

A PERSONAL NOTE OF ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND PEDAGOGY

Insight, a breakthrough, requiring much intellectual dismantling and dislocation. Beginning with a mental interim, with the cultivation of a feeling for the unfamiliar, unparalleled, and incredible. It is being involved with a phenomenon, being intimately engaged to it, courting it, as it were, that after much perplexity and embarrassment, we come upon insight – upon a way of seeing the phenomenon from within. Insight is accompanied by a sense of surprise. What has been closed is suddenly disclosed. It entails genuine perception, seeing anew. He who thinks that we can see the same object twice has never seen. Paradoxically, insight is knowledge at first sight.

I CHOSE THIS EPIGRAM for *Leviathan: A Journal of Middle East Politics and Culture*, a publication created with my students at Boston University nearly thirty years ago. It still resonates and informs the way I see the world. It underscores the imperative of what I have termed “immersive education” and “thinking beyond boundaries, acting across borders,” both dictums that define the educational mission of the Institute for Global Leadership at Tufts University (IGL).

It comes from a powerful book, *Prophets*, authored by renowned Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel. His thought and activism profoundly influenced my involvement with the U.S. civil rights movement, the Jewish Peace Fellowship during the Vietnam War, and for the last thirty years, my teaching and mentoring.

The research, reflections, and analysis published in this journal are the intellectual yield of an extraordinary effort by a unique cohort of friends and young scholars who coalesced at the IGL. It is the product of an ongoing dialogue between thoughtful young Israeli, Palestinian, Iranian, Iraqi, Indian, Lebanese, Saudi, Emirate, Turkish, and American thinkers, striving to understand the complexities and ambiguities of their world, and of their role in that world—hopefully one of accountability and passionate engagement.

A few years ago when some academics around the world were encouraging an intellectual boycott and fiscal divestment of Israel, this cadre refused to engage in the sterile and futile debate over whether or not Israel was an apartheid state. Rather, we challenged our students to understand the value of the South African experience as one that could potentially inspire and enlighten them about ways to transcend seemingly intractable conflict. Could one renounce violence in favor of real encounter and seek compromise that did not entail betrayal of one's essential convictions and identity?

Rather than accept isolation, sanctions, and exclusion, the students were encouraged to embrace the attitude of inclusion, of encounter, of the necessity to make hard choices. They took the challenge, meeting some of the most controversial people they could have expected to meet, honest and unflinching people who live in the real world, who had "dirty hands." They invited both the former head of the Israeli Security Service, the Shin Bet, and the Palestinian philosopher, who is also the President of al-Quds University and the Palestine National Authority representative in Jerusalem, to Tufts. Both men had courageously broken through to create a grassroots peace initiative. They were joined by the former Minister for Constitutional Affairs under the apartheid regime in South Africa, who was subsequently asked by Mandela to remain in his post, thereby acknowledging his pivotal role in seeking to free Mandela. In public and private discourse with EPIIC students in the "Sovereignty and Intervention" year, an embryonic NIMEP was challenged to seriously learn and to confront realities on the ground. Their diverse backgrounds led them to the same conclusion: to understand the complexities of the world, one must immerse oneself in the thorns and brambles of its conflicts.

It was a challenge not accepted lightly. Along with the Faculty for Israeli-Palestinian Peace, NIMEP organized a student delegation to Israel and the West Bank. They met with politicians, scholars, activists, students, and the like, ranging from the mayors of Hebron and Haifa to professors of Birzeit and Hebrew University to grassroots activists on both sides of the divide (see articles on the delegation in this edition of the journal).

NIMEP's Iran Dialogue Initiative organized the first group of U.S. students officially invited to the Islamic Republic of Iran. They dialogued with Iranian students in the School of International Relations in Tehran, as well as with Ayatollahs and their clerical students at Mofid University. Tufts

undergraduates and Fletcher students, observant and secular Jews, Muslims and Christians, all of many majors, represented the confidence and pride that Tufts rightfully has in its students.

We encourage our students to enter such situations. We understand the necessity of scrutiny and rigorous preparation, and we are not risk-averse. Unlike most other universities, our administration has continued to allow Tufts University students to be “prudent risk-takers,” to encounter the world, to research and study.

Opening oneself up to new experiences, both expected and totally unexpected, testing one’s theories and suppositions, trusting oneself and others, is critical to scholarship and to global citizenship. I vividly remember my own first research abroad, traveling with the Southern Sudanese rebel group, the Anya Nya, in Bahr al Ghazal and Equatoria provinces for months in 1966. To prepare, to go, to see, to listen, to witness, to challenge one’s core beliefs, to gain the confidence of others, to exchange thought-deadening ideological prisons for enlightening experiential prisms, to understand and test theory through praxis, has informed a tradition of immersive education that began in the very first year of the Symposium Project. After twenty years it has evolved into the IGL, an institute now responsible for a very high percentage of the independent undergraduate global research undertaken at Tufts.

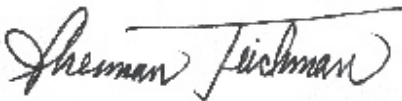
To attempt to suspend one’s preconceptions has always been a core tenet here. It was actually the banner written by our students in their “International Terrorism” colloquium, over the door of their very first symposium in 1986. And over the years it has been fascinating to see the outcomes—two sophomore women of EPIIC’s “International Security: The Environmental Dimension” year, paddling up the Wa Wa River in Nicaragua to visit with the Mosquito people, then coming back to Medford to contradict the thesis of “conservation by self-determination” of a MacArthur genius geographer who had taught them in the colloquium. Students spending a year in Bosnia with women of all ethnic communities who had been raped and abused, then with them penetrating UN bureaucracy to create the model for community outreach for international criminal tribunals, a framework now used in Sierra Leone; students debunking the theories for privatization of housing in Soweto township, Johannesburg. This year a young woman documenting the Piquetera striker’s movement in Argentina found that her sympathies had changed witnessing their bullying tactics.

A NOTE ON SERENDIPITY

I recommend a wonderful book to all those interested in pedagogy and intellectual history by the renowned sociologists Robert K. Merton & Elinor Barber, *The Travels and Adventures of Serendipity: A Study in Sociological Semantics and the Sociology of Science*. Here is a provoking and fun way to encounter “serendipity” as Walpole’s “accidental sagacity” and the “acuteness of discovery.” To travel far beyond the dictionary definitions of the “faculty, ability, gift, habit, aptitude, or talent for making happy and unexpected discoveries by accident,” or the nexus of “inspiration, perspiration, error, and happy chance...” to a distinctive and complex cognitive process, to the means of discovery of “unanticipated, anomalous and strategic datum.”

My students know my remark that the “S” on Superman’s shirt stands for “serendipity.” While I mean it to be humorous, being educated in the raw, eclectic mix of a New York ghetto high school, a plebe summer at the Naval Academy, graduate study at the Johns Hopkins University, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the multidisciplinary halls of the University of Chicago, and in the barren scrub land of the Southern Sudan, I believe in it seriously.

At the Institute I have sought to nurture an educational subculture, seeking with glee and, hopefully, in self-critical apologia to Thomas Kuhn’s “serendipitous, sociocognitive microenvironments,” to capture the spirit of “institutionalized serendipity.” Looking at the remarkable yield of the students of NIMEP and at the collective and individual accomplishments of their many peers at this wonderful University, I have begun to hope that I have succeeded.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sherman Teichman". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Sherman Teichman
Director, Institute for Global Leadership
March 2005