2004: Vol. 3, No. 3

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Democracy Matters Are Frightening in Our Time

By | 2004: Vol. 3, No. 3

A decade ago I wrote *Race Matters* in order to spark a candid public conversation about America's most explosive issue and most difficult dilemma: the ways in which the vicious legacy of white supremacy contributes to the arrested development of American democracy. This book-the sequel to *Race Matters*-will look unflinchingly at the waning of democratic energies and practices in our present age of the American empire. There is a deeply troubling deterioration of democratic powers in America today. The rise of an ugly imperialism has been aided by an unholy alliance of the plutocratic elites and the Christian Right, and also by a massive disaffection of so many voters who see too little difference between two corrupted parties, with blacks being taken for granted by the Democrats, and with the deep disaffection of youth. The energy of the youth support for the Howard Dean campaign and avid participation in the recent anti-globalization protests are promising signs, however, of the potential to engage them.

As I've traveled across this country giving speeches and attending gatherings for the past thirty years, I've always been impressed by the intelligence, imagination, creativity, and humor of the American people, then found myself wondering how we end up with such mediocre and milquetoast leaders in public office. It's as if the best and brightest citizens boycott elected public office, while the most ambitious go into the private sector. In a capitalist society that is where the wealth, influence, and status are. But we've always been a capitalist society, and we've had some quality leaders in the past. Why the steep decline? As with sitcoms on television, the standards have dropped so low, we cannot separate a joke from an insult. When Bush smiles after his carefully scripted press conferences of little substance, we do not know whether he is laughing at us or getting back at us as we laugh at him-as the press meanwhile hurries to concoct a story out of his clichés and shibboleths.

In our market-driven empire, elite salesmanship to the demos has taken the place of genuine democratic leadership. The majority of voting-age citizens do not vote. They are not stupid (though shortsighted). They know that political leadership is confined to two parties that are both parasitic on corporate money and interests. To choose one or the other is a little like black people choosing between the left-wing and right-wing versions of the Dred Scott decision. There is a difference but not much-though every difference does matter.

Yet a narrow rant against the new imperialism or emerging plutocracy is not enough. Instead we must dip deep into often-untapped wells of our democratic tradition to fight the imperialist strain and plutocratic impulse in American life. We must not allow our elected officials-many beholden to unaccountable corporate elites-to bastardize and pulverize the precious word

democracy as they fail to respect and act on genuine democratic ideals.

The problems plaguing our democracy are not only ones of disaffection and disillusionment. The greatest threats come in the form of the rise of three dominating, antidemocratic dogmas. These three dogmas, promoted by the most powerful forces in our world, are rendering American democracy vacuous. The first dogma of free-market fundamentalism posits the unregulated and unfettered market as idol and fetish. This glorification of the market has led to a callous corporate-dominated political economy in which business leaders (their wealth and power) are to be worshipped-even despite the recent scandals-and the most powerful corporations are delegated magical powers of salvation rather than relegated to democratic scrutiny concerning both the ethics of their business practices and their treatment of workers. This largely unexamined and unquestioned dogma that supports the policies of both Democrats and Republicans in the United States-and those of most political parties in other parts of the world-is a major threat to the quality of democratic life and the well-being of most peoples across the globe. It yields an obscene level of wealth inequality, along with its corollary of intensified class hostility and hatred. It also redefines the terms of what we should be striving for in life, glamorizing materialistic gain, narcissistic pleasure, and the pursuit of narrow individualistic preoccupations-especially for young people here and abroad.

Free-market fundamentalism-just as dangerous as the religious fundamentalisms of our day-trivializes the concern for public interest. The overwhelming power and influence of plutocrats and oligarchs in the economy put fear and insecurity in the hearts of anxiety-ridden workers and render money-driven, poll-obsessed elected officials deferential to corporate goals of profit, often at the cost of the common good. This illicit marriage of corporate and political elites-so blatant and flagrant in our time-not only undermines the trust of informed citizens in those who rule over them. It also promotes the pervasive sleepwalking of the populace, who see that the false prophets are handsomely rewarded with money, status, and access to more power. This profit-driven vision is sucking the democratic life out of American society.

In short, the dangerous dogma of free-market fundamentalism turns our attention away from schools to prisons, from workers' conditions to profit margins, from health clinics to high-tech facial surgeries, from civic associations to pornographic Internet sites, and from children's care to strip clubs. The fundamentalism of the market puts a premium on the activities of buying and selling, consuming and taking, promoting and advertising, and devalues community, compassionate charity, and improvement of the general quality of life. How ironic that in America we've moved so quickly from Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Let Freedom Ring!" to "Bling! Bling!"-as if freedom were reducible to simply having material toys, as dictated by free-market fundamentalism.

The second prevailing dogma of our time is aggressive militarism, of which the new policy of preemptive strike against potential enemies is but an extension. This new doctrine of U.S. foreign policy goes far beyond our former doctrine of preventive war. It green-lights political elites to sacrifice U.S. soldiers-who are disproportionately working class and youth of color-in adventurous crusades. This dogma posits military might as salvific in a world in which he who

has the most and biggest weapons is the most moral and masculine, hence worthy of policing others. In practice, this dogma takes the form of unilateral intervention, colonial invasion, and armed occupation abroad. It has fueled a foreign policy that shuns multilateral cooperation of nations and undermines international structures of deliberation. Fashioned out of the cowboy mythology of the American frontier fantasy, the dogma of aggressive militarism is a lone-ranger strategy that employs "spare-no-enemies" tactics. It guarantees a perennial resorting to the immoral and base manner of settling conflict, namely, the perpetration of the very sick and cowardly terrorism it claims to contain and eliminate. On the domestic front, this dogma expands police power, augments the prison-industrial complex, and legitimates unchecked male power (and violence) at home and in the workplace. It views crime as a monstrous enemy to crush (targeting poor people) rather than as an ugly behavior to change (by addressing the conditions that often encourage such behavior).

As with the bully on the block, one's own interests and aims define what is moral and one's own anxieties and insecurities dictate what is masculine. Yet the use of naked force to resolve conflict often backfires. The arrogant hubris that usually accompanies this use of force tends to lead toward instability-and even destruction-in the regions where we have sought to impose our will. Violence is readily deployed by those who cloak themselves in innocence-those unwilling to examine themselves and uninterested in counting the number of innocent victims they kill. Note the Bush administration's callous disregard for both the U.S. soldiers and innocent Iraqis killed in our recent adventurous invasion. The barbaric abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib is a flagrant example.

The third prevailing dogma in this historic moment is escalating authoritarianism. This dogma is rooted in our understandable paranoia toward potential terrorists, our traditional fear of too many liberties, and our deep distrust of one another. The Patriot Act is but the peak of an iceberg that has widened the scope of the repression of our hard-earned rights and hard-fought liberties. The Supreme Court has helped lead the way with its support of the Patriot Act. There are, however, determined democrats on the Court who are deeply concerned, as expressed in a recent speech of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg: "On important issues," she said, "like the balance between liberty and security, if the public doesn't care, then the security side is going to overweigh the other." The cowardly terrorist attacks of 9/11 have been cannon fodder for the tightening of surveillance. The loosening of legal protection and slow closing of meaningful access to the oversight of governmental activities-measures deemed necessary in the myopic view of many-are justified by the notion that safety trumps liberty and security dictates the perimeters of freedom.

Meanwhile the market-driven media-fueled by our vast ideological polarization and abetted by profit-hungry monopolies-have severely narrowed our political "dialogue." The major problem is not the vociferous shouting from one camp to the other; rather it is that many have given up even being heard. We are losing the very value of dialogue-especially respectful communication-in the name of the sheer force of naked power. This is the classic triumph of authoritarianism over the kind of questioning, compassion, and hope requisite for any democratic experiment.

We have witnessed similar developments in our schools and universities-increasing monitoring of viewpoints, disrespecting of those with whom one disagrees, and foreclosing of the common ground upon which we can listen and learn. The major culprit here is not "political correctness," a term coined by those who tend to trivialize the scars of others and minimize the suffering of victims while highlighting their own wounds. Rather the challenge is mustering the courage to scrutinize all forms of dogmatic policing of dialogue and to shatter all authoritarian strategies of silencing voices. We must respect the scars and wounds of each one of us-even if we are sometimes wrong (or right!).

Democracy matters are frightening in our time precisely because the three dominant dogmas of free-market fundamentalism, aggressive militarism, and escalating authoritarianism are snuffing out the democratic impulses that are so vital for the deepening and spread of democracy in the world. In short, we are experiencing the sad American imperial devouring of American democracy. This historic devouring in our time constitutes an unprecedented gangsterization of America-an unbridled grasp at power, wealth, and status. And when the most powerful forces in a society-and an empire-promote a suffocation of democratic energies, the very future of genuine democracy is jeopardized.

How ironic that 9/11-a vicious attack on innocent civilians by gangsters-becomes the historic occasion for the full-scale gangsterization of America. Do we now live in a post-democratic age in which the very "democratic" rhetoric of an imperial America hides the waning of a democratic America? Are there enough democratic energies here and abroad to fight for and win back our democracy given the undeniable power of the three dominant dogmas that fuel imperial America? Or will the American empire go the way of the Leviathans of the past-the Roman, Ottoman, Soviet, and British empires? Can any empire resist the temptation to become drunk with the wine of world power or become intoxicated with the hubris and greed of imperial possibilities? Has not every major empire pursued quixotic dreams of global domination-of shaping the world in its image and for its interest-that resulted in internal decay and doom? Can we committed democrats avert this world-historical pattern and possible fate?

Our fundamental test may lie in our continuing response to 9/11. With the last remnants of the repressive Soviet empire (North Korea and Cuba) proud yet weak, the post-imperial European Union in search of an identity and unity, the Asian powers steady but hesitant, and African and Latin American regimes still grappling with postcolonial European and U.S. economic domination, the American empire struts across the globe like a behemoth. We have built up uncontested military might, undeniable cultural power, and transnational corporate and financial hegemony-yet with a huge trade deficit, budget deficit, and intensifying class, racial, religious, and ideological warfare at home. During the cold war, these internal conflicts were often contained by focusing on a common external foe-Communism. Then, for a brief decade, Americans turned on one another in "the culture wars." The well-financed right wing convinced many fellow citizens that the Left-from progressive professors to neo-liberal Clintonites, multicultural artists to mainstream feminists, gay and lesbian activists to ecological preservationists-was leading America over the abyss. After 9/11, unity seemed possible-but only if it fit the mold of a narrow patriotism and a revenge-driven lust for a war on terrorism.

And as the old-style imperialism of the new hawks in the Bush administration made manifest-through subtle manipulation and outright mendacity-the newly aggressive American empire would not only police the world in light of its interests but also impose its imperial vision and policy-by hook or by crook-on a sleepwalking U.S. citizenry.

Ironically, this vision and policy is, in some ways, continuous with those of earlier administrations that rarely questioned the dogmas of free-market fundamentalism (look at the disaster of Clinton's NAFTA on Canada and Mexico), aggressive militarism (abusive police power in poor communities of color at home), and escalating authoritarianism (targeted crime fighting and mandatory sentencing for incarceration). But the coarse and unabashed imperial devouring of democracy of the Bush administration is a low point in America's rocky history of sustaining its still evolving experiment in democracy. And now instead of Communism as our external foe we have Islamic terrorism. In addition, the prevailing conservative culture has made the Left-progressives and liberals-internal enemies. They are considered out of step with the drumbeat of patriots, who defer to the imperial aims, free-market policies, cultural conservative views, and personal pieties of the Bush administration. To put it bluntly, we have reached a rare fork in the road of American history.

Democracy matters require that we keep track of the intimate link between domestic issues and foreign policies. Like the empires of old-especially the Roman and British ones-what we do abroad affects what we can do here and what we do here shapes what we can do abroad. Probably the most difficult challenge facing our democracy, in the near term at any rate, is that of the centrality of Middle East politics for the American empire. If we are to stabilize the world and enrich democracy in the world, we must confront the anti-Semitic hostility of oil-rich autocratic Arab regimes to Israel's very existence, as well as Israelis' occupation and subjugation of Palestinian lands and people. We must act more decisively to stop both the barbaric Palestinian suicide bombers' murdering of innocent Israeli civilians and the inhumane Israeli military attacks on unarmed Palestinian refugees. These explosive issues test the capacity of all Americans to engage in a respectful and candid dialogue; indeed, they may be pivotal in determining the destiny of American democracy.

The ugly terrorist attacks on innocent civilians on 9/11 plunged the whole country into the blues. Never before have Americans of *all* classes, colors, regions, religions, genders, and sexual orientations felt unsafe, unprotected, subject to random violence, and hated. Yet to have been designated and treated as a nigger in America for over 350 years has been to feel unsafe, unprotected, subject to random violence, and hated. The high point of the black response to American terrorism (or niggerization) is found in the compassionate and courageous voice of Emmett Till's mother, who stepped up to the lectern at Pilgrim Baptist Church in Chicago in 1955 at the funeral of her fourteen-year-old son, after his murder by American terrorists, and said: "I don't have a minute to hate. I'll pursue justice for the rest of my life." And that is precisely what Mamie Till Mobley did until her death in 2003. Her commitment to justice had nothing to do with naïveté. When Mississippi officials tried to keep any images of Emmett's brutalized body out of the press-his head had swollen to five times its normal size-Mamie Till Mobley held an open-casket service for all the world to see. That is the essence of the blues: to

stare painful truths in the face and persevere without cynicism or pessimism.

Much of the future of democracy in America and the world hangs on grasping and preserving the rich democratic tradition that produced the Douglasses, Kings, Coltranes, and Mobleys in the face of terrorist attacks and cowardly assaults. Since 9/11 we have experienced the niggerization of America, and as we struggle against the imperialistic arrogance of the us-versus-them, revenge-driven policies of the Bush administration, we as a blues nation must learn from a blues people how to keep alive our deep democratic energies in dark times rather than resort to the tempting and easier response of militarism and authoritarianism.

No democracy can flourish against the corruptions of plutocratic, imperial forces-or withstand the temptations of militarism in the face of terrorist hate-without a citizenry girded by these three moral pillars of Socratic questioning, prophetic witness, and tragicomic hope. The hawks and proselytizers of the Bush administration have professed themselves to be the guardians of American democracy, but there is a deep democratic tradition in this country that speaks powerfully against their nihilistic, antidemocratic abuse of power and that can fortify genuine democrats today in the fight against imperialism. That democratic fervor is found in the beacon calls for imaginative selfcreation in Ralph Waldo Emerson, in the dark warnings of imminent selfdestruction in Herman Melville, in the impassioned odes to democratic possibility in Walt Whitman. It is found most urgently and poignantly in the prophetic and powerful voices of the long black freedom struggle-from the democratic eloquence of Frederick Douglass to the soaring civic sermons of Martin Luther King Jr., in the wrenching artistic honesty of James Baldwin and Toni Morrison, and in the expressive force and improvisatory genius of the blues/jazz tradition, all forged in the night side of America and defying the demeaning strictures of white supremacy. The greatest intellectual, moral, political, and spiritual resources in America that may renew the soul and preserve the future of American democracy reside in this multiracial, rich democratic heritage.

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Interpreting the Enlightenment: Metaphysics, Critique, and Politics

By | 2004: Vol. 3, No. 3

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, amid the intellectual retrenchment consonant with the unending “war against terror,” the Enlightenment legacy has become-more than ever before-a contested terrain. Human rights is often used as an ideological excuse for the exercise of arbitrary power; the security of western states has served as a justification for the constriction of personal freedom; and, with flags flying, Christian fundamentalists have called for the defense of western “values.” The best of them-political liberty, social justice, and cosmopolitanism-are rooted in the Enlightenment, and they retain their radical character.

But not only the right is distorting them. These values have also come under assault from important intellectual representatives of the left: anarchists, communitarians, postmodernists, half-hearted liberals, and authoritarian socialists. Intellectual and political disorientation has been the result. Ideas long associated with reactionary movements-the privileging of experience over reason, national or ethnic identity over internationalism and cosmopolitanism, the community over the individual, custom over innovation, myth over science-have entered the thinking of the American left. Its partisans have thus become increasingly unclear about the tradition into which they fit and the purposes their politics should serve. The collapse of intellectual coherence on the left reflects the collapse of a purposeful politics from the left. Reconstructing such a politics depends upon appropriating the Enlightenment to meet new conditions.

Conservatives have, ironically, been more clear-sighted. In the past, they deplored the “nihilism” of the Enlightenment:1 its devastating assault on communal life, religious faith, social privilege, and traditional authority. Conservatives, and those even farther to the right, consistently rejected Enlightenment concerns with individualism, dissent, secularism, reform, and the primacy of critical reflection. This differentiated them from the left. If many leading conservatives now insist upon the importance of “reason” in chastising radical reformers in the West and the advocates of Islam in the Orient, indeed, their “cultural” appropriation truncates the radical spirit of the Enlightenment and its critical ethos.2

The defense of western civilization by conservative intellectuals is, unsurprisingly, mixed with anti-Enlightenment and anti-modern prejudices. They obsess about sexual license and the decline of family values, cultural “nihilism” and the loss of tradition, tolerance for divergent life-styles and the erosion of national identity. Their “west” is not the “west” of the Enlightenment. Those conservatives most concerned about the coming “death of the west,” in fact, sound like their forefathers who feared “the age of reason” and later the destruction of

privileges associated with an obviously white and Christian world.3 Discussion of the Enlightenment has nonetheless become skewed to the right; the radical moment has dropped out. It is no longer treated as the razor that divides "left" and right." If there is any legitimacy to claims concerning the increasing irrelevance of fundamental political distinctions, indeed, here lies the historical source.

With its emphasis upon autonomy, tolerance, and reason-no less than its attack upon received traditions, popular prejudices, and religious superstitions-the Enlightenment was generally recognized as the foundation for any kind of progressive politics. Dialectic of Enlightenment by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, however, dramatically undermined that perception. Published in 1947, written in a period marked by the previously unimaginable slaughter of two world wars, the emergence of mass culture, bureaucratic states, and what Daniel Rousset called "the concentration camp universe," this book was an interdisciplinary experiment. Neither a work of history, anthropology, sociology, nor politics, it instead combined these disciplines to remarkable effect and turned the accepted notion of progress upside down. The scientific method of the Enlightenment, according to the authors, may have originally intended to serve the ideals of human liberation in an assault upon religious dogma. Yet the power of scientific reason ultimately wound up being directed not merely against the gods, but all metaphysical ideas-including conscience and freedom-as well. "Knowledge" became divorced from "information," norms from facts, and the scientific method, increasingly freed from any commitment to liberation, transformed nature into an object of domination, and itself into a whore employed by the highest bidder.

"Instrumental reason" was seen as merging with what Marx termed the "commodity form" underpinning capitalist social relations. Everything thereby became subject to the calculation of costs and benefits. Even art and aesthetic tastes would become defined by a "culture industry"-intent only upon maximizing profits by seeking the lowest common denominator for its products. Instrumental rationality was thus seen as stripping the supposedly "autonomous" individual, envisioned by the philosophes, of both the means and the will to resist manipulation by totalitarian movements. Enlightenment now received two connotations: its historical epoch was grounded in an anthropological understanding of civilization that, from the first, projected the opposite of progress. This gave the book its power: Horkheimer and Adorno offered not simply the critique of some prior historical moment in time, but of all human development. This made it possible to identify enlightenment not with progress, as the philistine bourgeois might like to believe, but rather-unwittingly-with barbarism, Auschwitz, and what is still often called "the totally administered society."

Such is the picture painted by Dialectic of Enlightenment. But it should not be forgotten that its authors were concerned with criticizing enlightenment generally, and the historical epoch known as the Enlightenment in particular, from the standpoint of enlightenment itself: thus the title of the work. Their masterpiece was actually "intended to prepare the way for a positive notion of enlightenment, which will release it from entanglement in blind domination."4 Later, in fact, Horkheimer and Adorno even talked about writing a sequel that would have carried a title like "Rescuing the Enlightenment" (Rettung der Aufklärung).5 This reclamation project

was never completed, and much time has been spent speculating about why it wasn't. The reason, I believe, is that the logic of their argument ultimately left them with little positive to say. Viewing instrumental rationality as equivalent with the rationality of domination, and this rationality with an increasingly seamless bureaucratic order, no room existed any longer for a concrete or effective political form of opposition: Horkheimer would thus ultimately embrace a quasi-religious "yearning for the totally other" while Adorno became interested in a form of aesthetic resistance grounded in "negative dialectics." Their great work initiated a radical change in critical theory, but its metaphysical subjectivism surrendered any systematic concern with social movements and political institutions. Neither of them ever genuinely appreciated the democratic inheritance of the Enlightenment and thus, not only did they render critique independent of its philosophical foundations,6 but also of any practical interest it might serve.

Horkheimer and Adorno never really grasped that, in contrast to the system builder, the blinkered empiricist, or the fanatic, the philosophe always evidenced a "greater interest in the things of this world, a greater confidence in man and his works and his reason, the growing appetite of curiosity and the growing restlessness of the unsatisfied mind-all these things form less a doctrine than a spirit."7 Just as Montesquieu believed it was the spirit of the laws, rather than any system of laws, that manifested the commitment to justice, the spirit of Enlightenment projected the radical quality of that commitment and a critique of the historical limitations with which even its best thinkers are always tainted. Empiricists may deny the existence of a "spirit of the times." Nevertheless, the various of a given historical epoch can generate an ethos, an existential stance toward reality, or what might even be termed a "project" uniting the diverse participants in a broader intellectual trend or movement.8

The Enlightenment evidenced such an ethos and a peculiar stance toward reality with respect toward its transformation. Making sense of this, however, is impossible without recognizing what became a general stylistic commitment to clarity, communicability, and what rhetoricians term "plain speech." For their parts, however, Horkheimer and Adorno believed that resistance against the incursions of the culture industry justified the extremely difficult, if not often opaque, writing style for which they would become famous-or, better, infamous. Their esoteric and academic style is a far cry from that of Enlightenment intellectuals who debated first principles in public, who introduced freelance writing, who employed satire and wit to demolish puffery and dogma, and who were preoccupied with reaching a general audience of educated readers: Lessing put the matter in the most radical form in what became a popular saying-"Write just as you speak and it will be beautiful"-while, in a letter written to D'Alembert in April of 1766, Voltaire noted that "Twenty folio volumes will never make a revolution: it's the small, portable books at thirty sous that are dangerous. If the Gospel had cost 1,200 sesterces, the Christian religion would never have been established."9

Appropriating the Enlightenment for modernity calls for reconnecting with the vernacular. This does not imply some endorsement of anti-intellectualism. Debates in highly specialized fields, especially those of the natural sciences, obviously demand expertise and insisting that intellectuals must "reach the masses" has always been a questionable strategy.10 The subject

under discussion should define the language in which it is discussed and the terms employed are valid insofar as they illuminate what cannot be said in a simpler way. Horkheimer and Adorno, however, saw the matter differently. They feared being integrated by the culture industry, avoided political engagement, and turned freedom into the metaphysical-aesthetic preserve of the connoisseur. They became increasingly incapable of appreciating the egalitarian impulses generated by the Enlightenment and the ability of its advocates-Ben Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Thomas Paine, and Rousseau-to argue clearly and with a political purpose.11 Thus, whether or not their "critical" enterprise was "dialectically" in keeping with the impulses of the past, its assumptions prevented them from articulating anything positive for the present or the future.

The idea of reclaiming the Enlightenment means providing the sequel that Horkheimer and Adorno never wrote in a style they refused to employ as well as a "positive" view of tradition that links theory and practice.12 Little sympathy should be wasted on meta-theory for its inability to deal with historical conflicts or even that the classic work by Horkheimer and Adorno is different from the postmodern works it inspired:13 its intention, which was to criticize the Enlightenment from the standpoint of enlightenment itself, is not congruent with the result. We need to consider the actual movements with which enlightenment ideals, as against competing ideals, were connected. Highlighting the assault undertaken by the philosophes against the old feudal order and the international battle that was fought-from 1789 until 1939 and into the present–14 between liberal and socialist forces imbued with the Enlightenment heritage and those forces of religious reaction, conservative prejudice, and fascist irrationalism whose inspiration derived from what Isaiah Berlin initially termed the "Counter-Enlightenment," therefore becomes crucial.15 Without a sense of this battle, or what I elsewhere termed the "great divide" of modern political life, any discussion of the Enlightenment will necessarily take a purely academic form.

Dialectic of Enlightenment never grasped what was at stake in the conflict or interrogated its political history. Its authors never acknowledged that different practices and ideals are appropriate to different spheres of activity or that only confusion would result from substituting the affirmation of subjectivity, through aesthetic-philosophic criticism, for political resistance. Horkheimer and Adorno were no less remiss than their postmodern followers in ignoring the institutional preconditions for the free exercise of individual capacities. Striking indeed is how those most concerned about the "loss of subjectivity" have shown the least awareness about the practical role of genuinely democratic as against reactionary pseudo-universalism and the institutional lessons of totalitarianism.

Enlightenment values are still not hegemonic or establishmentarian. Authoritarianism is still rampant, most inhabitants of the world still suffer under the strictures of traditionalism, and earn less than $2 per day. The Enlightenment was always a movement of protest against the exercise of arbitrary power, the force of custom and ingrained prejudices, and the justification of social misery. Its spirit was the expression of a bourgeois class on the rise against the hegemonic feudal values of the established society and its political ideals are still subordinate to those of traditionalism and authoritarianism in most of the world. There should be no

mistake: though the philosophes were responding primarily to the world associated with “throne and altar,” the ideals of these thinkers remain relevant for even for nations without a feudal past like the United States. Western nations still carry the scars of racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, and class inequality.

Enlightenment thinkers evidenced anticipatory insights, speculations, and contradictory views on an extraordinary variety of issues. The less systematic the thinker, it is possible to assume, the more perverse the ways in which his or her ideas could be appropriated. Enlightenment thinkers, however, were rarely endorsed or embraced by conservative or fascist political movements: it is hard to imagine a bust of Locke or Voltaire sitting on the desk of Mussolini. The philosophes had their most profound impact on the Left: Locke and Kant influenced all manner of liberals, socialists, and anarchists. Beccaria, Holbach, and Adam Smith were deeply committed to moral development and social reform. Thomas Paine is among the founders of modern internationalism. There is hardly a genuinely democratic regime that is not indebted to Montesquieu. Enlightenment philosophers would inspire generations of those languishing under the weight of despotism and dogma. The extent to which their political contribution is forgotten is the extent to which the contemporary left will constantly find itself intellectually reinventing the wheel.

The Enlightenment privileged a critical reflection on society, its traditions, its ideologies, and its institutions. Its spirit was opposed from the beginning, both in terms of style and content, by the type of fanaticism evidenced yesterday by secular totalitarians and today by religious fundamentalists. Just as there is a spirit of the Enlightenment, there is a phenomenology of the anti-Enlightenment. The language of both has-often unwittingly-carried over into the modern age. A lack of awareness about the past, however, has undermined the ability to make sense of the present. Arguing that the Enlightenment with its emphasis upon civil liberties, tolerance, and humanism was-for example-somehow responsible for the “Terror” of the French Revolution or twentieth-century totalitarianism indulges the pseudo-dialectical sensibility without looking at political history, movements, or institutional practices. The entire political landscape is distorted by this view: its revision alone justifies the popular academic reinterpretation of the Enlightenment legacy.

Understanding the current clash between secularism and religious fundamentalism in the present, no less than the most profound political conflicts of the past, calls for first recognizing that the “Counter-Enlightenment” was not some “dialectical” response to the success of the Enlightenment but an immediate response, born of fear and loathing, against everything associated with its spirit. Perversions of the original impulse still go unacknowledged. Enlightenment values run directly counter to the exercise of arbitrary power no less than the censorship, collectivism, and conformism of authoritarian or totalitarian regimes of both the left and the right. It was also not that the Enlightenment somehow blended with its opposite, the Counter-Enlightenment, but that-from the first-two traditions confronted one another. The hatred between them only intensified in the aftermath of the age of democratic revolution and the epic battle would culminate in Auschwitz.

The Enlightenment is not a trans-historical anthropological dynamic, or a disembodied set of epistemological propositions, but rather a composite of views unified by similar political ideals and social aims. As against contemporary critical theorists and postmodernists, the philosophes were clear about the basic values underlying their enterprise. They shared a fundamental concern with constricting the exercise of arbitrary institutional power and expanding the realm of individual autonomy. This connection between politics and ethics is growing weaker. Enough understand "experience" and intuition as enough in resisting power. But they are not enough. Indeed, since "Western civilization is essentially political, and politics has been its vital center throughout the modern period, . . . to restore ethical values means to revive political theory, and to achieve this what is needed is a return to the ideas of the eighteenth century, to pick up the threads where they were then dropped or broken off."16

That is the purpose behind this particular appropriation of the Enlightenment. Excellent research has been done on the tradition deriving from Spinoza and lesser-known figures of the period concerned with fostering gender and racial equality as well as radical understandings of democracy and community: it is even legitimate to distinguish between the "radical" and the "conservative" or "moderate" Enlightenment.17 But this is better done in hindsight. It was ultimately the "liberal" element that inspired progressive movements for suffrage, abolition of the slave trade, civil liberties, and progressive labor legislation during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The point was to highlight the rule of law and introduce constraints upon the arbitrary exercise of institutional power. These concerns made uncomfortable even "enlightened" monarchs like Frederick the Great who insisted that "the passions of rulers have no other curbs but the limits of their power." They also inspired virtually every major intellectual representative of the socialist labor movement from Eduard Bernstein to Rosa Luxemburg as surely as the best among the Bolsheviks, and libertarian anarchists like Gustav Landauer, Victor Serge, Augustin Souchy, and Murray Bookchin. The concerns of these radical heirs of the Enlightenment, if not always their solutions, retain their relevance.

Again: the political spirit of the Enlightenment crystallized around the principles connected with fostering the accountability of institutions, reciprocity under the law, and a commitment to experiment with social reform. Not in imperialism, or racism, or the manipulation of liberty, but in these ideals lies the basis of Enlightenment universalism. Democracy remains an empty word without it. Enlightenment universalism protects rather than threatens the exercise of subjectivity. It presumes to render institutions accountable, a fundamental principle of democracy, and thereby create the preconditions for expanding individual freedom. Such a view would inform liberal movements concerned with civil liberties as well as socialist movements seeking to constrain the power of capital. Reciprocity can be understood in the same way: it, too, underpins the liberal idea of the citizen with its inherently democratic imperative-against all prejudice-to include "the other" as well as the socialist refusal to identify the working person as a mere "cost of production." The Enlightenment notion of political engagement, indeed, alone keeps democracy fresh and alive.

Ideals such as these provide an enduring foundation for opposing contemporary infringements on individual rights and dignity by new global forms of capitalism, the imperatives of the

culture industry, and parochial biases of every sort. They constitute the radical quality of the Enlightenment, and its "positive" moment beyond the prejudices of its particular representatives. Too many on the fringes have been forgotten like the proto-socialist Mably or the proto-communist Morelly and, until the appearance of Radical Enlightenment (2001) by Jonathan Israel, even major intellectuals like Spinoza have not received the political recognition that they were due. But we should be concerned with something other than uncovering the past. It should instead be to reinvigorate the present, salvage the Enlightenment legacy, and contest those who would institutionally freeze its radicalism and strip away its protest character. Such an undertaking is important, moreover, since their efforts have been remarkably successful. Enlightenment thinking is seen by many as the inherently western ideology of the bourgeois gentleman, the Vernunftrepublikaner of the Weimar Republic, or characters like the "windbag" Settembrini who endured the sarcasm of totalitarians and the boredom of philistines in Thomas Mann's The Magic Mountain.

The idea of reclaiming the Enlightenment views its subject less as a dead historical artifact than as the necessary precondition for developing any form of progressive politics in the present. Understanding the Enlightenment, in this way, calls for opposing current fashions and conceits. Despite the existence of superb classic studies on the Enlightenment,18 the general trend of scholarship has tended to insist upon eliminating its unifying cosmopolitan spirit-its ethos-in favor of treating diverse national, religious, gender, generational, and regional "enlightenments."19 There is indeed always a danger of reifying the "Enlightenment" and ignoring the unique and particular moments of its expression. Edward Gibbon was a very different historian than Hume; Goethe criticized the theory of color advanced by Newton; Hobbes understood the state differently than Montesquieu; Voltaire and Rousseau differed over the social role of the theatre; the atheistic materialism of the Baron d'Holbach had little in common with the idealism of Kant. Different individuals in different circumstances produced different perspectives on reality. Nevertheless, what unified them made the cumulative impact of individual thinkers and national intellectual trends far greater than the sum of the parts.

Extraordinary was the way in which the philosophes evidenced a common resistance to parochial beliefs and the arrogance of power. By simply deconstructing the "Enlightenment," the forest gets lost for the trees. Radical tendencies within it like anti-imperialism thus often come to be seen either as historical anomalies or as simple interests of this or that thinker.20 It also becomes easy to forget that even before 1789, the anti-philosophes of the Counter-Enlightenment were busy "reconciling and uniting their enemies well beyond their extreme differences, attributing to them common aims and common ends. Tautology aside, there is much truth to the claim that the Counter-Enlightenment invented the Enlightenment."21

If there was no "Enlightenment," but only discrete forms of intellectual activity falling loosely under its rubric, why should the political enemies of this international trend have been the same? These representatives of church and tradition-who so vigorously opposed democracy and equality, revolution and reform, cosmopolitanism and internationalism, skepticism and science-formed a "Counter-Enlightenment International" even before the French Revolution.22 Academic historians have attempted to interpret the Enlightenment as a series of internal

debates around important intellectual “flashpoints.”23 They have highlighted what the Enlightenment had in common with its enemies like the Church;24 and the resentment of its lesser known against its more famous representatives.25 They have also emphasized the different connotations behind the terms Enlightenment, Aufklärung, Les lumieres, Illuminismo.

Nowhere is the political conflict between the Enlightenment and the Counter-Enlightenment, however, given center stage: it is as if the revolutionary quality of Cezanne were to be appreciated without referring to the most famous aesthetically conservative artists of his time. Perhaps in our apolitical age the primacy of such apolitical interpretations only makes sense. But the implications are clear: insofar as the savage political conflict between different ideologies is ignored, especially since it plays such an important role in understanding contemporary politics, the Enlightenment will be turned into a lifeless object of interest only to historical connoisseurs. The ability to evaluate its failings and those of its most important representatives is also, thereby severely compromised.

There weren’t many saints among the philosophes. Even the most anticipatory form of philosophy retains residues, reactionary assumptions, and prejudices, from its historical context. Some figures of the Enlightenment look better than others with references to the stupidities of their time. But there is no comparing the views on women, religious minorities, and civil liberties of the philosophes with representatives of the Counter-Enlightenment who opposed every progressive measure to improve the condition of women, sought to keep Jews in the ghetto, and feared democracy and social reform like the plague. Usually ignored is the question concerning what it was reasonable to expect from these intellectuals in their own historical context. It is impossible to excuse Voltaire for his anti-Semitism, but that is because other of his contemporaries, like Lessing or Montesquieu, held more egalitarian and sophisticated views. Rousseau and Kant can be condemned for their support of the death penalty precisely because others like Beccaria and Voltaire understood its barbarity. But it is foolish simply to introduce an abstract standard of what is currently considered politically correct. Indeed, by reducing ideas to the prejudices of their usually white, male, and western authors, many supposedly progressive historical interrogations of the past actually wind up tossing the historical context by the wayside.

Confronting such biases in progressive terms is furthermore possible only from the standpoint of the Enlightenment with its liberal and socialist inheritance. There is little of organizational or ethical importance that the Counter-Enlightenment or the present assortment of “post-enlightenment” philosophies has to offer the struggle of the excluded and exploited. Viewing the Enlightenment as irremediably tainted by anachronistic prejudices only casts a plague on all houses. No need exists to compare the views of the philosophes and the fanatics: both are prejudiced with regard to race or sex or sexual practice and that is that. Forgotten is that the former can be held to their own ethical standards of progress while the latter cannot because they rejected those standards in the first place. This little volume seeks to illuminate not simply the “differences,” but the qualitative differences between essentially progressive movements that embraced the political implications of the Enlightenment and essentially reactionary movements that resisted it.

Movements often show their weakness by the way in which they, whether consciously or unconsciously, appropriate the thinking of their adversaries. This is particularly true of the contemporary left. Enough “liberals” now suggest that liberal regimes must rest on a homogeneous national community with shared cultural values; others influenced by postmodern ideology view universal concepts as complicit with domination and as a threat to their particular identities; “western” ideas no less than the philosophies generating them are strenuously contested by self-styled radical anti-imperialists whose “nonwestern” beliefs are associated with indigenous religious traditions and romanticized visions of an organic society.26 There are still those who laud the liberal heritage, often without admitting its complicity in the violence produced by capitalism, and others like Neil Postman who properly emphasized the importance of “building a bridge” to the eighteenth century in order to recapture its lost humanism.27 But the more fashionable interpretations suggest that the Enlightenment has lost its relevance,28 or that its importance was always overrated in comparison with the salacious and anti-authoritarian popular literature of the time.29

The Enlightenment may not have produced the best of all possible worlds and, admittedly, the importance of ideas and intellectuals is often overestimated. But the philosophes surely shaped the progressive political discourse of modernity. Even their enemies have manipulated their line of argument. Too much time is now spent in abstract discussion of the tension between “liberty” and “equality” especially since, in general, right-wing movements-ranging from hard-line conservatives to old-fashioned totalitarians to the new supporters of fundamentalism-have had no trouble attacking both. It is true that establishmentarian elites employ the notion of rights to defend capitalist property relations and keep subaltern groups in their place. But it is also true that such an undertaking requires transforming what might be termed the protest character of the Enlightenment into a set of unassailable legal claims that benefit elites.

