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PERSPECTIVES, MODELS, AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

Essays from the Lilly Seminar on Religion and Higher Education

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"Stopping the Heart"

The Spiritual Search of Students and the Challenge to a Professor in an Undergraduate Literature Class

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Knowledge is not necessarily the same as . . . truth. The difference? Knowledge does not arrest the senses, but truth always stops the heart.
—Monique, student in English 379B, "Literature and Religion," University of Maryland

She has done it again. Monique has gotten in. She writes, "Knowledge does not arrest the senses, but truth always stops the heart." Wow. There is much that we could read into this statement. For starters, I must agree that there has been nothing in my studies that has ever given me sufficient reason for pause. Nothing in my life has "arrested the senses." It is true that significant revelation has caused people this sensation, but it seems that nobody has stumbled upon something so grand as to "stop the heart."
—Caleb, fellow student in English 379B

I often think of my friends and [myself] as characters in a cheaply made twenty-something angst movie. We have all of the stereotypical problems and anxieties. I wanted to write my final paper on our, or perhaps, just my, quest for some sort of direction, purpose, or meaning to our/my melodramatic existence.
—Beth, fellow student in English 379B

I begin with these quotes from my fall 1999 "Literature and Religion" class, because what I would like to do in this essay, above all, is let the voices of our students be heard. As important as our historical, academic, and theoretical reflections are about "religion and the academy," I find myself also constantly asking the question, "Where and how does it all finally matter,

come to fruition?" After twenty years in academia, I begin to feel that what goes on in the face-to-face daily interaction in the classroom is the ultimate answer to that question.

I do not, of course, mean to negate the importance of our research and publishing, our continuous restless revisions of knowledge, our efforts in this book to advance scholarly perspectives on a subject that has almost been "taboo" for so long. I simply want to put them in another perspective. There is another aspect of our scholarly lives I would like to address as well. We so often write and research out of passionate personal concerns; yet these remain largely concealed as we carefully code and translate them into the discourse of our respective fields. I myself have written books about hermeneutics and epistemology, the relation of rabbinic modes of interpretation to modern literary theory, and the struggles of some of the great Jewish thinkers of the twentieth century to find a way back to Judaism without negating or sacrificing modernity. In these writings, the personal religious concerns that had impelled my scholarly projects were expressed for the most part in a highly abstract academic mode. I kept them mostly hidden from my students as well . . . for good and obvious reasons: a belief that the academy was the forum for an unmediated free play of ideas, and that my role as a professor in a large publicly-funded state university was to generate this free play; a sense that our mission was to teach "critical thinking," and that my function was to unsettle and challenge my students, not to be their spiritual counselor, or put forth my own personal religious beliefs.

Nor, I must admit, would I have felt comfortable doing so. Yet there is also an older meaning of the word "profession" as "vocation"—of a "professional" as someone called to a "service." The word "profession" originally had a moral and even religious component, which has long been obscured by the more contemporary meaning of "professionalization as the achievement of technical skill, specialized theoretical knowledge, and admission to an elite community of self-governing practitioners."[1] Today, we take "professional" to mean removing one's own personal prejudices and emotions from the task at hand. Yet a "professor" is also etymologically defined as one who "professes": from *pro-fateri*, to "declare loudly," publicly; one who "makes open declaration of his statements or opinions, one who makes public his belief." "Con-fess" and pro-fess share this same Latin root; and so one also "professes" one's faith, love, or devotion.[2]

Many of my colleagues teaching feminist and postcolonial theory, or gay and lesbian studies quite passionately "profess" their personal beliefs on those issues. Yet professing beliefs on religious issues in the classroom tacitly seems to have been deemed illegitimate. The discourse in English departments these days, as in much of the humanities, often centers around issues of "gender, race, and class." The thrust has been to insert texts back into their political and ideological matrices, to analyze them as part of larger "cultural practices," to try to hear voices which have been "marginalized," to challenge the canon, and so forth. One of my students, who loved poetry and was an English major, was surprised when we talked one week about Emily Dickinson's struggles with faith. "I never studied her or thought of her as a religious writer in my American literature classes," she said. We have elided religion as one of those factors that goes into making of identity—not even hearing it as a "marginalized voice." While we encourage a very free discourse about political and sexual identity, we are silent about our spiritual sides. As a colleague commented to me when I told him I was writing this essay: " 'Religion'—that's the Last Frontier in the academy these days!"

My courses in the English department at a large state university are on topics such as the Bible as literature, literature and ethics, literary theory. Over the years, I have indeed challenged my students to "think critically." The classes were interesting, and for the most part successful. Yet I always had the nagging feeling that somehow, something was missing. For I also knew from my students' private comments to me (after class, in the office, in the halls) that many of them, too, were deeply searching spiritually and at a very vulnerable time in their lives. At the end of the semester, after the profusion of ideas, questions, and debates to which I exposed them, they often expressed a frustrated need for help in sorting it all out, knowing where to take a stand, a feeling of being left hanging. As one bright student in a recent undergraduate seminar on the "Bible as Literature" said on the last day of class: "It was an excellent course, don't get me wrong, but we cleverly avoided talking about God, didn't we?" "Yes," another student added, "and, you know—He is a major character in the book!" These comments affected me strongly, and I began to rethink my stance.

Needless to say, over the past several years, postmodern thought, feminist theory, and cultural studies have relentlessly critiqued the notion of an objective subject, of an ability to speak above or beyond ideology. Interest

in the relations among power, knowledge, and institutions also started to refocus theoretical attention on the classroom as the site where all this came to a head. But could there possibly be a way to stop "cleverly avoiding talking about God" in these skeptical and critically sophisticated classrooms? I myself had written academically at length about the ways postmodernism philosophically opened a new path for "religion" to "return" to the academy. But still I wondered if there was a way I could somehow bring a discourse of—for want of a better term—"spirituality" to my classroom without sacrificing my goals of challenging critical thinking and the free play of ideas. I am not, of course, the first to raise these questions or struggle with these issues. Writers like Jane Tomkins and Parker Palmer have bravely preceded me. Jane Tomkins says it well when she writes that despite all our professed educational goals of critical thinking, or social change, or transmission of cultural heritage, or professional training,

> I have come to think that teaching and learning are not preparation for anything but are the thing itself. . . . The classroom is a microcosm of the world; it is the chance we have to practice whatever ideals we cherish. The kind of classroom one creates is the acid test of what it is one really stands for. And I wonder, in the case of college professors, if performing their competence in front of other people is all that amounts to in the end.[3]

