

Therefore, the agenda of foreign policy problems in the post-Kennedy era involves problems both new and old. European states increasingly assert their autonomy; their voices are no longer those of the weak and the dependent. General de Gaulle believes that Europe can recover its authority only if any European association is founded on the power of one or more strong European states. American policy can scarcely hold to its credo of self-determination and deny France or others this right. Yet security in a thermonuclear age depends upon power that is greater than national power. It may involve groupings of states and some link with one or more of the super-powers. The claims of France and the imperatives of security in a highly insecure world are not easily reconciled. To the extent that they can ultimately be brought into harmony, the legacy of President Kennedy's patient, resolute and matter-of-fact management of conflicting interests must be brought into play.

Moreover, those who would build on the first steps of the nuclear test ban treaty must heed what can be learned from the beginnings. Throughout the Kennedy administration, the portals of contact were always kept open. At times, the Rusk-Gromyko

conversations most resembled a long-playing record. For the Russians, there could, however, be no mistaking the fact that they enjoyed a possible opening to the West, and with the further deterioration in Sino-Soviet relations this proved an opportunity which they seized. If further advances are to come in the control of the arms race, the style and method worked out for maintaining contact must be preserved.

Finally, world politics is burdened down with a large list of unfinished business. No answers were found in the Kennedy era to the German problem, Communist China, Cyprus, Kashmir, the Arab-Israeli dispute or European unification. Most of these problems will be with us for the foreseeable future. They have deep historical roots and touch men at points of strongest emotions. Outsiders who would help, offend as often as they serve. Yet once more conversations must go on, changing circumstances be explored, and willingness of states to make concessions determined. If these are the problems we face, the legacy the young President left us when he was torn away has permanent and enduring value for the problems of world politics tomorrow and perhaps for all time.

## ON POWER IN JUDAISM

What is the junction of power and morality?

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With respect to the morality and legitimacy of power a schematic view which is held by many, including probably most Jews, was recently expressed again by the late and learned David Baumgardt (*Living Legacy—Essays in Honor of Hugo Hahn*, N.Y. 1963, pp. 20-23). The view, summarily put, amounts to this: there is, on one hand, the attitude of a few radical Christians—to limit ourselves to the Western world—who condemn power as in itself evil and sinful; they take New Testament statements like "turn the cheek" and "do not judge" literally. But they are neurotic and, what is worse, unrealistic, for they open gates to the victory of injustice and brutality. There is, on the other hand, the undisguised worship of power. It is practiced not only

by politicians like Machiavelli and taught by philosophers like Nietzsche, but it is also often stimulated by professed and accepted spokesmen of an ethic of love and decency. To document the last claim, Baumgardt, for example, cites Thomas Aquinas' approval of feudal masters whipping their disobedient servants and of rulers killing or maiming their rebellious subjects, the Grand Inquisitor, and the fact that even basically moral nations "intervene" in the gross immoralities of other nations only at the point that their own self-interest is likely to suffer. Finally, there is the *via media*, which the Jewish philosopher Baumgardt—like many others—discerned in Judaism, according to which power is in itself essentially neutral, which is prepared to use power without worshipping it, and which tries to combine love with justice.

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Perhaps a Jew ought to leave such a theory alone, for it certainly presents Judaism in a light attractive to most contemporary political scientists. We wish to propose, however, that for very many reasons this is an entirely false analysis, at least of the first and third views. About the second we will not argue, because we assume that none of us will admit to holding it, and, further, because it has the merit of intimating some of the hypocrisies of commonly held ideas about history and the Western faiths. For is it not truly astounding that the forces which are substantively responsible for the cascade of blood, misery, and falsehood that constitutes virtually the entire Occidental record can go on claiming, with some modicum of good conscience and persuasiveness, that they bespeak divine truth, mercy, and love!