Democratic society was initially understood as an experiment that developed hand in hand with the liberation of the critical spirit. But the belief still persists that Enlightenment thinkers were preoccupied with finding a single absolute truth that explains all of reality, and the character of correct conduct in all circumstances.30 Many radicals are also repulsed by the anti-populist sentiments and the toleration of religion exhibited by major representatives of the Enlightenment, their acceptance of the state, their sexist and racist prejudices, their elitism and their Eurocentrism, their scientism and their eradication of subjectivity in the name of universal abstractions. That various philosophes harbored such beliefs is irrefutable; that the Enlightenment ethos is reducible to them, however, is unsustainable.

What has been called the Enlightenment may no longer seem particularly radical: its most important values seem to have been realized.31 Indulging in this belief, however, would be a mistake. The 11th of September only highlights what should already have been obvious: the need remains for an unrelenting assault on religious fanaticism not merely of the Islamic variety, but of the sort promulgated by “born again” Christians, biblical literalists, Protestant sects intent upon converting the Jewish infidels, and all those who would bring their revealed certainties-contested by others with other revealed certainties-into the mainstream of public life. The Enlightenment may have had a transforming impact upon religion itself.32 But its

mainstream institutions fought against what Sir Karl Popper termed the “open society” virtually every step of the way. Every concession to the march of progress made by religion was the product of unremitting pressure by its opponents.

Reason is not the enemy of experience. Nothing is more foolish than to confuse a reactionary pseudo-universalism with the genuinely democratic universalism that underpins the liberal rule of law, the constraint of arbitrary power, and the free exercise of subjectivity. Probably no group of intellectuals, in fact, was more aware of the contributions offered by different cultures than the philosophes who prized the early agricultural societies that never encountered Christianity like the Amer-Indians and who looked with such respect at Tahiti, the Near East, and the Orient. Their information about these exotic regions was admittedly suspect, much of it was completely half-baked, and the philosophes often romanticized their subjects. But, still, they looked to these cultures as a source for new experiences and, generally speaking, the sympathy they extended to them was genuine. Skepticism concerning the inflexible claims of national and religious dogma links the Enlightenment with a political undertaking intent upon making society more democratic, more cosmopolitan, and more experimental.

Just as the philosophes saw science not merely as an ordering device but as a self-critical method that could be used in the fight for liberation from outdated prejudices and dogmas, their view of aesthetics called upon individuals to expand the realm of their experience. Rousseau was not alone in claiming that “the education of man begins at birth.” Diderot called for the enjoyment of sexuality for its own sake and, though the Abbé Prévost may have warned against the dangers of unbridled passion and disrespect for superiors, his Manon Lescaut had the opposite effect: it also helped forge the image of America as a land without “the arbitrary laws of rank and convention.”33 Voltaire satirized the man who would understand the world through reason alone; and Kant understood aesthetic experience as a form of “purposeful purposelessness.” The philosophes were not colorless academics or puritanical reformers, but individuals who gloried in their eccentricities and who sought not merely to educate their minds, but also to educate their sentiments and sensibilities.

Illuminating the spirit of the Enlightenment, the best that it had to offer, is the place to begin. But this involves envisioning a loose assemblage of intellectuals as an international intellectual movement intent upon changing the world-ideologically, politically, socially, and economically. It means viewing the democratic revolutions in England, the United States, Europe, and beyond as part of a single undertaking. This requires a shift in interpretive perspective. Especially when the salience of the Enlightenment can no longer be taken for granted, when its values have come under attack from both the right and the left, more is necessary than analyzing a few thinkers or some abstract philosophical propositions about history, nature, and “man.” It is a matter of presenting the Enlightenment as an overarching political enterprise and a living tradition-not merely in its ideas but in the actions it inspires.

Notes

1.John Ralston, Voltaire’s Bastards: The Dictatorship of Reason in the West (New York: Free

Press, 1992); Alisdair MacIntyre, After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984).

2. Note the huge anthology in which essays deal with everything from “civil science” to “philosophical sex” without any concern for the political legacy of the Enlightenment. Cf. Enlightenment, Passion, Modernity: Historical Essays in European Thought and Culture edited by Mark S. Micale and Robert Dietle (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

3. Patrick J. Buchanan, The Death of the West: How Dying Populations and Immigrant Invasions Imperil Our Country and Civilization (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2002).

4. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment trans. John Cumming (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972), xvi.

5. Max Horkheimer, Gesammelte Schriften 20 Bde. hrsg. Alfred Schmidt und Gunzelin Schmid Norr (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1989) 17: 873, 884.

6. Jürgen Habermas, The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twleve Lectures trans. Frederic Lawrence (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), 116.

7. John C. Gagliardo, Enlightened Despotism (Wheeling, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, 1967), 20.

8. Peter Gay, The Party of Humanity: Essays in the French Enlightenment (New York: Norton, 1954), 112.

9. Cited in ibid., 36.

10. Stephen Eric Bronner, “Critical Intellectuals, Politics, and Society” in Imagining the Possible: Radical Politics for Conservative Times (New York: Routledge, 2002), 73ff.

11. For the philosophe, “it was part of his new self-image as representative of society at large and of his pragmatic approach to affairs of the mind that he adhered to no academic protocol but wrote in whatever form would attract the widest interest, be most appropriate to the subject of the moment, and act with best narcotic effect on the official censors of church and state.” Leonard Krieger, Kings and Philosophers, 16891789 (New York: Norton, 1970), 15556.

12. Note the more extensive discussion in Stephen Eric Bronner, Ideas in Action: Political Tradition in the Twentieth Century (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 1ff.

13. Daniel Gordon, “On the Supposed Obsolescence of the French Enlightenment” in Postmodernism and the Enlightenment: New Perspectives in Eighteenth-Century French Intellectual History ed. Daniel Gordon (New York: Routledge, 2001), 206

14. Arthur Rosenberg, Democracy and Socialism: A Contribution to the Political History of the Past 150 Years (New York: Knopf, 1939).

15. Isaiah Berlin, “The Counter-Enlightenment” in Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas ed. Henry Hardy (New York: Viking, 1980), 1ff.

16. Alfred Cobban, In Search of Humanity: The Role of the Enlightenment in Modern History (New York: George Braziller, 1960), 27.

17. Jonathan Israel, Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 16501750 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); also, Margaret C. Jacob, The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans (London: Allen & Unwin, 1981).

18. Note in particular, Ernst Cassirer, The Philosophy of the Enlightenment trans. Fritz C.A. Koellen and James P. Pettegrove (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951).

19. “The Enlightenment has exploded. Coming under the immense weight of new scholarship, since the mid-Seventies, it has been fragmented into a plethora of Enlightenments. To the dismay of word processor spell-checkers, the plural form of the English term is currently used almost as often as the singular. In German, Aufklärungen is making a parallel entry. The French, whether by grammatical chance or by prophetic common wisdom, have always had les lumières in the plural mode.” Fania Oz-Salzberger, “New Approaches towards a History of the Enlightenment: Can Disparate Perspectives Make a General Picture?” in Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte Bd. XXIX (Gerlingen: Bleicher Verlag, 2000), 171.

20 Introducing the general category of “Enlightenment” is a practical necessity for understanding the plurality of particulars. Its existence is implicit in any study of the period or any other equally general concern like eighteenth-century thought. This often becomes evident, apparently against the intentions of the author, in an otherwise fine study where it is argued that: “A study of Enlightenment anti-imperialism offers a richer and more accurate portrait of eighteenth century political thought . . . and simultaneously . . . that the Enlightenment’ as such and the notion of an overarching Enlightenment project’ simply do not exist.” Sankar Muthu, Enlightenment Against Empire (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 3, 264.

21. Darrin M. McMahaon, Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 32.

22. Ibid., 106ff.

23. Dorinda Outram, The Enlightenment (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 3. b

24. Carl Becker, The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932).bb

25. Robert Darnton, “The High Enlightenment and the Low-life of History in Pre-Revolutionary France” in Past and Present, 51 (1971), 81115.

26. Rajani Kannepalli Kanth, Breaking with the Enlightenment: The Twilight of History and the Rediscovery of Utopia (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1997), 94ff.

27. Neil Postman, Building a Bridge to the 18th Century: How the Past Can Improve Our Future (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999).

28. John Gray, Enlightenment's Wake: Politics and Culture at the End of the Modern Age (London: Routledge, 1995).

29. Robert Darnton, The Forbidden Bestsellers of Pre-Revolutionary France (New York: Norton, 1995). For an excellent critique see Thomas Munck, The Enlightenment: A Comparative Social History 17211794 (London: Arnold, 2000), pgs. 76ff and passim. Also, Reinhart Koselleck, Kritik und Krise (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973).

30. Isaiah Berlin, "Giambattista Vico and Cultural History" in The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas ed. Henry Hardy (New York: Vintage, 1992), 51; also, Alisdair MacIntyre, Whose Justice, Which Rationality? (Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 6.

31. Robert Anchor, The Enlightenment Tradition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 58.

32. David Sorkin, Moses Mendelssohn and the Religious Enlightenment (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

33. Anchor, The Enlightenment Tradition, 51.

Fahrenheit 9/11: The Real Lowdown

By | 2004: Vol. 3, No. 3

Agitprop, by any other name, is still agitprop. Even our heartiest approval of a refreshingly candid viewpoint within this dubious medium doesn't change that fact. But so what? In the trumped-up second Gulf war, didn't the mainstream U.S. media, as anchorman Dan Rather admitted with the saving grace of traces of shame, operate, as if by a tap of a wicked witch's wand, as an enormous fawning agitprop apparatus for the Bush White House? Agitprop is what every government assiduously churns out every day in calculated streams of tactical news bites, although the purveyors usually give it a suitably anodyne label, such as "public information." The disingenuous official briefings that reporters in Vietnam dubbed the "Five O'Clock Follies" have since been resurrected and refined into holy writ, especially in the watch-the-bomb-scoot-down-the-chimney cable news networks, among which Fox is only the worst offender. Can we have some whopping correctives, please?

Agitprop is customarily dismissed as politically skewed messages wrapped in the guise of art or news reporting. Yet the redoubtable Michael Moore, after a mercifully brief dalliance with presidential candidate and former NATO commander Wesley Clarke, owes no special party allegiances and loudly tells anyone who wants to know that his cunningly corrosive and hundred million dollar grossing *Fahrenheit 9/11* is damned well intended to capsize (if not abet the impeachments of) the floundering Bush administration. Most agitprop these ultra-hip days is heavily cloaked as dispassionate analysis, not as ringing calls to man the barricades or, or more to the point, flock to local polling places to throw out the bums. With that infinitely affable tenacity that is his gift and trademark, Moore has become the insistent inquisitive voice of everyday Americans who wear their baseball caps unfashionably peak forward, and want to know what the hell is really going on.

In *Fahrenheit 9/11* Moore deftly strings together a chain of seamy episodes into a big picture of the media manipulation of that huge chunk of working America informed, if that is the word, mostly by glossy TV and radio networks, or by a remarkably servile local press. You needn't peruse David Brock's *The Republican Noise Machine* or Joe Conason's *Big Lies* or anything by Robert McChesney to notice the monotonous right wing tone of U.S. airwaves-just hit "scan" on your car radio or flip through eighty-seven TV channels and find nothing (else) on news stations. An incandescent right-wing rage erupts today because Moore miraculously managed to break-maybe just sprain-the Right's grip on misreporting the news. If he accomplishes nothing else, Moore finally is getting the word out that Al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein had nothing to do with one another. The circulation of that piquant fact alone is a public service for which to smooch the ground Moore walks on. In a mass media vehicle, Bush at last wears a tall dunce's cap, and not the avenging angel's wings that his righteous supporters imagine.

The big guns were rolled out. Christopher Hitchens, in a typical deviously reasoned essay,

assails *Fahrenheit 9/11* as “a sinister exercise in moral frivolity, crudely disguised as an exercise in seriousness.” For Hitchens, a born-again Bush apologist, the horde of contradictions that Moore vividly points out infest Bush’s antiterrorism policy are grist to be twisted sophistically into Moore’s own contradictions. Moore, for example, archly asks why so few U.S. troops were dispatched so tardily to catch bin Laden if Bush’s urgent concern were really terrorism. Moore also asks what influence the Saudis, as well as other major moneybags domestic and foreign, have exerted over U.S. policy. Hitchens, therefore, asserts that either the Saudis run U.S. policy or they do not. If not, then nothing the Saudis do matters. Now there’s a fine analytical mind for you. (Everything, by the way, according to Hitchens, is going swimmingly in arid Afghanistan, where nary a burqa mars the scenic landscape anymore.)

Coming into play is the twitty Brit view that only they savor the exquisiteness of irony while those perky Yanks cannot evolve beyond commonplace sarcasm. Because the pallid 9/11 Commission and Richard P. Clarke see nothing wrong with the peculiar nature of the Saudis’ exit, it’s okay then. Bush and Blair together are doing profound work. Iraq indeed was in noncompliance with UN resolutions, as were the U.S. and Israel, but never mind about them. There admittedly was a “bad period” when Washington preferred Saddam in the 1980s (and maybe a bit before), but, hey, that’s history. Hitchens credits the rumor that Saddam dispatched agents to snuff the elder Bush. For eleven years those sanctified no-fly zones were unilaterally imposed by Britain and the U.S., not the UN. Hitchens studiously misses any uncongenial point. Moore ridicules counterterrorism stinginess not because he craves massive spending but because the war on terror is plainly a pretext. The “matches and lighters” episode in the documentary underlines the hefty business influence upon an obliging government, at the minor cost of common sense. Blacks are happy to be in the Army, Hitchens says, because, you know, that’s what the civil rights movement was all about, although Martin Luther King might have had a word with Hitchens about this little misapprehension. He even equates Moore’s aversion to Bush with a hatred of “western democracy and an admiration of totalitarianism.” I’m not kidding. A jowly literal-mindedness smothers Hitchens, who by far is still the smartest of the multitude of critics.

Why all the fuss? Can a mere documentary decide the next U.S. presidential election? Moore, so far as the jittery Bush administration is concerned, is one the most dangerous critters at large in America. They rightly reckon that in a close race Moore is costing Bush many vital votes in November. No documentary ever before has exerted the seditious public impact that Moore’s *Fahrenheit 9/11* has made at the box office. If the numbers in the first few weeks are anything to go by, Moore is not just wittily preaching to the converted but reaching the shopping mall cineplex masses, a majority of whom still believe the carefully cultivated fib that Saddam Hussein instigated the 9/11 attacks. If not, then even more people may venture to ask just what was the point of the Iraq invasion and its soaring costs anyway?

Films rarely matter a whit in the real world except as money-spinning reaffirmations of conventional wisdoms and shopworn fantasies. In times of war, even undeclared wars, films reverently wave Old Glory and duly demonize the appointed foe. Commercial flicks are especially reluctant to upset popular prejudices and illusions, preferring to play along in order

to attract ticket-buying crowds. Yet Moore, creator of black-humored probes *Roger & Me* and *Bowling for Columbine*, slipped past the wary gatekeepers of the corporate entertainment industry to score a sizzling success. Far scarier than routine images of slavering foreign fanatics in faraway climes lusting to cut our throats is the sneaking suspicion that our own "wartime" government is the worst enemy that ordinary Americans now have: picking your pockets, grabbing your kids for service, spying on your toilet habits, raising prices, lying prolifically, gutting the Constitution, and violating civil liberties. If "by their deeds ye shall know them," then no one hates our freedom more than the devious denizens of the Bush administration do.

Moore's magical knack is capturing raw truths on screen that his audience may suspect but are too timid or unsure to say aloud. In the opening weeks of *Fahrenheit 9/11* people dashed to see his heart-achingly funny exposé of Bush's long trail of truculent twaddle, despite original distributor Disney stupidly having balked at releasing it. *Fahrenheit 9/11* publicizes blistering facts that ought to have been in plain sight all along. Behold footage of the 2001 inauguration where Bush's presidential stretch limo is pelted with eggs by crowds incensed at his theft of the election because of canny Florida vote-rigging, a staged "riot" of middle class Republican bullies to stop a county-level recount, and the inexcusable 5-4 decision by conservative Supreme Court appointees (two of whom should have recused themselves for having sons working for the Republican campaign) to select Bush who managed to mistake it for a coronation.

Is Moore just a simpering Democratic Party flack? Well, Moore does not shy away from displaying the spineless acquiescence of Democratic Party leaders to the 2000 electoral travesty. Not one senator of either party has the nerve to sign a demand by black congresspersons for a formal debate of certification of the 2000 election so as to address the deliberate illegitimate disenfranchisement of tens of thousands of black Florida voters, which helped hand the presidency to Bush-an outrage that has yet to be remedied. Al Gore, who chairs the proceedings, looks like a perfectly obliging fool. One can bet that, if positions were reversed, Republicans would have battled as fiercely and dirtily as possible. What is most shocking, though, is that many Americans never were informed because such scenes were withheld or underplayed by national news networks.

Still, the starkly clear news slowly dawns on bewildered Americans that there is nothing to which Bush's band of corporate bullies, neocon firebrands, and *faux* Christian fundamentalists would not stoop for the sake of grabbing more power. Moore insinuates that it is the authoritarian urges of George W. Bush, not Osama bin Laden, that have done most to make the USA an increasingly scary and strange land for its inhabitants. With bemused distaste *Fahrenheit 9/11* charts how wealthy cronies repeatedly bailed the young feckless Bush out of business flops in order to gain precious access to his former secret policeman daddy in the White House. Bush literally was lifted into multimillionaire status through the indulgent auspices of these influence-seeking big businessmen, and with lavish Saudi backing too. All these touchingly devoted pals deeply appreciate that there is no higher and quicker return on investment than that which can be gained through medleys of tax breaks, government

contracts, and other special favors.

The supremely idealized America that John Wayne valiantly defended in a myriad of 1950s movies is long gone. Bush, the self-styled “war president,” is actually the carefree and careless National Guard pilot during Vietnam, whose closest chum in that safe branch of the service soon became a Saudi representative. Moore cites the mammoth cash flow over three decades from the Saudis to Bush’s family and friends. Moore isn’t peddling a conspiracy theory, just painting a picture of coziness. Quid pro quo reigns way up there in the economic stratosphere and so, just a day or two after 9/11 over a hundred members of bin Laden’s billionaire clan get spirited out of the U.S. while police were tossing less well-connected foreigners into prisons, throwing away the keys and thumbing through recycled Gestapo manuals. Why Moore even has the gall to remind viewers (not that most ever had an inkling) that bin Laden was tenderly nurtured by U.S. agencies. In the 1980s in Afghanistan, the U.S. ponied up plenty of arms and cash for bin Laden and other feudal fundamentalists because a Soviet-backed modernizing regime obviously “hated the freedom” of those sweet Afghan war lords. Bush’s backers have quite a soft spot for feudal allies.

Moore’s patented in-your-face bonhomie is downright enchanting as he collars glib U.S. politicians who squirm or sprint away as he tries to enlist their children in the Iraq war they approved. For once, their smooth glad-handedness or Olympic disdain counts against them. Far better, Moore goes after a USA Patriot Act which was nothing but a shameless compilation of devoutly desired things that closet reactionaries yearned to impose the first chance they had. Moore circles Capitol Hill in a rickety ice cream van, reading passages of this draconian legislation that our legislators signed without going through the patriotic chore of reading first.

Moore, the blue collar boy, senses very savvily what tropes will get through to his audience. His mockery of the motley crew making up the “coalition of the willing” has drawn PC squeals in some purse-lipped quarters. (Do the Dutch really need defending against a languid hash-smoking stereotype?) The archetypal shot is Bush sitting eerily, cluelessly, in a primary school classroom for what seems like eons after being told of the 9/11 attacks-the very antonym of the cool “take charge” guy his handlers project. Then there’s Georgie boy in his nifty flight suit smirking on the carrier deck with that “Mission accomplished” banner unfurled like a tombstone inscription above. Bush’s macho threat vis-à-vis the Iraqi resistance to “smoke ’em out” intersects with a sublime cheap shot from a musty old cowboy flick of the sort where he picked up this lugubrious B-movie expression.

Moore shows how U.S. troops, mostly trawled by sharp-eyed recruiters from neighborhoods laid waste by neglect, were dispatched to serve the interests not of the nation but of Halliburton, Unocal, and Bechtel. An Iraqi family, raided at night by a snatch squad of GIs, weeps and trembles before their new masked masters. In wavering flashlight beams, tiny children cower as another “suspect” is swept up, mostly because he is fits that key criminal category: young man. Moore provides Abu Ghraib-like glimpses of routine racist mistreatment of liberated Iraqis. As Moore sadly says, “Immoral actions lead to more immoral actions.” Sordid systematic abuses are what happen when cynical elites send ignorant youngsters off to

fight for trumped-up reasons. The troops righteously imagine they are exacting revenge for 9/11. A stupefying lie. But what next?

A close relative of mine is an Army combat veteran who wandered by mistake long ago into the "closed ward" of a veterans' hospital where the unsightly cases are delicately tucked away. What he glimpsed inside left him shaken. You'd have to have seen his darting eyes as he told the tale. In *Fahrenheit 9/11* Moore unfurls the taboo images of ghastly wounds, charred corpses of U.S. mercenaries dangling on a bridge, and rows of flag-draped metal coffins. All so hush-hush. Yet even these hideous costs might be made marginally bearable if they really were necessary to ensure safety. No way. Moore's interview with parents of a dead American soldier peels away the reflex-like obedience that passes for patriotism in many quarters of America.

The real strife, Moore rousingly sums up, is a covert class war waged on Americans by their own callous leadership. This Orwellian "endless war" stirs fears and reduces citizens to suckers for the genuine agenda, which is upholding the social hierarchy and looting rights. Why else should the police plant spies inside innocuous do-gooder groups while Bush gives bin Laden a two month head start to get away, hmm? Why does this mendacious administration, which tried to cut counterterrorism funds before 9/11, try so hard to slash money for military veterans? Oil, of course, is far too vulgar a motive for our most sophisticated minds to accept as a key reason, if not the reason, for intruding into Iraq. The scene of American firms holding a dreary jamboree at which to divvy up the taxpayer-funded spoils of war is a clincher. If there is a glaring omission in *Fahrenheit 9/11*, it certainly is, as left critics complain, the intimate link of Bush neocons to the truculent Israeli right wing. Is Moore really more afraid of the Israeli lobby than of the Bush administration? An interesting, even instructive, question.

Moore flatly, scandalously, openly, says "j'accuse": that the reasons Americans are told they are fighting are hopelessly phony ones. The venerable repertoire of gimmicks that power elites rely on are not working terribly well nowadays. A CBS News/*New York Times* poll in mid-July finds a majority (51%) believe the U.S. should have left Iraq well enough alone. Almost two-third (62%) say the war has not been worth the cost. Apart from tens of thousands of dead and mutilated Iraqis, the war has exacted, at the lowball official estimates, some 900 American lives, 5,000 wounded and 250 billion dollars. Word is leaking out that the Bush people already are scrambling to contrive possible pretexts to suspend the November elections. One suspects too that there are fretful aides on their knees in the White House praying for another fundamentalist attack on the U.S.-and that a stray intergalactic meteor, dispatched by their cruel backwoods god named Mammon, strikes down Michael Moore.

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But on A Quiet Day . . . A Tribute to Arundhati Roy

By | 2004: Vol. 3, No. 3

Sometimes one feels like “tuning out.” Faced with the incessant noise of war planes and propaganda machines, one sometimes feels like stopping up one’s ears in order to shut out the world. The impulse is particularly strong in the “developed,” industrial North-given the fact that development almost invariably means a ratcheting up of the noise level. Although amply motivated, the attempt for many of us does not quite succeed. For, in muffling the roar of military-industrial noises, our ears become available for and attuned to a different kind of sound: the recessed voices of the persecuted and exploited, the anguished cries of the victims of development and military power. A great philosopher of the last century vividly described the tendency of modern lives to become submerged in societal noises, in the busy clamor of social conformism (what he called “*das Man*“). But he also indicated a different possibility, a different path involving a kind of turning-around or a movement leading from “tuning out” to a new kind of “tuning in.” In his portrayal, this attunement or tuning-in meant an opening of heart and mind to recessed voices drowned out by societal pressures: above all to the voice of “conscience” which calls us into mindfulness, into a new mode of careful being-in-the-world.

As one will note, conscience here does not call one into a solipsism far removed from the world, but rather onto a road leading more deeply into the world, into its agonies and hidden aspirations. Not long ago, such a call struck me somewhat unexpectedly. It happened in the midst of a new war, while fire bombs were dropping on distant cities and the roar of war planes rocked that part of the world. At that time I began reading a book called *The God of Small Things*-and was transported beyond surface events into the deeper recesses of human agonies. The book is from the pen of a writer I had not encountered before (I shamefully confess) by the name of Arundhati Roy. She hails from the “South,” more specifically from Kerala in India, and now lives in Delhi. Happening in the midst of a war ostensibly launched by the North, the encounter for me had a special significance: by awakening me again to the enormous rifts tearing apart our world, and by urging on me a renewed mindfulness. In the meantime, I have read several of Arundhati Roy’s other writings, including a series of essays collected in her books *The Cost of Living*, *Power Politics*, and *War Talk*. The following pages are meant as a tribute to her: as an expression of gratitude to her for serving in many ways as a voice of conscience calling on people everywhere, but especially people in the North, to step back from the pretense of cultural superiority and to return to the cultivation of our shared humanity.

A Writer-Activist?

Paying tribute to a writer like Arundhati Roy is risky and difficult-especially for a non-writer (or

a non-literary-writer) like me. The difficulty is particularly great in the case of a novel like *The God of Small Things*, an outstanding work of fiction which deservedly has received the distinguished Booker Prize. Not being a novelist or a literary critic, how could I possibly do justice to the vast richness of this book, the immense subtlety of its nuances, its stories within stories and echoes within echoes? How could I fathom its depth of imagination and the intense agonies of its characters? Famous writers East and West have celebrated her work; John Updike has compared it to a Tiger Woods story, while Salmon Rushdie has praised her combination of passion and intellectual verve. My own approach has to be somewhat different. Having spent most of my adult years mulling over ponderous philosophical texts, I have to link her work with my own background which, in the main, has always hovered between philosophy and politics or between theory and praxis.

The aspect I want to pick up first is the title of her prize-winning novel. The very phrase "The God of Small Things" is in a way counter-hegemonic if not seditious. Traditional religion, especially in the West, has always associated "God" with bigness or greatness. Of all the things in the world, and of all the big things, God was held to be the biggest or greatest; among all the many causes and moving engines in the world, God was seen as the first or primary cause or engine. Due to the traditional linkage of "throne and altar," the bigness of God has tended to rub off on the status of princes, kings, and political rulers. This fascination with bigness has proven to be hard to shake, and in some form even persists today. Thus, when "world leaders" or presidents claim to be mouth-pieces or "stand-ins" for God, their power appears to be wielded by "divine right." To be sure, this pretense of leaders is contested and debunked by modern democracy with is emphasis on the importance of ordinary people and ordinary lives. As it happens, these ordinary lives-although seemingly small if compared with the power of potentates-are by no means "small" in terms of dignity and moral-spiritual significance. For grown-up people in democracies, God no longer has need of pomp and circumstance but is content to remain sheltered in ordinary phenomena and inconspicuous places and events. As Walter Benjamin has remarked, ordinary lives at any moment can become the narrow gate through which the Messiah suddenly and without fanfare enters. Thus, it is a small, nearly imperceptible change which changes everything.

In Arundhati Roy's novel, the change is so unobtrusive that it is not specifically elaborated or thematized. However, on some others occasions she has shed light on the book's title. In her essay "The Greater Common Good" of 1999 (reprinted in *The Cost of Living*), we find some tantalizing lines. "Perhaps," she writes,

that's what the twenty-first century has in store for us: the dismantling of the Big. Big bombs, big dams, big ideologies, big contradictions, big countries, big wars, big heroes, big mistakes. Perhaps it will be the Century of the Small.

And she adds: "Perhaps right now, this very minute, there's a small god up in heaven readying herself for us." As we know, of course, this "small god" (if she comes) will be up against all the old bigness: the big old God associated with the biggest country, the biggest superpower, the biggest wealth, the biggest arsenal of weapons of mass destruction, the biggest bigness. If the

small god were to come, she would certainly not arrive in a mammoth conflagration or on top of a nuclear mushroom cloud-as some devotees of Armageddon now predict and propagate. She would come on the feet of a dove, as the consoler of the desolate, the healer of the wounded, the liberator of the oppressed. As Arundhati Roy herself stated in a recent interview, commenting on the title of her novel:

To me the god of small things is the inversion of God. God is a big thing and God's in control. The god of small things … whether it is the way children see things or whether it is the insect life in the book, or the fish or the stars-there is no accepting of what we think of as adult boundaries. This small activity that goes on is the under-life of the book. All sorts of boundaries are transgressed upon.

In many quarters, and not without reason, Arundhati Roy is considered a political activist and public intellectual-in addition to, or apart from being a writer. Yet, as the preceding passages make clear, her activism does not subscribe to any "big ideology" or overarching platform seeking to mold and reshape social life; she also does not favor mass organizations wedded to rigid marching orders or agendas. As she remarked coyly about her childhood in Kerala: she grew up in a state where different "religions coincide" and coexist, where "Christianity, Hinduism, Marxism and Islam … all live together and rub each other down." The point of her remark was not simply to debunk these "religions," but rather to relativize them slightly and thus to prevent them from becoming ideological straitjackets. As it seems to me, a main feature of Roy's work is that it escapes ready-made formulas or pigeonholes.

In a nimble way, she refuses to accept the rubrics offered by contemporary society: the options of ivory-tower retreat (literature for literature's sake) or of mindless street activism-or else the super-option of the writer-intellectual as the architect of grand social platforms. She is celebrated as a writer; but she is also known as a political activist. What is intriguing and even dazzling is the manner in which she is both-the manner in which writing and doing, thinking and acting in her case are neither radically separated nor fused in an ideological stew. As she remarked in an interview given at the World Social Forum in early 2003: "When I write, I don't even think consciously of being political-because I *am* political. I know that even if I wrote fairy stories, they would be political." As she added, literature and politics (contrary to widespread belief) are not "two separate things"-which does not mean that there is not a world of "difference between literature and propaganda" (where the latter instrumentalizes the former for extrinsic goals). For Roy, writing and acting are not at odds but reflective of a "way of being"-reflective of the writer's distinctive way of being-in-the-world.

In a fashion reminiscent of Edward Said, Roy asks a question which is too often side-stepped by contemporary intellectuals: the question regarding the social responsibility of literature and art (and one might add: philosophy). "What is the role of writers and artists in society?" she queries in *Power Politics*. "Can it be fixed, described, characterized in any definite way? Should it be?" In a poignant way, this question had been raised by Edward Said in his Reith lectures of 1993, subsequently published as *Representations of the Intellectual*. At the time of his lectures, Said was renowned as a writer; but he was also suspect in many quarters as a political activist.

As he noted in his Introduction: “I was accused of being active in the battle for Palestinian rights, and thus disqualified for any sober or respectable platform at all.” His lectures pinpointed the public role of the intellectual as that of a peculiar insider-outsider, in any case of an “amateur and disturber of the status quo.” If intellectuals were complete “outsiders,” they would enjoy the alibi or refuge of an ivory tower, far removed from Julien Benda’s “*trahison des clercs*“-what Said calls “Benda’s uncritical Platonism.” But if they were complete “insiders,” they would become accomplices and sycophants of the ruling power, thus robbing the intellect of its critical edge. “Insiders,” he writes, “promote special interests, but intellectuals should be the ones to question patriotic nationalism, corporate thinking, and a sense of class, racial or gender privilege.” For Said, the “principal duty” of intellectuals, writers, and artists resides in the search for “relative independence” from societal pressures-an independence which justifies his characterization of the intellectual “as exile and marginal, as amateur, and as the author of a language that tries to speak the truth to power.”

Without implying any direct influence, Arundhati Roy’s outlook broadly concurs with Said’s. In *Power Politics* she lays down two guideposts for writers: first, “there are no rules”; and secondly, “there are no excuses for bad art”-where the second guidepost severely complicates the first. The absence of formal, externally fixed rules does not mean that everything is left to arbitrary whim. “There is a very thin line,” she writes, “that separates the strong, true, bright bird of imagination from the synthetic, noisy bauble.” The point is that the writer (or the intellectual) constantly has to search for that line and allow herself to be measured by its standard: “The thing about this line’ is that once you learn to recognize it, once you see it, it’s impossible to ignore. You have no choice but to live with it, to follow it through.” (In his Introduction, Said observed likewise that there are no fixed “rules” by which intellectuals can know “what to say or do,” but that it is crucial nonetheless to uphold standards of conduct.)

Regarding the public role of writers or intellectuals this means that there cannot be fixed rules dictating either specific social obligations or else mandating radical exile. The rub is again the peculiar inside/outside position of writers or intellectuals: they have to know sufficiently the language of their community in order properly to address it; and they have to be sufficiently dislodged to contest that language. Whichever way they choose-inside or outside-there is no real escape: “There’s no innocence; either way you are accountable.” As Roy concedes, a good or great writer “may refuse to accept any responsibility or morality that society wishes to *impose* on her.” Yet, the best and greatest also know that if they abuse their freedom-by joining the ivory tower or else becoming “palace entertainers”-they inevitably damage their art: “There is an intricate web of morality, rigor, and responsibility that art, that writing itself, imposes on a writer. It’s singular, it’s individual, but nevertheless it’s there.”

Roy’s entire work is a testimonial to the stringent demands of the “thin line.” In her writings and in her public conduct she has resisted both radical politizication or political co-optation and retreat into the haven of *belles letters*. Like every thoughtful writer or intellectual Roy does not like to be conscripted into ideological agendas or be submerged in mindless activism. As a reflective person, she relishes subtle nuances and the open-endedness of many issues. In her own words: “I am all for discretion, prudence, tentativeness, subtlety, ambiguity,

complexity. I love the unanswered question, the unresolved story, the unclimbed mountain, the tender shard of an incomplete dream." But she adds an important caveat: "Most of the time." Problems may be so urgent, public policies so threatening or destructive that even the most pensive person cannot remain uninvolved-without becoming an accomplice. Are there not occasions, she asks, when prudence turns into "pusillanimity" and caution into cowardice? Can a writer or intellectual afford to be "ambiguous about everything," and is there not a point where circumspection becomes "a kind of espousal"? No one can accuse Arundhati Roy of being pusillanimous or cowardly. Whatever pressing issues or lurking disasters there may be in this world, she has never hesitated to speak out-and do so forcefully and without equivocation. In her words again:

Isn't it true, or at least theoretically possible, that there are times in the life of a people or a nation when the political climate demands that we-even the most sophisticated of us-overtly take sides? I believe that such times are upon us. And I believe that in the coming years intellectuals and artists in India will be called upon to take sides.

Not only in India, one might add, but all over the world.

The Military-Industrial Complex

The issues on which Arundhati Roy has most frequently and most forcefully spoken are two: big corporate business and the war machine-whose interconnection or collusion President Dwight Eisenhower had termed the "military-industrial complex." This interconnection has been steadily tightening since Eisenhower's time. Basically, the war machine is designed to keep markets stable and safe for business investments; in turn, corporate business finances the maintenance of the war machine. For Roy, the most glaring and preposterous manifestations of this collusion in India are the development of the nuclear bomb and the construction of "big dams" or mega-dams. Some of her sharpest attacks have been leveled at these targets. Although not intuitively evident, she has neatly pinpointed the linkage between the two phenomena-while inserting both in the broader framework of globalization. From a global angle, dam construction is part of the global market dominated by Western corporate business; on the other hand, nuclear bombs are compensatory devices meant to provide domestic security and to pacify volatile masses.

As she noted in an interview with David Barsamian in 2001, it is crucial to perceive the links between "privatization, globalization, and [religious] fundamentalism." For when, in constructing dams, a country like India is "selling its entire power sector" to foreign business firms (like Enron), pressure is placed on the government to compensate people by building a bomb or else by erecting a "Hindu temple on the site of the Babri mosque." So, this is the trade-off one has to understand: "With one hand, you are selling the country out to Western multinationals; and with the other, you want to defend your borders with nuclear bombs."

Dam construction has been a major preoccupation of modern India. Just as, for Lenin, electrification held the key to Russia's future, dams-in particular mega-dams-were touted as

springboards of India's rapid economic development. In a famous speech in 1948, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had proclaimed that "dams are the temples of modern India" (a phrasing he himself came to regret later). In the period following independence, the country embarked on a craze of dam constructions, one more ambitious and extensive than the other. As Roy notes in *The Cost of Living*, India is "the third largest dam-builder in the world," having constructed since 1948 a total of roughly 3,300 big dams. The latest and most ambitious undertaking along these lines is the Sardar Sarovar Dam, a monumental mega-dam that is being built on the Narmada River in central India-the same river which, according to government plans, is going to provide sites in the future for some additional three thousand dams. Although heralded as developmental marvels, the human and social costs of big dams have so far vastly outstripped any economic benefits. In Roy's words, the reservoirs of these dams have "uprooted millions of people" (perhaps as many as thirty million). What is worse: "There are no government records of how many people have actually been displaced" and there is a total lack of anything resembling a "national rehabilitation policy." Against the backdrop of this grim scenario, the Sardar Sarovar Dam is now taking its toll. As the waters at the dam's reservoir are rising every hour, she writes, "more than ten thousand people face submergence. They have nowhere to go."

Dam construction in India is complicated and aggravated by the impact of globalization-which today is closely linked with the panaceas of neo-liberalism, structural adjustment, and (above all) privatization. The latter policy is particularly grievous when it involves the privatization of water resources in third-world countries. In this case, the policy does not just mean an innocuous "structural adjustment," but the transfer of effective control over the daily lives of millions of people. This transfer, one should note well, does not signify the end of "power" but rather the replacement of public power-the role of democratically elected leaders-by the unaccountable power of executives of private (chiefly foreign or multi-national) businesses. Keeping one's focus on water-generated or electrical power, the deeper meaning of "power politics," in Roy's usage, becomes clear. As she states: "Dam builders want to control public water policies" just as "power utility companies want to draft power policies, and financial institutions want to supervise government investment." In this context, Roy offers one of the most trenchant definitions of "privatization" that one can find in the literature anywhere. "What does privatization really mean?" she asks, and answers:

Essentially, it is the transfer of productive public assets from the state to private companies. Productive assets include natural resources: earth, forest, water, air. These are assets that the state holds in trust for the people it represents. In a country like India, seventy percent of the population lives in rural areas. That's seven hundred million people. Their lives depend directly on access to natural resources. To snatch these away and sell them as stock to private companies is a process of barbaric dispossession on a scale that has no parallel in history.

