact remains that his death was the first step in the radical escalation of the Vietnam War carried out under Johnson. The interpretation of Dealey Plaza is thus fundamental to our understanding of the entire period of the Vietnam War.

But I worry that the recent promotion of the JFK assassination issue to a higher degree of legitimacy will tempt democratic intellectuals such as Todd Gitlin into deeper and more complex struggles with historical irony, as where he writes, "In the end, it seems almost certain that the murder will remain unsolved." It is important to understand

(Continued on p. 76)

This is the moment we need to get together and plan a new response to the rapidly changing circumstances in America and in the world.

TIKKUN CAMP

August 23–26 at Elat Chayyim The Woodstock Center for Health and Healing in the Catskill Mountains

AFTER THE PANIC OF 1992

There will be two simultaneous meetings taking place during our Tikkun camp: one focused on American politics, the other on Jewish renewal.

Drafting a new Port Huron Statement: A New Direction for Liberal and Progressive Forces

We are trying to assemble some of the most creative political and social thinkers and activists to develop a new stategy for the current period. When tens of millions of people rush to support a right-wing Texas billionaire, defying all the accepted wisdom about the impossibility of doing electoral politics outside the two-party framework, while liberals and progressives, many of them unenthusiastic about the Democratic party's choice for president, sit on the sidelines, confused and lacking vision, we know it's time for people to get together and do some deep rethinking. We can't pretend that we enter this discussion without an agenda—we think that the Politics of Meaning platform and direction printed in this issue of *Tikkun* provide a basis for a new thinking. If you're turned on by those ideas, write to us and tell us about yourself and why you'd like to be part of what may be a historic event.

Jewish Renewal After L.A. and Perot: The Need for New Organization and Leadership

The political disintegration and chaos reflected both by the failure of liberal leadership after L.A. and by the rise of Ross Perot raise the question of whether Jewish renewal has anything important to contribute to healing and repairing the larger society, and if so, how. There has been a proliferation of local projects, havurot, bookstores, and community gatherings. But at the same time there has been a collapse of national leadership and institutions. New Jewish Agenda has closed its national office, New Outlook is reputed to be on the verge of financial collapse, AJ Congress recently voted to restrict what its national leaders could say about Israel, and only *Tikkun* remains able to give voice to the intersection between Jewish renewal and social issues. We are hoping to create some kind of network of Jewish renewal projects and groups, perhaps through the Committee for Judaism and Social Justice, that can engage in social issues. If you'd like to help in creating this network, you should be at this gathering.

Cost: $220 includes food and lodging from Sunday, Aug.23 to Wednesday morning, Aug.26th. To apply: tell us about yourself and why you should be part of one or the other of these conversations. Send along with check to: Tikkun, Box POB 1788, Cathedral Station, NY, NY 10025

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New York Office or Oakland Office

1. **Editor.** Experienced conceptual and copy-editor, capable of taking a clunky piece and making it elegant and accessible, yet also willing to work on business and other aspects of the magazine. We'd consider one of two types of people: a. A fulltime person who saw this as their political movement, not just a job, and could give unreservedly of their time, energy and smarts to the magazine. Wordperfect or Quarkexpress literacy required. Pay in low $20/ks plus benefits; or b. A highly skilled and experienced editor who worked halftime for $14 k.
2. **Administrative Assistant/Managing Editor.** Running all aspects of the business and doing layout of the magazine (requirement: Quarkexpress and Wordperfect competency). A "movement-style" job: high stress, more than 40 hours per week, unlimited expectations. Fulltime: in low $20/ks plus benefits. Part-time: $12k.
3. **Unpaid Interns:** September, 1992 through June, 1993. A perfect way into the world of publishing, and possibly into paid employment at Tikkun (but no promises). We need a minimum of 20hrs/wk. Interns must be prepared to do everything: from reading and assessing manuscripts, copyediting, proofreading, soliciting articles and helping to plan conferences to office drudgery, answering phones , leafletting, mailings, etc.

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EDITORIALS

A Victory for Peace in Israel

Michael Lerner

We deserve to rejoice! Please don't remind us that Yitzhak Rabin is no dove, that after his famous order to Israeli soldiers to "break their bones" the Israeli army engaged in ruthless suppression of the intifada, or that, as Akiva Eldar reports in this issue of *Tikkun,* this year's Knesset campaign ignored many of Israel's most critical issues and focused on personalities. True as all these considerations are, the election results have given Labor a unique opportunity to put together a government that could take definitive steps toward peace. We would enthusiastically support such a government.

Rabin may have doubts about ceding too much to the Palestinians. But there are many key members of Labor's Knesset faction who understand that Palestinians are not struggling for "limited autonomy" but for real self-determination. Our task in America is to give the peace elements in Labor—together with MKs from the Meretz coalition of Israeli peace activists—the public support they need in the upcoming political battles.

For years the conservatives in the American Jewish establishment have sided with Shamir and justified their stance by arguing that Shamir's administration was the elected government of Israel. and that his policies therefore merited the loyalty of American Jews. We hope that the same conservatives will now give enthusiastic public support to the process of freezing some settlements, dismantling others, and trading land for peace. We never argued that it was inappropriate to criticize an Israeli government—but they did, so let's now see how many of them are hypocrites and how many actually publicly embrace the land for peace position now that it will likely be the official position of the Israeli government.

Labor could still blow it by going too slowly and offering too little. If Palestinians feel that they are once again being offered a meaningless autonomy plan and not real self-determination, they will resort to violence —which in turn will make Labor look ineffective. Our task, as lovers of Israel and the Jewish people, is to do what we can to strengthen the hand of those propeace Knesset members in Labor and their Meretz allies who can make a Rabin government act to bring real peace and not just piecemeal concessions. That this must go hand-in-hand with the strongest possible security guarantees for Israel remains the commitment of all of us who for years have labored for peace.

The Democrats, the Elections, and the Panic of 1992

Most of us have never lived through a historical moment in which a majority of people become so disoriented and fearful that they rush to grab on to anything that seems to offer temporary safety or calm. But now, in everything from the L.A. riots to the candidacy of Ross Perot, we can see all the signs of a full-blown social and economic breakdown—what could be called the panic of 1992. The panic is caused by deep structural changes and momentary crises:

Recession

The recession deepens, in part, because people perceive that the recession might hurt them, so they stop spending. We at *Tikkun* have experienced this very directly. Faced with dramatic losses of subscribers and donors in the past eight months, we've directly called many of these people to ask why they were not donating or resubscribing. Invariably we are told that the people involved are cutting back because of the recession. But when we persist in asking if they have lost a job or had a pay reduction, 80 percent of those questioned tell us that there has been no objective change in their earning power. Instead, they confess to an increasing fear that things may be less stable in the future, so they'd better cut back on subscriptions or donations now. This, in turn, has forced us to cut back on staff and on pages in the magazine—as reciprocal and rotating fears begin to cause the very things most feared.

Perot

When a majority of those polled in early summer 1992 indicate they are willing to support a Texas billionaire about whose positions on issues they know virtually nothing for president, we are facing a phenomenon close to mass hysteria. Perot's commitment to reproductive choice and his "no-nonsense" attitude of "getting in there and cleaning up the problem" have some appeal.

But this impression dissipates once one remembers that this is someone who shared the collective delusion that the wounds of Vietnam could be healed by fantastical MIA rescue schemes and that he was a supporter of Oliver North's militarism *über alles*. Perot may not be the out-and-out fascist that some people on the Left worry he is, but he *does* move the country's dialogue more to the right than to the left. More important, his popularity is a symptom of deep panic.

Beyond Two-Party Politics?

After the debacle of 1988, Norman Lear, Patrick Caddell, and I met with a group of other social-change thinkers to talk about how progressives could prevent another such defeat in 1992. Some of us were convinced that the political alignments of the past could be transcended, others that the best progressives could hope for would be to influence the inner workings of the Democratic party. There were many who believed that the one thing everyone "knew" was that the two-party system in America makes any other approach to politics impossible. It has taken Ross Perot to seriously question that assumption. And many progressives are now asking what might have happened had they spent the past four years building a coherent alternative.

Quayle and "Moral Elitism"

It's easy to see what's *wrong* in Vice President Dan Quayle's attack on liberals' alleged "moral elitism": his manipulation of the language of values to relegitimize patriarchal and oppressive social values. But there's also something *correct* in what Quayle and the Right are saying. Liberals and progressives dismiss Quayle and so don't allow themselves to hear why some part of his message makes sense to the very people they hope to reach. Quayle's conclusions are reactionary and revolting, but he is addressing a genuine perception that many Americans have—that the liberals and progressives don't understand their lives and don't care much about their pain unless they can fit into one of the "specially oppressed groups" about whom it's politically correct to worry.

In our research at the Institute for Labor and Mental Health—the research and education organization that created *Tikkun*—we discovered that most Americans are in deep pain about their lives. They face stress and alienation at work and often find it difficult to maintain friendships and keep families together. They are haunted by the sense that their children are growing up without any moral foundation, and a sense that their lives are isolated, directionless, and without larger purpose and meaning. All these feelings are typically refracted through the dominant meritocratic ideologies of American society so that most Americans become enmeshed in a deep process of self-blaming. As a result, many Americans feel terrible about themselves and find themselves in need of some way to cover up their pain and depression.

We've developed a platform for a politics of meaning in this issue of *Tikkun* precisely because we want to show liberals and progressives that they could address this pain without adopting reactionary solutions or becoming overly psychologistic. But we are aware that the Democrats and liberal social-change movements are likely to avoid the guts of the idea: the need to critique this process of self-blaming and provide a new understanding, a changed consciousness that could help foster compassion and healing. They can be counted on to avoid the way that family break-up is rooted in the psychology and ethics of a competitive market society and to claim instead that they are profamily because they support child-care or family leave. Of course, so do we, but that's not sufficient; it doesn't go deep enough to counter what Quayle is saying. To be seriously profamily or provalues from a progressive perspective forces us to raise a deeper critique of the economic and political structure than Democrats or many liberals are prepared to do. Without that deeper critique, they are sitting ducks for the Right's attack on them.

Clinton and Israel

Why Liberal and Progressive American Jews May Have Difficulty Supporting Him

In a critique of Letty Cottin Pogrebin's call for liberals to become involved with Clinton, Robert Fitch gives the standard left arguments against lesser-evil politics (the exchange appears as a "Current Debate" in this issue of the magazine). Whatever the merits of Fitch's arguments, they are unlikely to be the reasons why many liberal Jews would sit on the sidelines when faced with four more years of Bush or the fascist potential of a Perot administration. But what *may* keep some sitting out the election is something of equal import: the way that Clinton has positioned himself as a critic of President Bush's attempts to pressure Israel to stop building West Bank settlements. The received wisdom in the Democratic party is that the only way to get "the Jewish vote" is to play to the militarist wing of the Jewish community and show that the Democrats will do a better job of supporting Israeli hard-liners than the Republicans have done. This may be an effective strategy for winning the support of a section of the organized Jewish community. But there are many American Jews (polls sometimes say

we are the majority) who oppose Israeli hard-liners, support a freeze on settlements, and align more with the Israeli peace movement. For us, Jewish interests are best served when the peace forces are strengthened, and Jewish interests are undermined when American politicians and spokespeople for the Jewish establishment toe the line for Israeli militarists. Ironically for the Democrats, some of those local activists most likely to get out into their neighborhoods and ring doorbells for an election are precisely these kinds of Jews. Some of them are saying privately that they might be reluctant to become activists again if they perceive that the Democrats may be strengthening the hands of the hawks within Israel's Labor party or within a coalition government. The peace forces within the Labor party will find it hard to stand up to Rabin's hawkishness to the extent that Rabin would be able to point to the fact that the Democrats are relaxing pressure on Israel for a settlement freeze. Now more than ever there is no "Jewish vote": There are opposing tendencies within American Jewry, and if the Democrats choose to woo the most conservative elements, they may win Brooklyn, Scarsdale, and Miami Beach but lose the very people who they will most need as activists, energizers, and opinion makers in November.

L.A. in Light of Rio

The ethos of looting in American society permeates the consciousness of all of us. America now appropriates 40 percent of the world's resources for 5 percent of the world's population. It participates with other advanced industrial societies in the wanton destruction of the oceans, air, and ozone. At the international conference on the environment in Rio, the U.S. openly rebuffed efforts to force us to think about the welfare of others and of our own children and grandchildren, and condoned the principle of unplanned, reckless economic production. All this makes it clear that the U.S. is a preeminent looter of the collective resources of the human race, able to grab and despoil whatever it wants over the objections of the majority only because it has more military power. Under such a regime, the principles of looking out for number one and me-firstism become the common sense that governs everyday life. No wonder, then, that we all feel it is appropriate to get away with as much as we can, and then hypocritically condemn those looters in L.A. who are merely acting out within the context of poverty the same principle of societal irresponsibility that permeates every other corner of the society. Ironically, most Americans know this in one part of their consciousness; they sense that something is deeply wrong with the ethos of looting even as they participate in it, and thus get attracted to simplistic solutions that promise to reimpose a moral order. We too support a new moral ordering of politics, but to do that in a progressive and responsible manner, we need the kind of politics of meaning detailed below.

Time for a new Port Huron Statement?

The Port Huron Statement launched Students for a Democratic Society as the leading New Left organization of the 1960s. We may need such a new vision in the 1990s. We believe the basis for such a vision can be found in the ideas we have put forward in our platform for a politics of meaning. But we may need to spend the next several years working out the details. In the meantime, we are inviting liberals and progressives, leaders and activists in the Democratic party, the Green party, and various social-change movements to join us in some serious reflection on these issues. We've invited Democratic delegates to a meeting with us in order to discuss these concerns at the party's national convention in New York. And we're inviting them and you to join us at a three-day "Tikkun Camp" August 23–26 (details in the ad on page 3). Although we don't endorse any particular political party, candidate, or legislation, we do hope that people from all the liberal and progressive social-change movements will be able to learn from the platform for a politics of meaning in time to change the outcomes in 1992. But if they don't—and if we don't want to be in a similar or worse situation in 1996—*now* is the time to start building a new perspective. That's why the Tikkun Camp is important—though we will probably be following up with a series of regional meetings in the next year. The panic of 1992 opens up lots of possibilities—and *Tikkun* will be the place where you can read much of the new thinking that will come out of the present crisis.

But *Tikkun* itself needs your financial support—and that's why we are asking each of you to donate at least $100 a year to the magazine.

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Can the Democrats Be Stopped from Blowing It Again in 1992?

Michael Lerner

Probably not.

But not for the reasons that you might think. The problem is not the personality or past marital practices or draft record of Bill Clinton, or even his dramatic failure to respond to the L.A. riots with a vision of an alternative. Nor is it Ross Perot. Perot is a symptom of the failure of the liberal and progressive forces, not a cause of that failure.

The problem is deeper. It's not about how to run elections or how to market candidates. The liberal and progressive forces have the wrong paradigm about what human beings need. Though often internally motivated by a deep moral commitment, they've framed their intellectual commitments around a belief that the only things that *really* move people are economic entitlements or political rights. As a result, they can't explain their own internal motivations (many of them are *neither* economically nor politically oppressed). And they can't explain why people who *are* economically hurting or scared seem to get attracted to right-wing movements that call for greater economic benefits for the rich and not for themselves.

What they miss is that human beings have a deep need to have their lives make sense, to transcend the dynamics of individualism and selfishness that predominate in a competitive market society and to find a way to place their lives in a context of meaning and purpose. It is the deprivation of meaning in contemporary society that fuels people's sense of desperation and loneliness—and that leads them to grab onto anyone who seems to understand their pain, whether it's a Texas billionaire or a right-wing religious movement. The Right understood this, and the extent that Bush has lost his attractiveness to many Americans is the extent to which he has moved away from an intuitive understanding of these issues and back into the Republicanism-as-usual that characterized the party before it was taken over by cultural right-wingers. Of course, the cultural Right proposed "solutions" that were often no more than scapegoating "the other," and their decline should be welcome. But as they decline, other extremists may step into the same role, providing alternative forms of gratification. Only a progressive social movement could actually and deeply address the human needs for love, connection, meaning, and purpose in a humane way—by linking the deprivation of meaning to the ethos of materialism, selfishness, and moral relativism of the competitive marketplace. All the more tragic that they do not try to do so, and instead dismiss all of these concerns as irrelevant, "not political," or even "flaky."

The Democrats could transform themselves and political dialogue if they were to adopt a politics of meaning. So, too, could other parties and political movements of the liberal and progressive world—though the discussion here is framed in terms that are meant to show how these ideas might work in the electoral arena, I don't intend to be endorsing or affiliating with any particular party, candidate or legislation. Yet I have no doubt that the success of any of the candidates and parties and social change movements of the liberal and progressive world will depend on the extent to which they incorporate, consciously or unconsciously, the perspective articulated here. To the extent that they fail to do so, they condemn themselves to endlessly licking their wounds and wondering why they aren't winning.

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Introduction to the Politics of Meaning

What's the difference between a politics of meaning and the current politics of the Democratic party and the liberal and progressive social-change movements?

The old politics addresses economic entitlements and political rights. It is based on the assumption that these are the only needs that politics can address.

A politics of meaning addresses the psychological, ethical, and spiritual needs of Americans. It incorporates the liberal and progressive agenda, but it puts this agenda in a much deeper context.

What Kinds of Needs Are "Meaning Needs"?

Americans turned to the Right in the late 1970s and through the 1980s despite the fact that the Republicans did not actually deliver economic improvements for the majority. What the Right *did* deliver was an acknowledgment of something that the Democrats and liberals could not recognize—that human beings have other needs that extend far beyond a politics of rights and entitlements.

The liberal model seemed to be based on the notion that it would provide everyone with "equal opportunity" to pursue his or her own self-interest. But the actual society that emerged from the free pursuit of self-interest was one filled with selfishness, cynicism, and despair. The liberals didn't notice this, because they focused all their energies on trying to make sure that the groups that had been left out or discriminated against would have the same equal opportunity to compete in the marketplace without unfair obstacles. Of course, we support the attempts to provide equal opportunity—and as we say in the platform below, this agenda requires a massive economic commitment to full employment and rebuilding the cities. But meanwhile, everyone else—the American majority—was feeling that its needs were not being addressed by the liberals.

Bill Clinton and other Democrats have recognized that feeling. But so far, they have not really understood it. Their solution was to extend more economic programs and benefits to the middle class. True, many middle-income Americans *do* feel economically insecure and *do* appreciate the benefits being offered by the Democratic party and liberal social-change movements. Still, at a deeper level, they continue to feel misunderstood. Part of the reason they have found it difficult to trust Clinton is that even though he is offering them economic programs, he still seems unable to comprehend their pain.

That pain is deeply rooted in the experience of most Americans. They feel on a daily basis that their society is falling apart, that things aren't working right, that something very fundamental is wrong. When you pursue the conversation more deeply, as we did at the Institute for Labor and Mental Health during in-depth interviews conducted with thousands of Americans in the 1980s, you hear the following kinds of answers: "I'm afraid my family is going to fall apart and I'm going to be alone"; "I feel frustrated with my job—I don't feel respected at work, and I don't respect myself there either, because I'm not doing something that really matters and I've let myself down by not getting better or more fulfilling work"; "Friendships are not what they used to be—people just seem to be out for themselves"; "My children are picking up really bad values—and I'm not sure if it's television, their friends, the schools . . . but something isn't right there"; "I'm afraid that I'm going to be totally abandoned as an elderly person—nobody respects anybody, nobody really takes care of anybody anymore"; "It's a dog-eat-dog world, and I've got to look out for myself, but I wish people weren't this way"; "Nothing feels safe anymore;" or "My life doesn't make much sense—I'm always rushing around doing things, but I can't figure out what it's all about."

I call this the deprivation of meaning—a social ill that feels just as pressing as the deprivation of economic security. People want their lives to have meaning that transcends themselves and that roots them in some larger framework of purpose. They have sought "communities of meaning" that provide an ethical and spiritual framework that can link them to a past and future that offers them more than just self-interest.

A politics of meaning is a politics that addresses these needs.

Doesn't the Right Just Manipulate These Kinds of Needs?

Yes, it does. It pretends to provide a community of meaning—but what it really provides is a set of fanciful communities that have no real existence in the daily lives of people except as theoretical constructs. So when, for example, it encourages us to think that "we" have won the cold war, it wants us to believe that we are all part of one big, happy, and powerful nation that is winning victories and getting bigger and stronger in every way. But in actual fact, after the victory parades are over, most people go back to daily lives that are frustrating, alienating, and emotionally precarious.

The Right then responds to the pain of daily life by explaining that people aren't really enjoying the big pseudocommunity of the American nation due to some "other" that is screwing things up. Sometimes the Right points to gays and lesbians or people who it claims don't respect family values, sometimes to Blacks or other peoples of color, sometimes to Japanese, Arabs, Jews, feminists, liberal reformers, or activists from the 1960s.

Why Do People Buy This Stuff?

Because they are in pain and the Right is providing them with the only explanation around. The Democrats and liberals don't even recognize that this kind of pain exists or that it has anything to do with politics. They

tend to think that people ought to go to a psychiatrist or to a church to deal with this kind of issue, but that it has no business being in politics.

Wouldn't We Be Better Off To Keep These Issues Out of Politics?

They are already there and there's no way to keep them out. The Democrats keep losing because they don't even recognize that these are the questions that are being addressed. In fact, every political choice reflects underlying values. It is pure self-delusion to think moral values can be kept out of politics. What happens normally is that value choices are made, but made as value-neutral "efficiency" choices.

Will a Politics of Meaning Abandon the Needs of African Americans or the Poor?

Not at all. The Democrats and the liberals are doing a very poor job of serving African Americans and the poor by continuing to be defeated at the polls. The Democrats need to forge an alliance between the interests of middle-income people and the interests of the poor. But this can't be an economic alliance *only,* because the needs of middle-income people are *also* "meaning" needs. In fact, the only way middle-income people will ever be willing to provide massive support for the poor is if they come to understand that doing so is in their interests. The Left can help people understand that what they want and need can best be served by building a society based on a principle of mutual caring and ethical seriousness. In making the case for a commitment not just to self-interest but to the disadvantaged as well, we advance the interests of the poor and those who are still victims of racial and sexual discrimination, oppression, and harassment. Moreover, poor and oppressed people face the same crisis of meaning as everyone else.

What's the Central Notion of a Politics of Meaning?

We need to build a society that promotes rather than undermines our capacity to be loving, caring, intelligent, cooperative, and ethically and spiritually sensitive. The present society destroys rather than enhances these qualities.

The Campaign for a
Politics of Meaning

Over the course of the next two decades we will be attempting to take the values-oriented, psychologically and spiritually sensitive approach of the Politics of Meaning and introduce it in every area of contemporary thought and activity. Changing the dominant paradigm of liberal and progressive thought will take a long time and meet considerable resistance. And although we are presenting here an attempt to apply our perspective to specific areas of economic and political life, this is only a first stab—we understand that the ideas need to be further refined.

You can join us in this venture.

The discussion of these ideas, debates about how they should be applied to any specific area of economic and political life, and reflections on the theoretical foundations will take place in the pages of *Tikkun* magazine. If you don't yet subscribe, please subscribe. Buying the magazine on the newsstand is not sufficient for two reasons: a) If we want to contact you to tell you about a gathering in your area or a national meeting about these issues, we can only do so by mailing to our list of subscribers; and b)We only get 40 percent of what you pay on the newsstand. We need more.

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Can't You Say This without Using Words like "Love" or "Spirituality" or "Ethics" That Sound So Inappropriate for Politics?

No. We refuse to abandon a word like "love" just because it has been so misused, so often appropriated by the snake-oil peddlers of the Right or of various fanatical religious groups. People are right to be suspicious of people who use these words, because they are so often intended to manipulate others. Nevertheless, they remain central to our deepest concerns as human beings. To abandon these words is to give the entire terrain to the Right—and in the process, to ensure the Right's ongoing political victory.

But What Keeps This from Becoming a Right-Wing Terrain?

The content of our platform. We aren't saying "trust us, we'll work it out later." Instead, we are defining a specific platform that gives you an idea of what a politics of meaning might look like.

Do We Have to Be Committed to All the Details?

No. We are at an early stage in defining a politics of meaning. There already is a right-wing politics of meaning. We are trying to create a liberal and progressive version. We invite you to participate with us in doing this.

What's the Common Link in This Platform?

Every plank represents an attempt to acknowledge that human beings have a need for a more loving and caring world, a world in which people take responsibility for each other, a world in which ethical and spiritual concerns are given central attention.

One simple way of putting it is that we are for the re-moralization of public space as a step toward the re-moralization of daily life.

What Do You Mean by the Re-moralization of Public Space—and Isn't That Dangerous?

The danger that liberals sometimes conjure up is that right-wing nuts will be attempting to impose their moral values on the rest of us, so the best way to protect ourselves is to keep morality out of public life. That sounds like a good strategy—but it hasn't worked.

What liberals don't notice is that their worst fantasy is *already happening. Liberals have not succeeded in keeping values out of public life; they've only succeeded in keeping their values out, and have left the terrain open for right-wing values.*

When liberals insist on leaving public space free of values, they leave that space open to the values of the marketplace. Those values have encouraged a society based on selfishness and "me-firstism"—parading as value-neutrality.

We reject moral relativism. A society based on love and caring is better than a society based on selfishness—and we are committed to doing what we can to creating such a society.

The fact that some people use the language of morality to impose their own narrow program cannot warrant the avoidance of moral commitment. When liberals talk about "tolerance," for example, we are saying that this is a value that *we* hold. We may kid ourselves into thinking that we are really being value-neutral, but in fact all we are actually doing is saying that "tolerance" is our highest value. A politics of meaning *is* committed to tolerance, but only as one of a set of values that includes love, caring, cooperation, responsibility, justice, peace, and moral and spiritual sensitivity.

Is This Realistic? Do You Really Believe Anybody Is Going to Take This Seriously?

It will take many years before the ideas put forward in our 1992 platform for a politics of meaning move to the center of the liberal and progressive agenda. We are launching a campaign to alter the way that people think about these issues. This is not a political campaign. We don't seek to elect a specific candidate or pass specific legislation. Rather, we are using the form of a "platform" to give one example of how a politics of meaning might take shape. In fact, we are defining a new paradigm, and new paradigms take lots of time to get accepted. And this new paradigm isn't just about politics, it's about every area of life and thought.

The only part that seems unrealistic is to believe that the liberal and progressive forces will be able to understand and accept this approach.

On the other hand, this platform is extremely realistic as a way to approach Americans. It is far more unrealistic for Democrats, liberals, progressives, or other groups to believe that they can sustain the old paradigm and simultaneously build the lasting loyalty of the majority of Americans.

What Are We Supposed to Do with This Platform?

1. Circulate it to friends, colleagues, social-change activists, opinion makers, people in the media, union members, feminists, government employees, health-care workers, educators, elected officials, and anyone else who has been wondering why they are not getting excited about the kind of politics they hear these days.

2. Create a discussion group to refine it, develop new platform areas, and extend its vision beyond politics to other areas of your lives.

3. Begin to implement it. Fight for this vision in every arena of public life in which you are involved.

4. Join with us in building a campaign for a politics of meaning. If you are interested in becoming involved, we will be holding a planning meeting August 23–26 near Woodstock in the Catskill Mountains. And we will be getting people together in different communities to work on the platform and to plan ways to bring these ideas into the public arena.

A Platform for the Politics of Meaning

A Values-Oriented Approach to Progressive Politics

The platform presented here is an attempt to show what it might look like if liberal and progressive forces moved beyond economic entitlements and political rights and began to focus on building a society that fostered ethical and spiritual sensitivity, mutual caring and responsibility, loving relationships and strong families. We've picked only a few of the areas that need to be addressed, and you may disagree with some of the specifics . . . but this platform is meant to show what it would mean in concrete terms for a movement or a political party to adopt a politics of meaning paradigm. Instead of throwing money at a problem or creating new entitlements, we show that a progressive political platform could embody a vision of a highly ethical social order.

Education

Educate for Values

Values clarification is not enough—schools should give priority to educating students to practice the following specific values: love, empathy, caring, cooperation, commitment to others, spiritual and ethical sensitivity, respect for difference, respect for learning, and honesty. Students should learn about the different theoretical approaches to *how* one can achieve these values. But they should not be left unclear that these are the values that the school system seeks to engender.

Example: Caring for others

Method: A few hours of every school week should be dedicated to community service projects. In upper grades, students should be taught to evaluate existing community self-help projects. In the last two years of high school, each student should be required to design, implement, and analyze a "caring for others" project in his or her community.

Example: Empathy

Method: Required course in every year. In early grades, students seek to establish empathy for other cultures and ethnic and religious groups. In junior high, they practice empathy for parents and family; in the first year of high school, empathy with fellow students; in later years of high school, empathy with "the other" (whatever group is being stigmatized that year in popular or media culture). The final year of this course of study would focus on "obstacles to empathy" and students would design projects on how to overcome these obstacles together with members of a stigmatized group.

Teach Family Coping Skills

Schools should create a "safe space" for students to reflect on what is happening in their families and how to work with the problems they face. A frequent reason why students are not more successful in school is that they face difficult problems in their families and have no perspective on these problems. But even the most successful students often face deep inner conflicts about family issues.

The goal here is not to identify one "correct" family form or to impose external values on families. It is rather to create a context of support for family life by allowing students to learn coping skills.

Example: Identifying problem dynamics in families

Method: In earlier grades, the focus would be on teaching students the different ways that families are organized in different cultures and the kinds of problems that tend to emerge. In later grades, the focus would be on one's own family, learning to speak about family dynamics, how to recognize similarities in family dynamics, and how to recognize areas in which family communication skills have broken down. In high school, students should learn how to recognize problem areas in their own and others' families and strategies other families have pursued to alleviate these kinds of problems.

Example: Understanding how the world of work, the competitive marketplace, and television undermine an ethos of loving and caring central to family life

Method: In earlier grades, watching television portrayals of families and learning how they are misleading. In later grades, learning about the psychological impact of work and economic competition.

Teach Respect for Learning

If the system doesn't respect learning, why should the children? To show respect for learning, the following are key elements:

•Increase teachers' pay to make it commensurate with that of other respected professions.

•Provide adequate funding for education to *reduce class sizes*. The basic principle for funding should be this: The same amount of money should be spent on every student in the country, regardless of the ability of the surrounding community to levy adequate taxes.

HEALTH

Health care should be made available to every American. But we *also* want a revolution in values in the way we think of health care—away from the current model in which individual health care providers make huge fortunes at the expense of the common good. What we want is to foster a health-conscious society, with most citizens participating in the process of health promotion, health education, and health-care delivery. Our approach to health care must reflect our highest values of caring and concern for other human beings. At every level of the health care system, the values of caring and concern must be primary, shaping our decisions and replacing the way that those decisions are now determined by concerns about profit for health-care providers.

Community-Controlled Health Care for All Citizens

There are two ideas for providing health care that are equally bad: the model of creating some huge government bureaucracy in which we have no control over the kinds of services or the service deliverers, but must wait patiently for the system to take care of us; and the model of keeping the present system intact and merely paying the ever-expanding bills for services.

What we need is a new system in which everyone is entitled to equal care, without regard to their ability to pay. Money should be excluded from consideration in determining who gets what treatment or what services. Medical care should be accessible to all—and the only way this can happen is if people do not pay for services and medical personnel do not expect to receive payment for services. But this presents another possible difficulty: the growth of a medical bureaucracy that is unresponsive to the needs of those being serviced. To counter this prospect, all medical care in a community should be placed under the direct supervision of locally elected community boards. These boards will have the power to suspend medical personnel and to exercise direct control over the local hospitals and health-care providers. Doctors, nurses, and health personnel will be required to live in the community they serve, and the rules and procedures of the institutions in which they work will be decided by elected community boards representing the people who will actually seek services. Inside these institutions, working rules and procedures will normally be set by a committee elected by the providers themselves, including doctors, nurses, hospital orderlies, health educators, social workers, and medical technicians. These elected committees will hire and fire hospital administrators.

Training and Rewarding Health Personnel

The primary reason people enter the medical profession and other health professions is that they want to serve other human beings. Yet this serving motive quickly gets undermined in a society that places primary value on money and power. In the field of health care, these dynamics can be particularly destructive of the trust that is necessary between health-care providers and their clients. The whole approach to training and rewarding the health professionals must be reworked to focus on the ethos of community service.

Because doctors and other health-care workers are going to use their skills primarily to serve the public good, their training should be fully paid by the community. They should also receive a "family living" stipend to support their families while they receive this training. Since they are making a comfortable wage while preparing for their profession, they no longer have a case for excessive compensation afterwards. So doctors' salaries should not exceed twice the average wage in the communities that they serve.

Health Promotion

Every workplace should be mandated to elect a workers' safety and health committee. This committee will monitor work conditions and, when necessary, reshape those conditions and override corporate decisions to ensure that they promote the health of workers and that products manufactured or services rendered promote the health of the consumers or service clients.

The research we conducted at the Institute for Labor and Mental Health demonstrated that the physical and mental health of working people improves when they are allowed to participate in "occupational stress" groups at the workplace. These groups provide workers with opportunities to identify stressors in their work environment—including stressful management techniques—and to organize to change them. They also provide crucial social support to workers suffering from occupational stress. Other research shows that health improves as workers gain increased control of the workplace. Safety and health committees thus should be empowered to create occupational stress groups and provide other techniques to support worker control. Each workplace should be mandated to provide half an hour per day for workers to participate in exercise or health education.

Parks, community sports facilities, and community health centers should create the infrastructure for an extensive program of community health education, nutrition information, and campaigns to promote exercise. Each health facility should be networked to a national computer system that provides the latest information about nutrition, exercise, and alternative medical techniques for dealing with specific health problems.

Criminalizing Behavior that Endangers Public Health: Corporate and Government Polluters

Those who knowingly or unknowingly participate in practices that endanger public health should be sent to prison. The longest jail terms should go to government or corporate officials and members of boards of directors of companies that pursue environmentally destructive policies. Shorter (but still stiff) sentences should go to middle management that cooperates in polluting or that directly or indirectly stifles environmental whistle-blowers. Government and industry should extend strong promotion and financial incentives to whistle-blowers.



Healing People Rather than Fighting Disease

We need a different paradigm of health care. Health professionals must set out to achieve the highest possible level of well-being for the patient, rather than simply expel some germ or disease from a body. Physical healing is closely connected to psychological and spiritual well-being, and our approach to health care must serve the full human being. In part, it requires a different kind of training of health personnel so that they are sensitized to these concerns. In part, it also requires a different power arrangement at hospitals and health-care facilities, so that the expertise of nurses, social workers, health-education specialists, and other caring professionals is integrated into the way that we provide health care.

One important element in healing is for the patient to feel empowered in the process. Hence, to the greatest extent possible the practice of medicine must include educating the client to the possible options for care and the relevant disputes that currently exist about possible strategies for treatment. The client must also actively participate in the process of deciding which strategies make most sense. Every health-care facility should have several full-time client advocates to ensure that these procedures are fully observed.

Community Care for the Sick

We need to encourage an ethos of caring for the sick. As one part of that process, we need to make the care of the sick a community responsibility. Workers shall be allowed at least two hours leave per month to visit the sick, as long as these hours are validated by health-care personnel. Schools should take students to visit the sick of the community, government offices should require all



governmental personnel to spend at least two hours per week visiting the sick, and similarly for military, police, and all people employed in education and media.

ECONOMIC POLICY

Work for What Purpose?

In our present system, decisions about what to produce are generated by the profit motive without regard to the consequences. If someone can make a profit producing some product even though it is environmentally destructive or uses up scarce resources that future generations may require to meet more pressing needs, the requisites of immediate profit take precedence. Only extraordinary governmental intervention stops some of this production, and by and large it is too little and too late. The result is now upon us: the pollution of our oceans; the destruction of the ozone layer; the depletion of nonrenewable resources; and workers who are skeptical about the whole process of work because they know their labor has been separated from moral ends and is dedicated primarily to enriching the few.

We need a different attitude toward work and production. Our highest goal must be to produce goods and services to benefit the common good, and to do so in ways that maximize the creative capacities of those involved in the world of work. If we think in terms of these values, we get a whole new sense of what kind of production is efficient: namely, that which actually uses the world's resources in ways that promote the common good and that proceeds in ways that are good for the people actually doing the work.