There are many things wrong, however, with the evaluation of what Baumgardt described in the other two schools of thought. The first is that in these matters a peculiar illiteracy and blindness overcome even the most knowledgeable and otherwise objective students. The reason is probably that the sheer weight of established biases crushes all factual information to the contrary. "If any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also" is always quoted from Matthew 5:39; we note that even the *R.S.V.*, despite its impressive apparatus of cross-references, fails to cite the source, to wit the Hebrew Bible, Lamentations 3:27-30: "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. Let him sit alone in silence when He has laid it on him. Let him put his mouth in the dust—there may yet be hope. *Let him give his cheek to the smiter* and be filled with insults." "Judge not, and you will not be judged . . . for the measure you give will be the measure you get back" is always quoted from Luke 37f., and, we resign ourselves to admitting, one cannot expect to see acknowledged its authoritative Jewish foundation on actually the most popular level of talmudic exposition: "All of God's dispensations transpire according to the principle: measure for measure." (*B. Sanh.* 90a) "Hillel said: . . . judge not your neighbor until you have come into his place." (*Abot* 2:5)

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This is not a matter of trading quotations or of claiming mere chronological priority. (For that matter, even "love your neighbor" is invariably attributed to its secondary source.) It is, in fact, an expression of the deep-seated pre-judgment and misjudgment of Western civilization, which the flagrantly contradictory evidence of history and of doctrine has not in the slightest disenchanted, that

Judaism teaches an "Old Testament way of revenge" as over against the Christian New Testament way of love.

More than this is involved. Philosophers before and since Hegel have fallen prey to the insidious danger of symmetry, to which the number Three lends a peculiarly middle-brow charm. Aristotle taught that virtue is the golden medium between the two ethical extremes: kindness, for instance, would be half-way between self-abnegation that leads to self-destruction and selfishness that destroys society. Precisely this geometric calculation of social ethics is involved in the three-fold classification for which we have cited only as a symbol David Baumgardt and which underlies the popular contemporary distinction between "sentimental pacifists," on the one hand, militaristic bellicists on the other, and "realistic moralists" as their valid resolution and (Hegelian) transcendence. Depending on one's own prior theological or philosophical commitment, a Christian like Kenneth Thompson or William O'Brien or a Jew like Baumgardt or Robert Gordis will then proceed to identify this Aristotelian "middle" with his own faith.

But there is nothing as "square" as symmetry. Indeed, the square is the perfect symbol of symmetry. Divide a square in the middle in any direction, and it falls apart into two equal portions. You do not need a square: if you half either half of it, you can easily evoke the other half, and the second half is, therefore, entirely superfluous. Nothing would be as boring as an hypothetical Mondrian that consisted of a square with a line down the center; unless the partition is off-center the eye leaves it quickly in sheer ennui.

We may suspect that an additional motivation, conscious or not, of such morality of the middle is its promise of balance. It may be compared to a teeter-totter: one weight at one end, an equal weight at the other, and in the center a tall object. If the weight at either end outstrips the other, the teeter-totter loses its balance, and the central object will also surely topple. If, on the other hand, all the weights are carefully balanced, no motion whatever will take place. This is the perfectly immobile and symmetrical social pyramid. In it all parties concerned, and especially the towering superstructure, may hope to retain their positions as they are.

Now, it is true that in the systems of social ethics of an Aristotle or a Hegel, conservative as they are, a certain element of mobility nonetheless enters. In the case of the former, the exact location of the center of the teeter-totter is difficult to determine, must be calculated again and again *ad hoc*,

and is the result of individual psychological operations of prudence rather than of rational philosophy. There is, therefore, never a complete equilibrium—only the search for it. Nonetheless, the ideal for Aristotle is stability and the achievement of a *status quo* for master and slave alike. In the case of Hegel the three elements are not located on a plane but dialectically—and thus dynamically—produce one another over and over again. But this historical motion is nought but a developmental stage, and its final consummation is the attainment of an absolute synthesis—the Prussian state, for example—in which all further motion is not only unnecessary but even sinful. Once the consummation has been achieved, whether it be “the classless society” or any other self-determined utopia, motion is regarded as criminal. Balance, in short, whether real or ideal, is a profoundly conservative and oppressive goal.