The consequences of the privatization of natural resources are today no longer left to guess-work or conjecture. In 1999-Roy recalls-the government of Bolivia privatized the public water supply system in the city of Cochabamba and signed a forty-year lease with a consortium headed by Bechtel, the giant U.S. engineering firm: "The first thing Bechtel did was to raise

the price of water; hundreds of thousands of people simply couldn't afford it any more." Something similar may be in store for people in India. With regard to water resources there, the prime advocates and beneficiaries of privatization have been General Electric and Enron. Typically, concerned state governments in India have been induced to sign so-called "Power Purchase Agreements" with big companies, preferably foreign or multinational companies-agreements which transfer basic control over water and electric power to the purchasers. When such agreements break down or run into trouble with local agencies, they tend to be renegotiated-often at rates of return still more beneficial to the purchasing companies.

In Roy's words: "The fish bowl of the drive to privatize power, its truly star turn, is the story of Enron, the Houston-based natural gas company." The first Power Purchase Agreement between Enron and the state of Maharashtra was signed in 1993. Due to changes in political leadership at the state level, the contract had to be repeatedly re-written and renegotiated, leading to steadily higher costs to the state. While the initial contract pegged the annual amount owed to Enron in the neighborhood of four hundred million dollars, the latest "re-negotiated" agreement compels Maharashtra to pay to Enron a sum of thirty billion dollars. As Roy comments: "It constitutes the largest contract ever signed in the history of India.… Experts who have studied the project have called it the most massive fraud in the country's history."

To be sure, the costs of dam constructions and the sale of water resources are not only borne by local governments, but also (and even principally) by the masses of poor people victimized by "power politics." Despite the huge fanfare boosting big dams and big companies, the results for these masses have been disheartening. After the construction of thousands of dams, Roy notes, some 250 million people have no access to safe drinking water, while over eighty percent of rural households still do not have electricity. The deprivation is experienced most acutely by the Adivasis (indigenous tribal people) and the Dalits (formerly called "Untouchables") who are also most seriously affected by big dams. In the case of the Sardar Sarovar Dam on the Narmada River, more than half of all the people displaced are Adivasis; and another large segment is made up of Dalits. Here power politics joins the grim story of ethnic conflict and caste discrimination. "The ethnic otherness' of these victims," Roy comments, "takes some of the pressure off the nation builders.' It's like having an expense account" whereby India's poorest people are "subsidizing the life-styles of her richest."

Thus, despite appeals to the "greater common good" (supposedly advanced by big dams), a good part of the "cost of living" of the upper crust of society is charged to the meager fortunes of the poor. When faced with inequities or injustices of such proportions, Roy's language tends to become stirring and nearly biblical-reminiscent of Lincoln's fulmination against a "house divided." "The millions of displaced people in India," we read in *The Cost of Living*,

are nothing but refugees of an unacknowledged war. And we, like the citizens of White America and French Canada and Hitler's Germany, are condoning it by looking away. Why? Because we are told that it's being done for the sake of the Greater Common Good. That it's being done in the name of Progress, in the name of the National Interest (which, of course, is paramount).…We believe what it benefits us to believe.

As previously mentioned, the construction of mega-dams is closely linked with militarism or the advancement of military power-which, in our age, means the development of nuclear bombs and weapons of mass destruction. In India, the big event happened in May 1998 with the denotation of the first nuclear bomb-an explosion which, according to government reports, made "the desert shake" and a "whole mountain turn white." For Arundhati Roy-voicing the sentiments of millions of people in India and elsewhere-the event was an ominous turning point steering the country and the rest of the world in a perilous and potentially disastrous direction. As she noted, the case against nuclear weapons had been made by thoughtful people many times in the past, often in passionate and eloquent language; but this fact offered no excuse for remaining silent. Despite a certain fatigue induced by the need to repeat the obvious, the case had to be restated clearly and forcefully: "We have to reach within ourselves and find the strength to think, to fight."

As with regard to mega-dams and their social consequences, Roy lent her pen to the vigorous denunciation of militarism and nuclear mega-politics. In language designed to infuriate Indian chauvinists and especially devotees of "Hindutva" (India for Hindus), an essay published in the aftermath of the explosion asserted bluntly: "India's nuclear tests, the manner in which they were conducted, the euphoria with which they have been greeted (by us) is indefensible. To me, it signifies dreadful things: the end of imagination; the end of freedom actually." In still bolder language, the same essay exposed the linkage between mega-bombs and the ruling military-industrial complex which, in India and elsewhere, constitutes the major threat to the survival of democratic institutions: "India's nuclear bomb is the final act of betrayal by a ruling class that has failed its people [that is, failed to nourish and educate the people]. The nuclear bomb is the most anti-democratic, anti-national, anti-human, outright evil thing that man has ever made."17

One of the most valuable features of Roy's anti-nuclear essay is its realist candor: its unblinking willingness to look at the horrors of nuclear devastation. This candor is particularly important in view of recent attempts-again by ruling elites-to downplay these horrors by throwing over them the mantle of relative normalcy or else of strategic inevitability (given the global dangers of "terrorism"). Most prominent among these ruses is the rhetoric of "smart nuclear bombs" and (even more hideously) of "preemptive nuclear strikes." Piercing this fog of deception, Roy's essay offers a stark description of "ground zero": "If there is a nuclear war, our foes will not be China or America or even each other. Our foe will be the earth herself; the very elements-the sky, the air, the land, the wind and water-will all turn against us." Readers who still remember Hiroshima and Nagasaki will find their memories joltingly refreshed by Roy's stark portrayal:

Our cities and forests, our fields and villages will burn for days. Rivers will turn to poison; the air will become fire; the wind will spread the flames.... Temperatures will drop to far below freezing and nuclear winter will set in. Water will turn into toxic ice. Radioactive fallout will seep through the earth and contaminate groundwater. Most living things, animal and vegetable, fish and fowl, will die.

Faced with catastrophes of this magnitude, the head of an atomic research center in Bombay

(Mumbai) recommended that, in case of nuclear attack, people retire to the basement of their homes and take iodine pills. As Roy scathingly remarks, governmental (so-called) preparedness is a sham; it is "nothing but a perilous joke in a world where iodine pills are prescribed as a prophylactic for nuclear irradiation."

The reasons given by Indian officials for the development of nuclear capability have been primarily three: the looming danger of China; the ongoing conflict with Pakistan; and the Western example of nuclear power politics. None of these reasons stand up to scrutiny. Regarding China, Roy comments, the last military confrontation happened over three decades ago; since that time, conditions have by no means deteriorated but rather "improved slightly between us." Relations between India and Pakistan are more tense and perilous, especially when the focus is placed on Kashmir. However, here the geographical proximity itself undermines nuclear programs on both sides. In Roy's words: "Though we are separate countries, we share skies, we share winds, we share water. Where radioactive fallout will land on any given day depends on the direction of the wind and the rain." Hence, any nuclear attack launched by India against Pakistan will be "a war against ourselves." Somewhat more tricky-but ultimately equally fallacious-is the reference to Western power politics and the obvious hypocrisy involved in Western nuclear policies ("bombs are good for us, not for you"). Although containing more than a kernel of truth, the charge of hypocrisy and duplicity does not vindicate India's nuclear arsenal. "Exposing Western hypocrisy," Roy asks mockingly, "how much more exposed can they be? Which decent human being on earth harbors any illusions about it?" While protesting self-righteously against nuclear proliferation, Western regimes have in fact amassed the largest arsenal of nuclear devices and other weapons of mass destruction; and they have never hesitated to use this arsenal for their own political advantage: "They stand on the world's stage naked and entirely unembarrassed, because they know that they have more money, more food, and bigger bombs than anybody else. They know they can wipe us out in the course of an ordinary working day."

As one should note well, Roy's point here is to criticize India's nuclear program, not to shield Western hypocrisy and war-mongering. Her book *Power Politics* contains stirring passages condemning the spread of war-mongering all over the world, but especially the kind of belligerence unleashed by the so-called "war on terrorism" (what Richard Falk has called "the great terror war"). Roy is adamantly opposed to the high-handed and unilateral definition of "terrorism" by state governments-especially governments whose own policies may have the effect of "terrorizing" large populations at home and abroad. Here is a memorable statement on behalf of the victims of governmental war-mongering: "People rarely win wars; governments rarely lose them. People get killed; governments molt and regroup, hydra-headed. They [governments] first use flags to shrink-wrap peoples' minds and smother real thought, and then as ceremonial shrouds to bury the willing dead." In our time of unprecedented media manipulation, Roy's denunciation of chauvinistic flag-waving and brain-washing surely deserves close attention. One of her main concerns is the unpredictable outcome of nationalist belligerence: the fact that, in pursuing national glory, governments or ruling elites may unleash or exacerbate "huge, raging human feelings" present in the world today. What war-mongering typically ignores are the underlying sources of conflict: especially the misery of common people

whose sufferings cannot be alleviated by warfare. At the time of the war in Afghanistan (2001), Roy penned a passage whose salience has further increased in light of subsequent military adventures:

Put your ear to the ground in this part of the world, and you can hear the thrumming, the deadly drumbeat of burgeoning anger. Please. Please, stop the war now. Enough people have died. The smart missiles are just not smart enough. They are blowing up whole warehouses of suppressed fury.

India and the Future

Roy's forthrightness-her role as writer-activist pleading on behalf of common people-has not earned her universal applause. Although celebrated by some literary figures and academic intellectuals, her readiness to "speak truth to power" has irked and infuriated chauvinists, war-mongers, and acolytes of "bigness," both at home and abroad. As she remarked once to an Indian reporter: "Each time I step out, I hear the snicker-snack of knives being sharpened. But that is good; it keeps me sharp." There can be no doubt that, despite and in the teeth of great power politics, Arundhati Roy has maintained her "sharpness" and intellectual integrity-not out of spite or meddlesomeness, but out of a deep commitment to humanity at large, to a world inhabited and sustained by the "god of small things." In this respect, her work has served as a beacon of hope to the persecuted and oppressed, to the victims of military-industrial complexes everywhere. The presence of such a beacon-or a series of beacons-is crucial today in a world dominated or contaminated by globalizing neo-liberalism, structural downsizing, and privatization. In this context, one may usefully recall a phrase she used in her conversation with David Barsamian: "The only thing worth globalizing today is dissent." To be sure, globalizing dissent does not mean the construction of grand ideological panaceas or the formulation of general marching orders. Rather, dissenters are called upon to resist in very concrete contexts and for a very specific purpose: the alleviation of injustice and misery. "Each person," she commented to Ben Ehrenreich at the World Social Forum in Brazil (2003), "has to find a way of staying their ground. It's not that all of us have to become professional activists. All of us have to find our particular way."

As Roy fully realizes (perhaps better than many "progressive" thinkers), the obstacles to resistance are formidable and nearly overwhelming. Her portrayal of conditions in India and the rest of the world is exceedingly grim-a grimness which has placed her on the "index" of domestic and global ruling elites. Take the example of India first. Her book *Power Politics* opens with passages which are deeply shocking and disheartening. "As Indian citizens," she writes there, "we subsist on a regular diet of caste massacres and nuclear tests, mosque breakings and fashion shows, church burnings and expanding cell phone networks, bonded labor and the digital revolution, female infanticide and the Nasdaq crash." As these lines indicate, the country is torn apart by the conflicting pulls of traditionalist fundamentalism and high-tech modernity; at the same time, society exhibits a widening gulf between a small globalizing elite and the large masses of people victimized by mega-dams and big bombs. "It is," she adds, "as though the people of India have been rounded up and loaded onto two

conveys of trucks, a huge big one and a tiny little one"-with the tiny convey heading toward a "glittering destination somewhere near the top of the world," while the large one "melts into darkness."

The picture becomes even move disturbing when Roy turns to her immediate environment: the metropolis of Delhi. "Close to forty percent of Delhi's population of twelve million (about five million people)," she comments, "live in slums and unauthorized colonies. Most of them are not serviced by municipal services-no electricity, no water, no sewage systems. About fifty thousand people are homeless and sleep on the streets." Joined by a large army of "informal" laborers, the latter people are the "noncitizens" of Delhi, surviving "in the folds and wrinkles, the cracks and fissures, of the official' city."

To be sure, conditions in India are not autonomous or unique, but merely an outgrowth or reflection of conditions in the world today-a world dominated by the West and its only remaining mega-power, America. Roy's denunciation of Western colonial, neo-colonial, and imperial machinations has never been reticent or subdued. As she wrote on the West's domineering impulses: "These are people whose histories are spongy with the blood of others. Colonialism, apartheid, slavery, ethnic cleansing, germ warfare, chemical weapons-they virtually invented it all. They have plundered nations, snuffed out civilizations, exterminated entire populations." What aggravates the situation further is that the plundering of nations has usually been carried out with a "good conscience": for the sake of progress, modernization, or (simply) freedom. In this respect, Americans have an unequaled record of missionary zeal. *Power Politics* offers a long list of countries which America has attacked or been at war with since World War II-a list ranging from China and Korea to Vietnam, El Salvador and Nicaragua and finally to Afghanistan and Iraq. In nearly all instances, military action was justified by the rhetoric of freedom or the defense of Western (superior) values. Referring to America's self-description as "the most free nation in the world," Roy raises the question: "What freedoms does it uphold?" And answers: "Within its borders the freedoms of speech, religion, thought; of artistic expression; food habits, sexual preferences (well, to some extent), and many other exemplary, wonderful things. Outside its borders the freedom to dominate, humiliate, and subjugate-usually in the service of America's real religion, the free market'." Turning specifically to the labels attached to the war against Iraq-Operation Infinite Justice, Operation Enduring Freedom-she comments: "We know that Infinite Justice for some means Infinite Injustice for others. And Enduring Freedom for some means Enduring Subjugation for Others."

As it happens, and as Roy fully realizes, the situation is still more complex and hazardous: the neat separation between "freedom at home" and "unfreedom abroad" cannot be maintained for long. Sooner or later, militarism and the insatiable demands of the military-industrial complex are bound to undermine domestic liberties as well. This tendency is well illustrated by the ongoing "war on terrorism" and the prioritization of domestic or "homeland" security. In Roy's words: "Operation Enduring Freedom is ostensibly being fought to uphold the American Way of Life. It will probably end up undermining it completely." The erosion of domestic liberties may proceed slowly and with all kinds of rhetorical subterfuges. However, security demands will ultimately prevail-with far-reaching consequences. The American government and governments

all over the world, Roy continues, will use the climate of war as an excuse "to curtail civil liberties, deny free speech, lay off workers, harass ethnic and religious minorities, cut back on public spending, and divert huge amounts of money to the defense industry." Considering the latter consequence, there almost seems to be a subterranean complicity between the terrorists and the military-industrial complex, both pulling in the direction of increased defense spending and global militarization. The net result of this collusion is the emergence of a kind of a global "empire" wedded to mega-power politics, with potentially totalitarian implications. The sheer scale of surveillance necessary in such an empire is likely to produce "a logistical, ethical, and civil rights nightmare," with public freedom being the first casualty. For Roy, an imperial or ruthlessly hegemonic world is "like having a government without a healthy opposition. It becomes a kind of dictatorship. It is like putting a plastic bag over the world, and preventing it from breathing."

The enormity of the danger-a danger that literally takes one's breath away-may be conducive to discouragement and despair. In some occasional passages, Roy herself seems ready to concede defeat and throw in the towel. Reflecting on her native India and its recent infatuation with big dams and big bombs, she sometimes appears willing to beat a retreat or escape into purely imaginary realms. "If protesting against having a nuclear bomb implanted in my brain, "she writes in *The Cost of Living*," is anti-Hindu and antinational, then I secede. I declare myself an independent, mobile republic." This republic, she adds a bit playfully, so far has "no flag" and its policies are simple: "I am willing to sign any nuclear nonproliferation treaty or nuclear test ban treaty" and "immigrants are welcome." Playfulness, however, is only a thin disguise here for a deep sadness: "My world has died; and I write to mourn its passing." As it happens (fortunately), loss and mourning are not Roy's final words. Even when tempted by despair, she quickly remembers the need to distinguish between oppressive governmental policies and the genuine concerns of common people living ordinary lives, both at home and abroad. Counter-balancing her sharp critique of American mega-politics, she assures ordinary American people "that it is not them, but their government's policies that are so hated." The same trust in ordinary lives also applies to India. Here too, the sparks of common decency have not yet been entirely extinguished, despite massive assaults by ruling elites. Friends of India and friends of democracy are likely to relish the following lines Roy penned in *Power Politics*:

India's redemption lies in the inherent anarchy and factiousness of its people, and in the legendary inefficiency of the Indian state…. Corporatizing India is like trying to impose an iron grid on a heaving ocean and forcing it to behave. My guess is that India will not behave. It cannot. It's too old and too clever to be made to jump through hoops all over again. It's too diverse, too grand, too feral, and-eventually, I hope-too democratic to be lobotomized into believing in one single idea, which is ultimately what globalization really is: Life is Perfect.

In the end, Roy's writings exude not despair, but hope and commitment to a better-more just, more humane-future. Hope in her case-one should note well-is not born from wishful thinking, but from a sober readiness to "stay one's ground" in the face of seemingly overwhelming odds. Although severely tested, this readiness is not entirely whimsical or unfounded because, ultimately, hope is sustained by a love that will not quit. "There is beauty yet," we read, "in this

brutal, damaged world of ours-hidden, fierce, immense. Beauty that is uniquely ours and beauty that we have received with grace from others…. We have to seek it out, nurture it, love it."

Commitment to a better future surely requires active engagement, but-and here is the rub-an engagement that exceeds willful activism. The reason is that the "good life" (so-called) cannot be engineered or fabricated in the manner in which devotees of "empire" construct or fabricate their imperial edifice. Although involving praxis, commitment to a better future also requires a certain reticence, a refusal to dominate, coerce, or construct-hence a willingness to allow the good life to happen when it "comes." In this respect, Roy's outlook bears a certain resemblance to Jacques Derrida's notion of a "democracy to come"-about which he writes that such a democracy must have "the structure of a promise-and thus the memory of that which carries the future, the to-come, here, and now." No one has been better able than Roy to capture the sense of this promise and to articulate it in moving language. Here are the closing lines of "Come September," an address she presented in Santa Fe on September 18, 2002: "Perhaps there is a small god up in heaven readying herself for us. Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. Maybe many of us won't be here to greet her; but on a quiet day, if I listen very carefully, I can hear her breathing."

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The Iraqi Conflict and Its Impact on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

By | 2004: Vol. 3, No. 3

There is a widespread belief in the Arab world and in western pro-Palestinian circles that there is a strong Israeli connection to the invasion of Iraq and, more generally, to American policies in the Middle East. Such a conviction is based more on prejudice than on facts. It is widely assumed that the political interests of the United States and Israel are the same with regards to the Middle East and that the hard-line pro-US Jewish faction led by Sharon represents the views of "the Jewish community" both within Israel and within the world at large. In actuality, however, the relationship between the United States and Israel, and the connection between the Iraqi conflict and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is extremely complex. In place of the gross distortions that have permeated popular discourse on the subject, I seek to present a more accurate, multi-faceted view of the relationship between the Iraqi conflict and that of Israel-Palestine. By clearly defining the roles and interests of the various actors involved I hope to move beyond generalizations to form a clearer conceptualization of the way the conflicts overlap and the reasons why they do so.

US Ambition and the Iraqi Conflict

The United States has been acting as an empire with imperial ambitions for quite some time, certainly long before President Bush II came to power. The administrations of Bush I and Bill Clinton functioned according to the same imperial logic that guides the current Bush administration; the current administration is set apart from its predecessors only by its commitment to use force to achieve its global ambitions. This difference is to be explained by the fact that President Bush II and his Republican Party represent the interests of the neo-conservatives, who will do whatever it takes to achieve their goals. The ideology of these neoconservatives is based on an objective fact: since the disappearance of the Soviet Union, the United States is the sole world super-power which has the capacity-economic, financial, political, and military-to exercise global power. The neo-cons seek to use the reality of American strength to establish American hegemony.

The invasion of Iraq plays a crucial role in the agenda of the neoconservatives. Iraq has the second largest oil reserves in the world. It could replace, in case of need, other producers such as Saudi Arabia, a fragile ally of the United States. The control of oil production and prices gives the United States potential power to pressure consumer states such as Russia, China, and many in Western Europe. As early as 1997, the neo-conservatives recommended that no industrial power-besides the United States-should be allowed to play any role on the international oil scene. They were aware of the importance of oil and it was clear that they intended to dominate the world oil market.

In addition to the control of Iraqi oil, the US invasion provides other benefits to the neo-conservatives. The establishment of military bases in Iraq consolidates America's hegemony in the gulf region, central Asia, and beyond. In addition, it is assumed that the "democratization" of the Middle East, which will include regime changes if necessary, will destroy the bases of terrorism and create a better environment for countries allied to the United States. These friendly states would make peace with Israel even if the Palestinian problem had yet to be solved. Israel, America's surrogate state in the Middle East, would then be given a dominant role in the region.

In terms of domestic politics, the invasion of Iraq allows the neoconservatives an opportunity to entice much of the Jewish vote away from the Democratic Party. The invasion has also strengthened the ties between the Republican Party and millions of sympathizers of the Christian right, thereby achieving two, seemingly contradictory goals, at once. The invasion of Iraq allows the neo-conservatives to consolidate their power both at home and abroad, bringing them ever closer to their goal of global hegemony. Within the context of US interest is the Unites States' relationship with Israel best understood. Most of the neo-conservatives are right wing Zionists sometimes more to the right than Ariel Sharon who believe that peace should be imposed on the Palestinians, a peace which would be acceptable to the expansionist rulers of Israel. This "peace" would form a small part of the wider US strategy for dominance, which includes the so-called democratization of Iraq, followed by regime change in Syria, the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon, and the destabilization of the Iranian regime, thus leading to the withdrawal of Hezbollah from Israel's borders. The dramatic change in the regional balance of power would then bring about the desired pax Americana.

Given US priorities, it should be clear that a strong Israel is desirable in so far as and only insofar as — it will aid the United States in its quest for power. Because the US is not interested in Israel for its own sake, Israel often does not take priority: in its battle against terrorism, the US chose to invade Iraq rather than to solve the Israel-Palestinian problem, even though involving itself in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would have been the more logical and obvious choice. Let there be no confusion on this point: Israel is the satellite of the United States, not the other way around.

Israel, "the Jews," and the United States

It is a common misperception that Israel's relationship with the United States is inherently symbiotic. In reality, Israel often pays a high price for its ties to the United States. Recently, the perceived connection between the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Iraqi conflict has inflicted great harm on Israel, the Jews, and the peace process. International public opinion hostile to the invasion of Iraq, especially in the Arab world and in Europe, make little distinction between Bush's United States and Sharon's Israel. In most, if not all demonstrations, slogans are hostile to both Israel and the US, as both are accused of war mongering. A poll organized by the European Union last November indicated that 59% of the citizens of Europe considered Israel to be the greatest threat to world peace and stability greater than the United States, North Korea or Iran. Undoubtedly this negative view is to be

partly attributed to the behavior of the Israeli army in the occupied territories. Yet, this is a relatively new phenomenon in Europe and one that should be noted: pro-Palestinian sympathies are becoming more widespread than support for Israeli policies.

The war in Iraq is also seen by many as a worldwide Jewish conspiracy. The government of Israel and Jewish organizations supporting it are partly responsible for this anti-Semitic perception. Israel has always presented itself as the representative of the whole Jewish people, including those in the Diaspora. Organizations of the Jewish establishment around the world who have adopted a hard-line attitude towards the conflict also pretend to speak for the Jews in their respective countries. Unfortunately, the hard-liners have convinced most of the world, and especially the Arab world, that they represent the "Jewish community" as a whole. If we are to more accurately understand the connection between the Iraqi conflict and that of Israel-Palestine, we must disentangle the facts from the distortions and recognize the variations of thought and belief that exist within and between the Jewish communities. On the issue of the US invasion of Iraq, it should be noted that the Israeli government did not represent even the Israeli people as a whole. According to one poll taken on the eve of the Iraqi war, public opinion was evenly split: 46% in favor of the American-led war and 43% against a war undertaken without international legitimacy. Furthermore, on 15 February of last year, both Palestinians and Israelis demonstrated against Bush and Sharon, along with millions of others in 600 cities around the globe.

Similarly, Jewish establishment organizations in various countries do not represent all of their Jewish countrymen. These affluent, powerful lobbies are unconditionally supportive of the Israeli state and attempt to stifle dissenting opinion by labeling those openly critical of Israeli policies as "self hating" Jews.

The role of the Jewish lobby in the United States is further complicated by the fact that it must ally itself with the Christian fundamentalists if it is to have the influence it desires. On its own, the Jewish lobby in the US is not as efficient as it is said to be. The Christian fundamentalists, who are heavily represented within Congress and the Bush administration, are much more influential. Together with the neo-conservatives, Jewish or not, they have played and continue to play a major role in the state's decision-making process. The Jewish lobby is not proud of its alliance with the Christian fundamentalists, who are not only expansionist Zionists but who are also implicitly anti-Semitic.

Indeed, there is no one "Jewish community" to speak of, only fragmented, dissenting communities with different interests and different alliances. Though this should be an obvious point, distortions and misperceptions about Israel and the Jews have become so commonplace that common sense and rational critique have been discarded in favor of simple, sweeping generalizations.

The Impact of the 2004 Election on the Middle East

Lately the Bush administration has not made as much progress on the path towards global hegemony as it would like. Unforeseen obstacles, such as the degree of patriotism and anti-American sentiment in Iraq, international criticism, and domestic unease threaten the Bush project with total collapse. There is a very real chance that Bush could be defeated in the November election. What will be the impact of the election on the Middle East? If Bush is reelected he will probably not change his attitude towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He may alter his approach in order to reduce Arab hostility to his policies, but not enough to bring about a settlement.

The election of John Kerry to the White House would deprive Israeli expansionists of the unconditional support of the United States. A constructive dialogue would become unavoidable between Washington and Israeli moderates. However, John Kerry, in line with the traditional policy of the Democratic Party, will avoid confrontation with the current Israeli government. Kerry will adopt a Clinton-like approach only if a new majority is elected in Israel that is favorable to a just peace with the Palestinians. If this were to occur, Kerry would benefit from the full support of the European Union.

No matter how strong the relationship between the United States and Israel may become, its fundamental basis will not change: US interests and the US vision of global hegemony will dictate the terms of its existence. For this reason, if for no other, Israel cannot rely on the United States to solve its problems. Indeed, neither the Israelis nor the Palestinians should look to foreign powers for the solution of their conflict. It is only when they agree on the basics of a settlement that they will obtain the outside support they need. This is why the peace movements in both communities have a historic mission to accomplish, and this is why they need badly the solidarity and the support of all peace-loving organizations around the world.
**This article was adapted from a talk given in Geneva in July 2004. It was adapted by Margot Morgan.*

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Setting the Record Straight: Zionism from the Standpoint of its Jewish Critics

By | 2004: Vol. 3, No. 3

Introduction

The debate about the Israel/Palestine question remains, after a century of discussion, negotiation and armed conflict one of the major unresolved issues of global politics. In its current manifestation all sides, including the Israelis, have ostensibly settled on a two state solution: the Jewish state already exists but the Palestinian state awaits its birth. In the main, the issues have been framed by the claims of Zionism, or Jewish nationalism, and Arab nationalism to a rather small body of land with huge material and symbolic stakes. Now Adam Shatz, who is literary editor at *The Nation*, has edited an anthology of the writing by non-Zionist Jewish intellectuals and commentary by writers grouped under the rubric of he calls "the other Zionism," about Zionism and Israel. Of the non-Zionist Jews Isaac Deutscher and Hannah Arendt are perhaps the representative figures who set the main context for Shatz's argument that there has always been a secular, anti-nationalist discourse about Israel and Zionism which, in different modalities, is shared by Marxist and non-Marxist Jews.

Both writers begin from the problematic status of Jews in the diaspora; they are acutely aware of anti-Semitism in the West and well as the Middle East. Deutscher's "The Non Jewish Jew" is a memoir of his own orthodox childhood, a lightening fast history of the relation of Marx and Marxism to the "Jewish Question" and a meditation on the reason, despite constant persecution, Jews have survived in the capitalist epoch. Deutscher's thesis is that Jews represent the market economy because they have been consigned to it by anti-Semitism as well as by the fact that they were merchants in semi-feudal societies such as 18th and 19th century Central and Eastern Europe. They were bearers of capitalist progress and, for this reason accumulated the economic and social resources to avoid obliteration before the Holocaust and even after it. Arendt published her "The Jew as Pariah Peace or Armistice in the Near East" in 1950, two years after the founding of Israel as a Jewish state. A refugee herself, she spent much of the 1930s and 1940s working for Jewish resettlement from Nazi Germany and other countries of Central and Eastern Europe where Jews suffered a precarious existence. Profoundly aware that Jews have suffered the stigma of "outsider" or Pariah, her article is, nevertheless a stinging indictment of the British strategy to prevent a peaceful arrangement between Jews and Arabs in Palestine and a powerful critique of the underlying nationalist premises of Zionism:

…almost from the beginning the misfortune of building a Jewish National Home has been that it was accompanied by a Central European ideology of nationalism and tribal thinking among the Jews, and by an Oxford inspired colonial romanticism among the Arabs. For ideological

reasons the Jews overlooked the Arabs, who lived in what would have been an empty country, to fit their preconceived idea of national emancipation. Because of romanticism or a complete inability to understand what was actually going on, the Arabs considered the Jews old-fashioned invaders or newfangled tools of imperialism." (85)

Newfangled or not, Arendt goes on to show that imperialism played an important ideological role in shaping the thinking of both Arab and Jew.

The title of Shatz's book, *Prophets Outcast*, is borrowed from the third volume of Isaac Deutscher's monumental biography of Trotsky, which chronicles Trotsky's sojourn in exile from the Soviet Union he helped create, until his tragic murder in 1940 under the axe of a Stalinist agent. Both terms of the title, "prophets" and "outcast" are richly discussed and documented in the pieces. Their prophecy consists in dire warnings, issued from the dawn of Zionism and the Jewish migration to Palestine at the turn of the 20th century, that the prevailing Jewish nationalism would lead to disaster. And all of the essays collected in this volume constitute a consistent repudiation of the hallowed ideology that identifies the Jewish Homeland with the Jewish state. Here, for example, is Yitzak Epstein, a pioneer who settled in the Upper Gallilee in 1886, during the first Jewish migration. Writing in 1907 Epstein explodes one of the sustaining myths of Zionism. Contrary to its claim that settlers found a virtually undeveloped desert when they arrived, and that their efforts amounted to both a civilizing project and a restoration of fallow land, Epstein states:

there are no empty fields [in Palestine]; to the contrary every fellah tries to enlarge his plot from the land of the adjoining cistern, if it does not require excessive labor. Near cities they also till the sloping hillsides and around the settlement of Metullah, the poor fellahin, like those in Lebanon, plant between the rocks and do not let a cubit go fallow. (37)

And I. F. Stone and Noam Chomsky systematically deconstruct many of the lapses of historical memory that have been invoked by staunch supporters of Israel's settler society. In 1969 Stone reminds us that during 1947-1948 fighting Israel "seized 23% more land than was allotted to it" and demonstrates convincingly that the founding of the state of Israel was closely bound up with imperial politics (197) Chomsky's essay, published six years later, is notable for its reconstitution of the early program of the socialist Zionists, with whom he had been affiliated in his youth. The left socialists were not for an ethnic state that was Jewish, but for a bi-national state where Jews and Palestinians could live with each other and attempt to build an egalitarian, socialist society based on mutual respect.

Martin Buber and Albert Einstein, professed Zionists, issue dire warnings that a radical departure from the values of humanism and the concept of the community of nations-statements that echo Arendt's repudiation of ethnic tribalism-would condemn the new state of Israel to isolation and prevent the creation of what Einstein terms a "common" future for "two great Semitic peoples." In 1948 Einstein minces no words in his condemnation of the Jewish Right for its attacks on Arab villages, terrorist acts and bleak nationalist vision. But it is Buber who raises the stakes in the debate about the new Jewish state. In Buber's view, at its

inception, Israel was losing an opportunity to forge a union with the Arabs by constituting itself as a small state-Buber calls it “normal”-which resists taking a broader and more inclusive view and instead was militant in defense of its own sovereignty.

This book intends to resuscitate an almost forgotten tradition within the debate about the fate of Jews. Many of the contributions reveal a penchant for polemic, fearlessness about the consequences of puncturing sacred and all but unassailable versions of history and contemporary Israeli reality, and a fierce assertion and defense of secular cosmopolitanism. Some of the essays have characteristics of classics: Deutscher’s “Non Jewish Jew,” the Stone and Chomsky pieces and a stimulating article by a contemporary Israeli native brought up on a Kibbutz and currently teaching in the United States, the historian Gabriel Piterberg on the question of historical and contemporary “Erasures.” Although another article by the Israeli peace activist Simcha Flapan covers some of the same ground, Piterberg’s essay completely obliterates many of the sustaining myths of Zionism by invoking historical evidence and theoretically informed analysis to get at the underlying truths of Israeli claims. Marc Ellis’s article on the Palestinian uprising of the late 1980s is at once a good account of the first Intifada and a severe puncturing of what he calls “Holocaust theology”-the widely held refusal among Jews to recognize, let alone criticize the abrogation by the Israeli government of Palestinian rights, or to admit, for example that Israel has nuclear weapons in violation of international agreements. Shatz’s introduction and his notes to every contribution help illuminate the issues and provide short biographical material on some of the lesser known writers.

The collection has two weaknesses that detract from an otherwise compelling representation of a the critical tradition: the section called “Marxism and the Jewish Question” focuses, exclusively, on the brief comments of Trotsky and the Trotskyist, Abram Leon whose book on the topic, Zionism: A Marxist Interpretation was published in 1940. The Leon work is a major contribution to Marxism and to the literature on Zionism. However the excerpt is both too brief and does not give enough the theoretical flavor of the work. But there are other, perhaps equally important Marxist writings on Jews and Zionism that did not find their way into the book. One, Ber Borochov’s The National Question and the Class Struggle, written in the early 20th century, from a left-Zionist perspective was profoundly influential on Hashomer Hatzair and other Labor Zionist tendencies until the late 1960s. Communists like M. J. Olgin and V. J. Jerome wrote critical analyses of Zionism in the 1930s and 1940s. Here, Shatz displays an unexpected narrowness which contrasts to the rest of the volume which goes out of its way to include diverse non-Zionist and Zionist perspectives.

Judith Butler’s confrontation with one of the more egregious aspects of Zionist invective, its label of anti-Semitism attached to any criticism of Zionism or the state of Israel, and the charge that its Jewish critics must be “self-hating” addresses an important issue in the current debate. And Tony Judt’s article from the New York Review of Books calling for a return of bi-nationalism is, perhaps, one of the boldest, if utopian, pieces in the collection. But just as earlier writings such as those by Arendt and Chomsky link the questions of the middle east to the world politics of their own time, one would have hoped for the inclusion of a similar set of

articles for our own time, especially the relation of US policy to the Palestinian and Israeli conflict. These criticisms are not meant to detract from the urgency and brilliance of Shatz's effort. In what follows, I want to offer my own reading of some of issues, including those of history an memory on Israel and Zionism, that bear on the politics of our time.

I

A YEAR AND A HALF AFTER THE US INVASION OF IRAQ IT IS increasingly evident that this was not a war for democracy, to fight terrorism or, of course, to eliminate Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. This is a war to establish US dominance over the Middle East. In the administration's calculus, ending the Ba'athist regime that governed Iraq for more than thirty years was a means, not an final objective. Displaying overwhelming US military power and toppling Saddam Hussein was merely a prelude to a much larger aim: to warn the Europeans as well as neighboring Arab states that in its quest for unchallenged economic and political regional hegemony, the United States was prepared to go it alone-at least in relation to its traditional Cold War era European allies. The stakes were not only the rich Iraqi oil reserves, as the Left was wont to point out or the region's centrality to world energy resources, although these should not be overlooked or minimized. Contrary to his 2000 election pledge to stay clear of foreign entanglements, George Bush and his administration have used the events of 9/11 to undertake an extensive program of military intervention without, however, offering a clear plan for post-war nation-building or reconstruction.

Short of unmitigated disasters, an eventuality that is still not impossible given the full throated insurgency now in process which has caused a high level of casualties following its military conquest of the Iraqi state, we can expect that occupation forces will remain in place for the foreseeable future. The American military will stay en masse in Iraq not only because of the neo-colonialist intentions of this administration, which require setting in place a stable Iraqi-led puppet regime, and privatizing state-owned enterprises, not the least the oil industry, but also because it continues to label the multiple insurgencies instances of "terrorism." That terrorism has become the indiscriminate name for all dissent is consistent with the Bush doctrine that, since 9/11, terrorism is the rubric under which a new evil other has been constructed and has rapidly become the key element of US foreign policy.