Palmer supports his attempts to recreate the classroom by using postmodern notions of epistemology, rightly stressing that our models of epistemology—of what knowledge is and what the relation of knower to known is—contain implicit pedagogies that either undermine community or foster it. As he writes in his book, *To Know as We Are Known,* "To teach is to create a space in which the community of truth is practiced":

> In truthful knowing we neither infuse the world with our subjectivity (as premodern knowing did) nor hold it at arm's length, manipulating it to suit our needs (as is the modern style). . . . In truthful knowing, the knower becomes co-participant in a community of faithful relationships with other persons and creatures and things, with whatever our knowledge makes known. We find truth by pledging our troth, and

knowing becomes a reunion of separated beings whose primary bond is not of logic but of love.[4]

II

A wonderful vision indeed. The reality of trying to implement it, of course, is another matter. As I began to write the next sentence of this paragraph, to describe the new course on "Literature and Religion" I had decided to teach in fall 1999, to try finally to face these issues head on, a typo spelled the words "new curse." At times, it did feel like that. In the rest of this essay, I would like to describe my experience with this course, and mostly let the voices of its students be heard. For our students also often hide from us *their* own most passionate concerns, their spiritual struggles. Not often are they afforded an opportunity to express them in a large state university; and they are quite tentative about doing so, fearing retribution from relentlessly skeptical professors and seemingly cynical fellow students.

I, too, was quite unsure how I was going to be able to create some kind of new space or new language for such discussion in the university classroom. I had been struck by a recent article in my Smith College alumna magazine about "Religion on Campus" in which a Smith religion major was quoted as saying that in her religion courses, "we talk about spiritual experiences as if no one in the classroom could possibly have had one."[5] I knew I wanted to try to give my students the freedom to talk about religious issues, but I did not want to force this upon them, nor did I feel it was my role either to resolve their doubts or challenge their beliefs. I did not want them to battle each other over whose religion was "true," or attempt to proselytize each other. I wanted them to be stimulated and broadened by literature that would show them the paths others had taken on spiritual quests, and to learn from each other. I realized, in retrospect, that I did want somehow to encourage and confirm them in their spiritual quests, to affirm their searching until they each found what she or he needed, each in her or his own way. I agonized endlessly over the reading list and course description, and finally came up with the following:

> Literature is one of the best vehicles for exploring those questions of "ultimate meaning" we all ponder. This course will examine the relation of literature and religion from a variety of angles: representations and quests for the Divine in literature; spiritual autobiographies; the relation of issues of faith to the academy; literature as substitute for religion; the relation of the literary to the sacred in myth and story. We will read poetry, fiction, and drama that explores the religious experience in Christian, Jewish, Eastern and Native American traditions.

When finally it came to putting together the fourteen weeks of reading, among the texts I ended up with were Dostoevsky's "The Grand Inquisitor," Tolstoy's "The Death of Ivan Ilych," selections from the Bible (some chapters of Genesis and Matthew, all of the Book of Job and the Song of Songs), selections from Emerson, Dickinson, Alfred Kazin's review of the American Transcendentalists in his *God and the American Writer*, stories by Flannery O'Connor, Tony Kushner's play about the AIDS epidemic, *Angels in America*, Viktor Frankl's holocaust memoir, *Man's Search for Meaning*, the modern Yiddish and Hebrew writer Chaim Grade's story on the holocaust, "My Quarrel With Hersh Rasseyner" (along with the film version of the story), Generation-X writer Douglas Coupland's *Life After God*. At mid-semester, after evaluating together with the students our progress in the class, I responded to their expressed intense desire to read non-Western religious literature by adding such Native American material as *Black Elk Speaks*, Buddhist and Hindu tradition via Herman Hesse's *Siddhartha,* and African religion through Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Speakers were invited to talk about Zen Buddhist poetry and practice, and Native American healing rituals. It was quite clear to me by then that what the students wanted was material that spoke *straight* to their hearts and souls, that addressed on their own level what burned inside them—issues such as faith and doubt, good and evil, intellect versus emotions, the meaning of suffering. Writing which did not do this, or which was circuitous, such as Emerson's—they simply ignored, or sat in stony silence when I tried to get a discussion going.

Who were the students? The course was open, had no prerequisites, and so gathered its members from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds. There were business and accounting majors, science majors, premeds, literature majors, psychology and communications majors, one philosophy student, undecideds, transfer students new to campus. They also reflected the rich multicultural nature of my university, which is very close to

Washington, D.C. and Baltimore. The roster included students whose backgrounds were Vietnamese-American Catholic, Russian Eastern Orthodox, Korean-Christian, Jewish, African-American Baptist, old-line American Protestant, African-American Pentecostal, agnostics, atheists, *plus* the president of the campus "Pagan Student Union" (an organization I had certainly not heard of till then!) and some of his friends from this unusual club.

III

Now, of course, this was a self-selected group, for only those students who had some special feeling for religious issues would choose such a course. Yet I must say, that in other courses I have taught, such as "Literature and Ethics," or even regular literature classes (and graduate seminars as well), I have always sensed that underneath those pulled-down baseball caps and Walkman headphones, many of the students were burning with issues of faith and doubt, or were passionate believers—but all this was just often glimpsed indirectly, and kept under wraps. So here, finally, I would try to see if some of it could be brought to the surface in an academic setting.

It was a much more difficult task than I anticipated, with many ups and downs. The initial readings on American Transcendentalists did not catch their hearts—they were withdrawn, cautious, wary, seemed confused, bored, and restless. I struggled. Moreover, I myself was cautious; I did not feel comfortable revealing myself as an Orthodox Jew. I had just returned from a two-year fellowship in Jerusalem and was readjusting to America as well. The real work, and eventual success, of the class came to take place in our "class letters." Over the years, I have developed a certain pedagogical technique of having students write letters instead of journals.[6] They are asked also to make copies of their letters for the whole class, to distribute, and read them aloud at the beginning of each session. In essence, the rhetorical directness and informal form of the letter frees them to write in a more personal, engaged way. Knowing they will "mail" the letter, i.e., read it aloud and give it to their colleagues, makes them put in special effort. We also discuss the letters in class in small groups; other students can then write back, respond to the letter in the next session or later. They can also write in the persona of a character, or to a character in the reading, as well as to a fellow student.

