

"TO BE OR NOT TO BE, THAT IS THE QUESTION" -
THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN "BEING" AND "ACCOMPLISHING"

(Rosh Ha-Shanah morning-afternoon, 5736-1975
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IN HIS BRILLIANT PLAY, "HAMLET", SHAKESPEARE HAS HIS HERO SAY, "TO BE OR NOT TO BE, THAT IS THE QUESTION". HAMLET WAS TRYING TO DECIDE WHETHER TO LIVE OR TO COMMIT SUICIDE, BUT HE WAS ALSO TRYING TO DECIDE WHETHER TO LIVE MEANINGFULLY OR MERELY TO EXIST PASSIVELY. HAMLET DECIDED THAT IF LIVING HAD ANY MEANING AT ALL, HE HAD TO LIVE COURAGEOUSLY, AND THIS MEANT HE HAD TO AVENGE HIS FATHER'S DEATH.

FOR HAMLET, THE VERY ESSENCE OF LIFE WAS TO SHOW A RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS THE PREVIOUS GENERATIONS. "TO BE" MEANT TO DO IN THE PRESENT WHAT HE HAD TO DO TO HONOR THE MEMORY OF HIS FATHER. THIS IS NOT QUITE WHAT SOME MODERNISTS MEAN WHEN THEY ASK THIS SAME QUESTION, "TO BE OR NOT TO BE?". FOR MOST MODERNISTS, "TO BE" MEANS TO LIVE PLEASURABLY WITHOUT THOUGHT OF THE PAST OR THE FUTURE. WHEN A MEMBER OF THE AVANT-GARDE INTELLECTUAL SET SPEAKS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF "BEING" RATHER THAN THE IMPORTANCE OF "DOING", CHANCES ARE THAT HE IS ENCOURAGING EACH OF US TO "EAT, DRINK AND BE MERRY", WITHOUT THOUGHT OF WHAT OUR ACTS MEAN TO SOCIETY AND TO HISTORY.

PERHAPS AN OLD STORY WILL HELP US UNDERSTAND THE CONFLICT IN LIFE-STYLES THAT IS GOING ON TODAY. THE STORY IS THAT TWO EXECUTIVES OF A LARGE CORPORATION WERE SEATED IN AN AIR-CONDITIONED COMMUTER-TRAIN ON THEIR WAY FROM THE SUBURBS OF NEW YORK TO THEIR OFFICE IN THE CROWDED CITY. THE EXECUTIVES WERE ALREADY BUSY WITH THEIR NOTES, DISCUSSING, EVEN BEFORE BUSINESS HOURS, THE BIG DEALS THAT WERE IN THE OFFING. AS THE TRAIN SPED ON ITS WAY, ONE OF THE EXECUTIVES LOOKED OUT THE WINDOW. HE SAW A YOUNG MAN WHO LOOKED LIKE HE OUGHT TO BE ON HIS WAY TO WORK TOO, ONLY THIS YOUNG MAN WAS FISHING IN A STREAM. "BOY", SAID THIS EXECUTIVE TO HIS COMPANION, "I'D LIKE TO SAVE UP ENOUGH SOMEDAY SO I COULD RETIRE AND DO THAT TOO". THIS CLASSIC STORY DESCRIBES ONE PART OF THE PROBLEM IN A NUTSHELL. THE YOUNG MAN WHO WAS FISHING HAD DECIDED THAT HE WASN'T GOING TO GET ON THE MERRY-GO-ROUND. HE WASN'T GOING TO WORK ALL OF HIS LIFE DOING SOMETHING HE DIDN'T ESPECIALLY LIKE TO DO. SAVING MONEY WAS NOT HIS GOAL. HE WAS GOING TO ENJOY HIMSELF WHILE HE WAS STILL YOUNG AND VIGOROUS. AN OVER-SIMPLIFIED ANALYSIS OF THE WAR BETWEEN LIFE-STYLES WHICH IS RAGING TODAY IS THIS - THE EXECUTIVES REPRESENT THE PHILOSOPHY OF "DOING", OR "ACCOMPLISHING", THE YOUNG MAN REPRESENTS THE PHILOSOPHY OF "BEING". THE MATTER IS MORE COMPLEX THAN IT SEEMS ON THE SURFACE, HOWEVER.

