

Creative Spirituality: Jewish Education and the Arts
Conference Proceedings
Sunday, November 9, 2003
Yeshiva University Museum, New York City

Session I:
The View From the Tradition

Rabbi Jeffrey Saks:

ATID is committed in various ways, both in Israel as well as abroad, to invest in Jewish education by focusing on people, institutions and ideas. We have a training fellowship for young teachers and educational leadership in Jerusalem, both for Israelis and Jews from the Diaspora. We work with institutions, with schools, and other settings of Jewish teaching throughout the world. In our own way we're making an effort to produce a little intellectual capital; to generate some ideas, curricula, thoughts, directions, and policy statements, in order to impact on Jewish education. Our most recent foray in that field is the publication of a volume entitled *Wisdom From All My Teachers*, and by coincidence or not a number of our speakers today have articles featured in that book. It's a collection of twenty essays on some challenges and initiatives in contemporary Jewish education.

We chose to call today's conference "Creative Spirituality." Spirituality is a slippery term. For too long in Jewish education spirituality has been used as the opposite of intellectualism. When in fact, spirituality is not the opposite of intellectualism. Spirituality is no more the opposite of intellectualism than my left leg is the opposite of my right leg. The opposite of my left leg is falling down. But my left and right legs, if working in harmony, enable me to get places. The opposite of spirituality is in fact being unengaged, being unenergized—blandness and void. Our notion, as actually outlined in Rabbi Brovender's article in our book,¹ which I know

¹ Chaim Brovender, "Towards *Ahavat Hashem*: Art and the Religious Experience" in *Wisdom From All My Teachers: Challenges and Initiatives in Contemporary Torah Education*, ed. Jeffrey Saks and Susan Handelman (Jerusalem: ATID/Urim, 2003), pp. 49-73. Download at: www.atid.org/TowardsAhavatHashem.pdf.

that many of you have read or downloaded from the internet, is that art, creativity, being engaged--in this case by the visual, although by many other forms of media as well, is a way to energize, is an avenue into the goals of Torah and Jewish education which we're not always able to utilize. And that is, I would say, basically our agenda for today's conference. To look from different perspectives, from the tradition, from within the artist's studio, from within the schoolhouse, on ways to make this happen.

There is a lot that we are not going to do today. Perhaps I'm speaking to the converted because after all you chose to come here and have demonstrated an interest in this topic, but you may be aware, from the random conversation in the hallway with a colleague, that not everyone who is committed to Jewish education fully understands or appreciates or even agrees with some of the ideas that will be put forth today. The topic is vast, and there are many questions that might be asked about "well, how come we're not talking about this, that, or the other thing?," each one a worthy issue or topic and perhaps we'll have an opportunity to address them at future meetings. We thought to open an ongoing discussion with some of you, and with those that will come after, to try to think together--teachers, administrators, artists, concerned laypersons, parents, students--on ways to more properly and effectively energize the arts to be an avenue to succeed further in Jewish education. It was therefore very natural that we turned to and found a willing partner in the Yeshiva University Museum, who has agreed to co-sponsor and host today's event. And I am very pleased to ask Mrs. Sylvia Herskowitz, director of Yeshiva University Museum to say a few words.

Mrs. Sylvia Herskowitz:

I'm very pleased to welcome this room of kindred spirits to Yeshiva University Museum, which has been teaching Jewish history and culture through art for thirty years.

In our lives today, music and art, especially Jewish music and Jewish art, have found the lowest common denominator. The infinite reproductions of sound and image have trivialized and bowdlerized so much of our Jewish culture and made it pedestrian. Our mission is to offer audiences a genuine experience, a one-on-one experience with beauty, with the ethos and aesthetics of past generations as much as with the talents of contemporary artists, striving to express their Jewish identity. In

1935, the sainted Rav Avraham Yitzhak Kook z"tl spent some time in London, where he visited The National Gallery, and this is what he said:

The paintings that I loved the most were those of Rembrandt. In my opinion, Rembrandt was a saint. When I first saw Rembrandt's paintings, they reminded me of the rabbinic statement about the creation of light. When God created the light, it was so strong and luminous that it was possible to see from one end of the world to the other, and God feared that the wicked would make use of it. What did He do? He secreted it for the righteous in the World to Come. But from time to time, there are great men whom God blesses with a vision of that hidden light. I believe that Rembrandt was one of them. And the light in his paintings is that light which God created on Genesis Day.

There is also another quote that I want to read to you. I'm very fond of it, and it is all about how in everything that we do, the art is really a reflection of the art with which Hashem created the world. There is a wonderful paragraph in *Akeidat Yitzhak*, by Rabbi Isaac Arama, who wrote in 1425:

For the Holy One Blessed Be He could have created man without the sky and the stars, without all of those plants and animals, but this would not have been such a fine and exquisite existence as it is the way it was created. And He, Blessed Be He, chose to make it the most perfect and exquisite existence.

Do you need anything more to demonstrate that art is at the soul of Jewish tradition and practice?

Rabbi Saks:

For over a quarter century, Rabbi Norman Lamm, as president of Yeshiva University, stood at the leadership of that great institution, which has meant so much to so many of us, myself included, and has shaped generations of leadership for the Jewish community. But he has also, somehow miraculously, despite the heavy burden of leadership, consistently produced intellectual leadership as well. By being involved in the arena of ideas. Personally, it has meant a great deal to me, and to ATID as an institution that Rabbi Lamm has taken an interest in our work at ATID. We were very pleased that he was able to be with us this morning to help us frame the issue or the challenge of the arts, Torah, Jewish education, and to help put focus to the deliberations that we will be engaging in throughout the rest of the day.

Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm:

When Rabbi Brovender and Rabbi Saks invited me to address you, on the issue of Jewish art, I thought to myself, “what is its origin?” And I'm not concerned now so much with the ancient origins, going back to biblical times, as I am with things that happened closer to our time, because chronology plays a role in ideology. The closer you are to an ideological situation, the more influence it has over you. And being involved, from an academic point of view, with the era of the *hassidim* and their opponents, I asked myself, is there anything in this collision of ideas that reflects upon the value of Jewish art? And I think that it certainly does. It occurs to me that there was a much greater receptivity for art, graphics, music, and all of the creative arts by the hassidic world than by the mitnagdic world--and this requires analysis and understanding. For instance, I've seen paintings by Lubavitch *hassidim*, and I am sure that there are others of that type too. It is almost inconceivable for me to say that I have seen paintings by *Litvishe yeshiva* students, by the mitnagdic world, which has many things to its credit; Jewish art, I believe, is not essentially one of them. You may find one here, one there, but in general, the attitude was not as receptive and friendly and as compassionate with art as was the hassidic world. In discussing this briefly with Rabbi Brovender, he suggested that because in the mitnagdic world, the chief value was Torah study and the study of Torah is required to fill all of one's available hours, therefore you have no time for anything else but Torah. I think that there is a great deal of truth in it. But I believe there is something more than that, there's something spiritually significant in the difference.