On the other hand, we have no desire to leave economic decisions in the hands of large bureaucracies. We have seen the disastrous results of this kind of centralization in the former Soviet bloc, and even in Western European communities, where large government bureaucracies have alienated and disaffected their populations. Therefore, we support a gradual transition to a more mixed economy, one in which the market still plays an important role, but one that has larger elements of social planning, particularly to protect the environment. But all such planning must be kept strictly under the direct democratic review of all those affected by its decisions.

Respect for Work and Workers

. . . in the profit-making sector

If work is transformed into an activity in which people have greater opportunity to actualize their capacities as loving, creative, cooperative, intelligent, aesthetic, and caring human beings, people will have more respect for work and for each other as working people. We reject the notion that the goal of society should be to minimize the amount of time that people spend in work, and the implied ethos (sometimes endorsed among the very rich, as well as some who live on welfare) that it's clever

to find ways to get out of work. The dignity of work is inherently tied to the extent that it allows us to externalize our inner selves and to actualize our most human capacities. Of course, there is a certain amount of work that will never be anything but drudgery. Yet as the experience of many kibbutzim shows, the meaning of that work can be quite different if the drudge work is routinely rotated among all members of the society, if it is understood to be socially valuable, and if those who do that kind of work are given higher compensations than those doing more fulfilling work. Yet most work can be reorganized in ways that allow the workers to determine the way the work is done, what it is done for, and who benefits from the work.

To be pro-work, however, is not to be pro–alienated labor. To the extent that workers don't have control over their work and cannot use it as an opportunity for creativity, they will inevitably find themselves in a struggle with management. In this struggle, we side with workers to the extent that they are seeking greater control and power in the workplace. We understand the impulse of working people to give up on any larger vision of change and to focus more narrowly on getting for themselves a bigger portion of the pie. Yet to the extent that this plays into the ethos of self-interest, these struggles are readily misinterpreted by others, and become easy targets for those who are interested in setting one sector of the workforce against another. It always appears that one group is benefiting at the expense of others. Hence, the struggles that make most sense are those that help people see how they have common interests. Our goal is to help working people to win such struggles so that the world of work and the economy can be reshaped in the ways described here.

One of the ways that workers traditionally have gotten power is through their own organizations. We support legislation that would make it easier for workers to organize at a workplace and that would prohibit a variety of union-busting techniques. At the same time, we support efforts to democratize the unions, ensure reform factions access to union newspapers and the opportunity to present their positions at union meetings, the right of union members to recall their national and regional leadership, and the right of union members through referendum to bind their union negotiators to specific contractual proposals.

On the other hand, we think it unfair and misleading to talk about worker's rights without talking about their responsibilities as well. The economy is not a bottomless cookie jar for us to reach in and remove goodies whenever we want—we have to create wealth. We recognize that talk of responsibility seems hollow when the wealth of the society is being appropriated by a small group of the rich. But if we do transform these dynamics and create a society in which production is aimed at the common good, then part of that process must require a very different attitude toward work. People must begin to see themselves as having a responsibility to others that they fulfill by working hard and working smart.

. . . in government service

Most people who go into the public sector do so because they actually *do* want to serve the common good. But all too often they find government bureaucracies set up to serve their own interests or the interests of corporations they were expected to regulate. Some fight against these dynamics, either by leaving government or by attempting to support various reform movements. But eventually many government workers give up on making larger changes in the system and focus more narrowly on doing their own job as well as they can. This often seems to be the only course available in workplaces that are inadequately funded and administered by bureaucrats who do not reward service as much as sticking to the rules.

Ironically, this dynamic is intensified by the reaction of the public. The public is in part disillusioned by government programs that have failed to solve the problems that they were supposed to solve. It also senses that government workers sometimes don't seem to care about the problems the public is facing. As a result, the public has voted to cut taxes and further squeeze public services. This, in turn, makes public-sector workers all the more despondent about being able to serve the public adequately.

Three things need to happen to change this dynamic: a) Government programs need to be funded at a level that can make them work. Whenever cuts are threatened or programs underfunded, the government workers affected by these measures should be given media time to explain to the public what services they can no longer receive and how the services that they do receive will be less effective. By allowing government workers to engage in this kind of politicking, they can feel a more direct ability to affect public opinion rather than having to rely on elected politicians to plead their case. b) Public boards need to be elected both at the local and national levels to monitor the way that government bureaucracies work. Such boards should be empowered to ensure that government services are responsive to the public they are supposed to serve. c) Government workers should be given time off each week to engage in direct service to the community—so that every office worker gets a few hours to provide concrete services instead of just pushing papers.

After the Cold War

It's time to convert our military-industrial complex into industries that produce goods and services for domestic consumption. This is not a question of reducing spending by 5 percent or 10 percent or any other marginal figure. Rather, we seek a total reconstruction of the sectors of the economy that are now geared to military work. Only by investing our resources into civilian production can we get an economy capable of functioning effectively in the international capitalist market. This means spending hundreds of billions on research and development and hundreds of billions on retooling our factories.

The major obstacle to developing a rational plan has been political: No one wants to face the economic dislocation that such a retooling would require. Workers in areas that depend on the military-industrial complex are acting in an entirely rational fashion when they resist military cutbacks: They have already seen what happens to regions when factories close down and "the market" determines where new investment will go. The only way it would be rational for people to support retooling is to arrive at a fully worked-out national plan, complete with timetables that guarantee every worker a job at the same level of pay that they presently hold, and unemployment insurance at that same level for any period during which the job is not yet available. Such a plan is essential if we are to construct a rational and strong economy.

Rewarding Public Investment

If capitalists can be legitimately rewarded with a profit for taking risks on their investments, the public should also be rewarded when it takes risks with its money. Hence, public representation should be sought on any corporate board that makes direct or indirect use of R&D funds originally provided by the government. Similarly, public representation should be sought on banks and savings and loans that benefit from public bailouts or other direct or indirect subsidies from public funds. However, to make public representation meaningful, these representatives should be elected under rules that guarantee that they have not had any political or economic connection with the corporation and will not receive any direct or indirect benefits for at least ten years after providing this public service.

Fighting the Ethos of Looting

After the insurrection in L.A., there was considerable talk about social breakdown in our cities and what the looting that occurred during the riots meant. Yet the ethos of looting the collective wealth of the human race for corporate or individual gain pervades this society. Part of the goal of any program in the economy should be to create a new ethos of mutual caring. Looting is never acceptable—whether on the part of the most poor or on the part of everyone who loots the environment or who participates in institutions and practices that show little regard for social responsibility or for the fate of future generations.

One way to provide an incentive for social responsibility is to provide incentives in the world of work. Every corporation that shows a certain level of social responsibility in programs of ecological sensitivity, job enrichment, and redistribution of profits to support social programs will pay a lower level of taxes; those companies that have been relatively insensitive will pay a higher level of taxes.

Investing in Community-Controlled Corporate Ventures

After the insurrection in L.A., it is commonplace to talk of massive investments in our cities. But where the money goes makes a big difference. We do not need a huge new social-service bureaucracy. What we do need is productive investment in jobs and necessary services.

Some of these jobs can be generated by investing in small businesses, but those businesses should be community-controlled. Loans should be made to groups of neighbors, church members, labor unions, or other local organizations that wish to invest in their own communities. Other loans should be made to companies that are willing to provide training, child care, and jobs to the community in which they are located.

The federal government already sponsors R&D projects that could potentially produce profitable and ecologically sound goods. Government money should also be used to fund new corporate ventures that are owned and operated by the communities in which they are located.

A National Plan for Investment

We want America to be strong—but strength in the twenty-first century will mean economic strength. The primary resources for economic strength will be the intelligence, creativity, and productivity of American citizens. For those reasons, investing in America's citizens is not only morally correct but economically sensible. Similarly, plans for workers' control are not a luxury—

they are the best way to create a productive work force capable of holding its own in the competitive marketplace of the future. So the first front of investment must be education—and from there, a sustained campaign to establish and fund the various programs for workers' control outlined above.

There's a danger in making this argument in terms of competitiveness. We need a fundamental rethinking of economic categories so that they can incorporate this basic truth: Workers do not exist to serve the economy; the economy exists to serve the needs of workers and all the rest of us. We reject the principles that make it seem acceptable for companies to move out of a given community, leaving its workers destitute. Instead, we must require any company planning to relocate to provide an economic and human environmental impact report for the community it is intending to leave behind. No plant relocation should be approved unless the company provides for the future well-being of the people whose labor had allowed that company to survive.

America's economic life requires planning, coordination, and vision. We can no longer afford to make investment decisions primarily on the basis of corporate profits. But the need for national planning should not be the excuse to create new governing bodies through which the rich can pursue their interests with the mere semblance of participation from the rest of society. To ensure that the national plan represents the real interests of Americans, an economic congress should be elected with two representatives from each congressional district. This body will be charged with the task of developing coherent options for the American public. These options should then be presented to the public, so that it can determine which are the best directions to pursue.

Here are some of the objectives we advocate that this new investment process should pursue:

•Create productive jobs—jobs that create needed goods—or jobs that allow people to be more productive in work—jobs in child care and care for the elderly—that free others to put more energy into their work and face less distraction in the workplace.

•Reindustrialize the cities—but in ways that are ecologically sound.

•Create urban banks to extend loans to minority entrepreneurs and to community groups to create productive small businesses.

•Double the rate of housing production. Tax capital gains in real-estate speculation and tax unused land at a rate higher than land that is put to productive use.

•Create jobs with massive governmental expenditures on rebuilding America's productive infrastructure in ecologically sound ways. For example, invest in an extensive system of rapid intercity trains and other forms of mass transit.

End Poverty, Homelessness, and Hunger

No one should be homeless or hungry. Rather than suspecting welfare recipients of fraud, we should hold the rest of the society responsible for not having found ways to provide meaningful employment. Our approach to the poorest members of society should reflect the degree of sensitivity and caring that we would expect should we ever be in need.

We must begin by demanding that all workplaces pay a living wage, and this calls for a dramatic escalation in the minimum wage. Second, this agenda means that we must provide food, fuel, and rent subsidies to anyone working at a minimum-wage job who is having trouble supporting other family members. Unlike money supplements, food, fuel, and rent subsidies can only be used by the person to whom they are issued and only for the purposes issued. Third, we must embark on a massive building program to construct enough housing for all Americans.

There's nothing wrong in principle with requiring that all able-bodied persons receiving support should also be required to work. The problem with the way that this demand appears in contemporary politics is that it is usually associated with the notion that welfare recipients don't want to work or are trying to rip off the public. Certainly, some small group of welfare recipients fits this description, but many more genuinely want jobs and job training and can't find them. A more compassionate approach would provide adequate, government-funded child care to anyone seeking job training. Welfare workers should find appropriate jobs and/or job training and support services for anyone receiving welfare.

Taxes

Ironically, the most regressive taxes are levied by state and local governments led by the Democrats. This system should be dramatically changed. Personal income taxes should be steeply graded according to income level. Sales taxes should be levied on interbusiness services. Cities must stop granting massive tax exemptions to the super-rich; giant private universities should have to pay their fair share; and large elite nonprofits that own property should pay local tax.

Taxes would not be seen as such a burden by a society that believed that tax money solved problems rather than fostered them. For example, many people would be happy to pay higher taxes to achieve full employment,

but feel resentful of half-way welfare measures that reward people for not working and provide no real job opportunities, training, or child care. Similarly, people would be willing to pay higher taxes to finance a comprehensive health program. But most of us resent the thought of paying more to include more people in the current health system that seems, at bottom, a system for enriching health providers rather than a social practice that embodies basic values of concern and caring.

Supporting Families

Dan Quayle has set back family support in the U.S. by trying to equate profamily politics with support for a particular form of family life that is increasingly rare in the U.S. We who care about families find this particularly disturbing, because we support all kinds of families, including single-parent families, gay families, and other alternative arrangements. If people make long-term commitments of caring and love to live together, take care of each other, and provide a stable and nurturing environment for raising the next generation, we are satisfied that they have formed a family. All family forms share a common set of ideals—namely, that this will be the one institution whose explicit goal is to promote a long-term commitment to a loving relationship, and that family members will be valued regardless of what they have achieved or failed to achieve in the outside world.

Those who have done everything to eliminate the basic social supports so necessary for family life have no business preaching to others or pretending that they are really profamily. This hypocrisy is upsetting, and its political effect is to undermine more serious thinking about how families in all of their various forms can best be supported.

The External Structure of a Progressive Profamily Program

These are the tried-and-true social democratic measures of family support. While they barely scrape the surface elements of family support, we are behind them all:

1. Comprehensive, community-controlled, publicly funded child care. Child-care services will be provided by professionals who will be paid respectable wages and given extensive training and ongoing supervision.

2. Subsidies for families to take care of aging parents at home, plus training for seniors who have retired from their jobs to become support personnel for others who are aging.

3. Mandated maternity and paternity leaves that are considerably longer than those currently in place. Additional workplace measures would include the right to come into work late when necessary to provide care for children, plus sick benefits for the care of ailing children or aging parents.

4. Basic guarantees of housing and health care are integral to a profamily politics. Other social supports include full employment, neighborhood safety, extensive family recreational facilities in each neighborhood, and tax benefits to provide education in the arts and sciences as an after-school option.

The Inner Crisis in Families: A Progressive Profamily Program

The family crisis requires a fundamental reorientation of the world of work and a repairing of the dominant values of the society. A society that rewards people in the world of work for their ability to manipulate and control others will necessarily produce narcissistic personalities unable to love. A society that makes work unfulfilling and alienating, and then encourages individuals to blame themselves for having failed to find nonalienating labor, necessarily produces individuals who return from the world of work so burned out, depressed, and angry at themselves that they are going to have little energy for building love and intimacy. Indeed, workplaces in the past that were more physically debilitating were nonetheless less emotionally debilitating to the extent that working people did not blame themselves, but instead externalized their anger at the larger social system. But to the extent that people blame themselves, and then engage in various activities to try to numb the pain that this self-blaming tends to engender, they become poor candidates for love and intimacy. Moreover, the breakdown of larger communities of meaning and purpose within which families of the past were embedded puts an unprecedented burden on every specific relationship to become the meaning and purpose of life for people cut off from these larger spiritual and political communities.

Family support begins with a new understanding of what causes family tensions or breakdown:

a. Stress at work.

Typically this stress is rooted in powerlessness, and the inability of many working people to use their human capacities as loving, creative, cooperating, ethically and spiritually grounded beings in the course of their work. To the extent that these capacities are frustrated, most

working people become alienated, depressed, angry, physically sick, or in other ways less healthy and happy than they deserve to be. But because most people have bought into the ideology of success as a meritocratic reward, they blame themselves, and bring home the stress in the form of internalized self-blaming. They then do the best they can to "forget" work or repress the anger they feel toward themselves through various attempts to deaden their minds. They turn to alcohol, drugs, or television—or activities that are good in themselves but can be destructive when engaged in a frenetic manner to deaden pain, like athletics, aerobics, politics, religion, and even sex or socializing. But the effort to deaden the pain never works perfectly, and eventually the dynamics of work seep out in irritability, depression, or seemingly irrational outbursts of anger. When this happens, individuals blame themselves, or at best seek couples counseling, and remain unaware of the destructive impact that alienation at work has been having on their most intimate relationships.

b. The creation of the narcissistic personality by the competitive marketplace.

People who are best at manipulating others, who sell themselves and are continually remaking themselves, their appearances, and their personality styles to make sure that they can "sell" on the marketplace are often those who are most handsomely rewarded by capitalism. Yet the very personality traits that make these people successful at work make them poor candidates for love and intimacy. This is not the fault of individuals—it is the predictable consequence of a marketplace that promotes narcissistic character traits. Similarly, the decrease in public and private morality—reflected in the willingness of people to abandon each other in family life, to be less dependable as friends and to be unresponsive to the needs of others—is at least in part a product of the "bottom line" morality of the marketplace, which ridicules anyone who takes commitment and morality seriously.

c. Redressing inequalities of power that tend to subvert loving relationships.

Some societally imposed ideologies that justify inequalities have sometimes partially counterbalanced this tendency. But patriarchal relationships have so frequently led to physical and emotional abuse that families have held together more by virtue of legal and economic constraints than by loving connections. These families have generated a great deal of emotional pain and deadening, and a consequent cruelty or emotional vacuity in the rest of life, including a willingness to tolerate slavery, pogroms, and even genocide. Today the patriarchal order is increasingly being challenged and legal, economic, and social constraints on divorce have largely eroded. As a result, families can only be held together by love and commitment—not by power and constraint. In this circumstance, the elimination of the vestiges of inequality in family life, sex roles, and the economy are actually the very best supports from which to build families based on loving commitments. To the extent that women enter into or remain in families because of economic or social constraints, those families will be inherently unstable. On the other hand, to the extent that women achieve real economic, political, and social power, and can build families that do not promote the inequality or subordination of women, we are more likely to see the re-creation of long-term commitments and family-life stability. In this sense, feminism is an important profamily force, and the feminist agenda helps create the possibility for stable family life. This stability is indispensable to the task of creating a stable loving framework within which to raise children.

Respect For Children

It's not because they are the owners of "rights" that children ought to be respected. The language of rights becomes particularly misleading here, since we know that parents have an obligation to bring their children into a moral, cultural, and intellectual community, and sometimes that will mean overriding what children choose. Particularly in a world that has focused massive amounts of television and social conditioning to shape children's wants, it is fatuous to assume that children automatically know what's best for them in all instances, and that parents have no task but to provide a safe context for children to pursue their own inner desires. Indeed, the notion of a world in which children are always right, fostered by a spate of movies and TV shows that have reversed the old "parents-know-best" fantasies, is just the latest pandering of the mass media to the fastest-growing sector of the commercial marketplace.

Children deserve respect because they participate in the same sanctity and holiness that commit us to fundamental caring for every human being. But there's another reason as well—because love can't be coerced, and children who grow up being treated respectfully are most likely to know how to treat others respectfully. Children will also respond to the love they received in their early years by projecting love to others, not excluding their aging parents. Conversely, children who have not been respected are more likely to be disrespectful to others as adults, and hence to make it harder to create a community of loving connections and caring,



precisely the kind of community that we want to live in. Being respectful does *not* mean avoiding all forms of discipline. Self-discipline and learning to take responsibility are important gifts that parents must give their children. But too often parents use these words as a cover to pass on to children the same arbitrariness, emotional cruelty, and sometimes even violence that they experienced when they were children.

One need not avoid discipline, rules, and strong guidelines to be respectful of children; but one does have to avoid all forms of treatment based on the assumption that the child is not deserving of equal respect and caring, including as much protection as possible from the unnecessary infliction of pain. Of course, such judgments must always be relative to a given historical and psychological context: We do *not* want the state to try to raise children, so we inevitably have to assume that each parent will inflict some of his or her neuroses on his or her children. But this is why we want to urge parents to join parenting groups in their own communities, so that some of the worst aspects of those neuroses can be worked through and overcome in loving communities. We can then redirect our loving energies toward our children in positive ways.

Child-raising is not simply a private matter to be governed primarily by considerations that might apply to private property. Children are our future neighbors, and how they are being treated *is* everyone's business, because they will make our world unpleasant if they have to act out on the world around them the disrespectful or even violent behavior that they sometimes experienced in their families of origin. Again, this is *not* a prescription for governmental interference in families—but rather a recommendation that we as individuals and communities support programs aimed at increasing parenting and communication skills, and designed to allow children to articulate their needs in ways that will be most effective. If we want to live in a society filled with love, as we do, then we must foster love, encourage love, and reward love.

The highest honors should be given to the parents in each community who have been most successful in raising loving children—in recognition of one of the most important societal contributions one can make. For example, imagine if we were to establish the principle that every year twenty families (including single-parent and gay families) in every congressional district were going to be rewarded for having produced children who were, by age eighteen, the most loving, caring, honest, responsible, and supportive people in their communities. Each such family, chosen by a vote of the children's peers, would be entitled to a two-month all-expenses-paid vacation anywhere in the world—or some similar kind of reward that would show that the community gave its highest honors to families that reared loving and caring children. But the criteria for this should not be set by parents, lest we get coerced behavior to parental norms, but by children assessing their peers.

Family Support Doesn't Mean Supporting Coercion or Dishonesty in Family Life

Many people have experienced emotional coercion in family life. To be profamily from a progressive perspective is not to rationalize the various deceits and coercions by which people try to cover up all the problems and tensions in families or the ways that people actually suppress their real selves in order to become "good couples." In calling for a progressive profamily perspective we are not cheerleading for existing family relationships. Rather, our goal is to ask why the promise of families is *not* being achieved, and then to argue for the ways that the social order must be transformed for families to really work to fulfill their promise. To be *really* profamily means to recognize the pain and frustration so many people experience in family life, to get those secrets out of the closet and into the public domain. People can then learn from each other's experience, stop blaming themselves inappropriately for those problems, and begin to help each other work them through.

Foreign Policy

The goal of American foreign policy should be to create a world in which different peoples and cultures can trust each other. Part of the task is to foster and support democratic and human rights–respecting regimes wherever possible so that the peoples of the world can decide their own fate. Yet we want more than the abstract principle of self-determination—we want a world in which people will choose a way of life that is healthy and nurturing for themselves and for the rest of us.

It's all too easy to imagine a world in which powerful elites maintain their power by using the mechanisms of media and unevenly distributed economic power to manipulate people into "democratically" choosing aggressive, chauvinist, or racist governments. Yet for most people in the world, formal democracy and human rights would be a huge advance over current conditions of domination and repression. Whatever the dangers of ethnic and nationalist divisions in Eastern Europe, we welcome the collapse of Soviet totalitarianism just as we welcomed liberation movements against colonialism and imperialism. But we cannot close our eyes or give support to antidemocratic tendencies within liberation struggles, whether they be within the ANC, the Cuban revolution, the Zionist movement, the new regimes that emerged to replace communism in Eastern Europe, or the many Third World countries that have shown little ability to maintain a basic commitment to democracy and human rights.

We believe that in a better world the U.S. should be playing an active role in fostering democracy and human rights. Where the U.S. does play this role in the world today, it should be congratulated. But more often than not, these are not the commitments that have motivated U.S. foreign policy. Rather, the guiding principle of U.S. foreign policy has been the desire to make the world safe for American corporations. All too often this has led to a cynical willingness to collaborate with oppressive regimes; and in other cases, a lack of interest or involvement in combating oppression because we had no "vital interests" in the area. Given this tilt, it makes sense to start with the principle that the U.S. should avoid unilateral interventions. Wherever possible, it should pursue a policy of support for the principles of democracy and human rights by working through the UN and other international bodies.

On the other hand, we have no illusions about the UN international bodies. They too are political, shaped by the decisions of member states that are often themselves dominated by repressive or self-interested elites. Hence, they are just as often likely to make collective decisions that are distorted or even immoral. If we wish to put the U.S. into this international framework, it is not because we believe that the majority rule of nations is necessarily going to be more fundamentally just, but rather because we know that U.S. policy in this current period is shaped less by commitments to democratic and human-rights values than by a desire to serve America's corporate elite.

But we will simultaneously struggle for a different principle to govern international relations: a principle that recognizes that the highest goal should be to create a world in which every individual is treated as infinitely precious and deserving of respect and caring. We reject the cynical view that dismisses all such thoughts as naive illusion; we see nothing inevitable about the triumph of selfishness either in individuals or in the larger world. The pessimism expressed in Reinhold Neibuhr's *Moral Man and Immoral Society* was an expression of a world wearied by the superpower conflict that followed so quickly upon World War II. Today there are other possibilities for which we shall fight.

Ideally, if American foreign policy reflected our highest ideals, we would support the use of American power to promote democratic and human-rights forces around the world. While we would still advocate that force be used in concert with other nations, under these (frankly counterfactual) circumstances we would support unilateral action to oppose racism, imperialism, or overt repression of human rights. And we would also support the use of force even at times when a majority of other countries were willing to turn their backs on these offenses.

In the world that we seek to create, America would stand as a primary force for morality, caring, and community. It would set the example by ending its irresponsible pollution of the air, ground, and waters. It would also pioneer efforts to create an international plan to save the world's resources for future generations. And it would follow the principle of fairness by committing a substantial portion of its own resources and human energies to helping to improve the material conditions of the rest of the world. This would call for a concerted campaign to end world hunger and poverty and to share with the rest of the world American technology, know-how, and wealth. A serious willingness to pursue these aims, matched by real commitments of money and resources, would have a profound effect on the dynamics of the rest of the world. It would make a spirit of generosity, sharing, and mutual concern newly credible among peoples who have given up on this possibility. And it would unleash the creativity and imagination of hundreds of millions who are today trapped in poverty and hopelessness.

As part of this program, every American would be expected to give two years to national service, either working to improve the conditions in poverty-stricken areas in the U.S., or working in an international project aimed at bringing American skills and know-how to less developed countries. Such international aid programs must be guided by a spirit of humility that recognizes that the exchange must be two ways, and that Americans have much to learn from many cultures that are less well-off, but may nevertheless have spiritual or moral wisdom to impart that is needed just as badly in the U.S. as material goods or capital might be needed in other parts of the world. For this reason, we should encourage other cultures to send volunteers to the U.S. to share with us their accumulated wisdom and to teach us about other, non-Western ways of life.

Israel

We are committed to a strong and secure Israel. The Zionist movement, the national liberation struggle of the Jewish people, cannot be allowed to falter. We believe, along with many Israelis, that these goals can best be secured when Israel agrees to create a demilitarized Palestinian state in the West Bank. Because the Jewish people have been subject to a systematic genocide, we believe that they have a right to special consideration, affirmative action on an international scale, and hence we support the right of return for Jews to the State of Israel. And because Israelis have been subjected to a long campaign of vilification in the Arab world, inspired in part by ruthless tyrants seeking to destroy any non-Islamic or non-Arab force in the region, we understand why Israelis are particularly sensitive on security issues. For these reasons, we support Israelis of the peace movement who insist that a Palestinian state would have to be fully demilitarized, and have its borders policed by the Israeli army. Such a state would also have to cede a strip of land on its Eastern border so that the Israeli army could locate its troops and equipment in strategic positions to prevent any infiltration or invasion of the Palestinian state by hostile Arab countries. Moreover, we believe that as a condition for its creation, the Palestinian state would have to include as part of its constitution a binding agreement that both accepts the principle of demilitarization for the next hundred years and also officially renounces, in the name of the entire Palestinian people, any claims to land, houses, or other property within the pre-1967 borders of the State of Israel.

Israel must retain sufficient strength to defend itself against hostile Arab states that surround it, and the United States should play a major role in ensuring that Israel receives the most advanced military supplies, information-gathering techniques, and economic support. In order to create a sense of confidence that Israel will not be abandoned, the U.S. should sign a military pact with Israel assuring every form of direct and indirect support, and providing for the U.S.'s massive retaliation against any country that attempts to invade or attack Israel.

On the other hand, Israel's security, like that of the rest of the world, depends on creating a climate of peace, justice, economic prosperity, and spiritual fulfillment throughout the region. We support efforts to achieve a full demilitarization of the region, and of the rest of the world as well. However, given the history of the Jewish people in the twentieth century, we believe that Israel should be one of the later states to disarm, after many other states have accepted and implemented this principle. Similarly, given Israel's psychic scars, we hope that other peoples of the region will take definitive first steps toward creating just, peaceful, and spiritually fulfilled societies—and we believe that Israel will respond to that in a positive way. To help in this process, we believe Israel should help foster an economic common market in the Middle East. We also propose that as part of a general peace settlement that includes full recognition of Israel, acceptance by Israel of a demilitarized Palestinian state under conditions specified above, open borders, a common currency for the region, and mutual exchanges of citizens and educational and cultural institutions. We do not believe Israel should be pressured into a partial peace with neighboring Arab states. Only when those states are ready to fully accept Israel, rectify the long history of anti-Semitic propaganda with which they have indoctrinated their own peoples, and prepare a peace that includes economic cooperation and cultural openness, should Israel be encouraged to make concessions for peace. But in the meantime, the Occupation of the West Bank and Gaza must be transcended by the creation of a demilitarized Palestinian state.

Senior Citizens

Senior citizens deserve more than economic security and protection from physical abuse and mental pain. They deserve the respect and honor of having given of themselves to the rest of us for most of their lives. But equally important, the rest of us deserve to learn from seniors, and to benefit from their life experience and wisdom. The issue of aging, then, is not simply an issue

of how to respect the rights of senior citizens, but also how to create a society that honors rather than discards them, and honors them not only for *their* sake but for *ours*.

It is truly outrageous that those who have worked all their lives should face economic insecurity or fear that they cannot afford adequate health care or housing. Although *no one* should face these problems, to the extent that society needs to make judgments about where to start to rectify inequalities, it should start by taking care of the aging.

Too often, however, liberal programs have only addressed the very real material needs of the aging. We support the liberal programs, but we also believe that seniors face the same *deprivation of meaning* that is so painful to everyone else. In fact, given an opportunity to reflect on their lives and the lives of the society, many seniors become deeply depressed, because the feelings of isolation, loneliness, and alienation that the rest of us have spent so much energy repressing through alcohol, drugs, television, or other frenetic activities can no longer be so successfully pushed out of consciousness.

It is for this reason that elders could be the vanguard of social and political change. The same consciousness that today leads some seniors into depression or into a frenetic attempt to repress the awareness of their pain could also be channeled into activity aimed at rebuilding our world in a more loving, caring, and ethically sensitive way.

The major obstacle to shaping a society that honors and respects elders is the need of the competitive market economy to endlessly market new products. Since these products are often unnecessary, and changes in products are a function of the need to generate new markets by fostering new needs in the populace, the market is committed to an ethos of "newness" that denigrates that which is old. Experience and accumulated wisdom can be validated only to the extent that elders acquire them from the young, and learn that new products *are* really needed. No wonder, then, that political and social institutions built around the needs of the market will reflect that same invalidation of anything that smacks of being old. A commitment to seniors must ultimately be a commitment to changing those aspects of the economy that require the rest of us to discard the old and endlessly consume the new. Such an attitude is not only ecologically destructive; it is also morally illegitimate, and leads to a society that devalues elders.

But even those institutions and service providers who are dedicated to serving elders have unnecessarily restricted their vision. Typically, they fight only for the physical well-being of seniors and ignore their spiritual needs as human beings who are still engaged in growth and the accumulation of wisdom, and capable of creating beauty and sharing love.

Translating these concerns into concrete programs requires a deep rethinking of how we organize our society. Here are some steps:

•Useful legislation has been passed that gives nursing-home residents a right to privacy, a right to participate in the planning of their own care, a right to know what medications they are being given and to refuse to take them, and a right not to be put into physical restraints solely for the convenience of the nursing-home staff. But the government has not yet been willing to back up these useful steps with funding to implement and enforce them.

•Each senior-citizen center or nursing home should be democratically run by an elected council of elders. Some nursing homes have already implemented programs that encourage the elders to sing together, write poetry and plays together, write letters to newspapers and locally elected officials, and to act in ways that restore the dignity that sickness or infirmity may have begun to undermine. Another dignity-restoring mechanism: Encourage residents to hold memorial services for residents who passed away, thus recognizing that someone who lived among the residents is now dead. By acknowledging death, and the fact that all residents are facing it, it becomes easier to sanctify life.

•Nursing homes, churches, and community centers that serve seniors must all move beyond a focus on the most narrow definition of needs—food, exercise, and entertainment—and recognize that elders have the ability to embody and to transmit the wisdom of the past, the right to the fullest possible life in the present, and the opportunity to shape the future.

•Every family, community, state, and nation needs a council of elders. The elders would gather regularly to celebrate, pray, exercise, talk, and care for one another and for everyone else. American society would be greatly enriched if the media gave equal attention to the discussions in councils of elders that is currently given to the local city councils.

•Every community needs a "Seniors Corps" that facilitates the involvement of elders in the central service institutions of the society. As assistants and advisors to teachers, child-care providers, nonprofit agencies, government offices, health care facilities, and in the private sector, seniors often have the wisdom, experience, and know-how that others lack. □

Notes Toward Platform Planks for a Politics of Meaning

Tikkun *is in the process of developing and refining platform planks for the politics of meaning. We are including a few suggested ideas that we have not had time to fully integrate into a formal platform in order to show some of the thought that is continuing to take shape around these issues. In each of the following sections, there are positions that have generated enough controversy and disagreement that we know that some more discussion needs to take place. Like the rest of the platform, they are offered here more as an indication of the kind of thinking we want to see begun than as a statement of a position to which we are committed.*

We hope that you will become involved in creating a group in your community that can discuss the platform, and the notes printed below, and that can also develop together other planks that might be appropriate. Get together with other people in your area of interest, brainstorm, write drafts, show them to others in your community, and have them read the original platform plus what you've added. Then expand the circle—bring it to neighbors, people with whom you work, the parents of your children's schoolmates, people you know from synagogue or church, your friends, your relatives, etc. Build a larger and larger community of people talking about these ideas!

Try to ensure that your discussions fit the spirit of the politics of meaning. Don't develop a platform that tells us nothing more than to spend x billions of dollars to provide service y, or that enumerates a new set of entitlements or rights that don't speak to our needs for community, love, caring, and for an ethos of mutual responsibility and ethical and spiritual sensitivity.

Media: Jay Rosen

No campaign for a politics of meaning can succeed without passing through what we have come to call "the media," that great maker (and trasher) of meanings.

But first, let us be clear about what we're dealing with. The media is a corporate complex that specializes in the production of audiences. As such, it is unreformable—but not because the bottom line always wins, or because the media merely gives us what we want. Rather, the media cannot be reformed because it is not an organization with a set of by-laws, a political institution with a charter, or a group whose membership we can address at an annual conference. It is a piece of industrial circuitry, a cash-flow system that routes itself through our eyeballs and eardrums on its way between bank accounts.

It is one of the quirks of a free society that this important but amoral system is necessarily insulated from political control—unlike, for example, the private banking system. The media feels no debt to the society that refuses to control it, because the media cannot feel. Thus, it does no good to tell the media what it ought to be doing because, in a very strict sense, it doesn't care, and can't be made to care, except through drastic political measures that none of us would support.

But all is not lost. Although the media would like to do away with real people who are capable of feeling and caring, such people are in fact indispensable at every level of the system. Movies are still made by directors, news is still produced by journalists, magazines and books are the work of editors and writers. These are the people we can and should address, not "the media." But what should we say to them?

We might say something like this: Treat yourself, and others, like human beings. Don't push our buttons simply because you know how. Don't offer us an experience you wouldn't find nourishing and important yourself. On the vital subjects of our time, take the time to say something vital. Tell the stories of people you've come to know, and don't tell our stories unless you come to know us as people. Respect the limited resources of language and the exhaustible power of imagery. Respect your craft by practicing it well. Respect yourself by believing in your work. Respect us by refusing to see us as unthinking masses, reacting to stimuli. Respect the first cultural requirement of a democracy, which is serious (and civil) discussion of matters of common concern.

Our assumption must be that many people in the media would like to make this their code—for their own sakes as well as ours. The media, in fact, resents its de-

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pendence on such people, but it cannot eliminate them. We should understand, then, that the media *oppresses those who work for it as much as it degrades and insults its audience.* It oppresses them because it would like to eliminate them, their particular talents, their desire to believe that some things are worth communicating while others are not.

The people who work for the media feel this threat to their humanity and independence every day. A magazine editor can either pursue the particular vision of life she feels her magazine exhibits, or she can produce the sort of product the cash-flow system is trying to shape as it speaks to her in memos, figures, and charts. A movie director can either struggle to film the movie he has seen in his head, or he can shoot the scenes the cash-flow system demands as it pulses through every detail of his production. What would most restore meaning to the products of the mass media is for writers, editors, filmmakers, TV producers, and journalists to insist on their own bond with the audience, their own way of communicating, their own craft, rather than relying on the industrial logic and impersonal formulae of the media.

The important conflict, then, is not between serious subjects and sensational appeals, or high art and low culture, or mass audiences and specialized tastes. It is the conflict between the velocity of money as it transforms itself into media products, and the impulse to communicate with others, as it is felt by the living people who create these products. This impulse—to see the audience as human beings with lives and souls like your own—can be as relevant to the production of a network sitcom as it is to the staging of an opera, as important to the editing of a beauty magazine as it is to the sensibility behind a literary quarterly. It is a thoroughly human impulse, and it needs to be protected *against* "the media."