PROBLEMS WITH THE PHILOSOPHY OF "DOING"

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE EXECUTIVES, WHEN CARRIED TO AN EXTREME, HAS ITS SEVERE PROBLEMS. THE PHILOSOPHY OF "DOING" OR "ACCOMPLISHMENT" PLACES ITS EMPHASIS ON THE GOAL, THE FUTURE. IF ONE HOPES TO BE A DOCTOR, FOR EXAMPLE, ONE MUST SACRIFICE ONE'S PRESENT YEARS FOR THE FUTURE. ONE MUST STUDY INTENSELY DAY AND NIGHT FOR YEARS. THE DOCTOR OR LAWYER OR BUSINESS MAN POSTPONES HIS ENJOYMENT OF THE PRESENT TO ACQUIRE KNOWLEDGE OR TO AMASS THE FINANCIAL CAPITAL THAT WILL PERMIT HIM TO REACH A DESIRED PLATEAU. HE IS, THEN, FIRST OF ALL, A WORKER AND A SAVER. HE IS A MAN OF THE FUTURE BUT NOT OF THE PRESENT. THIS KIND OF COMMITMENT CAN BE OVERDONE, HOWEVER. IN WAR TIME, THE OVER-ACHIEVER IS REPRESENTED BY A MAN LIKE GENERAL PATTON, WHO IN WORLD WAR II DROVE HIS MEN AND MACHINES INTO THE GROUND TO ACCOMPLISH THE MAJOR OBJECTIVE, WHICH WAS THE DEFEAT OF THE GERMANS. IN SO DOING, GENERAL PATTON WAS BOTH A HERO AND A VILLAIN. HE WON THE BATTLE, BUT HE WON THE ENDURING HATRED OF HIS MEN. HE HAD LITTLE CONCERN FOR THEM AS INDIVIDUALS, FOR THEIR PRIVATE NEEDS AND FEELINGS. HE WAS CONCERNED ONLY WITH THE GOAL. HE WAS A "DOER" PAR EXCELLENCE, WHO SACRIFICED THE PRESENT ENTIRELY TO THE FUTURE.

THERE ARE GENERAL PATTONS IN BUSINESS. THERE ARE CORPORATION EXECUTIVES WHO THINK ONLY OF PROFITS AND OF THEIR HOPE FOR ADVANCEMENT. TO OBTAIN THEIR OBJECTIVE, PERHAPS AN INCREASE IN PRODUCTION OR EFFICIENCY, THEY MAY HAVE TO RUN ROUGHSHOD OVER THE PEOPLE WHO WORK UNDER THEM. THIS KIND OF EXECUTIVE BECOMES A MACHINE. HE HAS LOST THE SECRET OF WHAT IT IS TO BE A HUMAN BEING. HE IS MERELY AN APPENDAGE OF THE CORPORATION.

ONE OF THE NEGATIVE FEATURES OF THE DRIVE TO ACCOMPLISHMENT, WHICH HAS DOMINATED OUR SOCIETY UNTIL RECENTLY, IS THAT THE FATHER, OR BREADWINNER, HAS LITTLE TIME FOR THE CHILDREN. HE COMES HOME EXHAUSTED UNABLE TO DO HIS PART IN TEACHING AND RAISING THE CHILDREN. HE BECOMES MERELY THE DISPENSER OF CASH, BUT HE HAS NO INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHILDREN, OR, PERHAPS, EVEN WITH HIS WIFE. DEPERSONALIZATION IS A FEATURE OF THE GOAL-ORIENTED CORPORATION AND THE GOAL-ORIENTED FAMILY. ONE OF THE THINGS THAT OUGHT TO CONCERN WOMEN WHO SEEK AN EQUAL STATUS WITH MEN IS THAT THEY MAY MAKE THEMSELVES IN THE IMAGE OF THE VOCATION-ORIENTED MALE. IF THIS IS THE GOAL OF THE LIBERATED WOMAN, THEN, CHILDREN WILL BE BLESSED WITH TWO PARENTS WHO DON'T HAVE TIME FOR THEM. IN THIS SENSE, WE MIGHT SAY THAT A WOMAN WHO WANTS TO ENTER THE COMPETITIVE WORLD OF ACCOMPLISHMENT RISKS LOSING HER "BEING"; THAT IS, SHE RISKS LOSING HER ABILITY TO RELATE TO OTHERS AS A WARM, COMPASSIONATE PERSON WHO IS NOT CONSUMED WITH THE TRIVIA OF ACQUISITION AND ACCOMPLISHMENT.