I remember an incident in my own life that made a profound impact upon me, or affect upon me. I was living then in Crown Heights (this has nothing to do with Lubavitch) and my parents sent *shalach manos* for Purim to the rabbi of the synagogue where we *davened*. It was a *hassideshe shul*, led by the Kozhnitzer Rebbe *zt"l*, a wonderful, wonderful human being. So I came there Purim morning after the services were over, and I knocked on the door and came in, and the rebbetzin welcomed me very warmly, and while she is exchanging some usual greetings, conventional talk, I hear the most beautiful violin playing. The sounds just filled the place with a certain sweetness, and I asked “who is playing the violin?” She shrugged her shoulders and answered, “The Rebbe. Who else?” The Kozhnitzer Rebbe was playing the violin and I said: “Does he do it often?” She said, “Of course.” If I'm not mistaken, and I may be wrong, when I was much younger, living in Williamsburg, I

remember that the then Stolin-Karliner Rebbe also played the fiddle. So there is a certain lack of surprise of that happening amongst *hassidim*. I would be shocked to learn that any member of the Soloveitchik family played an instrument. It's not in their makeup, in their spiritual makeup, to do that. Now as to the hassidic view of music, of singing for instance, of song: I remember as a child, hearing in the name of one of the well known Rebbes (maybe it was the Modjister), who said that in drawing an ideological picture of Heaven, if you want to have values placed side by side, there are different *heikhalot*, different rooms, different chambers, different palaces, if you will. And that the *heikhal ha-shirah* (song) was right next to the *heikhal ha-tshuvah* (repentance). Which means, that *shirah* has a definite spiritual value, if only as a prerequisite, as necessary for *teshuvah*--which is of course a prime religious experience.

Yet I remember an article written, probably in the 1950s, by a Hebrew poet named Yaakov Kahan (I believe that was his name), entitled "Lithuania My Birthplace," describing the typical *Litvak*, the classical Lithuanian Jew. He says that in Lithuania the only expression of joy through music came at a happy occasion such as wedding when everyone would sing the song "*Barukh Elokeinu she-Boranu Likhvodo*." Anyone familiar with this song knows that it's really a dirge. It's a very sorrowful, mournful kind of melody--there is no hand clapping, there is no dancing to it. That was the extent he said, of song in the Lithuanian world.

So the question is why so? As I mentioned, there's the overriding value of *Talmud Torah*. The mitnagdic world placed a greater value on Torah study than the *hassidic* world did. (Although the usual prejudice that *hassidim* downplayed *Talmud Torah*, is not entirely true. It's simply that they did not give it the special, extraordinary, emphasis that the Lithuanian world did.) I think there are also other reasons. *Hassidim* generally valued emotions, and the emotional life, more than the Lithuanian world did. The Lithuanian world was more antiseptic, more self-repressive, when it came to the expression of emotions, whereas the *hassidim* were much more open. There was dancing at many occasions, certainly singing at all times. The emotions were expressed, and it's so obvious one needn't go into it in any great detail.

From an ideological and intellectual point of view, something that I pointed out in my book on *Torah Umadda*,² *hassidim* believed that the service of God should not be restricted to the performance of *mitzvot*. Serving God through the performance of the commandments is called *avodah be-ruhniut*--to serve God with spirituality. Not the same definition of “spirituality” that we hear about today, but I believe you know what I mean, that you are following a religious commandment. They said there is also such a thing as *avodah be-gashmiut*, that you can serve God in physical ways. By simply doing your job and bearing in mind that you are doing it in an honorable way for the sake of God (and not merely for the sake of God in the sense that you'll earn enough money to be able to learn Torah), that itself is a service of God. And some radical expressions of hassidic literature that doing business or any of the corporeal physical things we do during the day, can be as important as *tallit* and *tefillin*. Why? If you do it with the right attitude, then you dedicate this to the Almighty. So if you do it that way, then the argument should be, at least I have tried to make it, that there is also *avodat Hashem be-sikhliut*--you can serve God with the mind, with intellectual achievement. There is no reason not to say, that in that case, you can serve God in any way, including the expression of aesthetics and art. So, it would hold true that if one pursues his or her aesthetics in a religious framework, and with that kind of conviction, that too is a holy act, an act that Judaism considers sacred and worthy. So, what this has to do with the curriculum and education, I leave to educators in further detail, but I certainly think there is something worthy of considering in our times when art does play such a role, and when no aspect of a human personality should be excluded from the purview of Judaism.

Rabbi Saks:

The remainder of this first session, which again is dedicated to putting forth ideas regarding the rabbinic tradition on the topic, and the promise or potential of art to Torah and Jewish education, will be dedicated to a presentation by Rabbi Chaim Brovender, and a response by way of presentation from Rabbi Shalom Carmy.

Rabbi Brovender, as is well known, has long been associated with the yeshivah that he founded, over 30 years ago, Yeshivat HaMivtar in Efrat, as well as Michlelet Bruria (today known as Midreshet Lindenbaum), in Jerusalem, and five

² Norman Lamm, *Torah Umadda: The Encounter of Religious Learning and Worldly*

years ago, he put his shoulder to the task of founding an institute that would attempt to ameliorate some of the problems in Jewish education worldwide, and that of course is ATID. And together with a team of some of the leading Jewish educators in Israel, both from the world of *yeshivot*, as well as schools, as well as the universities, we have attempted to do exactly that. Rabbi Brovender is the president, and driving visionary behind what we do at ATID. And as many people have commented to me, many people have been surprised to discover, largely through the article that he authored for our book, “He's interested in art?!” Yes, he's interested in art. He's interested in the way that art helps us navigate the shoals of *avodat Hashem*, of serving God. And he's interested in the way that art might be a springboard, a trigger, towards the great prime religious goal, of *ahavat Hashem*, of loving God. That was the topic of his article, and it is the topic of his talk this morning.

Rabbi Brovender will be followed by Rabbi Shalom Carmy, who has been influential in helping shape many, many students who have gone on to distinguished careers in Jewish education, both here and in Israel. Rabbi Carmy teaches Jewish studies and philosophy at Yeshiva University. And most recently edited a volume entitled *Worship of the Heart*,³ by Rabbi Soloveitchik, a collection of essays on the topic of Jewish prayer. His response will use as its springboard the sections of that book dealing with aesthetics and serving God.