It is important, then, to defend and expand all spaces within the media complex where the velocity of money is not the determining factor (or the sole factor) in what gets produced. The most overtly political battle in this fight is the conservative campaign to privatize or defund PBS, a campaign that must be strongly resisted. The significance of PBS goes beyond the programs it provides. It lies in the political statement that a free society should clear a space within the media where the logic of the marketplace does not reign. PBS should expand itself as a home for independent producers of television programming, but we should not object if some of these producers turn out to have views that differ from our own. Right-wing producers are not the principal threat to a politics of meaning; more threatening is the requirement that all subjects be treated with "balance," which is what conservatives will demand if they can't destroy the public broadcasting system entirely.

The case of PBS is unusual, however, since it is one of the few instances when a legislative battle actually bears on the content of the media. The rest of the time, the important battles are fought out within the precincts of "private" businesses: the daily newspaper that is told to remake itself along the lines of *USA Today,* the once-proud TV newscast that heads "downmarket" in imitation of "Geraldo," the three-dimensional movie character who is rewritten on orders from above as a jokey stereotype, the radio deejay with a genuine personality who is replaced by a computer-generated playlist.

For a politics of meaning to succeed, we would have to start seeing these everyday battles between people and the media as "political"—as an arena of struggle against a machinery that means to demean us. The people engaged in this struggle deserve our support. But in exchange they must treat their audiences (and their craft) with respect—which means, above all, that they learn to address us as fellow citizens, sharing a common fate in a world that can only be repaired and transformed in common. This has always been the promise of the media in a democratic society. To make good on that promise is a social responsibility that progressives need to face. □

The Strategy Center Report on Reconstructing Los Angeles

A Progressive Antidote to the Ueberroth, Corporatist Vision of Inner City Redomination

The Urban Strategies Group of the Labor/Community Strategy Center is preparing a major report that will present an independent analysis of the causes of the Los Angeles uprising, critique the strategies of corporate domination articulated by the Ueberroth "Rebuild L.A. Commission," and offer strategic and programmatic ideas that will incorporate cooperative forms of community economic development, environmentally sound manufacturing for the inner city, a high wage, unionized job base, and a multi-racial strategy for a long-term, urban resistance focusing on working people and people of color.

Written by Cynthia Hamilton, Eric Mann, Anthony Thigpenn, Dean Toji, Gilbert Aviles, Lisa Duran and other members of the Urban Strategies Group, the report will be available in August, 1992.

Send $5 per copy (includes postage, handling and tax) to
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CRIME AND JUSTICE: REVEREND STEPHEN J. CHINLUND

America is addicted to a punishment-and-retribution model of criminal justice. We are like parents of a misbehaving teenager who have tried spanking, but the child is too big. So we withhold allowance and the child sells drugs. We "ground" the youngster and she simply walks out. We believe that we can cure crime by escalating the punishments.

There is a superb alternative. It has been called *tzedaka* justice. Instead of retribution, it calls for reweaving of community. *Tzedaka* is a word that means both justice and love. *Tzedaka* calls for the healing of both victim and criminal.

The first principle of *tzedaka* justice is that we hold criminals responsible for their crimes. To rob a person of this responsibility is patronizing. Though there are psychological, economic, and social factors that exert great pressure on the moral strength of the individual, it remains a choice—usually a series of choices—when a person commits a crime.

The politics of meaning insists on the centrality of community. One way of thinking about crime is to see it as an action that breaks the sacred circle of the community. Justice restores that circle.

It is easy to see how this breaks down when the crime is against property. In retributive justice, a thief is sent to jail. The victim has lost twice: Not only is he missing the stolen property; he also pays the cost of incarceration for the thief. In turn, the thief leaves prison as one who is more outside the circle of the community than ever.

Tzedaka justice would suggest that the thief be required to perform some community service, strictly monitored and supervised by service agencies. Having performed this service, the thief can return to the community with a sense of having *acted* in a positive way to reweave the rent in the fabric of the community caused by his or her crime.

Crimes of assault or murder have no such neat solution. Wounds leave scars; death means the victim is no longer present and there is nothing the criminal can do as an act of restoration.

However, there is no restoration with retribution either. Punishment of the criminal does not help new skin grow over the scar or resurrect the dead person.

Tzedaka justice aims to get criminals to accomplish three tasks:

1. Discover their own goodness. Family and society have invariably told criminals that they have no goodness. In breaking the law, they act on that repeated accusation. We need to build on the model of already-existing programs in which criminals can discover their own value as people.

2. Learn the academic and vocational material that they were too depressed to take in before. This can be done at relatively low cost, especially if other criminals are required to teach those at a lower level of schooling.

3. Become part of a community of people seeking to live crime-free lives.

To be realistic, we must acknowledge that there are some whose lives have been so brutalized as little children and/or so burdened by many destructive choices they've made in the past that they experience themselves as unable to participate in the process of *tzedaka*. If their crimes are serious enough, they would have to be imprisoned.

Even then, we can pursue concerted efforts to form communities inside prison that can prepare inmates to begin the process of restoration in the larger community once they are released. Programs such as Network in the Community and Stayin' Out have already established these kinds of communities inside and outside of prisons, and the Women's Prison Association is in the process of founding another.

In order for all this to work, society must accomodate related changes of the sort outlined in the remainder of the politics of meaning platform. In a society based on self-interest and "looking out for number one," the idea of *tzedaka* justice will seem utopian and naive. But to the extent that we move to a society based on the principles of a politics of meaning, the principle of *tzedaka* justice becomes more realistic.

Steps in this direction can be taken even under the current social order. For example, Lee Brown, the current New York City chief of police, made a subtle but enormous change in his first and fundamental communication to his police: "You will be judged and measured no longer by the number of arrests you make, but by the reduction of crime in your community." In a stroke, he changed the game. Instead of the violent, childish game of cops and robbers, he enthroned *tzedaka* justice. If the goal is to heal the community, police need to move beyond attacking criminals. And contrary to popular perceptions, during Brown's term as chief, all indices of crime have been reduced in New York City. Brown's new administration represents but the first step to a new vision of individual and community responsibility in the realm of crime and justice—one that can lead beyond the deadlocked politics of left and right and into a new politics of meaning. □

The Reverend Stephen J. Chinlund is the executive director of the Episcopal Mission Society. He is a former prison warden and the former head of the New York State Commission of Correction.

Hunger's Many Meanings

Ronna Kabatznick

America's love affair with diets is souring. A recent National Institutes of Health panel concluded that most commercial weight-loss programs are essentially useless and that the possibility of long-term weight-loss success is more fantasy than reality. Critical articles in both the popular and professional press have prompted an important reexamination of how diets work (or do not work), how safe they really are, and what effects they have on consumers—particularly female consumers. These criticisms are formidable. Some of them include the charge that diets cause unhealthy obsessions among women of all ages who become hooked on meeting impossible standards of thinness and beauty; that diets create an unnatural relationship to food by forcing dieters to eat boring and tasteless food; and that diets reinforce the belief that a woman's self-worth is determined largely by her body, not her mind.

Partly as a result of such critical reappraisals, a growing number of women are rebelling against the unrealistic standards set forth by the media and some dieting organizations. They have formed an anti-diet movement that encourages women to reclaim their bodies and to eat naturally, among other things. For many long-term dieters, this may come as a relief. After all, why follow a diet when diets not only contribute to health risks but present major psychological risks as well? Besides, who could possibly disagree with the notion that women have been pressured long enough to conform to unrealistic images of beauty? Recent studies indicate increased preoccupation with diets and body-image among elementary school girls and an alarmingly high rate of anorexia among college-aged women. Such findings make one wonder why the dieting industry wasn't abolished a long time ago.

Although many of these criticisms are undeniably valid, they fail to address dieters' deeper and more fundamental needs. In order for weight-loss programs to work, they need to respond to those needs. Just as you cannot vanquish the Right with a new highway or tax rebate, you cannot deal with the issues that lie at the heart of overeating by replacing one ideology (that of dieting) with another (that of not dieting)—even if the new one is more compelling.

Dieting seems so simple, the issues so trivial. Just eat a little more of this, a little less of that, and you lose weight. But it doesn't work that way. In fact, dieting touches our most profound conflicts and earliest childhood memories. To succeed at dieting we must heal patterns of relationships that were formed at the same time as our eating habits. Dieting resonates back to those moments when eating habits were formed and solidified. Smells and flavors have the capacity to transport people back to their early childhoods and to trigger the complex connections we feel between food, security, love, and comfort. The way meals were served, the way food was presented, and the ways in which caring was shown in the process of feeding were primary ways in which we received messages about ourselves, our self-worth, and our relationship to authority.

Overeating in later life is a mechanism that often covers up painful memories or deadens feelings of abandonment, betrayal, and grief. If early in life food was a means of expressing love and comfort or a way to assuage aches and misery, then reaching for food in times of happiness or distress in our adult lives is a natural extension of these well-formed patterns.

Like smoking, the very act of eating—selecting what we want, putting it on our plates, taking bites, chewing, swallowing, etc.—provides us with a compelling set of distractions from the pain in our current life or in our memories. The tensions at the dinner table or the loneliness we feel when coming home to an empty house can all be softened or even obliterated by overeating. Eating allows us to believe we are exercising some control in a life full of emotions and situations that make us feel out of control. Cutting off our feelings through eating gives us some temporary ability to cope. What becomes clear, however, is that the feelings that were repressed are fated to return with even greater vigor when they become linked to remorse and self-loathing for having overeaten.

When one stops eating (as on liquid diets) or eats less (as on weight-management diets), the painful and sometimes unbearable feelings that were forced out of our consciousness begin to resurface and are often exposed for the first time in many years. Our emotional system

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gets thrown back to the tragedies and traumas that triggered the defensive desire to eat in the first place. This process leaves us feeling enraged, terrified, or sorrowful. This is one of the major reasons why so many dieters return to overeating. Many may choose the pain of an overweight body to the pain of acknowledging betrayal by a parent, the abuse of a spouse, or the recognition that they work in dead-end jobs that make no use of their creativity and intelligence.

Dieting is not just connected to the belief that if we eat and exercise properly we will lose weight; it is connected to the belief that losing weight will also bring more love and authenticity into our lives.

On the other hand, dieting can be an opportunity to heal past hurts and to confront present difficulties in our lives. Once we let go of the illusion of a magical healing through food, we increase the chances of giving ourselves what we are really hungering for. It's not just physical nourishment that we crave; we crave intimacy, love, security, recognition, and meaning. Dieting is not just connected to the belief that if we eat and exercise properly we will lose weight; it is connected to the belief that losing weight will also bring more love and authenticity into our lives.

There's no question that there are sets of instructions one can follow that will, in fact, result in weight loss. I've lost weight, as millions of people do, on the Weight Watchers program and I know that system works. Most people don't have difficulty with weight-loss systems; it's following the instructions that poses the problem.

Past hurts are an important part of the reason diets aren't always successful; but they are not the whole story. Many people are facing very real economic insecurity as America's role in the world declines. Beneath the outward signs of prosperity, there is a growing recognition that our affluence may be temporary, and that the unemployment facing only part of the population today may face more of us in the future.

But the pain in American society is not just economic. Many Americans find that the collapse of a framework of meaning and purpose for their lives causes ongoing pain and emotional hunger. As it becomes harder for people to sustain relationships, keep families together, and find some way to make sense of their daily lives in terms of some higher purposes that might anchor them spiritually and ethically, overeating becomes another way to avoid thinking about more comprehensive solutions.

Amid this confusion lies a disturbing paradox. Nearly twenty million Americans—most of them women and children—do not have enough food to nourish them. On the other hand, sixty million Americans are trying to lose weight and are paying millions of dollars a year for the pursuit of slimmer, healthier bodies.

It's no coincidence that both dieting and hunger are on the rise. If we see hunger as a metaphor for the overall sense of deprivation—both economic and spiritual—that pervades Americans' lives on so many levels, then it makes sense that both groups of hungry people would be expanding at such a rapid pace.

Dieters and hungry people feel this hunger differently. Dieters want to restrict their food intake while hungry people try to increase it. Dieters can choose what to eat while many hungry people are at the mercy of soup kitchens; hungry people are vulnerable to the ravages of malnourishment—including death—while most dieters do not encounter these risks. Yet dieters face another powerful hunger—often a hunger for meaning and a way of achieving a sense of wholeness and self-love. These qualities are not only difficult to cultivate in a climate so hostile to women; they are also a far cry from the number of fat grams in a muffin or calories in an ice-cream cone. For many people, it will be necessary to reexamine their own past, to rework their self-understanding, and to unlearn feelings of self-loathing and despair. It is also important to struggle to change social arrangements such as sexism that tend to sustain feelings of powerlessness and self-blame. By addressing all of these issues for the purpose of weight management, one also gains a sense of control over one's life that, in turn, can become a healing and empowering experience.

I have discovered one way to increase dieters' feelings of self-worth that is simple and accessible to many people: for those who struggle with feelings of emotional hunger and fulfillment to feed those who have been deprived of food. In 1989, I helped launch the first chapter of Dieters Feed the Hungry, an organization that allows dieters to give to others the food that they might otherwise be overeating. (The organization accepts only nutritious food, not cookies, cake, or candy.)

The purpose of Dieters Feed the Hungry is to bring a deeper meaning to the dieting experience by encouraging dieters to focus some of their time and energy on feeding those who really need food. All health- and

(Continued on p. 65)

CURRENT DEBATE

Should Progressives Support Clinton?

Tikkun does not endorse candidates or legislation. But many of our readers are opinion shapers in their own communities, and particularly after what they perceived to be Clinton's failure to articulate a progressive perspective following the L.A. insurrection, they have been wondering whether to get involved this year. We present both sides.

The Purist Trap

Letty Cottin Pogrebin

Yankel prided himself on his perfect piety. He was so pure, so *frum,* that he wouldn't eat in a restaurant even if it was glatt kosher, and he wouldn't trust a friend's food no matter what. When he passed on, naturally Yankel found himself in heaven.

"So, nu?" said the archangel, greeting him effusively. "What do you want for lunch?"

"They serve lunch here?" Yankel replied, amazed.

"Should we starve?" said the angel. "Anything you want; just name it."

"First tell me, please, who is in charge of the kitchen?" asked Yankel.

The angel smiled angelically. "The same one who runs everything here: Almighty God."

Yankel thought for a minute. "Well in that case," he replied, "I'll have the fruit plate."

Although a symbol of religious arrogance, Yankel is also a metaphor for those political ideologues whose standards are holier than thine and mine, and who never compromise their principles regardless of the facts in the kitchen. Such people are not necessarily the most worthy denizens of heaven or the best guardians of the public good. They "stand firm" and "hold fast" all right, but in the process they often obstruct others, impede progress, and extinguish hope.

A classic case in point is the 1992 presidential race and the liberal response to Bill Clinton, which seems to range from lackluster to supercilious to hostile. I'm worried because even at this late stage in the election year, progressives seem intent on flexing their radical muscles by finding fault with the candidate. They can't be bothered to tackle the less self-congratulatory but far more urgent and demanding task of bringing leftist constituencies into the campaign to influence Clinton's policies and to balance the influence of right-centrist advisers from the Democratic Leadership Council.

I'm worried because in their zeal to advertise their ideological standards and remind us of where Clinton falls short, these Yankels are having a chilling effect on grass-roots organizing that will lead us to catastrophe in November. Now is the time for them to surrender their purism and come to the table with the rest of us.

"Excellence can be the enemy of good." This aphorism has mystified me for most of my life, but lately it makes a kind of rueful sense. Holding fast to every ideal makes one feel more virtuous than those who cave in; but all too often, holding fast or standing firm is another way of describing intransigence, superiority, and rigidity. When the demand for perfection dishonors all lesser options and paralyzes human effort, excellence doesn't just harm good, it destroys it.

I'm afraid this is what is happening in Democratic party politics. There are too many naysayers, too many critics, and not enough team players. While we focus on our feet of clay, the Republicans use their feet to run away with the store. I'm tired of liberal Democrats who roundly attack the status quo but won't engage in the drudge work required to change it, which at this critical moment means working to get a Democrat elected president. It's as simple as that.

A friend of mine, a curmudgeonly law professor, boasts that he hasn't entered a voting booth since 1960 and he's not voting this year either. He says his passionate nonvote is the most effective means of communicating his disappointment in every Democratic candidate on every ballot in the last thirty-one years. I say that far from sending any such message to someone capable of acting upon it, he has helped to send Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, and George Bush to the White House

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Heirlooms

"We sell the things your grandmother threw away!"
—sign in an antique-store window

She always stops at these places,
pulling over at each hand-painted sign
to search among the Ball jars
and stacked cast-iron skillets,
through boxes of once-garish postcards inscribed
with fading messages,
for something her hands will tighten around
when they find it.
She has
what her grandmother kept:
feather pillows, a pair of brass
candlesticks, a copper samovar,
but that small woman, stiff
in her corset, had been a sealed,
mute presence. Whatever she had
discarded was now ash, blown
across frozen, rutted roads to towns
long gone; or buried
in the packed earth—dented
ladle, a bread knife, a shard
of porcelain tea cup, fragile,
smooth as a cheekbone.

Deborah Brody

just because Hubert Humphrey, Jimmy Carter, and Michael Dukakis failed to strike fire in the progressive imagination. When Democrats didn't measure up to the standards of the curmudgeons and purists, these militant nonvoters joined the millions of mindless nonvoters and disillusioned dropouts and gave our nation twelve years of economic, racial, social, judicial, and environmental disaster. (Speaking of dropouts, of the five million Jews in America, one million are not registered to vote.)

Now I'm afraid the curmudgeons are going to do it again. They're going to stand firm in the not column: not voting, not contributing money, not getting involved, not closing ranks behind the Democratic candidate—and not acknowledging that this behavior has pernicious consequences. Namely, it lets us be Bushed again.

Besides the militant and the passive nonvoters, there are the purists who say they *will* vote for Bill Clinton because they're good citizens and faithful Democrats, but they can't work up any real enthusiasm for the candidate because … and then they recite the familiar media clichés: "character problem," "slick," "don't trust him," "Gennifer Flowers."

When I hear this litany from my own friends, I ask whether, despite their reservations, they want Clinton to win.

"Of course," they answer. "He's much better than Bush."

"But after listening to what you just said, why would someone on the fence be moved to vote for Clinton?" I ask. "And why would someone who is not in the habit of going to the polls decide this was the year to show up and vote for the Democrat? And how are we going to pull off a victory if good liberal activists like you, opinion makers like you, are badmouthing our candidate?"

"Mmmmm," they say. "You've got a point."

I recognize that millions of Americans are so fed up with politics-as-usual that they're ready to vote for Ross Perot, who has replaced "none-of-the-above" as the protest candidate of choice. The collective feelings of frustration should be acknowledged and validated—America *is* in deep trouble—but validation does not mean capitulation to a quick-fix candidate whose solutions subvert democracy. Perot's cocky attitude boils down to: "Don't bother with the details; just leave everything to me and my handpicked advisers." This is a seductive prescription for people who have lost faith in democratic institutions like municipal government and the U.S. Congress, or who feel the police and the courts have become enemies of the people. But Perot's patriarchal, authoritarian managerial style no more qualifies him to solve America's systemic angst than making the trains run on time qualified Benito Mussolini to be Italy's populist hero. Turning to a false savior is like applying a superficial dressing to a deep wound; it allows infection to develop underneath. At best it will take votes from Clinton and ensure a second Bush presidency; at worst it will elect a man whose claim to fame is his ability to accumulate billions, and whose best-known foray into national politics was his obsessive pursuit of the fantasy of waging a military campaign to rescue MIA Vietnam veterans.

If all of us who understand the sense of alienation and despair in the public soul were to spend a few months channeling our ideas and energies into the Clinton campaign instead of sitting on the sidelines and bemoaning our fate for not having a candidate more to our liking, we might actually affect the future of our nation. My experience working with the Clinton campaign persuades me that it is receptive to alternative voices, but such voices will have only minor impact unless many more of us become part of the team working to elect the candidate.

I happen to believe Bill Clinton will make an excellent president but I'm not arguing that case here. Here, I'm hoping to activate the iconoclastic nonvoter, persuade the reluctant but loyal Democrat to do more than just vote, and suggest that the radical absolutist has no place in electoral politics.

As a product of post-Holocaust consciousness, I am deeply suspicious of absolutism, whether it is absolute trust in God, the Covenant, positive outcomes of Science or Culture, or the efficacy of Progress. As a veteran of the women's movement, I recognize beneath the proud posture of a purist the imperious strut of an arrogant male. This is not to say that political rigidity is practiced solely by men but that masculine socialization and the powers that accrue to men under patriarchy seem to promulgate aggressive confidence in the rightness of one's own position. In any case, gender-linked or not, the strut has lost its sex appeal.

Having worked in several New York campaigns, I know the price we've paid for bull-headed purism in electoral politics. Consider this: In our 1976 Senate primary race, Ramsey Clark ran as a radical outsider supported by a quixotic group of true believers against the more heavily favored Bella Abzug and Daniel Moynihan. Clark split off enough left-leaning Democratic votes to give Moynihan the victory. Had Clark stayed out, as many begged him to do, Clarence Thomas might not be sitting on the Supreme Court today.

A bizarre leap? Not when you realize that if Abzug had been elected, she probably would now be well into her third term and as the senior senator from New York, she would have achieved her stated goal of serving on the Judiciary Committee. Now just imagine how different the Thomas/Hill hearings might have been had Abzug been on that panel.

But it never happened. Too pure to be pragmatic, the sororicidal New Left, like the fratricidal Old Left, decided to "stand firm" rather than do what was best for the people of New York. It supported a man who was an icon of the antiwar movement but had done little else, and refused to rally behind a three-term congresswoman who was a populist hero and a powerful advocate for peace, civil rights, and women's equality—and who, prior to the Clark candidacy, was en route to certain victory. Because Clark refused to drop out, Abzug lost by less than 1 percent and the rest, as they say, is history.

Self-destructive political purism is not exclusively a left-wing malady. In New York's 1980 Senate race, the incumbent senator Jacob Javits lost to Alfonse D'Amato in the Republican primary. To stay in the race, Javits entered the general election on the Liberal Party line and split the vote, attracting progressive Republicans who despised D'Amato and who, absent the Javits alternative, would have gone for the Democratic candidate. That Democrat, Elizabeth Holtzman, would now be completing her second term in the Senate and might well have been the second woman on that panel facing Clarence Thomas.

The curmudgeons are going to stand firm in the not column: not voting, not contributing money, not getting involved, not closing ranks behind the Democratic candidate—and not acknowledging that this behavior has pernicious consequences. Namely, it lets us be Bushed again.

Ironically, there are two potential spoilers among this year's Democratic Senate primary in New York: Holtzman herself (now New York City's comptroller) and New York Attorney General Robert Abrams, who are in the race with Geraldine Ferraro, and Reverend Al Sharpton. Holtzman's low poll rankings and serious fund-raising difficulties suggest that her effort is futile. Moreover, many feminists—recognizing that Ferraro is by far the stronger candidate against D'Amato—have asked Holtzman to drop out so as not to split the women's vote, but personal hubris or political purism has kept her in and may well result in neither woman winning the Senate seat. As for Abrams, if he loses the Democratic primary, he can still run in the general election with his Liberal party endorsement, virtually assuring a split that keeps D'Amato in the Senate.

I, too, am a true believer, but in its place, which means in social movements, where ideology and strategy are formulated, in families, where lifelong values are learned, or in sexual politics, where power is allocated. Electoral politics are different. Here we practice the art of the possible, not the craft of the perfectionist. I want possibilities; therefore I am open to compromise. That may sound wimpy, but after more than twenty years as an organizer and activist, I prefer to win as a wimp than lose yet again with all my precious ideals intact. There's a time to uphold every last standard to the letter and a time to negotiate for the greater good. Presidential elections are a time to bend.

We can learn a lesson from labor-management relations. At the bargaining table, each side struggles to give and get, to search out areas of consensus and avoid hard-headed confrontation because if the two sides reach an impasse, they wage economic war or they may have to subject their fates to binding arbitration. Rather than let the process be taken out of their control, they choose the lesser option: They compromise. Thus, some unions have chosen job security over wage raises, and some environmental groups have accepted less than their ultimate goals in return for the support of powerful allies. It's not a matter of selling out, but of cashing in while there is still something to sell.

The something the Democrats still have to sell is the promise of a new administration with fresh faces—talented, socially responsible administrators, policy-makers, child advocates, and public-interest lawyers who have been in exile for twelve years. We offer Americans the chance to elect a young, energetic president with a commitment to racial harmony and a plan to bring us together after years of divisiveness and despair, a president whose appointments to the federal bench and the Supreme Court will not unhinge the Bill of Rights, a president who will spend the peace dividend on the people who need it most. Sending a Democrat to the White House would give America the opportunity to reaffirm human dignity, rekindle hope, restore reproductive rights, ensure economic justice, and revive programs that have been sacrificed to profits and political expediency.

This opportunity is ours to seize or to squander; it depends on how much each of us is willing to do to sustain and strengthen Bill Clinton, the man he is and the president he can be.

Just as the psychologist D. W. Winnicott defined the "good enough mother" as a sufficient standard for child-rearing, we must now embrace the "good enough candidate" as a sufficient impetus for political mobilization. Even Democrats and liberals who do not agree with me that Bill Clinton will make an excellent president can agree that he is a good enough candidate in the same way that growing older is a good enough option. When you consider the alternative, the choice is clear.

I'm not just voting for Bill Clinton, I am working hard for him between now and Election Day and there is one simple reason why *Tikkun* readers should do the same: *because those who are not actively campaigning for Clinton are passively campaigning for Bush.* If four more years of George Bush is as unthinkable to you as it is to me, call your local Clinton headquarters and get to work. □

Bob Fitch Responds: The Not-So-Lesser Evil

Letty Cottin Pogrebin's parable of Yankel and the perils of political purism carried me back a quarter century to the endless student debates that took place on the terrace of the Berkeley campus during the Humphrey-Nixon campaign.

As the sun set over San Francisco Bay, we Yankelites would continue to insist that after Watts, the assassination of Lumumba, and Vietnam, no radical could be a Democrat or vote for one. Political renewal depended on the creation of an independent alternative to the Democrats—one that would be built out of the new movements we had just started to organize.

The pragmatists argued just as confidently that if we didn't support Humphrey, we were, in effect, voting for Nixon. And that Americans, living in the richest, most successful, most politically stable country in the world, would never support a third party. Besides, the place for the new movements was inside the Democratic party, where they could be effective.

"You just don't get it, even now," I can hear the anti-purists say. "If all you Berkeley radicals had pitched in, Nixon would never have sat in the White House. Watergate would still be the name of an upscale D.C. apartment complex."

This logic spins out into a host of other nightmare scenarios: But for the callow political myopia of a handful of Berkeley students, the bombing of Cambodia would never have been ordered. And the Khmer Rouge would have remained in the jungle, where it belonged. By the same reasoning, to absolve ourselves for our purist sins, we ought to join the first available phone bank and start dialing for Bill Clinton.

But there are still a few weeks until the campaign really starts. So before we grab our phone lists and computer print-outs, let's reexamine the binary logic of lesser evilism that tells us how, whenever we are confronted with two evils, we must always choose the less odious and never try to find a better choice.

The dutiful acceptance of bad political choices ensures that the next set of choices is even worse. The poor give up on politics. Only those with a stake in existing arrangements vote. Candidates appeal to an ever smaller, whiter, richer electorate while the country gets poorer and more racially diverse.

Bob Fitch is a New York–based writer and is the author of a forthcoming book entitled The Assassination of New York.


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This is the logic that has produced Bill Clinton, who is, to put it gently, no Hubert Humphrey. In the aftermath of the Watts riots, the vice-president said that if he lived in a slum tenement with rats and no place to go swimming, "You'd have more trouble than you have already, because I've got enough spark left in me to lead a mighty good revolt under those conditions."

The Clinton campaign, weeks after the uprising in South Central Los Angeles, is still trying to calculate the direction of the prevailing political winds. According to *Newsday,* Will Marshall, president of the Public Policy Institute, an arm of the Democratic Leadership Council, which forms Clinton's power base, "balks at potentially turning off suburban voters with new money demands." He thinks Clinton should "stick with his instincts" and remain focused on workfare and programs that would deny benefits to welfare mothers who have a second child.

Humphrey cofounded the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party. It helped turn Minnesota from a poor state into one of the country's richest, offering almost the highest wages in the U.S. For twelve years, by contrast, Clinton has proudly presided over a "right-to-work" state. This means that even if 100 percent of the workers at a job site vote to join a union, they have no right to exclusive representation by that union. In Arkansas, the average wage for manufacturing workers has fallen lower than it is for comparable jobs in Seoul, South Korea.

The party that now offers a Clinton instead of a Humphrey not only holds out the last straw of lesser evilism. It also reveals itself as the Roach Motel of progressive politics. The radicals come in, but they can't come out.

Consider the corrosive effect the Democratic party has had on the activists who've entered it over the years. The moral and political deterioration of Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee veterans and union organizers like Ivanhoe Donaldson, Marion Barry, Andrew Young, and Coleman Young typifies how the structure of the urban Democratic party turns heroes into hacks.

A similar process seems to be at work with Jewish feminists. Notwithstanding their artful protestations to the contrary, Ruth Messinger and Elizabeth Holtzman have been transformed from inspiring advocates into mules for New York's real-estate and financial interests—taking their money, amplifying their influence and concerns, and intimidating community opposition to realestate expansion.

This illicit affair with FIRE (finance, insurance, and real estate) has had even more serious effects on the poor and working class where the urban Democrats carry out their one-party rule. In New York, the true unemployment rate estimated by the Commissioner of Employment stands at 28.5 percent. The actual number of people on welfare is 1.3 million—close to one out of five, given the exodus from the city now underway.

And what is the righteous response of the urban Dems? Progressive taxation? Rebuilding the cities? Reindustrialization? They dare not propose any of these, lest they offend FIRE, which wants to keep the city safe for high-rises and for the people that Clinton's chief economic adviser Robert Reich calls symbolic analysts—brokers, lawyers, managers, and consultants—who can afford to pay $20 a square foot.

The Democratic party now reveals itself as the Roach Motel of progressive politics. The radicals come in, but they can't come out.

Nor can urban disintegration be blamed simply on twelve years of Republican cutbacks. Federal aid to cities hit a peak in the mid-1970s. But well before that, the cities were devastated by twenty years of disastrous experiments with urban renewal initiated by big real estate, administered by the urban Dems and stopped only by the Watts riots.

The real-estate-led destruction of jobs and communities continued in the 1970s with "planned shrinkage." Then, as now, the urban establishment was reluctant to provide jobs. "We should not encourage people to stay where their job possibilities are daily becoming more remote," insisted New York City Housing Commissioner Roger Starr. "Stop the Puerto Ricans and the rural blacks from living in the city," he urged, "reverse the role of the city ... it can no longer be the place of opportunity." New York's policy of dispersing the poor and driving up real-estate values was officially ratified by Jimmy Carter's 1980 Presidential Commission on the Cities—"Bus Tickets for Blacks," as it was called. It urged the federal government to reduce grant-in-aid programs to cities in the Northeast and North-central U.S. and to route blacks into Sunbelt cities "where the jobs are."

Meanwhile, the Democrats throw up one presidential airball after another; the careers of promising leaders invariably go into embarrassing decline; and the urban Dems can't even suggest—much less actually find—a plausible way to stop urban poverty, unemployment,

and social disintegration. All this can be explained by the Democrats' status as the one-party government of America's cities. They reign while real estate rules. Without an organized challenge from below, the urban Dems have rotted out, like the neighborhoods they were supposed to assist. And the tortured rationales for supporting them begin now to resemble in tone and substance the arguments that justified Soviet one-party rule before its collapse.

Those who want a better presidential choice next time might find inspiration in the Jewish purist tradition. Consider the Perushim, "those who separated themselves" (the "Pharisees," as the Romans called them). The Perushim were separate not from the poor and the oppressed, but from the high-priest Sadducee commercial aristocrats and the Sanhedrin. The royal Jewish establishment attacked them as *frum* because they placed religious observance before Jewish nationalism. But the Perushim fought for women's rights, for the rights of slaves, and for reform of the penal code. They actually invented the synagogue and the congregational principle, which allowed religious questions to be settled by a vote of the community.

Now *that* would be a political revolution in America: an election where the opinions and the votes of the poor in their communities truly counted for something. Didn't someone suggest that twenty-five years ago at Berkeley? I think his name was Yankel. □

Letty Cottin Pogrebin Responds

Bob Fitch's rebuttal proves my point better than it proves his. Twenty-five years ago, he and his fellow Yankelites contented themselves with grandiose plans for "political renewal" and easy-listening indictments of LBJ and Hubert Humphrey while the country went to hell in Nixon's handbasket. And somehow, that vaunted "independent alternative to the Democrats" never seemed to materialize. The guys who gave us political romanticism with our Berkeley sunsets did not by themselves cause Watergate and the bombing of Cambodia. Yet opting out of the lesser evil of the 1968 election, they—along with many others—gave us the greater evil we've been heir to ever since.

And today, Fitch is still naming the problem and denouncing the operatives rather than jumping into the morass and struggling to command the high ground from within. As is typical of political purists, Fitch does not address the concrete, immediate questions faced by all registered voters and raised by my essay: What is he going to *do* in this presidential election? Does he presently have an "independent alternative to the Democrats," i.e., someone who is credible and electable this November? If not, does he plan to vote for one of the three existing candidates? If so, for whom, and why, and how much effort will he put into the campaign? If "none-of-the-above" wins his allegiance, or if he plans to be passive—i.e., simply doesn't vote and thus ratifies the status quo, or votes and doesn't campaign or engage in other forms of activism—is he prepared to take personal responsibility for the social and economic consequences of a Bush or Perot Administration?

Incidentally, Fitch is dead wrong in his claim that being a right-to-work state "means that even if 100 percent of the workers vote for a union, they have no right to exclusive representation by that union." The fact is in *every* state, including the so-called right-to-work states, if a majority of workers—even just 51 out of 100—vote for the union, the union becomes the exclusive representative of *all* 100. In right-to-work states, the only difference is that unions are legally barred from negotiating a clause requiring workers to join the union as a condition of employment.

Not only are Fitch's facts wrong, but the concerns he expresses on behalf of organized labor are not shared by organized labor. The AFL-CIO has endorsed Bill Clinton for president. □

The Smallest Pebble

I am sick of the dead
immemorial, buried
and embalmed for life,
provided with eternal care.

I placed the smallest
pebble on my grandfather's
grave, not to say hello,
but to remind myself
there are limits to giving.

Debra Weinstein

FICTION

Light of This World

Ehud Havazelet

April, 1967. In Queens, spring has arrived early, full-blown. Along Jamaica Avenue, in the mid-day twilight of the el, spindly maples push green tips along their branches and an orange tree, planted by a Korean grocer who doesn't know better, sprouts shiny leaves, no oranges, in a bucket between his store and the barber shop. Doors stay open, cabbies lean from windows to talk, men walk to work with jackets on their arms, and in King's Park, for the public's own safety locked two years now, untended crocus and goldenrod bloom, a fifty-year-old camellia, sending scents up the avenue, where people sniff the air, remembering.

In an alley to the side of the Mid-Queens Hebrew Day School, three boys hide behind an overflowing Sani-Trash dumpster. They are not friends, and escaping detention together has not changed that. One boy, a pale-skinned child with glasses and thick blonde hair, is too short to see over the dumpster. He stretches. He asks the other two to tell him what they see. They don't.

The tallest boy surveys the street through a broken desk above the garbage. He keeps his knowledge to himself. The third, apparently losing interest, turns his back and slides to the ground, where he picks savagely at his shoe with a stick.

"What?" the blonde boy asks. "Is he coming?" He cranes upward but cannot see. "What's he doing now?"

The tall boy ignores him. This is the last person in the world he need answer. On the sidewalk, Rabbi Klaperman checks behind trees, mailboxes, his face redder with each step. The tall boy is enjoying himself. Something sweet carries into the alley to mix with the smells of turpentine, rotting milk, and pencil shavings. He spits. "Sorry, Rabbi," he says, softly. "Not even close."