IN THE 1920'S, A MAN, WHO LATER BECAME A SUPREME COURT JUSTICE, BEGAN AN ATTACK ON THE BIG CORPORATIONS THAT WERE ONLY CONCERNED WITH PROFITS AND WHICH MADE COGS OUT OF THEIR WORKERS. LOUIS BRANDEIS, A JEWISH LAWYER FROM NEW ENGLAND, DEVELOPED THE IDEA THAT WORKERS SHOULD BE TAUGHT MANY JOBS AND ROTATED SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT BECOME THE KIND OF ROBOTS CHARLES CHAPLIN DESCRIBES IN HIS FILM, "MODERN TIMES". BRANDEIS SAID THE WORKERS MUST BE ENCOURAGED TO THINK, TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PLANNING PROCESS, OR THEY WILL BE COMPLETELY DEHUMANIZED IN THE FACTORY PROCESS. LONG BEFORE THE MODERNIST REVOLT, JUDGE BRANDEIS TAUGHT THAT THE WORKER-VICTIMS OF THE ASSEMBLY LINE PRODUCTION WOULD LOSE THEIR "BEING", THEIR INDIVIDUAL PERSONALITY, THEIR SENSITIVITY AS A HUMAN BEING, IF CORPORATIONS CONTINUED THEIR PREVAILING POLICY. UNFORTUNATELY, THE INFLUENCE OF MEN LIKE BRANDEIS WAS NOT SUFFICIENT TO CHANGE THE COURSE OF AMERICA.

I AM SURE YOU KNOW THAT THE JEWS IN AMERICA ARE ONE OF THE GROUPS MOST INFLUENCED BY THE DOCTRINE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT. PRIOR TO THEIR COMING TO AMERICA, THE JEWS OF EASTERN EUROPE WERE NOT GIVEN MUCH OPPORTUNITY FOR ACCOMPLISHMENT. IN THEIR EUROPEAN GHETTOS, THEY TURNED INWARD UPON THEMSELVES AND MADE A VIRTUE OF THE DOCTRINE OF "BEING" IN ITS NOBLEST FORM. WE WILL SPEAK OF THAT LATER. FOR THE PRESENT, WE NOTE THAT WHEN THE JEWS OF EUROPE CAME TO AMERICA, THEY DISCOVERED THAT IF THEY WORKED AND SAVED, THEY COULD HOPE TO RAISE THEIR STANDARD OF LIVING. THEY HAD NO IDEA THAT THEIR CHILDREN OR GRANDCHILDREN WOULD ACTUALLY BECOME A SOLID PART OF THE MIDDLE OR UPPER MIDDLE-CLASS. AMERICAN JEWS, THEN, HAVE BEEN THE BEST EXAMPLE OF THE WORK HARD, SAVE YOUR MONEY, SEND YOUR CHILDREN TO COLLEGE ETHIC. AS A RESULT, 80% OF JEWISH CHILDREN IN AMERICA GO TO COLLEGE, AN ALMOST UNBELIEVABLE FIGURE, AND OUT OF THIS GROUP COMES SOME OF THE BRIGHTEST, MOST COMMITTED, MOST DEDICATED ACCOMPLISHERS IN THE COUNTRY. IF SOMEONE WERE ABLE TO DOCUMENT THE CONTRIBUTIONS TO SCIENCE, TO MEDICINE, TO LAW, OR TO THE MEDIA MADE BY THE JEWS, IT WOULD MAKE, I AM SURE, AN ASTOUNDING RECORD.