Iraq's conquest is only one component of the intricate, but interlinked US middle east intervention. Numerous missteps notwithstanding, the Bush administration-and its Democratic rivals-are committed to three crucial elements of a Middle East policy installing friendly, if not always puppet regimes in Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan and neutralizing Libya and Iran; dismantling and otherwise thwarting the development of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons among Arab countries and Iran; even as, under the excuse that, in Bush's words, "Israel has the right to defend itself," the US bestows unconditional support to Israel's own program to develop, maintain and possibly deploy weapons of mass destruction, not the least of which are nuclear weapons about which the Israelis and the American government are strictly silent; and supporting the unconditional right of Israel not only to exist, but also, in the name of self-defense, its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, the prospective sites of the still

unfulfilled promise of the autonomous Palestinian state. That the Democrats may differ on the issue of unilateral ism and may be critical of the performance of US intelligence agencies, which grossly misstated the Ba'athist threat to United States security, should not divert our gaze from the essential bi-partisanship that continues to govern US Middle East policy. It is true that, as demonstrated in the 2004 primary season, there is dissent on some of these questions. But, at least for the present, it has been effectively stifled within the party's ranks, and this subordination is particularly evident in the silence among leading liberals on Israel and the Palestinians, a silence that has provided ample space for Israel to pursue, with increasing approbation by the Bush administration, a new colonialism in the region.

An important part of the administration's strategy is to support, by indirection indicated by the US government's silence on the bloody results of the occupation and the relentless forward march of Jewish settlements, Ariel Sharon's program for a "greater" Israel that will reduce the promised Palestinian state, when and if it comes into being, to a dependent, noncontiguous, poor semi-colonial possession. Since fall 2001, in concert with the Sharon strategy, the Palestinian resistance, just like its predecessor, the Intifada of the 1980s, has been conflated with terrorism (indeed insurgency against all but US-supported regimes suffers the same label). In contrast to forty years during which successive US national administrations-Republican as well as Democratic-rhetorically opposed Israel's annexation of the West Bank and Gaza-even as all refused to impose sanctions on the Israelis and regularly supplied the government with large sums of economic aid aid and military funds-recent statements by the Bush administration have reversed this administration's early censure of Israel's systematic disenfranchisement of the Palestinians. Instead, consistent with its doctrine of building an alliance of the imperial willing, it now clearly sides with the Israeli government's policy of dispossession by settlement and armed occupation of these territories. In this respect we note that the *New York Times* 8/21/04 reported that the Bush administration might support some new West Bank settlements.

In this regard Sharon's spring 2004 unilateral announcement of Israel's eventual withdrawal from the Gaza must be taken with grain of salt; especially since, almost simultaneously, he has tried to placate his right by promising new settlements in the West Bank. Israel's occupational forces have moved in and out of the non-Israel territories such as Lebanon as well as Palestinian lands since the 1967 War. In this respect one may speculate that Sharon's gesture was intended to give him cover against accusations that he has violated the Camp David and the Geneva Accord that called for the creation of a Palestinian State in the current occupied territories, accords which would have mandated the immediate dismantlement of the Jewish settlements on the West Bank as well as Gaza. After driving the Palestinians to their knees, the Sharon government hopes that its victims will accept a deal. As Tony Judt argued more than two years ago, the Palestinians are asked to accept a more economically prosperous subordinate status in return for surrendering their passion for genuine autonomy. In 2002 Judt's conclusion was that this is the most serious of Sharon's many flawed assumptions. Passion, according to Judt, will always win out. It remains to be seen whether this optimistic analysis can withstand the severe tests placed before it by Sharon's shenanigans.

There is no doubt that Bush has, in part, adopted these policies in order to pander to the powerful American pro-Israel lobby that, tragically, enjoys the support of the overwhelming majority of organized US Jewry. Moreover, neither of the two post-Vietnam war Democratic administrations since the 1967 war that initiated the occupations of Palestinian territory, nor the 2004 Democratic presidential candidate, John Kerry, dare risk the ire of the pro-Israel lobby whose unconditional support of the program of Greater Israel has contributed to the paralysis in American politics to confront the serious consequences of Israeli aggression. Since this lobby (AIPAC) is directly and indirectly responsible for raising major campaigns funds for both parties' electoral efforts, it is highly unlikely that either will bite the hand that feeds it. But while the politics of influence and campaign financing is a necessary part of the explanation for US policy, it is insufficient. The bare fact is that Israel is a vital component of the main objective of US Middle East policy: to establish the dominance of United States and US-based energy corporations and to thwart movements for genuine Arab independence in the region. Since 1948 when, by armed struggle and the powerful alliance with the Soviet Union and Great Britain, Jews achieved their national home, the United States remains responsible for building Israel's military dominance in the region; Congress has appropriated more than $3 billions a year for this purpose, and Israel is the world's largest recipient of US aid for non-military purposes. Today Israel is perhaps the 4th strongest military power in the world. Despite its democratic protestations, the Bush administration has not extended similar backing to the Iranian liberalization movement any more than it is prepared to put its weight behind Palestinian autonomy by insisting that negotiations for the establishment of a Palestinian state proceed in a timely fashion.

Moreover, the US public has never been effectively disabused of one of the most enduring myths about Israel: that contrary to all of its Arab neighbors and Iran, it is the one democratic state in the Middle East. Carefully disguised from this account is the rank economic and social discrimination suffered by the nearly one million Israeli Palestinians. For while they are citizens and enjoy suffrage, they have been systematically denied significant land ownership and their civil liberties and social rights are severely restricted by police and other surveillance forces. Together with what Ella Shohat has called "Arab Jews," the Sephardim who migrated from countries such as Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, among others, they constitute a significant fraction of the Israeli working class, many of whom are poor, suffer authoritarian scorn from the Ashkenazim, who constitute the overwhelming majority of professional/managerial and bourgeois classes and who own the lion's share of Israel's productive property.

Citing the rash of suicide bombings that have occurred in the past several years the Israeli government's program of systematic disempowerment of the Palestinians by acts of violence such as blowing up Palestinian homes, killing civilians who demonstrate, peacefully or not, lengthy internment of all manner of dissenters without preferring charges and its latest maneuver, the construction of a wall around Israel that effectively creates a new apartheid in the area and deprives tens of thousands of Palestinians of their livelihood. The ominous silence of the US government in the face of these hostile, aggressive acts has resulted in an unprecedented repudiation and isolation of both Israel and the United States government in

world opinion. Israel's relentless military repression of Palestinians that has resulted in hundreds of deaths every year since the occupation that began in 1967, for its trampling of human rights Israel stands condemned by Amnesty International, the United Nations and other human rights organizations but, so far with little effect.

Even as the Bush administration has refused to condemn Israel's virtual house arrest of Yassar Arafat in Ramallah, he remains the President of the Palestinian Authority which enjoys official US and UN and recognition, Still, the Bush administration is somewhat constrained by world opinion. It is still official US policy to favor an autonomous Palestinian state. To be sure, Arafat's career as the leader of Al Fatah and as chief of the Authority has been riddled with corruption: cronyism, nepotism, authoritarian rule, and opportunism and provides enough convenient grist for the Israeli government's propaganda mill. Arafat faces serious opposition from within, not only from his traditional religious nationalist opponents who reject any settlement that will recognize Israel's right to exist and suspect Arafat of being all to willing to make compromises. Recently thousands of young Palestinians who are not connected to Hamas or other Islamist groups took to the streets to protest Arafat's leadership. The potential emergence of an anti-Arafat, secular movement is, undoubtedly, giving Sharon and his allies on the Right as well as in the Center Labor Party which, at this writing, is poised to enter the Sharon government, some sleepless nights. For if this movement gains momentum it may deprive the Israeli elite of one of its central excuses for refusing to engage in serious negotiations with the Palestinians: Arafat is unreliable. Sharon's proposed "national unity government' reveals the degree to which Labor has, itself, drifted right and indicates the growing strength of the intransigent ultra-right coalition led by Benjamin Netanyahu. For if a new secular democratic force emerges victorious within the Palestinian resistance, they will deprive the Israeli government of its main excuse for not negotiating a serious settlement: that Arafat is not a worthy partner.

II

SINCE WORLD WAR TWO WORLD JEWRY HAS BEEN PREOCCUPIED with the Holocaust. There can be little dispute that the Holocaust was one of the defining events of the 20th century. Those who refuse to draw its implications for the future of what has euphemistically been described as "civilization," let alone those who regard the legacy of the bourgeois enlightenment as unproblematic, even after Auschwitz, are no less culpable for the current state of global affairs than Americans who fail to take account of the US atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the subsequent global buildup of stockpiles of even more powerful nuclear weapons.. The genocide perpetrated by the Nazis against European Jews, and the first historic use of nuclear weapons by the US government have coarsened both those who directly participated in these events and those who sanctioned them either by silence or by granting enthusiastic support. It is no exaggeration to claim that the ravages of World War Two during which 40 million perished, including 20 million Russians and six million Jews, the Vietnam war, which killed millions of Vietnamese civilians, "ethnic cleansing" in Bosnia, bring new meaning to Gandhi's ironic remark. When asked what he thought of western civilization he is said to have replied: "it would be a good idea."

The Holocaust was not only unique in its display of systematic extermination of an entire people, but revealed two profound flaws in the Enlightenment legacy. The first is the “banality of evil” that Hannah Arendt describes in her controversial study Eichmann in Jerusalem. The social content of this phrase is the critique of the pervasive bureaucratic rationality of Western capitalism. In Max Weber’s terms the machinery of extermination was derived from the same algorithms upon which the success of large scale industry and government relies. The second is perhaps even more serious. One of the myths of the Enlightenment is the what we mean by progress is intimately bound to the presumed disinterestedness and political neutrality of Science. Science is said to be liberatory to the extent that is hermetically sealed from the chaos of political struggles and the conflicts of everyday social relations. Hitler’s scientists were to be unencumbered by the uses to which their discoveries and inventions were put.

For example Werner Heisenberg may have failed to develop a nuclear weapon for the Third Reich but, patriotism aside, his motives were equally to engage in the techno-games that impelled his counterparts in the West. Perhaps few of those who engaged in research directed toward extermination, were anti-Semites. They were good worshippers of the religion of Science. If poetry was one of the highest forms of humanist expression, Adorno asked whether there could be poetry after Auschwitz. Those who work on weapons of mass destruction during World War Two and perform similar tasks in laboratories all over the world today will almost invariably protest that theie science has nothing to do with with mass suffering, including genocide. They are only doing their jobs and even more, taking advantage of the proclivity of states to fund scientific discovery through military programs. As citizens they may disapprove of these programs; as scientists they have no choice by to avail themselves of their largesse.

Zionism is an ideology whose key premise is that, absent their constitution as a nation-state with territorial integrity Jews have no secure home. For some Zionists the Holocaust was only the final proof that Jews required a “national home” to survive the brutality of anti-Semitism which, presumably, pervades even the most enlightened modern states. The Zionist argument relies as well on a quasi-religious recuperation of the twenty five hundred year history of persecution by a succession of rulers, beginning with the destruction of the first Temple. For it was the expulsion of Jews from 15th century Spain, the frequent Pogroms of Czarist Russia, and the widespread discrimination visited upon Jews in most countries of Europe and the United States that, a half century before World War Two, led Theodore Herzl, Chaim Weizmann, and others to conclude that hopes of Jewish assimilation even in the most democratic societies were misdirected.

As practical politicians as much as visionaries, Herzl and Weizmann were neither socialists nor anti-imperialists. Herzl foresaw a capitalist Jewish state and was prepared to enter into an alliance with the British, or any other major European power that could deliver the requisite pledge that Jews would have their own nation-state. In fact, he negotiated with Turkey, then part of the Ottoman Empire, and might have agreed to settlement in Uganda, but this arrangement did not work out. Finally, as World War One broke out, world Zionism settled on Palestine as its objective, and dealt with some leading political figures in the United Kingdom, whose empire, at least until World War One, was unrivaled in power and scope. The focus on

Britain was aided by both the strength of the British Zionist movement and its capacity to influence the government, and by Chaim Weizmann's important scientific contributions to the war effort which impressed British government officials. Indeed Herzl argued that advocates of a Jewish state in Palestine would, of necessity, require the approbation of the British. Moreover he sought to persuade the British that a Jewish state in the Middle East could serve British interests by providing the Empire with a vital military, economic and cultural outpost. After years of hesitation and diplomatic maneuver, not the least of which was a promise to the Arabs that they would retain sovereignty in Palestine as well as other Arab lands, in 1917 His Majesty's Government, under the leadership of Lloyd George, issued the so-called Balfour Declaration of support for the concept of a Jewish National Home in the area known as Palestine.

But the Balfour Declaration included a phrase, insisted upon by Jewish opponents of the concept of a Jewish state, that some Zionists might have interpreted as double talk. While the opening of the declaration unambiguously reads "His Majesty's Government views with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people an will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object," it goes on to state it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political state enjoyed by Jews in any other country

According to Ami Isseroff, "this wording was at least in part a reflection of [the secretary for India] Edwin Montague's conviction, shared by other influential British Jews, that the very existence of a Jewish state would call into question the loyalties of Jews living in other countries and be a source of anti-Semitic persecution. The clause concerning the rights of existing non-Jewish communities was used in the 1922 [Winston] Churchill White Paper and more particularly in the Passfield White Paper to justify limitations on Jewish immigration, which, it was claimed, was threatening the economic rights of the Arabs by causing unemployment and dispossession." Plainly, in addition to the anxiety of some British Jews in high places, powerful elements of the British ruling circles also harbored deep reservations about the identification of a Jewish national home with the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. For by the turn of the 20th century Jews were already purchasing large tracts of land from resident Arabs, a program which might be described as dispossession by commerce. This conversion of Arab peasants into proletarians continued throughout the length of the 20th century and intensified after the war.

By 2000, by law and by commercial transaction, Jews owned ninety percent of Palestine land. Contrary to the myths of Zionism, Jews were not purchasing desert or other fallow lands, but displacing thousands of Palestinians who, for generations, sustained themselves on subsistence and commercial agriculture. Before 1948 when the Jewish State was won by armed struggle and diplomatic and political triumph, the Palestinians did not typically leave the region but, in most instances, were transformed into wage laborers on the lands they once owned, or migrated to cities like Jerusalem where some became small merchants, but most entered wage labor for the growing number of Jewish owned manufacturing, transportation and commercial

enterprises.

Although legitimate real estate purchases constituted the bulk of the ownership transfers until 1948, thereafter Israel's expropriation of the Arabs by means of military force meant that many Palestinians were forced to migrate from the new state of Israel, often to refugee camps within the middle east. What David Harvey has called "accumulation by dispossession" became the main source of Israeli capital formation and this was one of the principal outcomes of the 1967 Six Day War when, as spoils of victory, Israel annexed the West Bank, the Golan Heights and Gaza. At the same time successive Israeli governments-Labor as well as those of the Right-denied the "right of return" to the dispossessed Palestinians even as they affirmed the right of any Jew to "return" to their historic homeland even if they had never before lived there.

III

THE UNITY OF ZIONISM IS THE CONVICTION OF THE NECESSITY FOR the creation of a Jewish national home. Regardless of other ideological considerations such as the nature of the society which should be established in the new state, all factions of the Zionist movement share skepticism, even disdain, for the concept of Jews living permanently in any disapora. For Zionism diasporic Jews may be used for political and financial purposes, but their Jewishness remains always suspect. There agreement ends. Since the early 20th century, one may discern three broad tendencies corresponding to different interpretations of what means a Jewish National Home and what kind of economic, political and social order should be created. The dominant tendency, represented by Herzl and Weitzmann, and most of the earliest settler groups, including the Israeli Labor Party led by David Ben Gurion, favored the creation of a Jewish state that would exercise economic, political and ideological hegemony over its resident Palestinians who, at best could expect bare toleration,. Labor (Mapai) was prepared to grant those who could not be displaced formal citizenship but vigorously pursued a policy of dispossession, wherever the vital interests of Jews was at stake. This policy accelerated after 1948 when Israel, as a Jewish state, adopted an official program of limiting Palestinians within its borders and boldly coveted non-Israel territories of Palestine.

Of course Mapai disagreed with "bourgeois" Zionists regarding the economic character of the Jewish State. Even before the founding of the state of Israel Mapai and the Histadrut, its trade union federation, set up union-owned businesses, some of which are operated as cooperatives which, through the 1960s, dominated Israel's economy. A concomitant of these institutions under Labor's auspices, Israel developed one of the more comprehensive social welfare states in the world, much of it underwritten by US aid. Since the emergence of the Right in the late 1960s, Israel has undergone significant privatization and some elements of the leading Right-wing party, Likud, have sought to dismantle or otherwise weaken welfare state programs, either by privatization or by shrinking them. But like the American social security system and similar European practices and institutions, these programs enjoy broad support among Israeli citizens. For this reason, at least for the present, the Right has made little headway and in Israel has suffered some political defeats when it has attempted to implement is dismantlement program.

The rightist faction, whose most articulate ideologue was Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky, were eloquent in its contention that the establishment of a Jewish State entailed the ruthless pursuit of a policy of ethnic cleansing, both by law and by terror. Jabotinsky boldly declared:

The Arabs loved their country as much as the Jews did. Instinctively, they understood Zionist aspirations very well, and their decision to resist was very natural…There was no misunderstanding between Jew and Arba but anatural conflict…No agreement was possible with the Palestinian Arab; they would accept Zionism only when they found themselves up against an "iron wall," when they had no alternative but to accept Jewish settlement.

That "iron wall" became the hallmark of the Right's policy regarding Palestinian Arabs. Jabotinsky advocated colonization, and believed that the Palestinian Arabs were part of a much larger Arab world of 35 million people who could be made to accept colonialization only by "bayonets." He argued that only when the extremists had been crushed would "moderates" take over. Sharon is a true believer in the Jabotinsky legacy. He has converted a metaphoric statement into a physical reality and it is no accident. For Sharon himself is the political son of a series of patrons including prime ministers Begin, Shamir and other militants who participated in the independence movement under the banner of the Irgun and were themselves terrorists But in concert with the mainstream, Jabotinsky believed in a policy of cultural Western homogeneity stating that:

we Jews have nothing in common with what is called the "Orient"…thank God. We are going in Palestine, first for our national convenience [second] to sweep out all traces of the "Oriental Soul." As for the Arabs in Palestine, what they do is their own business but if we can do them a favor, it is to help them liberate themselves from the Orient.

But as this statement shows, the rightist sage first pointed to the Sephardim, "who must be weaned from their "ancient spiritual traditions and laws" Israel's education policy has always been relentlessly Western. Far from being multi-cultural its school system is firmly controlled by the Ashkenazis.

Jabotinsky died in 1940, but his teachings have become the new mainstream of Israeli society. During the struggle for Palestine between the Great wars the Right's militia, Irgun and its terrorist wing, the Stern Gang, became something of an embarrassment to the mainstream of the Mapai because of their advocacy of terrorism against Palestinians as an instrument of liberation. After 1948 they formed an electoral party Herut, which became the contemporary Likud Party. The Mapai distanced itself from the right on domestic grounds but also because it recoiled at the inconvenient language that the followers of Jabotinsky used. Labor had a longer term strategy to achieve some of the same goals. David Ben Gurion himself, Moshe Sharrett and other leaders of the party were no less contemptuous of the Palestinians and had no plan to grant them full citizenship. But during the 1948 war and in the early days of Israel, they were somewhat constrained by the need to win political and economic aid from key European states such as the Soviet Union, France, Britain and the United States whose support, in the immediate post-war period, had been shaky at best. Despite the best efforts of American Jews,

Roosevelt had never been a friend of the Jewish Agency, which administered a program of relief and immigration, especially of Holocaust victims.

In fact, Secretary of State Cordell Hull had consistently spurned various representations that called attention to the plight of European Jews and allowed only a sliver of those with professional and scientific credentials to enter the country. Truman was perhaps even more hostile to mass Jewish immigration into the United States. After the founding of the UN the Soviet Union became one of Israel's most important allies in the early debates about the desirability of the Jewish state concept. That the Soviet Union was a major supporter of the Jewish state was interpreted by many foreign policy experts as part of its strategy to become a leading player in the region, helped produce a sharp turn in US foreign policy. Recall that early in 1947 a State Department functionary, George Kennan, had written a memo advising that US foreign policy be devoted to a strategy of containment of Soviet expansionism after the agreements at Potsdam and Yalta had ratified permanent Soviet occupation of much of Eastern Europe. It may be argued that the reversal of US policy towards Jews and especially its belated agreement to back the proposal to found a Jewish state in Palestine was one of the felicitous entailments of the Cold War and followed Truman's adoption of the Kennan thesis and its concomitant, Winston Churchill's fateful Fulton MO speech declaring the Soviet Union the new enemy of Western democracies. Despite the Soviet Union's crucial gesture, after the United States government's support of the Jewish state, and the UN declaration of a two-state solution to the Palestinian question, Israel chose the West, a decision that was foreshadowed by the liberal and social-democratic orientation of the leading Zionist forces.

The third tendency, the left Zionists, was inspired by the writing of Ber Borochov who in the first decade and a half of the 20th century, provided a Marxist analysis of the imperative of a Jewish homeland. His major work, T*he National Question and the Class Struggle* (1905), and many articles in subsequent years, offered a theoretical argument that tried to explain why Jews could never truly assimilate into European and United States liberal democratic states. The gist of his argument is based on the marxist insight that the production of human life is grounded in our collective relation to nature. According to Borochov, through anti-Semitism and the social division of labor Jews have been consigned in nearly all European states and the US to sectors that are removed from basic industries such as agriculture, mining and primary metals production. Where Jews have found economic niches in productive wage labor they are mostly in the garment and textile trades, or are craftspersons in secondary and tertiary industries such as retail and wholesale trades, or are independent petty bourgeois shopkeepers. Under these "conditions of production" their separation from nature and thus the fundamental processes of capitalist production, combined with their historic outsiderness renders next to impossible their permanent assimilation into these societies.

Using a Marxist argument-that capitalism always functions, in the first place, within a national market-Borochov enters a vigorous defense of nation as the dominant context within which classes are formed and class struggle is conducted. After acknowledging that the Grand and petty bourgeoisie adopt nationalism as part of their ideological and political rationale, he takes pains, against the traditional socialist assertion that the working class has no country and that

only an internationalist movement can effectively replace capitalist relations of production, to insist that working class consciousness is forged in the context of the nation-state:

All propaganda and every moment, which is rooted in the character of the conditions of production of a given society, it is either nation or nationalistic. Whenever attempts to blunt the class and civil consciousness of the members of that society, and whenever it ignores the class structure and the antagonism between the interests of the classes, it is nationalistic. If, however, it does not obscure the class structure of the society, it is national.

If the Jews have no secure national identity, if their position renders them relatively powerless, they cannot control their own destiny. According to Borochov even in the most liberal of "gentile" states the position of Jews would always be precarious because of the fragility of their economic position. Anti-Semitism, for the most part latent in liberal-capitalist societies, would inevitably become manifest in times of inevitable capitalist crises.

Borochov's theoretical work became the basis for the famed Kibbutz movement in Palestine which beckoned thousands of Europe and American Jews to migrate to Palestine between the wars to reclaim the land. Borochov was the ideological reference for the Hashomer Hazair, the Marxist Zionist party that, until the 1967 war, was an important political force. It identified itself with the international perspectives of the Soviet Union which, notwithstanding anti-Semitism and other serious flaws, it believed remained the most powerful force in the world for socialism and had played a crucial role in the defeat of fascism. As Israel moved ever more firmly into the US orbit, Hashomer, or the Mapam, its party name, found itself in an increasingly defensive position. Before 1948 it was the only Zionist faction that advocated a bi-national state in which Palestinian Arabs would have full citizenship, enter into a collaborative relationship with working Jews on the basis of their common class interests and fight together for socialism. While it accepted the Jewish state in the early years of Israeli independence, it maintained its position for bi-nationalism. Its disintegration reflected the heightened Israeli nationalism that accompanied the post-war occupation and annexation. More to the point, the party and its program were based in the Kibbutz movement, a rather narrow fraction of the population, and, in the burgeoning cities, managed to win support mainly among the intellectuals. Further, as the social composition of the Israeli population shifted from European to middle eastern Jews, left Zionism's appeal was substantially diminished. It survived as the initial basis of the Israeli peace movement which, however, was neither socialist nor Marxist.

But there is an important fourth political tendency among Jews, the secular, internationalist cosmopolitans, most of whom are on the left. Although they readily acknowledge the serious questions posed by Zionists about anti-Semitism share with most Jews a strong cultural and political identification with the legacy of the Holocaust, they are not neither nationalists nor Zionists. I was raised in this milieu.

IV

IN THE LATE 1940S I ATTENDED NEW YORK CITY'S MUSIC AND Art High School, having

passed the entrance test in music. Organized by Mayor LaGuardia to give “talented” students a chance to follow their artistic interests while receiving a high quality academic education it attracted kids from all over the city and became, along with Stuyvestant, Brooklyn Tech and Bronx Science the city’s “select” high schools. Many of us came from liberal or left-wing families, a good number from the Jewish working class. Of course there were an equal number of students from the professional and managerial class and a small, but not insignificant coterie of black and Latino students.

“M and A” made an indelible impression on all of us for its focus on the arts, but also, at the time of the American Celebration, whose central proposition was that the US was the best of all possible worlds, many of us had fairly strong political interests, were critical of US foreign policy and of the Truman administration’s rearmament program that sacrificed social programs and were militantly anti-racist. The overwhelming majority of the politically active Jewish students were from families that were firmly rooted in the diaspora. Ideologically our parents were “progressives,” a common term describing those sympathetic to the New Deal and its legacy, socialists and communists. Our parents were divided over the Cold War, but a surprisingly large number were among those who dissented from the mounting pressure for conformity in American society and culture.

Among our classmates was a small group of Hashomer members. They were sympathetic to the Communist wing of the American Left but generally refrained from getting involved in American politics because they saw themselves as making *alliyah*-moving to Israel-after graduation from high school or college. In a school of students who were generally better educated than most of their generation, some of the Hashomer adherents were among the most talented and well informed about political issues. As I became more vocal in school affairs, they made fairly vigorous efforts to recruit me. I met with their New York leader, attended their camp in New Jersey over several weekends and read some of their literature, including *The National Question* by Borochov. After these experiences I knew in my bones that I was not a Zionist. For even as I resonated with some of Borochov’s arguments which were conveyed to me verbally as well as in text and agreed that European Jews needed a homeland and viewed the founding of Israel with pride-largely due to the importance of the two labor parties that were central to the military victory-my perspectives, as unformed as they were, were directed to the American situation.

Like most young Jewish radicals of my own generation I fervently believed collective action could change America, that the working class in this most advanced of capitalist countries would eventually adopt Left politics and oppose the dominant program of capital. I saw myself as a Jew, but only culturally, because my parents were secular and cosmopolitan, if not rootless. My father’s family came to the US from Lithuania in 1908 and were practicing religious Jews. But he, too, was an American. Through his encouragement I was exposed to classic American literature-by the age of sixteen I had read Whitman, Poe, Hawthorne and the major 20th century novelists such as Dreiser, Dos Passos, Thomas Wolfe and James T. Farrell. Moreover, I was steeped in American History, having read the Beards’ *Rise of American Civilization* and a fair amount of labor and black history.

Pursued by Russian authorities some members of my mother's family had been staunch activists in the Jewish Bund, a revolutionary socialist, militantly anti-Zionist movement. They had arrived in the United States as political refugees. Some of her uncles were founders of the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union. The most prominent was my uncle Zelig, who had been a garment worker and later a reporter and labor editor for the Jewish Daily Forward, died in the late 1960s. I remember attending the funeral home where over 200 people crowded into the chapel to say their farewells. As I entered the home my aunt was engaged in a loud dispute with the funeral director. It seems he had asked whether she required a rabbi to officiate at the event. Angrily she told him that "we don't need a rabbi or any other religious person to attend" and the director vanished. This was the first time I was made aware of her and my uncle's atheism. The "service" consisted of a long list of often spirited testimonials, in Yiddish, delivered from the podium by my uncle's friends.

Later, in the 1980s, when I was invited to give a speech at a dinner sponsored by the American section of the Bund, I was able to confirm, first hand, how truly secular and anti- or non-Zionist this movement had been. Men and women in their sixties and seventies and older still called themselves secular Jewish socialists and, although they felt ties to Israel and would defend her, their lives had been living repudiation of the fundamental Zionist creed. Zelig was far more vocal than most in his disapproval of Zionism and of Israel's adoption of Hebrew as the official Israeli language. Even though he had abandoned the socialist movement- having left the party in 1936 among many others to support Roosevelt and affiliated with the American Labor Party, a united front organization of principally trade union socialists and Communists-he retained traditional diasporic socialist values. These included: contempt for organized religion which, he and others of his generation believed, had thwarted the forward march of the Jewish masses, in the first place the working class; the belief that one could never affiliate with a capitalist party; and the imperative that Jews remain staunch defenders of the Enlightenment, especially secular education, science and the arts. And, despite their strong feeling for Yiddish culture, my mother's side of the family considered themselves dissenting Americans.

In sum, first and second generation immigrant Jews had fallen for assimilation into American society and culture more rapidly than their European counterparts. But, at least until the late 1960s secular Jews remained staunch adherents of all of the major left and left-liberal currents in American society. Jews were heavily represented in the leadership as well as the rank and file of the parties and organizations of the Left and were among the leading trade unionists, not only in the older needle trades and in the retail and other service sectors but especially in the newly organized public employees organizations. Jews are at the top of some of America's largest unions. The names of Jerry Wurf, late president of the State, County and Municipal Employees, Service Employees leader Andy Stern, the Teachers Al Shanker and Sandi Feldman and the Communications Workers' Morton Barr, attest to the role of Jews in the labor movement.

But Zionism had effectively neutralized secular Jewry's voice in the determination of US Middle East policy because many were afflicted with profound guilt about the Holocaust and, perhaps, about their own assimilated identity After the 1967 war many on the Left either openly

renounced their own anti-Zionism, or fell silent about the Middle East. Some Jewish labor leaders who had grown up in the non-Zionist socialist movement became fervent and uncritical patrons of Israel, even as they remained stalwarts of the liberal wing of the Democratic Party, supporters of liberal feminism, civil rights and even the anti-Vietnam war movement. This was particularly true of democratic socialists of both socialist and Trotskyist backgrounds, but, already rattled by the celebrated Khruschev revelations about Stalin's infamies, many close to the Communists muted their criticisms of Israel as well. A not insignificant fraction of erstwhile left Jews of all persuasions, especially intellectuals either drifted or galloped to the Right, because, after the Left refused to defend it against a threatened Arab invasion they viewed radicals, particularly of the New Left variety, as implacable opponents of the state of Israel After 1967, the fragment of left Jews who remained critical of the actual policies of the Israel government, especially the occupation and the hardening of the Israeli class and race systems, were labeled "self hating." The implication of this phrase is that anyone, especially in the diaspora who opposes Israel's position *viz* the Palestinians has become, intentionally or not, an enemy of Israel.

After 1967 the grip of Zionism over the organizations of US Jews-religious, fraternal and sororial, secularists defenders of the constitution's separation of church and state, community centers, charities such as the Jewish Federation, business organizations and others-was virtually complete. The transformation of Israeli politics from mild social-democratic to right-wing nationalism has the detained the great majority of organized American Jews not at all. Begin, Shamir Sharon enjoyed as much support in these circles as did David Ben Gurion, Golda Meir, Yitzak Rabin and Shimon Peres. It may be argued that the reason for this trans-ideological solidarity is that the Zionist propaganda machine has been all-powerful in the face of a vacuum in counter-information about what is going on. But what remains to be explained is why secular, cosmopolitan and radical Jews have been almost completely marginalized in American politics and especially in the debate about the Middle East.

Make no mistake. In the last thirty years, in addition to the radicals who have been consistent, if uncritical, in their support of the Palestinian Arab position, secular Jews who have been generally sympathetic to Israel, have advanced their agenda for peace in the Middle East. Conservatives like Seymour Martin Lipset, Tony Judt, Daniel Bell, liberals like Amitai Etzioni and other intellectuals have joined democratic leftists like Michael Walzer, Irving Howe and others grouped around journals such as Dissent and The Nation in a fairly broad effort to urge both sides to make peace and work toward a Palestinian state. They have taken out ads, lobbied the Congress and written op-eds daily newspapers that implicitly or openly criticized Israel's approach. The problem with these interventions is that they reflect a wide agreement among Jewish intellectuals that peace is both necessary and desirable, but have little base in the court of Jewish public opinion. For today, in contrast to the first two decades of the post-World War Two period when secular liberals played an important role in organized Jewry, there is no left or critical intellectual coterie that commands a degree of moral authority in organized Jewish circles. The neo-conservative journal Commentary is, for most intents and purposes, the leading intellectual forum of American Jewish opinion and it is rapidly pro-Israel. The few specifically left Jewish publications have a limited audience and the most widely circulated

among them, *Tikkun*, is edited by a former radical, now rabbi Michael Lerner. But taking into account *Tikkun*'s largely secular, non-Zionist readership, its circulation is fairly confined to people on the left who are more strongly identified as Jews. *Tikkun* simply does not talk to the Jewish-identified small business, technical and professional middle class.

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ZIONISM WAS ONCE AS DIVERSE AS MARXISM. WHILE THE concept of a Jewish homeland inevitably entailed the creation of settlements that might encroach on the lands of indigenous peoples, strong Jewish currents within and without Zionism advanced the notion of bi-nationalism as an alternative to the dominant ideology of the Jewish state. Through the post-1948 period the voices of bi-nationalism were virtually stilled as Israel consolidated its narrow, tribalistic concept of sovereignty, hardened its mythological narrative of origin, created a hierarchical ethnic and class ridden society that all but reversed its once powerful legacy of laborism and collectivism. Today many young Israelis, disillusioned with the drift of their homeland, seek spiritual and economic refuge in the United States and countries of the almost defunct British Commonwealth, especially Canada and Australia. I have met more than a few of these younger people, some of whom are and were my students; and I have had discussions with the previous generation of Israelis who served in the 1947-48, 1967 and 1973 wars who have drawn the conclusion that militarism has become the dominant strain in Zionism. Theirs is not always a political critique of the fate of Israel, but they are generally agreed that the society feels stifling, dangerous, sometimes authoritarian, and closed. For even in the midst of its unmistakable military power, and as the Right and Center Zionists cling to their near-monopoly over the discourse about the discourse about the Holocaust, its institutionalized memories, and its narratives, they are having a hard time sustaining the view of Israel as a victim state, or as a humanist refuge for the homeless and abandoned.

True, large migrations of Russians, following an earlier arrival of Arab Jews, keeps alive the older idea. But today's Israel has pursued some of the worst features of western capitalism. It has adopted a policy of "guest workers" to replace the now excluded West Bank and Gaza Palestinians who are barred by the Iron Wall from earning their living. These workers-Turks, Yemenis and others cannot qualify for citizenship since they re not Jews. At the same time they compete with the other fractions of the Israeli working class: Sephardim, Israeli Palestinians and Russians to the benefit of the bourgeois and the Professional and managerial elite. Buber's lament about the normalization of Israel has come to pass. But, despite the umbilical cord that has been constructed, along with the Iron Wall, between Israel and its patrons, the US government and the American organized Jewry, there can be long-term security. Israel stands alone in the region; even its once heralded alliance with Egypt is all but sundered by its refusal to address the Palestinian problem. And its willingness to lend its technical and military capacities to further the ends of US domination in the region, remains a thin thread upon which to base any comfort.

Once viewed as a lapsed doctrine, after the Palestinian state is erected, bi-nationalism may make an unexpected comeback. For it is unlikely that the Palestinians will accept a version of

the Bantustan-dependent, economically unviable, militarily weak and territorially split by the strategic placement of Jewish settlements as military outposts for Israel. This is is a possible scenario, particularly in the face of the profound corruption of the extant Arab states, whose historical betrayal of the Palestinians shows no signs of abatement, let alone reversal. A bi-national state in the region could be the beacon of democracy and egalitarianism Israel once claimed and still claims to be.

But it will take years of writing such as Shatz has offered, political discussion and agitation within both left and liberal circles, especially within the United States, a much less timid Israeli peace movement, and a Left within Israel and among US pro-peace Jewish activists, that courageously embraces the possibility of bi-nationalism and, of course, a Palestinian resistance that works to overcome the nationalism within its own ranks and forges a democratic alternative to the Arafat fraud. These are tall orders that are likely to be fulfilled, if at all, unevenly and with many setbacks. What we can do now is to take up the issues raised by *Prophets Outcast*, not only on the non-Zionist left (is there a Zionist left anymore worthy of the name?) but into larger sections of American Jewish life.

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Ariel Sharon’s War Against The Palestinians

By | 2004: Vol. 3, No. 3

For Ariel Sharon diplomacy, to invert the famous saying by Karl von Clausewitz, is the extension of war by other means. The burly, 76-year old Israeli leader has had a chequered career as a soldier and a politician but he has never thought of himself as a diplomat. The title Sharon chose for his autobiography aptly sums him up in one word-Warrior. Bargaining, accommodation, and compromise are alien to his whole way of thinking. This makes Sharon unsuited, both by temperament and by conviction, to the task of peace-making. In a peace process, unlike war, you cannot have a winner and a loser. The resolution of a conflict requires two winners. Sharon, on the other hand, views the relations with the Palestinians as a zero-sum game where a gain by one side is necessarily at the expense of the other. And he is hell-bent on always being the winner. President George W. Bush once described Sharon as “a man of peace.” But this is about as accurate as describe Sharon as a slim and handsome young man.

Sharon is a man of war through and through and he perceives the Palestinians not as a partner on the road to peace but as Israel’s principal enemy. The roots of Sharon’s thinking about the Palestinians go back to Ze’ev Jabotinsky, the spiritual father of the Israeli right. In 1923 Jabotinsky published an article entitled “On the Iron Wall (We and the Arabs).” He argued that Arab nationalists were bound to oppose the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. Consequently, a voluntary agreement between the two sides was unattainable. The only way to realize the Zionist project was behind an iron wall of Jewish military strength. In other words, the Zionist project could only be implemented unilaterally and by military force.