"What's he doing?" the blonde boy asks again, not daring to peek around the side. He is trying to keep his mother's disappointed face from filling his brain. He puts a hand on the tall boy's arm.

The tall boy looks at the hand until it is removed. He nods then, acknowledging, and punches the blonde boy hard in the ribs. The third boy, back to the street as if nothing could concern him less, reaches up to add a punch of his own, to a kidney. "Zitski," the tall boy says, smiling. He looks into the dumpster, aims for a half-crushed Dixie cup, rolls spit into a cartridge on his tongue, lets fly. The spit slaps the paper cup with a solid "thock." Bull's eye. "Zitski," he says again, enjoying himself.

The third boy snorts, looks up at the spitter. They exchange glances. "Yeah," he says, "Zitski." The spitter snorts, too. "Snotski," the boy continues, "Barfski," and the spitter is doubled over with held-in laughter. "Shitski," the boy concludes, standing, looking right at the small boy, nose-distant, "Ivan Shitski, Mama's love puppy."

The small boy turns away. He upends a wooden fruit box, and climbing slowly, peeks over the dumpster's metal rim. What he sees is Rabbi Klaperman, whistle and clipboard in hand, a portly man in a black hat, a grey suit worn iridescent at elbows and knees, yellowed tzitzis looped in coils around his belt. He peers into the back seats of cars, under a few, into the scraggly bushes at the school entrance, which wouldn't hide a cat. He doesn't see us, the small boy is about to report, when the box is yanked from under him. The spitter grabs a good dollop of midriff and hangs on. The small boy slips, jack-knifing over the side and dipping his hands in something wet. His head still among the garbage, he screams: "YOU SON OF A BITCH, I'LL KILL YOU, YOU SON OF A BITCH!"

Rabbi Klaperman has been musing on what he will do when he catches them. Punitive scenarios loll in his mind. Public humiliation. Calling the parents in the middle of the day—is Avram Klaperman, zookeeper. Maybe a little twist of the neck, almost by accident, when no one is looking. A hurt for a hurt. He rubs his chest thoughtfully. He can already feel their scruffs in his fingers, hear the snuffling sounds as they try to walk, almost lifted from the ground. Rabbi Klaperman pushes his hat back and mops sweat with a

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Ehud Havazelet's short story collection, What Is It Then Between Us? *(Charles Scribner's, 1988), won the Bay Area Book Reviewer's Award for fiction.*

handkerchief, then takes two white pills from a jacket pocket and puts them in his mouth. Not today, Klaperman thinks. First, a demon of a heartburn—massive, unique, spreading through him like slow fire. Then this, three hoodlums on the run. Not today, he thinks, I got troubles enough.

He sees movement by the janitor's entrance, waits a moment, poised, then darts around to look. He trots on the balls of his feet, silent, nearly skipping. Down three steps by the metal door a grey cat lifts an unfriendly face from a paw and regards him. Rabbi Klaperman looks back, no friendlier, is about to send it flying off his black oxford when one little monster screams. Instantly he is up the steps, whistle at his lips, but already two boys are running toward the avenue and a third, looking fearfully over a shoulder, is not far behind. He gives the whistle two blasts that send the cat pinwheeling through his legs. He does kick this time, hitting air, and he chases, running and whistling a good fifteen yards before his chest reaches up and grabs him. Monsters. Against the hood of a green Oldsmobile he fingers shirt and tie, his chest underneath, twisting socket of all the world's misery. Not today. He shouts their names, slowly, swallowing poison, as he circles them on the detention roll in red: "LEIBOWITZ, ARNOLD! NACHMAN, DAVID! PITSKI, IVAN!" But no one is listening. At the corner, three boys disappear in the shadows of the Jamaica Avenue el.

If not truly friends, two are united at least in hating the third. Everybody hates Ivan Pitski, and Arnold Leibowitz, acknowledged titleholder of biggest troublemaker in the history of the Mid-Queens Hebrew Day School, sees it as one of his more pleasurable duties to make Ivan miserable. David Nachman has never given Pitski much thought until today, but finds with grim satisfaction that hating Pitski is easy.

They hate him for many reasons. For the blue Cadillac with gold-spoked rims his mother drives, for the fancy coats and hats she buys Ivan, the pastel sweaters, though clearly the boy does not enjoy wearing them. For the library his father paid for, the Leon Pitski Reading Room, and the brass plaque that tells you so, every time you go through the door. They hate him for the furs she wears, the skins of animals you never heard of, and for black hair that sweeps off her head like some sleek bird, and for the dresses that cling and slide, dresses slit from Canarsie to the Bronx, and for the fact that their mothers don't own, couldn't possibly wear if they did own, dresses so slinky and sheer. They hate him for her lipstick, orange and purple and fire-engine red, and for the kisses she gives Ivan, long lippy kisses, real looking, familiar to them from Sunday afternoons in butter-smelling sticky-floored movie houses on Main Street and Parsons Boulevard, and for her throat, movie-queen white, never-ending, and for her breasts, most of all for her breasts, not a thing motherly about them, live under blue satin and black crepe, they rise to where pallid Ivan is passively embraced, breasts a different species entirely from the broad cushiony plains of their mothers, breasts that are a glory to watch, and that enter your dreams at night.

Hating Ivan is *easy*—David Nachman has learned this today—he invites it by his manner, his appearance, he simply asks for it with every move he makes. For Ivan is a wimp, a dweeb, a pussy, a doughy child with coarse blonde corkscrews sprouting on a top-heavy skull. Big water-lidded eyes swim behind glasses so thick it must be a different world he looks out on, and he's a whiner, Ivan, a coward, like all pussies and dweebs, a bursting ledger of unspoken hurts, deferred and half-formed schemes of vengeance, for he knows he is hated, and he wears the need for friends like a smell on his skin, sallow babyflesh that asks for—that demands—slaps, hip-checks, pinches, deep body blows that leave him bent against the wall as you walk away, already forgetting. They hate him because he has what they believe they want, and because in his gracelessness, in his sullen, pouty obstinance, he knows it.

She calls him sweetheart, babydoll, loverboy. And after pouring cups of the sweet dark wine Ivan can barely sip at, she pulls him close and whispers, "My light," she nearly sings it, looking so long into his eyes he knows she means it. "My only shining light."

His mother is a real beauty, with stark black hair and eyes so blue they seem to give out light, and he can barely look at her. Her delivery of him was long, she has told him, and dangerous. After two days, the doctors feared Ivan would carry her off, kill them both before he'd been properly born. But she wasn't afraid; it had merely made them closer.

She lays out clothes for him. Every day when he comes out of the bathroom they're on his bed, underwear and socks on the pillow, shirt folded neatly over the pants, and weekends when Leon travels to his out-of-town banks, she lays out suits—blue serge in summer, grey pinstripe for winter—and in the dining room, Carlotta serves them formal meals.

In the high-backed mahogany chairs Ivan feels like dozing. The heavy meats settle in him like stones and the candles roll on their wicks, mesmerizing. His mother talks of her youth, of suitors from six states, including the son of a United States congressman. But the one she loved, a gentile boy named Edgar Atkins, had perished in the Pacific theater in 1944. She has a picture of him

(Continued on p. 65)

What Price Victory?
Labor and the Election's Missing Peace

Akiva Eldar

This year's elections were not the first that Israeli politicians proclaimed *truly* fateful for the future of the State. Pundits say that this was a particularly turbulent election campaign, but the campaign that brought Menachem Begin into power was no less turbulent. What really made the elections to the thirteenth Knesset fateful was the fact that, for the first time in modern Israel's history, the political face-off took place at the very moment when active peace talks were being held between Israel and the Palestinians and between Israel and the Arab states. And what was more telling still was the failure of this historic development to play anything more than a marginal role in the election campaign.

Contrary to early predictions neither the peace process, the loan guarantees, nor the absorption of Soviet immigrants set the agenda of the campaign. Similar forecasts that had Israelis reacting at the polls to the still-recent memory of the Gulf War's curfews, sealed rooms, and SCUD attacks also turned out to be misguided. Israeli voters were not asked to choose between territories and peace, or between aliya and settlements, or between economic welfare and unemployment and inflation. They were not even told what form of self-rule the country's major parties would offer the Palestinians the day after the elections, or what kind of solution party leaders would bring to the negotiations with the Syrians, the Jordanians, and the Lebanese. The Labor party did not make any effort to remind the public that the Likud preferred several hundred embattled trailer homes to $10 billion in loan guarantees from the United States—and the many more billions that would have come from Europe and Japan to finance the absorption of Jews from Eastern Europe and Ethiopia. Yitzhak Rabin murmured something about freezing only the "political settlements." But he neglected to mention to the Likud voters, whom he was courting, that Yitzhak Shamir's "stand-tall" policy has frozen up resources for immigrant absorption. Many Jews from the former Soviet Union are now wary about their economic prospects in Israel, even though they face an uncertain future in one of the most dangerous places in the world for an ethnic minority. As a result, immigration has been dramatically curtailed over the last year.

Likud leaders have said that Labor *talks* peace while Likud *makes* peace. The average voter recognized this as a familiar theme in election propaganda, which had also been sounded in 1981, 1984, and 1988—in reference to the peace with Egypt, made by Menachem Begin over the furious objections of Shamir and Moshe Arens. The pictures from the Madrid Conference and from the regional conference in Moscow showed Shamir and David Levy being welcomed into the palaces of the world's leaders. There are no similar pictures of Rabin and Shimon Peres, because the Likud in early 1990 refused to sit with Palestinian representatives whom the Palestinians chose, and Labor refused to sit with a party that sabotaged the peace process. It goes without saying that the Likud had no interest in reminding the public that President Bush, in the euphoria of the unfinished victory he won in the Gulf, had to drag Likud leaders to the Madrid Conference. Why did the Labor party downplay the crucial political background to the Likud's photographs? It didn't discuss what would happen to the peace talks if Rabin were elected Prime Minister. And it completely ignored critical issues that await Israel's next government: disarmament, agreements on water management, economic development, and a host of other questions that will affect the future of Israel and the entire Middle East.

Instead, the dominant agenda of the election was set by knives. Labor's answer to the terrorist who knifed the fifteen-year-old girl in Bat Yam came almost entirely from the vocabulary of the Likud. Rather than drawing the Right into the diplomatic arena and showing the urgent need for a political resolution to the fate of the Territories, Labor promised to be more Likud than the Likud. The jingle was, "Israel is waiting for Rabin." The message came from the song that Israelis sang during the Six Day War: "Nasser is waiting for Rabin." The connotation was unmistakable: Give Rabin the power to take care of the Arabs. His record as Defense Minister shows that he knows how to expel them and to break their bones better than Moshe Arens, better even than Sharon.

Akiva Eldar is a diplomatic correspondent and columnist for the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz.



Upending the peace: On the eve of June's Knesset elections, a crowd outraged by a terrorist knife attack overturns a car belonging to a passing Arab.

The missed opportunity to address the substantive political challenges that face the future of the Middle East is a direct outcome of Labor's strategy to get the Likud out of power, whatever the price. One could defend this approach by calling it a temporary, ad hoc tactic of those who believed that the public wants security, and that in an election campaign, you give the public exactly what it wants. One could hope that the moderates in Labor will not allow hawks in the party such as Avigdor Kahalani and Binyamin Ben-Eliezer to take control of the platform and of policy. But one can't ignore the danger that Rabin and his friends are taking their campaign strategy seriously—i.e., that they have internalized the concept that for a government to have a long life, it must emphasize security and conceal any agenda for peace. They are liable to convince themselves that they came to power thanks to their ability to persuade the public that they can handle the terrorists better than the Likud.

The agenda of this election campaign contributed nothing to widening the circle of public support for compromise with the Arabs and for improving Israel's ability to coexist with its neighbors. On the contrary, it appears that the strategy of obscuring the political message and ideology for the sake of stressing the security message and shoring up Rabin's personality cult has served to erode the position of the peace camp. It's difficult, and perhaps impossible, to convince policymakers that the election results reflect what the surveys have been showing for several years now—that most Israelis are willing to give up the Territories and to stop the settlements in the context of a peace agreement with the Arabs. For a variety of reasons, many of them preferred the Likud over Labor and the Left when they entered the voting booths. There is no evidence that the decision to move Labor's message to the right and that exchanging Shimon Peres who "gives in" with Yitzhak Rabin who "dishes it out" explains the shift in the power balance between the two major parties. For all its heated rhetoric, the campaign left one critical question unanswered: Did Labor pose a credible challenge to Likud or, in light of the Likud record, was there in fact no competition?

The Meretz coalition that formed out of the peace camp offered no way out of this impasse. Instead of trying to force the large parties into a substantive debate on significant issues—areas in which Meretz had a clear advantage—the Meretz leaders confined themselves to embroidering the edges of political debate. They did little to promote a serious discussion

(Continued on p. 71)

ROUNDTABLE

Domestic Social Policy After the L.A. Uprising

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Tikkun: The looting following the verdict that acquitted four police officers of beating Rodney King may have been the quintessential expression of American values. We live in a culture of looting—the unfair appropriation or random destruction of the collective goods of others for the sake of personal and private benefit. That ethos, enshrined in the logic of the competitive marketplace, tells us that our greatest responsibility is to "look out for number one" and get what you can when you can. Americans can accept their president attending a world ecological summit and refusing to go along with the world's pleas to stop polluting the oceans and air and destroying the ozone layer. The guiding principle of self-interest makes corporations feel that they have every right to use up the world's resources to produce goods for which they must then generate a need through psychologically sophisticated advertising. It leaves many Americans feeling that they would be foolish and naive to act on any other principle besides that of getting as much as they can for themselves, in any way they can, as long as they don't get caught. People have a collective depression and cynicism about the possibility of real community, so in their despair they adopt a pessimistic "realism" that leads the poor to justify looting, middle income people to justify opposing taxes to fund needed social programs, and the rich to justify plundering the earth.

We've convened this roundtable to ask all of you the following question: What have you learned from the L.A. insurrection that might change the way you look at social policy issues? Are there any domestic policy ideas that could get to the heart of America's domestic problems and go beyond the left-right posturing that has brought us a stalemate for so many decades?

Jim Sleeper: Even if one accepted your premises about the larger society, we have to ask ourselves: How is this going to change and who could change it? In the earlier part of this century, the Triangle Factory Fire caused the death of 145 people, mostly working women. The owners, who had violated every safety code in the book, were put on trial for manslaughter—and like the cops in the King case, they were acquitted. But instead of taking to the streets to pillage or loot, these desperately poor garment workers organized themselves in a formidably disciplined way and were able to force the passage of protective legislation. It was the owners who in effect burned and killed people; it was the poor who had to teach decency to their so-called "betters," through disciplined organizing. Is the demand for discipline a double standard for the oppressed? Yes. Is there any way to avoid it? No.

Cynthia Hamilton: The disciplined organizing at the time was exemplary, but what was different in that historical period was the existence of a group of progressives in elite positions in the society who were willing to recognize that there were problems that needed to be solved, and who were committed to that. That consciousness may be what is absent now in the elites of wealth and power.

The L.A. insurrection might be thought of as similar to riots that have taken place in Third World countries against the International Monetary Fund's programs that have forced devaluation of currency, reduction of wages, and the slashing of all social spending and subsidization of basic products. In these countries, there has been rioting not only among very poor people but also among those who have jobs that are going to be made worse by the IMF programs. When we look at L.A., we see a city with extremes of wealth and poverty that are generating similar responses.

Eric Mann: The racism of the liberals in tailing behind the Reagan counterrevolution accepts the idea that while the rebellions of the 1960s may have been an

"acceptable" response to centuries of racial oppression, the benefits of affirmative action and a few years of the Great Society have canceled society's debt to people of color. Now, according to the liberals, it is time for the black community to behave properly and stop hiding behind historical categories of racism.

The specifics of the African-American experience are relevant here. It began with forced transport and enslavement, continued with rape, castration, forced illiteracy, and family destruction as explicit aspects of state policy. The systematic use of the ideology of racism to paint the slaves as subhuman served both to justify slavery and psychologically enslave an increasingly racist white working class. And central to this system, then and now, is a repressive police apparatus to enforce an ethically unacceptable set of social-economic relationships. This psychology of racism, even more pronounced after centuries, is at the core of a tragedy that organizers today still have been unable to solve—the division of a working class along racial lines. And for Jim Sleeper to even begin to compare the experience of African-American "immigrant workers" to those Eastern-European white (and often Jewish) workers in New York *perpetuates* racial barriers, not because there is nothing in common between the two experiences, but because it is the white progressive's inability to understand the difference between the slave and the worker that is still at the core of our inability to construct the long sought-after multiracial progressive coalition.

Tikkun asks for what might be a creative response to our present situation, but what is frightening is how repetitive our society's response (both liberal and conservative) to the African-American experience has been through the ages—pathologizing African Americans rather than seeing how pathological the entire racist system has been and how it continues to function in ways that have not rectified the consequences of past oppression. In this context, I refuse to condemn the oppressed for acting in ways that do not live up to the expectations and desires of the oppressors.

Lawrence Mead: It's absurd to describe looting as dictated by the culture—capitalist, collectivist, or otherwise. If you want to have social change, you must first deal with the looting. Before one can discuss what kind of society to have, one must have a population that is able to observe basic civility. One may argue that those problems arise ultimately or historically from the structure of society, but in the present, antisocial behavior like crime does not. To talk about change, the first thing one must do is to get the deprived to work regularly. That is a precondition for any progressive change, left or right.

NYU is full of the sons and daughters of the people Jim Sleeper describes, people who worked hard, saved their pennies, and can now send their kids to a good university. The problem is that many of the poor today don't have the family structures that would make getting ahead possible. I'm not saying that it's their fault, or that they should be blamed, but I am saying that competence needs to be discussed. As long as this kind of destructive behavior persists among the poor, issues of class and equality get pushed off the agenda and the focus is entirely on issues of personal behavior. Conservatives benefit from this. I'm convinced that the reaction of many Americans to what happened in L.A. is the largest single thing likely to lead to the reelection of George Bush.

I agree that there is looting among the rich as well as the poor, but you can't even get to that discussion in the political arena as long as people fear that the looting of the poor might spread to encompass them, their homes, or their neighborhoods. Until this is dealt with, all other issues fade into the background.

Ramona Ripston: Any one explanation of the looting in L.A. is wrong, because there were various people with various motives. There were angry people, there were greedy people, there were poor people, there were hungry people. The looting was not racially unified. There were many more Latinos involved in the looting than African Americans. This was a class struggle.

We had an election in California in early June, a month after the L.A. insurrection. Candidates who ran on law-and-order platforms were defeated. People like U.S. Senate candidates Mel Levine and Gray Davis who made "law and order" central to their campaign were resoundingly rejected by the voters. Surveys after the rebellion indicated that 55 percent of the people in Los Angeles felt that there were "justifiable" reasons why the rebellion happened.

Michael Katz: One of the basic claims made by those who talk about pathology in the culture of poverty is that there really are jobs available. This is a claim also made by Lawrence Mead. Yet my own reading of the literature, including the literature that Mead cites in his own studies on this topic, has convinced me that there really is very little corroborating evidence for that claim. The absence of jobs remains a major problem.

Moreover, comparisons with other immigrant groups that arrived in this country at the beginning of the twentieth century lead me to believe that the experiences were fundamentally different. Immigrants from Europe came at a time when the economy was expanding and there was considerable demand for semiskilled and even unskilled labor. They did not face a problem

of deindustrialization. Nor did they face anything like the discrimination that African Americans still face today. All the evidence shows that blacks lived closer to industrial jobs that they could not get than the European immigrants that the factories sought to hire. Nor were the obstacles Europeans faced in moving from ethnic communities to nonsegregated communities as intense as those faced by African Americans.

Mickey Kaus: I agree with Professor Katz that the experience of African Americans is sui generis. But his remarks point out why *Tikkun*'s opening statement is overdrawn. American capitalism has been very successful at integrating various other ethnic and racial groups. So I don't think you can blame the "logic" of the market. You certainly can't claim that somehow it's in the interest of the capitalists to have a dysfunctional underclass. I think, rather, that the existence of the underclass gives certain racial stereotypes a basis in reality, and then the larger society reacts in ways that make people living in ghetto areas feel that they are being discriminated against—which they are. They then produce an "oppositional culture," which in turn makes the larger society even more wary and more likely to tolerate and practice de facto race discrimination.

The only way to break the circle is to remove the economic underpinning of the culture of poverty, which is the welfare system. Changing this economic base is much more important than trying to change education or talking about values. What allows people to stay in a situation in which they don't have jobs? Welfare. But if you're going to end welfare, you need to replace it with a WPA-style jobs program offering work to anyone who needs it.

Hamilton: There has been an intentional dismantling of the physical communities in which African Americans live, and this has intensified the problem of constituting a supportive infrastructure. Economic policy and urban policy have combined to destroy black communities.

It's all very well to talk about eliminating welfare. But if the predictions about the continuing decline of our economy are true, pretty soon *everyone* is going to be needing welfare.

Sleeper: I, too, agree with Professor Katz that the situation of African Americans is unprecedented. But some things in political life are constant: building credibility and constituencies. That's why I would hold inner-city residents to the standards of the garment workers of the early part of the twentieth century. Without discipline they and those who make excuses for them will never build the political coalitions that they need in order to rectify their problems. Also it's condescending to many inner-city blacks to assume that the pathological behavior of some is the norm—because one need only look at the heavily black hospital workers union and Industrial Areas Foundation groups in New York to see that alternatives are possible. We should not be talking as though inner-city blacks are so beaten down as victims that they are unable to do this.

Mann: You're right to say that these communities need organization. Ever since I got out of Cornell, I've been doing organizing, first with the Congress of Racial Equality, then with the Students for a Democratic Society, later with hospital workers and then in the United Auto Workers. Now I'm a director of a center for labor and community organizing. I've observed that the crime, the gangs, the burning down of stores in one's own community are inimical to good organizing. When people are hurting each other, that does not generate solidarity. But how we interpret this unstrategic behavior is very important. When the Right blames the most powerless and talks about a pathology, it does an excellent job of further disempowering people and making them feel bad about themselves. For the oppressed, it is an essential first step to hold the system of capitalism responsible for the growing social disintegration in many communities of color—for many of the forces working on any individual family are not within their power to control. When the auto worker comes home and finds his kid on drugs, the forces that led in this direction are not a reflection of his own personal failure, but rather of a complex set of social forces that the individual did not create and largely cannot control.

In the past few years I've watched growing bipartisan support for granting more power to the private sector, the delegitimization of government both as a force to regulate the economy and as a force to intervene for civil rights, and even the delegitimization of the function of government as a slight mover of money from rich to poor. The Republican strategy to create a white electoral majority and the reestablishment of racism as national policy, combined with suppressing virtually every avenue of protest (not just on race, but for peace, women's reproductive rights, and labor rights) has produced a mass exodus from activity aimed at fundamental social change, and an ethical corruption that permeates politics at the electoral, community, and labor-union levels. In this context, the problem isn't that the African-American community hasn't been morally exemplary.

Mead: In response to the points Michael Katz made, I don't say that blacks faced the *same* conditions as other

immigrant groups—I recognize that many have had a terrible time. Yet most blacks are not part of the underclass, and this fact shows that opportunities have been available. If, then, many blacks remain in the underclass, this needs to be explained. Part of the story is connected with the flight of the black middle class from inner-city communities. But there is little evidence that a lack of jobs causes the predicament that blacks face in these communities.

Mann: There are 500,000 jobs in Los Angeles that pay less than $10,000 a year, and they are predominantly held by Latinos, blacks, and Asians.

Mead: I'm not saying that the jobs are good ones. I'm saying that there are jobs for most people who seek them at any given time. But I'm not claiming that there are enough jobs for all the nonworking poor, and should it prove that there are not, I'd be in favor of creating such jobs. But we're a long way from that now—we have millions of immigrants flooding this country, and there are usually jobs available for most of them at any given time. There's a real problem of wage inequality and that problem is getting worse. But inequality among workers is a different problem from poverty and welfare. Barriers explain inequalities of wages among workers, but they don't usually explain poverty and welfare. There was social change happening in this country and expansion of opportunities for blacks through the middle of the 1960s. Then we had a puzzling collapse in the inner cities—and until that is dealt with, progressive social change will be frustrated.

Hamilton: One thing that facilitates organizing is the proximity of residents who share churches, community centers, and means of informal communication. Since 1965, both black and white working-class communities in the cities have been bulldozed and systematically destroyed. When community breaks down all you have left is what is imposed by formal arrangements: the police, the courts, the elected officials.

Sleeper: But certainly the collapse of these communities cannot be attributed solely to bulldozing. People still continue to live next to each other.

Hamilton: In major urban areas where there were concentrated black communities, we've seen major bulldozing and structural change.

Mead: In central Los Angeles?

Hamilton: Yes, it is being bulldozed and redeveloped. I'm not saying that central Los Angeles is no longer standing, but rather that it is being transformed. The streets where there were churches, social halls, and community-owned businesses are either deteriorating or have been replaced by office towers, parking lots, or gentrified housing—the old downtown slums are now the financial district. But there are no jobs, and there are no places to meet and shape the community.

Ripston: As to the question of jobs, there are four hundred thousand fewer jobs in California than there were a year ago. The jobs that remain are becoming more and more skilled, and yet our schools are doing a poorer job than ever of preparing our children. People who come from Korea or other Asian countries often come with resources, unlike many in the Latino or African-American communities.

Sleeper: Many of the Koreans get their businesses going because they have a sense of responsibility to each other. They pool their limited resources to "stake" one another—in a way we don't see happening even with those African Americans who make it out of the ghettos. So, for example, ten or twenty Korean or Asian families will each give a thousand dollars to help finance a new family's enterprise, so that when the family approaches a bank for a start-up loan, it already has some money and some basis for starting a business. Also, Koreans work in tight family units for fifteen or sixteen hours a day, washing off the fruit, taking care of the details—and everyone can see them doing that. It's just so obvious that family units are critical to success. Inner-city black communities do not have the social structure to sustain the bonds of trust that are needed to "stake" one another and sustain that kind of family output. It can't just be a matter of racism, because two-thirds of the black community does manage to hold jobs. We have to look at the leadership, the communal horizons, and, yes, the moral choices of those left behind. In Spike Lee's film *Do the Right Thing,* there's a moment when one of the characters, challenged about why he's going to shop at a Korean market, notes that the store was unoccupied and available for a song for years—with low-interest capital, I might add—yet no one did anything with it. If Lee can pose that challenge, so should black pols. So should we.

Hamilton: You can't just take over an unoccupied store. You need to rent or buy the property, you must have the start-up money for the business, and you must go through the banks. Banks most often say to their black customers, "No, sorry, the community in which you live is too risky for us to invest in." That's redlining. Now as

to the supposition that blacks won't take low-paying jobs, a recent study in Chicago found that it was not the case that blacks were refusing low-wage jobs. On the contrary, the study found that blacks very much wanted to work and would take jobs at the cheapest level, but they were not being hired for these jobs.

Mann: For the past ten years I've been engaged in organizing to keep open an auto plant in Van Nuys, California whose workforce was 50 percent Latino and 15 percent black. We argued that besides these individuals needing their jobs, the black and Latino communities needed the various auto, steel, and rubber plants to remain open. In closing down the heavy industrial facilities and sending these workers into unemployment, corporations were making decisions that would have destructive consequences for these communities. But when we approached the Democratic party, the Republican party, and the liberals who live on the West Side of L.A., all we heard was a refusal to get involved in the decisions. We were told that this was merely a labor issue or an issue that had to be left to the economy, and no one would address the societal consequences of these kinds of decisions. Even the AFL-CIO turned a deaf ear and said, "In an era of international restructuring, we have to let the companies do what they are going to do." And yet it was precisely these events, and the refusal of the Democratic party or the labor movement to try to restrict capital flight, that formed the backdrop to the events in Los Angeles this spring.

Mead: There is deindustrialization going on, but the total number of jobs is not dropping because there has been a huge creation of new jobs in the service sector. Jobs are not declining on the aggregate, except temporarily now during the recession. The kinds of workers being driven out of the factories are very seldom the kinds of people you see rioting in the cities. It's true that they sometimes have to take lower wages, but they are seldom unemployed for long periods. The structural problems are real, but they are not the same problem that we face in the inner cities.

Kaus: Let's cut off the debate about whether there are enough jobs—let's be sure there *are* enough jobs by offering WPA work to everyone who needs it. These WPA jobs would pay slightly less than private sector jobs (to preserve the incentive to look for private-sector work). But *all* lower-paying jobs, public and private, would be supplemented with an income-tax credit. Mothers would be given adequate child care. Once we've done all this, we have the moral basis for ending the welfare system.

Ripston: But right now we are facing massive assaults on the social services and welfare benefits that people are receiving—and that is *not* being accompanied by any jobs program.

Sleeper: As long as people feel they are pouring money into a bottomless pit, that's inevitable. But Mickey Kaus's suggestions, which I support, face the problem of finding a political constituency.

Katz: In fact the discussion we are having here tonight has been repeated many times throughout American history, and still there has been no significant progress. I'm forced to conclude that having an underclass that can be attacked in the way that this one is attacked may serve some useful purposes for political mobilization and for maintaining a segmented and relatively disempowered workforce. So this leaves me feeling pessimistic. We've never been able to coordinate the labor market with welfare policies. And I see no one today, in the midst of the 1992 campaign, who is seeking to provide meaningful leadership on this question. I haven't heard anything fresh or creative or promising from Clinton or from national leadership in the Democratic party.

Kaus: I think Clinton's talk about welfare reform is promising—he wants to put a time limit on welfare.

Tikkun: When you spoke of this before, you more clearly indicated the connection to a jobs program.

Kaus: Well, after two years or so, welfare mothers would have to take public-service jobs, which are like WPA jobs. It's a back-door WPA.

Tikkun: Back-door because he thinks he can't get political support for a WPA program?

Kaus: A jobs program will cost a lot of money. Clinton obviously hasn't faced up to that, for fear of being labeled a big spender.

Mann: Having a large number of people out of jobs depresses pay on the job market. Yet there is a large number of white people in this society who will oppose programs that are in their own self-interest if they suspect that these same programs will benefit African Americans or Latinos—and this is virtually psychopathic behavior that can only be accounted for by understanding the powerful impact of racism.

Tikkun: That suggests the need to build a cross-class alliance in order to solve the problems of the underclass.

Some of you seem to be saying that such an alliance cannot be built until we can reassure middle-income whites that we oppose the pathology element in the culture of poverty—particularly around crime, self-destructive drugs, and random violence.

Mann: Jesse Jackson got seven million votes in the Democratic party, but many white people couldn't respond to him no matter how hard he tried to reach out to them in a reassuring manner.

Mead: Race is a factor, but it isn't the decisive element. Even the L.A. riots, though triggered by a racial incident, weren't about race—after all, a majority of those arrested were Latinos, not blacks.

What's distinctive about this period is that the concerns about the behavior of the underclass are central to mass politics and thus have the power to push class issues off the public agenda. If you want progressive change, you must first deal with disorder. We must rebuild the structures of public authority in the inner city. The welfare system must be reformed to include serious work requirements. The criminal justice system must get control of the streets, and break up the drug culture. The shift toward community policing in some communities represents progress. The public schools also need their authority strengthened. The effort to restore order is central to restoring social trust outside the ghetto as well. As social authority recovers, we will see a higher employment level, and at that point a progressive agenda will regain some credibility.

Cornel West: Eric Mann's point is not that race is a fundamental cause of the problem, but rather that it is a barrier to the kind of alliance necessary to solve the problem. If the squalor in the public sphere is condoned because of the racialization of the public sphere—and race is very much a factor for Latinos, not just for African Americans—then we do in fact have a problem of race and not just of class. If government gets discredited because it tries to rectify these problems. . . .

Mead: The reason why government is discredited is that it is perceived as permissive and as having failed to enforce the values upon which the society agrees. It is not because government is trying to help blacks, because white workers were allied with blacks when government did that during the New Deal . . . .

West: . . . which also reinforced apartheid in the southern part of the United States.

Mead: But blacks voted for Roosevelt and benefited from the New Deal. And the alliance continued in the early days of the civil-rights movement. But after the riots in the 1960s and the inability of the government to restore a sense of public order and safety, then you did have a collapse of that coalition, an estrangement from government, and a defeat of progressive politics, which will continue until public authority has been restored. It's only because race has been associated with disorder that it appears to be the block to social change.

Mann: There were no inner-city rebellions from 1968 to 1992, yet the focus on this has continued at the same level. White racism will find any argument to grab onto as long as the suppression of blacks and people of color is the result. It's a free-floating phenomenon that needs a rationalization. The social pathology that gets the major focus is the pathology of the underclass; but look at how little time and energy, academic or governmental, has been focused on the much larger pathology of white racism. The majority of whites don't behave according to their rational class interests—shouldn't this social pathology require our attention?

And how interested are whites in solving these issues, when in June the majority of whites in California voted down a ballot proposition for new monies for our schools? The whites won't invest in the schools necessary to give people the skills so that they can get the few semiskilled jobs that presently exist. Instead they think they can flee from them.

Mead: The majority of whites feel the public schools have collapsed because of the disorders associated with the poor. Government has been hesitant to deal with that—and until this changes, you will not get white commitment to social change.

West: If you had "well-behaved" black poor people in those schools, would the white folk have stayed in the schools anyway? We have evidence that when "well-behaved" black middle-class people move to the suburbs, whites do their best to move further out.

Sleeper: To say that from the inception of the New Deal to now American white racism has continued, implacable, unchanged, is simply not true. There has been a clear line of progress through the late 1960s, when the rise of crime and dramatic breakdown of family structures convinced fair-minded whites that people in the inner cities were living in a different reality, playing by separate, exotic rules.

West: But part of the problem here, Jim, is the racialized

(Continued on p. 74)

The Aleph-Bet of Creation: Jewish Mysticism for Beginners

Arthur Green

When God set out to create the universe, says an old rabbinic story, all the letters of the alphabet crowded in before the Holy Throne. Each of them cried out, "Create the world with me!" In the best-known version of this tale, the letters begin their appeal from the rear of the alphabet, working their way up to bet, which, like the Latin *b,* is the second letter from the top. Tav, the last letter, is rejected because it is associated with death, and God's creation is to be the home of life. Shin, kof, and resh are all rejected because they comprise the Hebrew word *sheker,* meaning "lie," while God's creation is to be a realm of truth. And so the tale goes, upward through the letters of the alphabet, until it comes to bet. Bet is the letter of *beracha* (fortuitously translatable with a *b* as "blessing" in English).



As the story unfolds, the letters compete for the position of first letter in the Torah. Tradition says that "God looked into Torah and created the world"; the first letter of Holy Scripture would then also be God's first tool in the creation of the universe. The bet of *bereshit* (or the *b* of "In the beginning"), victor in this contest, becomes the primal surge of divine energy through which the project of the world's existence was launched.

The midrash of the letters reveals an interesting dimension of the ancient Jewish love affair with words and language. The most popular creation-myth of ancient Israel was one in which Elohim (more later on that generic Hebrew term for "God" or "gods") simply spoke the world into being: "God said: 'Let there be light.' And there was light." As simple as that. God calls each aspect of existence into being by stating its name. This means that ultimate power, that by which all things come to be, resides in language. This verbal myth was so very powerful, we should recall, that it displaced the much more richly pictorial—and indeed far bloodier—Canaanite-Hebrew myth that saw creation as the culmination of a great battle among the gods, or as the triumph of YHWH over the watery forces of premundane chaos. The old tale receded to the edges of the Genesis narrative in the face of this new and all-powerful myth of the word: The true creative power of divinity (and of God's human image, of course) lies in language. How very primally Jewish this is, setting an agenda for a people who will, in both the sacred and secular realms, achieve their place in history through the power of the word.

But the authors of our midrash of the letters are not satisfied with this assertion that speech is the ultimate root of God's power. They seek to enter into or get behind this primary speech-act. They want to break down the first divine word into its component parts; they say that letters, rather than words, brim with divine energy. Each of the letters seeks to put its own stamp on God's great project. God the primal speaker has been replaced by God the cosmic Kabbalist, arranging the creative powers by juggling the letters of the sacred Hebrew alphabet.