FOR EXAMPLE, THE JEWS ARE LESS THAN 3% OF THE POPULATION IN AMERICA, BUT WE PROVIDE 30% OF THE FACULTY OF HARVARD UNIVERSITY. WE OUGHT, INDEED, TO BE PROUD OF THIS KIND OF RECORD; BUT THERE IS ANOTHER SIDE OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH STORY OF ACCOMPLISHMENT. THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY IS "THE JEWISH ANOMALY". * A "JEWISH ANOMALY" IS A CHILD WHO GETS "C"s INSTEAD OF "A"s AND "B"s. IN SOME HYSTERICALLY MOTIVATED FAMILIES, A "JEWISH ANOMALY" IS A CHILD THAT GETS "B"s INSTEAD OF "A"s! THESE MARVELOUS CHILDREN, WHO WOULD BE OUTSTANDING IN MANY OTHER GROUPS, SOMETIMES ARE TREATED IN OUR JEWISH SOCIETY AS IF THEY WERE FAILURES IN LIFE. SO ABSORBED ARE WE JEWS IN THE DOCTRINE OF ACADEMIC OR PROFESSIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENT, THAT WE ARE SOMETIMES UNABLE TO GIVE OUR CHILDREN THE KIND OF LOVE AND UNDERSTANDING THAT THEY DESERVE AND SO DESPERATELY NEED. SOCIOLOGICAL STUDIES SHOW THAT A LARGE

* An anomaly is something different from the norm, an irregularity.

PERCENTAGE OF THE "HIPPIES" OF SAN FRANCISCO CAME FROM THIS PARTICULAR GROUP OF JEWISH "UNDER-ACHIEVERS" WHO THOUGHT THEY WERE FAILURES IN THE EYES OF THEIR FRIENDS OR FAMILIES AND REVOLTED AGAINST THE PRESSURE.

THE MODERN ADVOCATES OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF "BEING" AS AGAINST THE PHILOSOPHY OF "ACCOMPLISHMENT" WOULD ASK, "WHERE DOES IT SAY IN THE TORAH THAT EVERY JEWISH CHILD MUST BE A GENIUS IN THE ACADEMIC SENSE?" MAYBE THESE SO-CALLED UNDER-ACHIEVERS HAVE THEIR OWN GENIUS, THE GENIUS OF "BEING", THAT RARE ABILITY WHICH ENABLES ONE TO REVOLT AGAINST A PROCESS WHICH IS GRINDING SO MANY OF US INTO THE GROUND. LET ME SAY TO YOU THAT I STAND SQUARELY BEHIND THE MODERNISTS ON THIS POINT. COLLEGE ISN'T FOR EVERYONE, NOT EVEN FOR ALL JEWS. WE HAVE TO HELP OUR CHILDREN GO IN THOSE DIRECTIONS WHICH MAKE THEM HAPPY, AND THESE DIRECTIONS MAY BE DIFFERENT FROM WHAT WE MIGHT CHOOSE FOR THEM. FOR EXAMPLE, WHAT'S WRONG WITH BECOMING A CARPENTER? I KNOW OF ONE JEWISH CARPENTER WHO DID VERY WELL FOR HIMSELF! WHEN I SAY WE JEWS SHOULD NOT BE SO RIGID IN GUIDING OUR CHILDREN INTO A FEW PROFESSIONS NOW REGARDED AS TRADITIONAL FOR US, I AM NOT SUGGESTING THAT WE SHOULD ALLOW THEM TO LIVE NON-PRODUCTIVE OR DESTRUCTIVE LIVES; BUT ONE OF THE THINGS WE HAVE TO LEARN IS THAT A NON-ACADEMIC PURSUIT IS NOT NECESSARILY DESTRUCTIVE. THE CHILD IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE VOCATION. VOCATIONAL STATUS IS NOT A POT INTO WHICH WE MUST STUFF THE CHILD'S PERSONALITY AS WE WOULD STUFF A PLANT. DIFFERENT PLANTS REQUIRE DIFFERENT KINDS OF SOIL IN ORDER TO GROW, AND DIFFERENT KINDS OF POTS! DIFFERENT CHILDREN REQUIRE DIFFERENT KINDS OF TRAINING, DIFFERENT KINDS OF EMPLOYMENT AND DIFFERENT KINDS OF GROWTH SITUATIONS.