At mid-semester and at the end of the semester, I ask them to read the whole pile of letters accumulated over the course of the semester and pick several quotes from other students' letters, and from their own, which were most meaningful to them—to copy them, comment on why they picked them, copy them for the whole class, or post them on the class e-mail list. In place of a final exam, they write for my eyes only, a final review essay about "How My Mind Has Changed" as result of the course, using all this material, as well as quotes from the reading. As one of the more cynical and perplexed class members (the philosophy major) wrote to the class at the end of the semester in this review-letter exercise,

> Finally, I would like to comment on the letters in general. There were so many little things in each letter that could be commented on that it would take years to discuss every detail and give it the attention it deserves. What made this class so effective was the honesty and thought everyone put into the letters and discussions. That personal insight gave this class a depth that most courses lack and I thank you all for sharing. I hope you all find the answers you are looking for. And if you do please e-mail me because I am so tired of asking paradoxically unanswerable questions that at this point I'm pretty much open to anything you got. Future cult leaders take note.
>
> —Ever the Absurd Man, Nat

By the end of the semester, behind those slightly jaded looks, behind those quiet, enigmatic faces, I did find souls on fire with extraordinary passion. Their letters gave me an unusual glimpse into where so many of our students are—how there is so much "religion in the academy" in ways of which we are quite unaware. As Mary Rose O'Reilly writes: "The question for me is, how do we teach people who are profoundly, and even stubbornly, spiritual brings? I think we assume that spiritual beings is the last thing they are (because it is perhaps the last thing they will let us know)."[7]

My students were indeed spiritual beings who had vivid spiritual experiences. Aaron, a nonobservant Jewish student, artist, and musician, told the class about an experience he had undergone that previous summer in California, after some extended time at a Jewish studies institute. It had

changed him, he said, and he was still trying to recapture and understand it. In his final paper, he copied for me his detailed journal entry from that day:

> 8/15/99—Night. Navigating a crooked cliff-top road fifty feet above the Pacific. We pull off the road, seaside, gravel crunching under radial tires. We clear a patch of ground and spread a tarp on the dirt. The air is cool, crisp, and clear. The glow of the milkyway shimmers in the glass-like calm of the ocean, framed by the soft curve of the horizon. We bed down for the night; feet to the Pacific, eyes to the sky. Meteor-shower—Falling stars seem to punctuate our conversation. I hear the hum of cars in the distance. The conversation continues and I wish for a tape recorder. My companion informs me that the traffic I hear passing is the lapping of waves on the shore fifty feet below. A veil is lifted. In my mind's eye, I am transported skyward. I see myself lying on the edge of the continent, bustling nation at my back. A brilliant flash of light arches across the sky and drops into the Pacific just beyond my reach. I am floating in the center of the universe.

He then writes: "It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I felt as though I had tapped into some universal truth." He had, indeed, for once, found a "truth that stops the heart."

These startling voices of my students are what I would like now to share at length. First are some passages from a "How My Mind Has Changed" final exam essay written to me from one of the brightest class members, a hard-working premedical student:

> Most of the thoughts that have inspired me this semester have connections to Existentialism, and I think I have related that philosophy to just about every book we have read. The articles that you gave me put a name to ideas that I have believed for a long time. One of the religious experiences which I had as a child, long before I grasped the word "holy" as anything other than a prefix to the word "bible," was a conviction that the physical world around me was sacred. We did not have a television when I was very young, and I would spend hours lying in different nooks and crannies in my house, memorizing the layout of the physical objects in front of me. I agree with Simone Weil that "Attentiveness without an object is the supreme form of prayer." Today I know the house where I grew up in the same sense of the word which Mary Rose O'Reilly meant when she said she knew two things. It is real to me unlike any other place. I know the walls, the ceilings, the floorboards, the way the sun slants through the windows, the way the doorknobs have tarnished and the way they turn, the clamminess of the unfinished basement floor on bare feet, the squeak in the kitchen floor, which makes the whole house seem to shake when you jump on it.
>
> This is the sort of awareness which I think might save me from the fate of the man in Kierkegaard's anecdote, "so abstracted from his own life that he hardly knows he exists until, one fine morning, he wakes up to find himself dead." It explains the appeal of Bonhoeffer's theory of faith that manifests itself not in intellectual assent to certain propositions, but in action. Siddhartha experienced a similar awareness when he stopped to learn a place thoroughly: "the river is everywhere at once, at its source and at its mouth, at the waterfall, at the ferry, at the rapids, in the sea, in the mountains, everywhere at once, and only the present exists for it, and not a shadow of the future. . . ."
>
> I am disappointed at myself for some of the last letter that I wrote, when we read books dealing with Eastern philosophy. I wish I could have had the resource and creativity to try to convey the feelings and ideas that they inspired in me, rather than pull out my crude Western analytical devices. Christianity invites analysis and debate: two thirds of the New Testament is interpretation, and not all of it charitable! When I try to approach a Buddhist essay with the same questions and objectives, however, it feels like I am using a pair of forceps to examine a bubble. . . . There is one sentence from Anne Lamott's essay, "Why I Don't Meditate," that seems to me supremely beautiful: "You're going to be vulnerable anyway, because you're a small soft little human animal—so the only choice is whether you are most going to resemble Richard Nixon, with his neck jammed down into his shoulders, trying to figure out who to blame, or the sea anemone, tentative and brave, trying to connect, the formless fleshy blob out of which grows the frills, the petals."
>
> I am not ashamed of my forceps, but I wish I could have the soft outstretched tentacles of the sea anemone as well.
>
> Already before beginning this class, I had encountered most of the cosmologies and theologies that we explored. The change that has

taken place in my mind has arisen from an awareness of the omnipresent religious dimensions of our everyday lives. It comes from discussing the ideals of community, tradition, knowledge, faith, and innocence. I have learned from my classmates that I am not the only one with a persistent fear of not realizing what I idealize, of finding no meaning. I hope I do not lose this awareness, and I hope that I may continue to find good books to read.