The crux of Jabotinsky’s strategy was to enable the Zionist movement to deal with its local opponents from a position of unassailable strength. The iron wall was not an end in itself but a means to an end. It was intended to compel the Arabs to abandon any hope of destroying the Jewish state. Despair was expected to promote pragmatism on the other side and thus to prepare the ground for the second stage of the strategy: negotiations with the local Arabs about their status and national rights in Palestine. In other words, Jewish military strength was to pave the way to a political settlement with the Palestinian national movement which laid a claim to the whole of Palestine.

The key phrase here is “iron wall.” It accurately describes the basic Zionist strategy in the conflict with the neighboring Arab states since Israel was established in 1948. It also provides the title of my book *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World*. In the book I argue that the history of the State of Israel is a vindication of the strategy of the iron wall. The Arabs-first the Egyptians, then the Palestinians, then the Jordanians-learnt the hard way that Israel could not

be defeated on the battlefield and were compelled to negotiate with it from a position of palpable weakness.

The 1993 Oslo accord between Israel and the PLO was a major turning-point in the 100-year old history of the conflict over Palestine. It marked the transition from the first to the second stage of the iron wall strategy, the transition from deterrence to negotiations and compromise. The Palestinians believed that by signing the Oslo accord and thereby giving up their claim to 78% of pre-1948 Palestine, they would gradually gain an independent state stretching over the Gaza Strip and most of the West Bank with a capital in East Jerusalem. They had moderated their political program very considerably in the way that Jabotinsky had predicted in his extraordinarily prescient article. But what the Oslo accord produced in practice was not the partition of Palestine but a persistent political deadlock. Ten years on, the Palestinians are bitterly disappointed with the results of the historic compromise which they struck on the lawn of the White House with the leaders of the Jewish state. The Oslo peace process broke down in the summer of 2000 and the dream of independence and statehood remain just that-a dream. Having made the peace of the brave, the Palestinians confront an Israeli prime minister who is determined to impose on them the peace of the bully.

Ariel Sharon has been involved at the sharp end of the confrontation with the Arabs for most of his life. The hallmarks of his career are mendacity, the most savage brutality towards Arab civilians, and a persistent preference for force over diplomacy to solve political problems. After making the transition from the army into politics, Sharon remained the champion of violent solutions. His ideology is the Likud ideology of Greater Israel that claims the whole of the West Bank as an integral part of the Land of Israel. This ideology leaves no room for an independent Palestinian state between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

In the past, Sharon used to seek a solution to the Palestinian problem at the expense of Jordan, half of whose population is of Palestinian origin. Sharon was in fact one of the most consistent proponents of the Likud policy and the slogan that “Jordan is Palestine.” This policy denied the need to create a new Palestinian state on the West Bank of the river Jordan by claiming that a Palestinian state in all but name already existed on the East Bank of the river. Consequently, the solution lay in helping the PLO to transform the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan into the Republic of Palestine. During the crisis in Jordan in September 1970, Ariel Sharon was the only member of the IDF General Staff who was opposed to the policy of helping King Hussein to beat off the challenge from the PLO. After the signature of the peace treaty between Israel and Jordan in October 1994, the Likud finally abandoned the policy that “Jordan is Palestine.” Sharon himself may have realized that this policy is no longer realistic but his failure to renounce it openly suggests that it may still be lurking at the back of his mind.

In and out of uniform, Ariel Sharon has waged a relentless war against the Palestinian people. This is the theme of Baruch Kimmerling’s informative and illuminating recent book *Politicide: Ariel Sharon’s War Against the Palestinians.* Kimmerling defines politicide as “a process that has, as its ultimate goal, the dissolution of the Palestinians’ existence as a legitimate social, political, and economic entity. This process may also but not necessarily entail their partial or

complete ethnic cleansing from the territory known as the Land of Israel." Kimmerling regards Sharon as the most brutal, deceitful, and unrestrained of all Israeli generals and politicians and as one of the most frightening leaders of the new millennium. The book is a devastating indictment of Sharon's attempts to destroy the Palestinian people, including the proposal to forcibly turn Jordan into a Palestinian state and the infamous invasion of Lebanon in 1982.

As minister of defence in Menachem Begin's government Sharon was the driving force behind the invasion of Lebanon which was fraudulently named "Operation Peace for Galilee." This was not a defensive war to safeguard Israel's security but an offensive war designed to reshape the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East. The principal objective of Sharon's war was to destroy the PLO as a military and political organization, to break the backbone of Palestinian nationalism, to spread despair and despondency among the inhabitants of the West Bank, and to pave the way to its absorption into Greater Israel. A second objective was to give Israel's Maronite allies a leg-up to power, and then compel them to sign a peace treaty with Israel. A third objective was to defeat and expel the Syrian army from Lebanon and to make Israel the dominant power in the Levant. Under Sharon's devious direction, an operation that was supposedly undertaken in self-defence developed into a merciless siege of Beirut and culminated in a horrendous massacre in the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila which led to the removal of Sharon from his post at the ministry of defence.

If brute military force is Sharon's principal instrument in dealing with the Palestinian people, the building of Jewish settlements on occupied Palestinian territory is another project that has always been close to his heart-if he has one. Here he was acting in the best Zionist tradition of "creating facts on the ground" to pre-empt negotiations. In various capacities-as minister of agriculture, as minister without portfolio, as minister of industry and trade, as minister of housing and construction, as minister of national infrastructure, and as minister of foreign affairs-Sharon spurned diplomatic compromise and pushed for confiscating more and more Arab land, for building more and more Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, and for the expansion of existing settlements. It was not for nothing that he was nick-named "the bulldozer." The settlements were a manifestation of Sharon's territorial expansionism, an example of his general preference for unilateral action, and a way of preventing the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. Whereas Labor-led governments tended to construct settlements in areas of strategic importance to Israel, the Likud, and Ariel Sharon in particular, deliberately scattered settlements across the length and breadth of Judea and Samaria-the Biblical names for the West Bank-in order to render territorial compromise impossible when the Labor Party returned to power.

Labor did return to power in 1992 and the following year Itzhak Rabin signed the Oslo accord with Yasser Arafat. The Likud rejected the Oslo accord from the beginning as incompatible with Israel's security and with its historic right to the whole Land of Israel. Binyamin Netanyahu spent his three years in power (1996-1999) in a largely successful attempt to delay, to subvert, and ultimately to derail the Oslo peace process. It was Labor's Ehud Barak, however, who presided over the breakdown of the process at the Camp David summit in July 2000. With the collapse of the summit, the countdown to the return to violence began. Ariel

Sharon, Netanyahu's successor as leader of the Likud, provided the spark that set off the conflagration with his provocative visit to Haram al-Sharif in the Old City of Jerusalem on 28 September 2000.

Palestinian riots quickly evolved into a full-scale uprising, the Al-Aqsa intifada, paving the way to Ariel Sharon's decisive electoral victory against Ehud Barak on 6 February 2001. Israel was at war and no Israeli leader was more efficient or more ruthless in fighting the Palestinians than this old war-horse. During the election campaign the wily Sharon tried to reinvent himself as a man of peace. He ran on a ticket of "peace with security." But it was the same old Sharon who had not mellowed with age and who did not appear to have learnt any lessons from his ill-conceived and ill-fated war in Lebanon. Sharon's rise to power thus immediately extinguished any faint light there might have been at the end of the tunnel.

With Sharon ensconced in the prime minister's office, Israel was back to the old strategy of the iron wall with a vengeance. Ze'ev Jabotinsky had outlined a sophisticated strategy of change in which Jewish military power was designed to pave the way to negotiations from strength. Sharon, like most politicians of the Right, is dedicated to building up his country's military power but is rather reluctant to engage in peace negotiations with the Palestinians. His strategy is to use Israel's overwhelming military power in order to impose his terms on the opponent. Small wander that in the three years since Likud's victory at the polls, final status negotiations with the Palestinian Authority have not been resumed. The persistence of Palestinian violence against Israeli civilians, especially in the terrifying form of suicide bombings, is Sharon's excuse for refusing to resume political negotiations. The deeper reasons lie in his psychological make-up, his worldview, and the ideology of Greater Israel. One does not negotiate about a nationalist ideology. All nationalist isms eventually lead to war and right-wing Zionism is no exception.

Ariel Sharon is the unilateralist *par excellence*. This is reflected across the entire spectrum of his government's policies from the destruction of Palestinian houses to the targeted killing of militant Palestinian leaders, from expansion of Jewish settlements on the West Bank to the construction of an elaborate network of by-pass roads for the exclusive use of the settlers, from habitual violation of UN resolutions to the systematic abuse of international humanitarian law. Arab peace offers are treated with indifference verging on contempt. In late March 2002, for example, all 22 members of the Arab League endorsed a Saudi plan that offered Israel peace and normalisation in return for withdrawal from the territories it occupied in June 1967. Sharon's response amounted to a declaration of war. He launched the fraudulently-named "Operation Defensive Shield" which seriously damaged the PA's capacity to govern and destroyed much of the civilian infrastructure that had been built with foreign aid. On the belligerent prime minister's orders, the IDF marched into the Palestinian part of West Bank and waged against its people a savage war which included the reoccupation of cities, the bombardment of refugee camps, the demolition of houses, attacks on medical facilities, the rounding up of hundreds of suspects, torture, and summary executions.

One of the most disturbing aspects of the Sharon government's policy is the construction of the

so-called “security barrier” or wall on the West Bank. This wall is higher than the Berlin Wall, it winds its way round the main Jewish settlement blocks, and it is a flagrant violation of international law. The purpose of this wall is said to be to prevent terrorist attacks on Israel, but the hidden motives behind it have as much to do with land-grabbing as with security. To build the wall Israel is expropriating land, demolishing houses, separating farmers from their fields, workers from their place of work, school children from their schools, and entire communities from their sources of water. The wall bites deep into the West Bank with the apparent aim of crowding as many Palestinians as possible into as little territory as possible. Estimate of the area of the West Bank that this wall will gobble up by the time it is completed range from 15 to 55 per cent. What is clear is that the wall is paving the way to the de facto annexation of a substantial part of the West Bank to Israel thereby undermining the possibility of a genuine two-state solution. For Ze’ev Jabotinsky the strategy of the “Iron Wall,” was a metaphor for dealing with the Arabs from a position of unassailable strength. In the crude hands of Ariel Sharon and his associates, however, this metaphor is fast becoming a hideous and horrendous concrete reality and an environmental catastrophe.

In an effort to breathe some life into the comatose Israeli-Palestinian peace process, Tony Blair took the lead in persuading the Quartet to issue “the road map”. George Bush was not an enthusiast of the road map: he adopted it under pressure from his allies. The road map was formally launched by the Quartet in May of last year. It envisaged three phases leading to an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel by 2005. The Palestinians embraced the roadmap with great alacrity though they found it difficult to come up with a credible security plan due to the death and destruction visited upon them by “Operation Defensive Shield”. The Israeli position was more ambiguous. Ariel Sharon requested and received from President Bush three delays in launching the road map, and once it was launched, he submitted fourteen amendments that were designed to empty it of any serious political content. The Israeli Cabinet never endorsed the road map as such; it only voted for specific measures that were required of Israel in the first phase. There was also some outright opposition to the road map from ministers who are well to the right of Ariel Sharon.

The policies of the Israeli government did not change significantly following this half-hearted adoption of the road map. It continued to order IDF incursions into the Palestinian territories, targeted assassinations of Palestinian militants, demolition of houses, uprooting of trees, curfews, restrictions, and the deliberate inflicting of misery, hunger, and hardship to encourage Arab migration from the West Bank. At the same time, settlement activity continued on the West Bank under the guise of natural growth’ but in blatant violation of the provisions of the road map.

The failure of all official plans to break the deadlock on the Israeli-Palestinian front encouraged private individuals and groups from both sides of the divide to come forward with fresh ideas. Sari Nusseibeh and Ami Ayalon obtained more than 300,000 signatures for their blueprint for the resolution of the conflict. Yasser Abed Rabbo and Yossi Beilin signed a “peace agreement” between Palestine and Israel in Geneva on 1 December 2003 amid great media and political fanfare. The Geneva Accord is a 50-page document that deals in detail with all aspects of the

dispute. Funded and sponsored by the Swiss government, it was enthusiastically received all over the world. Predictably, however, it incurred the wrath of Ariel Sharon who denounced Yossi Beilin as a traitor. Ever the soldier, Sharon acted on the precept that the best line of defence is to attack. Sharon's central contention all along was that there is no Palestinian peace partner. The Geneva Accord demonstrated not only that there was a significant body of moderate Palestinians who were prepared to negotiate with Israel a final settlement to the conflict but that they had already done most of the ground work.

At length Sharon reached the conclusion that the occupation in its present form is unsustainable and he began to look for ways of distancing Israel from the main Palestinians population centres while keeping as much of their land as possible. The plan he came up with is not a peace plan but a plan for a unilateral Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip and four isolated settlements on the West Bank. Characteristically, the plan ignored Palestinian rights and interests and it was not even presented to Palestinian Authority as a basis for negotiations because it would have been rejected out of hand. To the world Sharon presented the plan as a contribution to the road map and to the building of peace based on a two-state solution. But to his right-wing supporters he said: "My plan is difficult for the Palestinians, a fatal blow. There's no Palestinian state in a unilateral move." The real purpose behind the plan is to sweep away the remnants of Oslo, to undermine the position of Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Authority, and to derail the road map. Anchored in a fundamental rejection of the Palestinian national identity, the plan is a pitch for *politicide*, an attempt to deny the Palestinian people an independent political existence on their land.

By-passing the Palestinians, the Quartet, the UN, and the international community, Sharon presented his plan to the only person who counts in his eyes: the President of the United States. As a reward for the offer to pull the 7,500 settlers out of the Gaza Strip, Sharon requested Mr. Bush's support for retaining the six major Jewish settlement blocks, holding 92,000 people, on the West Bank. Indeed, in a remarkable exercise in brinkmanship or blackmail, Sharon threatened not to board the aircraft at Ben-Gurion airport until his demands were satisfied. At their meeting at the White House on April 14th the president granted his guest everything he had asked for and more. Hailing Sharon's plan as a "a bold and historic initiative" and as a true contribution to building peace in the region, Mr Bush proceeded to give the most right-wing prime minister in Israel's history two specific assurances. First, Bush promised American support for Israel's retention of choice parts of the West Bank. Second, he rejected the right of return of the 1948 refugees and said that in future they and their families should immigrate to a new Palestinian state. Sharon asked for these assurances in writing and he received them in writing. Taken together, these two assurances amounted to an abrupt reversal of American policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict, under both Democratic and Republican administrations, since 1967. They also destroyed irrevocably any residual credibility that the Bush administration may have had to serve as an honest broker in the resolution of this conflict.

Arab reactions to the Sharon-Bush pact were instantaneous and incandescent with rage. There was a universal feeling that by embracing the Likud's one-sided nationalist agenda, Bush

sounded the death knell of the peace process. Yasser Arafat labelled Bush's statements "a new Balfour Declaration," alluding to Britain's infamous 1917 promise to support the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine. King Abdullah II of Jordan cancelled a scheduled meeting with Mr. Bush on account of the statements he made during the prime minister's visit. Given Sharon's record as a proponent of the thesis that "Jordan is Palestine," the king had every reason to dissociate himself from an accord over which he was not consulted and which could end up by destabilising his own kingdom through an influx of Palestinians from the West Bank to the East Bank. President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt said that there is more hatred of Americans in the Arab world today than ever before. The Organisation of Islamic Conferences also condemned Washington for its support of Israel's unilateral initiative. To many Muslims as well as Arabs, the Sharon-Bush collusion is deeply offensive and it is bound to trigger violent reactions.

Meanwhile, Ariel Sharon, the champion of violent solutions, can congratulate himself on a spectacular victory. Virtually single-handed, he brought about a seismic change in America's position, a change that could redefine the conflict for a generation or more. He persuaded the most powerful man in the world to back his plan to consolidate Israel's grip in the West Bank and to unilaterally draw the borders of an emasculated Palestinian state. Sharon can use this backing to overcome right-wing opposition to his Gaza disengagement plan from right-wing elements in the government and the ruling party and to hang on to power despite the three separate charges of corruption pending against him and his two sons. As for George W. Bush, his sudden and ill-considered conversion to Sharon's expansionist agenda is largely motivated by political expediency: blind support for Israel will go down well in the upcoming presidential elections not only with Jewish voters but with the much more substantial constituency of Christian fundamentalists. The tragedy is that Bush and Sharon, in trying to protect their domestic power base, are endangering the future of Israel, the Palestinians, and the entire Middle East.

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This article was originally published in German in the Swiss weekly, Die Weltwoche*, 29 April 2004.*

A Path To Peace: Sharon's Disengagement Plan Or The Geneva Accord?

By | 2004: Vol. 3, No. 3

The Geneva Accord is Sharon's nightmare. On the eve of the Likud referendum on Sharon's disengagement plan, he threatened that if it failed, Geneva was the alternative. Sharon is so worried about Geneva (or similar initiatives like the Nusseibeh-Ayalon plan) that he insisted that President Bush include the following sentence in the letter the President gave Sharon during their meeting in Washington in late April: "The United States will do its utmost to prevent any attempt by anyone to impose any other plan…than my own vision and its implementation, as described in the road map." To explain why Sharon is so worried about Geneva, I will compare it to Sharon's plan.

Sharon's commitment to evacuate the settlements in Gaza is a smokescreen. Pulling out of 17 settlements in Gaza will not end the occupation of Gaza Strip. Under Sharon's plan, Israel will maintain Israeli control over Gaza's airspace, its territorial sea, and all border crossings. It also envisages that the Israeli army and security services will continue to have a free hand to operate there. Gaza thus will remain a vast prison under the external control of the IDF, which will retain the right to intervene.

Sharon's decision to implement his plan unilaterally is also problematical. By avoiding negotiations with the Palestinians for evacuating the Gaza settlements, Israel receives no quid quo pro toward peace. In contrast, the Geneva Accord offers Israel security arrangements, an end to claims, and an end to the conflict in exchange for withdrawal from the settlements. Moreover, and this is my main argument, by focusing the debate on evacuating Gaza Strip settlements, Sharon aims to disguise his strategic goal of consolidating Israel's control over the West Bank. He is willing to sacrifice the civilian settlements in Gaza to accomplish this. Sharon's plan for the West Bank is defined by three aspects of the "separation barrier" system that Israel is building unilaterally along a route approved by the Israeli cabinet in June 2002 and October 2003. These are the territory the barrier will surround; the territory that will remain on the Israeli side of the barrier; and the settlements that, according to Sharon's vision and his public commitments, should be retained.

The separation barrier will be 686 kilometers long, including the route it will take around the settlement of Ariel, whereas the pre-1967 war "green line" border was only about 350 kilometers. The border defined by the barrier will be extended to about 786 kilometers, assuming that Sharon implements his plan to extend it so that it will place the settlements of Maale Adumim east of Jerusalem and Kiryat Arba near Hebron on the Israeli side.

Sharon's military planners have also drawn a line for the separation barrier in the Jordan valley

to the east that is 143 kilometers long, although a Sharon's spokesman has said the eastern wall will not be built for the time being. Nevertheless, Sharon has always said Israel will retain the Jordan Valley up to a line about 10 kilometers west of the Jordan River. Sharon's policy of staying in the Jordan Valley is confirmed by the location of both "legal" settlements that he will retain and "illegal outposts" that are being built along in the Jordan valley. There are 37 such outposts in this area whose purpose is to thicken the large established settlements in that area overlooking the Jordan Valley. The fact that the Government is offering houses in established settlements in the Jordan Valley to new Israeli buyers is further evidence of Sharon's intention to preserve this area, de facto, as part of Israel.

The Israeli State Comptroller reported that the Minister of Housing has spent $6.5 million dollars in illegal settlement construction during the past three years. Half of this has supported illegal outposts that President Bush's, notwithstanding the fact that the road map calls for the dismantling of all outposts and Sharon has promised to do so. The IDF, the Zionist Organization, the Jewish Agency, the Ministry of Infrastructure, and Prime Minister Sharon himself have been complicit in this absurdity.

If Sharon only builds the separation barrier in the west, Israel will annex, de facto, about 20% of the West Bank. If he extends the barrier to the Jordan Valley, or even if he does not but fulfills his commitment to control the Jordan Valley without a barrier, Sharon will have annexed, de facto, about 45% of the West Bank. The areas Sharon plans to retain under his plan are very similar to those on the map that Israel proposed to the Palestinians at the Camp David summit in 2000.

It is clear that the line of the separation barrier in the west and the virtual barrier in the east, even if an actual barrier is not built there, is not based solely on security considerations. It is primarily designed to preserve the majority of the settlements and to divide, contain, and control the Palestinian populated areas.

Now let me compare the Geneva Accord to Sharon's plan. First, if we assume that Sharon intends to annex only 20% of the West Bank, this compares to only 2% that would be annexed under the Geneva Accord. This 2% would include the areas in which over which 50 percent of the settlers reside.

Under the Geneva Accord, no Palestinians will be annexed to Israel and no settlers will remain on the Palestinian side of the border. In comparison, under Sharon's plan, 375,000 West Bank Palestinians will remain on the Israeli side of the barrier. 200,000 of these are Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem. 50,000 live just outside of the boundaries of East Jerusalem. The other 125,000 live elsewhere in the rest of the West Bank, west of the separation barrier. They will be caught between the June 4,1967 international border line and the fence that cuts them from their hinterland.

In addition, under Sharon's plan, 200,000 more West Bank Palestinians, mostly in poor rural areas, will be confined in enclaves. Sharon's plan will evacuate only four small, half empty and

very remote settlements in the northern West Bank. The plan would preserve the 58 other Israeli settlements in the heart of the West Bank on the Palestinian side of the separation barrier. In order to protect these 58 settlements, Israel will contain and control the Palestinians through a combination of electronic sensors, road blocks and checkpoints that will create additional barriers within the external separation barrier.

The 58 authorized settlements, to which one may add about 80 illegal' outposts, contain about 70,000 settlers. They will have 700 kilometers of roads for their and the IDF's exclusive use. It is clear from this data that Sharon has no intention of disengaging from the West Bank. Sharon's deputy Ehud Ohlmert recommended a much greater pull back from the West Bank that would evacuate 40,000 44,000 settlers to Israel. Sharon rejected this because he is still committed, psychologically and ideologically and for political and security reasons to Israel's settlement project, the largest undertaking Israel has made since the 1967 war. The massive scale of the settlement enterprise created under Sharon's leadership in his former ministerial posts and today as Prime Minister speaks for itself. I doubt that Sharon is capable of crossing the Rubicon and reversing it.

Sharon's separation barrier will incorporate into Israel 154,000 settlers in the five main settlement blocks that Sharon has vowed to preserve, and 70,000 additional settlers on the Palestinian side of the barrier would also remain under Israeli control. Under the Geneva Accord, only 110,000 West Bank settlers, or about 50% of the total, would be annexed to Israel, and no settlements would remain on the Palestinian side of the border. In contrast, Sharon's plan would retain about 225,000 settlers, located on both sides of the barrier, under Israeli control, or about 99% of the total.

The difference between the 20% of the territory (not including the Jordan Valley and the build up areas of the 58 settlements on the Palestinian side of the barrier) to be annexed under the Sharon plan, and the 2% of the territory to be absorbed by Israel under the Geneva Accord is also large. The differences between the settlers and land to be annexed, de jure or de facto under the two approaches lies in Sharon's strategy to annex the maximum land area of biblical Israel and the maximum number of settlements. In order to accomplish this, he is willing to accept the inevitable de facto annexation of many Palestinians. In contrast, the Geneva Accord favours withdrawing from far more land and settlements in order to end the occupation of the Palestinians.

Withdrawing unilaterally from the Gaza settlements raises the risk that Gaza will be controlled by a coalition of radical Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and radical Fatah factions. Overall, it is very much in Israel's interest to achieve a final status agreement with the Palestinians, and this can only be achieved through negotiations. Sharon justifies acting unilaterally by claiming there is no partner with whom to negotiate in the current Palestinian leadership. Others, like Ehud Barak, go further, arguing that the Palestinian people are not a partner and that Israel will have to await the emergence of a new generation of Palestinians before there can be peace.

In contrast, the Geneva Accord argues that both the current Palestinian leadership and the

Palestinian people are partners for peace. Geneva calls for empowerment of moderate Palestinians through negotiations with them and recognition of their legitimacy. Yet Sharon refuses to deal with Abu Ala or any other moderate Palestinian leader.

Sharon's plan for the West Bank does not contemplate Israeli responsibility for governing directly the Palestinians and providing them expensive services like education, health and municipal services. Yet Sharon plans to control the Palestinians by keeping IDF troops in the West Bank, controlling the main roads, and controlling the borders of the West Bank and Gaza, including the Gaza coastline. In short, Sharon wants to contain 3.2 million Palestinians, by controlling them from the outside their populated areas with walls and fences, preserving military access, and dividing the internal space left to the Palestinians into enclaves, without accepting responsibility for governing them. Sharon answers the argument that this threatens Israel's Jewish majority by claiming that because the Palestinians will not receive Israeli citizenship or be ruled directly by Israel, no demographic problem or a bi-national state exist.

The liberals in Israel argue that Sharon's plan will destroy Israel's democracy. They claim that if Israel maintains permanent control, even though it is indirect, over an unwilling Palestinian majority, Israel will become de facto a bi-national Jewish-Arab state. I agree. If Sharon has his way, Israel will become a combination of a militarized state like ancient Sparta and an apartheid state like the former South Africa that denies equal rights to the majority, creating a system I call "Sparthied." This would violate Jewish values and morality and would undermine the Zionist vision of a democratic, Jewish state.

The competing view that Zionism should be expansionist and that acquisition of territory in the West Bank and Gaza must continue through the use of the Army, settlements and cooperation between the IDF and settlers is now obsolete. That concept of Zionism must give way to a new Zionism that emphasizes the growth and well being of a Jewish democratic state within the pre-1967 borders at peace with the Palestinians and other Arab states. This must be accomplished through diplomacy, not force. Israel must abandon ambitions to control Palestinian territories and renew attention to building a better Israeli society through improved education, social welfare, and infrastructure. Shifting the Israeli project from expansion and settlement to internal rebuilding will require a change in Israeli identity. It will be very difficult, but it must be done.

Unfortunately, Sharon's policies are taking Israel in another direction. The alternative approach is the Geneva Accord that would renew final status negotiations with moderate Palestinian partners. Israel and the United States must also reach out to other partners who have been excluded, the Europeans and the moderate Arab states, and make them part of the Geneva approach. A renewed alliance between moderate, pragmatic Israelis and Palestinians would weaken the religious fundamentalist and extremists on both sides. Our Palestinian counterparts in Geneva want this no less that we do. Their stake in avoiding a victory by Palestinian extremists in Hamas and the Islamic Jihad is just as strong as our stake in rescuing Israel from the settlement enterprise and the grave dangers of attempting to dominate and control the Palestinians.

Some Israelis argue that in ten years time, we will look back at Sharon's decision to evacuate settlements in Gaza as part of a larger design to uproot all the settlements, step by step. But I see no evidence, judging from Sharon's statements and his past actions, that he intends this. Indeed, all the evidence supports a design by Sharon to hang onto the West Bank as the central goal of his "disengagement" plan. In order to defeat Sharon's plan, the Israeli opposition must argue more effectively in favor of its alternative by demonstrating the dangers of Sharon's plan to Israel's future. The leaders of the Israeli opposition should resist Sharon's trial to co-opt them by bringing them into his cabinet in a "unity" government. The role of the opposition is to transform public opinion in support of its own goals and thereby persuade Sharon to yield, or step aside in favor of a new leadership.

Most Israelis today are convinced that the majority of the Palestinians support terrorism and hate Jews. Israelis tend to believe what their leaders say, and this is the message they hear from the Sharon government. On the other hand, the majority of Israelis recognize that the status quo is untenable and that something must be done. The Palestinians have a mirror image of the Israelis and tend to demonize them. Paradoxically, on both sides many continue to support violent responses, while at the same time they understand that violence is not succeeding and that something else is needed. For the Israelis, unilateral disengagement seems to be the answer. Sooner or later both sides will realize that only a negotiated agreement will succeed, and in that context the logic of a mutual negotiated agreement along the lines of Geneva is very strong.

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America and the World A Conversation with Jürgen Habermas

By | 2004: Vol. 3, No. 3

Q: *Professor Habermas, let me begin by congratulating you on receiving the Prince of Asturias Prize and also the gold medal of the Bellas Artes Foundation of Madrid. You must have surprised many Spaniards, as you did me, when you confessed your admiration for two fiercely existentialist writers, Miguel de Unamuno and Miguel de Cervantes.*

A: This love goes back to school days and my university years. After the Second World War, when the Keller Theater was presenting masterful productions of French plays by Sartre, Mauriac and Claudel, Existentialism gave expression to our sense of life. A book by the Tuebingen philosopher, Friedrich Bollnow who would now be 100, like Adorno brought Unamuno's *Don Quixote* to my attention at that time. By similar paths, I also found my way to Kierkegaard, to the later Schelling, and to the Heidegger of *Being and Time*. That I turned my back on *Being and Time*, and busied myself, rather, with social-, political-, and legal theory, had one simple reason: In the rather tattered mental and moral world of the *Bundesrepublik*, one could grapple better with what Jaspers called "limit situations" in the language of Marx and Dewey than in the "jargon of authenticity."

Q: *To get back to the occasion of the prize, could you comment on the fact that Susan Sontag, Gustavo Gutierrez and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio da Silva, all distinctly figures of the Left, and loudly outspoken opponents of the war in Iraq, were among the prize winners?*

A: This prize enjoys an astonishingly high profile in the Spanish-speaking world. On reflection, the coincidence might just be an accident. Anyway, the street demonstrations in Spain against Aznar's Iraq policy were even more overwhelming than in the other European countries.

Q: *You, too, were very critical of the American-lead war in Afghanistan and Iraq. But during the Kosovo crisis, you supported the same unilateralism, and justified a form of "military humanism," to use Chomsky's expression. How are these cases different Iraq and Afghanistan on the one hand, and Kosovo on the other?*

A: Concerning the intervention in Afghanistan, in an interview with Giovanna Borradori, I expressed myself with some reservation: After September 11th, the Taliban regime refused to renounce unambiguously its support of the terrorism of Al-Qaeda. Up to this point, international law has not been tailored for such situations. The objections which I had at the time were not, as with the Iraqi campaign, of a legal nature. Quite apart from the lying maneuvers of the current U.S. administration which have lately come to light, the *recent Gulf War* represents, on the part of Bush, since September 2002, a patent threat to the United Nations and a violation of international law. Neither one of the two preconditions existed which

could have justified such an intervention: There was neither an appropriate resolution of the Security Council, nor was an attack imminent on the part of Iraq. It counts for nothing whether weapons of mass destruction might still be found or not. For a preventive attack, there is no retroactive justification: No one may go to war on a suspicion.

Here you see the difference with the *situation in Kosovo*, when the West had to decide, in light of the accumulated experiences of the Bosnian War think of the disaster of Srebenica! if it wanted to watch yet more ethnic cleansing by Milosevic, or if it wanted, in the absence of national interest, to intervene. Granted, the Security Council was blocked. Just the same, there were two grounds for legitimating action-one formal, the other informal-even though the U.N. Charter does not permit any substitute for the required consent of the Security Council: For the first, one may appeal to the *obligatio erga omnes*, binding on all states, the call for emergency assistance in the case of a threatened genocide, which, in any event, is firmly established in *customary* international law. For the other, one may place on the scale the fact that NATO is an alliance made up of liberal states, whose organizing principles comport with the principles of the UN's Declaration of Human Rights. Compare this with the "coalition of the willing," which has split the West, and included states in contempt of human rights, such as Uzbekistan and Taylor's Liberia.

Just as important is the perspective of the Continental European countries like France, Italy and Germany, which served to justify, at the time, their participation in the Kosovo intervention. In expectation of eventual ratification by the Security Council, these countries understood this intervention as an "anticipation"of an effective law of world citizenship – as a step along the path from classical international law to what Kant envisioned as the "status of world citizen" which would afford legal protection to citizens against their own criminal regimes. Already at that time (in an article for the April 29, 1999 issue of "Die Zeit"), I had posited a characteristic difference between the Continental European and the Anglo-American: "It is one thing for the U.S.A. to employ, in the course of what is also an admirable political tradition, human rights instrumentally as surety of a hegemonic order. It is another thing if we understand the precarious transition, from classical power politics to the state of world citizenship, as a learning process to be mastered collectively. This more comprehensive perspective requires greater caution. The self-empowerment of NATO should not become the rule."

Q: *On May 31st, you and Derrida published a kind of manifesto with the title: "The 15th of February, or: What Binds the Europeans. A Plea for a Common Foreign Policy-First of all, in Core-Europe." In a foreword, Derrida explains that he subscribes to the article that you wrote. How is it that two intellectual heavyweights, who for the last two decades have regarded each other suspiciously from across the Rhine, and who have been-as some insist-talking past each other, suddenly so well understand each other, as to publish, together, so important a document? Is it simply "politics," or is the text you both have signed also a "philosophical gesture"? An amnesty, a truce, a reconciliation, a philosophical gift?*

A: I haven't a clue what Derrida would say in answer to your question. To my taste, you have

pitched the thing too high with these formulations. First of all, this was concerned with a political statement in which Derrida and I were in agreement-as has often been the case lately, by the way. After the formal conclusion of the Iraq war, when many were fearing a general prostration of the "unwilling" governments before Bush, I had sent a letter to Derrida-as well as to Eco, Muschg, Rorty, Savater and Vattimo-inviting them to participate in a common initiative. (Paul Ricoeur was the only one who preferred to hold back because of political considerations; Eric Hobsbawm and Harry Mulisch could not participate for personal reasons.) Now, Derrida was not able to write, at this time, his own article, as he was obliged to be undergoing unpleasant medical tests. But Derrida wanted very much to be part of this, and suggested the procedure which we then followed. I was happy about this. We had last met in New York after September 11th. We had already been recording our philosophical discussion for some years, in Evanston, in Paris and in Frankfurt. So no grand gesture was now required.

When he received the Adorno Prize, Derrida, for his part, gave a highly sensible speech in the Paulskirche in Frankfurt, in which the spiritual affinity of these two minds was impressively manifested. This kind of thing leaves one not unmoved. Actually, over and beyond all the politics, what connects me to Derrida is the philosophical reference to an author like Kant. Admittedly and though we're roughly the same age, our life histories have been very different what separates us is the later Heidegger. Derrida's thinking has appropriated the Jewish-inspired perceptions of a Levinas. In Heidegger, I confront a philosopher who failed as a citizen in 1933 and especially after 1945. But even as a philosopher, he is suspect to me because, in the 1930s, he received Nietzsche precisely as a neo-pagan, as it was then the fashion to do. Unlike Derrida, whose reading of "Andenken" accords with the spirit of monotheistic tradition, I take Heidegger's botch-job "Seinsdenken" as a leveling of that epochal threshold in the history of consciousness that Jaspers had called the "axial age." According to my understanding, Heidegger committed treason against that caesura which is marked, in various ways, by the prophetic-awakening Word from Mount Sinai, and by the Enlightenment of a Socrates.

When Derrida and I mutually understand our so different background motives, a difference of interpretation must not be taken as a difference in the thing being interpreted. Be that as it may, "truce" or "reconciliation" are not really the proper expressions for a friendly and open-minded interchange.

Q: *Why have you entitled this essay "The 15th of February", and not, as some American might have proposed "The 11th of September", or "The 9th of April"? Was February 15th the world-historical answer to September 11th rather than to the campaigns against the Taliban and Saddam Hussein?*

A: This is reading too much into it. The editors at the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* had actually published the article under the headline "Our Renewal. After the War: The Rebirth of Europe." Perhaps they wanted to downplay the importance of the demonstrations of February 15th. Allusion to this date would have reminded one that, in cities such as London, Madrid and Barcelona, Rome, Berlin and Paris, demonstrations had taken place that were bigger than any

since the end of the Second World War. These demonstrations were not an answer to the attack of September 11th, which had immediately moved the Europeans to such impressive manifestations of solidarity. The demonstrations gave voice to the infuriated, powerless outrage of a highly diverse mass of citizens, many of whom had never before gone out into the streets. The anti-war appeal was directed unambiguously against the dishonest and illegal policies of certain of the allied governments. I regard this massive protest to be no more "anti-American" than our Vietnam protests had been in their day – with the sorry difference that, between 1965 and 1970, we only had to add our protests to the formidable protests that were happening in America itself. So I was glad that my friend Richard Rorty spontaneously joined in the intellectuals' initiative of May 31st with an article that was, in fact, politically and theoretically, the sharpest.

Q: *Let's stay with the original title that had called for a common European foreign policy " beginning in the center of Europe." This a little like saying there's a center and a periphery some who are essential, and some who are not. For some, this was an eerie echo of Rumsfeld's distinction between the old and the new Europe. I am certain that the ascription of any such family resemblance gives you and Derrida a headache. You have been energetically in favor of a constitution for the European Union in which such gradations of space and geography should have no place. What do you mean by "Core-Europe"?*

A: "Center of Europe [Kerneuropa]" is, first of all, a technical expression, brought into play at the start of the 1990s by Schaeuble and Lamers, foreign policy experts of the CDU, at a moment in time when the process of European unification had still to solidify; it was intended to recall the vanguard role played by the six original members of the European Community. Then as now, France, the Benelux countries, Italy and Germany turn out to be the driving force behind the "deepening"of EU institutions. Meanwhile, at the summit in Nice of EU heads of government, it was officially decided there would be a provision for a "strengthened cooperation"of particular member states in particular political spheres. This mechanism goes by the name of "structured cooperation" in the draft European Constitution. Germany, France, Luxemburg, Belgium, and lately, even Great Britain, are making use of this provision for the common building-up of Europe's own armed forces. The US administration is exerting what is, admittedly, considerable pressure on Great Britain to forestall the establishment of a European headquarters, though it would still be associated with NATO. To this extent, therefore, "Core-Europe" is already a reality.