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Religious faith, to the contrary, comes to upset any balance in this world. For it, equilibrium is smugness and self-righteousness. Its only stability—and this is a highly qualified one—is the Kingdom of God which, even if of this world, is never (historically) realized. Indeed, if a social balance has been achieved, because it must be sinful faith makes it its business to overturn it. “The Lord kills and brings to life; He lowers to the netherworld and raises up. The Lord impoverishes and enriches, He constantly brings low and uplifts. He lifts up the poor from the dust, He raises the needy from the dunghill to place him with princes.” (I Sam. 2:6ff.)

And in Jewish ethics the saintly man does not remain within the boundaries of sober, rational morality but goes “beyond the line of the law,” for it is pre-eminently beyond this line, outside established canons, that the glory of God is to be found. Religious ethics do not start out with the “givennesses” of this world and try to create some kind of order among them but come out of another world and insist that the world accommodate itself to them. And who, Thoreau rightly recognized, ever knows whether a drummer who is out of step with his village-band may not be beating the rhythm of the angelic choir?

Morality, furthermore, is not the result of a prudential calculation. The medium between two extremes is, typically, the outcome of an operation on a surface but, to use Tillich’s definition, religion is not the dimension of width but of depth. Confronted by an ethical problem, we do not, validly, survey its extension but its interior. (See Hermann Cohen’s magnificent analysis of the Aristotelian Maimon-

ides’ break from Aristotle’s “ethic of the golden medium” to the radical imitation of God in humility and perfection, “Charakteristik der Ethik Maimunis,” *Moses Ben Maimon—Sein Leben, Sein Werk, und Sein Einfluss*, eds. Bacher etc., Berlin 1908, vol. I, pp. 109–116.) Put differently, we can say that religious ethics have to be radical and asymmetrical. Two examples can illustrate this truth:

Abot 5:13 reads: “He who says: ‘what is mine is yours, and what is yours is mine’ is an ignoramus; he who says: ‘what is mine is yours, and what is yours is yours’ is pious; he who says: ‘what is yours is mine, and what is mine is mine’ is wicked; he who says: ‘what is mine is mine, and what is yours is yours’—this is an average man.” (The Hebrew text makes it impossible to be quite as calm about this as the English “average-man” would lead to believe, for the term *benonit* connotes not only “average” but also “middling” and “mediocre.” Somehow, behind this Hebrew word one visualizes the vast procession of sinners who had been neither very bad nor very good in life—unlike “the little girl who had a little curl”—and whom Dante condemns to circle eternally in purgatory behind an all-white flag. Luther: “If ye sin, sin ye lustily.” *Sukkah* 52a: “The greater the man the greater his penchant for sin.”)

As far as we have hitherto quoted the text, this is a perfectly symmetrical and rational classification of men. But the text goes on: the radically religious man breaks in, destroys the fine symmetry of the aphorism, upsets the algebraic smoothness of the entire chapter of neat dichotomies within which our quotation is located, and confuses the distinction between the average rational man and (of all people) the wicked man by adding: “But some say (and one would like to know who the “some” are so that one can embrace them): this is the character of Sodom.” To be average and arithmetically rational and symmetrical in the field of ethics, i.e., is the ultimate, Sodomite stage of wickedness. The only pious posture that remains is the radical, “unrealistic” one of “what is mine is yours, and what is yours is yours.”

Further, if neither Judaism nor real ethics can abide such a “morality of the symmetrical middle,” then the symbolic demand for radicalism in the search for truth and righteousness is expressed in the Bible by the story of Isaac’s shepherds (Gen. 26:18–23) who had to call two wells “Contention” and “Enmity” until they dug one deep enough to deserve the name “Rehoboth—Wide Spaces, Deep Spaces” from which “the living waters” of God bubbled forth, a well which Abraham had originally found and which the Philistines—in the eternally

Philistine, superficial way (Ex. 13:17: "God did not indulge (His people to let them go) the way of the Philistines, for it is the easy way, for (by that way) they would eventually return to Egypt")—had covered up.