OUR BIBLE IS FILLED WITH TEACHINGS THAT THOSE WHO HOLD POSITIONS LEAST HONORED IN SOCIETY MAY BE THE VERY PERSONS WHO ARE DEAREST TO GOD. THE TALMUD ADVISES US, "ACHARON ACHARON HAVIV". WE MIGHT TRANSLATE THIS TO MEAN, "WHOSOEVER SEEMS TO YOU TO BE THE LEAST IMPORTANT MAY BE THE MOST BELOVED TO GOD". THIS IS A WAY OF SAYING THAT THE EVALUATIONS OF SOCIETY ARE NOT ALWAYS VALID. NO TWO OF US ARE ABLE TO MAKE THE SAME KIND OF CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY, AND WHO IS TO SAY WHICH CONTRIBUTION IS REALLY THE MOST MEANINGFUL? FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN ONE MAN STANDS ON THE SHOULDER OF ANOTHER MAN TO TAKE AN APPLE FROM THE TREE, WHO IS MOST IMPORTANT, THE MAN AT THE PRODUCTION END, THE APPLE END, OR THE MAN BELOW WHO PROVIDES THE PHYSICAL LABOR OR THE FOUNDATION? THE ADVOCATES OF THE DOCTRINE OF "BEING" WOULD SAY, WE ARE ASKING THE WRONG QUESTIONS. THE QUESTION IS NOT WHO IS THE MOST IMPORTANT, BUT HOW CAN EACH OF US DO HIS UNIQUE PART WITH A FEELING OF WORTH AND HAPPINESS.

THE PROBLEMS OF THE DOCTRINE OF "BEING"

OBVIOUSLY, THE DOCTRINE OF "DOING" OR "ACCOMPLISHING" HAS ITS DRAWBACKS AND CASUALTIES, BUT WHAT OF THE DOCTRINE OF "BEING"? WHAT ARE ITS PROBLEMS? AT ITS BEST, THE DOCTRINE OF "BEING" SUGGESTS THAT IF YOU BECOME A GOOD PERSON, YOU HAVE ACHIEVED THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN THE WORLD. A GOOD PERSON HERE DOES NOT MEAN A KNOWLEDGEABLE PERSON OR A WEALTHY PERSON, ALTHOUGH THESE ADJECTIVES ARE NOT NECESSARILY EXCLUDED. A GOOD PERSON IS SIMPLY ONE WHO IS KIND AND GENEROUS, EMPATHETIC AND SYMPATHETIC. THE JEWISH MYSTICS, THE HASIDIM, WERE ADVOCATES OF THE SUPREMACY OF THE DOCTRINE OF "BEING". THE HASIDIC TEACHERS OPPOSED THE TALMUDIC RABBIS WHO STRESSED THE NECESSITY OF ACADEMIC LEARNING. ACCORDINGLY, WHEN THE HASIDIC RABBI WAS ASKED, "RABBI, IF YOU DO NOT TEACH OTHERS THROUGH BOOKS AS THE TALMUDIC MASTERS DO, HOW DO YOU TEACH AT ALL?" THE RABBI REPLIED, "AS THE BARREL OVERFLOWS.". THE RABBI INFERRED THAT HE TAUGHT BY EXAMPLE, BY WHAT HE WAS. HE TAUGHT THROUGH HIS CHARACTER, THROUGH HIS BEING. FIRST YOU FILL YOURSELF WITH GOOD THINGS, THE RABBI TAUGHT, AS YOU WOULD FILL A BARREL, AND THEN, THESE THINGS WILL FLOW OVER TO OTHERS. THEY WILL FLOW SILENTLY BUT DYNAMICALLY.