Rabbi Chaim Brovender:

Before I undertake to continue the discussion about art, spirituality, and Torah education, I would like to make several autobiographical points. First, I am definitely not an artist. In fact, I could probably say that I've never really exhibited any aptitude for drawing or painting. On the other hand, my grandchildren enjoy very much when I join them on the floor in scribbling on large pieces of paper--but they're my only audience, so far. Secondly, I think it's important that you know that I have spent my life teaching Torah. And when I say that I spent my life teaching Torah, I mean that I spent my life teaching the *text* of Torah. I have taught young people for many years, and I am full of gratitude to Hashem for this opportunity. As for my own studies in college (I went to Yeshiva College), I focused on math and physics. I don't recall

Knowledge in the Jewish Tradition (Northvale, NJ: Aronson, 1990).

³ Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Worship of the Heart: Essays on Jewish Prayer*, ed. Shalom Carmy (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 2003).

studying art at all. I studied math and physics in the Yeshiva University graduate school, until, contrary to my parents inclination, Torah got the better of me. I imagine that I was interested enough to go to a museum from time to time, and to read an occasional article on or biography of a good artist. It may even be that coming from Brooklyn I felt a little intimidated by people who lived in Manhattan, where the museums were better, so my actual interest in art started a little bit late in my life.

After the Six Day War (I had gone on *Aliyah* in 1965) I had the opportunity to go on a trip to Holland. And when I was in Amsterdam, in Leiden, I learned something about a painting that I will show you today. The painting is Rembrandt's "The Night Watch," and it is hung in a very special way at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, and the way it's hung makes the picture even more overwhelming than it is. When I saw that painting, in that room, in that museum, I thought at that time, that there might really be something here worth investigating, and more importantly, something for me here personally. At the time, I did not know what Rav Kook had said about Rembrandt. But we will look at it together a little bit later, and perhaps see if Rav Kook had something to say to all of us.

I have to stress again and again, that in the competition in my world, for me, between *Talmud Torah* and any other Jewish event, for me, Torah is primary. It gives me more than anything else. However, I'm aware of the fact that the description of Torah study given in *Nefesh ha-Hayyim* is not achievable for everybody. It's not true that we can send our children to school, and put them in front of a *Gemara*, or have a teacher if he is well versed, or well placed, or well thought of, that our children will necessarily find in the act of *Talmud Torah*, what we like, hope, and are interested in them finding. We are not always able to see Talmud, or learning Torah generally, as the source of a connection to the more spiritual world and to God.

In Israel, as you know, they do studies, and it has been claimed in fact that there are places, religious schools, where the study of Talmud is actually despised. I recall that Rabbi Steinsaltz once remarked at an ATID conference that when he was in university he, too, studied math and physics. You know, math and physics have their devastating aspects to them, not everybody is able to conquer the mountain presented by mathematics. There were some students who did well, and there were many students who were not able to cope with the rigors of the hard sciences. He remarked that he never heard anyone, rejected by physics, who said that they *hated* physics. But he does hear people say that they hate learning Torah--they find it difficult, and he

didn't understand why this was the case. I would suggest that the hope in studying Torah is much greater than the hope in studying physics or mathematics. And therefore the failure in *Talmud Torah* is much greater than the failure might be in math and physics. Because we place a tremendous amount of hope, in the possibility that the student will become close to his inner feelings, his spirit, his God, through *Talmud Torah*. And when the student rejects that opportunity, when he or she is unable to accept that responsibility, where he doesn't see *Talmud Torah* as leading in any particular direction, then the disappointment is tremendous.

What I am interested in talking about today, is whether art can help us teach our children that there is a God in the world, and that being closer to that God might be important, valuable, positive, and actually something that the spirit of every student demands.

Let me say a few words about beauty. Even though you know that beauty and aesthetics are topics that have been given over to philosophers, we non-philosophers can also say something. In my article I pointed out that everybody seems to have a sense of beauty. And we can often agree about one thing or another, inspiring us with its beauty. Again, the Scottish highlands or a wondrous sunset. Who can look upon those Scottish highlands and not be impressed? Who has not seen a sunset? Who has not stood Friday afternoon, in *Eretz Yisrael*, in Tzfat, at a weekend, at a *shabbaton*, and watched the sunset and say: "It's just beautiful" or "It's wonderful"? We have that capacity; we all stand amazed and agree that there is rare beauty in the created world. But it's not so clear to us, what it is about those events that make us react to beauty. What is it that makes us agree that they are, in fact, beautiful? Skeptics might say, and we're all a little skeptical (we're Jewish after all!), that we are trained to react to certain kinds of stimuli, and relate that reaction to beauty. We're sort of told, "Oh, that's called beautiful," and then you know, you don't want to be left out, so you say: "Ah, such a beautiful sunset."

However, I think most agree, that the universality of the reaction demands further clarification, and I will venture to offer a definition. Beauty always strikes us as something unique. A one-time event, never before seen, with no expectation that it will return and repeat itself. The sunset, is the only sunset that I have ever seen, as beautiful as the one I am looking at. I have seen others, but not one quite like the one that I am looking at. When beauty makes itself known to us, we always have the feeling that we cannot miss out on its presence, and certainly, cannot expect it to

repeat itself. That sunset, which some scientist might say is a daily occurrence, is noteworthy, because it will never be repeated again.

What of the Scottish highlands? They are, after all, always there, always impressive. Do they fit the definition that I have offered of beauty? In this case, beauty is created in part by the limitations of man. You see, when we look at the Scottish highlands, we can't see it all at once. As the Highlands recede from view, they are less impressive than the ones we are standing next to. In fact, every time you look at the grand event, you are looking elsewhere, at a different point, at a different aspect of things. Even if you think you are standing in the same place, your vision changes a bit. The beauty of the vision is a function of its newness. The beauty of the Highlands for me is that they are always new, they are always different. Once they turn into the same thing, and once they repeat themselves, and once you say to your friends on the tour: "Oh, yes, I've seen this already," then in fact, you probably are not seeing it at all. We look at different parts, different slices of reality, but the vision will call upon different reactions. Beauty is that which we never tire of, which we never see enough of, because it is always new, and always different. So the sunset is the first sunset since creation. And the Scottish highlands have just been made by the Almighty for me to gaze upon. It's important that this definition be considered. Beauty is something that is new. It's a first time experience. It's the ability to look and to see things for the first time. And so, we never tire of the sunset, and we never have our fill of the Scottish highlands.

Before I went to Israel in 1965 I had never been there before. The summer before we left on *Aliyah* we had met this Israeli couple and they told us: "Well, you can't go to Israel, unless you take a tour of America first." Apparently, this was very much in style with Israelis. It never occurred to me that in order to go on *Aliyah*, I'd have to go first to Yellowstone Park. But, in any event, since we were young and naïve, my wife and I (she was young, I was naïve) decided to take them up on this proposition, and we traveled with them around America. So, as I said, I never had been to Israel before, and I didn't know much about the modern names of the geographical places. Our friends thought that the way you do it is you get into a car, you drive a thousand miles, you get out of your car, you take pictures, you go back into the car, drive another thousand miles, and you just keep doing that. Everyplace we went the Israelis would say: "*zeh yesh lanu ba-aretz*"--we've got this in Israel, it's the same thing. Mitzpeh Ramon, and Metula, etc., we've got all this stuff. I was

overwhelmed at my fortunate choice of going on *Aliyah*, because Israel is a very small country, and they had everything that we had in America, which is such a big, big place. But when we came to the Grand Canyon, we were on top looking down on the Colorado River, I remember the amazement on the face of my Israeli friend, who said to me: “*zeh ain lanu*”—we *don't* have this. You see, people, have to see something that is so special, that is so different, that is so unique, that they understand that they are standing before beauty.