Linda here articulates what haunted so many of these students, and what they often wrote of—a fear of finding no meaning, no purpose, no enduring love, and no just and good God in the universe. Rachel, another very bright science major (and member of the Pagan Student Union), writes of some of the same struggles as Linda did in the following passages from her final review letter to the class. Like the others, it was posted to the class on our e-mail list during exam period:

> Dear Class:
>
> I've really learned a lot from each and every one of you. Most of all, I have found that not one of us has the answers; we are all struggling with the details of life and God. We laughed and talked a lot about all of the things that have perplexed us. We've even shared donuts, Twizzlers, and I think everyone's favorite, coffee. . . .
>
> As the semester wore on I often thought about Nat's statement, "As Prozac is the second most prescribed drug in America, I imagine that there are quite a few discontented people out there. It seems reasonable that in the big rat race that occupies forty hours of our weeks, we can forget the meaning of it all" (during our discussion of *Man's Search for Meaning*). That's what this class was all about, right, finding the meaning of life and possibly stumbling on God's real cause for putting us here. Nat had a real way of expressing those, I'm not sure how to put this, uncomfortable truths. Sure, no one really wants to admit it but I think we all wonder why we "bother waking up at all." I worry that one day I will be the woman in line at the prescription counter complaining that I have to wait forty minutes to pick up my medication. Frankly, the thought terrifies me. . . . I can only hope that having an understanding of the meaning of life will help me steer clear of such a predicament. I think that at least to some degree, we all decided to take this class for that reason.

> If only there were some way to intellectualize the situation, to turn understanding God's intent into an exact science. I'm sure that if knowing, say for instance Calculus, would give us the understanding of God's intent, life would be a lot easier. I say this because there is only one right answer to an optimization problem and best of all, if it's an odd problem we can look up the answer in the back of the book. Unfortunately, religion and philosophy take some real thought and you never know if you're on the right track.
>
> I just wanted to find some logical answers to the questions that plagued me. But I think our consensus is that there are no answers right now. As Vanessa said: "We all have to cope with the questions that cannot be answered and with the distance that may never diminish"(Nov. 12, 1999). I guess this has really been the hardest part for me. I wish far too much that I could sit down with the Bible, a pen, and some paper and write a really good outline of what God intended the "meaning of life" to be. It would be great to go out, solve a couple problems, do my job and maybe get a progress report in the mail. Even better; how about one of those visions people are always having in great books about religion.
>
> As it is now, all I have to look forward to is Judgment Day and that's just too late. Still, I have acknowledged the fact that God cannot or will not give me the answers that I want in a form that I can understand . . . And what's more annoying: why won't this great all-powerful being intervene on behalf of the innocent and oppressed? I feel like a child saying that, but it's just not fair.

Mike, a very bright English major, close friend of Rachel, and fellow member of the Pagan Club was also in our class. Mike described himself to me as an "ex-Christian" ("I finished with all that in high school," was how he put it), and had become fascinated by kabbalah (Jewish mystical tradition). His initial letters were highly intellectual, theoretical, abstract mini-essays full of technical information about the history of religions; they had the unintended effect of intimidating the rest of the far less knowledgeable students. Only towards the end of the semester did he begin to speak a bit more personally. During exam period he contracted what he later found out was pneumonia, and was in a feverish state of illness when he wrote his final review letter to the class on e-mail. This

condition, however, made him write intimately in a way he had never done before during the semester:

Dear Class,

. . . I feel a little like a mad prophet. You know: one of those semi-mythical priests who lived at the riverbank, cackling out insane divinations, scratching at unclean and ragged clothes, all the while my neighbors might point at me and say "touched in the head" and "touched by God" in the same sentence. And even if my style is a little less cohesive tonight than normal, I wonder what this makes you all think of me. And how different it is from whatever-God-I-choose-in-any-moment thinks of His-Her-Its erstwhile creation?

"Are we really what you had in mind that immortal day you gave us breath?" Monique wrote on November 8th, 1999. "More than life, you also gave us reason and intellect, which became barriers to you, not bridges."

. . . What does it take for us to strip away a shell of false-logic? Does our formulaic knowledge and intense concentration prohibit us from attaining some secret realization of God? I don't know. But I know that all the training I've received in my life makes me want to cling onto that rationality like a drowning swimmer clutching his life raft. . . .

That could be my mistake though; I'm—thinking—too hard. I'm really trying to bring my intelligence to bear on the issue. I'm trying to use the force of my college-trained intelligence against the puzzle of God, Tao, and Buddhism, until I break open the lock and can find out the secret.

Sometimes, I can feel that epiphany in the corner of my consciousness, like a very distant light, blinking in and out of existence with a faint heartbeat. I usually try and reach out to the epiphany, grab hold of it, and yank it back to me. You know: hold it close to my chest, and never, ever let go. Like a loved one, or a family member. It almost brings tears to my eyes; the deep longing that I want to fill with almost anything I can. Just something to cut the pain, and take the edge off it for a while.

. . . I've tried to be honest, and I've tried to be as clear (and maybe aesthetic) as this sickness would let me. I don't think I've found much in the way of an answer, but this one, small piece. That is to say, the same quote that Melanie used from Coupland's *Life After God:*

My secret is that I need God—that I am sick and can no longer make it alone. I need God to help me give, because I no longer seem to be capable of giving . . . to help me love, as I seem beyond being able to love.

Love,

Mike

PS: Keep in touch, everyone. Drop me a line. We'll have a big "God & Lit" party or something, and wait for God to wake up and notice us again.

In his final essay written after he had recovered, on how his mind had changed, Mike cited this conflict between intellect versus emotion as the issue on which he had most moved:

I forget which philosopher said "An unexamined life is not worth living." But that's been a huge hallmark in my development. I've tried to keep virtually nothing about myself "unexamined" and unexplored. Why do I feel this way about death? Why do the holidays make me feel the way they do?

After the months of studying religion through literature, though, I think I should relax that tight, rational grip. While I'm not ready to completely let go of my intellectual self-examination, I think that a more emotional connection is due to my religion.

I can't help but think of our discussions about Buddhism and the Tao in relation to this. It seems that it directly relates, actually, in that the Tao is about just "letting it flow." Whereas I seem to be blocking that flow every step of the way. If "the flow" is a river, I'm missing important things by "filtering" it through my rationality.

Studying religion through literature is probably a huge part of the reason I have come to this decision. Literature has always been emotional for me, even though I've been rationally trained as a New Historicist. So, viewing the subject through a different, emotional "filter" has instigated the change.

Most profoundly, Coupland's *Life After God* has been in my thoughts. It speaks to me, with that deep melancholy and over-riding, questioning angst. It echoes my own thoughts; not so much any despair about the nature of God, but a simple question. I see myself asking it all the

time, and I don't know when I stop. I just turn my face sky-ward, stare into the night, and ask, "Are you out there?"