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Why does bet win the contest? One commentary argues that since God wanted to bless the world, or since the divine wisdom foresaw creation as a source of blessing, the letter of blessing was the natural victor. Another source suggests that it is the written form of the bet that assured its preeminence. Bet is "closed" (meaning it is written with an unbroken line) above, below, and from behind. It is open only looking forward. Similarly, readers of God's Torah or inhabitants of God's universe had best not turn their eyes to what is above, below, or behind the world, but should look only forward, into history, in order to know God's ways. The gift of blessing and the lesson of humility are both given to us when bet is selected to begin the Torah.

To the question "How did the many emerge from the One?" the answer "Very gradually" ultimately will not do.

But what of aleph? Why should Creation not take place through the first of the letters? How can the contest be called off before the primary contender has a chance to show its stuff? Here interpreters have made a variety of apologies and explanations. Aleph begins the word *arur,* or cursed. God feared creating life under the sign of a curse. Others note that aleph had already been given the gift of standing for "one" and thus beginning the number sequence (for the Hebrew consonants also serve as numbers); it could not claim the mantle of beginning the Torah as well as being the first of the letters and numbers. And some point to the fact that the slighted aleph would one day be given its due: When God spoke the ten commandments at Sinai, they began with an aleph, that of *anochi* ("I am ..."). What more could the first letter want?

But our reading of the midrash needs to be pushed a step further, to a reading I have not yet found in any of the textual traditions. Aleph, as we said, stands also for the number one; bet is two, and so forth. The world was created through the bet for an obvious yet somehow hidden reason. The creation of this world is the creation of a universe of bet, or the emergence of duality. It marks the passage of the all-embracing One into the realm of self and other, or the transformation of the One as cosmic aleph into *Elohim,* a God whose very name indicates plurality, even when used with a singular verb. *Elohim*—the name used for God throughout the creation story in Genesis 1—is author of the world of bet, divinity that has to coexist in a universe shared with others. Creation begins with bet because that is precisely what creation is: the origin of the many out of the realm of the undivided One.

As though to dramatize the key role of duality in creation, the Genesis story is told as a tale of pairs: light and darkness, earth and heaven, upper and lower waters, sea and land, sun and moon, male and female, weekday work and Sabbath rest. These are the primal pairs through which creation is made known. The most basic of dualities, to which all these others point, is that of God and world, testament to the crucial change that the One would seem to have undergone by becoming Creator. Creation, so we would imagine, means that the limitless One is forced to become the One-in-relation. Its endless and ever-renewing energy is now to be manifest in the cacophony of infinite growth and diversity, rather than in the austere silence of changeless eternity.

But no. The midrash of the letters insists that the aleph is still there, waiting patiently behind the bet. The unity that precedes and underlies all of being has not been changed by creation. What has been added is only another perspective, that of the creatures. From our point of view, God is indeed Elohim, a Self who shares the stage of existence with countless other selves, including our own. But from the divine point of view, all is as it was before. One remains one. This unitive truth will be shared with humanity at Sinai, when the aleph will manifest itself as the starting-point of God's "I am." Sinai's revelation will be one that contains all of Being as a single whole. It will show us the path that leads toward repair of the primal breach that is the inevitable concomitant of creation, the breaking of the one into the many. The revelation at Sinai will begin to bring us back from the realm of two to that of one. It will do so once again through words and language, confirming forever the centrality of these to the Jewish mind.

It is no accident that this healing speech begins in silence. Aleph on its own is an entirely silent letter; only an accompanying vowel sound can make it speak. The whole Torah, as a Chasidic master once noted, is contained in that silent aleph, waiting to be spoken. But how long does it take to move from aleph's silence to the sound of that "Ah," the sound of the vowel that follows aleph, and the place where all words begin? What is the process that moves the cosmos from silence to speech? On this point even the Torah itself remains silent.

Here our contemplation of the mystery of aleph-bet leads us to the question of all questions, the essential conundrum that has teased mystics and would-be mystics since the beginning. If all is one, how do we get to the many? If all there is is aleph, where does bet come

from in the first place? In the tale of the creation, the question forms around the origins of the world's existence, seemingly separate from its source. If divinity is a perfect One, all of reality contained within a single aleph, how does our world, called the "world of separation" or multiplicity, come to be? When we speak of revelation, the question is reformulated in terms of word and silence, but it is not essentially altered. If all is one in divine silence, how could we ever imagine that silence being broken by the fragmented—and therefore potentially profane—character of speech? Only when we turn to redemption, the third eternal moment of the cosmic schema, is the question reversed: How do we go from speech to silence, from the many to the One, from our world that began with bet back to the realm of the silent aleph?

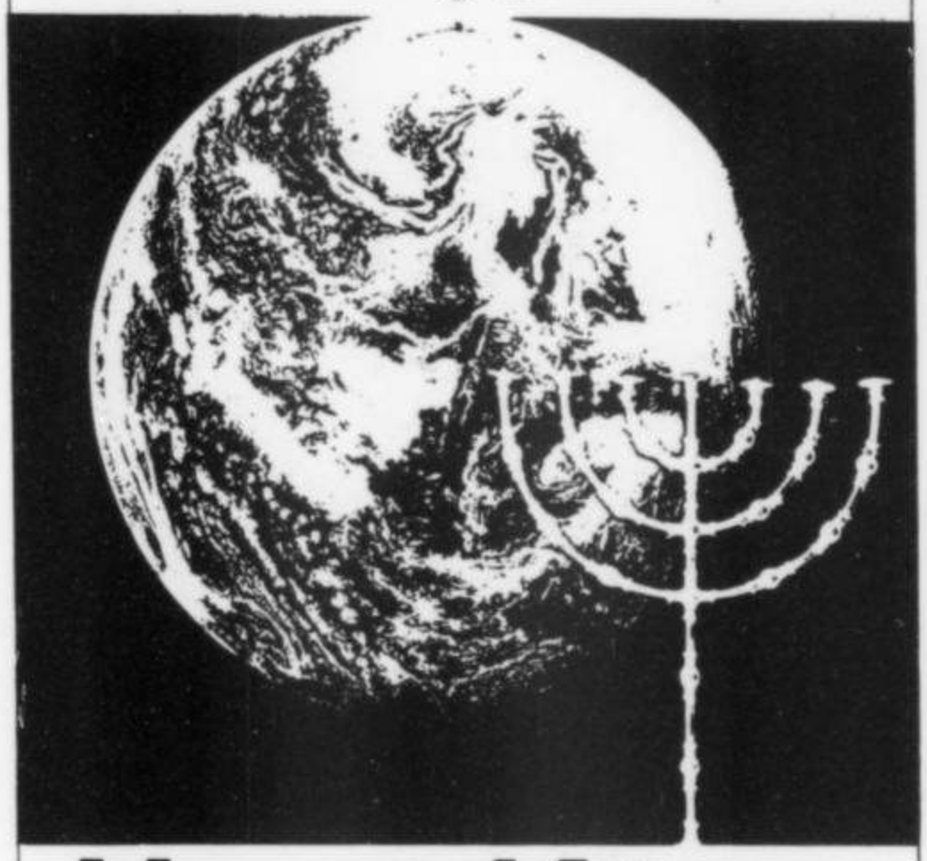
The Kabbalists, as Jewish mystics have been called since the Middle Ages, tried to deal with this problem by gradualizing nearly to infinity the transition from One to many. They described the primal stages of emergence from the One as occurring with the utmost subtlety, and refined them still further, over and over again. First, the One was surrounded by an ether, an air so fine that it could not be grasped. Then there appeared a line so thin it could not be drawn, then a "lamp of darkness" and a primal point. Step by step, stage by stage, with a step backward for each glance forward, the changeless infinite began to approach definition.

The Kabbalists described the fully manifest divine realm as a network of ten potencies, or *sefirot,* which together comprise the divine self. This means that the unity of God is dynamic, ten-within-one, rather than static. These *sefirot,* called by a great variety of symbolic names, serve both as stages in the unfolding self-manifestation of God and as rungs the mystic has to traverse in order to restore divine wholeness. But the Kabbalists' discussions of these ten powers are also replete with hints that this ten does not represent a multiplicity at all. Ten is, after all, merely one carried out to the next power; one need add nothing but a zero in order to create it. So too one hundred and all the rest, the Kabbalists like to remind us, hinting that even the greatest multiplicity can come to be without betraying the One.

But graduation does not adequately solve the problem. I look around at the world of multiplicity, knowing (from both tradition and experience) of the One that lies behind it. When I ask, "Whence the many?" I find the Kabbalist prepared to induct me into his realm of complex and subtle myth. I sense the delicacy of his mind and find something more than delicious in its elevation and refinement. In his tale of the origins of the many, I cannot but sense that he *knows* something. He

(Continued on p. 72)

On the brink of an historical turning point



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Desert Scorn: Bedouin Life Under Israeli Rule

Haim Chertok

Shortly after dawn on March 4, 1991, a detachment of three hundred men arrived in jeeps and trucks at the compound where the families of Mitab Al-Qsasa and Salman Mohammed Abu Kaf lived. Their objective? To raze the buildings to the ground. This Israeli operation did not take place on the West Bank or the Gaza Strip, and neither Al-Qsasa nor Abu Kaf was accused of terrorist activity or incitement to violence—charges that may cost the accused their homes. Consequently, this incident five kilometers from Hura, one of seven government-planned Bedouin townships in the Negev, passed unreported by the scores of Jerusalem's internationally based journalists and rated only meager coverage in the Israeli press.

The force contained units from the Border Patrol, the police, the army, and members of the so-called Green Patrol. (This last is ostensibly an ecological service attached to Israel's Department of Agriculture but in fact primarily functions as a surveillance and strike force against the illegal Bedouin settlements in the Negev.) Before the eyes of the thirty-five inhabitants—among them three infants, a twelve-year old paraplegic, and a woman of seventy-five—the Israeli detachment leveled two cement-block houses, six zinc huts, and one wooden shanty: seven dwellings and two storehouses of sheep fodder. Their contents were damaged beyond repair. Rather than acquiesce to the government's plan to relocate them to Hura, the families of Mitab Al-Qsasa and Salman Mohammed Abu Kaf, with the help of friends and neighbors, raised tents on the site of their demolished homes the very next day. They still live there today.

What offense could have merited such severity? According to Eli Izhayig, spokesman for the Israel Lands Administration, "the Al-Qsasa and Abu Kaf families inhabited houses that had been constructed without proper license"—an activity that evidently ranks with terrorism and incitement in Israeli jurisprudence. And had the two heads of households applied for proper licenses, they would have stumbled over the catch-22 procedures Israel uses to snare the Bedouins of the Negev. The Lands Administration issues building licenses only for government-sanctioned Bedouin townships, of which, at present, there are three. As with the Al-Qsasas and Abu Kafs, so it goes with hundreds of others. The Ministry of Interior has reported that between 1988 and 1990, demolitions of unlicensed Bedouin dwelling places were carried out at the rate of one nearly every other day.

Since the 1950s, Israeli government policy has been "to encourage" the Bedouins to settle in selected locations. Encouraging, of course, means to remove them from the open desert so that military, agricultural, and industrial development in the Negev can proceed unimpeded. For several decades this policy was rarely enforced, but it gained a new lease on life in the wake of the 1979 Camp David Accords, which enjoined the Israeli Army to evacuate its bases in Sinai. The need to locate training bases and three new air fields within the narrow confines of the Negev made an unmonitored, uncontrolled Bedouin presence more than merely inexpedient.

Expanding townships as well as the military regard the Bedouins as an impediment to progress. Omer is an affluent suburb of Beer-Sheva. Its residents—overwhelmingly Ashkenazi and secular—are mainly professionals, many of them employed at nearby Ben-Gurion University; in the last general election, a high proportion voted for left-leaning RATZ (the Citizens' Rights party). Adjacent to Omer is a fenced-in village of several hundred Bedouins, who resettled there more than thirty years ago—"illegally," of course—after Israel forced them to evacuate traditional lands closer to Beer-Sheva. These Bedouin used to dry-farm the fields on the south side of the highway, which were expropriated a decade ago and reassigned to a nearby kibbutz.

Seeking further expansion, the civic leaders of Omer have been casting covetous eyes on the illegal settlements of their most immediate neighbors, and have

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petitioned the Israeli courts to evict the Omer-abutting Bedouins. Neither the good greedy leftists of the kibbutz nor the good designing advocates of the municipality of Omer have shown much interest in the civil liberties of their fellow Israeli citizens—the Bedouins.

For millennia, Bedouin tribespeople roamed the Negev in search of water and vegetation for their flocks. Over the generations they have become skilled herdsmen who mastered the art of survival under semi-arid conditions. They also have traditionally sustained a symbiotic relationship with the farmers of Galilee, who allowed Bedouins to drive their flocks to forage over already-harvested fields, clearing them of stubble in the process. This shepherd economy worked smoothly as long as the Bedouin population was relatively low and empty land was abundant.

The founding of the State of Israel marked the beginning of the end for both of these conditions. The introduction of modern medical procedures reduced Bedouin infant mortality (which used to be around 50 percent) so precipitously that today's Negev Bedouin population of 70,000 is a high for modern times. Simultaneously, since all land in the Negev is now controlled by the State, even Bedouin tribes who have lived in the region for many generations exercise no legal rights over their land. Over the past decade many Bedouins have sought employment in factories or on agricultural settlements, abandoning in the process their nomadic way of life.

The government-authorized Markovitch Report (1986) indicated a total of 5,944 "illegal Bedouin structures" dotting the Negev. Of these, over 98 percent were classified as "soft," i.e., temporary structures such as tin shacks and huts. The vast majority are on land claimed by both the State and the Bedouins. By 1990, despite the Sisyphean efforts of the Green Patrol, the Association for Support and Defense of Bedouin Rights (the only civil-rights organization founded and run by the Bedouins themselves) estimated that the number of these "illegal" structures had increased to around eight thousand.

Khalil Al-Okhbi was born in 1956 in Al-Okhbi, a village of around one hundred dwellings just off the highway between Beer-Sheva and Arad. Like the Bedouin closer to Omer, the Al-Okhbi tribe had moved in 1951 after it was expelled from its settlement nearer to Beer-Sheva. Officially, all are squatters; like the other twenty or so good-sized Bedouin villages of the northern Negev, Al-Okhbi is not recognized by the Israeli authorities. Officially, it does not exist.

Khalil Al-Okhbi is married, the father of five children. In 1982 he received a court order to destroy his own house. He complied. Subsequently, Al-Okhbi explained, his wife built another home for the family on the same site. The Negev Regional Planning Authority claimed for its part that Al-Okhbi circumvented the original court order, and it has brought a new case against him. Before his case made its way into the court, the house accidentally burned to the ground. Despite the nullity of the house, the State insisted upon arguing the case. For his offenses, Al-Okhbi was sentenced to a year in prison, seven months of it suspended, and a fine of 3,000 shekels. The prosecutor has appealed the court's decision; he wants Al-Okhbi to serve a longer sentence and to pay a fine of 100,000 shekels.

The problem is not that Israelis harbor deep-seated prejudices against the Bedouins, but rather that they are largely unmoved by the Bedouins' plight. Most Israeli Jews view their fellow Bedouin citizens as little more than a picturesque nuisance.

Unlike Israeli Arabs in general, many young Bedouins in the Negev have volunteered to serve in the army, frequently performing invaluable service as trackers along the borders. When missiles rained down on Tel Aviv during the Gulf War, several Bedouin settlements opened their doors to Jewish families who fled from the center of the country. The problem is not that Israelis harbor deep-seated prejudices against the Bedouins, but rather that they are largely unmoved by the Bedouins' plight. Most Israeli Jews view their fellow Bedouin citizens as little more than a picturesque nuisance.

Today, Israel is moving steadily toward the implementation of a full-scale resettlement plan: the concentration of all Negev Bedouins into seven large townships —and only three of these have had *their* building plans approved. By perfectly legal means, the lands where some thirty-thousand Bedouins lived have been confiscated and their former inhabitants have been moved to sprawling conglomerations such as Rahat, north of Beer-Sheva. Like Khalil Al-Okhbi, the overwhelming majority of the region's remaining forty-thousand Bedouin live in homes that the State considers illegal. Any sunrise, they may see their home ringed by the jeeps of the Green Patrol. Every one of the dwellings is threatened with demolition.

A closer examination of the judicial rationale for these draconian procedures is instructive. Any Israeli wishing to construct a building on either private or state-owned land must first obtain a permit from his or her local planning and building commission. The land must be zoned as residential and situated on a local outline plan, which receives approval only after lengthy review from the local, regional, and even national levels of government. Except for housing construction in the seven government-planned townships, Bedouins of the Negev are entirely excluded from this mechanism, utterly removed from the decision-making processes that so crucially determine the course of their lives. In fact, only 3.4 percent of local outline plans of Arab villages across the country (and none of the Bedouin villages) were drawn up by Arabs.

Under Israeli law, construction of buildings without a permit is a criminal offense punishable by heavy fines and imprisonment for up to two years. After the chairman of the local or regional planning commission initiates proceedings, administrative demolition orders may be issued subject to implementation after only twenty-four hours. On receiving notice of such an order, homeowners may apply to the courts for a stay—for obvious reasons, without delay—but the burden is entirely on the owners to show why their homes should not be destroyed. Moreover, even if an application for a stay is before the court, demolition proceedings can proceed anyway, though this has only happened infrequently.

Those convicted for building an illegal structure are generally given three to six months to carry out the demolition themselves. If they fail to comply, they may be summoned to court, fined, and even imprisoned. If they continue to delay carrying out the court order, the court may mandate the Green Patrol to demolish the offending structures. In the event that no one can be identified to be charged with the offense, the court may circumvent the five-year statute of limitations for criminal prosecution in illegal building cases by invoking special procedures under provisions of Israel's 1965 Planning and Building Act in order to hasten the demolition process. When the Green Patrol is dispatched to destroy Bedouin dwellings, the homeowners are made to pay for the government's inconvenience. As a result, most court-ordered demolitions are carried out by Bedouins themselves.

Though Israeli courts regard any noncompliance with the planning and building law as a serious offense, enforcement of these regulations is, not surprisingly, pursued more vigilantly in the Arab than in the Jewish sector. In fact, as any close observer of the Israeli scene could verify, infringements of planning code regulations by Jewish homeowners are far from uncommon. Yet who has ever heard of an Israeli judge issuing an order for the demolition of a home belonging to a Jew, let alone of its implementation?

Beyond the callous reaches of Israel's law and officialdom, some pockets of Jewish concern for the welfare and rights of the Bedouins can be found. A small number of Jewish lawyers join in the work of the Association for Support and Defense of Bedouin Rights. In addition, conscientious individuals such as psychologist Moshe Landsman and feminist Leah Shakdiel, both of the Negev town of Yeroham, have come to the aid of the Association. Shakdiel reported a typical instance of Israeli indifference to Bedouin sensibilities. In June 1991, at a site at Yeroham, an Arab bulldozer operator was breaking ground for apartments to be built for Russian *olim*. At the insistence of his supervisor, he broke open Bedouin gravesites that had long been marked and noted, exposing a small pile of bones. After days of deliberations, the Bedouins agreed to a compromise involving a new fence. However, one need not wonder what the reaction would have been had a Jewish gravesite been unearthed by Bedouins.

The unrelenting government pressure to shoehorn Negev Bedouins into urban concentrations has aroused the sympathetic concern of Professor Gideon Kressel, for many years the head of a team of anthropologists at Ben-Gurion University's Center for Grazing Lands Research at Sde Boker. "A proven way of life, a fascinating, irreplaceable culture which lends variety to the Negev scene, is being dangerously undermined," Kressel says. "Of course we recognize that a good many Bedouins nowadays have come to prefer to live in urban centers. What we are suggesting is that a lifestyle in harmony with traditional Bedouin values should be made available as an alternative to the others."

But those Bedouins who stubbornly hold fast to more traditional patterns find that the land squeeze is devastating their shepherd economy and forcing them to resort to overgrazing. Hewing to their tents, the majority of Bedouins now eke out a precarious existence that becomes less viable every season. The only new crops being harvested by the Bedouins of the Negev are marginality, anger, frustration, and growing alienation from Israeli society—a sadly ironic prospect for an Arab population that has traditionally been loyal to the Jewish State.

But given the overriding need of the military for more space, is there really an alternative to channeling Bedouins onto reservations that seem destined to become urban slums and a breeding ground for discontent? Professor Kressel offers one possible answer. His Center for Grazing Lands Research is readying a fresh

(Continued on p. 73)

JEWISH FEMINISM

About Men

Judith Plaskow

"What is the place of men in a feminist Judaism?" "What can I do?" "Where do I fit in?" Men ask these questions, sometimes plaintively, sometimes angrily, whenever I speak on Jewish feminism. I find it difficult to answer the questions directly. For one thing, if I do not want men to define the role of women in the Jewish tradition, what right have I to define men's place in a new Jewish order? For another, these questions at times sound suspiciously like appeals for women to remain in our caretaker role. They are requests not simply for guidance but for reassurance, for continuing affection and regard. One sure implication of a feminist Judaism, however, is that just as women are learning to support and empower each other, so men will need to learn to do the same. Women have enough work creating a Judaism that acknowledges our presence without also being expected to take care of men. We need the help of men who can be responsible for their own Jewish lives and who can recognize the ways in which sexism has deformed those lives.

Once the problem with such questions is acknowledged, however, it is also true that men have a vital role to play in shaping a feminist Judaism. They can take many concrete steps to function as agents of change and allies in the struggle for a feminist Judaism. These steps fall into two broad categories: letting go of traditional forms of male power and exploring their Jewishness within a feminist (i.e., genuinely egalitarian) framework.

Letting Go

1. An excellent first step in divesting oneself of the prerogatives of male power is to read Esther Ticktin's "A Modest Beginning" and make a commitment to the new halachot she proposes there. This article, first printed in the *Response* anthology on women in 1974 (and reprinted in 1976 in Elizabeth Koltun's anthology *The Jewish Woman*), has never received the attention it deserves. Ticktin suggests concrete ways in which men can begin to let go of male privilege while at the same time raising the consciousness of others. She suggests, for example, that men refuse to accept an *aliya* in any congregation where women cannot have an *aliya* and give the reason for their refusal. And she asks that traditional men, for whom certain forms of nonparticipation are not yet possible, at least refrain from speaking to women about events and privileges that exclude women (e.g., in Orthodox synagogues, dancing with a Torah on Simchat Torah).

My favorite example of the practice of Ticktin's principles involves a prominent member of the Jewish renewal movement who was asked by Chasidim on an airplane to help make the morning minyan. "Does your minyan count women?" he asked them. "I'm sorry, but it is the halacha of my community to count women in a minyan." The multiplication of such simple acts helps sow the seeds of a feminist Judaism.

2. Interrupt and argue with the conscious and unconscious sexism of male friends and colleagues. Whites have learned from black people that if we really care about ending racism, then it is our responsibility to name and stop it wherever we see it. Just as we should not have to wait for a black person to be in the room to intervene in racist situations, men should not have to wait for women to put a stop to sexist conversation or conduct. Indeed, because of the pervasiveness of racism and sexism, it is often more effective when members of the dominant group interrupt or halt oppressive behavior.

Allies of Jewish feminists can refuse to participate in sexist banter or to tolerate JAP jokes. They can persistently question the conscious or unconscious exclusion of women from a thousand synagogues and Jewish community undertakings. They can examine their own work and teaching, writing, and communal projects to see if they make room for women and women's experience.

3. Never say, "We are not talking about that now" when women raise issues of the oppressiveness of a particular text, context, or situation. This line, which I heard all through graduate school, is continually used to avoid examining the problems and erasures of tradition. "We're not talking about Karl Barth's view of women as ontologically subordinate right now, we're talking about his doctrine of revelation." "We're not talking about the abusiveness of this Talmudic passage, we're talking about Rashi, or how to follow the argument." Think about the political consequences of this silencing. When an individual or text is clearly anti-Semitic, can Jews put the anti-Semitism neatly aside while we deal with the "real issues," or is anti-Semitism the first thing we need to have acknowledged and addressed?

Dealing with feminist issues can indeed derail discussion, cause carefully planned projects or talks to be laid aside, and take events in unexpected and sometimes frightening directions. If we temporarily turn from Rashi or modes of rabbinic argument, for example, to look at the *content* of Talmudic assumptions about women's sexuality, there is no question that the lesson will be exploded open. But the train of Jewish tradition has been barreling along on its patriarchal track for three thousand years. Laying some new line is a priority that rightfully interferes with business as usual. *Im lo akhshav eima'tai?* When else shall we talk about women's issues—in specifically planned sessions that only a small

(Continued on p. 76)

Judith Plaskow is a Jewish feminist theologian and professor of religious studies at Manhattan College.

Confession from a Jericho Jail

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BOOK REVIEW

Give Thymos a Chance

Todd Gitlin

The End of History and the Last Man by Francis Fukuyama. The Free Press, 1992, 418 pp.

We like our wars to end with a bang: a white flag, an armistice, a surrender document passed across a table. Time to bring on the wild party, the freeze-frames of joy, as in Alfred Eisenstadt's famous photograph of the jubilant sailor embracing an equally jubilant woman in Times Square on VJ day. Also time to bring on the collective interpreters—the priests, pundits, and presidents—to tell the populace that victory means the triumph of freedom over slavery.

Compared to the scenic, precisely dated full stops of the two World Wars, the end of the cold war came with barely a whimper. Indeed, for months, the president of the United States refused to acknowledge that anything much had happened at all. The *New York Times* op-ed page habitually asked, in the tone of a leading if plaintive question, "Is the Cold War Over?" In short order, the enemy had not only resigned; it had disbanded. Which meant not only that warheads were being unpacked and dismantled, that the Pentagon had to scramble for a revitalized raison d'etre, that weapons designers in search of lucrative enemies had to go looking for killer asteroids—yes, *asteroids*—but that America itself, this baggy and indistinct nation, "conceived in liberty" and perennially in search of itself, was left without a mission. Forty-some years of commencement speeches had been rendered obsolete, and we were left in an interpretive vacuum. The galvanizing purpose of America's political culture had vanished. We stumbled into one of history's—or History's—great anticlimaxes, where we continue to flounder.

Enter Francis Fukuyama, 1989's op-ed savant, with an arresting, if oversimple, idea about what the collapse of communism might mean. Leaving aside for a moment the intrinsic merit of Fukuyama's idea—of which more below—I think it fair to say that intrinsic merit was not, by itself, responsible for the swarm of commentary that filled the op-ed pages for months. (In any given month, obscure intellectual journals publish at least a manifesto or two that arguably might be worthy of provoking a flurry of op-ed opinion.) Nor could the furor be accounted for entirely by Fukuyama's formidable intellectual paternity—he was a student of Allan Bloom—nor even by the fact that Fukuyama, as deputy director of the State Department's policy planning staff, begged recognition as a philosopher-king; nor even the fact that his original article, "The End of History?" was published in the neoconservative oracle *The National Interest*—though surely none of these elements was negligible.

No, give credit where credit is due. It was a combination of Fukuyama's scope and skill and the ripeness of the moment that sent his star catapulting into the intellectual firmament. His idea had scale: It was ambitious enough to be commensurate with the magnitude of the transformation coming to pass in the world. It also perfectly packaged the two sides of present-day conservative thought: It was optimistic about markets, hailing American economic theory as the one that won the cold war; and yet, at the same time, it brooded about the loss of heart and spirit in the decrepit West.

Partly because of his puckish use of language and the fact that Hegel was not widely read on the State Department beat, Fukuyama was widely misinterpreted to be saying that, with the end of communism, the world was going to become eventless. This was utter incomprehension. Fukuyama is hardly so stupid as to think that history will cease to fill up with happenings, even dramatic and dangerous ones. He does not think that conflict is lapsing into a sort of universal steady state. No, as George Bush was mumbling his way through the end of the cold war, Fukuyama arrived in the midst of an interpretive vacuum with a grand idea in a culture that had need of one.

Fukuyama is philosophically more ambitious than the grand generalizers of recent decades—Walt W. Rostow in the 1950s and 1960s, Daniel Bell, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and Samuel Huntington in the 1960s and 1970s—and for this reason alone he is worth taking seriously. Standing out among academics who are, in Max Weber's gloomy words, "specialists without spirit," and postmodernists who declare that the age of "master narratives" has expired, Fukuyama wants nothing less than to relaunch two grand traditions. First, the philosophy of history, namely the belief that history is more than mere flux, that it has unity, a direction, a capital H. And second: In the spirit of system-builders from Plato to Kant and Rousseau to his guru, Hegel, he seeks to build his intellectual edifice on first principles, on an idea about Humanity's essential characteristics—in a phrase, a philosophical anthropology.

In recent years, conservatives have been better at this sort of thing than so-called progressives, who, despite their label, tend neither to believe that progress is the name of the game nor

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to see anything essential about humanity. In fact, the tattered philosopher-kings of the Left tend to believe that America is declining—not only economically but spiritually; and as for a philosophical anthropology, well, the Left's conventional wisdom holds that there is no human nature, only human history. It is conservatives, especially the neos, many of them reconstructed Marxists used to thinking in big schematic terms, who have seized the intellectual initiative by resurrecting the idea that history has a rhyme and a reason. Amid the prevailing pessimism, Fukuyama shines, a sun among raisins. Without doubt, sunniness is part of his appeal.

At its core, Fukuyama's argument is baby-simple—which has not kept many reviewers from getting it wrong. Since at least the French Revolution, History has a singular direction powered by science, which is cumulative and irreversible. Nations are driven to improve their science in order to compete militarily and satisfy desires with goods. To defend themselves, nations are driven to make labor and organization more and more efficient. Likewise, to satisfy the desire for comforts, nations are driven to apply reason to bureaucracy and the division of labor. They produce new machines and streamline the production process. The resulting economic growth produces a certain uniformity. Markets grow, expediting economics of scale. Cities grow, transportation speeds up, innovations accelerate, consumers accumulate goods—presto, modernity.

With Hegelian-Weberian aplomb, Fukuyama calls this engine of history the Mechanism, with a capital *M*. The Mechanism produces capitalism by default. Whether North or South, socialism, in his view, is down for the last count because central planning throws a wrench in the gears of the Mechanism. Communism, as Walt W. Rostow wrote in 1960, is no more than a "disease of the transition" to industrialism. That idea, however smug, is less than the whole truth—"the transition" outside East Asia is hardly automatic—but neither does it look so stupid anymore.

But Fukuyama is not satisfied to see the market as the universal *economic* destiny. Humanity, he insists, is also inexorably bound for a *political* destiny, namely, liberal democracy—which he does not define very carefully but which presumably entails popular representation, free expression, and a plurality of institutions. Not because liberal democracy is everywhere on the horizon—though sometimes he exaggerates the degree to which it has already arrived—but because it is, to paraphrase Sartre's 1960 statement about Marxism, the idea that cannot be transcended in our time. It is as an *ideal,* Fukuyama argues, that liberal democracy cannot be improved on. There is a "complete absence of coherent *theoretical* alternatives." Unlike our grandparents, "we have trouble [today] imagining a world that is radically better than our own, or a future that is not essentially democratic and capitalist." There may be backsliding from this exalted ideal—there may even be horrendous outbursts of unreason, dictatorship, genocide—but sooner or later, presumably sooner, History recovers and marches on. Liberal democracy may have its discontents, its imperfections and shortcomings, but it has nothing that Hegel or Marx would have called a *contradiction*—no potential for a breakdown fundamental enough to undo the system itself.

Now, at certain moments, Fukuyama stretches so far as to fall on his face, and therefore he must be held responsible for much of the same kind of misinterpretation that he laments. In his prophetic mode, he is not content to argue that liberal democracy is an unsurpassable *ideal*; he also insists that democracy is a galloping, all but unavoidable, *fact*. In this mood, he acts as if he were still in the State Department—annexing to the sphere of actually existing liberal democracies the likes of Turkey, Mexico, Peru, Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines.

Still, for his main argument to hold good, he needn't have gone so far as to claim that liberal democracy has already arrived. He needs only to argue that it has logical advantages that eventually, despite backsliding—despite fascism, Stalinism, and still unimagined revivals and recombinations—will out. Toward this end, he makes two strong claims. One is that sooner or later, economic development, even when pursued for a while under dictatorship, as in Franco's Spain, Salazar's Portugal, or the colonels' Greece, expedites political pluralism; that, as in the former Eastern bloc, the growth of social complexity and education establish conditions for democracy.

The other claim goes deeper. It goes back to the premise of his—that is to say, Hegel's—philosophical anthropology. Humans don't just struggle to satisfy their desires, they seek recognition. Accept this premise and Fukuyama is entitled to claim that the absence of contradiction in liberal democracy is fundamental. Following Alexandre Kojeve's version of Hegel, Fukuyama now resorts to first principles, and argues that humanity is outfitted from the beginning with a moral capacity, and that this moral capacity is an engine of history. Men and women are tripartite: not just pleasure-hunters and interest-maximizers, as English liberals would tell us, but also dignity-seekers. As Plato wrote, people do not live by bread or arithmetic alone, but also by *thymos,* variously translated as "spiritedness," "heart," "courage," "indignation," "pride," "an innate human sense of justice." Desire and reason together fuel economic growth; *thymos* fuels the struggle for recognition, which culminates in the struggle for democracy, that is, a society in which recognition is mutual and universal.

Fukuyama persuasively demonstrates that *thymos* is a force in history—something only an economic determinist could overlook. But now comes the tricky part. Leaving aside intricacies of definition, why should this *thymos*—which we call soul—triumph? Why can't it give rise to grotesque offspring—the furies of false pride that ride the winds of nation and race while crooning about bygone glories of blood and spirit? Fukuyama is no connect-the-dots Pangloss. In good Hegelian fashion, he recognizes that the good can curdle into the terrible. *Thymos* may give rise to its distortion, *megalothymia,* the passion for superiority and glory. In the modern world, worldly desire has eclipsed *thymos*—which, unsatisfied by humdrum liberal democratic recognition, goes underground, rebels and produces its irrational, barbaric forms—fundamentalism and aggressive nationalism.

And here, the complications that Fukuyama has omitted in the course of making his schematic argument come back to haunt him. Islamic fundamentalist fascism and Asian authoritarianism remain not only possible but actual. Untamed, intolerant nationalism is far from finished. Fukuyama tries to save his scheme by claiming that the world polarizes, North-South, "between a post-historical part and the part that is still stuck in history." The North trades, frets, and offers, as outlets for *thymos,* entrepreneurship, sports, and entertainment. The South is still enmeshed in old-fashioned wars for recognition and territory. Where the two halves of the world collide—as in oil and immigration—trouble looms.

The trouble with the ideal of liberal democracy is not that human beings are too bad for it, but that they are too complicated to cease wanting to improve it.

Now liberal democracy is not free of internal frictions, either. The serious challenges, Fukuyama argues, will come not from the Left, which wants more equality yet offers no route that leads to it, but from the Right, which thinks equality squashes the *thymos* of the best. Fukuyama is at home with the poet of *thymos,* Nietzsche—not that he wants to let loose the "blonde beast" of Zarathustrian fascism. Rather, Fukuyama endorses (though he does not credit) Richard Rorty's version of a liberal Nietzsche as a guru of private self-creation who belongs indoors, taking care of personal business, and not unleashed into the public square to make policy. The spread of equality produces postmodern weariness—no new eras to conquer. And yet, *thymos* or no, boring old liberal democracy, by his earlier argument, remains the least bad form of social order imaginable. Uncomfortable with condemning democratic humanity to boredom—the lack of ideas for which to live or die—Fukuyama now launches into a search for the moral equivalent of the aristocratic joust. But what liberal democracy would have to do to sustain itself against resource panics, ecocatastrophe, even religious and immigration wars, is a subject he circumnavigates.