On the other hand, today, in a Europe deliberately divided and weakened by Rumsfeld and his underwriters, the term has its appeal. The idea of a common foreign- and defense policy emanating from the center of Europe arouses anxieties in a situation where the European Union, after its extension eastward, is barely governable, and it is especially anxiety-producing in countries which, for good and sufficient historical reasons, are resistant to further integration. Some member-states want to hold onto a national scope of action. They are more interested in the existing, predominantly inter-governmental mode of decision making, than in extending the jurisdiction of majority-rule supra-national institutions over an ever-greater range of political actions. Thus you see the newly admitted East-Central European nations

concerned for their newly-achieved national sovereignty, and Great Britain frightened for its "special relationship" with the USA.

America's divisive policy found willing helpers in Aznar and Blair. This chutzpah struck at the long-latent European fault-line separating the integrationists and their opponents. "Core-Europe" is an answer to both: to the smouldering intra-European controversy over the "finality" of the unification process, which is wholly independent of the war in Iraq, as well as to the current stimulation of that opposition, which has its origin outside Europe. The reactions to the catch-phrase "Core-Europe" are all the more nervous the more external and internal pressures invite this answer. The hegemonic unilateralism of the US administration has thrown down the challenge to Europe to learn, finally, how to speak foreign policy with one voice. But in face of the frustrated deepening of the European Union, we can learn to make a start if, first of all, we begin at the center.

France and Germany, many times over the course of decades, have undertaken this role. Precedence does not mean exclusion. The door stands open to all. The harsh criticism which Great Britain and the East-Central European countries, above all, have leveled at our initiative, is also explained, of course, by the push which a common foreign-and-defense policy has received from the provocative and favorably-timed opposition of the overwhelming majority of the population *of all of Europe* to Bush's adventure in Iraq. I viewed this provocation, as it respected our May 31st initiative, as most opportune. Unfortunately, no fruitful discussion developed out of it.

Q: *We know, of course, that the United States has played "new" Europe against "old" even in the exercise of its influence within NATO. Does the future of the European Union lie with a weakening or with a strengthening of NATO? Should and can NATO be replaced with something else?*

A: NATO played a good part during the Cold War, and also afterwards even if it ought not again act alone, as when it intervened in Kosovo. But if the United States views NATO less and less as an alliance entailing obligations to consult, and more and more unilaterally as a mere instrument for the furtherance of its own national interests and world-power politics, then NATO has no future. It may be NATO's peculiar strength that "powerful military alliance" does not exhaust its definition; rather, its military might comes attached to a value-added *dual legitimacy*: NATO's existence is justified, as I see it, only by its being an alliance of indubitably liberal states, acting in express conformity with the human rights policies of the United Nations.

Q: *"Americans are from Mars; Europeans are from Venus," Robert Kagan asserts in an essay, which has attracted much attention on the part of the neo-conservative Straussians in the Bush administration. One might view this essay, which was originally entitled "Power and Weakness," as a manifesto in which Bush's national defense policy is mapped out. Kagan distinguishes between Americans and Europeans, calling the former "Hobbesians" and the latter "Kantians." Have the Europeans really entered the post-modern paradise of Kant's*

"perpetual peace," while the Americans remain outside in the Hobbesian world of power politics, standing watch upon the ramparts that their European beneficiaries can not defend?

A: The philosophical comparison won't take you far: Kant was, in a certain sense, a true student of Hobbes; he described, in any event, modern coercive law and the character of state sovereignty as soberly as Hobbes did. The connection, splashy but inadequate and misleading, which Kagan makes between these philosophical traditions on the one hand, and those national mentalities and policies on the other, should best be laid aside. Viewed long-range, what one may perceive as the difference between the Anglo-American and the European mentalities reflects long-term historical experiences; but I see no correlation with short-term changes in political strategies.

In his attempt to separate the wolves from the sheep, Kagan is alluding, of course, to certain facts: The terror-regime of the Nazis was only brought down through the exercise of military violence and through invasion. The Europeans were able, during the Cold War, to build and extend their welfare states under the nuclear umbrella of the US. In Europe, and especially in its richly-populated middle, pacifist attitudes have proliferated. In the meanwhile, the countries of Europe, with their comparatively slender military budgets and poorly equipped armed forces, could oppose the bone-crushing military might of the US only with empty words. Well, Kagan's caricatured interpretation of these facts provokes me to offer these comments:

1. For the victory over Nazi-Germany, we have also to thank the costly struggles of the Red Army;

2. Their social compact and economic importance, features of a "soft," non-militaristic power, have given the Europeans an influence in global power relations not to be underestimated;

3. In Germany today, as a consequence, also, of American re-education, a welcome pacifism reigns, which, however, did not prevent the Bundesrepublik from participating in UN actions in Bosnia, in Kosovo, in Macedonia, in Afghanistan, and lastly in the Horn of Africa;

4. It is the US, itself, who wants to thwart the plans to build up a European military capability independent of NATO.

This exchange of blows elevates the matter to the false level of an altercation. What I take to be false is Kagan's stylization of US policy over the course of the last century. The conflict between "realism" and "idealism" in foreign and defense policy occurred, not between the continents, but, rather, within American policy itself. Certainly, the bi-polar power structure of the world between 1945 and 1989, compelled a policy of balance of terror. The competition between the two nuclear-armed systems during the Cold War created the background for the towering influence which the "realist" school of international relations in Washington was able wield. But we must not forget the impetus which President Wilson gave to the founding of the League of Nations after the First World War, nor the influence which American jurists and politicians themselves exercised in Paris after the US retreated from the League. Without the US, there would have been no Kellogg-Briand Pact, nor the first international legal proscription

of wars of aggression. But what fits least in the militant picture of the role of the US that Kagan paints, is the policy of the victors in 1945, initiated by Franklin D. Roosevelt. What Roosevelt called for in his undelivered Jefferson Day Address of April 11, 1945, was for the world to seek not only an "end to war," but an "end to the beginning of all wars."

In that period, the US was at the peak of the new internationalism, and spearheaded the initiative for the creation of the United Nations, in San Francisco. The US was the driving force behind the UN, which (no accident) has its headquarters in New York. The US set in motion the first international human rights convention, campaigned for the global monitoring of, as well as the juridical and military prosecution of, human rights violations, pressed upon the Europeans the idea of a political unification of Europe-initially, against the opposition of the French. This period of unexampled internationalism, loosed, in the ensuing decades, a wave of innovations in the field of human rights, blocked, indeed, during the Cold War, but implemented, in part, after 1989. As of that point in time, it was yet to be decided if the one remaining superpower would turn away from its leading role in the march toward a cosmopolitan legal order, and fall back into the imperial role of a good hegemon above international law.

George Bush, the father of the current president, had-admittedly, vague-notions of world order, that were different from his son's. The unilateral action of the current administration and the repute of its influential neo-conservative members and advisors, reminds one, of course, of its precursors: the repudiation of the climate treaty, the treaty on atomic, biological and chemical weapons, the landmine convention, the protocols for the agreement on so-called child-warriors, etc. But Kagan is suggesting a false continuity. The newly-elected Bush administration's definitive repudiation of internationalism has remained its keynote: The rejection of the (since established) International Criminal Court was no trivial delict. One must not imagine that the offensive marginalizing of the United Nations and the cavalier contempt for international law which this administration has allowed itself to be guilty of, represent the expression of some necessary constant of American foreign policy. This administration, whose declared aim, to attend to national interests, has so obviously missed its mark, can be voted out of office. Why should it not be replaced in the coming year by an administration that gives the lie to Kagan?

Q: *In the United States, the "War on Terrorism" has veered off into a "War on Civil Liberties," poisoning the legal infrastructure that makes a living democratic culture possible. The Orwellian "Patriot Act" is a Pyrrhic victory in which we and our democracy are the vanquished. Has the "War on Terrorism" similarly affected the European Union? Or has its experience with the terrorism of the 70s made it immune to the surrender of civil liberties to the security-state?*

A: I don't actually believe that. In the *Bundesrepublik*, the reactions in the autumn of 77 were hysterical enough. Furthermore, we're encountering today a different sort of terrorism. I don't know what would have happened if the twin towers had collapsed in Berlin or Frankfurt. Naturally, we would not, after September 11, have laced up for ourselves "security packets" so suffocatingly tight, nor of such an unconstitutional reach, as the frightening regulations in America, which have been so clearly skewered and dissected by my friend Ronald Dworkin. If, in this regard, distinctions were to be drawn between mentality and practice here and beyond

the Atlantic, I would endeavor to place them in the context of historical experience. Maybe the very understandable shock in the USA after September 11 was, in fact, greater than it would have been in a European country accustomed to war. How to prove this?

Certainly, the patriotic upsurge following upon September 11, had an American character. But the key to the curtailment of fundamental law, which you've referred to, to the breach of the Geneva Convention in Guantanamo, to the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, etc., I would locate elsewhere. The militarization of life domestically and abroad, the bellicose policies which open themselves up to infection by their opponent's own methods, and which return the Hobbesian state to the world stage where the globalization of markets had seemed to have driven the political into the wings, all this the politically enlightened American populace would have overwhelmingly rejected, if the administration had not, with force, shameless propaganda, and manipulated insecurity, exploited the shock of September 11. For a European observer and a twice-shy child such as I, the systematic intimidation and indoctrination of the population and the restrictions on the scope of permitted opinion in the months of October and November of 2002, (when I was in Chicago), were unnerving. This was not "my" America. From my 16th year onward, my political thinking, thanks to the sensible re-education policy of the Occupation, has been nourished by the American ideals of the late 18th century.

Q: *In your keynote address to the Philosophical World Congress during August of 2003 in Istanbul, you said that international security, under the conditions prevailing in post-national configurations, is being threatened in new ways and from three sides: By international terrorism, by criminal states, and by certain new civil wars arising in failed states. What interests me particularly is this: Is terrorism something that democratic states can declare war on?*

A: Whether democratic or not, a state can normally only make "war" on another state, if the word is to have a precise meaning. When a government, for example, deploys military force against an insurrection, the means do indeed suggest a war, but this force is fulfilling another function-the state is concerned for tranquility and order within its own territorial borders, in circumstances when the police organs will no longer suffice. Now, when this attempt at enforced peace misfires, and the regime itself degenerates into merely one of several contending parties, the term is "civil war." This verbal analogy to war as between states holds in one circumstance only-when the collapse of state power gives rise to the same oppositional symmetry between intra-state parties as normally obtains between warring states. Anyhow, what's missing here is the proper subject of acts of war: the organized coercive power of an opposing state. Forgive this conceptual pedantry. But in international terrorism, worldwide and dispersed, far-reaching and decentralized, and only loosely reticulated, we are encountering a *new* phenomenon, which we should not be too quick to assimilate to what we already know.

Sharon and Putin can feel themselves encouraged courtesy of Bush, since the latter has thrown all of them into one pot, as if Al-Qaeda were nothing other than a territorially bound Partisan terrorist independence or resistence movement (as in Northern Ireland, Palestine, Chechnya,

etc.) . Al-Qaeda is also different from the terrorist gangs and tribal warriors, the corrupt war lords of a miscarried decolonization, and also different from criminal regimes of states making war against their own inhabitants through ethnic cleansing and genocide, or which support worldwide terror, e.g., the Taliban. The US administration, with its Iraq war, has undertaken what is not only illegal, but unfeasible: to substitute an asymmetrical war between states for the asymmetry between a state armed with hi-tech weapons, on the one hand, and, on the other, an elusive terrorist network that, up to now, has worked with knives and explosives. War between states is asymmetrical when an aggressor aims at the destruction of a regime, rather than at a conventional defeat, because their relative strengths are so transparently fixed a priori. Think of the month-long troop deployment on the borders of Iraq. One needn't be a terror expert to recognize that this is no way to destroy the infrastructure of a network, or to engage Al-Qaeda and its off-shoots, or to dry up the milieus which nourish such a group.

Q: *Jurists are of the opinion that, according to classic international law concepts, the* jus in bello *entails inherent limitations on the* jus ad bellum*. Already, the detailed provisions of the Hague Land War Convention aim at restraining force, exercised in war, against the civilian population, against soldiers taken prisoner, against the environment and the infrastructure of the affected society. The rules for the conduct of war are also supposed to enable a conclusion of peace acceptable to all sides. But the monstrous disproportion in technological and military strength between the United States and its respective adversaries-in Afghanistan or in Iraq-makes it near impossible to abide by the* jus in bello*. Must not the United States be indicted and prosecuted for war crimes, obviously committed by America in Iraq, but deliberately ignored by us?*

A: Now, the American Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, in just this connection, waxed proud over the deployment of precision weapons that were supposed to have kept civilian losses at a comparatively low level. When I read, in the late edition of the *New York Times* of April 10, 2003, a report concerning the Iraqi war dead, and learned of the regulations pursuant to which Rumsfeld accepts civilian "casualties," this alleged precision no longer offers any consolation: "Air war commanders were required to obtain the approval of Defense Secretary Donald L. Rumsfeld if any planned air strike was thought likely to result in deaths of more than 30 civilians. More than 50 such strikes were proposed and all of them were approved." I do not know what the International Criminal Court in The Hague would have to say to this. But given that this court is not recognized by the USA, and given, also, that no judgment can be leveled by the Security Council against a member with veto power, the entire question is going to have to be posed somewhere else.

Careful estimates place the Iraqi dead at 20,000 altogether. This number, monstrous when compared with their own losses, throws a spotlight on the moral obscenity that we sense when we see, on our televisions, the carefully controlled, if not entirely manipulated, images from this asymmetrical war. This power asymmetry would take on a different significance if it reflected not the super-powerfulness and the powerlessness of the warring parties, but the police power of a world organization.

The United Nations, today, by its Charter, is already charged with the ensuring of peace and security, as well as with the worldwide enforcement of human rights protections. Let us assume, contrary to existing facts, that the world organization were up to the task. It would be able to fulfill its functions, then, under the condition that it would wield, uniquely and non-selectively, sanctions of a *daunting superiority* against rule-breaking actors and states. With this, the asymmetry of power would have assumed a different character.

The infinitely troublesome and still improbable transformation from idiosyncratic and selective punitive wars to police actions authorized by international law requires more than just an impartial tribunal adjudicating adequately-defined crimes. We also need to develop further the *jus in bello* into a law of intervention that will very closely resemble internal police law, inasmuch as the Hague Land War Convention, which is only directed to the *waging of war*, is not tailored to such civil concepts as obstruction of justice and enforcement of sentences. Because innocent lives are always at stake in humanitarian interventions, such force as may be required must be so finely regulated that the declared motives of a world-police action will lose the odor of pretext, and as such, be capable of winning worldwide acceptance. A touchstone might be the moral feelings of global observers not that sadness and sympathy could possibly disappear, but rather that spontaneous outrage that many of us felt at seeing the heavens over Baghdad lit up, obscenely, week after week, by rocket strikes.

Q: *John Rawls envisions the possibility of democratic "just wars" undertaken against "unlawful states." But you go further, and argue that even undoubtedly democratic countries may not arrogate to themselves the right to wage, at their discretion, war against a purportedly despotic, peace-threatening or criminal state. In your Istanbul address, you say that impartial judgments can never be pleasing to any one side; accordingly, on these cognitive grounds, the unilateralism of a hegemon, however well-meaning, must necessarily lack legitimacy: "That the good hegemon has, itself, a democratic constitution, cannot compensate for this lack." Has the* jus ad bellum*, which made up the core of classical international law, become obsolete even in the case of the just war?*

A: Rawls' last book, *The Law of Peoples,* has been justly criticized because he relaxes the strong principles of justice, which a democratic constitution must embody for dealing with authoritarian or semi-authoritarian states, and places the guardianship of these weakened principles in the hands of individual democratic states. Rawls cites, in this connection, Michael Walzer's concurring doctrine on just war. Both regard "justice among nations" as desirable and possible, but they want to entrust the enforcement of international justice, in specific cases, to the judgment and discretion of sovereign states. Rawls thus seems to be thinking with Kant rather than with the liberal avant garde of the international community; Walzer, with the respective participating nations, completely independently of their internal constitutions. Unlike Rawls, with Walzer there is a mistrust of supranational operations and organizations that is motivated by communitarian considerations. Protecting the integrity of the way of life and established ethos of a nation state, so long as it doesn't encompass genocide and crimes against humanity, should enjoy precedence over the global enforcement of abstract principles of justice. The considerations referred to in your question are better illustrated by Walzer's

conception than by Rawls' half-hearted defense of international law.

Since the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928, wars of aggression have been proscribed by international law. The exercise of military force is to be permitted only for self-defense. Thus the *jus ad bellum*, as understood by classical international law, was abolished. Because the institutions of the League of Nations, founded after the First World War, proved to be too weak, the United Nations, after the Second World War, was vested with authority to conduct peacekeeping operations and to impose sanctions, although at the price of a veto for the then-great powers. The UN Charter stipulates the precedence of international law over the legal systems of the several nations. The coupling of the Charter with the Declaration of Human Rights, and the wide-ranging authority which the Security Council enjoys under Chapter VII, have set off a wave of legal innovations which-though, since 1989, they have remained an unutilized "fleet in being"-have been correctly understood as a "constitutionalizing of international law." The world organization, which, meanwhile, comprises 192 member states, has a veritable constitution, which sets forth the procedures according to which international breaches of the rules can be determined and punished. There have been, since, no more just and unjust wars, only legal or illegal ones, justified or unjustified under international law.

One must bear in mind this enormous advance in the rights revolution in order to realize the radical breach that the Bush administration has wrought-as much with a defense doctrine which willfully ignores the applicable legal preconditions for the exercise of military force, as with its ultimatum to the Security Council that it either give its blessing to the United States' aggressive Iraq policy, or sink into meaninglessness. In the rhetoric of legitimation, there is in no "realistic" redemption of "idealistic" notions. To the extent that Bush wanted to eliminate an unjust system and democratize the region of the Middle East, these normative goals were not contrary to the program of the United Nations. In dispute was not the question whether justice between nations was actually possible, but only as to the means for its accomplishment. The Bush administration, with moralistic phrases *ad acta*, has laid aside the 220-year-old Kantian project for the *legalizing* of international relations.

The comportment of the American administration allows for only one conclusion, that, as they see it, international law is finished *as a medium* for the resolution of conflicts between states, and for the advancement of democracy and human rights. These goals, the world power has made the official centerpiece of a policy that no longer relies on law, but rather on its own ethical values and moral convictions: it has substituted its own normative rationales for prescribed juristic procedures. But the one cannot substitute for the other. The abstention from legal argumentation always betokens an abandonment of previously recognized general norms. From the restricted vantage point of its own political culture and its own understanding of the world and of itself, even the most thoughtful and best-intentioned hegemon cannot be certain if it is understanding and considering the situation and interests of the other parties. This goes for the citizens of a democratic superpower as well as for its political leadership. Without inclusive legal procedures, which embrace all the parties involved, and contain their conflicting perspectives, there is nothing compelling the predominant party to give up the central perspective of a great empire, or to engage in the de-centering of meaning-perspectives that an

equal consideration for the cognitive point of view of all interests requires.

Also, an ultra-modern power like the US relapses into the pseudo-universalism of the ancient empires when, on questions of international justice, it substitutes morality and ethics for positive law. From Bush's perspective, "our" values are the universally valid values which all other nations should accept in their best interests. This pseudo-universalism is part of an all-encompassing ethnocentrism. And a theory of just war, deriving from theological and natural law traditions, has nothing to set against this, even when it appears, as today, in communitarian garb. I am not saying that the official rationales of the American administration for the Iraq war, or that the officially expressed religious convictions of the American president concerning "the good" and "the evil-doers" satisfy the Walzerian criteria for a "just war." Walzer-the-political-commentator has left nobody in the dark on this score. But Walzer-the-philosopher has extracted his criteria, reasonable as they may be, solely from moral principles and ethical considerations, outside the framework of a theory of law which ties judgments on war and peace to inclusive and impartial procedures for the generation and application of mandatory norms.

In this context, what interests me is only one consequence of such an approach, namely, that the criteria for judging just wars is not being translated into a matrix of law. But only by doing so are the ever-controversial elements of "justice" translated into the verifiable category of "legality" as regards to war. Walzer's criteria for just wars, even if they can be found in international customary law, are essentially ethical and political in nature. Review of their application in particular cases is withdrawn from international courts of law, and reserved rather more to the sagacity and sense of justice of individual states.

But why should the impartial adjudication of conflicts within the medium of law be assured only within states? Why should not the same be brought to bear, judicially, on international conflicts? This is not trivial. Who is to determine, on the supra-national level, if "our" values truly merit universal acceptance, or if we are truly exercising universally recognized principles, or whether we are perceiving a conflict situation truly non-selectively, for example, or whether, instead, we are taking into consideration only what is relevant to us? This is the whole point of inclusive legal procedures which condition supra-national decision-making upon the adoption of reciprocating points of view and consideration of reciprocal interests.

Q: *Though you cherish your Kantian project, are you not, on its behalf, acting like an advocate for a "military humanism?"*

A: I am not familiar with the precise context of the expression, but I imagine that it is alluding to the danger of a moralizing of antagonism. It's precisely on the international plane that a demonizing of adversaries-think of the "axis of evil"-cannot contribute to conflict resolution. On every side today, fundamentalism is growing, making conflicts incurable-in Iraq, in Israel and elsewhere. Carl Schmitt, incidently, also made this argument his whole life long in defense of a "non-discriminatory concept of war." Classical international law, he argued, had regarded war as needing no further justification than as a legitimate means to resolving conflicts between

states, and, at the same time, as an important condition for the civilizing of warlike disputes. With the criminalization of aggressive wars, introduced with the Versailles Treaty, war itself was made a crime, unleashing a dynamic of "limit-lifting" as the adversary, adjudged morally, metamorphosed into a despicable enemy, who is to be annihilated. If, in the train of this moralizing, one opponent can no longer regard the other as a worthy adversary-as a *justus hostis*-limited wars degenerate into total wars.

Now, as total war dates from the time of nationalistic mass-mobilizations and the development of weapons of mass destruction, this argument is not wrong. It only lends support to my thesis, that "justice between nations" cannot be achieved through moralizing, but only through the legalizing of international relations. Discriminating judgment only contributes to strife, as when one party presumes to pass judgment- *according to its own standards*-upon the alleged crimes of the other party. We must not confuse this kind of subjective judgment with a judicial condemnation of a proven criminal regime and its henchmen by a forum constituted by the community of nations, for the latter extends the protection of the law to an accused party, to whom the presumption of innocence applies.

Admittedly, this distinction between moralizing and the legalizing of international relations would not have satisfied Carl Schmitt; for him and his Fascist-minded comrades, the existential struggle of life and death possessed a weird vitalistic aura. Hence, it was Schmitt's opinion that the substance of the political, the self-asserting of the identity of a *Volk* or of a movement, will not let itself be tamed by norms, that every attempt at domestication through law, must accrue to moral savagery. Were the pacifism of law to triumph, we would be robbing ourselves of the essential means to the renewal of authentic being. But we need not concern ourselves further with this abstruse conception of the political.

We do need to concern ourselves with the purportedly "realistic" propositions, asserted by Hobbesians of the left and of the right, that the law, even in the modern guise assumed in constitutional democracies, is never anything but the reflex and mask of economic or political power. On this assumption, legal pacifism, which seeks to extend law to the international state of nature, is a sheer illusion. Actually, the Kantian project of constitutionalizing international law sustains itself by an idealism that is free of illusions. The form of modern law has, as such, a clearly moral core which makes it a "gentle civilizer" (*Koskenniemi*) in the long run, whenever law comes to be the medium through which a constitution is formed.

The egalitarian universalism, which is immanent in law and its procedures, has, as an empirical matter, perceptibly left its mark on the political and social reality of the West. The idea of equal treatment, in which the law of peoples as of states has such an investment, can fulfill its ideological function only at the price of serving, at the same time, as the standard for ideological critique. Therefore, opposition and liberation movements throughout the world have access to the vocabulary of human rights. And as soon as these movements serve oppression and exclusion, the rhetoric of human rights may be trusted to oppose this abuse.

Q: *Precisely as a defender of the Kantian project second to none, you must be deeply*

disappointed by the Machiavellian machinations that so often dominate the practice in the United Nations. You yourself have called attention to, and addressed the "monstrous selectivity" of the Security Council in making up its agenda. You speak of the "shameless precedence which national interests always enjoy over global responsibilities." How must the institutions of the United Nations be altered and reformed, so that, from a shield for the prosecution of pro-Western interests and goals, it may truly become an effective tool for the securing of peace?

A: That's a big topic. It isn't a question of institutional reform. Some change in the power relationship of a reasonably composed Security Council, as well as some restriction of the veto right of the great powers, certainly are necessary, but don't reach far enough. Let me single out a couple of aspects of this unwieldy complex.

The world organization is, quite properly, invested in full inclusiveness. It stands open to all nations who commit themselves to the *words* of the UN Charter and of its Declarations, which are bound up with international law-irrespective of how remotely its own internal practices *actually* accord with these principles. Thus, measured by its own founding principles, there exists-despite the formal equality of members-a fall off in legitimacy between liberal, semi-authoritarian, and sometimes even despotic member states. This becomes conspicuous when, to pick an example, a country like Libya assumes the chairmanship of the Human Rights Commission. John Rawls deserves credit for having pointed to the fundamental problem of graduated legitimation. The head-start which democratic countries have in regard to legitimation, upon which Kant had already fixed his hopes, hardly lends itself to formalizing. But those who would take account of it, can develop habits and practices. From this perspective as well, the needed reform of the veto of the permanent Security Council members, is important.

The most pressing problem, of course, is the restricted capacity to act of a world organization which has no monopoly of force, and is dependent on the ad hoc support of more potent members in particular cases of intervention and nation building. The problem, however, does not lie in the lack of a monopoly of force-the differentiation of basic law from executive state force, we have also seen elsewhere, for example, in the European Union, where EU law infringes national law, while the nation states still exercise command over the standing means of the legitimate resort to force. The United Nations suffers, apart from its want of funds, above all from a dependency on governments which, for their part, not only pursue their national interests, but are themselves dependent on the assent of their respective publics. Until the self-conception of member states changes, whose social-cognitive understanding of themselves is still as sovereign actors, we must think about how a relative uncoupling of levels of decision-making can be achieved. The member states could, for example, without restraining their national legal rights over the disposal of their military forces, hold a designated contingent expressly available for UN purposes.

The ambitious goal of a world domestic politics without a world government will remain, realistically, only an aspiration, if the world organization confines itself to its two most

important functions-maintaining peace and the global enforcement of human rights, and hands over political coordination in the areas of the economy, the environment, transportation, health, etc., to mid-level institutions and frameworks for negotiations. But this plane, upon which global players with capacity and scope of action can hammer out compromises, belongs, so far, to only particular institutions such as the World Trade Organization. The kind of felicitous reform I envision for the United Nations cannot be effected if the nation states in the various parts of the world do not integrate in continental governments after the model of the European Union. This would make for a modest beginning. Here-not in the reform of the UN-lies the properly Utopian element of the status of world citizenship.

On the basis of a division of labor within such a multi-level global system, the legitimation needs of a UN capable o f action, in even a halfway-democratic manner, might actually be met. A world public has formed, up to now, only intermittently, for major historical events, like September 11. Thanks to the electronic media and the astounding success of non-governmental organizations operating world wide, such as Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch, these may some day assume a firmer infrastructure and attain a greater continuity. In such circumstances, the idea of establishing a "second chamber" alongside of the General Assembly, a "parliament of world citizens" (David Held) would no longer be absurd, or, barring that, at the least an expansion of the existing chamber to include the representation of citizens. Thus would an evolution in international law, which has been long in the works, find its symbolic expression and institutional fulfillment. Meanwhile, it would not only be states, but also citizens themselves, who would be the subjects of international law: As world citizens, they could, if necessary, assert legal claims against their own governments.

Of course, an idea as abstract as a parliament of world citizens will easily give rise to humbug. But in view of the limited functions of the United Nations, one must keep in mind that representatives in this parliament would be representing populations which of necessity would not be bound together, like the citizens of a political entity, by thick traditions. In place of the positive solidarity of a national citizenry, a negative consensus would suffice, to wit: a common outrage at the aggressive warmongering and human rights violations of criminal gangs and regimes, or a common horror over acts of ethnic cleansing and of genocide.

Admittedly, the resistance and reactions to be overcome along the way to full constitutionalization will be so great that the project can only succeed if the USA, as in 1945, takes it on itself to be the locomotive at the forefront of the movement. This is not as improbable as, it appears at the moment. For one thing, it is a lucky accident of world history that the sole superpower is the oldest democracy on earth, and hence, contrary to what Kagan would have us believe, has, so to speak, innate affinities with the Kantian idea of the legalizing of international relations. For another, it is in the interest of the United States of America itself to make the UN capable of action before another, less democratic, great power rises to superpower status. Empires come and go. In the end, the European Union has agreed, just now, on countering the international law-breaking "pre-emptive strike" with a "preventive engagement," on principles of security and defense policy; it might be able to exercise influence on public opinion in our American ally.

Q: *The contempt of the American administration for international law and international treaties, the brutal exercise of military force, a politics of lies and blackmail has provoked an anti-Americanism which has extended to our own current government, and not without justification. How should Europe deal with this spreading animus so as to prevent worldwide anti-Americanism from swamping the West altogether in its wake?*

A: Anti-Americanism is a danger in Europe itself. In Germany, it has always been associated with the reactionary movements. Thus, it is important for us, as in the time of the Vietnam War, to be able to make common cause, side by side, with an American domestic opposition, against the policy of the American government. If we can relate ourselves to a protest movement inside the United States, the counter-productive reproach leveled against us of anti-Americanism is shown to be empty. The anti-modern emotion directed against the Western world as a whole, is another matter. In this regard, self-critique is appropriate-let us say, a self-critical defense of the achievements of Western modernity, which signalizes openness and willingness to learn, and above all dissolves the idiotic equation of democratic order and liberal society with unbridled capitalism. We must, on the one hand, clearly and unmistakably draw the line against fundamentalism, including Christian and Jewish fundamentalism, and, on the other hand, we must face up to the fact that fundamentalism is the child of a deracinating modernization, in which the derailments of our colonial history and the failures of decolonization have played a decisive role. As against fundamentalist self-quarantine, we can, in all events, show that the legitimate critique of the West borrows its standard from the West's own 200-year-old discourse of self-criticism.

Q: *Two political itineraries have lately ended up in the shredder of war and terrorism: The so-called "road map" that was supposed to lead to peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians, and the imperialist scenario of Cheney, Rumsfeld, Rice and Bush. The scenario for the conflict in Israel was supposed to be written together with the scenario for the reconstruction of the entire Middle East. But the policies of the United States have fused anti-Americanism with antisemitism. Anti-Americanism today is feeding old forms of murderous antisemitism. How can we defuse this explosive compound?*

A: This is a problem, particularly in Germany, where, at the moment, the floodgates of a narcissistic preoccupation with its own victims are opening, and, supported by official opinion, seeking a hearing and legitimacy, breaking through decades of-quite necessary-censorship. But we will be able to cope with that mixture, which you so rightly described, if the legitimate job of criticizing Bush's fatal vision of a world order can succeed in keeping itself convincingly free of every admixture of anti-Americanism. As soon as the *other* America once again assumes discernible contours, it will also pull the ground out from under that anti-Americanism which serves only as a cover for anti-Semitism.

This interview was conducted by Eduardo Mendieta (Dept. of Philosophy, SUNY Stony Brook) and was translated from the German by Jeffrey Craig Miller.

A Conversation with Raimund Abraham

By | 2004: Vol. 3, No. 3

Q: *Earlier, we spoke about the difference between architecture and "buildings". Could you explain what you meant?*

A: I consider architecture a discipline, not a profession. Considering the classic periods of architecture, architecture was more or less confined to the sacred and political power. Architecture represented a spiritual device and now it is considered that it should merely ornament our lives.

I think the major break in history occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century. When the old social or the known social structures collapsed: no more monarchies and a new society emerged. With that new society entered an evolution in technology. You had new programs so architecture became synonymous with the new ideologies and the power of the worker in work more than celebrating the sacred, so, for example, you had the factories and workers' housing. Now it appears that almost any domain can be expressed through architecture. Maybe this is true. Yet, for me architecture's role is to elevate the profane with the sacred. If you succeed in making architecture, the sacred has to prevail. That means that in the most profane or the most *pragmatic* program, the program always has to succumb to this period of the sacred whether it is a small house, a cathedral or a temple.

It is the nature of making things which I believe is the true foundation for any artistic discipline, whether it's film-making, architecture, painting, or sculpture. This whole "making" is challenged by new technology. The technology is totally divorced from the "making" because ultimately you make things with your hands. When I met Jonas Mekas and other experimental filmmakers, I was inspired by the idea that you only need a camera to make a film. Similarly, you can reduce the making of architecture to a piece of paper and a pencil. Even if I don't build, when I make an architectural drawing I construct it so I always anticipate the physicality, the decay, the atrophy of material in the metal so this has to do with making. There's incredible precision. The beautiful mystery of architecture is rooted in the precision of how to put one stone on top of the other. It's not the stone itself; it's the cut in between the stones, the seam. The precision of the emphasis is the principle of structure. How they are joined or how they are divorced.

As an architect it is very important that you distinguish between different realities. There's the reality of the drawing and the reality of the building. So one could say, or at least it is the common belief that architecture has to be built; I always denied that, because ultimately it is based on an idea. I don't ever need a building to verify my idea. Of course, what with a building is more its vanity and actual physical experience. But I anticipate; I wouldn't even build it if I could not anticipate how it would be.

Q: *Once the building is actually built the public is forced to deal with it. How should architecture relate to the public?*

A: It has to relate to program. Without program you can't have architecture, but the program has to be translated; it has to be challenged by the ideal of the discipline. So the program can never dominate. It's a conflict, which, of course, does not exist in film because film is done and then it is shown to the public. It is self-contained, while architecture is not because when it is built it is the offered for use. It all depends on how you define "use'" philosophically. "Use" can either be a celebration of function, which ultimately in its optimal implication would be a Fascist result because it would be completely covered by how the program had been implemented. So in architecture I think the program has to be reinterpreted. Even on a very basic level. For example, when the artists discovered the lofts in New York, completely new ways of living were offered because they had universal space. If you compare loft-living with an apartment where you have an entrance, you have a living room, a bedroom, and a bathroom, your life is defined by the nature of the rooms. Thus, the more, I'd say, bourgeois inhabiting those spaces becomes. It's more oppressive because then life becomes a habit and I believe that architecture has a role of challenging that habit at all times. It becomes a creative force in your life. Architecture has that ability, otherwise it would just be too *oppressive*, too influential, and perhaps it would *dictate* the way you behave in space.

In order to build something you have to violate the site. You dig a hole in the ground, which means you violate. That's why the Indians only build teepees or build their permanent structures of stone on the rocks and never violated out of respect for the earth. So there is this conflict between the structure and the site. The reconciliation is that you create the formal conditions, a new equilibrium. The equilibrium you have intervened into and disturbed has to be reconciled. That is really the role of architecture.

Q: *And what about your project in China?*

A: Like many other sites in China, they have erased all traces of what was there before. So I had to create my own memory. Instead of intervening in a landscape, as I discussed before, I had to imagine the block, with houses, whatever function it had and then I carved into the block. So the block became actually an extension of the earth. And then of course the challenge was how to geometricize that. It was an emotional act from the first moment I held that chisel; that chisel bit the block, then I started to translate that emotional topography into a constructible geometric landscape. And so every single point in the landscape now is defined.

Q: *I see, but you're dealing with a culture that has a very long history of architecture.*

A: This history is completely ignored by the present so-called ruling class. I feel like China wants to do, or is more or less successfully doing, what took the industrialized world, like America, a hundred years. They're doing it in ten and, of course, there is a consequence. The culture is in danger. The only part of their culture that you can still sense is their food.

The real conflict is between the land and the city. All this progress, this obsession with

reaching the top level of progress in industrialization in the world leaves all the peasants behind. Eighty percent of China is made up of peasants. This is also the lifeline for the country and there's no program of how to cope now with that conflict of the poverty in the country and the new wealth in the cities. It's apocalyptic out there. Beijing was a horizontal city, only pagodas, and the architecture was visible or reached above the horizon of the houses. Now they just have left a small portion of it, which is now being gentrified; its becoming like a SoHo and so that's what you witness there.

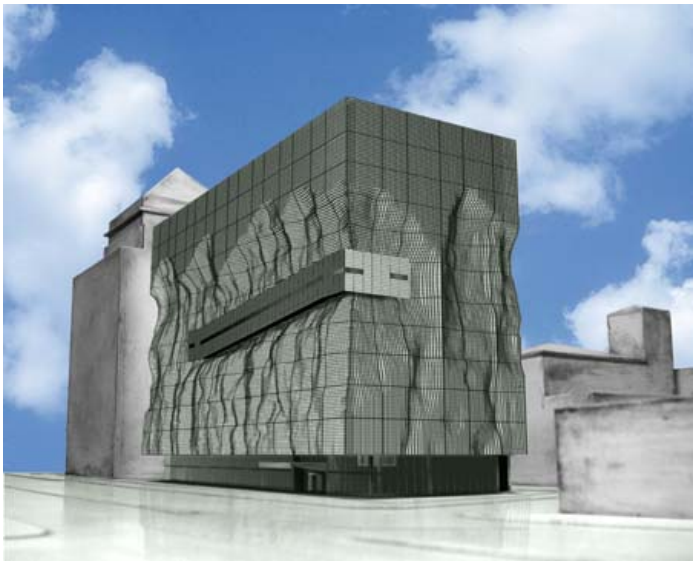
Q: *I am interested in hearing your critique of the project at Ground Zero, as well as hearing your explanation for the design you proposed.*

A: There was no hope from day one that the commercial world would really go for an architectural gesture that would be as radical as the event they claimed 9/11 was. Instead of saying, "Okay, now Mr. Silverstein, let's get you some architects to build the most efficient commercial buildings there," they tried to cover their intentions by saying, "Okay, now we need architecture." From day one, the project was a disguised commercial site plan. It is very clear that when the pragmatic force starts to dominate that process, they will do whatever they want and then more or less declare the imprints of the two commercial towers as sacred because of the original event. I think that is blasphemy. It's a fake…you see that's what I called it at the beginning: the necessity of architecture to celebrate the sacredness; this is just the opposite. It's fake sacredness.