Of course, there's not an answer. But sometimes, I can feel a little spark, deep in my emotions. Maybe that's the reply, and it's one that my rational mind wouldn't accept.

This has been the biggest change, and probably the most profoundly affecting one. It's a radical difference in the way I think about God. I've been trying to think God, and now I wonder if I shouldn't just feel God, instead.

Mike's struggles with intellect versus emotion were strongly paralleled by those of another equally bright and analytical student, Isaac. He was thirty-one years old, had grown up in an Orthodox Jewish family, but eleven years earlier had left Judaism and dropped out of College (Yeshiva University, a modern Orthodox Jewish institution in New York) when he could not find answers to his intellectual questions about suffering, evil, the meaning of "Chosen People," and a perceived conflict between science and religion. He had spent time as a scientific research assistant, then run his own business, traveled the world, and was now returning to finish a B.A. Isaac wrote often of his struggles with doubt and faith. Initially, he had a hard time, like Mike, being able to write a letter that would speak about his real concerns. I encouraged him to be honest about what he personally thought and felt, and to share with the class some of the things he had shared with me in after-class conversations. In his third class letter he did so, quoting a line from an Emily Dickinson poem we had read, "Doubt like the mosquito buzzes around my faith," and vividly described his life after he left Jewish observance. He ended it by writing:

> What I could not discover, amidst my conclusion that Judaism as I knew it was "bogus," was an answer. As my life went on without any sort of spiritual or religious faith, I became unfocused and lived a completely hedonistic and undirected life. I lived only to fulfill my primitive drives. My life became unmanageable and without any sort of faith. I was powerless to change it. I had become spiritually and morally bankrupt. I needed a buoy, something to keep me afloat. After turning away from religion so adamantly, I found that to survive, I needed a spiritual basis to my life. As such, I have to find tolerance and understanding where before there had been cynicism and rejection. Even though I can still intellectually reason against faith, in my deepest being I know faith is necessary and real for me. I am still searching for a spirituality, but somehow the search eliminates some of the doubt, and has meaning in itself.

This letter was eagerly and warmly received by the other students. On the last day of class, Isaac gave out a makeup letter that I would describe as a "bombshell," one which many of the students would quote and write about in their final reviews. The letter did not overtly relate to any reading for the class. I have found, however, that this kind of explosive personal revelation often happens on the very last days of class, or in finals weeks on the class e-mail list. It is as if the students feel this is their last chance to say what is really important to them, and it is safe to do so since we will not see each other again. I have also learned to attend carefully to these sudden eruptions—be they angry ones, or appeals to the heart, or confessions. For here, I think, we get a glimpse into where the students have really been "living" all semester, what really has been preoccupying them during the class, and perhaps what they will ultimately take from it. (Physicians and therapists report a similar phenomenon: just as the session ends and the patient is about to walk out the door, she or he turns and says, "And by the way, Doctor" and throws out the key piece of information.)

Isaac's letter simply began, "I am writing this letter to convey an experience I have been thinking of recently." On a meditation retreat in the Shenandoah Valley mountains a few weeks prior, he had received news that a close friend of his of his own age, named Mike, had passed away in California of ALS, Lou Gehrig's disease, which Mike had been struggling with for a few years. Isaac wrote of being together with Mike in California, and Mike having asked him to go with him to Las Vegas to visit his parents.

> Selfishly, I did not want to go but my girlfriend accepted and I did not argue. Instead I got into the van at six in the morning with a terrible attitude. Little did I know that my experience over the next three days-the last of *my* vacation-would be one of the most memorable in my life. The whole ride through the desert Mike had me take care of him. I would

massage his hands and feet to help keep his circulation going. I would feed him and help him use the bathroom. I even had to clean out his nose with a Q-tip every half hour so that he could breathe easier.

During that trip, I was not thinking about myself. For the hours we passed in the van, my self-centeredness was removed from me. I cannot recall laughing so much as I did during those three days. When we arrived in Las Vegas, Mike asked us to come with him as he needed to run an errand. It turned out that we were going to the funeral home and cemetery as Mike made the arrangements for his own funeral. I cried like a baby once I realized what was going on, but Mike kept our spirits up and reassured us that everything was going to be OK. He had made his peace with God and he accepted his situation unconditionally.

When I reflect back on this experience I am so grateful that God allowed me to be a part of Mike's life. Whenever I get caught up in my own petty problems, I try to remember those three days and that all my problems disappeared when I got out of myself by helping somebody else. . . . I hope I never forget that weekend.

Writing about this letter a week later in his final-exam review essay for me, Isaac said:

> In this letter, I expressed the feelings and experience that I had regarding my faith, not just what I thought about faith. All doubt was removed from me during those three days. . . . When I was with my friend Mike I learned that through action I could remove that nagging doubt that is constantly in my head. I learned that God is in me and everyone around me. I just have to give of myself for him to be revealed. . . . I now seem to have an answer that works for me on a day-to-day basis. When I can remember to stop worrying about myself and give to another person all my doubts fade in both my heart and head. During those times I am no longer tormented by the meaning of my existence.

In the end, it was not a piece of literature we had read, or any intellectual argument that helped Isaac find what he was searching for, though these had helped him on his way—it was, instead, a living experience with

another person. . . . a truth that "stopped the heart." Linda, the very bright pre-med student I quoted earlier, who wrote the most eloquent survey of all our readings, revealed in her very last review letter to our class e-mail list during exam period something quite personal as well:

> The words and ideas of the Bible resonate with me, but this is not the only reason that I am Christian. I am Christian because of the love of my neighbor, who took me to Baptist Bible school with her daughter as I grew up, and because of the faith of my grandmother. Both of them have fundamentalist convictions that, with the scientific and humanist upbringing of my parents, I cannot entirely and honestly accept. I have the feeling that if I charged at the truth like a bull, declaring my freedom to believe as I wish and my unwillingness to accept any half-answers, any faith that blinded, I might find more answers to suit my personal need, but I would betray my responsibilities to the community where I find myself. Ultimately, humans do not have the truth, and I think there is honesty in recognizing that and accepting the limitations of our creativity, generosity, and imagination.

Despite her superb intellectual grasp of the course material, ultimately it was also an encounter with a person that has made the critical difference in her spiritual life. I found that the students in the course who were least tormented by doubt and most attached to their faith, were those who also had figures such as these in their lives.