The uniqueness that belongs to beauty is akin to truth. Truth is something that has this variable aspect to it. It is wondrous, when you see it, you are overwhelmed by it, and it's never exhausted, there's always more truth, a new truth, something that has to be discovered. The Rambam [*Hil. Teshuvah* 10:2] taught us that we are able to perceive this truth, the “*mipnei she-hu emet*”—*because* it is true. So that learning Torah, watching God's word, looking at God's world, is about beauty and truth, in the sense that they have to renew themselves, they have to be new for us all the time. It has to be a new vision, not different, but new, whenever we approach.

If we are talking about *Litvaks*, everybody knows, that learning Torah is not a process only of absorbing material, or learning information, but it's the newness of the encounter which makes learning Torah so important and impressive an enterprise. So we look at the Scottish highlands and we see something new, and we learn Torah and we see something new, and the beauty and the truth of both of these things impress us. And since they are related to each other in some way, I would imagine that beauty and truth can enhance each other. And that if I don't see the truth in *Talmud Torah*, maybe looking at the truth in beauty will help me to get over the hurdle of *Talmud Torah*.

I want to look at several pictures. And I want you to remember that there are different ways of looking at a work of art. There is a scholarly, or academic way. We find that we are interested in the background and the causal factors that led to certain aspects of the work. What were the pressures? What were the incentives? What were the philosophical, social, political issues of the day, and how did they influence the artist? How was the concern of the method chosen by the artist influenced by the time in which he lived? These questions can be asked about the subject of the painting, and by the way in which the artist put paint to canvas. And also about those who may have supported the artist and provided him with the sustenance he needed. Alternatively, who did the artist need to please? What price did he have to pay in order to work at the enterprise which he so loved? These are questions at the heart of critical and

scholarly analysis. And it is important. But today I 'm not interested in all of that. There is another sort of study of art. And to explain it, I think we can again compare the study of art to the study of Torah.

We have developed different ways of looking at the Torah. Some ways are more analytical. They tend to put the Torah into an operating theater and dissect it in one way or another. And it may be that these different methodologies have value of a sort, and yield benefits. However, there is nothing that compares in the final analysis to being able to stand in wonder at the text of the Torah. And so that even though the scholarly effort, the scholarly enterprise is important and may be valuable, ultimately, it has to lead us to a new sense of wonderment about the Torah itself. And therefore, art I think can also be studied as an object of wonder. We can dissect, and rearrange, and probe, but eventually, it all comes down to what we *see*.

Let us look at two works together, and imagine that we traveled the long road, that we all know everything there is to know about Rembrandt and his “Night Watch.” How he worked, how he created the paintings, how he mixed the colors, what his great contributions to the enterprise of art were. Let us imagine that we know all of that. Having gone the long road together, we pause to take stock, and look at the painting one more time. “The Night Watch” is a painting which is very dark. Actually when it was first painted, it was painted in bright light, but later covered in dark varnish. We heard that Rembrandt’s understanding of light impressed Rav Kook. The painting was a little bigger than it is today, because part of it, on the left side, has suffered some damage. The proper name of the painting is actually “The Militia Company of Captain Frans Banning Cocq,” who is the person who is actually being painted.



Fig. 1
 Rembrandt, "The Night Watch" or "The Militia Company of Captain Frans Banning Cocq"
 Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (1642)

Now if you stand and look at this painting, it looks a bit complicated, and it is very hard to imagine there is any purpose to it at all. The central figure is the person who is in charge, Captain Frans Banning Cocq. To his left is his lieutenant (who has an unpronounceable Dutch name). Of course, the Captain is dressed in dark clothing, and the lieutenant is bright. Of course, that has some meaning, which is something that Rav Kook noticed. Now this group is a private little army. I guess they are getting together, ready to go out, to do whatever they do with these private armies. You have to understand, that there is no great idea that is represented here. Try as you may, the honest critics have admitted they don't know what it is that Rembrandt was painting. Of course, it's very interesting to see the clothing that was worn in Amsterdam at that time, and to talk about whether hassidic garb does look like that, or doesn't look like that. You know, we have this kind of worldliness about things of that time. But you see, if you look carefully, to the Captain's right, there is a little girl? What is she

doing there? It's hard to imagine that she was in the army. Let's say that in real life she's going home, taking some milk from a neighbor back to her house. And she got stuck in the group. Why would that interest Rembrandt? Or, then, you have the figure (on painting's far right) with the drum. What is it that he's doing there?

Actually it is interesting to look at this painting and compare it in your mind to group pictures we're familiar with—like from weddings. The main thing about group pictures that we are used to is that everybody looks extremely unhappy. We had pictures like this from my *bar mitzvah*. Everyone was standing in a straight line, looking at the camera. Now look at Rembrandt: are they looking at the “camera”? Are they all doing the same thing?

When I look at this picture there is a message about humanity. It's a very big picture, about five meters by four meters, and it takes up a tremendous amount of space in the hall in which it is hung. Rembrandt is giving us a message. He is explaining to us that even people who are doing the same thing, who are in the military, which is a situation in which people often lose their identities; they follow the leader, they take instruction and direction. So, Rembrandt says that even at that moment, firstly everybody, this person over here, you see him, he has a face, doesn't he? It is a face that is meaningful. He has an expression; he has an identity in the picture; he is not part of the crowd. Each figure is not quite like anyone else.

Rembrandt is showing us that you can paint a still life but you cannot *silence* life. Every person in this group is an individual; the artist wants us to reach out to them and be with them in some way or other, asks us to protect his identity, his independence. It is a great statement about freedom that even in this situation, the situation of the militia company where they are preparing, I think, to go out and defend the city, they are each of them a story, and this was Rembrandt's contribution to portraiture--not the ability to copy the facial features or the look of a person that existed at his time, but to give him/her an identity, a sense that every single person has some sort of story that is being told.

Now certainly, I wouldn't disagree with Rav Kook, but Rembrandt had the capacity in his way to teach us a lesson that I think is worth learning. Rembrandt achieved a certain level of perfection in his group paintings. You know that perfection is a problem, because once you are perfect, or once you are perceived as being the best that could be, then all other artists feel the need to imitate. All of a sudden Rembrandt was a “school” of painting, and his students, and their disciples, would vie

with each other to “do Rembrandt” as good as Rembrandt himself. And like the birth of all genres, this enterprise engendered a series of rules that had to be adhered to. I don’t think that this is unique, or limited to art *per se*, but it is certainly noticeable in the history of painting.