What I made was a metaphoric proposal. I just had three gigantic blocks which formed three walls, parallel walls on the side, and then I chose the moments when the event occurred, when the first plane and the second plane hit the towers. Then, when the first tower collapsed and when the second tower collapsed, simply as moments of an event. I located the sun vertically and horizontally for each of those time frames. I cut through those three walls in that angle of the sun. So, in a way, you caught the moment, a moment without any kind of a narrative reference. When you would be standing in that cut, at that particular moment in time, the sun would hit you. The architecture would celebrate and essentially revive that space and time, which became synonymous.

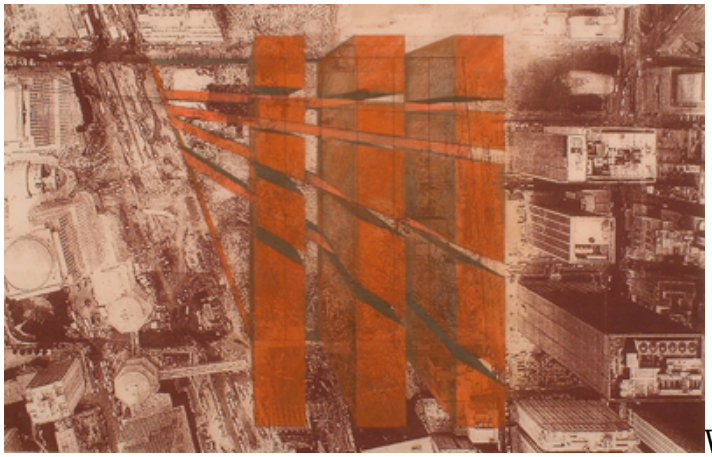
The Austrian Cultural Forum -perspective view from front

The Austrian Cultural Forum – interior staircase



Beijing Center for Well-Being – perspective view daytime

Beijing Center for Well-Being – perspective view interior lobby



WTC, New York (Ground Zero) – Bird’s Eye View

WTC, New York (Ground Zero) – Wall Towers

Raimund Abraham was born in Lienz, Tyrol in 1933. He studied architecture in Graz and had an architectural studio in Vienna in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Abraham emigrated to the United States in 1964 and first taught that year at the Rhode Island School of Design. In 1971 he moved to New York, where he has taught at Cooper Union ever since. In addition to his professorship at Cooper Union, Abraham has taught at Harvard and Yale, and at prestigious universities in Graz, Houston, London, Los Angeles, and Strasbourg.

Alexander (Sasha) Hammid (1907-2004)

By | 2004: Vol. 3, No. 3

Alexander (Sasha) Hammid (born Hackenschmied) (1907-2004) was one of the avant-garde and documentary cinema's pioneers. Before immigrating to the United States from Czechoslovakia, Hammid was a major figure in the Czech Avant-Garde. He wrote numerous articles in various film and arts publications on film as an art form. Hammid also began making his first films in Czechoslovakia and was an early promoter of avant-garde film screenings. He escaped Czechoslovakia when the Nazis came to power, smuggling out film footage of Nazi forces.

After arriving in the United States, Hammid began collaborating with documentary filmmaker, Herbert Kline on several films. He is perhaps best known for his work with his then wife, Maya Deren. Their first film together, Meshes of the Afternoon, is considered one of the most important American independent films. Around this time, Hammid was also making films for the U.S. Office of War Information, these included Toscanini: Hymn of the Nations and A Better Tomorrow. Working with Francis Thompson, Hammid was an early pioneer of multi-screen and IMAX film formats.

In memory of Alexander Hammid, Logos has republished two of Hammid's early articles on film and a newly written piece by Hammid's close friend Jonas Mekas. Although written over seventy years ago, Hammid's two articles address problems that are still current. They reveal his prescience and insightfulness as a film critic and theorist.

Alexander Hammid – Film And Music

By | 2004: Vol. 3, No. 3

In collaboration with the composer, Franti□ek Barto□, I have tried in my experimental film of *Prague Castle* (now entitled *Music of Architecture*) to find the relationship between architectural form and music; between an image and a tone; between the movement of a picture and the movement of music; and between the space of a picture and the space of a tone. This all being part of the wider problem of the relation between film image and sound.

Similar problems have already been encountered on the stage, by music itself, and by the silent film accompanied by an orchestra. These problems have been solved only intuitively by practice. On the stage a scene accompanied by special music can become quite different from the same scene without music, just as in the sound-film music can give an emotional, spatial, or rhythmic character to the picture, be it either purposely or by chance.

The fundamental element in the relationship between sound and image is the influence of tones of different pitch, timbre, and force upon the relative spatial formation of the image. There is also to be considered the relationship of tones and colors, and considerable experimental work has been attempted in this direction. The faculty of having visual color impressions on hearing different tones is possessed by many people, all of whom, however, do not visualize the same color for the same tone. Scriabin, the Russian composer, possessed this faculty, and has recorded on the margins of his musical manuscripts the colors which arose in his mind while composing. When plasyed on Pesanek's "color-piano" by which it is possible to produce on a screen, simultaneously with the music, colored shapes of varying size Scriabin's theory became clear, even to people who had not the faculty of seeing tones in colors. These color compositions have a direct analogy to the sound-film I have in mind: the indivisible sound and film composition.

Similar experiments have been made by Hirschfield-Mack at the Bauhaus School in Dessau in his reflector plays (Reflektorische Lichtspielen)/ By means of reflectors he threw on the screen colored geometrical shapes, capable of moving, and each corresponding to a certain tone. The spectators' impression was that these shapes sounded themselves. They were made to appear, move, disappear or change places in accordance with the rhythm of the music, thus introducing a geometrical and moving (almost dancing) component part. In this way Laszlo's modernist compositions of color and music were performed.

Scriabin, Laszlo, Pesanek and Hirschfield-Mack put stress before all upon color; but in the film we are putting stress upon shape, space and movement. There is not, however, a great difference, as in both cases the basis is the simultaneous fusion of musical and visual impressions into one emotional whole. The sound-film made the work much easier by introducing the unbreakable mechanical connection of both component parts.

The first film experiments of this sort were made by Oskar Fischinger in Berlin. In his Dancing Lines cartoons (Tanzande Linien, Opus I-XII.) Fischinger was not interested in color, but in movement and shape as he could feel them in music. He composed to given music, played on gramophone records, abstract and prevailingly lineal images, following uninterruptedly one after the other as well as moving intermittently or changing according to the rhythms or dynamics of the music. He preferred music predominantly rhythmic and gave an almost dancing character to the changes and movements of lines. Fischinger's work, a sort of visible lineal transcription of the music, was impressionistic, as, being a painter, he recorded visual impressions as they arose while hearing music with closed eyes. Music was the leading force, which he obediently accompanied by the dance of his lines.

It has often been said that the best film music is that which we do not hear that is, which does not intrude upon us but faithfully follows the atmosphere of the film, its chief task being to remove the painful silence and the noise of the projector. This might be valid in the period of the silent film, which had no need of music and was eve better without it. But for the sound-film this statement would mean the deepest misconception of the new medium. The silent film was better when music was smooth, servilely followed the action, and brought nothing new to the film, which the spectator could see as the director had made it. But if the musical conductor endeavored to strengthen the impressions of the film, then he became a violator of the director's work, and always made faults. The music would draw attention to itself by of its dynamic and rhythmic incongruities with the film as a whole and in parts, and if the spectator had a sense of film rhythm the result was ear-splitting. This was especially the case in Russian films which put stress upon montage.

The composer could not subordinate the rhythmic and dynamic changes of music to the changes of the film, because in doing so, he might violate the laws of music. The director, on the other hand, paid no attention to the future of music and its laws. Music always brought forth some new and unforeseen changes in the whole impression of the film. The director expressed with aid of filmic means all he wanted. Apart from the director's work, the composer wrote music according to the old independent rules, and the film served only as the raw theme. This gave rise to music which was self-sufficient in its form and could be played even without the film. Film and music ran side by side, both endeavoring to express the same thing in different ways. They illustrated themselves mutually, and in some places the impressions accidentally supplemented each other, thus creating some new impression, unforeseen either by the director or by the composer. For a space there was something new a sound-film; but a sound-film only by accident, and therefore bad on principle.

The musical film is a new medium, consisting of two component parts music and film, both of which must be created simultaneously. Neither music nor film can be divided and performed separately, because on part without the other would be unintelligible. It is possible that music already composed, or silent film already made, may be used as part of a requisite whole. Such cases, however, are rare for the actual work often involves some violation of the original, and it is therefore a responsible task to choose the parts. As a matter of course, it is much easier to make a new film with music already composed than to compose new music for a film already

made, the laws of film composition being more flexible than the laws of music. But primarily it will always be the formal, syntactic relation which will condition to cohesion of both component parts, the content or motive relation remaining secondary and not necessary. The possibilities are far reaching and await application as well as theory. Sound gives to a picture a new coloring; it determines its space and depth. The cohesion of music and film may result in counterpoint or syncopation of rhythm; by contrast it may give to each a new inner significance.

This article is reprinted from Film Culture No. 67-68-69, 1979 and was originally published in Film Quarterly No. 1, spring 1933. It was translated by Karel Santar.

The First Screening of Avant-Garde Films in Prague at the Kotva Cinema

By | 2004: Vol. 3, No. 3

Finally! That's the only way to say it.

Finally, after all the talking and writing, it has arrived in Prague. After so much indecision and delay only a few people had hope left that it would be realized. Since the first exposure to this kind of film art (known here, if at all, only from foreign news) comes to Prague so late, many people might wonder why so much joy. That needs to be explained.

It is debatable whether film is essentially more art or more industry. But it is certain that it has something of both. Film is art if it is made by an independent artist. The industrial character of film lies in the complicated technology of production and the necessity to produce on a large scale in order to show a profit, i.e., to produce for a large, broad public. For this kind of production, of course, factory efficiency is necessary, which greatly limits the freedom of creative individuality directing the production of the film. The creative strength of the film artist (both director and actor) is hindered and manipulated by the business end of production, to which the artist must submit because a film is usually a business venture. And to the businessman the artist is only the labor needed to improve his product (the film) and to increase his profit.

The "improvement" of the product means for the film investor and businessman delivering just what the customer the public wants. The film investor long ago gave up ideals like educating the public, or bringing culture to the masses, or patronizing pure art films which would raise cinema in the eyes of the whole educated world to the level of literature and the fine arts. The quicker way to profits is to come down and cater to the customer and satisfy his needs, no matter how low. That is how world cinema, with a few exceptions, sank to the level of junk literature, which grubs for its own profits by the same method.

If not for this state of affairs in the film world, a film avant-garde or independent cinema, which is the complete opposite of commercial cinema, would not be needed. But faith in the new-found possibilities of film art and the need to create freely and fully would not be silenced by materialistic business interests. If the businessman did not want to understand higher objectives and the need to create, at least film technology helped out those who did. The rapid development of film technology (which, admittedly, is credited to the rise of the film industry) made it possible to lower production costs eough so that the individual with a little financial support could undertake shorter films. In this way originated in France the first so-called avant-garde films, which represent the only untainted (though not always perfect) film art because they arose from a pure desire to create, and not to make money.

During the last ten years many films and shorts of this kind have appeared. They are difficult to find and categorize because they are not “world renowned productions”; they are very different and individual. Sometimes they are either so primitive or so refined and unusual that they are not accepted even where they should be. They are exclusive films and (especially the French and new Russian films) truly avant-garde because they are, both in concept and technique, far ahead of commercial cinema, which often learns from them later or coldly abuses some of their technical discoveries to vary their own conservative mold.

After France began, small independently produced films were made in Germany and then all over the world. Naturally, their authors and fans didn’t remain isolated; they banded together. Thus originated in each country associations (mostly called Ciné Clubs) for the purpose of showing the best films (both avant-garde and exceptionally good commercial films) to those who love cinema for more than empty entertainment and, eventually, for the purpose of supporting the independent production of art films.

Independent cinema already has its own tradition, its own world-renowned works and masters. Every city has one or more special cinemas just for this kind of films (in Paris there are ten). Prague stills owes its public such a cinema.

The Bio Kotva is trying to pay off that debt. We wish them success.

This piece first appeared in the Prague magazine, Pestrý Týden (Lively Week), number 47, on November 22, 1930. It was republished in Film Culture, number 67-68-69, in 1979. It is republished here with the permission of Jonas Mekas.

Two Memories of Alexander-Sasha Hammid

By | 2004: Vol. 3, No. 3

Memory One

The year was 1953. I had just moved into 95 Orchard Street place. The rent was $14.95 a month. During the days I worked at Lenard Perskie's Graphic Studios on West 22nd Street, doing camera work. We did work for the international edition of Life magazine. I remember making copies for Archipenko of his old photographs. Despite this, my real work was to catch up with the best of New York's culture. From the day that I landed in New York that happened on October 29, 1940 I submerged myself into the world of cinema. One of my universities was the MOMA and its 5:30PM daily screenings. Another was Cinema 16 and its monthly screenings of experimental films at the Needle Trades School on West 24th Street. I had to see and did everything that was screened in New York and I had to read everything that had been published on cinema in English. One publication that was always mentioned with great respect, in special publications on film as an art, was a mysterious book entitled An Anagram of Ideas on Art, Form, and Film by a certain Maya Deren. I combed all the bookshops and libraries, but could not locate it. I got so frustrated in my search that I decided to locate the author of the book. I had heard that she actually lived here in New York on Morton Street. I was so obsessed with the book that I determined that I should call and ask her to lend me a copy of the book. And so I did.

A husky voice came on the line. It was Maya Deren. I presented her with my problem. "Come, of course I'll lend you the book," she said. We made an appointment.

At the appointed time I arrive, ring the doorbell, and begin to climb up to I think the fifth floor. I arrive at the top of the stairs and there is this woman, Maya Deren, staring at me very weirdly. I expected to meet her very simply and normally. Instead, I found this woman who seemed somewhat panicky. I looked at her strange stare and didn't know how to react. She was very nervous.

"Anything wrong?" I managed to stammer.

The silent panic continued another moment, then Maya said: "I really though you were Sasha. You looked so much like Sasha and I had not expected him."

I was a little bit confused. But as she received me and we talked it became clear that Sasha was her recently divorced husband Sasha Hammid. Still in my old European Displaced Persons camp cloths, I was very European looking and when she showed me some pictures of Sasha I understood how close our resemblance was.

That's how I met Maya Deren. Not as myself, but as a doppelganger of Alexander- Sasha Hammid. We became very good friends immediately. And, of course, I walked out that afternoon clutching in my hands the thin volume of Anagram.

Memory Two

I met Sasha Hammid in real life in 1961. I was in the process of making my first "real" film, Guns of the Trees. Adolfas, my brother, thought we should get a car to help us move around. I don't drive, but Adolfas does. We were told that Hammid had a car he was trying to sell. So we went to see him.

The first thing that we really appreciated was that the Hammids, Sasha and his wife Hella, treated us with a good meal. We were always hungry in those days; we put every penny either into our filming or Film Culture magazine. So a meal was always very welcome. Hella even gave us a big bag of food to take home with us. We especially liked her bread, which she baked herself. And of course we bought their old used car. They sold it to us for practically nothing. Their children called it Papacar. The Papacar served us faithfully during the filming of Guns. Whenever we visited the Hammids, the children always were asking us about Papacar. They were very attached to it.

Sasha helped us in another emergency. We had need of a tripod. When we told this to Sasha, he went to the closet and brought a beautiful giro-tripod. "Here it is, use it." So we took it and used it for a lot of shooting. But one night we were stupid enough to leave it in the Papacar in the street. Next morning it was gone. Luckily, Adolfas was smart enough to insure it. For months we hid from Sasha the fact that his tripod was stolen. Then three months later, we got the insurance money, $300 of it. So we stopped to see Sasha at 1 West 89th street, where he always lived, and we handed him the money, apologizing profusely.

Sasha looked at us in disbelief then he began laughing. "Yes," he said, "thank-you very much, but that tripod was only worth thirty dollars."

We couldn't believe it. We were quite ignorant about the prices of movie equipment. We had to believe Sasha. So we had some good food and some good wine and we celebrated the stealing of the tripod. I think we split the money.

As the years went, we had many good days and evenings with the Hammids. He was one of the nicest people I have ever met in my life.

Jonas Mekas *is the founder and Artistic Director of Anthology Film Archives and is a noted poet and filmmaker. He serves on the* Logos *advisory board.*

Poetry By Nicanor Parra

By | 2004: Vol. 3, No. 3

Two Poems by Nicanor Parra
(translated by Liz Werner)

Something Like That

PARRA LAUGHS like he's condemned to hell
but when haven't poets laughed?
at least he declares that he's laughing

they pass the years pass
the years
at least they seem to be passing
hypothesis non fingo
everything goes on as if they were passing

now he starts to cry
forgetting that he's an antipoet

STOP RACKING YOUR BRAINS
nobody reads poetry nowadays
it doesn't matter if it's good or bad

FOUR DEFECTS that my Ophelia won't forgive me for:
old
lowlife
communist
and National Literature Prize

<<My family may be able to forgive you
for the first three
but never for the last>>

MY CORPSE and I
understand each other marvelously
my corpse asks me: do you believe in God?
and I respond with a hearty NO
my corpse asks: do you believe in the government?
and I respond with the hammer and sickle
my corpse asks: do you believe in the police?

and I respond with a punch in the face
then he gets up out of his coffin
and we go arm in arm to the altar

THE TRUE PROBLEM of philosophy
is who does the dishes

nothing otherworldly

God
the truth
the passage of time
absolutely
but first, who does the dishes

whoever wants to do them, go ahead
see ya later, alligator
and we're right back to being enemies

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT
compose a sonnet
that begins with the following iambic pentameter line:
I would prefer to die ahead of you
and that ends with the following:
I would prefer that you be first to die

YOU KNOW what happened
while I was kneeling
in front of the cross
looking at His wounds?

He smiled at me and winked!

before I thought He didn't ever laugh:
but now yeah I believe for real

A DECREPIT old man
throws red carnations
at his beloved mother's coffin

what you are hearing, ladies and gentlemen:
an old wino
bombarding his mother's tomb
with ribbons of red carnations

I QUIT sports for religion
(I went to mass every Sunday)
I abandoned religion for art
art for the mathematical sciences

until at last illumination hit

and now I'm someone only passing through
who puts no faith in the whole or its parts

No President's Statue Escapes

From those infallible pigeons
Clara Sandoval used to tell us:

Those pigeons know exactly what they're doing

These poems by Nicanor Parra, with translations by Liz Werner, will appear in Parra's upcoming book, Antipoems: How to Look Better & Feel Great*, to be published in September by New Directions (www.ndpublishing.com).*

Born in 1914 in the southern city of Chillan, ***Nicanor Parra****, the Antipoet of Chile, studied engineering at the University of Chile, physics at Brown University, and cosmology at Oxford, and spent many years as a teacher of mathematics and a professor of physics. He published his first book of poems in 1938, but it was in 1954 with* Poemas Y Antipoemas *that he became known as an "antipoet." His antitranslator, Liz Werner, is a native New Yorker, poet, and novelist who has lived and studied in Valparaiso, Chile, where she worked closely with Nicanor Parra in preparing this book.*

Algo Por El Estilo

PARRA SE RIE como condenado
¡cúando no se rieron los poetas!
a lo menos declara que se ríe

pasan los años pasan
los años
a lo menos parece que pasaran
hipótesis non fingo
todo sucede como si pasaran

ahora se pone a llorar
olvidando que es antipoeta

NO SE SIGAN ROMPIENDO LA CABEZA

las poesías no las lee nadie
da lo mismo que sean buenas o malas

CUATRO DEFECTOS que mi Dulcinea no me perdona:
viejo
roto
comunista
y Premio Nacional de Literatura

<<mi familia te podría perdonar los
tres primeros
pero no el último>>

MI CADAVER y yo
nos entendemos a las mil maravillas
Mi cadáver pregunta ¿crees en Dios?
y yo respondo con un NO de pecho
mi cadáver pregunta crees en el gobierno?
y yo respondo con la hoz y el martillo
mi cadáver pregunta crees en la policía?
y yo respondo con un recto al mentón
Entonces él se levanta del ataúd
y nos vamos del brazo al altar

EL VERDADERO PROBLEMA de la filosofía
es quién lava los platos

nada del otro mundo

Dios
la verdad
el transcurso del tiempo
claro que sí
pero primero quién lava los platos

el que quiera lavarlos que los lave
chao pescao
y tan enemigos como antes

TAREA PARA LA CASA
redactar un soneto
que comience con el siguiente endecasílabo:
Yo prefiero morir antes que tú
y que termine con el siguiente:
Yo prefiero que tú mueras primero

SABEN lo que pasó
mientras yo me encontraba arrodillado
frente a la cruz
mirando sus heridas?

¡me sonrió y me cerró un ojo!

yo creía que El no se reía:
ahora sí que creo de verdad

UN ANCIANO decrépito
lanza claveles rojos
al ataúd de su sra madre

lo que oyen sras y sres
un anciano beodo
bombardea la tumba de su madre
con serpentinas de claveles rojos

YO DEJE los deportes por la religión
(oía misa todos los domingos)
abandoné la religión por el arte
el arte por las ciencias exactas

hasta que se produjo la iluminación

Ahora soy un simple transeúnte
que desconfia del todo y sus partes
De Las Infalibles Palomas

No se libra la estatua de ningún presidente
Nos decía la Clara Sandoval

Las palomas saben múy bien lo que hacen *These poems by Nicanor Parra, with translations by Liz Werner, will appear in Parra's upcoming book,* Antipoems: How to Look Better & Feel Great*, to be published in September by New Directions (www.ndpublishing.com).*

Born in 1914 in the southern city of Chillan, ***Nicanor Parra****, the Antipoet of Chile, studied engineering at the University of Chile, physics at Brown University, and cosmology at Oxford, and spent many years as a teacher of mathematics and a professor of physics. He published his first book of poems in 1938, but it was in 1954 with* Poemas Y Antipoemas *that he became known as an "antipoet." His antitranslator, Liz Werner, is a native New Yorker, poet, and novelist who has lived and studied in Valparaiso, Chile, where she worked closely with Nicanor Parra in preparing this book.*

Poetry By Claudia Grinnell

By | 2004: Vol. 3, No. 3

We Really Can't

Talk about it in any authentic kind of way. There's at least one
Way, let's leave it at that. Plain and simple. Let's say,
The sun's setting. I don't like to brag or anything, but that's pretty
Spectacular this sunset. What I mean to say is, we're looking
Straight at it, a tropical island shimmers on the horizon I tell you:

Would you look at that. And you do. And I ask you this: Have you ever
Seen a more spectacular sunset? Of course you haven't,
Neither have I. What's left is an infinite splitting of hairs,
Well–one hair: it's our own ass we're covering. We're the species
With the best legal mind in all of creation. You have

The right to remain silent unless we compel you. In either case,
You'll probably get run over by a drunken driver in Ecuador,
Still running. I told you vests were coming back
And the next war would be over water. Listen, listen–
This time you have an opportunity, same as last time.

Claudia Grinnell

Born and raised in Germany, Claudia Grinnell now lives in Louisiana, where she teaches at the University of Louisiana, Monroe. She is the author of Conditions Horizontal (Missing Consonant Press, 2001), and her poems have appeared in such journals as Exquisite Corpse, New Orleans Review, Mudlark, and Minnesota Review. In 2000, Ms. Grinnell was the recipient of the Southern Women Writers Emerging Poets Award. More of her work can be found at www.ulm.edu/~grinnell/cc.htm

Ecocriticism's Big Bang: A Review of Practical Ecocriticism: Literature, Biology, and the Environment by Glen A. Love

By | 2004: Vol. 3, No. 3

Like Moliere's M. Jourdain speaking prose without knowing it, classic writers were unwittingly doing ecocriticism for centuries before the genre burst forth onto the academic scene in the early 1990s. From Virgil's *Georgics* to John Clare to Thoreau to Rachel Carson, sensitive people had actually noticed that they were living on and from the primal mud of Earth. Nevertheless, after many years of slow gestation, a meeting of the Western Literature Association in 1991- followed by "The Greening of Literary Studies, " an MLA special session in December of that same year-issued in an explicit new discipline, a new professional organization (the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment, known as ASLE), a new journal (*Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, known as ISLE), and in 1996 a new canonical text, *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, produced by Cheryll Glotfelty and me. Ecocriticism's early years brought together contemporary writers about nature, admiring critics of classic nature writers, and academics interested in, and consumed by, the growing problems of air pollution and environmental degradation. In the decade-plus that has intervened since the birth of ASLE, the ecocritical net has been cast over wider and wider territory to include the ecology of cities, environmental racism, environmental law, capitalism and colonial exploitation, and much more.

Although the cultural studies that took over the humanist academy during the last quarter of the twentieth century have slowly begun to recognize ecocriticism, the multicultural/social-constructionist postmodern ethos that generated them has been almost blind to the sciences upon which any knowledge of the Earth and its life depends. Ecocriticism, meanwhile, has gradually been moving into a new and more comprehensive phase that transcends this deficiency and acknowledges the explanatory power of evolutionary biology and evolutionary psychology. Nonetheless, like much study in the humanities over the past few decades, ecocriticism had early on been enabled by two fictions that have now been exhausted, one about the body and the other about the self/mind/person, a.k.a. "the soul." The first of these had to do with the "environment." The ecological movements of the past thirty years have been sustained by a distinction between the person and the environment that is wholly factitious. In this scenario, human beings live in but are semi-independent of an environment that they are harming with pollution, toxics, erosion, water usage, etc.-a dualism in which the mind, soul, or spirit retains an august autonomy derived from God or some sort of numinous stand-in, and entailing an immaculate conception in which the mind (as a "blank slate") was assumed not to have been violated by anything so gross as a body-or as Richard Dawkins has termed it, a "survival machine." In reality, however, there is not and never has been such a thing as "the

environment." Nothing "surrounds" a human being who is made of some special substance that can be distinguished from the "surroundings." There is only one congeries of earthly substance and it comprises everything from eukaryotes to Albert Einstein.

If we could produce a high tech time-lapse movie of the person in the environment, what would we see? A man and a woman eat food from the Earth that becomes their bodies and sperm cells and eggs. A fertilized egg, fed by more plants and animals, keeps dividing, turning into specialized body parts, including a brain, that are wholly derived from the plants and animals (and the earth, sunlight, water, air, etc., that generate them). The environment is coursing through the fetus, who is made of the substances ingested by the mother. The fetus becomes a baby who becomes a person who is comprised of the plants and animals eaten by his parents and now eaten by himself. His cells, nails, hair, skin, etc. are regularly sloughed off and replaced by newly made substance derived from earth-generated plants and animals. The person dies and decomposes back into the earth to provide food for new plants and animals to feed new parents, sperm, eggs, and fetuses. There is no environment, only an ensemble of elements recycled through every existing thing. The environment does not wrap around the person for his regal contemplation: the person is the environment and the environment is the person. The time-lapse movie shown fast would reveal matter from the Earth sweeping through the form of a person who himself sweeps back into the Earth, like a wave moving across the ocean. Seen by creatures from a different time-warp, we might be indistinguishable from fruit flies. Our hominid precursors, who did not buy Krispy Kreme doughnuts or meat in plastic packages and whose genetically driven sweet tooth and need for protein meant they had to spend most of the day eating fodder like pandas do or chasing animals to acquire crucial nourishment, were more aware of this than we are. Unlike us, they literally did not know where their next meal was coming from, but when it did arrive from their hard-earned efforts, they saw very well that both they and their prey came from and returned to the same all-purpose dust. The creation myths that eventuated in later epochs reflect this primal knowledge.

As for the self/soul/spirit that seems so unmoored and amenable to culture, it is not a specially infused blank creation, like a CD-R, waiting to be formatted by any chance discourse formation or regime of truth, but a virtual projection of the brain, like the projection of a movie on a screen or on a TV. The projections look autonomous but have no independent existence and cannot initiate anything, since they are really made of thin air. They are a *trompe l'oeil*. The brain is a fantastically complex machine made of hundreds of billions of neurons that produce the sense of consciousness, sight, smell, touch, hearing and self. But no self can be found, though just about everything else can be witnessed as brain activity by means of today's technological instruments. The desires that provoke acts of will are not chosen by a self, which cannot choose anything but which is fed by what is experienced as a stream of consciousness from inscrutable multiplex brain activity. The thoughts that move through the mind twenty-four hours a day are completely involuntary, unchosen by a me, though my virtual I is moved to act (or think it is acting) on them willy-nilly. But neuroscientists now tell us that the decision to move a finger, to eat some food, to have sex, has already been produced in the brain and body a microsecond before the conscious desire arises that seems to will the activity. I, it appears, am as much a function of the environment as a bean that starts to sprout when put in moist

earth or on a wet Kleenex.

Unless the human mind is an independent free soul injected by God into otherwise terrestrial matter, this mind is as subject to a materiality and a history as anything else. The mind may be unprecedented, amazing, astounding, plumbing the vast deeps and illimitable cosmos, but it has evolved from the same Big Bang as the cosmos and partakes of their substances, inter-relations, and history. Today this whole spectacle is called Darwinian evolution or the Modern Synthesis and the "human nature" it deals with is so pervasive and inclusive that Donald Brown has been able to produce an immense list of some of its characteristics, for example: aesthetics, anthropomorphization, beliefs about death, body adornment, classification, collective identities, cooperation, crying, dance, empathy, figurative speech, good and bad distinguished, incest avoidance, jokes, kin groups, language, logical notion of same [and different], males more aggressive, moral sentiments, music, nouns, overestimating objectivity of thought, rituals, roles, self distinguished from other, shame, status.[1]

The multi-culturalism that dominated the humanities for the past few decades arose as a reaction to the parochial "we" that, it turned out, referred only to white, Western males and not to the human race at large. So Lionel Trilling has been taken to task for talking about the way "we" respond to Jane Austen and for a conception of human nature that was as time bound as the psychoanalytical presuppositions of a Victorian-bred Freud. To expand this narrowness, blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans, Japanese, Sri Lankans, etc., have been taken under the wing of multiculturalism to repudiate the narrowness of we. But if the environment is a parochial illusion, so is the seemingly broad-minded we of multiculturalism and diversity. Like the disparaged we of Trilling, it too is narrow and synchronic, bound to its place and time, too limited to account for very much. For the real we consists of every human being who ever lived and all the hominids and primates that preceded them. This larger diachronic we is made from the environment that comprises everything and is not just a collection of favored 21st century cultures and post-colonial societies. Indeed, though it is politically correct to assert that race is a chimera and that the genetic differences between the so-called races are negligible, what tends to be overlooked, if that is true, is that the races are then ninety-nine percent the same and that the distinctive cultures that differentiate them, however worthy of study, are pretty superficial, given that we all have arrived here "out of Africa" from the consequences of the Big Bang.

If there were any doubt about the way in which today's brain and mind are tethered to a shared material past fully operative in the present, it can easily be dispelled by considering the multitudinous ways in which even at this present moment we are subject to the so-called environment. Hunger, sexual desire, fever, rage, drugs, alcohol, atmospheric pressure, air pollution, toxic substances, drought, floods, youth, age, disease-all these and more influence the way we feel and the thoughts we think at any given moment. "I" have a different psychology before food, before sex, before illness than what I am after them. At a certain point of starvation for food and sex, people will do just about anything, including cannibalism. (Think of the Donner party trapped in the snow-laden Sierras.) Afterwards, they lose interest until the next round. At every moment, I am the complex production of my bodily and brain states and

their immense culturally inscribed material history. A shortage of Vitamin C, of protein, of trace minerals, a surfeit of refined carbohydrates, all these affect my bodily and psychological condition, my emotions, my thoughts, my point of view. Is there ever a neutral moment when I am fully an ideal healthy person (healthy according to whom?) not driven by the very particular materiality that every single second of my existence is intimately connected with? Am I free? Let's put it this way: am I unmotivated, arbitrary, the product of a vacuous, desireless, blank slate? Or am I, rather, the result of my genes, my body, my country, my temporality, my family, my education, my general nurture and culture, my history, and last night's dinner-always susceptible to growth and change, however, even without an "I" to initiate it? Neo-Darwinians, after all, do not subscribe to anything as simplistic as genetic determinism, nor do they talk about nature versus nurture, whose boundaries look increasingly fluid.2

The decisive document in this awakening, the intellectual shot heard 'round the world, was an article by Leda Cosmides and John Tooby that appeared in 1992: "The Psychological Foundations of Culture." Although it emerged from the sciences and social sciences, it is now as functionally prime for the humanities as Aristotle's *Poetics*:

The Standard Social Science Model requires an impossible psychology. Results out of cognitive psychology, evolutionary biology, artificial intelligence, developmental psychology, linguistics, and philosophy converge on the same conclusion: A psychological architecture that consisted of nothing but equipotential, general-purpose, content-independent, or content-free mechanisms could not successfully perform the tasks the human mind is known to perform or solve the adaptive problems humans evolved to solve-from seeing, to learning a language, to recognizing an emotional expression, to selecting a mate, to the many disparate activities aggregated under the term "learning culture."

The alternative view is that the human psychological architecture contains many evolved mechanisms that are specialized for solving evolutionarily long-enduring adaptive problems and that these mechanisms have content-specialized representational formats, procedures, cues, and so on. . . . [which] tend to impose certain types of content and conceptual organization on human mental life. . . .

Although most psychologists were faintly aware that hominids lived for millions of years as hunter-gatherers or foragers, they did not realize that this had theoretical implications for their work. More to the point, however, the logic of the Standard Social Science Model informed them that humans were more or less blank slates for which no task was more natural than any other.3

As a consequence of their fatal assault on the SSSM, books on Darwin, evolutionary psychology, behavioral ecology, evolutionary biology and so forth have been appearing more abundantly than ever. Although changes in the ethos of the humanities are now beginning to show up, they are apt to produce the startled quality of Thurber's famous "Touché" cartoon, with the slashed head looking pretty nonplussed.

This, then, seems to be an ideal moment for the appearance of a book such as Glen A. Love's *Practical Ecocriticism: Literature, Biology, and the Environment*. Love, now emeritus from the University of Oregon, has had a career in American studies since the sixties, starting early with an ecological bent that became increasingly strong, abetted by an interest in the sciences. In his introduction he writes: "My attraction to a literal-that is, scientific-ecology and to the evolutionary biology upon which it is based has opposed a general coolness, even hostility, in the humanities toward the sciences in recent decades. Much of this hostility is an anachronistic holdover from the wholly justified reactions to the social Darwinist distortions of a century ago." He gives an historical account of the growing ecocriticism movement, more or less similar to the one I have given above, and as a past president of the Western Literature Association he is in a good position to have witnessed the growth from inside. Although the title of his book involves a certain amount of play against the background of I. A. Richards's *Practical Criticism*, play or no play it is a good title for what follows. Not a handbook, a textbook, or a how-to book, it would serve nonetheless as an almost ideal introduction-personal or classroom-to today's ecocriticism, with its strong emphasis on science via Darwin and evolutionary biology, a book "that aims to test ideas against the workings of physical reality, to join humanistic thinking to the empirical spirit of the sciences, to apply our nominal concern for the environment' to the sort of work we do in the real world as teachers, scholars, and citizens of a place and a planet." With its always lucid, graceful prose and its gutsiness without belligerence, it is not afraid to confront all sorts of dying shibboleths in the humanities. After three historical/theoretical chapters, Love follows through with three more exhibiting concrete treatments of Cather, Hemingway, and Howells. These exemplify a certain sort of ecocriticism in action and also reflect the academy's incipient "return to literature," which is replacing the stale iterations of yesteryear's "theory."

Love's reading has been enormously wide and deep, especially in ecocriticism and Darwinian sciences. Since my introductory remarks have already presented the foundations of his thinking, only a brief overview is needed. In his first chapter "Why Ecocriticism?" he pulls together these disciplines to characterize recent English studies "as a textbook example of anthropocentrism: divorced from nature and in denial of the biological underpinnings of our humanity and our tenuous connection to the planet." This first chapter describes the sorry ecological state of the planet and surveys a number of literary works that have taken cognizance of it over the years, managing at the same time to suggest the implications of evolutionary biology for both literature and life. The second chapter, on "Ecocriticism and Science," describes the science wars that reached a peak of intensity around the time of the Sokal Hoax generated by the notorious 1996 issue #46-47 of *Social Text,* which hardly needs going over again here.[4] Love guides us through the outpouring of evolutionary books of recent decades, from the many by E. O Wilson through Steven Pinker, Matt Ridley, Daniel Dennett and others. For literary studies in particular, the epochal moment was Joseph Carroll's *Evolution and Literary Theory* in 1995, followed by Carroll's subsequent articles on fiction, evolution, and ecology.[5] Love remarks that "since human interaction with the biosphere is widely perceived as the defining issue of the coming century, as well as the center of ecocriticism's claim to a role in literary study, biology seems positioned for an increasingly important place in our lives." If there can still be any doubt about this, two major websites

alone should dispel it: Arts and Letters Daily (aldaily.com) and the Yahoo Group for evolutionary psychology (groups.yahoo.com/group/evolutionary-psychology).