THE HASIDIM TRIED TO TEACH THAT THE PERSON WHO WAS WITHOUT ADVANCED ACADEMIC TRAINING COULD HAVE A VALUE AND A MEANING EQUAL TO THE MOST EDUCATED PERSON. THERE ARE DIFFERENT KINDS OF KNOWLEDGE, THEY SAID. GOD COULD BE FOUND IN NATURE, AS WELL AS IN BOOKS, AND THE MAIN ACTIVITY OF LIFE WAS NOT THE GATHERING OF INTELLECTUAL KNOWLEDGE OR THE ACQUIRING OF MATERIALISTIC WEALTH. THE HASIDIC VIEW OF THE UNIQUE MEANING OF EACH PERSON WAS MEDIATED TO US IN MODERN TIMES BY MARTIN BUBER. BUBER, IN TURN, HAS INFLUENCED LARGE NUMBERS OF HUMANIST TEACHERS. AUTHORITIES IN THE FIELDS OF RELIGION AND PSYCHOLOGY HAVE ACKNOWLEDGED THEIR DEBT TO HIM AND TO HASIDISM. UNFORTUNATELY, THERE ARE OTHER SOURCES FOR THE DOCTRINE OF "BEING" IN MODERN TIMES. MOST OF THE SELF-STYLED PRIESTS AND PROPHETS OF THE DOCTRINE OF BEING TODAY HAVE DERIVED THEIR TEACHING NOT FROM BUBER AND JUDAISM, BUT FROM THE ORIENTAL RELIGIONS. THE ORIENTAL RELIGIONS TEACH THAT IN ORDER "TO BE" ONE MUST ESCAPE FROM THIS FAKE WORLD, ONE MUST WITHDRAW FROM SOCIETY. BUBER, FOLLOWING JUDAISM, TEACHES THAT IN ORDER "TO BE", ONE MUST ENTER INTO SOCIETY AND HELP THE PEOPLE IN IT. THE ORIENTAL DOCTRINE TEACHES THAT ONE CAN MEET GOD ONLY IN SOLITUDE, IN THE SILENT RECESSES OF ONE'S OWN SOUL. BUBER TEACHES THAT YOU MEET GOD WHEN YOU MEET PEOPLE, YOU MEET GOD AS YOU TRY TO IMPROVE AND HALLOW THE EVERYDAY THINGS OF THIS WORLD. BOTH THE ORIENTALISTS AND BUBER ATTACK OUR CONCENTRATION ON WEALTH AND MATERIALISTIC THINGS, BUT THE ORIENTALISTS TEACH THAT WE MUST HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH MATERIALISTIC THINGS, WHILE BUBER TEACHES THAT WE MUST USE THEM FOR THE ADVANTAGE OF A GREATER NUMBER OF PEOPLE. THE ORIENTALISTS TEACH THAT IN ORDER "TO BE" IN THE HIGHEST SENSE, WE MUST SAY, "NO" TO OUR PASSIONS. BUBER PRESENTS THE JEWISH VIEW THAT IN ORDER "TO BE", WE MUST USE OUR PASSIONS IN THE SERVICE OF SPIRITUAL GOALS. THE ORIENTAL PATH IS THE PATH OF DENIAL.

THE JEWISH PATH IS THE PATH OF DISCERNING USAGE. THUS, SEXUAL DESIRE IS ONE OF THE THINGS ONE MUST DEFUSE, ACCORDING TO THE ORIENTAL MYSTICS. JUDAISM TEACHES THAT SEXUAL PASSION IS ONE OF GOD'S GREATEST GIFTS, BUT WE MUST CHANNEL IT IN THE DIRECTION OF A WARM FAMILY LIFE. THE ORIENTAL GURUS OF "BEING" TAKE US DOWN THE PATH OF ISOLATION FROM THE WORLD. JUDASIM IS THE PATH OF LIVING IN THE WORLD AND HELPING TO IMPROVE IT OR REDEEM IT.

UNFORTUNATELY, MOST OF THE YOUNGER PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE MOVEMENT DEVOTED TO "BEING" (RATHER THAN TO ACCOMPLISHMENT) ARE DEVOTEES OF THE EASTERN PHILOSOPHY. MANY OF THEM DON'T COMPLETELY UNDERSTAND THE EASTERN PHILOSOPHY EITHER, SO THEY SIMPLY BECOME ADVOCATES OF NOT DOING. THEY BEGIN TO GLORIFY IGNORANCE AND LAZINESS. FOR SOME OF THEM, "BEING", SIMPLY MEANS REVOLTING AGAINST THEIR PARENTS AND AGAINST SOCIETY AND SPENDING SEVERAL MONTHS OF THE YEAR SLEEPING IN A BEDROLL IN THE WILDS OF MONTANA. FOR MANY OF THE YOUNGER GENERATION, "TO BE" MEANS AVOIDING RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTHORITY. THE ESCAPE MAY BE ONLY AN ESCAPE, BUT SOMETIMES A YOUNG PERSON GATHERS STRENGTH IN HIS ESCAPE AND RETURNS TO BECOME ONE OF SOCIETY'S FIRST CITIZENS.

THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT KINDS OF PEOPLE WHO TALK ABOUT THE PHILOSOPHY OF BEING. THERE WAS A TIME IN AMERICA WHEN THE PROPHETS OF "BEING" WERE TYPIFIED BY UNWASHED VAGRANTS WHO ATE OUT OF GARBAGE PAILS, SWARMED OVER THE ROADS AS HITCH-HIKERS, AND DID ONLY OCCASIONAL JOBS. THERE WAS A TIME WHEN THOSE WHO SPOKE OUT MOST AGAINST THE DOCTRINE OF "ACCOMPLISHMENT", TOOK TO DRUGS AND TO LICENTIOUS SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS. THE BEARERS OF CIVILIZATION, THOSE WHO MAKE OUR SOCIETY WORK, WERE PROPERLY FRIGHTENED BY THIS SPECTACLE. THE ESSENCE OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF "BEING" IN ITS JEWISH EXPRESSION IS TO BE A CONSTRUCTIVE PERSON, EVEN IF ONE IS DIFFERENT FROM THE NORM. THE ESSENCE OF NOBLE BEING IS TO BE ABLE TO RELATE TO OTHERS ON THE HIGHEST PERSONAL LEVEL. THOSE WHO WILL GO TO BED WITH ANYONE AND EVERYONE DO NOT REALLY RELATE MEANINGFULLY TO ANYONE. THOSE WHO TRIP-OUT ON DRUGS CLEARLY HAVE NO RESPECT FOR THEMSELVES. HOW, THEN, CAN THEY RESPECT OTHERS? IT IS POSSIBLE TO HONOR THE VALUE OF THE DOCTRINE OF "BEING", AS I DO, AND STILL SAY EMPHATICALLY THAT IT HAS ITS DESTRUCTIVE POTENTIAL WHEN CARRIED TO AN EXTREME. WE ARE RIGHT TO OPPOSE THESE EXTREMIST TENDENCIES AND TO COMDEMN THEM AS AN INSULT TO HUMAN DIGNITY.

NEEDED: A BALANCE

WE CONCLUDE, THEN, THAT EACH OF THESE PHILOSOPHIES, THE DOCTRINE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT AND THE DOCTRINE OF BEING, HAS ITS POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE POINTS. CARRIED TO AN EXTREME, EACH DOCTRINE BECOMES DESTRUCTIVE. WHAT IS NEEDED IS A BALANCE BETWEEN THE TWO. IT IS TRAGIC WHEN WE ARE SO CONCERNED WITH PRODUCTION AND PROGRESS THAT WE FORGET TO TREAT WORKERS

AND CONSUMERS AS PRECIOUS BEINGS, WORTHY OF RESPECT AND COMPASSION. IT IS EQUALLY SAD WHEN HARD-WORKING MEN OR WOMEN COME HOME SO EXHAUSTED THEY CAN'T GIVE ANYTHING OF THEMSELVES TO THE MEMBERS OF THEIR FAMILIES. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT IS CHILDISH TO THINK THAT ONE CAN MERELY ENJOY LIFE WITHOUT CONCERN FOR THE CONSEQUENCES OF ONE'S INACTIVITY ON THE FUTURE OF MANKIND. WE MIGHT SAY THAT IT IS UNWISE FOR THE EXECUTIVES ON THE TRAIN TO POSTPONE THEIR FISHING VACATION TOO LONG, BUT IT IS ALSO UNWISE FOR THE YOUNG MAN IN THE STORY TO FISH ALL HIS LIFE WITHOUT THOUGHT OF RESTOCKING THE STREAM WITH MORE FISH.

WE MIGHT CONCLUDE WITH A REFERENCE TO THE MAN WHO, AT ONE TIME, WAS THE FOLK-HERO OF SOME OF THOSE WHO MISUNDERSTOOD THE DEEPER MEANINGS OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF "BEING". JUST A FEW YEARS AGO, MANY PEOPLE WANTED TO BE LIKE ZORBA, THE GREEK. ZORBA LOVED LIFE. WONDERFUL! HE LOVED TO DANCE. WONDERFUL! BUT ZORBA WAS UNEDUCATED AND ERRATIC. HE WAS HAPPY, YES, BUT HIS ATTEMPTS AT ORGANIZATION AND PRODUCTION ALWAYS ENDED IN DISASTER. REMEMBER HIS LUDICROUS EFFORTS TO SEND THE LOGS DOWN THE MOUNTAIN SIDES? WE COULD DEPEND ON ZORBA TO BE HAPPY IN SPITE OF HIS FAILURES (WONDERFUL!), BUT WE COULD NEVER RELY ON ZORBA TO HELP US BUILD ANYTHING THAT WOULD ENDURE.