By way of comparison, the expressionist painters, of more modern times, had to find new ways to depict their relationship to what they were trying to paint, and they focused on emotions, on the inner experience. In order to do that they had to jettison the formalism that was created by French and Dutch Academies and devise new ways to depict the scene. Those of you who are professionals know what I am talking about--I imagine a lot better than I know what I am talking about. So that the abstract expressionism movement in which people painted without referring to people, to noticeable kinds of images, in part was the result of the fact that Rembrandt, his students and his student’s students, etc., did that so well--there was no room left for people to express themselves.

I would like you to look at a painting by the Jewish painter Mark Rothko, who had some things to say about his own art. I would like to quote two things that he said. He said: “If you ignored representation you created greater clarity. The elimination of all obstacles between the painter and the idea, between the idea and the observer achieved clarity, a clarity which is to be understood.” That is, Rothko felt that “I have an idea. I understand something, you see this painting, and this painting is a color, a rectangle, another rectangle on top of some other color.” Rothko himself said that he poured his *neshamah* (soul) out into these pictures. He uses a shape, another rectangle, and he uses colors and a color on a color. Now, there is no way that anybody can associate anything in this picture with an idea in the way we can see in the Rembrandt. The Rembrandt picture talked about the human condition in a very direct kind of way. Rothko talks about the human condition in a different way. Rothko thinks that involving us with people and their feelings and emotions is not sufficient. We have to think about those feelings and emotions on their own terms.



Mark Rothko, "Untitled"
National Gallery of Art (1949)



Mark Rothko, "No. 10"
Oil on canvas, 229.2 x 146.4 cm
The Museum of Modern Art (1950)

Now, I realize that this is more difficult, but I would say that if a person would gaze upon this painting for some time and would be able to find in it a notion that attracted them, some sort of truth which made this all sensible, why an artist would be willing to invest so much of himself in this kind of enterprise, then I think again that educationally or as educators we will have found a new way of entry into the soul of the students.

The struggle with the ideas of art is accessible to those whose visual perception is well developed. They will learn to understand that truth is not simple even when you are holding on to the Torah. That comparing the enterprise of artists throughout the years who, after all, were simply trying to express what they understood, what they felt and their own humanity, enables us to connect to the fact that we have this ability as we stand in wonderful beauty and as we stand in amazement before the "Night Watch," as we find ourselves compelled for further investigation of the Rothko that we are looking at now. I think we can conclude that there are various avenues, not to truth--the truth is in the Torah--but people have to

develop within themselves the capacity to say, “I can connect to the truth, I have some ability within me that enables me to connect to the truth of the Torah and to relate to God in this world.”

“Rabbi Soloveitchik, Art and Aesthetics”

Rabbi Shalom Carmy:

Philosophical background: Understanding Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik z"l and aesthetics requires a digression through the history of philosophy. The Rav was steeped in modern and ancient philosophy, and we simply can't understand what he means without having some idea of the sources that he is utilizing. There are two thinkers in particular whose views on the word and concept of the aesthetic I want to sketch. We can then try to derive general views from the Rav's thinking and note how it is exemplified in its work on *tefillah* (prayer).

The first is Immanuel Kant (died 1804). His work on aesthetics, the *Critique of Judgment*, was produced late in his life. What is pertinent to the Rav on this subject? First, for Kant, aesthetic judgment, making judgments about beauty is differentiated sharply from scientific knowledge and from ethical knowledge. Science is in a way coercive. Pure reason (=scientific reasoning), which Kant dealt with in his first critique, can only work in one way. There is one unavoidable truth to arrive at. Similarly with ethics, if you start out with Kant's premises, which he would claim are the only rational ones to start from, there is one moral theory that is entailed.

In aesthetics Kant is impressed by the sense of agreement, where people coalesce around judgments of beauty, despite the lack of a coercive framework. Artistic judgment is inherently connected with freedom, with spontaneity. How we get from spontaneity to some kind of agreements in art is neither my concern right now, nor is it the Rav's concern either. But what the first half of the *Critique of Judgment* is about is the relationship of freedom and spontaneity to some kind of shared concept. Art and aesthetic judgment deal with the realm of freedom, which is inherently different from the coerciveness of knowledge or ethics. Kant was not very much interested in art himself, nor was he very perceptive in addressing a piece of music or a work of art. Kant was fascinated by the peculiar way art and beauty manifest human freedom. Freedom is more important for Kant than art. One distinction in the *Critique of Judgment* is also very important for the Rav. The

beautiful, for Kant, is characterized by harmony. In several sections of the *Critique of Judgment* Kant speaks about the sublime. The sublime is aesthetically very important yet in certain respects it is the very opposite of the beautiful. Beauty is harmonious; it is well proportioned. With the sublime one is overwhelmed by the object, crushed by the object: the majesty of the Alps; a storm at sea. Think of a human portrait that is not well proportioned, perhaps it is even grotesque, yet it is fascinating and repelling at the same time. Often the Rav uses the word "exalted" where most English writers (e.g. Burke) or translators say sublime.

So from Kant the Rav derives the stress on aesthetics as the manifestation of freedom, not bound by law and the awareness of the sublime as a central facet of aesthetic experience.

The second important thinker for the Rav was the Danish writer Søren Kierkegaard (died 1855). His orientation was strongly religious; he was a passionate religious writer. Kierkegaard's authorship differentiates so-called stages of existence. Individual types are defined by their choice of a certain way of living; much of Kierkegaard's philosophical work is to spell out the concrete implications of that way of life. The primary stages are: the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious.

The aesthetic is characterized by a desire for pleasure. The aesthete is not interested in moral obligation. Ethics is defined by a sense of obligation; it is universal; the ethical personality wants to recognize and fulfill its duty. When a building is on fire, the Rav says, and I have saved five children from the flames, I cannot opt out of saving more since it has become tedious (been there, done that). With an ethical obligation, boredom is not a factor. With a life that revolves around the aesthetic, whether something is interesting or pleasing is central. The Rav often speaks about this duality of the aesthetic and the ethical and Kierkegaard's third category, the religious. In this context, the term "aesthetic" often has a pejorative connotation. The source of sin according to the Rambam's *Guide of the Perplexed* (I:2) is choosing the pleasant and the unpleasant as categories of judgment instead of truth and falsehood. The Rambam's aesthete, then, is a rebel against the ethical, who refuses to accept the responsibility of the ethical.

Kierkegaard's aesthete embarks on a road that leads to self-contradiction and to despair. In Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*, volume 1, the aesthetic outlook, which is allowed to speak at great length for five hundred pages, ultimately founders on boredom. No matter how clever you are in arranging your pleasures, it's never

enough. No matter how clever you are, and Kierkegaard's aesthete is extremely clever, you devalue other people, because they are only means to your entertainment.