Indeed, his argument fuzzes up altogether at the end. Is boredom a malaise or an actual upending contradiction? Fukuyama does not persuade that it is the latter. But here his universalist theory leaves this reader dissatisfied. Floating, by the end, high above mundane currents, he fails to take seriously the particular upset caused by the end of the cold war and the Soviet empire—well stated by Ken Jowett, in his sobering new book *New World Disorder: The Leninist Extinction*: "Extinctions create turbulent (not pacific) environments, characterized by shifting and contested boundaries (of all types—territorial, ideological, cultural, economic, and political) and by insecure identities." Moreover, Fukuyama's fear of post-historic boredom strikes me as not only premature but insufficient to cancel his earlier argument that liberal democracy is the ultimate *ideal.*

The trouble with the ideal, in the end, is not that human beings are too bad for it but that they are too complicated to cease wanting to improve it. Fukuyama's philosophical anthropology is too narrow. It has no place for the adhesive forces—love, solidarity, the better side of the socialist ideal. If Fukuyama's philosophical anthropology were more ample and less pinched, he might accept the invitation to seek *thymos* in the defense of the conditions of life, in the heroism of artistic creation, in political audacity, in the adamant defense of the human rights not to be murdered, tortured, raped, left in the cold to die. These boring old goals should be resounding enough to enlist any of us—even Fukuyama himself, a half-hearted conservative at best.

He has, after all, no illusions about liberal democracy's practical achievements in the domain of equality or justice. Racism comes as no news to him. Neither does the degradation of the natural world by the cornucopia of garbage that spills from the factories into the dumps via the households. His disdain for the consumerized stupor of normal life could be rendered compatible with the will to overcome lethargy via political entrepreneurship—adventures in political action that might redeem some of the unkept promises of liberal democracy.

Ecofeminist activism and social democratic organizing as the moral equivalents of war? Well, history is nothing if not ironic. The spotted owl of Minerva is yet to be driven out of the last forests of Oregon. □

BOOK REVIEW

Malaise Story

Chris Lehmann

Intimations of Postmodernity by Zygmunt Bauman. Routledge, Chapman and Hall, 1992, 232 pp.

City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles by Mike Davis. Vintage, 1992, 462 pp.

The immolation of Los Angeles in the wake of the Rodney King verdict brought with it a torrent of commentary on the breakdown of American race relations and the dismal plight of inner cities. All this discussion, searching and anguished though much of it was, had the strangely familiar feel of ideological battles already fought to unpromising stalemates. South Central L.A. congresswoman Maxine Waters sounded the charge on twelve years of Reagan-Bush misrule as the political force that turned her district into a tinderbox. White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater argued, absurdly, that L.A.'s riot-devastated, inner-city neighborhoods were reaping the bitter fruits of liberal experiments with Great Society social engineering now twenty-years dead.

Such diagnoses of the riot's social and political genealogy were not the exclusive sport of partisan politicians. The effort to assimilate L.A.'s sufferings into familiar narratives of racial and social conflict pervaded virtually all public discussion. Comparisons with the Watts riot of 1965 seemed all but inevitable, as did evocations of 1967's Long Hot Summer in the Northeast, and the riots that followed Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination in 1968.

For all this talk, however, the raw visual images of the riots seemed to be telling another story. Footage of white motorists being dragged out of their cars and beaten, armed standoffs between Korean merchants and insurgent looters, and most astonishingly, L.A. residents (of all races) driving up to gutted stores, calmly selecting merchandise, and packing it into waiting trucks and vans forced upon dazed viewing audiences one critical realization: L.A.'s days of rage were not an assault on property or America's profit-driven way of life so much as a celebration of them.

Of course, the media's obsessive coverage of looting as the principal form of political expression in South Central L.A. often served to distort the actual range of the black community's response to the Rodney King verdict. Black citizens rescued victims of the rioting, and in the first critical hours of violence that proved too hot for the baton-happy LAPD, they even struggled to police their own neighborhoods. And out of the ruins of South Central L.A., black voters are now registering in record numbers. Yet the intensely private nature of the L.A. uprising still affords a vivid point of contrast to other, more politically minded moments in the nation's recent racial history: Participants in the riots seemed but thinly engaged with politics, and made it painfully clear by their actions that they saw neither hope nor reason to appeal to a shared political sphere or to transracial notions of civic responsibility.

To begin accounting for the dramatic privatization of political life, it seems necessary to ask what about the L.A. catastrophe was characteristic of its age—what, in other words, made it such a strikingly postmodern moment of political reckoning. Besides the behavior of rioters who rendered racial protest a few violent steps removed from a shopping spree, there was the use of video technology as a tool of criminal prosecution and—in the defense's painstaking freeze-frame review of the King videotape—exoneration. (One of the more unnerving specters the King verdict raised was the prospect that the seeming naturalism of the video camera will continue to undergo surreal, truth-defying manipulations in the interests of state power.) There was the *Bladerunner*-style spectacle of thousands of state troopers and National Guardsmen, unleashed on curfew-darkened streets with high-tech weaponry in a frank confession of the state's failure to sustain any semblance of racial and ethnic peace. And of course, there was the larger media frenzy of riot reporting, which lingered on all the most lurid spectacles of the rioting as though they were exotic aberrations in the natural order of things, like an Apollo landing or the eruption of Mount St. Helens. Mass audiences thus took in the country's ugliest political moments in morbid detail, marveling all the while at their own political impotence before a catastrophic social breakdown that they all somehow still sensed they were ultimately responsible for conjuring forth. It seemed nothing so much as a domestic version of the cathode paralysis that accompanied the Gulf War, which had therapists diagnosing something they called, with a straight face, "CNN syndrome," and treating it with the heartbreakingly feeble suggestion to turn off the TV and concentrate on hobbies or other placid diversions calculated to drive the thought of carnage out of the brain.

All these telling symptoms suggest that we need to look more carefully at the social world we casually designate as postmodern. This is still a vexed and halting enterprise, as one can expect of any category of cultural description bred in the seminar room. Postmodernism almost instantly invites a jaded response (from adherents and attackers alike), if only because jadedness itself is one of its most characteristic postures. Yet the King verdict and its aftermath have made it all too clear that whatever

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postmodernity's more elaborate intellectual guises may be, it is a quality of lived experience.

Taking theoretical measure of this experience is one of the humble aims of Zygmunt Bauman's ambitious collection of essays, *Intimations of Postmodernity*. Especially for American readers, Bauman—a Polish sociologist who emigrated to Britain in the 1960s—is able to move the troubled proposition of postmodernity onto reassuringly unfamiliar ground. He brings to his subject a healthy skepticism born of disillusion with the ideological legacies of the late cold war. He also writes from a perspective steeped in the philosophical and sociological debates concerning the nature and fate of modernity. Both of these vantage points found powerful expression in his study *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989), in which he argued that Nazi genocide was but the logical outcome of the ideological absolutism, universalizing rationality, and rage for order that define the entire modern experience.

Inasmuch as postmodernity marks a retreat from these pathologies, Bauman cautiously endorses it. The breakdown of what he calls the "proselytizing" designs of modern rationality now finds us in a strangely elastic social world, where the homogenizing powers of reason and the nation-state have ceded their initiative to the pluralist and particularistic claims of diverse cultural communities that are grounded in the suddenly omnipresent consumer marketplace. Postmodernity is, above all, a salutary collapse of world-destroying certainties, and the concomitant movement into a more-or-less open-ended "habitat of diffuse offers and free choices." The cultural and political climate of this habitat lends itself to no sure diagnosis, but Bauman is at least admirably direct in tracing its social roots. Much more than other theorists of the postmodern, who seek to elevate the peculiar contingency and weightlessness of postmodern experience into metaphysical principles, Bauman recognizes them as products of an epoch in which consumer conduct has become "the cognitive and moral focus of life, the integrative bond of the society, and the focus of systemic management."

The unchallenged hegemony of the consumer market, in other words, finds us in a dramatically new phase—if not at the much-celebrated "end"—of history. In this new world, the exhaustion of an adverserial political life comes as no great surprise. Productive labor, the nation-state, and most of the social conflicts they spawned have all been gently nudged off the global stage. In their place, consumer choice has created a paradoxically self-determined set of uncoerced social relations. Standing much of the traditional critique of consumer society on its head, Bauman suggests that "in the new domination of market forces culture has recovered a mechanism of the reproduction of diversity once located in autonomous communities and later ostensibly lost for a time in the era of politically sponsored cultural crusades and enlightened proselytism."

Los Angeles's asphyxiated public sphere is no more a costly amusement of a cosmopolitan consumer culture than its perennial curtain of smog is a tanning accessory.

Such observations clearly foreground the tacit social assumptions behind the postmodern condition, even if they do not translate into especially encouraging or convincing political prescriptions. The notion of the market as a gathering of strangely reconfigured gemeinschafts doesn't really withstand the kind of scrutiny involved in evaluating the cultural diversity and egalitarian political possibilities of, say, a Camel billboard or a Stroh's TV spot. And the merchandising of autonomous communities, no matter how culturally sensitive it may be, is still a far cry from the sort of life commitments and moral traditions that made them communities in the first place.

Much the same kind of willed social meliorism impairs Bauman's treatment of more overtly political questions. He argues that those who remain wedded to more familiar modern modes of social analysis labor under the misguided "pressure of historical memory." But his even-tempered celebrations of marketplace pluralism seem afflicted with a much more distressing sort of historical amnesia. He fails to reckon with the emergence of a mass consumer culture in the first half of the twentieth century, or the ideological affiliations that it and its defenders usually promote. It is especially sobering to recall that many postwar American sociologists, flush with exuberant visions of infinite consumer abundance and cold war Manifest Destiny, also declared productive labor, ideological conflict, and Old World nationalism to be rapidly vanishing mirages. And like the work of this earlier generation of false prophets, Bauman's analysis yields a singularly thin description of political life. His rendering of the place of postmodern political agency reads as an unstable compound of Daniel Bell's end of ideology and Marx's fabled withering away of the state under communism. In a postmodern age, Bauman writes,

> responsibility (real or just claimed) for policy shifts away from the state.... It is not taken over by another agent, though. It dissipates; it splits into a plethora of localized or partial policies.... Under the postmodern condition grievances which in the past would cumulate into a collective political process and address themselves to the state stay diffuse and translate into self-reflexivity of agents.

Postmodern culture, similarly, retains no stable focus or centers of authority: It is "a vision of spontaneous process devoid of administrative or managerial centres, free of an overall design and perpetuated by diffusely deployed powers."

One reads such passages and intuitively wonders why any cultural or political agent would bother to act in a social world that promises no more coherent response than his or her own "self-reflexivity." The scrupulous neutrality of speech Bauman seeks to achieve with terms such as "diffuse" and "spontaneous" (let alone "diffusely deployed powers" or "plethora of localized or partial policies") bespeaks something more than the notoriously clumsy experiments with language that afflict much of the debate over postmodernity: It effectively describes a world in which all forms of public activity have ground to a halt. The notion of addressing oneself to an active public—let alone of engaging an opponent in serious political or

cultural argument—becomes another quaint conceit of modernity. The market has already supplanted such activities with the infinitely expanding specter of consumer choice—and more to the point, it has so fragmented public attention that envisioning a shared political sphere is another feeble gesture in the direction of an imagined community, something no more substantial than similar communities of aerobic exercisers or twelve-step recovery patients. Thus this vision of contemporary politics and culture could easily pass as a description of the political philosophy of either Milton Friedman or Jean Beaudrillard: both radically privatized accounts of a social life that has been thoroughly—and for the most part, deliberately—drained of any content.

Just how deliberate this process has been is one of the central themes of Mike Davis's social, cultural, and architectural history of Los Angeles, *City of Quartz*. In a sharp polemical narrative, Davis illustrates how the conditions of postmodernity, far from being spontaneous and diffuse expressions of marketplace choice, arise out of a controlled social environment—and the thorough evacuation of anything resembling a sphere of shared public activity. Los Angeles, of course, was a postmodern metropolis long before any such apparition haunted the American imagination. Even before it acquired its identity as the world's "dream factory," L.A. was already well versed in the proliferation of images. Mythic incarnations of the city's self-image have always bred apace with successive stages in the city's feverish campaigns to consolidate its shaky economic base in the Southern California desert. Indeed, as Davis observes, the first inception of modern L.A. as a Romantic "Mission" settlement for white Protestant exiles from the Midwest bequeathed to future generations of power brokers "an ersatz history which, through its comprehensive incorporation into landscape and consumption, became an actual historical stratum" in the city's material development. The Mission myth also provided the model for the city's aggressive and often brutal campaigns of class and racial segmentation: Eugenic breeding schemes and paeans to the city as a future capital of Aryan civilization proliferated in the shadows of knock-off redtile haciendas and newly planted eucalyptus and citrus groves.

Under the ideological tutelage and open-shop development policies of the Otis-Chandler dynasty at the *Los Angeles Times,* the city's community of exiled Midwestern capital eventually sprouted into a full-fledged power elite. In the process, the city's peculiar will-to-privatization was also powerfully consolidated: By 1930, single-family homes comprised an astonishing 94 percent of the city's housing stock, and the promise of working-class home ownership was a key fixture in the Otis-Chandler vision of the city as a land of "sunshine and industrial freedom."

Meanwhile, the WASP newcomers eagerly bestowed the force of law on the Mission era's politics of racial polarization. When the advent of the film industry brought in a competing Jewish business establishment, the WASP elite erected a thorough system of anti-Semitic social barriers, scrupulously designed to keep capital flowing: Brokerages set aside separate stock pools for Jewish investors during the scandal-ridden oil boom of the 1920s, only to target these same investors for criminal prosecution once the investment scams became public. In a remarkably concerted campaign of residential segregation, neighborhood associations of homeowners—the same groups that provided the infrastructure for Southern California's tax revolt in the 1970s—drew up "restrictive covenants" to prevent blacks from owning property. In full force until 1948, when the Supreme Court ruled them unconstitutional, restrictive covenants provided the social blueprint for a sprawling county-wide megalopolis that now has a black population of 13 percent while 53 of its 82 cities have a black population of less than 1 percent. Simi Valley in neighboring Ventura County, the site of the disgraceful verdict in the King trial, is one such white enclave, with a black population of 1.4 percent, and some 2,000 active and retired members of the LAPD and Sheriff's department.

Through the twin narratives of rampant privatization and racial exclusion, Davis is able to render the dizzying flux of postmodern (or as he puts it, "postliberal") Los Angeles into an intelligible, if not strictly linear, set of social imperatives. Rather than evoking the themes of glitz and anomie favored by most critics of the city, Davis carefully draws the lines of social descent that have produced the tense, barricaded outpost of threatened social privilege that is contemporary L.A. What had been a playground for moneyed middle-brow WASP social fantasies is now a surreal, futuristic study in the militarization of civic space. Entire suburbs—as well as the city's affluent Park La Brea district—are walled off by security fences, while discreet markers planted in thousands of suburban lawns threaten to face down interlopers with the armed response of a private army of security professionals. And in a perverse brand of conspicuous consumption, Westside mansion owners have launched campaigns to obtain "absolute security," cribbing design strategies from American embassies to install "terrorist-proof security rooms" concealed behind sliding panels.

The city's postmodern public architecture arrogantly mimics these armed motifs. Hollywood's Goldwyn Regional Branch Library, built in 1984, sports a fifty-foot high security wall, an exterior flanked by sentry boxes, and a set of anti-graffiti barricades to preserve the façade's glowering antiseptic gleam. And in a harrowing vision of the sort of mixed economy that postmodernity might resolve into, inner-city shopping malls house substations of the LAPD, which provide backup to a panopticon security complex that surrounds shoppers with state-of-the-art video surveillance systems, infrared motion detectors, and round-the-clock security patrols.

The city's long-standing racial obsessions have also entered a new phase of high-tech, paramilitary mobilization. The LAPD has long floated proposals to seal off inner-city streets and monitor passage through them in order to curb the drug trade. Under the none-too-subtle rubric of Operation HAMMER, the LAPD has declared total war on the city's youth gangs—even though by the count of its own Gang-Related Active Trafficker program, active gang-members comprised just 36 percent of arrested dealers in a local crack economy dominated by Colombian cartels. In 1988, the LAPD budget, primed by the first year of Operation HAMMER, topped $400 million—just as the City Council approved its first meager program to create 100 jobs for inner-city teenagers, budgeted at $500,000.

Against such a background, the riots that followed upon the Rodney King verdict appear as a tragic playing out of deeply entrenched historical forces. And indeed, the whole narrative of the King beating and trial closely followed the city's social and racial topography, from the trial's relocation to Simi Valley to the staggeringly anemic LAPD response to the first outbreaks of violence in South Central L.A. The video images of white motorists dragged from cars and assaulted at South Central intersections provided an unsettling sort of reversed negative to the videotape of King's beating in San Fernando Valley. The tacit message of both was that being the wrong race in the wrong place is an offense punishable by vigilante assault. (Variations of this theme appeared in the Koreatown neighborhood, off the thoroughfare of Wilshire Boulevard, where Korean shopowners tried to fend off looters with rifle fire.) The police response to the riots—bolstered by 750 members of the California Highway Patrol, some 2,000 National Guardsmen, and 4,000 Army troops—finally made its presence known when the violence threatened to erupt beyond the borders of South Central L.A. into largely white settlements such as Westwood, Santa Monica, and the San Fernando Valley.

These patterns of enforcement—together with the complacency that prevented the LAPD from anticipating any such response to the King verdict in the first place—are but heightened testimony to the kind of stark confrontations of race and privilege already embedded in the city's landscape and architecture. Similarly, the jury verdict itself is but a distillation of the racial animus in a criminal justice system that could have Police Chief Daryl Gates explaining a rash of chokehold deaths in 1988 among black suspects detained by the LAPD on the grounds that "in some blacks when [the carotid chokehold] is applied, the veins or arteries do not open up as fast as they do on normal [sic] people."

L.A.'s recent racial hostilities serve as a powerful reminder that core questions of justice and democratic politics still lurk beneath the unruffled veneer of weightless consumer choice that is the public face of postmodernity. Even if we accept the proposition that the consumer market is an unalloyed social good, access to it is ultimately governed by the distribution of wealth, a social condition that has become far more coercive and less fluid during the last decade's passage into the postmodern. L.A.'s evolution into a city laid under siege by its own relentless drive to subdivide and conquer captures the logic of these basic disparities in its most extreme form. But as in so many other realms of American life, L.A.'s experience is a harbinger of larger, nationwide ills rather than an isolated, sun-drenched social pathology.

The notion that people can achieve spontaneous pluralist cultural self-definition in such an environment is close to parody. Los Angeles's asphyxiated public sphere is no more a costly amusement of a cosmopolitan consumer culture than its perennial curtain of smog is a tanning accessory. It is, rather, a peculiarly brutal expression of a social world whose worst injustices we have come merely to take for granted—or worse, to trivialize as ironic, postmodern spectacles. *City of Quartz* insistently dissects the kind of social arrangements we tacitly endorse when we hail the decline of productive labor or the tidal onrush of the global market. And it reminds us that as long as we continue to celebrate postmodernity with this kind of unqualified wishful thinking, we invite the same social impulses that have sent the public world of Los Angeles rushing blindly into the abyss, singing odes to its freedom all the way down. □

BOOK REVIEW

Political Science

Adam Goldgeier

The Descent of Icarus: Science and the Transformation of Contemporary Democracy by Yaron Ezrahi. Harvard University Press, 1990, 347 pp.

What is knowledge worth in a modern democracy? At a recent meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Princeton University President Harold Shapiro raised the question of its universal value in our time. "Will society continue to value the products of the mind? Will knowledge still be considered a force for good?"

The answer to the latter question appears to be a qualified "yes"—though the weight of the qualification is enough to empty the question of its meaning. Whose knowledge are we talking about, after all, in an age in which we understand knowledge to be not universal and transparent, but socially and culturally contingent? When Shapiro says "knowledge," he means something like "knowledge for its own sake," a category that would be rigorously challenged on most university campuses. Furthermore, whose "good" is assumed here? Considered "good" by whom? Is there an agreed-upon public definition of the good, or only competing private notions?

Yaron Ezrahi makes an indispensable contribution to the understanding of this dizzying postmodern epistemological and political phenomenon in *The Descent of Icarus: Science and the Transformation of Contemporary Democracy.* The book focuses on the precarious nature of democracy's self-legitimization, that is, what gives a democratically elected government the right to coerce its free citizens. Ezrahi's argument is simple, even if its many angles are, emphatically, not.

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Since the Renaissance's first lurches away from monarchy, Ezrahi argues, science has provided modern democracy with a language to legitimize itself. The emerging nation-state embraced science's imputed impartiality and universality, as well as its empirical, visual methodology, in order to establish a new and reliable authority for state action and accountability. Democracy, as Jefferson said, meant "the science of government," an "experiment," and required those with the best demonstrable results to administer it.

Furthermore, science's "instrumental paradigm of action," with its emphasis on observable cause and effect, played the role of the ideal rational referee between the autonomy of the individual citizen and his or her constraint in a liberal-democratic social order. One of the great, if dense, pleasures of this book is Ezrahi's account of the extraordinary political ingenuity with which "political actors" across time and borders have exploited science's claims of impartiality and rationality in order to stave off anarchy on the one hand and autocracy on the other.

For two centuries, Ezrahi argues, democracy attempted to fly on the back of science toward "spheres where collective human existence is free from chance, prejudice, and arbitrariness." But now, confident Daedalus has himself turned out to be a falling Icarus. We now understand science to be rife with ideology and Heisenbergian uncertainty. Furthermore, in the age of Love Canal, Stanley Kubrick's HAL, and Chernobyl, the machine—once a useful political metaphor for discipline and equilibrium—has become "an icon of social excess ... of blind powers running wild." The resulting decline of faith in science's impartiality leaves liberal democracy stripped of one of its most important (though not only) legitimizing tools. Interestingly, Ezrahi refuses to call this loss of the language of impartial reason a crisis, although he warns of the dangers of a catastrophic splash into a new era of fundamentalist or blood-and-soil politics. Rather, in the decline of the partnership between politics and science, he sees opportunities for the extension of democratic ideals.

There are two dominant traditions in thinking about the relationship between politics and science. The first sets itself against monarchic, class-based, and other inherited claims to authority, and hails science as the great rational alternative. In the words of John Dewey, "the operation of cooperative intelligence as displayed in science [is] a working model for the union of freedom and authority [in the] political as well as other spheres." The second, more contemporary tradition, best embodied by the grim predictions of Herbert Marcuse, sees scientific rationality as an unstoppable juggernaut, crushing human freedom, moral choice, and diversity.

Ezrahi approaches the question of science and democracy differently. His goal is not to be an advocate of any kind, but rather to explore science as a cultural resource for the construction of politics. What interests him is how science can be understood as "a cluster of symbols, languages, orientations, institutions and practices, of ways of seeing, describing and judging experience."

The book is divided into three parts. The first begins by examining the many ways the scientific ideal has upheld instrumental paradigms of public action in liberal democracies. Science supplies "rational persuasion" and meritocracy as rhetorical tools the state can then use to justify its authority, and through which it can depersonalize political power. Simply, citizens are now able to hold political actors accountable through the visible results of their actions. In democratic society, which is highly politicized, instrumentalism supplies—supposedly—a neutral authority.

Anthropologist Mary Douglas talks of "doom points" in her work on risk and danger. A doom point is a rhetorical trump card that cultures and their leaders invoke to end discussion by appeal to some incontrovertible law, usually God, nature, money, or time. In liberal democracy, however, science comes to us dressed up as nature itself, and in Ezrahi's account, has thus ascended as the court of final appeal.

The evidence one may present in such a court, Ezrahi goes on to explain, is only that which is visible, that is, empirically verifiable. In contrast to what he calls the "celebratory" code that marks the Catholic Church or royalty, which rely on awesome aesthetic aggrandizement and theatrical mystification, our positivist political tradition gives homage to results seen in plain sight, fully exposed under the gaze of the polity's citizens (or what Ezrahi calls citizen-witnesses). This trust in the eye over the wiles of the tongue is suggested by the inscription on the coat of arms of that venerable British scientific organization, the Royal Society—*Nullius in Verba*—("Not in words") and by the visual metaphor of "the Enlightenment" itself. The political world, so the advocates of the scientific spirit hoped, could now be measured by the same standards as the natural world.

Ezrahi is quick to point out the self-delusions required to sustain this rationalist myth. Such "naive realism" prefers to ignore liberal democracy's own forms of theatricality and celebratory rituals, its appeals to tradition, mythic origins, utopian futures. And political problems, as Bertrand de Jouvenel said, aren't "solved," as natural conundrums are; they are settled.

Along with science came the scientific "spirit," with its skepticism and demand for empirical proof and methodological precision. The second part of the book focuses more closely on the pragmatics of this historical shift from "credulous celebratory" faith in political actors to what Ezrahi somewhat awkwardly calls "skeptical attestive visual orientations toward political authority."

> Just as the new chemists forced the alchemists to subject their claims to public tests, so modern liberal-democratic political ideologues have enlisted materialistic and instrumental notions of political action to render political authority dependent upon action open to public observation and judgment.

The truth, if it be truth, must be plainly seen. Only then should citizens obey their leaders. Ezrahi demonstrates why the integration of science and technology into voluntaristic conceptions of public action found a more receptive audience in America than in England, with its inherited deference to class authority. In an excellent discussion of American aesthetics, particularly industrial aesthetics, Ezrahi emphasizes a national preference for laying bare the functionality of machines—whether mechanical or political. Just as a thresher or steam engine's form should fit its function free of adornment ("deformity," in Emerson's words), America has preferred a politics whose visible manifestations of action transparently represent its intentions.

America's peculiar fit of science and technology to politics produced a distinctly decentralized civic order. The citizen, rather than the expert, became the arbiter of knowledge, and his or her "experimental intelligence" (Dewey's term) linked state authority to individual freedom. This is quite unlike Emile Durkheim's centralizing variant of this relationship, in which Science demonstrates truth to the populace. But in both cases, recourse to the scientific ideal has allowed the state to replace sheer force with a more subtle "rational acknowledgment of restraint imposed by facts" as a strategy for managing democratic society.

This shared deference to impartiality, Ezrahi says in the third part of the book, is exactly what is falling apart in our time. His is a new angle on a familiar problem—the breakdown of shared metanarratives, those large historical stories that help us make sense of disparate events—that philosopher Jean-François Lyotard and other postmodern theorists have outlined throughout the eighties. Ezrahi describes these transformations as follows:

> a decline in the belief that science confirms that the "world" is an observable object and that seeing is a public act of knowing, that scientific knowledge mirrors objective reality uninfluenced by the interests, theories and ideologies that scientists "bring with them," or, to put it differently, that there is—or could be—such a thing as determinate, objective, ultimately true representations of the world.

So, Ezrahi goes on to say, the public's authority to judge political actors is threatened by a combination of factors:

> ... the subtle and pernicious implications of a spreading belief in the primacy of the subjective point of view, a growing distrust in the possibility of objective documentary pictures of reality, and by the values of late-twentieth-century variants of insular individualism, which undermines citizens' faith in the very possibility that individual witnesses can agree on what they see or that individual testimonies tend to converge in producing the same version of the world.

With this declining faith comes some familiar behavior, namely, political styles that rely on performative gestures and strategic ambiguity rather than appeals to substantive, verifiable results. Thus the upsurge in "hot-button" sloganeering around the NEA and flag-burning, a somnambulent president who is an actor, and Bush's execrable claim to be the environmental and education president. Ezrahi grounds these often-excoriated behaviors not in venality, but in democracy's demands for "pluralistic equilibrium"—the tenuous balance between competing interests that defines politics in this age of new epistemological norms.

A third result of this decline in faith, Ezrahi suggests, is a characteristically American suspicion of allegedly rational, comprehensive changes programmed from the center. Ezrahi intimates that the Reagan-era dismantling of social activism stems from a justifiable doubt about, first, what can be known, and second, what can be accomplished by political actors. Science now insists that we do not merely observe nature but create it by interacting with it, and society consists of incongruent versions of truth and the public good; the government has therefore limited itself to mediating between competing interests. Where the Enlightenment considered freedom manifest in an engineered idea of order, now it is manifest in "benign disorder."

This "new humility" in both science and politics, this downscaling of expectations from optimal development to satisfactory political "management" (the business metaphor is crucial, since science has been undergoing radical privatization in the last twelve years), represents the demise of both interventionist utopianism and the scientific-rationalist ideal. Indeed, it had to happen; the actual rationality of democratic life never approached that of its rationalist models. The hopes of post–World War II technological culture were obviously too high.

What bonds, then, now tie democracy together? Are there any common standards of authority and accountability? What are the limits on individual autonomy? The public citizen that the scientific ideal sustained over the course of two hundred years no longer balances out the contemporary notion of the enterprising private self. What will step into the gap? Ezrahi doesn't hazard to answer this question, observing only that "what levels political authority is no longer knowledge but admission of shared ignorance."

This argument may be a misrepresentation of the neoconservative "revolution" of the eighties (it can certainly be used to whitewash it). I, for one, cannot recall the White House consistently citing "shared ignorance" as a justification for massive cutbacks in social programs. Reaganomics came out of specific theories of deregulation and the free market based on "empirical" knowledge. Appeal to the mechanisms of the market is not quite the same thing as throwing up one's hands. And loss of faith in social activism does not amount to loss of faith in the manipulation of knowledge toward desired ends. As Andrew Ross points out in another recent and important book, *Strange Weather: Culture, Science and Technology in the Age of Limits,* money is closer to a "doom point" than science is:

> Technocracy has ... been dealt a hand in the power structure of capitalism (which is increasingly dependent on science-based industry), while its efficiency logic has come to prevail over the scientific management of everyday life. The systematic effects of this social engineering have been widespread.... Despite nominal appeals to rationality and progress, however, the gospel of the profit margin remains a more powerful doctrine than the gospel of efficiency. Capitalist reason, not technical reason, is still the order of the day.

If Ezrahi's book has any shortcomings, they derive from the fact that he underestimates the role of capitalist efficiency in the historical development of scientific efficiency.

Certainly such a consideration would have enriched Ezrahi's already revealing discussion of the impact of the privatization of science in the eighties. Ezrahi outlines how the partnership of public agencies with science and technology toward the advancement of the public good—once a structuring rhetoric of American society—has been replaced by a partnership of *business* with science and technology for private profit—a change that is rationalized as then

producing public good. Ezrahi focuses his attention squarely on the transformation of the notions of public and private inside the national polity from "civic individualism" to "private individualism." This observation is certainly right. But surely one of the most important historical developments of the last twenty years is privatization on a different scale: namely, the emergence of an almost spectral flow of global capital that often eludes public accountability and indeed reconfigures political authority both within and across national borders. Surely this warrants an analysis of transformed democratic loyalties in a world of increasingly fluid global capital (David Harvey's "flexible accumulation," which he forcefully posits as the material basis of postmodern culture).

The book ends on a curiously upbeat note, countering received wisdom in Left circles that a blood-and-soil (or aesthetic) foundation of politics means an inevitable descent into fascism. Ezrahi suggests that the exploitation of aesthetic sensibilities by political leaders doesn't necessarily have to celebrate authoritarian rule. Perhaps America will "develop a politics where the beautiful serves democratic ends." Perhaps politics and science, shorn of their centuries-old and mutually supporting illusions, will both have to face their internal limits.

Given Ezrahi's comprehensive familiarity with those limits, some speculation on a revitalized democratic ideology would have been welcome. What resistance will a resurgence of democracy find in a population not of citizen-witnesses, but of citizen-spectators each watching (or video-interacting with, or producing in virtual reality) his or her own private spectacle? What makes Ezrahi think "the beautiful" is any more available as a broad, cross-factional political category than is scientific instrumentality? If the beautiful is more and more the province of the profit-driven culture industry, and the moral is, for the moment, increasingly seen as the private domain of interest and ethnic groups, how will either the aesthetic or the moral be courts of common appeal?

Perhaps it is a good thing that the language of political "solutions" has left our collective vocabulary, and we retreat back to the messier human language of settlement and negotiation; perhaps it is a good thing to allow that the aesthetic and moral will forever be on the table with whatever other quotidian issues may be at hand. But if vigilance was the price of democracy in the age of Daedalus ascending, then something like an exhausting supervigilance seems to be our task in the age of Icarus descending. □

BOOK REVIEW

The Pleasures of Bad Taste

Stuart Klawans

Bridge of Light: Yiddish Film Between Two Worlds by J. Hoberman. The Museum of Modern Art, New York/ Schocken Books, 1992, 401 pp.

The filmgoers at New York's Museum of Modern Art stir restlessly in the dark, muttering non sequiturs to each other (or talking to themselves) like unquiet ghosts transfixed by the flickering light. The museum's staff calls them Friends of Old Films—the FOOFs. Of late, these shadowy, subterranean creatures seem to have aged. They are quicker than ever to sing along with any familiar tune that comes from the screen; their interpolated comments now emerge in a phantom tongue. If these are ghosts, they're Jewish ones, summoned into the theater by a retrospective of Yiddish films.

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They aren't here to make aesthetic judgments. Unlike the usual FOOFs, these Yiddishists will sit through anything. Patiently, they watch the surviving footage of an old Russian exploitation picture, *Fun Yidishn Leben* (From Jewish life), which apparently was slapped together sometime before World War I, not for a Jewish audience but for gentiles seeking the thrill of the exotic. In 1925, a Jewish writer happened upon *Fun Yidishn Leben* and declared it "an old *shmate* ... a story with a musician, a servant, and a bourgeois son, with a *shtikl pogrom* [a bit of a pogrom] thrown in for good measure." The critic was appalled that Jews could be enticed to watch such crap.

In 1992, I'm not appalled but impressed. A typical MoMA audience would riot if confronted with these odds and ends, shown without music or intertitles. But this film, though untouched by anything else that's Jewish, has a Yiddish name. That was good enough in 1925, and it seems to be good enough now.

To attend a screening of a Yiddish film—or to open *Bridge of Light,* the admirable new book on the topic by *Village Voice* critic J. Hoberman—is to sense the limits of good taste. Not that those limits haven't been tested before. James Joyce so loved the word that he gave us his own rebegettings of romance novels and newspaper ads, raised to the level of Homer. Later on, the camp artists, representatives of a hidden and persecuted subculture, challenged aesthetic assumptions for a different reason, inverting the standards of taste, rather than transcending them. And some recent advocates of political art have gone so far as to try banishing taste altogether, claiming that power is all and aesthetics nothing.

Yiddish films prompt all of these responses. Even the tackiest production

once held out a promise of redemption to the audience by virtue of its mere existence. "The flow of Yiddish movies was rarely sustained," Hoberman writes; "each release was something of an event." And so, as if to confirm the miracle, Yiddish films perpetually paid homage to the higher forces that had enabled them to come into being—God's love for Israel, or the strength of the Jewish family, or the liberated genius of the Soviet workers. Yiddish films might also be seen as an underground culture—the repressed side of Hollywood's Jewish moguls, whose de-Jewed products were coming to dominate world cinema. At rare but telling moments, the repressed material would burst into view, producing full-blown Jewish camp—as Hoberman notes, though in different terms, in his comments on *The Jazz Singer.* As for the appeal of politics over aesthetics, history in this case has been only too persuasive. The Holocaust, Hoberman observes, "retrospectively transmutes every scrap of Yiddish footage into a precious artifact."

So Yiddish films may transcend or invert or obliterate the standards of taste; but, more specifically, they confound all standards. Consider the American-made *Tsvey Shvester* (Two sisters), a vehicle for stage star Jennie Goldstein, which opened in November 1938 "and was extensively panned by the English-language press." Hoberman, awestruck at this eighteen-handkerchief jaw-dropper, cannot confine his synopsis to fewer than two pages. With his tone gradually taking on some of the film's hysteria, he chronicles mother domination, sibling rivalry, sexual betrayal, and not-so-covert incest anxiety, yet in the end cannot determine whether Goldstein's long-suffering character is meant to seem a saint or a monster. So flabbergasted does Hoberman become—and with good reason; you have to see this picture to believe it—that he adds a footnote, appealing to Northrop Frye to help decide whether *Tsvey Shvester* is a comedy or a tragedy. Frye answers, in effect, "Go figure."

All this about a film that fits nicely into the chapter called *Shund*: "Trash." The better class of Yiddish film is equally adept at baffling judgment. Joseph Green's *Yidl mitn Fidl* (Yiddle with his fiddle, 1936), one of the most popular of Yiddish films, reaches its climax when Molly Picon blunders into stardom on the Warsaw stage. She "falls into the pit," writes Hoberman, "scrambles about, speaks directly to the crowd, sings, soliloquizes," jokes, bursts into tears—and makes you wonder why the audience would greet such a performance with applause, rather than calling for a physician.