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In mediaeval Jewish philosophy God was often called *'ikar ha'ikarim*, "the root of all roots," the absolute Radical. Religious faith is, therefore, almost by definition, radical. Whatever is not radical is not faith. God hates comfortable and prudential superficialities. He loves all radicalisms, even His own radical opponents; He prefers these to his facile believers. Among other reasons, this is so because they are opponents only because they have not yet been radical enough. If they will persevere in their radicalism and dig ever deeper, they must eventually strike at the root, and God knows that He is the root. The spiritual universe, too, is round: God is at the center; you can dig to Him from any point on the surface straight down; the only place where you will not find Him is on top.

This is, of course, the function of faith and of ethics: to pull men and society and the world in the direction of the Kingdom of God. Messianism, eschatological faith, means that the pull comes from the extreme, radical end of the spectrum of historical possibilities. Thus it is that the Bible demands the impossible, "holy shall you be, for holy am I, the Lord, your God" (Lev. 19:2), and the prophets thundered their demands for absolute righteousness. The pulls in the opposite direction come aplenty from other quarters: toward evil from man's sinful desires, toward comfortable or convenient mediating positions from politicians and compromisers. The task of faith and, indeed, of the radicals without faith is to exert their strength in the direction of the Kingdom, even to insist on its instantaneous realization, for without them the sum of the pulls will escape the power of God all together.

War as legitimate self-defense and in limited execution, even if practicable, is, of course, naught but the arithmetic middle between aggressive and total war on the one hand and submission to evil on the other. War and war-like policies seen in depth rather than on a plane are murder, blasphemy of "the image of God," as asymmetrical as pacific resistance itself.

Everett Gendler has tried to draw the distinction between what he calls "establishment Judaism" and "dissenters' Judaism." (*Judaism*, Winter 1963, "Politics and Passion—An Inquiry into the Evils of Our Time," by R. Aaron Samuel Tamaret) He identifies

the former with the "official" Jewish bodies and spokesmen who can usually be found on the "liberal" side of conventional political, social, and ethical questions, and the latter he identifies with groups that often have no more than a tenuous relationship to the established channels of Jewish community-life—social radicals, beatniks, actionists on the fronts of peace and civil rights at this time, bearded mavericks all the way from Greenwich Village to Me'ah She'arim, the ultra-orthodox quarters of Jerusalem. The strange, or perhaps not so strange, aspect of this suggestive distinction is that, whereas dissenters usually oppose a new truth to the old, in this case they are the rightful spokesmen of the divine establishment against its human distortions. Sinai is always ranged against Olympus, Ebal against Gerizim, Jerusalem against Athens, the Kingdom of God against the kings of flesh and blood. How many of the prophets found favor in the eyes of their monarchs? As between Zedekiah and Jeremiah, Jerobeam and Hosea, who bespoke the authentic voice of God?

This is not a decisive yardstick, for in Judaism it is not historical or even theological speculation that determines an issue but the Law. But the fact remains that in the total history of Israel it is, paradoxically, the dissenters who constitute what Gendler calls "the moral mainstream" (however precarious such a concept is) not the "establishmentarians." Hosea and Jeremiah lay down God's word that Israel will be saved not by political or military alliances with Assyria, Egypt, or Babylonia but by pacific obedience to the divine Law. The Pharisees, canonizers of the valid forms of Jewish existence, virtually disregarded the activist Hasmonians and base Hanukah on the miracle of the oil; through R. Yohanan ben Zakkai they, in effect, betray the militancy of the Zealots who are offering military resistance to Rome in favor of establishing intellectual and religious academies; they authoritatively interpret Scriptures in such a way that what might appear to the naked eye to be many bellicist passages in the Bible turn out, to the spiritually enlightened eye, to be unequalled proclamations of radical peace-strategies.