So when you find pejorative remarks in the Rav's writing about the aesthetic--that is where it is coming from. In the month since Rabbi Brovender's article was published there has been some exchange on the Internet in which people have attacked the notion of art or aesthetics having any place in Judaism.⁴ They have latched onto Rabbi Soloveitchik's supposedly negative statements about the aesthetic. Pointing out privately that the Rav is using the word "aesthetic" in a technical, quite specialized sense, has earned me nasty reactions. They want the word to mean what they want it to mean, and are not willing to let it mean what the Rav wanted it to mean.

One more comment about Kierkegaard before we begin talking about the Rav. If you contrast the aesthetic on the one hand, and the ethical and the religious on the other hand, then the aesthetic is sinful and inferior. At a more complex level, Kierkegaard's aesthete, in certain respects, has more in common with the religious than the ethical does, because the ethical is defined purely in terms of universal ethical obligations. The aesthetic, as Rabbi Brovender pointed out, is connected with immediacy, if I can use Kierkegaard's terms. It is more spontaneous and expresses uniqueness. Religion has much in common with ethics, but ultimately it concerns the unique relationship to God and even to other human beings. It is more than simply doing your duty. Thus the highest realm of religious activity, relationship to God and to other human beings within a religious framework, may have more in common with this aesthetic orientation than it would have with a purely Kantian kind of ethics. This is pertinent not for Kierkegaard but also for the Rav.

Aesthetics in the Rav's Terminology

Now let us turn to our subject--the Rav. I want to make two generalizations about where the Rav places aesthetics. Like Kierkegaard, the Rav is preoccupied with human nature. It is human nature to be attracted to the kind of immediate, unique, spontaneous relationship Rabbi Brovender spoke about; it is human to respond to the beautiful and to the sublime.

⁴ Archived at: <http://www.lookstein.org/lookjed/read.php?f=1&i=3127&t=3114>

Understanding human beings takes work; there is no way around that. We gain insight into the way Judaism conceives of human nature by studying *halakhah* and by studying Torah, but much of our understanding requires a reflective encounter with human beings as they are. At a conference on art one may presume that almost everybody here encounters beauty and sublimity in various arts, novels, poetry, music, sculpture, plastic art and so forth. This how we are, willy-nilly. We must do justice to these facts about ourselves.

Secondly, the Rav is not just willing to consider the aesthetic as a psychological phenomenon. For the Rav, if it part of human nature, it has a legitimate place in life. To use one of Kierkegaard's phrases, religion does not annihilate the aesthetic, but merely dethrones it. Art and appreciation of beauty and sublimity have their place, even if it is a limited place.

The Rav would further maintain that a certain kind of aesthetic apprehension of the world is essential for *avodat Hashem*. To be deaf to the aesthetic is to deny an essential aspect of experience. Even when it comes to Torah study, and despite all the Rav wrote in *Ish haHalakhah*--where he subsumes *limmud Torah* under a scientific model, like physics--the creative aspects of learning involve a certain kind of intuition, spontaneity, subjectivity engaged in the attempt to grasp phenomena. Indeed it is true about science as well; the great mathematicians are great by virtue of their imagination. (The famous novelist Robert Musil started out as a mathematician, and one of his professors said, "Musil didn't have enough imagination to make a first rate mathematician, that's why he had to become a novelist." The Einstein who played the violin was the Einstein who re-imagined the physical world.) The Rav's perception of *lomdus* envisions creativity along similar lines.

A few years ago I wrote an article, contrasting my idea of *lomdus* with more prosaic ways of learning. The article was called "Polyphonic Diversity and Military Music."⁵ The image of polyphonic diversity was not mine; I got it from *Arukh haShulhan*, who, in describing the culture of *mahloket*, the complexity of halakhic discourse, compares it to polyphonic music. We have different voices, but the voices create one unity. I set that up as an ideal as opposed to a more prosaic approach: military music isn't supposed to be polyphonic, it is simply supposed to get everybody to march, equal speed, equal direction, to get from one place to another place in a set

⁵ Shalom Carmy, "Polyphonic Diversity and Military Music," *Tradition* 34:4 (2000), pp. 6-32.

time.

After I wrote the article, and after its first publication, I discovered that an Anabaptist group in Germany in the eighteenth century actually objected to the music of Bach on the grounds it was too aesthetic. All those different voices combining, confusing people--it was not "*yeshivish*." It didn't give people the uniform direction they wanted. They objected to it on that ground. But the Rav's outlook is one that values creativity. In many areas of *halakhah* everybody does march the same way--everybody holds the same *lulav*. When it comes to learning or to prayer every person brings own capacities and distinctive tone.

In the book on prayer, the Rav spent a great deal of time talking about these categories of the aesthetic and the ethical and the purposeful. Let me read you one passage, so you won't think I am making it up:

If we speak of experiencing God...we cannot consider the ethical or noetical act as capable of engendering such an experience. For the ethical and the cognitive, the rendezvous with the Creator is a quiet, sedate one. There is, in fact, no actual meeting. A real encounter is never achieved by the scientist or the ethicist. For them there is only, if we may use a metaphor of Yehudah Halevi [cf. *Kuzari* 1:109], an exchange of epistles; the contact is established in an impersonal way, through correspondence. The medium through which this type of contact is attained is the natural law and moral norm.

Only the aesthetic experience, if linked with the idea of the exalted, if linked with the idea of the exalted, may bring man directly into contact with God, living, personal and intimate. Only through coming in contact with the beautiful and exalted may one apprehend God instead of comprehending Him, feel the embrace of the Creator, and the warm breath of infinity hovering over a finite creation. The reason for immediacy and impact implicit in the aesthetic experience is its sensuous character.⁶

I could quote more. I hope this is enough to make you reconsider the stereotype of the cold Litvak. This Litvak read Kant and Kierkegaard and the *Kuzari*. And he knew what prayer means and how to pray. The discussion has been sketchy. I have said nothing about applications to specific disciplines. Most of the Rav's remarks pertain to natural beauty rather than to the arts. It is a great deficiency of contemporary aesthetic philosophy that it is almost exclusively about art and music and poetry and other human productions. We have lost sight of the fact that experience of a sunset, the natural experience of beauty, is also an important part, perhaps even a primary part of our aesthetic apprehension.

⁶ *Worship of the Heart*, p. 59.