"The nauseating sediment of pathetic kitsch," wrote one gentile reviewer, when *Der Dibek* (The dybbuk), Michal Waszynski's version of the stage classic, opened in Warsaw in 1937. Though harsh, blinkered, and almost certainly anti-Semitic, this reviewer might have been correct, had she been describing not *Der Dibek* but Yiddish film in general.

Apart from *Der Dibek* and *Yidl mitn Fidl,* only a handful of Yiddish pictures hold up on their own merits. The list certainly would include Edgar G. Ulmer's 1937 shtetl pastoral, *Grine Felder* (Green fields); Sidney Goldin's 1930 labor drama *Uncle Moses*; and the 1932 *Nosn Beker Fort Aheym* (The return of Nathan Becker), the only Soviet-made Yiddish talkie, directed by Boris Shpis and Rokhl M. Milman. (*Nosn Beker* was one of the highlights of the Museum of Modern Art series, which Hoberman helped organize; in his book, he does full justice to the film and to its star, Solomon Mikhoels, the extraordinary character actor from Alexander Granovsky's Moscow-based Yiddish theater, GOSET.) I should mention as well Granovsky's 1925 *Jewish Luck,* based on stories by Sholem Aleichem and also starring Mikhoels; Aleksander Ford's 1935 *Mir Kumen On* (We're on our way), a staged documentary about a children's sanatorium outside Warsaw, run by the Jewish Labor Bund; and Edgar G. Ulmer's 1939 *Di Klyatshe* (The light ahead), which recasts the healthy, idyllic shtetl of *Grine Felder* into a place of poverty, disease, and superstition. Those are the best. Stray beyond them, and you soon find yourself among curiosities, historical debris, botches of the sort that film addicts call "interesting," all manner of *shund.*

Nathaniel Buchwald, the respected culture editor of New York's left-wing *Morgn Frayhayt* newspaper, was even stricter in his judgment. In 1940, he accused virtually all Yiddish films of being spoiled by the "vulgar pranks of the cheap Yiddish theater." If so, then why would Hoberman choose to apply his formidable critical intelligence to a third-rate cinema? Why did he bother to amass every shred of information he could find on Yiddish film, and (for the sake of context) steep himself in the social, cultural, and political history of *Yiddishland?* Why, for that matter, did I seek out the *shundiest* movies I could get at MoMA, the ones that would seem to appeal only to Jewish coziness and nostalgia—the despicable cult of *Fiddler-on-the-Roof*ism? Granted, it has long been axiomatic that a really bad movie can be more revelatory than a good one—just as a disguise, if it's thin enough, does not so much hide the wearer's features as emphasize them. On that level I could defend Yiddish *shund* by pointing to its interest as ethnography or psychodrama. The same argument might excuse two hours spent at a bad old Spanish movie. And yet, a Sarita Montiel vehicle reveals pretty much what you'd expect. A Jenny Goldstein vehicle reveals—what?

As you watch the torrents of conflicting emotion clash on the screen, your own reactions are held in suspense, much as they would be in certain "classic" films. I'm thinking, for example, of Jean Renoir's *The Golden Coach* in which, by the end, you no longer know what to feel. But that's because Renoir and his star Anna Magnani have reached such a high level of artistry. The film *Tsvey Shvester* reaches a very low one—and yet the effect is disconcertingly similar.

It's time, I think, to look more closely at the particular form of badness that's endemic to Yiddish film, the badness that can stun all judgment.

Hoberman takes his book's subtitle from the original Yiddish name of Sh. An-sky's *Der Dibek: Tsvishn Tsvey Veltn.* If there is a master theme in Yiddish cinema, it is that sense of in-betweenness.

On one side is the world of tradition, as practiced in Russia's Pale of Settlement. The evolution of Jewish life there was sufficiently slow and steady as not to seem like change at all—especially in hindsight, when the Jews of the Pale found themselves dumped into modernity. This second world could take many forms: the Palestine that existed in the Zionists' heads, the workers' state imagined by socialists, or the golden land of America (on the evidence of certain films, a place where Jewish men must have been given a shave and a tuxedo immediately upon debarkation).

But no matter their image of the



Der Dibek, *Michal Waszynski's 1937 drama of love and spiritual possession, vividly captures a Jewish world caught between its troubled past and an uncertain future.*

modern world, Jews in increasing numbers found themselves headed for it, like it or not. As Hoberman notes, between the assassination of Czar Alexander II in 1881 and the outbreak of World War I, one-third of Russia's Jews left their homes. Further mass migrations followed, as the result of war, the Bolshevik revolution, and the Nazis' rise to power; and there were relocations within the new Soviet state as well. So the history of Yiddish cinema is also the history of European and American Jews during a relatively brief but eventful epoch. It's the history of a people caught between a past they imagined to have been timeless and unitary and a present that could seem both alluring and threatening.

On every level, Yiddish film reflects this dilemma, starting with the language itself. Yiddish, Hoberman writes, "is neither entirely respectful nor altogether respectable. For religious Jews, it is the language of the secular world; for the 'enlightened,' the signifier of Jewish insularity." The writers, directors, and actors were caught in a similar bind. In many cases, they had to remake themselves before they could create theater or film in Yiddish. In 1921, for example, Molly Picon went on a tour of Austria and points east in order to lose her Lower East Side mannerisms, improve her Yiddish, and return to Second Avenue billed as a European star. The producers of Yiddish films were in no less uncertain a position. They were an oxymoronic lot, according to Hoberman—"a unique mixture of naive businessmen and opportunistic idealists"—many of whom lasted in the film trade just long enough to make a single picture.

Little wonder, then, that in terms of theme, Yiddish film should forever be neither here nor there. You find a lot of cantor's-son stories. (*The Jazz Singer* is merely the best known, and least Yiddish, example.) You find a lot of anguished Old World parents whose children are lost, figuratively or otherwise, in the New; and a lot of New World children who seem to wish their parents would get lost. (Here the best example might be Joseph Green's 1939 *A Brivele der Mamen* [A little letter to mother]. It belongs to an exclusively Jewish genre, in which a woman takes on suffering the way a Russian weightlifter handles the barbells.) In this context, *Der Dibek,* though an exceptional production, really is the quintessential Yiddish film. No other picture suspends you so terribly between two worlds.

In the 1930s, as Hoberman notes, Jews in the United States could choose to act out their ambivalence about tradition and modernity. Jews in the Soviet Union and Poland had no such luxury. Within Soviet territory, assimilation was required. Within Poland, it had become impossible. Official anti-Semitism had thrown Jews back on themselves with a brutality that hinted at worse to come. So you can watch *Der Dibek* as a story about once-upon-a-time; or you can see it as the product of 1937 Warsaw, where modern Jews, more and more estranged from the gentile world, found themselves looking back on their grandparents' folklore.

They saw a dewy young maiden drained of life by a moribund tradition. In *Der Dibek,* a man allows worldly interests to frustrate the marriage that heaven had ordained for his daughter. The rejected suitor—a ringleted rabbinical student—therefore turns in despair to the occult; he dies, and his spirit takes up residence in the young woman's body. Perhaps, if the world had not interfered, he would have brought joy to the maiden. (He's played by the virile and charming Leon Liebgold.) But the world's interference seems to be a given in this film. The whole village is "a sort of cemetery," Hoberman writes—"the 'holy grave' in the town marketplace memorializes a bride and groom murdered under the *khupe* by Khmielnitsky's Cossacks 200 years before." In fact, the film's marriage ceremony turns into a dance of death.

No doubt the rabbinical ghost, by claiming his bride from the wrong side of the grave, has become a spiritual parasite; but that's what he would have been in life as well. To the "enlightened" Jew, this wandering *yeshiva bucher* would represent superstition; to the Zionists and Communists and Bundists, he would be the perfect *luftmensch,* the unproductive shtetl Jew who ought to have been a worker. And the worst thing would be that you can't get rid of him. He does depart at the end of *Der Dibek*—taking the bride's life as he goes. But he doesn't leave until threatened with excommunication. In other words, he only *seems* to go. He will remain part of the community forever.

For the young bride—and for the Jews of Poland—there could be no escape. The shtetl provided no refuge, and the modern world was murderous. *Der Dibek* is remarkable for the poignancy with which it dramatizes this dilemma; but it is not unique. Other, less "artistic" films addressed the same problem, sometimes with

bathos, sometimes with knockabout humor, often with a mixture of the two. And often, in this in-between realm, you can't tell whether to laugh or cry or scream. Yiddish cinema is a haunted house. You enter, and for a while it turns you into a ghost as well. No wonder aesthetic judgments are so hard to make. Ghosts are notoriously unsettled personalities.

Bridge of Light, like the MoMA series, owes a lot to the efforts of the National Center for Jewish Film at Brandeis University. The Center provided prints for the series and extensive research materials for the book. Given the fragility of films in general, and of Yiddish films in particular—a good many of the pictures Hoberman discusses have been lost—I almost prefer the book to the experience of seeing the movies. The book is complete; the series couldn't be.

Perhaps the burden of completeness weighed too heavily on Hoberman. I marveled at the depth of his research in *Bridge of Light,* but sometimes missed the wit of his best writing. (For a full measure of that, you'd have to turn to his recent collection of articles and reviews, *Vulgar Modernism,* published by Temple University Press.) Still, as both a labor of love and a work of scholarship, *Bridge of Light* is highly impressive. I imagine people will rely on it for many years to come, to satisfy a curiosity the book itself will help to create. Thanks to the Center and MoMA and Hoberman, Yiddish films will have a chance to remain in view, to keep audiences good and baffled. □

DIETS

(Continued from p. 28)

nutrition-conscious people are invited to participate, not just those interested in losing weight. Some people work in soup kitchens; others offer a pound of food for every pound lost; others donate food on a regular basis in honor of their own diet. Dieters are encouraged to find their own specific way to link their own diet with acts of generosity and giving. For many people, the act of writing a check is a quick escape from confronting the underlying issues, whereas hands-on involvement in feeding others has a deeper and more immediate meaning. Putting aside a can of tuna fish or a jar of peanut butter every day, bringing a certain amount of food to a soup kitchen in honor of losing or maintaining weight, or spending time making casseroles that will be given to the hungry are activities that give a sense of intimacy to nourishing others.

Feeding the hungry is one example of a way to address some of the deprivation of meaning that we face in contemporary society. Ultimately, of course, we need deeper changes—changes that would eliminate hunger and homelessness, create meaningful work, and encourage loving relationships, as well as changes that would promote cooperation and caring. A few hours a month in a soup kitchen or donating several boxes of cereal or raisins to a local food bank are not meant as a substitute for these larger changes, but can nevertheless give people a crucial sense of empowerment and community participation.

The best hopes for healthy living ultimately lie in these larger changes. Yet, to many people these fundamental structural changes seem unattainable; as a result, they have scaled down their expectations. Perhaps we can take an important intermediate step when we understand the links between the changes we wish to make in our own bodies and the changes that need to take place in the society around us. Diets will work more effectively when they are linked to a life in which we are filling our inner hunger by acting to bring more food, hope, caring, and love into the world. □

LIGHT OF THIS WORLD

(Continued from p. 36)

hidden in a jewelry box, and she has shown Ivan the odd-colored uniform, the grinning doomed boy, his cap angled so jauntily it must have fallen the moment the shutter snapped. She tells him how Leon Pitski had been kind in her misery and how one thing led to another. Mistakes had been made, God knew, but out of it she had been blessed—Ivan, her son, was all that mattered now.

At times Ivan dozes, or feels he must have. As his mother drinks the sweet wine, as she praises and scolds Carlotta about the food, Ivan withdraws behind open eyes, dreams out at the world while he moves far inside himself, finds a quiet place and sleeps.

After dinner, while Carlotta cleans, there is music, and dancing, Ivan pressed hard into his mother, in among the scents and powders and smells of food and wine, and she makes him lead, though he's never been shown how, tells him he is as fine a dancer as Edgar Atkins, who was known for his dancing. But soon she is weary, tear-sodden, and Ivan and Carlotta help her upstairs, undress her, and she is crying, calling for Ivan. He hesitates at the foot of the bed, a shoe in his hand, or a skirt, but Carlotta nudges him, "Go on, sugar," and he goes to her, strokes her hair but that isn't enough so he climbs into the bed as Carlotta closes the door and leaves. He lies with her as she sings, whispers in his ear, while outside, the sun moves slowly behind the trees or rain shifts against the side of the house or snow silently blankets the garage tops across the yard, and Ivan waits there, dreaming.

Leibowitz, Arnold was already in detention when the other boys arrived. He sprawled backward, mouth open, emitting sounds. He gave every indication that the slamming doors and rough orders Rabbi Klaperman dispersed were seriously disrupting his slumber. He gurgled and harrumphed, he shifted uncomfortably in his seat, he smacked his lips and yawned like a cat. When Rabbi Klaperman ungently snagged his shoulder, he came alive with sham eagerness and poked deep into his book. The look he turned on David and Ivan as they found seats was sly and amused and full of casual disregard.

Arnold, in the eighth grade, is two years ahead of the other boys, though by the calendar he should have been in high school long ago. He hangs around, as he sees it, to advance his legend. And in the schoolboy mythology of the Mid-Queens Hebrew Day School, no legends rival Arnold Leibowitz.

His vocation is spitting. He is credited with singlehandedly driving a substitute teacher, Mrs. Hannah Corn, into early retirement by inclining his head and spitting high into the air, over and over, catching the downward gob on his outstretched tongue until the poor woman ran from the classroom forever. On a windy day one November, from the window of Rabbi Mermelstein's Talmud class, Arnold Leibowitz, after several tries, cleared the chain-link schoolyard fence and half the backyard across it, to land a direct hit on a pair of red quilted long johns hanging in the sun to dry. Sammy Gould, the math genius, computed this to be a distance of sixty-two feet, allowing for the sway of the long johns in the breeze. He can hit a doorknob at twenty feet, loose volleys that slalom in mid-flight to land smartly on your neck, the top of your head, and in the hall between classes, he lets fly random warning shots above the crowd, and everyone goes silent and watches him coming. Arnold has no friends, or need of any; the merest rolling of his cheeks is enough to send most boys, certainly little shits like Nachman and Pitski, scurrying for cover.

David slouched into the room, affecting an expression of hardened boredom, and gave Arnold what he hoped looked like a knowing nod. Arnold ignored him. David chose a seat several rows behind Arnold. Ivan followed, was about to sit, when David extended his brown loafers and said, with sudden violence, "Back off, Zitski." This roused some of Arnold's attention. He gave a bare titter and mugged at his book. Ivan backed a couple of chairs away and Rabbi Klaperman said, "Feet off the furniture if it's not too much trouble, Professor Nachman."

David Nachman is aggrieved, put upon, a boy who carries anger like a stone in his pocket to caress. His trial is of identity, as he sees it. His grandfather is a founder of the school and his uncle chairs the board of trustees. They appear at various functions, sit onstage at graduation, and their pictures adorn the hallway leading to the principal's office. David is reminded of them constantly —his successes reflect their glory, his failures blot the family name. They are distant men, involved in the world of adult affairs, and David hates them with a furious passion—the big shots, the know-it-alls—and is determined to make a name for himself, if not the one they expect. He has plans for a vivid future in which he'll pay them all back by becoming a Communist or a Christian or maybe even an Arab. Meanwhile, he baffles the local geneticists: smoking cigarettes on the school roof until the horizon of apartment buildings cants in yellow haze; sneaking out of morning prayer to chalk precise transliterations of curse words on the boards in Hebrew; staying late each day to drop a single holy book out a window onto the heads of the teachers and children queuing up on 150th Street for the schoolbuses home. Today, when he was accused of cheating in Math—with Ivan Pitski, of all people—David put on such a display of outrage and felt such smarting sympathy for himself that he has now forgotten entirely that he *was* cheating, but so what?, never with Pitski, never in a million years with Pitski. They hadn't exchanged ten words in ten years and then suddenly Ivan sidles up at the detention room door with a look on, limpid, hopeful—a look, unmistakably, of love—and David is frightened, unbalanced, and he deflects the look with such fierce unfriendliness he can feel it changing his face.

Ivan had been watching David Nachman all morning. Mrs. Green, the math teacher, patrolled the aisles and stooped occasionally over students to deliver discouraging noises. The test was multiplication, which Ivan knew, but he had not studied and did not open his exam book. Instead, he watched David Nachman. He watched as David pulled yellow pieces of paper from his sleeves, his pockets, his shoes, and with expressions alternately furtive and triumphant, copied into his book. Once Mrs. Green stopped behind Ivan and tapped his arm, but he stared at her through his thick lenses with such imperturbable disregard that she shrugged and walked on.

A miracle had occurred, though no one knew of it except Ivan. In two days he had not slept, had barely eaten, and he felt he even moved differently, as if drawn in his motions by a new gravity.

It was Monday, during recess, when the boys of the sixth grade convened to abuse Ivan about his mother. This was a regular event, ritual to most of them, and Ivan stood against the wall and said nothing, as he always did. Recently, when Leon had been out of town unusually

long, Ivan's mother had driven to school upset, and though he knew the boys couldn't smell the wine, they could see the torn housecoat, poorly tied. She had opened the car door and called to him and as she did the housecoat fell, showing the eager boys swatches of thigh and white brassiere, and giving them fuel to torment Ivan for months. They asked if he liked to French his mother, if he had seen her titties. They asked if Ivan and Mommy slept in the same bed while Daddy was in Manhattan with his floozie. They reproached him with all the lurid fantasies imagination and ignorance could conjure.

This day, Perry Gruber, who fancied himself the expert on all matters sexual or illicit—and by rights, therefore, Ivan's chief abuser—inquired if they "did it," Ivan and his mom, how often a night and how many different ways. Did they do it camel fashion, Perry wondered, or doggie, and had they tried Japanese? Perry was a tall boy, with a thick upper lip which he pulled at with two fingers. His sad secret was his total ignorance of "doing it" any way at all, a fact he cleverly concealed by talking about sex all the time, with the vigor and obscure terminology of the connoisseur. It was probably Japanese, Perry explained to the boys, because of the way his mother walked. You could see it in her walk plain as day, Perry said, that she liked Ivan to do it to her Japanese.

David Nachman could not have cared less what they said to Ivan, was no more a friend of Ivan's this day than any other, but he was bored by Perry Gruber and his Brazilian-style and alligator-style, so he kicked a bottle cap at Gruber and said, "Hold it, Perry. Just what is Japanese style?"

Perry was startled. He had no idea. They were here to torment Pitski; why was Nachman quibbling about semantics? He looked at David blankly a moment, and then, not knowing what else to do, kicked Pitski hard in the thigh. "That's what *he* does, Nachman. With his mommy. You want some, too?"

"I get enough from your mommy, Gruber," David said.

There was a scuffle, and the teachers, after watching from the kitchen stoop where they huddled smoking, came wearily to separate the boys. But the miracle had occurred: Attention had been directed elsewhere too long, and when the teachers left, the boys milled off, or broke into groups to play punch ball—Ivan was forgotten. He stood against the wall and watched David Nachman flip baseball cards with some friends. Soon, as the boys wandered back to class, disgruntled and unsated, Ivan found David, who saw the thanks in his eyes, and, to ensure that Pitski didn't get the wrong idea, body-checked him into the lockers on the way to Jewish history.

Since then, Ivan had watched David. He had composed notes to David in his mind, invitations to come to his house after school, suggestions about things they might do together. He had an idea he would ask Leon if he might bring someone, a friend, along on their summer trip to the mountains. He would ask Carlotta to make her famous chocolate cake, and after school one day, he and David would go to his house and eat it together, listening to records on Ivan's new Zenith stereo player. He had visions, Ivan, both vague and somehow brilliant, of a future that involved David. As he watched David stuff a wad of yellow paper into his desk, Ivan saw them walking together, maybe in the mountains this summer, coming out of the woods onto a bright meadow, talking in quiet voices.

When Mrs. Green came to a stop behind David, Ivan knew there would be trouble. She leaned over David, as if to admire his efforts. She picked up David's exam book.

"Why, David," she said, "all these answers are correct." She smiled unhappily. "You've made remarkable, should I say miraculous progress since yesterday." She was a young woman from the Midwest with ideas about her life, none of which included teaching multiplication to a bunch of Jewish boys in the middle of Queens.

"Well, I studied hard, Mrs. Green." David smiled back.

"I *know,* David. I can tell." She reached for the wad of paper.

Before he quite realized what he was doing, Ivan stood and upended his desk on the floor. The crash was tremendous; all the students turned and Mrs. Green jumped two inches into the air. She recovered herself by taking David's exam book, then Ivan's and scrawling huge F's on their covers. Together, Nachman and Pitski were sent from the room.

At the detention room door, Ivan turned to David, hoping to have something to say, something humorous and offhand about Mrs. Green that would both mark this occasion and indicate it was no big deal to tough kids like themselves, but the look he saw on David's face discouraged any statement at all and he simply followed him into the room.

They were to study, without pause or conversation, for the next four hours. It could be any subject, but Rabbi Klaperman suggested they might study the Bible or simply pray, considering their dubious standing with the Lord. At his desk, Klaperman leaned over a large black Mishna, alternately rubbing his forehead and sitting back to swallow as his calamitous innards sent alarming signals. He was tormented by indigestion, and the flarings inside soured all of the man—you could see it in his posture, in his expression, in the

torpid yellow of his eyes. He was in no mood today. He had a pocket full of white pills, which he chewed while scowling thoughtfully at one or another of the boys. Arnold was a fixture, as regular here as the furniture. A sharp slap to the back of the neck had acquainted him with the foolhardiness of spitting in Klaperman's detention, and Klaperman gave him little thought. Pitski was a lost cause, a strange, unhappy boy, though God knew what reason he might have in that home of his. But Nachman was different, not a changeling like Pitski or a cossack like Leibowitz. That he, with all his advantages, should be in detention enraged Rabbi Klaperman, and watching the sullen boy's face sent a small breaker of acid rolling in his chest.

"Nachman," he said, "are you happy? Does it bring you joy being a disgrace?" He paused, discreetly, a moment. "That's what you are, of course, a disgrace. To your family, to yourself. Your grandfather should see you in this room, with such company." He acknowledged a small tracheal spasm. "Hoodlums."

Rabbi Klaperman ate a white pill, grimaced, ate another. Gases from foods he did not recall eating filled his throat. "Should I call him, your grandfather?" He held an imaginary phone to his ear for heightened effect. "Excuse please, Avram Klaperman with charming news regarding little David." He lowered his hand. Fish? Klaperman thought. When did I eat fish? "Or your uncle, not a busy man," he said. "Perhaps I should place a call?"

"Yeah, do that," Nachman said, quietly.

"Excuse?" Klaperman said. "Did I hear something, or am I mistaken?"

David turned a page.

"I believe I heard something, Professor Nachman. We wouldn't want, God forbid, to miss any pearls from your illustrious lips. Would you care to repeat?" He stood.

"It was me, Rabbi," Arnold said, staring at his book.

"Oh?"

"Yes, excuse please, I think I passed a little gas," Arnold said. "Perhaps more than a little. Must be something I ate."

"Alright! Enough witticisms," Rabbi Klaperman announced. "As a trio you're delightful. Perhaps we can arrange you should spend the next ten years in this room exchanging witticisms."

David glanced at Arnold, who looked back and widened his eyes in mock terror. To the side, Ivan muttered something and laughed, but neither boy turned to investigate.

"SILENCE!" Rabbi Klaperman roared. "I will have silence!"

For fifteen minutes Rabbi Klaperman rubbed his raging belly and cursed his life. Images of the shtetl floated before his unfocused eyes, blue skies and grass, children running. Many worlds ago. For fifteen minutes, silence was broken only by the shuffling feet of the boys and the stifled squeals of Klaperman, who chewed white pills and changed color. Arnold watched him. Suddenly the rabbi rose and left the room, unaccountably leaving the door open. Arnold was through it before it had swung shut, and David was a step behind, pumping a fist at the rabbi's retreating back. Ivan sat in his chair, looking at the door. He closed his eyes, counted to ten, and bolted after the two boys, catching them just as they hit the street.

Jamaica Avenue, 2 p.m. Freedom. Through the el, a grid-work of light and shadow splashes the storefronts and sidewalks. A green bus rolls by blaring its horn. A delivery boy on a bicycle rides against traffic, propelling his huge aluminum box before him. Two men push a black sedan down the street while a boy, younger than they are, steers. Overhead a train roars, and in a moment everything is swallowed in noise, dancing to vibrations sent through steel girders to the street. It passes above them, and David watches as showers of yellow sparks fall, first one, then another, disappearing before they hit the asphalt. Jamaica Avenue in full swing. Free.

Arnold immediately stuffs his yarmulke into his back pocket, and after a moment's pause, David does the same. Ivan fingers his, leaves it on his head. Two young women in floral dresses walk by with red Coca-Cola cups in their hands. Arnold falls against the shoe store window. He clutches his heart. "Oh, mama," he says. The women smile and one of them—the cuter one, with brown hair bobbed short around her face—looks back. Arnold hoots, slaps David on the back, and they tear up the avenue.

In Pete's candy store, they look at comic books and, behind the rack of school supplies, nearly get a centerfold open before Pete catches them. He shoos them toward the door, threatening to "get the rabbis on them." Nachman and Leibowitz dart for the street, but Ivan coolly continues shopping. He emerges a moment later with two magazines, one about trucks and the other about race cars, and two Hershey bars. Arnold produces a pack of Lucky Strikes he has filched from the counter and lights one with a blue Zippo. He draws in deeply and lets smoke out in plumes from his nose. Ivan sits on the storefront ledge and begins examining the magazines. David takes the race-car magazine and reads about the Corvette Stingray Coupe, which has maxed out at 180 MPH in trials. Ivan unwraps one chocolate bar and offers the other to David. David begins to eat.

"Oh, isn't that sweet?" Leibowitz says. "Little Ivan and little David. I didn't know you were engaged."

Nachman feels his cheeks aching again. Leibowitz stands to the side, swallowing smoke. David grabs the candy from Ivan and throws it on the pavement. He holds up what is left of his in front of Ivan's face, then drops this, too, on the ground. Ivan looks from one boy to the other.

"What is it with you?" Nachman asks him, prodding his shoulder. "Did I put an ad in the *Daily News*—wanted, fat, whiny rich kid to be best friend? Did I, Zitski?" He stands near Leibowitz. "If I need a friend, I'll write you a letter."

"He thinks you're adorable," Arnold says. "He wants to marry you."

"If I want a boyfriend, I'll borrow one of his mother's."

"I'd like to borrow her," Arnold says, and he mimics a woman walking, hips flared and swinging, cigarette extended. "Zitski, dear," he minces, "come rub Mommy's back."

"Come rub Mommy's front," Nachman adds.

Pitski stands where David left him. He watches Nachman and Leibowitz prancing up the street, looks down at the ruined candy. He grinds it into the pavement with a heel, then follows the boys at a short distance.

In the Hallmark, Arnold cops a couple of cigars and a stack of birthday cards stamped with pink roses. David pockets three blue magic markers and two reds, and a combination toe-clipper–pocketknife with NY embossed on its handle. The two boys spend some time in Sam Goody's, but there is no opportunity to steal anything, so they leave. At the Woolworth's next door, Leibowitz slaps Nachman in the chest, motioning for him to look. Inside, Pitski stands before the long, waist-high candy counter. He is filling his briefcase with handfuls of candy, slowly, taking his time. Even Leibowitz and Nachman are impressed. Ivan finishes, snaps the briefcase closed, and in no hurry at all, walks out the door. The two boys, guffawing, follow him up the street.

They run breakneck through Lilly's Lamp and Statuary, caterwauling, spinning the lampshades on their stands, until Lilly reaches into her desk for the .22 she keeps for personal protection. The boys head for the exit, but at the door, Ivan stops, takes a small china figurine from a table and lifts it over his head. The other two boys are on the street, running. Lilly, with an embroidered handkerchief in one hand, levels the other, holding the gun, at Ivan. For a moment they stare, and instead of throwing the figurine, a delicately painted black and white poodle, Ivan sets it back in place, hard, so that a tiny black paw breaks off and rolls on the carpet. He walks out.

Behind Bohack's, they sit on milk boxes and eat caramels and jujubes, Turkish Taffee, and chocolate-covered marshmallow bars. No one likes the soft candies with cream centers, so they toss them over the fence into somebody's yard. They divide the O'Henrys and chocolate kisses, and Arnold takes the box of lemon drops, claiming a girl he knows is wild about them. They talk about classes they are missing, the suckers left behind.

"Did you see Klaperman chasing us?" David asks, blowing out his cheeks in imitation of Klaperman running. "I thought the old fart would have a heart attack, right in front of the school."

"Old fart is right," Arnold says, and lifts a cheek to demonstrate that spitting is not his sole talent.

Arnold lights a cigar and smokes it, though it sends his stomach barreling toward his chest. David lights the other, has a puff and passes it to Ivan, who drops it on the ground.

"That's a two-dollar stogie," Arnold tells him.

"What do I care," Ivan says.

Arnold shakes his head, then spits, a low-flying bank shot off the rear wall of the supermarket. "Zitski," Arnold says, then holds the cigar before his face to admire it. "You shouldn't waste a two-dollar stogie."

They take out the greeting cards. Inside is a short poem:

> To our darling niece
> So fair and good
> Upon the threshold
> Of Womanhood
> Happy, *Happy* Sweet Sixteen!

They inscribe one to Doris Goldhammer, in the seventh grade. "I love you madly," David writes. "I love your boomers," Arnold adds underneath. Then one to Rabbi Klaperman: "I want you bad," signed "Lola, the Fox," and one to Rabbi Mermelstein, "Your bald head drives me crazy," signed "A secret admirer."

They write a few more, pass them around, and then Arnold gives one he has written to Ivan. It has a cartoon of a woman sitting on the hood of a blue car. It says, "Dear Mom, show us some titty," and is signed, "your loving son, Zitski."

Ivan whips a handful of caramels at Arnold. They slap his face, stinging, and clatter behind him on a stack of tin milk boxes. Ivan reaches into the briefcase again; a handful of jujubes goes flying, then marshmallow bars melted in a heap, until Arnold has lifted Ivan off his seat, has him by the neck against the fence.

"You little jerk," Arnold says, rolling his mouth in a frenzy of preparation. "What should I do with you now?"

Ivan looks at him. "You're shit," he says. "I don't care what you do."

Arnold holds him another moment, then releases him with a sharp smack to both cheeks, sending his glasses to the ground. Arnold lets loose a gob that arcs toward the top of the supermarket then disappears in sunlight over the roof.

They fill their pockets with candy and toss the rest over the fence. David distributes magic markers and they scrawl across the wall of Bohack's. "Mid-Queens Hebrew sucks!" David writes, and "Doris Goldhammer" in a blue heart. Arnold writes "YANKEES!" and "Walt Frazier is God." The rear door of the supermarket rattles and the two boys drop their markers and run up the alley to the street. Ivan ignores the sound. He is over on his side of the wall, working slowly. With care, he writes, "SHITPISSMOTHERFUCKERNIGGERKIKEBASTARDJEW." Over it he draws a large red swastika. He puts his marker in his pocket and walks quietly out to the street.

At the entrance to the Sutphin Boulevard station, Nachman says they should wait for Pitski. "Fuck him," Leibowitz suggests, but he stays. A taxi rolls by and for a moment David thinks he sees Rabbi Klaperman against the back seat, with the school nurse leaning over him. But the taxi turns the corner before he can be sure, and then Pitski walks by them, past the columns with the green glass globes, down the stairs to the subway.

Arnold vaults over the turnstile, and Ivan and David run through one of the Exit doors. In his glass booth, the token collector follows their movements without expression.

Arnold lives toward 179th Street, in Bayside, and the other boys live toward the city. But it's the middle of a school day, an extraordinary Tuesday, and none are ready to go home.

On the platform, billboards advertise liquor and cigarettes, chewing gum. Four sets of tracks run before them, the inner for expresses, the outer two for locals. The tracks gleam silver into the tunnels on either side, where they disappear in darkness.

Arnold shows them how to get penny Chiclets by kicking the handle of the machine. He tries this procedure on the green Coke machine, which moves back an inch or so, but doesn't give out any Coke. They take Ivan's marker and give Mayor Lindsay a mustache and black eye, and draw glasses and missing teeth on the face of a gentleman advertising English gin. When the express hurtles through the center tracks, the boys stop to watch. Sparks fly from the thundering wheels, and passengers' faces flash by as in old movies, flickering between the pillars. They are impassive, these faces, as are the boys', as though nobody is looking at anything.

As they wait for the local, Arnold and David kick a small stack of newspapers around, but it soon falls apart. David is suffused with hilarity. He can't remember such a wild time. The afternoon is filled with importance, somehow—he will remember it. Just thinking about the looks on his uncle's and grandfather's faces fills him with profound fear and exhilaration. A wild time. He takes his yarmulke—a tightly-knit cap with his name on the side in blue lettering—from his pocket. He has not taken it off in public before. Even in the house, the rabbis say, you cannot take more than three steps without a head covering. It is an affront to God, the rabbis say. David takes the yarmulke and flips it, frisbee-style, to Arnold, ten feet up the platform. It carries nicely; David can see his name spiralling in the air. Arnold catches it and tosses it back. Ivan, off to one side, watches.

When David hooks a throw, Arnold does what he can, but the yarmulke sails off the platform and lands between the tracks below. The boys stand on the platform's yellow lip, looking down, and then David jumps, before he can think it over. He grabs the yarmulke, takes a quick look up the subway tunnel—just a few light bulbs in the darkness—then leaps up, getting his torso over the ledge, where Arnold helps him scramble to his feet.

The second time, Arnold goes to retrieve the yarmulke. He picks it up and stands, peering into the tunnel ahead of him. "I think I see it coming," Arnold says.

"Bull," says David. "I don't hear a thing."

"I can see all the way down the tunnel," Arnold says, taking a couple of steps forward. "I see lights all the way down, and a red dot. That's the F train," Arnold says.

"Well, get up here then," David says.

Arnold looks at David and grins. "Why? You want your precious yami, the one mommy made for her big boy?" He takes another step toward the tunnel. "Come and get it."

David leans over the tracks until he fears he will fall. Far into the tunnel, the silver tracks converge where they are hidden behind a bend. He sees the back of a signal lamp, red and yellow glass in a long box. That's all he sees. Then, faintly, he hears a rumbling, distant but clear. He wonders if Arnold hears it and looks over. Arnold is still grinning, but at Ivan, now.

"How 'bout the little fat boy?" Arnold says. "Why don't you come down here, little Ivan? I think I see your mother with the conductor."

Ivan stands a few feet from the edge of the platform. He has his hands in his pockets. "You're shit," he tells Arnold. Then he looks at David. "You both are. You came out of my ass."

David looks at Ivan in his plaid shirt and green corduroys. He looks at the glasses and the pale head where veins pulse blue. He takes two steps and snatches the

boy's yarmulke. It is a cloth one, a fancy black cap with satin trim. David flings it as far as he can up the tracks. When he looks back, light is glinting off the two tracks that run into the station.

Arnold scrambles onto the platform by himself, and the boys watch as the F roars from the tunnel to stop in a shattering shriek of brakes. Two men get off and an old woman the boys hadn't noticed gets on, looking at them through a window as the train pulls out. They watch until the red taillights blink out.

Ivan moves to the front of the platform.

"That's two steps, Zitski," David says. "One more and God will blast you to hell." Arnold laughs. Ivan steps to the edge, looks down at the skullcap half-floating in a puddle by the far track. He knows what Nachman is talking about, but what he sees is himself coming home without his yarmulke, his mother, more superstitious than religious, grabbing him at the door, making him kneel with her to pray, the two of them like that on the floor, half on the street, the door not even closed behind them. He jumps.

He looks quickly up the tunnel but sees no sign of a train. A string of single lights loops away in the dark. He can hear nothing. He picks up the wet yarmulke and wipes it on his shirt, puts it back on his head.

Ivan walks to where the boys stand and jumps. He is too short. On the second try, he manages to get his elbows over the ledge, but after a couple of seconds, he falls back. He looks at the boys above him.

"Need some help?" David says. "You require some assistance?"