There are, I think, important pedagogical consequences from these last pieces by Isaac and Linda. As professors, we usually focus on "critical thinking" and "disciplinary knowledge"—important and worthy goals, needless to say. But we so easily forget in the rush of the semester to cover our material, and to train those minds, that the mind is not the whole person, and people do not, in the end, really learn and internalize unless other parts of their selves are brought into play. As Joseph Schwab has written:

> Eros, the energy of wanting, is as much the energy source in the pursuit of truth as it is in the motion toward pleasure, friendship, and fame, or power. . . . The movement of Eros and the movement of the mind cannot take place separately, converging only at the end. In the person,

> the student, they interact and interpenetrate. They must be treated so in interactions with a person. They must be moved together. . . .[8]

A postmodern theorist might phrase it differently and say that knowledge is always social, dialogical, and embedded in a concrete material situation. Or as Parker Palmer, in the quote I cited above, put it: "In truthful knowing, the knower becomes co-participant in a community of faithful relationships with other persons and creatures and things, with whatever our knowledge makes known." So these letters, though seemingly unrelated to the readings of the course, were as important for Isaac and Mike to have a chance to write as their more analytical, objective epistles.

I am glad that Isaac and Mike came to ease some of their intellectual torments. (As it turned out, they even teamed up to do a joint website on kabbalah for their final project. In one of the links, Isaac made a further revelation: his great-grandfather had been a learned and practicing kabbalist in Yemen and Egypt!) Yet I am pained that all their years of education (religious or secular) and their college experience, have not helped them to integrate intellect with spirit with emotion—that they still see faith and intellect as opposites. Perhaps this is a necessary stage in their development, but I think it also reflects a failure in contemporary university teaching. I have sensed that more often than not, students in a large public university like mine keep a distance between the intellectual exercises they are asked to do in the classroom and the real passions and interests of their lives. As if they think this is what expected of them, and almost live "double lives." If we keep the development of their intellectual faculties separate from the other parts of their being, it stands to reason they will do so as well.

Several students wrote with great anguish about their disappointment in and alienation from the university. Monique, one of the best students in class, and an African-American journalism major, wrote in her first letter responding to Mary Rose O'Reilly's essay:

> What, then, is the treatment for a decapitated educational system, the result of violent removal of it spiritual head, replaced by thought without feeling, feeling without perception, perception without insight? It is a crude mass of speculation and skepticism. . . . I am convinced that a spiritually dead person can never truly grasp the meaning of canons of literature intended to reacquaint us with our spiritual selves. Cognitive reasoning and spirit are now polar binaries, perhaps evolved from the same abyss of un-knowing. *Was it always meant to be this way?*

In her midterm review Monique picked a sentence from an essay by Emerson we had read: "The invariable mark of wisdom is to see the miraculous in the common," and commented:

> I grow tired of the academic institution. My mind has worn out its elasticity in trying to wrap itself around the demands of professors and the claims of the scholars they teach. What began as a very engaging cerebral experience has given way to mental nausea, made feverish by indifference. But in the still and quiet, the ordinary, walking to class, or sitting on the side of the bed, I have moments of clarity. A speck of chipped paint suddenly becomes a metaphor for my entire life! I think this quote actually describes the scope of Emily Dickinson's poetry. She pushed conventional social constructs with planks of wood that bridge doubt and belief, or teeth that nibbled at her faith while a mosquito buzzed around it.
>
> I imagine her suddenly cut off in mid-sentence to gaze up at the way the light is peeking through her window. I think she probably sat and stared for hours at rain falling. Emily became the common, and it elevated her thoughts to a higher aim, more deeply and richer than any scholarly musing ever could. . . .

Their sense of fatigue and disillusionment with college troubles me greatly.

IV

As the students gradually opened their hearts and souls to each other, I played the role of sympathetic facilitator, but I did not, in turn, convey my own personal beliefs except in a few private conferences and after-class conversations. I could tell, however, that they sensed I had my own passionate beliefs and struggles. Why was I so reluctant, in addition to all the reasons I cited at the beginning of this essay, to share them more openly?

Was this a lack of nerve or a necessary stance, or both? I have been pondering this issue for some time. Just as I have also been wondering how some of the more traditional Jewish ideas of teaching and learning might be transferable to the contemporary academy. In what ways is the classroom itself a kind of "sacred space"? In what ways might the tension between withholding and giving be itself a spiritual act?[9]

For many years, I have been inspired by a model in the Jewish mystical tradition, the idea of *tzimtzum*—God's "self-contraction," a concealing or withdrawal of the divine light as the essential first step in God's creation of the universe. *Tzimtzum* ("contraction," "condensation") is the name given to the process of withdrawal of the infinite divine light in order to leave an "empty space" (*halal panui*), a space which can allow for finite beings, who otherwise would be overwhelmed and nullified by this light. In the kabbalistic scheme, a trace (*reshimu*) of the divine light remains in the void created by the *tzimtzum*, and further emanations illuminate into this void to allow for the creation of finite independent beings. There are interesting Chassidic texts which also explain the divine self-contraction using the analogy of the teacher-student relation. That is, the teacher first has to "withdraw," contract her or his intellectual light to the level at which it can be absorbed by the student, before the student can then develop to try to reach the concept on the more complex level on which the teacher herself conceives it. If the teacher would try to transfer her or his ideas directly on the level she or he conceives them, the student would be overwhelmed. The concealment, however, is ultimately for the purpose of revelation, just as the *tzimtzum* is made for the purpose of a new independent creation.

I have used this model till now to frame my teaching stance; that is, I have conceived of my role less as expansive self-expression or revelation of my religious positions, than as leaving a "trace" (*reshimu*) of them in the space I create for my students. A trace that hints, points, invites, but does not compel. My students should also have the freedom to withhold their personal beliefs. Yet the class should sense the *tzimtzum*, the fuller life beyond.[10]

On a larger scale, I wonder if this is not true of all the deepest pedagogical acts. Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav, a great Chassidic leader of the nineteenth century, in his own brilliant way, wrote that this act of emptying out, this *tzimtzum* in the teacher-student relationship is also deeply

productive for the teacher. For in the act of teaching, contraction, of giving over knowledge, the teacher, so to speak, also "empties" him or herself of their own knowledge, and so creates an open space within him or herself that enables entirely new knowledge to enter the mind. The bestower then becomes the receiver.