I have not made any distinction among the various aspects of art education, art as an aspect of history, where understanding Rembrandt is as important as understanding Descartes or anything else going on in the seventeenth century. I have said nothing about the knowledge of artistic technique or the evaluation of various works of art or the work of active creation, be it art or craft. I have said nothing at all about that and there is a great deal that can be said about it. I have said nothing about how these conceptions operate within a framework of Jewish life. Clearly, for the Rav, there is an aesthetic dimension to, take one example, *Kabbalat Shabbat*. Just listen to the words: "He is wrapped in a cloud like fog, His throne is built upon justice. Fire goes before Him, His lightning illuminates the universe, the earth trembles" [Psalms 97:2-4]. This is the sublime. It is a secondary matter whether one best attains that experience through the Frankfurt *nigunim* of *Tzadik ke-Tamar* or through Carlebach *minyanim*.

Aesthetics and Brisker Torah:

Let me conclude with two more localized, halakhic points. Halakhic analysis cannot substitute for experience and personal reflection. Yet *halakhah* can, in some measure create a frame of reference for such activity. A few weeks ago I participated in a closed conference on art and religion, attended primarily by Catholics. Many of them held that all discussion of art must base itself on a philosophical idea of beauty, applicable to all manifestations of the aesthetic. The Protestants and most of the practicing poets and artists tended to take a more piecemeal orientation. Music and art have different problems and differ radically in different times and places. *Halakhah*, too, tends to differentiate.

A famous Brisker analysis: "This is my God and I will make Him pleasant (*ve-anvehu*)" [Exodus 15:2] is the source for the *halakhah* that one is supposed to beautify mitzvot. Is the obligation to beautify *mitzvot* a general obligation to present the *mitzvot* in an aesthetically pleasing way, or is it a specific aspect of particular *mitzvot*? Rav Moshe Soloveichik, the Rav's father, argued that in addition to the general concept, there are categories pertaining to particular mitzvot: with regard to *lulav*, for example, with regard to *milah*--there are aesthetic features that apply to that *mitvah* only, and are not part of the general concept. This approach entails a piecemeal orientation to aesthetic questions. (I am omitting the details for reasons of time.)

Another example: Thirty years ago, the Rav gave a *yahrtzeit* lecture on the

theme of "*Ikkar Shirah ba-Peh, Ikkar Shirah ba-Kli*." In the Beit Hamikdash, did the *shirah* (the Levites' musical duties as part of the Temple service) revolve primarily around the human voice, or were they fulfilled through the accompanying instrumental music? The halakhic part of the *shiur* is in print.⁷ At the end of the *shiur* the Rav added a few remarks that did not get into the printed version. The Rav spoke about the role of music and art in religion. He emphasized the *halakhah* is, to a degree, suspicious of artistic expression in a religious context. Art, particularly music, is powerful and threatens to overwhelm human judgment. It menaces the rational faculty, and may undermine the critical judgment mediated through words and reason. Precisely because we know how to value the aesthetic, we do not give choreography and music free reign outside of the Beit Hamikdash. Nowadays we do not allow instrumental music as part of the prayer service. Note that the Rav is here offering an implicit distinction between singing and playing an instrument. This is intriguing, from a purely aesthetic point of view, as we consider the differences between these different modes of music. As far as I recall, the Rav did not pursue this line of thought. If we are serious about plumbing his legacy in this area, these are the inquiries we ought to be launching.

Audience Questions

Jennifer Birk:

I teach at the Prozdor High School at JTS using art as visual Midrash. My question is what do you have to say about when art, the visual arts at least, are not aesthetic. You mention that the sublime is a category that may not be visually aesthetic, but can be overwhelming. But some art, just as with the Talmud and Torah, is initially not aesthetically pleasing at all. What role does that type of art have, or does it create the same problem that we have when Torah study--at least initially the *pshat*--is not aesthetic. If art isn't aesthetic does it present a problem?

R. Shalom Carmy (*responding*):

I have a feeling that others have what to say about this also, but if I will speak again for myself now. I am not one of those *talmidim* of the Rav who always tries to pretend that what I am saying is what the Rav said. But my own instincts in this regard are

⁷ Printed as "*Belnyan Tekiah ve-Shirah BaMikdash*" in Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Shiurim*

more on the Protestant side rather than the Catholic side of the debate that I indicated before. Meaning, you just start with the fact that art is one of the ways in which people try to deal with reality. Then if that mode of writing or thinking or producing helps you get at the truth, then you go ahead and you do it. There are certain risks that by doing it that way, you may go further away from the truth, you may create a kind of visual image that blocks out the ability to respond to the text--that is a danger. But if you think that is going to bring you closer, bring you to a different angle on things, then I don't see any reason why one should not go ahead and do it.

Mark Singer:

I am from Baltimore, Maryland, I teach at Morgan State University and I am the founder and co-director of a unique Jewish camp for girls, we have art, music and drama. There is one basic problem here I think in the discussion and I guess I am saying this more, I welcome a response. But that is that the arts, music, dance, sculpture, the visual arts, they don't speak in words. You know in other words, the right drain for that matter does not speak in words. So when you are trying to apprehend truth in art, it is a very specific truth, but it may not be something that you can define in a lecture or that you can put it down into certain words.

Certainly those of us who learned Gemara know that also learning Gemara is not always strictly the words that makes sense, that make it come together. There is an aesthetic to the Gemara, there is an aesthetic to it where there are certain shapes to the ideas; there are certain rhythms to the ideas and if you learn long enough you tend to fall into those rhythms. It is not by accident that people will learn with the *niggun*. So the question is, why do we cut these out of Jewish education? In other words, the emphasis is so strong and the linear, left-brained if you will, you know the literary, the word side of things where we leave out the image, we leave out the oral image, we leave out the spatial image. Our schools are very black and white, bleak I would say, our Jewish schools and our children are deprived of a very essential part of life that not only do they need for their learning and existence in this world as human beings, no less as Jewish human beings, but even more so for them to truly apprehend and comprehend Torah and Gemara and *Tanakh* and all of the Jewish studies that we want

them to imbibe. I feel that there is a certain agenda being developed here from what I have heard this morning, I put this out, how can we really get into that other part, how can we integrate both the right brain and the left brain and how can we integrate the arts into a Jewish curriculum?

R. Norman Lamm (*responding*):

By default I will entertain the question. I too am in favor of uniting the left and the right brain into two hemispheres. Obviously that is what we are talking about. I would like to point out in reference to something that Rabbi Brovender said, which I think should not be overlooked, and that is the relationship between beauty and truth. In *kaballah* God reveals himself through the ten *sefirot* and the sixth one is identified with our forefather Jacob. *Hesed* is Avraham, *yirah/avodah* is Yitzhak, and Yaakov is identified by two different names, which ultimately are one, one is *tiferet* and the other one is *emet*. *Tiferet* is beauty and *emet* is truth. So there is inherently some kind of relationship that deserves further exploration. One of them is perhaps that truth should not be seen as a single statement, period, that is the end of it, but rather as a harmonization of opposites, which is what the whole *tiferet* is.