"I think he does," Arnold says. "That's what it looks like to me."

"I'd like to help," David says, "but shit doesn't have arms, right, Ivan?"

Arnold hoots once and sends a celebratory round into the tunnel. It flips in the light, seems, somehow, to make a turn, and disappears. Ivan jumps, gets his elbows on the platform again, kicks his feet, hangs a moment. While he is suspended, straining to get his feet over the ledge, Leibowitz hits him right in the eye with a good one. It stretches from his eye to his lip and drops off. Ivan hangs there, trembling with the effort. Then, not understanding exactly why, Nachman takes hold of one of Ivan's shoulders to help him up.

The moment he touches him Ivan squirms. He turns his head and they look at each other—David looks right into the magnified blue globes of Pitski's eyes, sees the pale skull, the color of eggs under the blonde hair. Ivan spits. From three inches away, David feels the warm spatter on his face, on his eyes and mouth. With a grunt, he shoves Pitski hard onto the tracks. He falls. An express, going the other way, passes behind him. The three boys, two on the platform, one in the tracks, watch the faces in the windows, feel the rumble in their feet until the train reenters the tunnel.

Pitski stands and dusts himself off. He looks at the two boys a moment—Nachman is wiping his face with a sleeve and Leibowitz is laughing to himself, about to speak. He says something, but Pitski doesn't hear it. Before Leibowitz has a chance to repeat himself, Pitski turns his back on them and begins walking, up the tracks, in the direction he assumes will be home. □

The World as Seen Before Falling

Who's that man?
I can't stand up in his presence,
can't face him.

Tell her to record the children's births,
attachment to the earth is strong,
a gripping hand, she must examine
those extraordinary fish.

I know mourning is a wheel
that comes around.
I'll give them lentils,
red lentil soup,
a proper mother—

Imagine the weight she wakes with
wearing guises before him,
thinking, because of me he falters.

Linda Zisquit

Israeli Elections

(Continued from p. 38)

of the difficulties that the Occupation poses for the international position of Israel. Strategists for Meretz preferred to emphasize the blurred line between Likud and Labor rather than to sharpen the contrast between Meretz leaders Yossi Sarid and Yair Tzaban and their Labor counterparts, Yitzhak Rabin and Avigdor Kahalani. Meretz, too, seems to have endorsed the theory that the public is shopping for personal security and is unwilling to examine the connection between this and the deep frustration of the Palestinians over the denial of their elementary rights. Questions of the Jewish and moral character of the occupying State of Israel are now taboo in the Zionist parties be they left, right, or center,

peace activists or hard-liners. Extraparliamentary bodies like Peace Now and Yesh Gvul were also struck dumb, apparently out of fear that their voices would scare voters away from Meretz candidates, who are now seen as the authentic representatives of the peace camp in the Knesset. Peace activists have not learned from the Movement for Electoral Reform or the Movement for a Constitution in Israel, both of which have developed effective strategies to keep pressure on the politicians and to focus public attention on their issues.

This year's campaign has shown that the political system in Israel is not yet mature enough to meet the challenges of personality-based elections. The Labor party, which did not manage to force the Likud, formally, into direct election of the Prime Minister, tried to do so informally by emphasizing the leadership of Rabin and by downplaying the importance of the party. At the same time, Labor strategists focused narrowly on the weaknesses of the uncharismatic Shamir. A country with "normal" problems like recession, unemployment, and the maldistribution of wealth perhaps can afford the luxury of wasting its collective attention on the personal conduct or "character" of the candidates. But a country with survival issues that demand incisive decisions on matters that have not produced anything approaching consensus cannot focus the debate on how much Rabin drinks or how long Shamir sleeps.

It is, of course, legitimate, even in Israel, to consider the way the candidates for head of state behaved forty-five years ago (Rabin during the War for Independence and Shamir in the underground). But there is room for this kind of focus only on condition that these subjects don't dominate the debate and relegate the main issue of war and peace to the sidelines. Neither party has abided by this condition.

The slogan of the elections, "Israel is waiting for Rabin," could turn out to be dangerous not only to its bearers, but, in the long run, for democracy in Israel. A jingle with a semifascist ring to it always latches onto an especially heroic or charismatic figure, such as Rabin or Begin. But Rabin is over seventy years old, and it's entirely possible that this is the last election campaign for both him and Shimon Peres. Rabin is basking in the glory of his tenure of Chief of Staff of the Six Day War and the Defense Minister who rescued the hostages in Entebbe. But what will the Labor party do in another four years when the next generation of politicians takes command? Does "Israel is waiting for Ramon" resonate, for example? In the personality cult surrounding Rabin, the party has set a standard that it's doubtful another figure can meet in the foreseeable future. The greater danger is that the public has learned that it must wait for a savior, and that the party and its platform are secondary. Today the savior is Rabin. Tomorrow, any number of other ex-generals could easily fill that role: Ariel Sharon, Rafel Etan, or Rahavam Ze'evi, the head of the far right "transfer" party, Moledet. □

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Jewish Mysticism

(Continued from p. 47)

hints to me (without ever needing to say it directly) that he too has been joined to the One, that he knows what it is to emerge from a state of utter absorption and to have to create again, on the far shores of mystical union, the mind of the many.

But I want more. To the question "How did the many emerge from the One?" the answer "Very gradually" ultimately will not do. So I turn to the next stage of Kabbalah, one that seems to have a different answer to the great question. Here the mystics of the Lurianic School add the notion of *tzimtzum* or divine self-contraction to their theory, opting for a quasi-spatial metaphor in order to explain reality. The One is all that exists, they say, and it fills all of primal space. The One indeed leaves no room for the many; any multiplicity emerging within it would instantly be reabsorbed into endless oneness. In order for the many to exist, the One first has to create the naught. It does this by an act of self-constriction, by removing itself from a certain realm, from which it is then quite totally absent. The first creation is that of the naught. It is within this vacuum that the domain of the many comes to exist, created by new and specifically directed rays of divine energy beamed in from beyond. The many represents a strange combination of the absence and presence of the One. It can exist only because of the One's absence, because the divine all-in-all has chosen to become transcendent (read: "absent," "distant") in order to allow for the existence of an "other." But the life-source of that other is nothing but the One, for no being could be imagined that does not have its root in Being.

Here, too, the Kabbalist's rendering both attracts me and leaves me disquieted. I feel close to the Kabbalist in his struggle to be other, to distance the ever-present One from his own inner space so that his separate identity as a created self might emerge and find itself real. But the tension wrought by this void is more than I can bear. To say that I exist thanks only to God's absence is to make me a being who thrives on alienation, who needs to be far from the One at least as much as he needs to be near. Will I then seek darkness as much as light? Evil as much as good? How dare I then speak of union? If I need divine absence in order to thrive, how do I keep religious passion—the desire for intimacy—from being a lie?

So I turn to the early Chasidic masters, my favorite guides and teachers in these inner realms. Mostly they are my guides despite what Chasidism later became, not because of it. I have read and been inspired by these masters and their original writings for many years now, not in the denatured and sanitized way they have often been presented to moderns, but also not in the flattened and overly pious reading of their latter-day Chasidic followers.

The first Chasidic masters were heirs to Kabbalistic cosmology in its most baroque form. Kabbalists since the sixteenth century had elaborated an almost infinitely complex map of worlds, potencies, and restored "countenances" of the divine, interwoven with the mysteries of divine names, letters, and numbers, all in every imaginable combination. One needed vast knowledge of these symbols and their carefully ruled inner dynamics in order to play on the chessboard of Kabbalah, where each move was seen as effecting potential salvific bounty for the universe and each misstep was sure to bring about defilement and wrath. The cosmic harmony originally intended in creation had been shattered by a cataclysm that preceded creation, and the purpose of human existence was nothing less than that of restoring wholeness to God. This could be effected only by means of Kabbalistic gnosis, a recondite religious intellectuality that supported acts of extraordinary ascetic devotion.

In a move that may be considered one of the great acts of cosmic housecleaning in the history of religion, the first Chasidic masters set aside all of these domains. The "heavens" of the mystic's mind were emptied of all their way stations, potencies, and symbolic configurations. These were henceforth to be considered only of psychological importance, and were to be drawn on mostly for metaphoric use. Were we dealing with a polytheistic system, we would say that all the deities and demigods were set aside. Here their rubrics are perforce those of realms and symbols rather than "gods," but the psychological force of their elimination is not much different. The upper realms are redeemed of their clutter and the mystic mind is redeemed of the burden of gnosis, of the need to identify and unite with each of these arcane principalities in the course of its journey.

The cosmos is now empty. No more ten rungs, four worlds, two hundred thirty-one gates, three hundred ten universes, or any of the rest. Now all has been reduced to two. These are the primal pair: nothingness and being, emptiness and fullness, transcendence and presence. The first and the last of the Kabbalist's rungs, or *sefirot,* have been retrieved from the ruins of his system. At one end of the empty cosmos stands *chochmah* (divine wisdom), the first point on the map of the One's journey into being. Here all of existence is present in the state of not-yet; *chochmah* is the One out of which all being is to be. At the other end of the cosmos is *malchut* (divine kingship), the world in all its fullness, the One dressed in the garb of the many.

Now the task of the mystic is simple. The two have to be revealed as one. Emptiness and fullness, the one and the many, God and world are two modes of the same reality, two perceptions of the same truth. The unchanging One that underlies reality, that existed "before" it and out of which the many emerged, stands over against the One that exists within the many, partaking fully of all the variety of life, evolving, growing, changing in each moment, borne within each being. The quest for truth is the attempt to unmask their oneness.

The ultimate symbol for this discovery is to be found in the aleph itself. An ancient reading of the forms of letters shows that aleph as classically written (think here also of Chinese masters contemplating their brush strokes) is composed of three letters: two letters yod joined by a vav. The two yods represent these two faces of reality, the changeless and the ever-new. The vav (this letter is used for "and" in Hebrew) is the *principium conjunctionis,* the force that joins the two together. All is contained within the single aleph, a One to which there indeed is no other. The many exist, on the plane of our ordinary reality. We live, we love, we bring forth new generations. We bring this world to the edge of destruction; we stop and seek to heal it. In the midst of all this drama it is good to remember, once in a while, that all of it takes place only within a single stroke of the endless and unchanging cosmic aleph. □

BEDOUINS

(Continued from p. 50)

proposal, an alternative path for the Bedouin that calls for modernizing the pastoral means of production. Land in the Negev would be leased to individual Bedouin families for a period of forty-nine years. If in the past the Bedouin never had cause to regard the enrichment of desert flora as one of their primary concerns, Kressel conjectures that leasing the land would provide them with incentive to care for a particular parcel of land: to fence it, to seed it, and to use it for fodder.

With infrastructure—roads, water, utilities—provided by the government, Kressel envisions a northern Negev that sustains villages of between sixty and eighty Bedouin families, each of them maintaining up to one hundred sheep (or forty sheep in addition to two or three camels), and traveling north with their flocks for the

summer weeks when the fodder gives out. Each of these villages could potentially combine its pastoral and horticultural activities with ventures in interior tourism so as to establish a domestic economy that promises the Bedouins a new measure of stability and prosperity.

The solution, according to Kressel, involves a paradox: "Only a fundamental alteration of the Bedouin's relation to the land would give him the opportunity to remain attached to it. As anthropologists, as Jews, and as humanitarians," he remarks, "our every instinct informs us to help the Bedouin struggle to preserve their culture in the way we have fought to preserve our own. We advocate that the lifestyle of the Bedouins should remain essentially rural. We believe that under present circumstances, the adoption of our general proposal, which has already been endorsed by certain organs of government, would be best for the Bedouin, best for the Negev, and best for the State of Israel."

At least two formidable obstacles stand between the present standoff and implementation of Kressel's proposal. One is the problem of how the Bedouins can participate more fully in the formulation of policies that affect their lives. Kressel emphasizes that the Bedouins themselves must be involved at every stage of the decision-making process. But Nuri Al-Okhbi, director of the Bedouin's civil-rights association, heard only belatedly of a Bedouin settlement being prepared by Kressel's Center for Grazing Lands Research, and wondered why Professor Kressel had not contacted him. The second barrier is surely far more daunting: If it is ever to be implemented, Kressel's plan must be submitted and eventually approved by a phalanx of ministerial committees, which in the past have displayed a monumental lack of interest in the well-being of the Bedouins.

In this attitude, it can scarcely be claimed that the Israeli government lags far behind its citizenry. Most Israelis show a greater interest in the fortunes of the Chicago Bulls than in the disposition of cases involving shepherds like Khalil Al-Okhbi or Bedouin bones uprooted in a cemetery near Yeroham. Notable exceptions, of course, are the more than forty-thousand Israeli citizens of the Negev who inhabit over a score of villages that are invisible on the official map of Israel. Unless the government adopts a new approach toward them in the future, every one of their homes will, in the fullness of time, be slated for destruction. □

ROUNDTABLE

(Continued from p. 44)

perception of disorder. You and I both know that cultural decay is transracial. The disorder in suburban and white urban schools is every bit as intense, but it is perceived differently. The violence is across the board, but the perception is that it's concentrated in the black poor. Blacks moving into white neighborhoods are perceived as sources of disorder no matter how well behaved they are.

Sleeper: I agree that that's racist, but the fact is that violent crime is *very* heavily black, and most people are reacting to an inner-city situation far different from anything they experience in their own communities. And those whites who continue to live in the large cities often experience it first-hand, not through skewed media portraits.

West: We need to couch our anti-racist views in the form of a reinvigorated public sphere that at once acknowledges how deep the racism is and at the same time acknowledges that you can't have a public arena of squalor and still have the public good as a whole.

There are some sources of hope, as well: for one, the massive demoralization of right-wing forces in this country. The deeply racist and patriarchal perceptions in this country have been fanned and fueled by a very successful right-wing public discourse put forward by right-wing intellectuals and politicians. We are seeing more and more deep clashes inside the right-wing coalition. Ross Perot, the pure media candidate, becomes an instance of the disaggregation of those right-wing forces. Irving Kristol in a recent issue of the *Times Literary Supplement* throws his hands up and talks about America's malaise! Where's their right-wing optimism today, after twelve years of right-wing rule? Second, after the Rodney King verdict, the claims that racism doesn't exist anymore have been completely shattered. Conservatives and black Republicans have been demoralized because they based their politics on the lie that racism had disappeared.

We may now be able to talk about the public sphere in a way that deracializes it, and instead the particular plight of poor blacks and Latinos can get discussed, but as part of a larger transformative project. For a moment we may be able to get public debate focused again on a restructuring of the public sphere in ways that would support public transportation, education, and other needed services, not only for the poor but for the whole society.

Hamilton: I agree that we have a new window of opportunity—to talk about the crisis of American society in terms that can encompass everyone. This moment will pass as soon as the right wing regroups. But for the moment, we can talk about what's wrong with an

American economy that doesn't create enough jobs to go around or what's wrong with public education—because at least at the college level this impacts not only blacks but many whites as well.

Kaus: I don't think the coalition can be put together unless the Left faces up to the underclass issue. There is free-floating racism, but most racism would disappear if there were only a black working class, middle class, and upper class—if the underclass were assimilated.

Mann: You seem to be claiming that the coalition could be put together if only blacks would behave. Yet I watched another set of rationalizations take place when an employed, stable, well-paid working class of Latinos and blacks asked General Motors to keep open the last auto plant in Los Angeles, and in this case, the white West Side started talking about "the efficiency of the market," "the undependability of U.S. workers," and "the right of consumers to buy products as cheaply as possible," with strong intimations that black and Latino (and white) auto workers were overpaid, pricing themselves out of the market. They almost expressed ideas of workers of color being "shiftless and lazy." It is interesting that the black unemployed are called an "underclass" while the black and Latino unionized working class are called "overpaid." (After the plants close, these workers become part of the unemployed "underclass" and the beat goes on.) My point is that of course we have to build social movements that go beyond race, that do not just emphasize "anti-racist education." But the reality of the organizing strategy that kept the GM Van Nuys plant open for a decade was that while the workforce of the plant was almost 35 percent white, and there was significant support for the most politically progressive whites, the *main* community support came from the churches, the university faculty, and the community organizations in the black and Latino communities, who well understood the cost of losing three thousand jobs at more than $10 an hour. In virtually every issue, whether it is peace, civil liberties, the environment, funding for public education, it is critical to include an aggressive component of educating white people about racist attitudes that often prevent them from joining or fully participating in those social movements.

West: We have to disaggregate the consensus that associated black people with public squalor—breaking the right-wing consensus that provides the right-wing alternative for the channeling of the racist psychosis. People are in search of new alternatives, from Perot to the breakdown of right-wing intellectual consensus, even to the point where a David Duke looks like an alternative for some of them.

Katz: But while a certain part of the right-wing discourse is breaking down, the public sphere is undergoing an intensified threat from privatization, symbolized most dramatically by the decision of Benno Schmidt to resign as president of Yale to head a project to create a thousand new private schools that aim to compete with public education. The public sphere is not only being disdained—it is being sold off.

Kaus: The public sphere has been privatized because of fear of the underclass. It was recently reported that in the District of Columbia, 42 percent of young black men are at any given moment enmeshed in the criminal justice system as suspects, defendants, or convicts. As long as those statistics are even close to being accurate, we are going to have the flight of whites from the cities to the suburbs or to private institutions. Unless you address the problem of the underclass you'll never address the degradation of the public sphere. My strategy is to build on the almost universal disgust with the welfare system.

Tikkun: There may be a problem here: "Cutting welfare" may be for many Americans a code word for cutting the throats of black people. So unless you focus on providing jobs, you may only get the result of people mobilizing to hurt blacks and not supporting the second step that you hope to quietly slip in along the way.

Kaus: There are good reasons why people hate welfare, because welfare provides an economic substitute for work. It's a bad thing with bad social consequences. People have always hated welfare and people have always been right.

Mann: But this misses the social context in which the current hatred of welfare flourishes. Just as during the 1930s, when the Left was able to ameliorate some of the injuries of class by placing the responsibility for structural unemployment on the system, there is an urgent need today for a sharp discourse *among* leftists, progressives, and liberals to reverse the regression on race, and to place the responsibility for structural and institutional racism back on the system. Otherwise, it will be the liberals who will support the continuation of police repression, not out of any conscious feelings of hatred toward blacks, but out of a need to suppress "inappropriate behavior" among people of color that they think jeopardizes their white version of today's New Deal. □

About Men

(Continued from p. 51)

number of already committed people will attend? How then will we ever learn to conduct our communal business in new and different ways?

Discovering and Exploring

Jewish feminism not only offers a wide-ranging critique of the subordination of women in Jewish religious and institutional life, it also offers a vision of a new Jewish order. It calls us to imagine a Jewish community organized to enable the participation of all its members, a Jewish history made whole, a revitalization of Jewish God-language, a broader definition of the Jewish family, and a new sexual ethic. It invites Jewish men to a reconsideration of their own Jewish humanity, its contours and its meaning.

1. Meet with other men. Write midrash. Talk about your relationship with God. Talk about Jewish spirituality not as universally Jewish, but as male spirituality, a direct outgrowth of your experience as men. Discuss what it feels like to let go of power, and welcome the range of emotions—from fear to laughter—that this prospect raises. Organize groups and develop rituals to guide each other through the process of relinquishing power. Talk about what might be on the other side of a patriarchal Judaism. Experience the power of particularity and the power of taking up a shared burden.

2. Talk with women. Listen—hard. Argue with women—not as one who owns the agenda but as one who has an equal stake in creating the Jewish future. Share your midrashim, your new liturgy. Participate in and organize joint projects, listening closely to women about how new endeavors have worked from their perspective. Go back and talk more with men.

I realize these suggestions are more amorphous than my first three, but it is precisely the daunting and open-ended task of shaping a new Judaism that finds Jewish feminists least able to tell men where they fit or what their role is. We do not have the answers, and it is not our job to find them. We know we are raising issues that are fundamental to Jewish life and the human community. In responding to these issues out of the particularities of their own experience—and in finding and defining new sorts of questions—Jewish men enter into a necessary dialogue out of which a new Jewish future can emerge. □

Letters

(Continued from p. 3)

that the JFK case is still active, like a volcano, and that we have not yet seen "the end" of it. It is wrong to pass final historical judgment on a case where full knowledge of the basic facts is as yet not possible, especially when one's natural stance is that of the detached and alienated ironist that Gitlin seems to have become.

Carl Oglesby
Founder, Assassination Information Bureau and author of *Who Killed JFK* and *The JFK Assassination*
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Is There a Jewish Renewal?

To the Editor:

In his review of Sara Bershtel and Alan Graubard's *Saving Remnants: Feeling Jewish in America* ("Sewing Jewish Remnants Into a New Tallit," March/April 1992), Arthur Waskow rejects their contention that the ethnic revival is not a remedy, but a symptom of a culture in crisis; not a new beginning, but a dying gasp. Waskow engages in precisely the myopic self-congratulation and organized delusion that Bershtel and Graubard lampoon in their book. Thus, Waskow makes much of the fact that "there are now whole congregations and neighborhoods of Jewish renewal," that "half the Jewish people—women—have become empowered to enter a religious life from which their mothers were barred, and tens of thousands have actually done so," that "tens of thousands of Jews have organized and supported new approaches to fundraising," and that "hundreds of thousands of Jews have used the arenas of art, rather than those of the synagogue, to explore the deepest ethical and spiritual dilemmas and to celebrate the deepest joys of Jewish life." From these sparse facts, Waskow weaves a picture of a resurgent Judaism that is sustained by a human stampede to "new forms of community." But this image is totally at odds with the sober reality, established in studies conducted over several decades of declining rates of religious and communal involvement and soaring rates of intermarriage. Waskow carries denial to a ludicrous extreme when he suggests that intermarriage (currently running close to 50 percent) may have new religious meaning "in the unfenced world we have chosen for ourselves." Well, this "unfenced world" is precisely the meaning of assimilation, and we cannot define it out of existence with pretentious talk about "reconfigured boundaries."

Thus, the first problem with Waskow's upbeat review is that it analyzes Jewish revival outside the context of the general trends in American Jewish life. John Higham described this situation some years ago as one of smaller and stronger cores and larger and weaker fringes. Revival and rampant assimilation go hand in hand, often occurring together within the same families.

Another problem with Waskow's reassuring assessment is that he hesitates to make any judgment about the cultural authenticity of reconstituted Judaism. Thus, Waskow lends much credence to such new-age concoctions as Jewish film festivals, renewal weddings, and eco-kosher guides. Are these the remnants that should be sewn together into a new tallit? And would such a tallit be worthy of its name?

Reconstituted forms of Judaism are not new phenomena. Writing in *Commentary* in 1956, Herbert Gans observed the emergence of a "new symbolic Judaism" consisting of such items as "doilies and tablecloths with the Star of David, pictures, books, and records depicting Jews (usually conspicuously pious ones), and *dreidls* whose faces are crammed with Jewish history." Unlike Waskow, Gans did not regard this symbolic culture as "renewal." As Gans writes:

> ... traditional Judaism has ceased to be a living culture for the second-generation Jew. Parts of it, however, have remained active in the form of habits or emotions;

these are now providing the impetus for a new "symbolic Judaism" still in the process of development.

Today a fourth generation whose grandparents were born in America is coming of age without any memories that reach back to the strong Jewish culture and powerful communities of their immigrant forebears. Contemporary Jews have good reason for their desperate yearning for wholeness, spirituality, and community, but how much of this can be found in the detritus of a dying culture? Waskow ends his review by suggesting that mourning the decline of the old forms of Jewish life is "like yearning westward after the sun has set, to see it where it was last—and to miss entirely its dawning in the east." But the unpalatable truth is that there is little reason to discount Bershtel and Graubard's view that Jewish revival does not represent the dawning of a new day, but the last hurrah of a culture in ultimate eclipse.

Stephen Steinberg
New York, New York

Arthur Waskow responds:

My assessment was not "reassuring"; it was demanding—demanding of action and hard work, as well as openness to joy.

We know that after the destruction of the Temple, when Yochanan ben Zakkai asserted that the rabbinic learning center at Yavneh stood equally with the Temple-that-had-been, some Jews scoffed at this new-age nonsense. We know that when some Jews substituted a family Seder for the biblical Pesach ritual of bringing a lamb to Jerusalem, other Jews scoffed at this new-age nonsense. We know that when some Jewish mystics at Safed introduced the ceremony of *kabbalat Shabbat,* others again scoffed at this new-age nonsense.

But at least all these scoffers were struggling to keep alive the older Jewish culture, the one that they already understood. Nothing is as dismaying as the habit some Jews have of rejecting rabbinic-Judaism-as-it-was as unlivable or undesirable and then saying that it is the only authentic form of Judaism, everything else being "new-age concoction." This is the passive-aggressive path to self-destruction.

Are new efforts to train an Eco-Shalom Corps of Jewish environmental organizers, new celebrations of menopause, new Seders for the "new year of trees" on Tu B'Shvat, new reshapings of ancient earth-protections into an "eco-kosher" practice, and new celebrations of Rosh Chodesh really new-age *nahrishkeit*? Or are these practices the seeds of a renewed Judaism that addresses real life-and-death issues in the language of Jewish metaphor and symbol?

Some say that too few Jews are growing these seeds. I agree. But then what? Do we then fold our hands—or roll up our sleeves? What can we do to help these seeds grow?

Which is greater, study or action? Study, said the rabbis—*if it leads to action.*

Crime and Punishment

To the Editor:

Why is it that the crime and scandal rate of the Jewish population is so much less than that of the general population, yet the crime rate of the unelected Jewish establishment leaders is so much higher than that of any other group?

Hardly a season goes by without the newspapers featuring major crimes by businesses run by the same people that run the major Jewish charities. We read about stock scandals involving Ivan Boesky, who was on the boards of Yeshiva University, the Jewish Theological Seminary, and the UJA-Federation when the scandal broke. Ludwig Jesselson, a principal shareholder of Solomon Brothers, recently mired in the bond scandals, is also chairman of the board of Yeshiva University and a UJA board member. A major partner of Kaye-Scholer, the law firm that disgraced the front pages of the *New York Times* for its role in the bank scandals, is Julius Berman, the current president of the Jewish Telegraphic Association, chairman of the Orthodox Union (OU) Kashrus committee, as well as former president of the Orthodox Union and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. Other Kaye-Scholer partners include the current chairman of the board of the OU, Sidney Kwestel. The Feder-Weber law firm was featured in the legal column of the *New York Times* last year as the subject of an ethics violation lawsuit with the state and local bar associations, and various law school professors filed briefs supporting the plaintiffs. Many of these firms' lawyers double on the boards of the OU and other similar organizations.

The Har Etzion Institute (the educational affiliate of the Maimad political party in Israel) annual dinner honorees and chairmen for the last few years have included Jesselson, Berman, and Weber, and in addition, Marc Belzberg. Belzberg, according to the *New York Times,* was called "the wicked witch of the west" by the federal judge who found him guilty of securities violations. Belzberg is also on the board of Yeshiva University's Rabbinical Seminary.

The excuses made by these prominent representatives of the Jewish community for fraud, banking, and securities violations sound remarkably similar to the excuses for intermarriage and Kashrus scandals heard by their organizations. The excuses include:

a) Society makes them do it.

b) Now that so many people are doing it means that it's not so bad.

c) It's a product of the times we live in so no one should be blamed.

d) We are against crime, but love the criminal.

One is reminded of the time when Rabbi Dr. Bernard Bergman, president of Mizrachi, president of the Bernard Revel Graduate School Alumni, and a Rabbinical Council of America Executive Committee member, was the subject of a nursing-home scandal. Then, he looked like an aberration. Now it seems like the norm. It's too much to demand that the leaders be "better" than the average Jew, but at least they shouldn't be so much worse. Thank God these unelected officials have few ordinary Jews following the examples that they set. These organizations must become honest, make full disclosures, or risk disappearing into the scrap heap of Jewish history.

Rabbi Yehuda Silver
New York, New York

Editor's note: We do not have the staff capacity to verify Rabbi Silver's allegations.

The Media and the 1992 Elections

To the Editor:

There is much merit in the view in Jay Rosen's article ("No Content: The Press, Politics, and Public Philosophy," May/June 1992) that the evening

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newscasts of the three networks "construct" the news and in doing so may overemphasize "horse-race" and "character" issues. They do so, at the very least, because of the unavoidable need to select and compress into a one-a-day, twenty-two-minute broadcast the headlines of the day's major international and national news events. Other broadcasts produced by these same companies, however, less constrained by time and format requirements (e.g., "Nightline," "Face the Nation," "This Week with David Brinkley"), provide greater focus on so-called "substantive" issues. And other television services with virtually no time demands—I think particularly of PBS's "MacNeil-Lehrer Newshour," CNN, and C-SPAN—provide expanded coverage. C-SPAN, in particular, provides an important service to those who want their news coverage raw and unsynthesized. And beyond television, viewers can get reports and analyses on political issues from the print media—ranging from daily newspapers to weekly newsmagazines to specialized, narrow-interest publications. In brief, citizens can get the quantity and quality of political discourse they want, if they search it out.

There is no question that the networks' evening newscasts are our largest *shared* media experience and thus are appropriately the subject of the greatest scrutiny. But, given the range of choices available, the fact that most Americans tend to watch the evening newscasts of the three TV networks suggests that there is *something* there that they like. If Americans were offended or bored by the networks' political coverage or found that coverage wholly irrelevant to their interests, one would expect to see declines in network viewership during political campaigns. We do not.

That is not to say that network treatment of the issues is all that it should be or might be. It is not, and network journalists themselves are high on the list of people who are critically examining their own work.

Rosen thinks that journalists should "stay out of the frame" and should ignore issues of "private" character. But a larger segment of the electorate considers these matters relevant, if not decisive, to their assessment of the candidate. Were journalists not to put themselves aggressively "in the frame" as the electorate's intrusive and proving representatives, we Americans would be powerless to get behind the candidates' finely crafted press releases and well-rehearsed speeches and TV advertisements. However easy it may be to agree with criticism of the condescending style of NBC's Tom Brokaw in his handling of a particular candidate debate, were it not for the media's aggressive involvement, the candidates would never debate at all. Candidates loathe the spontaneity and unpredictability of multiple-candidate appearances in so-called "debates." And, above all, they loathe candidate-to-candidate questioning since it is the most spontaneous and unpredictable of debate formats, putting extraordinary emphasis on debating skills. Not only do they want, but they insist on, journalists "being in the frame" in order to buffer them from surprise attacks of other candidates.

It is not, in my view, appropriate for the television networks to "elevate" the level of political discourse by denying to the American people information on issues the networks believe "beneath" them, but which the American people find important. At their best, journalists empower the electorate by exposing a candidate's policies, judgment, character, and leadership capability. Not all journalists maintain the highest quality of journalism every day, but viewers, listeners, and readers will turn them off if they do not make the effort.

George Vradenburg
Los Angeles, California

VERIFYING SPIRITUALITY

To the Editor:

Stephen Seligman's review of *The Spiritual Life of Children* by Robert Coles ("All God's Children," November/December 1991) contains a remarkable observation about children: "They believe things that are neither confirmable nor disconfirmable except subjectively. To put it crudely, they often say things that aren't true."

Seligman thinks that "not true" is an adequate, if crude, paraphrase of "not confirmable or disconfirmable except subjectively." Similarly, he explains that there is value to "faith and illusion," but that they are dangerous, for "once you allow the unverifiable to become the basis for authority, you may accept anything." Faith, according to Seligman, is a kind of illusion; only that which can be objectively verified should have authority.

His philosophical position has big problems.

First, ethical propositions almost never meet Seligman's standard. Ethical questions cannot, in general, be answered by appeal to objective verification. There is no clear way to reason from "is" to "ought," from what can be scientifically proven to what we should do. The proposition that the government should treat all of its citizens as equals, for example, is not an empirical one, derived from scientific experiments, but an ethical one, derived from certain unverifiable beliefs about what a government should do, and what rights citizens should have. Once you start allowing unverifiable beliefs, such as the equality of citizens before the government, to become the basis for authority, you are falling for mere illusions.

The strongest objection to Seligman's philosophy is that, according to its own test, it is also "not true." Seligman believes that things that are "unverifiable" are "illusions," and things that are "neither confirmable nor disconfirmable" are "not true." What test could confirm the accuracy of these definitions? Is there any way to verify them? I think it turns out that they are also assumptions that are not subject to rational proof, and so, according to Seligman, another kind of illusion.

Rabbi Eliezer Finkelman
Detroit, Michigan

Stephen Seligman responds: I am pleased that Rabbi Finkelman has occasioned an opportunity for me to elaborate some of the implicit positions in my argument about the dangers of the religious reification of the subjective experience of faith into authoritarianism, but his letter misconstrues my view. I do criticize religions for objectifying the fantasy-like side of some people's experiences of God, but I do not believe that this critique leads to a rejection of all personal knowledge as false. There is a wide array of ways of thinking about the world that are neither scientistic nor entirely relativistic, including those which stress ongoing dialogue between people. Although my review of Coles's book took the author to task for not showing how a critical psychosocial perspective could be applied to religion without undermining the value of religious belief, I was especially sympathetic to his

"Israel's very life depends on making peace with the Palestinians, and thus opening the door to the Arab world as a whole." (p. 81)

THE CONTROVERSY

"I have never found a way to absolve God of the crime of Auschwitz." (p. 243)

THAT IS

"It is clear to me that I think these thoughts because I was brought up in a rabbi's house." (p. xi)

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recognition of the profundity of spiritual discourse.

Rabbi Finkelman's initial quotation correctly calls attention to my overly casual use of the phrase "not true," but it involves an important omission that amounts to a distortion. I wasn't describing "children" in general, as his excerpt suggests, but referring to the children whom I described in the previous section, including "Mark, a twelve-year-old Seventh Day Adventist, [who] talks about how God helps him win at track meets," and Tommy, who speculates that "God looks like a planet." Alluding specifically to them, I wrote that "*these* children believe things that are neither confirmable nor disconfirmable." Most children do, of course, have many such ideas, and I agree with Coles that adults would be edified by paying more attention to children's fantasies as well as their worldviews and opinions. But my point here is that when fantastical ideas become the basis for ethical, political, and epistemological orientations, the danger of self-deception and authoritarianism is increased.

This is not to say that religious faith is without value, as I made clear in the first section of the review, as well as in the section from which Finkelman's quote is drawn. Following D. W. Winnicott, I regard the capacity for "illusion"—through which we vitalize our world by investing it with our own imaginative playfulness—as an essential human form of activity at the core of artistic and cultural experiences of all kinds, and thus do not mean to devalue faith by linking it to illusion. On the contrary, I agree with Coles's critique of Freud's condemnation of religion as nothing more than mass neurosis and am persuaded by his call for deference to the spiritual domain.

Thus, I do not believe that "only that which can be objectively verified should have authority." The question is what kind of authority, in what context, and with what kinds of epistemological and ethical checks and balances. Finkelman is right if he is saying that there is something essential about personal commitment in the political-ethical realm, but he must know that not all ethical points of view are as benign as "the proposition that government should treat all of its citizens as equals" (which, by the way, turns out not to be so benign when it functions—as in contemporary America—as an ideological shield against the popular awareness that government does nothing of the sort).

What would Finkelman say to the fundamentalist ayatollahs, the evangelical pro-lifers, or the Spanish inquisitors? We have to be able to find some basis from which to discriminate one religious idea from another, and the pure subjectivity of the personal experience of faith will not hold up. If Finkelman is arguing that you can't have ethics without people taking a stand about what they think is right, I couldn't agree more. But morality without skepticism is dangerous.

Instead, we are left with the Sisyphean task of tolerating doubt while taking positions, while always trying to enlarge the context within which we understand ourselves and the social world.

My point in reviewing *The Spiritual Life of Children* was that despite Coles's eloquence and empathy for his young subjects' spirituality, he does not try hard enough to get behind their religious ideas to see their social and psychological functions and effects. Coles's failure to situate spirituality in its contexts is a noteworthy omission that serves his unstated purpose of bolstering religious faith against those valid criticisms that remain even after the Freudian and Marxist orthodoxies have been deflated. Rabbi Finkelman seems to have the same purpose, and like so many of his colleagues, he fails to see the forest and so compromises his legitimacy as someone who can guide us to some of the most wonderful trees.

Stephen Seligman
San Francisco, California

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