Of the latter, perhaps the most extraordinary example is what they do to the final and climactic verse of that apparently rather blood-thirsty "Song of Deborah": "May all Thine enemies so perish, oh Lord, and may His lovers be like the sun when it goes forth in its might" (Ju. 5:31). For this is its talmudic exegesis: "We have been taught: "Those who are offended and do not offend, those who listen to their abasement and do not return in kind, who

act out of love and gladly accept their afflictions, of them Scriptures say: "May His lovers be like the sun when it goes forth in its might."'" (B. Yoma 23a, Sabbath 88, Gittin 36)

And then, for two thousand years, Israel lives and flourishes and creates and magnifies God without land, army, or even self-defense. Also in our time the body of the Jewish people stands mute and maimed as an accusation against the world. To be sure, strong and eloquent voices were heard in modern Jewish history calling for resistance and even counter-attack: Bialik excoriated his brothers in Czarist Russia for not defending themselves physically and with dignity; the fighters of the Warsaw Ghetto have been praised so frequently that their five million nine hundred ninety thousand fellow-Jews often seemed forgotten; and the whole world has paid so much respect to the feats of the Hagganah of Israel that Jews too glory in their accomplishments. And, of course, every man is, humanly, entitled to say: "the world around me that screams its devotion to love and truth has pushed and brutalized me and shed my blood long enough; I will stand up and give them what-for." But the sources of this attitude as well as the dangers that inhere in it must be recognized.

The call for Jewish political "realism" was sounded and continues to sound, whether it be for Jewish or for general social purposes, out of a Jewishly attenuated environment. When Bialik, the poet of the national renaissance, demanded counter-action, he did so, of course, in the spirit of the rationalist and nationalist incursion of Western Europe culture into the Jewish community of Eastern Europe. This tenor has grown in strength as European Jewry in general, and with it Israeli Jewry, and certainly the Jews of America increasingly spoke with the voice of Esau—sometimes even acted with his hands.

The literally awful moral consequences to which this attitude can lead is best exemplified by the current furor over Hannah Arendt's thesis that European Jewry was, in effect, an active and willing accessory

to its own murder: we began by glorifying the Warsaw Ghetto virtually to the exclusion of memorializing the millions of martyrs who went to their deaths without shedding the blood of even their most monstrous oppressors; the second step in this argument was reached when the prosecutor at the Eichmann trial constantly badgered his witnesses with the question—which, by then, was being asked by a large number of Jews surfeited with the ethos of the West—why did the other Jews not resort to physical rebellion? It is only a small distance from this question to the condemnation of the mass of the victims as actual participants in their own extermination. No one impugns in the slightest the historic heroism and legitimacy of the ghetto fighters, but they themselves would want to put it unequivocally on the record that their comrades who did not fight back but went to their death with the profession of faith, "Hear, oh Israel, the Lord, our God, the Lord is one" on their lips represented both the historical as well as the contemporary answer of Israel to the exercise of power.

The classic Jewish response in the confrontation with brute power, from literally the moment of Israel's birth as a people to this day, was squeezed out of the encounter between the Jew, the world, and God on the shores of the Red Sea: in front crested the high waves of the ocean, from behind the mighty armies of Pharaoh were pursuing, on each side lay the deadly desert. Four parties contended as to the right foreign policy: the first despaired and advised suicide in the sea; the second advised submission and return into slavery; the third advised military resistance; and the fourth advised that "a lot of noise and a great hubbub" would intimidate the foe. (*Makilta, Beshallah 2, 29a; etc.*) "But Moses said to the people: 'Fear not. Stand still and behold the salvation of the Lord that He will perform this day, for as you will have seen Egypt this day you will not see it again forever. The Lord will battle for you—and you: keep silence.'" (Ex. 14:13f.)

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