Ultimately, then, this concept of *tzimztum* and necessary contraction reminds me of what my many years of teaching have also led me to conclude: *one can never really teach anything "directly."* The teaching that is truly received and absorbed by the student is done via indirection. And the arousal of the desire to know itself also comes so often through indirection, through a lack which prompts desire, through a glimpse of a trace which tracks a glimmering light. Indirection, as Rabbi Nachman understood so well, was also the secret power of stories. Stories, in his description, help people who have "fallen asleep," who are sunk in an existential darkness to awaken and, as he puts it, "find their face," without the light overwhelming and blinding them. Stories "garb" and "enclothe" the light so it can be received, enable the sleeper to awaken gently, like a blind person healing and slowly coming to see illumination.[11] And that is one of the best descriptions of the relation between literature and religion I have ever come across. (R. Nachman was also himself a master creator of parables, stories, and songs.)

Yet while this model has well served my act of "withholding" as a teacher in a state university, and helped me formulate the relation of literature to religion, there are times, I confess, when I feel the need to take a risk and reveal more. I am always questioning myself: Did I reveal enough of myself, or not? When is the right time? Did I give enough guidance? Only once during the semester did I also write a class letter, though in the past I have tried to do so much more frequently. By mid-semester, my students were beginning to open up to each other so honestly and taking risks, that I felt the need to somehow reciprocate, to be more than the neutral traffic director. In other words, ethically I also owed them something more of myself. I finally gave out a letter of my own when we had been discussing Tolstoy's "The Death of Ivan Ilyich," a wrenching story about a complacent Russian bourgeois magistrate who injures himself one day while decorating his house, then goes into a progressive physical decline. As he sinks closer and closer to death, he finds himself facing the truth of his shallow life, alienated from his superficial friends and self-absorbed

members of his family, tormented by the question of what his life has meant.

That day, I gave to the class an e-mail letter I had received the year before, while still in Jerusalem, from my office mate, colleague, and friend, Jamie Robinson, who was then in the final stage of a nine-year battle with colon cancer. He passed away a few months after writing it. Jamie was fifty-three years old then. During the course of struggling with his illness he had tried to see it as a "spiritual journey," and he had the many ups and downs of all such journeys, several of which he shared with me in talks in our office, between or after class. Jamie's letter indeed "stopped my heart":

Dear Suzie,

Your erstwhile office mate lives (by the skin of his teeth), and so he assumes doth you. These must be particularly exciting times in Israel with the 50th anniversary of its founding—I've been reading about it in *The New Yorker* and elsewhere. . . . I would love to see Jerusalem, and envy you being there, clearly thriving in such an intense intellectual and political atmosphere.

I'd give you news on the department these days, but I'm a particularly barren source since I'm hardly ever there (average once/month) since I went on sick leave after a bunch of hospitalizations and another surgery in November. We've run out of chemotherapies, so now I'm in home hospice care (their nurse comes in 2–3 times/week to change dressings, adjust my morphine pump, etc.), and also attended by an LPN, a large woman named Josephine who hails from—ironically enough, since I served in the Peace Corps there—Ghana. She feeds me lunch, bathes me, and is around to help me take things easy, which I didn't find all that necessary at first, but which has been more required lately as my energy wears down gradually.

The tumor grows incrementally on my lower left side, whose front looks like a '56 Cadillac bumper breast (you may have to be into car culture to catch that reference), and clearly is sapping strength from me—had a transfusion last week in prep. for a trip with the children to Williamsburg and it helped me through the weekend there, but it's taken me 4 days to recover. So that may well be my last trip, which saddens me. One of the things I miss most is the opportunity to travel and

see places I've never seen, like Jerusalem (op cit), the Grand Canyon, Yosemite, Provence, Maine. But I've really been pretty privileged in that regard (I've taught or lectured on 5 continents, and lived for years in Africa and Europe), so I'm not complaining, just yearning.

All told, the past four months have been a pretty weird time, "laying low" back at the house, considering how my life has been spent, balancing off the professional things undone . . . and challenges avoided, against . . . I'm not sure what, exactly. I could break into a chorus of "I did it my way," but that seems a bit too grand, and not entirely accurate. Anyway, I've achieved some spiritual growth, and probably nudged a few students in some good directions, and encouraged a lot of the average ones to love literature enthusiastically and see it as a way of framing life (a bit passe in these post-Deconstruction days). I persuade myself I've done more good than harm.

And I know you have, Suzie, and wanted to let you know while there was still world enough and time. [deletion of more personal remarks] For these and all the other things you've generously shared with me, I thank you, friend, and pray that God blesses you as He has blessed others by making you part of their journeys.

I'd like to see you "next year in Jerusalem," but reckon that's not in the cards. In the meantime, my Susan joins me in sending,

Love, Jamie.

I read the letter to the class and felt their hearts stop too. I chose not, however, to share with them my response to this message. But I have decided to print it here . . . for as Jamie faced the ultimate meaning of his life in the university, and stopped my heart, he helped me think about the meaning of mine as well. I close with these words:

April 27, 1998

Dear Jamie:

. . . You describe your process of thinking about and reviewing your life these past four months and what seems to have really counted—the effect on your students, your spiritual growth . . . I was indeed so grateful for your words to me, about how you think I have helped my students, and how somehow I have helped you in your journey. Because I

often wonder what remains of all those years of mine at the University. From my perspective here in Jerusalem—a 3,000-year-old-city, the focus of so much pain and yearning where you do indeed have "intimations of immortality"—I, too, think from afar about what that life in academia is finally all about, and it seems to me it is not ultimately about the "career" part—the publications, the latest theories—all of which become obsolete fairly quickly. But the enduring things are those human relations we were able to construct almost in spite of the University—those moments of touching each other's souls somehow, even obliquely.

Someone gave me a copy of an interview with Grace Paley in which she talked about teaching writing and said, "To me, teaching is a gift because it puts you in loving contact with young people."

How many moments of loving contact do I remember in my years of teaching—with students and colleagues? In the end, that is what it is about, I think. They redeem everything. I can remember some very specifically; I missed opportunities for others, but I want to try to remember that as my ultimate goal. The course material, the literature, the theories, all the rest of it is just a means.