Love's chapter on pastoral and death recruits literary theorists and scientists to interweave connections between nature and humanity. Besides some of the already mentioned names above, he brings in Leo Marx, Stephen Jay Gould, Annette Kolodny, D. H. Lawrence, Simon Schama, Raymond Williams, Virgil and Theocritus, Lawrence Buell, Joseph Meeker, C. P. Snow, and innumerable others, with extensive reflections on E. O. Wilson's influential books. "Environmental studies," he writes, "particularly ecology, began in the life sciences and broadened to include the humanities," but the need that is now more pressing is in the reverse direction. The period in which there was nothing outside the text has passed. Deconstruction's de facto revival of the New Criticism now looks stunningly inapposite-and as the Bush regime's policies for air pollution, water purity, Arctic refuges, global warming, nuclear revival, energy consumption are added to SARS, flu, mad cow disease, HIV in undeveloped countries, the so-called real world begins to seem very real indeed. "Man's unconquerable mind" has never seemed more vulnerable to its bio-chemistry.

Applying Darwinian ecocritical concepts to Willa Cather's "Tom Outland's Story" from *The Professor's House*, Love finds that it is "a particularly packed meditation on biological-cultural co-evolution. . . . [Cather] looks beneath culture to its roots in human animality. . . . [Her] best work demonstrates that it is not minor differences that divide humans culturally but the major similarities that unite us as a species." When he turns to Hemingway, whom he sees as substantially influenced by Cather, Love finds a tension between a primitivism and individualism that reflect the anthropocentrism of the modern tragic hero, who glorifies a sometimes ruthless natural environment that he nonetheless destroys as part of his escape from contemporary society. In this, Love is sympathetic to Joseph Meeker's vision of comedy as an expression of Darwinian survival, as against egocentric tragedy that extols individual will even as it pulls down the natural order in acts of uncomprehending destruction.6 With mixed feelings about *The Old Man and the Sea*, he concludes: "Hence there is more at issue in Santiago's self-doubts than Greek hubris or Christian pride. Beyond these, there is the greater folly of his assumption that the only order to the biotic world is that which his limited understanding can provide."

In a long concluding essay about altruism (a major Darwinian crux) in Howells's fiction, Love concedes that Howells's evolutionism connects well with the comedy of survival but that it suffers nonetheless from the familiar exceptionalism and delusions of grandeur that raise human beings above the natural world. "The soft-Darwinian belief that mankind must distinguish itself ever more clearly from the animal world in order to achieve moral perfection does not seem to have been seriously questioned by Howells." Mark Twain, in contrast, questioned that belief "in the most caustic terms in his later works." Still, Love thinks of Howells as a "realist" who ultimately sees through the utopianism of his Altrurian romances even as he exonerates the human psyche from its somatic vehicle.

All of these chapters involve critical overviews based on well-informed readings in fields that

humanists generally ignore. Now and then Love overreads the ecological and evolutionary substrates of the fictions he examines, but he is mostly highly skilled and persuasive-and in the present climate of denial his counter-attempt here is almost Promethean. If the world he describes is terra incognita to so many of our colleagues, *Practical Ecocriticism* is an ideal starting point for remediation. The bibliography alone gives new meaning to "diversity."

Notes

1 See "Donald E. Brown's List of Human Universals, " in the Appendix to Steven Pinker's *The Blank Slate*: *The Modern Denial of Human Nature* (New York: Viking, 2002). Also, Donald E. Brown, *Human Universals* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1991).

2 See Pinker's *The Blank Slate*. Daniel C. Dennett, *Freedom Evolves* (New York: Viking, 2003). Stephen R. Quartz and Terrence J. Sejnowski, *Liars, Lovers, and Heroes: What the New Brain Science Reveals About How We Become Who We Are* (New York: Wm. Morrow, 2002). William H. Calvin, *A Brain For All Seasons: Human Evolution and Abrupt Climate Change* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002). Matt Ridley, *Nature Via Nurture: Genes, Experience, and What Makes Us Human* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003).

3 Jerome H. Barkow, Leda Cosmides, and John Tooby, *The Adapted Mind: Evolutionary Psychology and the Generation of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992): 34, 96-7.

[4 See Harold Fromm, "My Science Wars," *Hudson Review* 49 (Winter 1997): 599-609. Also see Alan Sokal's website (which includes the above item): http://physics.nyu.edu/faculty/sokal

5 These have recently been collected in Joseph Carroll, *Literary Darwinism: Evolution, Human Nature, and Literature* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004).

6 Joseph Meeker, *The Comedy of Survival: Literary Ecology and the Play Ethic* [3rd edition of *The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology*, 1974] (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997).

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Rashid Khalidi, Resurrecting Empire, Western Footprints, and America's Path in the Middle East

By | 2004: Vol. 3, No. 3

Shortly before his death, Edward Said warned against the cancerous spread of essentialist discourses about Islam and the Arab world in America: "I wish I could say," he wrote, "that general understanding of the Middle East, Arabs and Islam in the United States has improved somewhat, but alas, it really hasn't." To the contrary, since 9/11 there has been "a hardening of attitudes, the tightening of the grip of demeaning generalization and triumphalist cliché, and the dominance of crude power allied with simplistic contempt for dissenters." Fueled by right wing ideologues intent on manufacturing otherness and justifying American imperial expansion, we have witnessed a "massive and calculatedly aggressive attack on the contemporary societies of the Arab and Muslim for their backwardness, lack of democracy, and abrogation of women's rights . . ."[i] In its most primitive and vengeful form, this ideological campaign has framed Islam as a "very wicked and evil religion" (Franklin Graham), and vilified Mohamed as a "terrorist" (Jerry Falwell). Subtler but no less pernicious academic variants have painted a monochrome picture of immobile societies stuck in pre-modernity, pathologically absorbed in lost golden ages, nourishing ancient grievances against a world that has irretrievably left them behind, and desperately in need of a (Protestant) reformation (Bernard Lewis). American society has been saturated by endlessly repeated mind-numbing media clichés about "them" and "us," about the unquenchable hatred that Islamist radicals are said to harbor against (Western) modernity and open societies.

The highest levels of government have been corrupted by this Orientalist worldview. U.S. policy in the Middle East and the Gulf is driven, in Juan Cole's words, by "complete ignorance of Arabs and Arab culture." Indeed, pseudo-scientific narratives about Arab "behavior" have become the staple of official American thinking, if one can call it that. Rafael Patai's *The Arab Mind*,[ii] a compendium of racist stereotypes and Eurocentric generalizations (there is "an all-encompassing preoccupation with sex in the Arab mind," the Arabs only understand force, etc.), has become the bible of the Bush administration's leading neoconservative lights and "the most popular and widely read book on the Arabs in the U.S. military."[iii] Said noted over twenty years ago that Patai's 1973 book, reissued in 2001, "eradicates the plurality of differences among the Arabs (whoever they may be in fact) in the interest of one difference, that one setting Arabs off from everyone else."[iv] That difference not only transforms Arabs into passive object of the Western "scientific" gaze but effectively removes them from the sphere of "civilization," hence authorizing practices that violate fundamental humanitarian standards. Torture and sexual humiliation have thus become the symbols of America's early 21st century imperial experiment in the Middle East.[v] Such are the rhetorical devices and the

bleak practices of Empire.

Thankfully, there are dissident voices in this intellectual and moral wasteland. In a carefully crafted but anguished essay on European and American imperial politics that deserves wide circulation, Rashid Khalidi argues that the United States is "wittingly or unwittingly stepping into the boots of earlier imperial powers." That "enthusiastic ignorance" and imperial hubris have combined in a fateful and futile attempt to reconfigure the Arab Middle East in America's image. Whatever America's imperial managers may think about themselves or say about their actions, throughout the Middle East, and indeed the Third World as a whole, the Bush administration's armed intrusion into Arab affairs is understood as "an attempt to reverse the course of history and reimpose Western control in a part of the world that has been struggling for two centuries to resist it." How could they see things otherwise? The discourses are the same: like the European colonial powers which subjugated the peoples of South America, the Middle East, Africa and Asia in the name of their supposed *mission civilisatrice*, America's contemporary neo-imperial ideologues make the claim that U.S. tanks and bayonets are bringing reform, progress and enlightenment to the Arab world. Like the European founders of modern "scientific" racism who contended that "Mohammedanism is the greatest of all hindrances to every progress of civilization,"[vi] and argued that logic is something that the "Oriental is altogether disposed to ignore,"[vii] the U.S. has framed the war in Iraq, and the wider attempt to reconfigure the region through force, as part of a wider struggle between civilization and barbarism, darkness and light. In the early days after 9/11, George Bush actually talked about a "crusade."

If the discourses are analogous, so are the practices. In 1841, Alexis de Tocqueville chided faint-hearted French democrats for failing to accept that "any people wishing to make war with the Arabs will be forced . . . to burn crops, empty silos and seize unarmed men, women and children."[viii] Today, our Tocquevillian neoconservatives recommend that "maximum force" be used "to demonstrate that the empire cannot be challenged with impunity,"[ix] or "to demonstrate our seriousness."[x] Having imprudently refused to greet their U.S. "liberators" with jasmine, rosewater and incense, the Iraqis should, in the words of an official of the former Coalition Provisional Authority in Baghdad, be "scared into submission."[xi] The parallel between Algeria and Iraq is not the product of this author's imagination: the Pentagon held a private screening of Gillo Pontecorvo's *Battle of Algiers* for senior personnel on August 27, 2003. The film, the most powerful critical cinematic treatment of French colonialism, shows how French counterinsurgency operations succeeded in breaking the backbone of National Liberation Front resistance in Algiers thanks to torture. France won all the battles but nonetheless lost the war.

As senior U.S. commanders recognize, the U.S. is also losing its war in Iraq.[xii] Although there is still room for debate concerning the hierarchy of motivations leading to the war, it is plainly apparent that the Bush administration invaded Iraq with the intent of setting up a protectorate in the heart of the Gulf. It never intended to establish direct rule like the British in India, but a system of indirect rule, relying on local allies and buttressed by U.S. military power, akin to Britain in Egypt after 1922. This, as Khalidi reminds us, is also a page from Europe's colonial

book. The European colonial powers set up differentiated forms of control in North Africa, the Middle East, and the Gulf:

These ranged from the direct rule of the French in Algeria, which was virtually annexed to France and whose indigenous population lost its rights and lands in favor of newly arrived European colonists, to various forms of indirect rule preferred by the British, and also adapted by the French in Tunis. In these cases of indirect rule, local potentates were maintained in place . . . but their power was more apparent than real. In every case, control was firmly in the hands of European "advisors," backed by European and mercenary troops, who ensured that every important aspect of governance developed in accord with the desires of the dominant western power. (p. 18)

The U.S. has benevolently granted Iraq limited sovereignty. It has transferred minor authority to an American-appointed government headed by a former Iraqi intelligence officer with longstanding CIA ties. Washington grandly claims that this shows that it has neither territorial ambitions or unstated imperial aims. But the U.S. will run the country as surely as Britain ran Egypt. When needed, it will no doubt resort, like the Europeans before it, to exceptional brutality. In Libya, in the early 20th century, the Italians destroyed "the country's social structure" and expelled "the population from the fertile coastal regions in favor of Italian colonists." In Morocco and Syria, the French mastered repeated revolts through "massive forces and the extensive use of air power." In Iraq, Britain's General Frederick Stanley Maude famously marched into Baghdad in 1917 proclaiming, "Our armies do not come into your cities and lands as conquerors or enemies, but as liberators." Three years later, Great Britain was suppressing a mass uprising by bombing villages and using poison gas.[xiii] The Mandate was saved.

The U.S., in short, is walking down a well-trodden path, lined with the victims of European colonial rule. If history is any guide, America's imperial experiment is going to fail, possibly disastrously. On this, Khalidi writes:

However much may have changed in the world . . . and however powerful the U.S. may be, any deep reading of the history of the Middle East would show that it is impossible to erect a Western system of domination there in the 21st century that will not face resistance by its subjects. It is impossible to march into the Middle East proclaiming good intentions and to ignore the fact that the locals have a longer sense of history than most Americans, and will recall vividly that over the past two centuries they have been reassured several times by their conquerors that they had the best of intentions. (p. 167)

Indeed, the war and occupation of Iraq have stimulated resistance and widened the divide between "Islam" and the "West." While most Americans still cling to the dominant national narrative of a uniquely successful democratic and anti-colonial trajectory, under George W. Bush the U.S. is becoming what Third World people on the receiving end long suspected, a classic colonial empire. The informal empire established after the Second World War is fast giving way to a quasi-territorial empire upheld by an archipelago of military bases and foreign

legions stationed in the heart of semi-sovereign Third World states. But America should beware: neither France nor Britain were able, even at their height, "to dominate most parts of this region directly for long without paying an exorbitant price." As the imperial experiment unravels under our eyes, the question is what price Americans are really willing to pay for empire.

Notes

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[i] Edward Said, *Orientalism*, Vintage Books, New York, 2003, pp. xviii and xix.

[ii] Rafael Patai, *The Arab Mind* (Long Island City: Hatherleigh Press, 2002, rev. ed.)

[iii] See Brian Whitaker, *The Arab Mind*, London *Guardian*, May 27, 2004. Patai's pamphlet "is used as a textbook for officers at the JFK special warfare school in Fort Bragg. . . . The State Department, too, used to take an interest in the book, although it seemingly no longer does. At one stage, the training department gave free copies to officials when they were posted to U.S. embassies in the Middle East." First published in 1973, the book was republished in 2001 with a foreword by Norvell B. DeAtkine, Director of Middle East Studies at the JFK Special Warfare Center and School, Fort Bragg who writes: "At the institution where I teach military affairs, *The Arab Mind* forms the basis of my cultural instruction."

[iv] Said, op. cit. p. 309.

[v] As J. M. Coetzee's exploration of the subject in *The Coming of the Barbarians* so brilliantly showed, torture is the submerged truth of colonial conquest and empire.

[vi]See, Houston S. Chamberlain, *The Foundations of the 19th Century,* John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1910.

[vii] Lord Cromer, quoted by Said, op. cit. p.36.

[viii] A. de Tocqueville. "Travail sur l'Algérie (octobre 1841)" in □uvres, Paris, Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1991, tome 1, p. 704 et 753.

[ix] Stephen Peter Rosen, The Future of War and the American Military, Harvard Review, May-June 2002, Volume 104, No. 5.

[x] Charles Krauthammer, "This is Hardly Vietnam," *Washington Post*, April 16, 2004; Page A 21. After Falluja, William Kristol likewise wrote: "We could have sent many tanks, along with air support, to disperse the mob, kill those who didn't disperse, intimidate onlookers, and recover the bodies of the dead Americans. And we could immediately have put a price on the head of the killers and those who desecrated the bodies." See "After Falluja," *Weekly Standard*,

April 12/19 issue.

[xi] Quoted by Seymour Hersh, quoted in H.D.S. Greenway, “Is America facing an Iraqi Intifadah?” *Boston Globe*, 9 April 2004.

[xii] See Philip S. Golub, “End of the Consensus,” *Le monde diplomatique*, English edition, June 2004.

[xiii] Winston Churchill, then secretary for war and air, suggested that “Mesopotamia could be cheaply policed by aircraft armed with gas bombs, supported by as few as 4,000 British and 10,000 Indian troops.”

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Hope and History, by Gerry Adams

By | 2004: Vol. 3, No. 3

Sinn Fein party leader Gerry Adams's latest book on the fragile and fitful Northern Irish peace process is subtitled "Making Peace in Ireland," and the text is prefaced by a Seamus Heaney poem:

History says, Don't hope
On this side of the grave
But then, once in a lifetime
The tide of justice can rise up
and hope and history rhyme
So hope for a sea change
On the far side of revenge
Believe that farther shore
Is reachable from here
Believe in miracles and cures
and healing wells.

There is little more to be said in that poignant vein.

But poetry compresses experience and not even the hearty injunctions in Rudyard Kipling's "If" tell the anxious reader how to achieve the ambitious moral goals urged upon him. Likewise, Adams's extremely detailed book gives such a congested account of Provisional Sinn Fein's journey through the wilderness that it is difficult to wend one's way through all the thick word curtains of annotation. There are striking passages of narrative clarity, though, obviously only one partisan perspective is enthusiastically engaged. These occasional morsels are very digestible but they are buried in vast carcasses of connective tissue. His worthy tome is, in a word, tiring (though not tiresome) to read.

Heaney's poem, cited at the start, gives us some hope of better prose around the bend when the eyes are weary and the narrative bogs down. But, as I said, poetry compresses and Gerry Adams, and his team of aides meticulously recording every jot and tittle at meetings and events, have composed a work dismayingly far removed from the realm of smooth, well-paced narratives. Possibly, a gripping story, which the peace process ought to be, was never Adams's goal. This imposing mass of cumulative minutes of meetings, encounters, and Ard Feises (annual party congresses) inundates us with information, some of which is forgettable, though much of the remainder likely will nourish hardy historians and biographers for the rest of the century.

Let us start with essential facts. Ireland is a small island, 300 odd miles long and 150 miles wide, and historically too close for comfort to Britain. Northern Ireland consists of six counties

of the province of Ulster. Three further counties, including, oddly enough, the most northerly, Donegal, are part of the Republic of Ireland, or Eire. The seeds of rowdy Republican political tradition run far back, beginning after the envied American and French revolutions. The dominant strain of republicanism in Ireland, it may surprise some readers to learn, was Presbyterian, though, as in Washington, and Paris, the leaders were probably deists or skeptics, like Thomas Paine. Wolf Tone, the martyred helmsman of Irish republicanism, uttered the oft-quoted nonsectarian aspiration "to substitute the common name of Irishman, for Protestant, Catholic and dissenter." Tone's valiant struggles, with French help, ended miserably in both the defeat of his French allies and of the popular 1798 rebellion: a bloody affair resulting in a forest of gallows plus the 1800 Act of Union, giving Ireland to England and adding a stripe to the Union Jack.

The chief sign of Irish republicanism's political resurrection in the 19th century was the Fenian Brotherhood, born out of the American Civil War (where many an Irish recruit acquired military skills) and resulting in desultory bombings, plottings, hangings, and deportations until the rise in the 1880s of Charles Stewart Parnell, leader of the Irish Home Rule Party in the House of Commons, Westminster. Fraud and deceit, notorious in story and poetry led to his downfall and to the end of what seemed like imminent Irish home rule.

The bishops and their party
A tragic story made
A husband who betrayed his wife
And after that betrayed
But here's another reason
For Parnell loved a lass
-W.B. Yeats

In 1905, the year of the Liberal Party landslide in Britain, Arthur Griffith in Ireland devised the name or slogan, Sinn Fein (pronounced "shin fain") which means "us" or "we ourselves." The name came into popular use after the 1918 election in the British Isles, which registered a huge Irish majority for Irish independence. It was at this turbulent time, the threshold of the Anglo-Irish war (Black and Tan War, 1919-1920), that the term Irish Republican Army (IRA) arose. The "diehard" republican opposition to the Irish Free State compromise government, which took power in the southern twenty-six counties in 1923, was known as the Irregulars and only gradually became widely known as the IRA. They were rapidly out-gunned, out-maneuvered and defeated, but not stamped out.

So former "irregulars" leader Eamon de Valera's somewhat theological evasion of the British "oath of allegiance" enabled him to enter the Irish Parliament, and take power in 1932. The years that followed until the Second World War-known in neutral Ireland quaintly as "the Emergency"-reshaped the IRA, which faced down a local Irish fascist "blue shirt" bid for power and its support for Franco in Spain. The IRA, a proscribed organization, now tended toward a nationalist-republican split among its fractious members, but somehow held together. Many members fought in Spain and became militant but parliamentarian socialists, following the

guidance of the writings of James Connally, the executed socialist leader of the Citizens Army in the 1916 rebellion. During the war (or Emergency) years 1939-45 the IRA in practice became split doctrinally between socialist republicans and physical force nationalists although there was no formal secession. Despite often sharp disagreement among old (and new) comrades, friendly, if testy, bonds maintained the underground movement.

Through ensuing changes in Irish government, including one in which ex-IRA Chief of Staff Sean MacBride became minister for foreign affairs in 1948, the IRA continued to wind down its reliance on physical force and to concentrate instead on a socialist reform policy, eventually abjuring militarism altogether in the early 1960s. Meanwhile, in the six separated counties of sectarian Ulster, a satrapy of conservative Westminster, the Catholic, or more properly Nationalist middle classes were inspired by and imitated the tactics of Martin Luther King, rather than Wolfe Tone, and started a risky round of protest marching from Belfast to the Burntollet Bridge. The savage and bloody repression of these marches led to a plain need for, as the republican community saw it, self-protection. Since the "official" IRA had disposed of its dwindling arms stock and was caught empty-handed, a new and somewhat naively nationalist offspring of nationalist defense was born: the Provisional IRA, known in the back streets as "provies."

As its bloody but unavoidable guerrilla campaign was waged, a public organ was established to formulate policy and act as spokesman, Provisional Sinn Fein. The "official IRA," now pledged to political and not military action, was known as "the stickies" after the self-sticking emblem of the Easter Lily, sold in the streets by supporters, and for long years the symbol of the Easter Rebellion of 1916. The Provies broke away from the official IRA (who go uncited in this book's index) over 1969-1970. The official IRA was always a mixed religious or non-religious body and an all-Ireland clandestine organization. In the twenty-six counties of the Republic the Official IRA, after calling its unilateral ceasefire in 1972, became parliamentary and re-dubbed itself Sinn Fein, the Workers' Party, and finally in the 1980s just the Workers' Party. The Provisional IRA, which began as groups of vigilantes, gained in strength and wealth from contributions from the USA, local "taxes," and collections on paynights in Irish working people's pubs in Great Britain. Adams was an early recruit.

After thirty years of guerrilla warfare and hundreds of atrocities and horrors on all sides, a sort of stalemate was quite clearly apparent to Adams, as well as any other unblinkered politician, and the Good Friday Agreement was mooted, backed by the governments of Britain and Ireland with the indispensable help of the Clinton administration. This scheme would allow for a plan for a joint British-Irish administration of a revived local government-prorogued in 1972-for the six counties of Northern Ireland with a mixture of Unionist and nationalist ministers, elected locally. There was a highly promising start to the process, which seemed to work for a while, but intransigence by more extreme Unionists caused it to collapse. Tony Blair, the British prime minister, coaxed and probably bullied a bit and up to the end of this book by Adams, it seemed likely that a "power sharing executive" (first launched in 1974 and ended quickly by a loyalist strike) might be relaunched in 2003.

There is always hope. But the Rev. Ian Paisley's fiery "not an inch" attitude has been the reigning extremist Unionist belief since Protestant Northern Ireland leader Edmund Carson uttered that chilly phrase in 1913. The adamant resistance of the Unionist hard core brought about the partition of Ireland and has its roots in the decaying compost of bigotry. Unfortunately, this book was barely off the printing press when low-turnout by a weary public in a north of Ireland election produced electoral results that caused everything to collapse. The implacable Democratic Unionist Party led by Paisley finally became the biggest Unionist party, outpolling David Trimble's Ulster Unionist Party, itself riven by internal extremists, and which had held out the prospect of reaching a reasoned arrangement of fair government with the nationalists. All hopes of power sharing disappeared overnight.

In my compressed, if not poetic, account of this whole sad story, as Adams's volume relates it, much was omitted or underemphasized: important aspects such as the role of the Social Democratic Party, and Labour Party and its courageous leader John Hume, who doggedly talked Sinn Fein into accepting the concept of political compromise. Among the great cataracts of details of policy and decisions flooding the pages, many telling episodes also emerge: the exploits of the Army Intelligence Agency which penetrated and aided the Ulster Defense Association (UDA, the largest of several deadly loyalist paramilitary organizations, which curiously get little press) and its deals with the South African arms manufacturers; the exploits of army agents and spies; and the UDA murder of Paddy Finucane, the human rights lawyer, filled with bullets before his horrified family as they sat down to Sunday dinner.

Adams's book relates many more such awful incidents, often with names and their seamy connections supplied, providing they incriminate the authorities, apparent or secret, who indeed have a lot to answer for in Northern Ireland. Bombings and shootings by the Provisional IRA, however, are handled with the most conspicuous discretion. This is all too understandable, but it makes for very bad history. Nonetheless, for what it offers from an essential participant's perspective, we should be grateful for this account of the tediously and painfully slow development toward the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, and one hopes that the good Rev. Paisley's religious and political bigotry will somehow be circumvented in the near future.

The Politics of Anti-Semitism, edited by Alexander Cockburn and Jeffery St. Clair

By | 2004: Vol. 3, No. 3

The goal that Cockburn and St. Clair's collection of essays aspires to achieve is quite ambitious: "To lift [the] embargo" over "criticizing Israel." This provocative collection only partially achieves this aim; moreover, I am uncertain that their volume is actually conducive to a more rational and open debate over U.S. policies toward Israel.

Most contributors decry a powerful Jewish lobby in the U.S., and perhaps elsewhere, that automatically tars anyone who dares to criticize Israeli policies toward Palestinians as being motivated by ugly anti-Semitism. In this dogged and dogmatic way, the vigilant lobby manages to control the public debate and channel it in a way that make it literally impossible to voice any criticism of Israel, constructive or otherwise. All these contributors concur that a clear and legitimate distinction between criticizing Israel and being anti-Semitic needs to be drawn if a genuine productive dialogue is ever to arise which may lead to a just solution. This line of argument seems to me to be quite valid and should indeed be pursued and put into action.

Several essayists, however, come perilously close to suggesting that a blanket hostility not only toward Israel but toward Jews generally is to some extent justified. This disturbing stance apparently is adopted because Israeli leaders proclaim, without much visible dissent, that they represent Jews everywhere, and so therefore implicate them. In these instances it's as if the "universal Jew" has been resurrected, only under a very different proprietorship. Consider that organizations such as AIPAC that unequivocally back harsh Israeli policies in the occupied territories likewise assert that they represent "Jewish opinion." In this misshapen context it is rather easy to see why many people would blame all Jews as responsible for upholding and maintaining an ongoing instance of grave injustice. Hence, the worrisome recent resurgence of anti-Semitism.

The authors' claim is that this powerful lobby successfully speaks as if it represents Jewish opinion and in this way implicates the entire community. Moreover, they find that this lobby is even able to push different U.S. administrations, particularly the current one, to pursue policies that support Jewish/Israeli goals rather than U.S. ones. The aim of the book is to expose this lobby and thereby reduce its unjustified punitive use of the label of anti-Semitism as a disciplining device.

Yet, only Uri Avnery, Linda Belanger and Norman Finkelstein offer persuasive essays to open the hearts and minds of the public-and of the Jewish community in particular-to a more critical debate of Israel's behavior toward the Palestinians: mainly, by pointing out very affectingly that the Holocaust legacy ought to instruct us that cruel practices associated with the occupation of

the West Bank and Gaza are immoral by any standard. There is no need to imply any offensive equivalence between the immorality of the Israeli occupation and the evil of the Holocaust; the Holocaust should have taught us all (including Anglo-American forces in Iraq) that there are irreducibly decent ways in which people should be treated. The Israeli occupation, as they argue, is a gross violation of these standards of decency. I believe that the book would have been far more forceful for an audience outside the "already convinced" if such constructive trails were blazed.

Some authors provide sound arguments why supporting Israel uncritically is in the long run profoundly counter-productive for all parties. Scott Handleman, for example, suggests that blind support of Israel will ultimately backfire badly because the injustices of the Israeli policies will eventually become so clear that the American citizenry will blame the Jewish community for the awful situation in the Middle East and for obliging U.S. policies that resulted in undermining U.S. interests. He has a point. On the other hand, essayists Cockburn and Avnery assert that the war in Iraq was almost exclusively initiated by senior Jewish officials in the Pentagon and other upper tiers of the administration. Their claim is echoed by Sunderland and the Christisons. The underlying accusation is of dual loyalty because the 2003 invasion was rhetorically justified on the grounds that it is necessary for achieving U.S. security but was actually pushed by people who care foremost about Israel's security.

The accusation of dual loyalty is an example of how this collection, instead of searching for ways to open up debate, probably distracts from what ultimately unites the writers, namely, opposition to Israeli policies in the occupied territories. It would be more fruitful if the cases these authors formulate would have shown how this war would serve neither American interests nor (probably) Israel's. Sunderland asserts that different congressmen went to Israel and advised Israeli officials to ignore American pressure to agree to a two-state solution or conduct peace talks. This, he suggests, was treasonous. I would suggest that although this sort of behavior exemplifies bad judgment and bad politics, it is not treason. If Israeli politicians asked the U.S. instead to place more pressure on Israel to end its occupation he probably would not label that gambit as treason.

Other writers suggest that, on occasion, Israeli intelligence services deliberately withheld vital information that might have saved thousands of American lives. Again, it seems to me that bringing up unproven claims only undermine the credibility of the rest of their case, which ought to be heard. The final two essays by Yigal Bronner and the late Edward Said seem perhaps least relevant to a book titled *The Politics of Anti-Semitism* inasmuch as this phrase is not mentioned even once in them. Yet, they are the most powerful contributions as, in their distinct ways, they vividly convey the hideousness of the Israeli occupation and in this way stress the urgency of mobilizing the world wide public to demand that the U.S. and other major powers work to put an end to Palestinian suffering and, as I strongly believe, an end to Israeli suffering as well.

Islam Without Fear: Egypt and the New Islamists

By | 2004: Vol. 3, No. 3

In the dark aftermath of September 11, a little-known but renewed quest began to take shape around the Muslim world, a quest geared at achieving social justice. If the problem of terrorism is to be addressed intelligently, religion cannot simply be brushed aside but instead must be reconfigured to meet global challenges. In a controversial bestseller, Sam Huntington asserted the continuing centrality of religion within our cantankerous modernity. Huntington argued that in Islam, religious principles serve foremost as the pivot of individual and group action and, secondly, as the basis for "clashes" between civilizations. Yet, Islam itself cannot be the problem since, like every other belief system, it can be invoked either for peace and reconciliation, or for strife. The crux of the matter is, of course, the interpretation given to governing texts, and how and why a particular interpretation becomes dominant. By misinterpreting the Quran, Sunnah and the hadiths- which form the bedrock of Islam- charismatic leaders with reactionary agendas can lead genuine believers astray.

Religious extremism strives to eclipse more reasonable discourses on "truth." But, in contrast, the centrist Islamic tradition urges the search for social justice, equity, democracy, civil liberties, human rights and the rule of law. Given a distinct possibility of opening spaces of reason within religion, this centrist Islamic tradition counsels that we examine forces which stoke frustrations, anger and resentment toward the West. In so doing, oppression, disparities of power, illiteracy, and poverty quickly percolate to the surface. Fundamentalism obscures the reality of utter desperation; it is a grasping at dogmatic straws. The outward trappings of religiosity are a smokescreen. Of course, just as is the case with any world religion, long-term tensions exist in Islam between the politics of self-interest and the politics of religious culture.

Armed with a deep knowledge of Egypt, political science professor Raymond Baker, who seems an enthusiastic admirer of the New Islamist school, counters the sense of hopelessness engendered (and fed upon by) by extremism with an intelligent and well-written analysis of the wider ambit of Islam. He shows that Islam, in its purest form, is a religion that focuses on freedom, equitable distribution of wealth, and the elevation of the poor, the weak and the marginalized. This volume forces us out of musty stereotypical molds-not unaided to a great extent by Western global media-that garishly paint Islam as being about nothing but zealotry, violence, and the apocalyptic destruction of the West.

The Arab Republic of Egypt underwent many upheavals since the 1952 revolution and the unsuccessful post-Nasser nationalist movements. The secular transformation within Egypt has been analyzed, but not to the same degree as the concomitant changes that occurred in the religious realm. Baker remedies this lack by showing how, in the middle of the 20th century,

religious beliefs in the Arab world began to coalesce into an “Islamic Awakening,” one in which the Wassatteya developed as the key centrist Islamic mainstream. Unlike the fundamentalist strains, Wassatteya utilize its “grounding in a comprehensive and substantive understanding of the higher purposes of Islam” (p. 11) to bring about societal transformation and also enshrine social justice by the way of strengthened economic, social, and political structures.

In Egypt, the Wassatteya took its most influential form in the New Islamist group, a body of scholars, intellectuals, and activists, many of whose “corrective” works derived inspiration from the teachings of 19th century cleric Muhammad Abduh. The impact of the New Islamists resonates today in Egyptian economics, politics, and social relations-and even beyond the Egyptian and Arab spheres of influence. Their vision of making Islam functional in a modernizing Middle East-where ignorance, narrow piety, and the subjugation of women and non-Muslims have hold sway-is a feat to be accomplished through pluralistic interpretations and understandings of key Islamic texts. The New Islamist reject any religious meanings that are rigid, reified, or restrictive.

Broadly, the New Islamist school urges a return to reason, and it stresses the elimination of backwardness, naïveté, intolerance, fatalism, “other-ism,” and other misbegotten attitudes and doxas which perpetuate underdevelopment. New Islamists promulgate their vision for long-term civilizational development in the spheres of religion, gender, and identity. They repudiate extremist Islamist assemblages that see the arts as an affront to Islam. New Islamists remind us that this cultural nihilism, vented through hatred for the arts, cannot be dissociated from misinformation and despair. “In settings of poverty and lack of hope,” Baker writes, “attack on the arts . . . in a perverse way compensate[s] for the inability to overcome . . . misery.” (p. 59)

Baker beautifully covers the salient issues of national development. The New Islamists’ focus on building community in non-exclusivist terms opens up full participation for women and non-Muslims. Justice, ethics, democracy, and egalitarian community building, these New Islamists say, are not only absolutely vital ingredients for broad-based national development but are wholly in keeping with Islamic tenets. Though they disagree with much of corporate-defined neoliberal globalization, and frown particularly at American hegemony, they insist that disengaging from the West is not a panacea for Egypt’s development, nor does the solution rest in the recesses of worn-out customs and ideas. Alert to the pitfalls of cultural blind spots, the New Islamists offer an articulation of alternative agendas that make it possible to speak on behalf of a progressive Islamic world, an agenda that honestly and fairly confronts contemporary issues that defy easy normative formulations: e.g., the lingering Israeli-Palestinian crisis.

Does Baker overrate the centrist forces in his depiction of New Islamism? No. Centrists matter in just about everything. An Islamic modernity requires centrist reasoning to operate sensibly in peace-making and ecumenically in the contested spaces of religion. The grim reality of rising inequalities, blind homogenization, and the paucity of Western imaginations that reduce Islam to “evil” are vicious particularisms that need to be completely neutralized.

Although the author's alignment with the New Islamists occasionally may mar an impartial consideration of these sensitive issues, Baker's book is a brilliant critical exposition of Islamic centrism. *Islam Without Fear* is a definite must-read for anyone interested in the myriad issues rooted in this culture-politics nexus. While helping us to understand the problems that beset Egyptian Muslims, it can set the stage for larger debates that create the atmosphere needed for a new world order oriented to social justice and tolerance of the "other."

Reference: Huntington, S.P. (1996) *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon and Schuster

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Rafael Major & Nicholas Xenos on Leo Strauss

By | 2004: Vol. 3, No. 3

Nicholas Xenos and the Rhetoric of the War on Leo Strauss

Dear Editor:

I thought I had read enough of the recent commentary on the thought and influence of Leo Strauss. The recent commentary in *Logos* by Nicholas Xenos seemed to be different, however, due to the fact that Xenos (unlike the rest of the bandwagon) seems to have read Strauss for himself rather than relying on secondary sources or simply quoting from other likeminded articles. In this respect, and this respect only, his original effort is to be commended.

Two brief criticisms: 1) Arguing that Strauss and "Straussians" (whatever that means) rely on a rhetoric of right and wrong is a good starting point, but by itself is pure sophistry. Xenos fails to reflect on his own thesis, which also takes advantage of moral categories. Is it "evil" to speak of good and evil? Xenos implies that it is and thus puts himself in the same category as his Strauss. Is it "bad" to distrust the excesses of democracy? Xenos implies that it is and therefore indicts his Strauss for reading Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, James Madison, Tocqueville, Mill and a host of other influential thinkers. It adds nothing to a discussion of Strauss in particular it is a merely a way of using democracy as a "good" white and everything else as an "evil" black.

2) The suggestion that Straussians all read the same books is tenable. To go on and suggest that they all speak the same way (use the same words) and dress the same way goes much too far. I imagine the same sort of rhetoric was used in Salem during similar hunts for teachers of dark secrets.

The writings of Leo Strauss comprise a vast body of thought. To select individual passages as fundamentalists are prone to do with the Bible proves *nothing* about the work as a whole. As Dr. Xenos well knows, even the devil can cite scripture for his purpose … or was that Shakespeare.

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Nicholas Xenos Responds:

If I understand Mr. Major's complaint correctly, he charges that I implicitly invoke absolute categories of good and evil while criticizing Strauss and Straussians (and I suspect he knows who they are) for doing the same thing. Apparently, my rejection of this distinction is itself one example of it, and my insistence upon emphasizing Strauss's (and much of contemporary liberalism's) antidemocratic nature is another. However, my point was to show how the

rhetoric of absolutes is deployed in a reactionary and antidemocratic manner by Strauss and others while professing to advance so-called liberal democracy. It is Strauss's thesis, not mine, that modernity is characterized by an ungrounded relativism. Typically, Mr. Major refers to "the excesses of democracy" as if they are so obvious as not to need demonstration. His comment regarding the canonical authors is apparently in reference to their individual and collective "distrust" of those excesses. Far from indicting Strauss for reading these authors I would merely question the way he and his school read them and offer different readings. But these issues go well beyond the narrower purpose of my article.

It is also symptomatic that Mr. Major invokes the image of a witch-hunt to characterize my characterization of the language and appearance of Straussians. I plead guilty to trivialization on the fashion front but not on the linguistic. However, all of these similarities reinforce the popular notion that Straussians form a sort of sect or cult. While denied on the one hand, this perception proves useful when Straussians wish to portray themselves as a persecuted group. Meanwhile, Mr. Major seems to be more chagrined by the idea that I think Straussians all dress like Young Republicans than by the fact that Leo Strauss professed fascist and authoritarian sentiments in 1933 as a proper reaction to the newly installed Nazi regime and that I claim that these sentiments subsequently were subsequently submerged in his esoteric "teaching" but were never relinquished. Whose excesses are really at issue here?

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