WE NEED THE ZORBAS IN OUR SOCIETY TO REMIND US THAT FAILURE IS NOT THE END OF THE WORLD. WE NEED THE ZORBAS TO REMIND US TO CELEBRATE TODAY IN REJOICING. THE ZORBAS MAKE US SMILE, AND REMIND US THAT WE HUMANS ARE NOT MERELY GOAL-ORIENTED MACHINES.

YET, IF ALL OF US WERE ZORBAS, CIVILIZATION WOULD SOON DISAPPEAR. WE NEED OUR ACADEMICALLY ORIENTED INTELLECTUALS TO LEARN FOR US THE FAILURES OF THE PAST, AND WE NEED THEM TO POINT TOWARDS NEW GAINS IN THE FUTURE; BUT IF LIFE WAS ONLY PLANNING AND PREPARING, IT WOULD BE FAR TOO GRIM AND SERIOUS. ONE CANNOT LOOK AT THE SUN ALL DAY WITHOUT BEING BLINDED. WE MERE MORTALS NEED SOME TIME IN THE SHADE.

THE ZORBAS ARE NOT LESS BELOVED TO GOD THAN OUR DOCTORS AND TEACHERS, BUT NEITHER ARE THEY MORE BELOVED. THOSE WHO WOULD HAVE US CAST OFF OUR BASIC ORIENTATION TOWARDS ACCOMPLISHING AND DOING DO NOT HAVE A SUPERIOR DOCTRINE, BUT THEY SERVE AS A REMINDER TO US TO CELEBRATE LIFE EVEN AS WE WORK AND STUDY.

WHAT IS THE IDEAL? THE IDEAL IS A COMBINATION OF ZORBA AND THE STUDENT, THE PERSON WHO CAN BUILD AND DANCE. THE IDEAL IS REPRESENTED IN THE WELL KNOWN STORY OF THE HASIDIC RABBI WHO, FOLLOWING THE CUSTOM, DANCED WITH THE TORAH IN THE SYNAGOGUE ON SIMCHAT TORAH AT THE END OF THE FESTIVAL OF SUKKOT. FIRST THE RABBI DANCED WITH THE TORAH, AND THEN HE DID A STRANGE THING. HE PUT THE TORAH DOWN AND CONTINUED TO DANCE JOYFULLY WITHOUT IT!

THE CONGREGANTS WONDERED AT THE SYMBOLISM OF THE RABBI'S UNUSUAL BEHAVIOR, HE WAS SUPPOSED TO DANCE ONLY WITH THE TORAH. THE RABBI'S CHIEF DISCIPLE EXPLAINED THE RABBI'S DEPARTURE FROM CUSTOM TO THOSE ASSEMBLED. "FIRST", SAID THE DISCIPLE, "THE RABBI DANCES WITH THE TORAH, TAKING INTO HIMSELF ALL OF THE WISDOM OF THE PAST AND MAKING THIS WISDOM HIS OWN.". "THEN", SAID THE DISCIPLE, "THE RABBI PUTS THE TORAH DOWN AND DANCES CREATIVELY, AS HIS HEART TELLS HIM. HE HAS BECOME A TORAH HIMSELF, AND HE IS ACTING OUT ITS PRINCIPLES."

THE STORY TAKES SIDES IN OUR DEBATE TODAY. IT SUGGESTS THAT EDUCATION, THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE ACCUMULATED WISDOM OF MANKIND IN THE PAST, IS A PREREQUISITE TO TRUE "BEING". ONLY WHEN ONE HAS ABSORBED THIS KNOWLEDGE, THE STORY SUGGESTS, CAN ONE REALLY CREATE NEW KNOWLEDGE AND ADD TO WHAT MANKIND HAS AMASSED; BUT THE RABBI IN THE STORY IS NOT JUST A STUDENT. HE IS ALSO A DANCER LIKE ZORBA. HE IS NOT AFRAID TO DO NEW THINGS. HE DOES NOT FEEL GUILTY FOR ENJOYING LIFE. IF YOU AND I, LIKE THIS RABBI, COMBINE THE BEST QUALITIES OF ACCOMPLISHING AND BEING, OUR SOCIETY WILL BE STRONG ENOUGH TO ACCOMMODATE THOSE EXTREMISTS WHO LIVE ONLY TO ACCOMPLISH AND THOSE WHO LIVE ONLY "TO BE".