And I have to tell you, too, Jamie, I know you, too, created many of those moments with those around you. I always sensed that in your approach to your students, in the many kindnesses you did for them, in the ways you related to everyone in the Department. Perhaps that is why I always felt drawn to you

And in the family you had built. . . . and built with such difficulty. I saw in you a man with a special gift of love—especially how you brought into your life the several children not originally your own. . . . In Judaism, the building of a family and home is the ultimate success, and part of eternity—in this, you are a real model. I think others feel this about you too—when Janet last wrote me about you in February, she said she had seen you in the office, and that though you were quite thin, you had, as she put it, an "aura" about you. Perhaps in this whittling down, is also being further revealed the core of your essential self—that man of luminous soul and love.

Spiritual teachers say that there aren't any coincidences in life—and I don't think it was coincidental that we came to share an office, you and I. You too have touched me deeply in my life . . . given me comfort

and solace and done kindness. Our office was often a little oasis in the Department.

So do we all live by the skin of our teeth—I think that phrase comes from the Book of Job. I still don't know how Job found comfort after all his tribulations, and I still don't understand God's answer to Job and I don't understand a lot of what God does, but being here in Jerusalem, one is fortified in faith despite all the difficulties, terror, conflict, bloodshed, and sense of fragility. . . .

I thought I sensed in the tone of your message that you too, despite all the pain, have been sustained by faith, made your way to certain peace with yourself and your God. In this too, I admire you so greatly.

I always loved the teaching of one of the great Chassidic masters, Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav who lived about 150 years ago and endured much. He had a famous saying, that he wrote a famous melody to—"All the world is a very narrow bridge, a very narrow bridge, and the main thing is . . . not to be afraid . . . not to be afraid at all." Thanks for being a warm companion to me on that bridge.

Love, Susie

Notes

On August 2, 1998, my colleague and friend Jamie Robinson, whom I write about at the end of this essay, passed away. I dedicate this essay to his memory. Before he died, he endowed "James A. Robinson Awards for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching" to be awarded yearly to teaching assistants in the English department of the University of Maryland, College Park. One month after his death, a memorial program was held for him by his colleagues at the university. Some months before, he himself had chosen pieces of music and poetry to be read at that occasion, which he knew was coming. For the cover of the program, he picked the following quote from the playwright Eugene O'Neill, about whom he had written a book: "It isn't the end. It's a free beginning—the start of my voyage."

1. See Lee S. Shulman, "Theory, Practice, and the Education of Professionals," *The Elementary School Journal* (98:5): 511–26. That turn of the century "ideology" of professionalism, writes Shulman, valued the technical "objective" and "scientific" but also had an equally strong moral and "service" aspect that we need to recover.

2. The dictionary I used for these definitions is the online http://www.dict.org which is the DICT Development Group: Online Dictionary Query, a database of several dictionaries. I also used the online Middle English Dictionary http://www.hti.umich.edu.

3. Jane Tomkins, "Pedagogy of the Distressed," *College English* 10 (1990): 659. See also her *A Life in School: What the Teacher Learned* (Boston: Addison-Wesley, 1996).

4. Parker Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known: Education as a Spiritual Journey* (San Francisco: HarperSan Francisco, 1993), 19, xvii, 8–9.

5. Quoted in Karen Fischer, "The Soul of America: An Increasingly Fractured Society Sends the Nation on a Quest for Faith," *Smith Alumnae Quarterly* (Spring, 1997): 7–12.

6. For an in-depth description, see my essay, "Dear Class," in *Essays in Quality Learning: Teachers' Reflections on Classroom Practice*, ed. Steven Selden (University of Maryland: IBM Total Quality Learning Project, 1998), 17–32.

Melanie, a straight-A award-winning English major in my class, wrote at the end of the semester, "It is so refreshing to take a course in which I have the opportunity to write letters such as these, for in letters, I am more apt to struggle with ideas, which is why I feel more comfortable writing letters than papers. Formal papers scare me because the assumption is that I will unlock every mystery. My language has to be strong, no use of the first person, and I have to avoid shaky ground. In this class, however, there are no theses to prove and no definite answers." Sadly, what this comment shows, and what my years of teaching experience also confirm, is that often our formal writing assignments, which are intended to help students "struggle with ideas," instead have the opposite effect. Very often, the same students who write eloquent, complex, and stunning letters turn in final "research" papers that are the opposite: stilted, monotonous, uninteresting, forced.

7. Mary Rose O'Reilly, "Silence and Slow Time: Pedagogies from Inner Space," *Pre-Text* 11 (1–2): 135.

8. Joseph Schwab, "Eros and Education," in *Science, Curriculum, and Liberal Education: Selected Essays*, ed. Ian Westbury and Neil Wilkof (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 109, 126.

9. For my further reflections on these matters, both theoretical and practical, see my essays "The Torah of Criticism and the Criticism of Torah: Recuperating the Pedagogical Moment," *Journal of Religion* 74:3 (1994): 356–71, reprinted in *Interpreting Judaism in a Postmodern Age*, ed. Steven Kepnes (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 221–42; " 'Find(ing) Yourself a Teacher': Opening the Discussion on Pedagogy at the Association for Jewish Studies Conference," *Association for Jewish Studies Newsletter*, Spring 1995 (45): 8–9; " '*Emunah*': The Craft of

Faith," *Crosscurrents: Religion and Intellectual Life* 42:3 (1992): 293–313, reprinted in *The Academy and the Possibility of Belief*, ed. M. L. Buley-Meissner (New York: Hampton Press, 2000), 85–104; " 'Crossing and Re-crossing the Void': A Letter to Gene," in *Reviewing the Covenant: Eugene Borowitz and the Postmodern Renewal of Jewish Theology*, ed. Peter Ochs (New York: State University of New York Press, 2000), 173–200; "We Cleverly Avoided Talking About God: Personal and Pedagogical Reflections on Academia and Spirituality," *Courtyard: A Journal of Research and Thought in Jewish Education* 1:1 (1999): 101–20; " 'Just as All Their Faces Are Different': The Jewish, the Personal, and the Pedagogical," in *The Social Character of Scholarly Writing*, ed. David Bleich and Deborah Holdstein (forthcoming; Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press).

10. I thank R. Tzvi Blanchard of the Center for Leadership and Learning in New York for helping me formulate this idea.

11. R. Nachman of Bratslav, *Likkutei Moharan* (Jerusalem: Agudat Meshek Ha-Nahal, 1811; reprint 1969), "Patakh R. Simon" #60.