Therefore teaching art in that sense that is allowing the student to become immersed in art has a restraint. I think Rabbi Carmy mentioned that art or the aesthetic is based upon a concept of freedom and it is basically antinomian. It doesn't have any rules outside of its own restricted. That is why the aesthetic commitments sometimes come in conflict with the ethical or the religious commitment. But from the Jewish point of view, art should be seen as something which is a form of *avodat Hashem* constrained by elements of truth or *halakhah*. *Halakhah* in turn should be inspired by the vision of *tiferet* or aesthetics. So that taking them both together is not only the fact that you have a totality, but you also have correctives on each side.

Session II: The View From the Studio

Shoshana Golin:

I have been asked to introduce the workshop session this morning, which is “A View From the Studio.” Just to give you a little feeder into it, I observed a school in Queens this past week, I was visiting the art department there and I went into one of the art classes. The teacher had his ninth graders in there and he was giving them a pep talk. They had just done their first drawing from observation and they were a little upset, a little frustrated. He said, “Well think about it, this is the first drawing you have ever done from observation. Everything we have done this semester has been from your imagination. This is the first time I told you, take a look at those boxes, they are very simple out there on that table, aren't they?” But that was the first training experience. He said, “anyone can draw, anyone can make a mark on a piece of paper.” But he said, “Not everyone can see. Not everyone knows what to look for, what they are looking at.” He said, “That is a skill, being able to see is a skill,” so that is what you are learning here today.

So with that I would like to introduce Ophir Agassi. Ophir is an artist who has displayed his work both here in the States and in Israel and he will be introducing the workshop.

Ophir Agassi:

Art is a product, not only of human intellect, but also of human feeling. As such, art attempts a tangible expression of the intangible. Fromentin wrote, “Art is the expression of the invisible by means of the visible.” It can be said further, art is an expression of the unseen through the seen, the metaphysical through the physical, the spirit through form.

A work of art is not only about reproducing or interpreting natural beauty. Art expands our potential to experience by presenting to us a vision of reality that we may have otherwise never known or by confirming our own thoughts and feelings about things that we could not ourselves articulate. Art thereby also creates shared experience where otherwise we might think ourselves separate or alone.

For example, in Van Gogh's paintings there is a distinct sense of reality, we understand that things are as he paints them, yet his paintings are not strict

representations from nature. In a painting by Van Gogh there is also a distinct feeling with which we are able to identify, though we ourselves may not have been able to give it expression or communicate it to others.

Visual art must be seen but merely looking is not enough. Art must be experienced if it is to have any real effect. Real experience influences our thoughts, feelings, and relationship to our surroundings. Spinoza wrote, "Only contemplated experience becomes real experience." How then can we begin to contemplate art?

The attempt to define art, or as Worringer put it, "... to reduce the multiple significance of the phenomena to a single, unequivocal concept," has so far been unsuccessful at best. However, there are certain qualities that all visual art does have in common.

Vision: All visual art has in common that it is at all times concerned with what is seen. All visual art is meant to be seen, to be experienced through sight.

Creation: All art has in common that it has been made by someone. All art is the result of a human act of volition, a conscious decision to utilize the human creative capacity. Thus in contemplating art we must certainly contemplate what we see as well as what it is to create.

As to vision: In the process of seeing and thinking about what we are seeing, there are certain qualities of vision that remain constant regardless of what the particular object of our gaze is at a given moment. These fundamental qualities of human vision lie beyond the visible surface of things and are true wherever we look. Wherever we look, we can fit what we see to match our vision of the world or we can adjust our vision according to what we see. The first approach is reductive. The second, expansive.

As a result of the second approach, adjusting our vision according to what we see, we are left not with what we think we know but with what we know because we think. A result of meditating well on what we see outside ourselves is a truer vision that enables us to see beyond the visible surface of things.

Harold Speed wrote in *The Practice and Science of Drawing* (p. 22): "People whose vision does not penetrate beyond the narrow limits of the commonplace, and to whom a cabbage is but a vulgar vegetable, are surprised if they see a beautiful picture painted of one, and say that the artist has idealized it...; whereas he has probably only honestly given expression to a truer, deeper vision than they had been aware of. The commonplace is not the true, but only the shallow, view of things."

As for creation: The first step in the act of creation, perhaps a precondition, was *Tzimtzum*. Before God could create the world, expand “What Was Not” to “What Is,” it was necessary for Him to contract Himself. On a human level, if we want to expand our view of things we too must contract our Self. It is difficult to cling to our ego and yet see things as they are rather than as we expect them to be. A further result of meditating well on what we see outside ourselves is an increased awareness of what we perceive within.

Drawing: It is not enough, however, that we contemplate vision on our own. We must have a way of communicating what we see to others so that understanding can be shared and thereby also enhanced. It is not enough, either, to contemplate creation. We can gain deeper understanding if our thoughts are complemented by action.

Vision: Through drawing it is possible to demonstrate and measure what is seen and drawing is the most efficient and most accessible way to do this. The result of the study of vision through drawing is a visual record of what was observed. This record can be interpreted using the same means by which it was made--sight.

Drawing is evidence of having seen. This evidence is understood through the same sense of vision that we engage in order to make the drawing. The painter Andre Derain wrote, “Learning to draw is the process itself of becoming visually conscious. Without having been through this evolution of the mind and eye... (one) remains visually naïve and untutored however sophisticated or mature he may be intellectually.”

Creation: Through drawing it is also possible to experience for oneself the act of creation. Regardless of what we draw, each drawing we make is a new thing that was not there before. In the act of drawing we become connected with our own ability to consciously make things by exercising the capacity with which are endowed of creating something that was not there before we acted.

Among the results of this understanding of the creative act gained by first-hand experience must be a heightened sensitivity to one’s own ability to create. Perhaps above all else, and certainly before all, God is the Creator. We are encouraged to experience closeness with Hashem by emulating Him. Even if only in this small capacity, understanding oneself as a creator must surely bring one into a closer relationship with the One who created Everything, He whom we are taught is

constantly involved in the act of creation--*ha-mihadeish be-tuvo be-khol yom tamid ma'aseh bereishit*.

Making Art: I am not suggesting that drawing be taught as a means of making art unless the ultimate goal is to make artists out of all students. And even were that the goal, it is only possible to teach the means of expression. Making art is not within the scope of things that can be taught.

It should be intuitive but is perhaps worth stating outright that not everyone can be an artist and not everyone can make art. This does not at all contradict the fact that all people possess a capacity for creation but merely points out that not everything that anybody creates becomes art. One may look at a work of art, contemplate it and appreciate it, without necessarily possessing the ability to make a work of art themselves.

One may see a baseball player in the major leagues hit a home run, and think about the factors that go into hitting a home run, appreciate the significance of a home run, without necessarily being able to hit one themselves. Even the major league ball player, however, does not learn to hit a home run before he learns to hold the bat. Likewise, even one who is inclined by nature towards art cannot make a work of art without first devoting much time and effort to mastering the means of expression. And even then, no one is assured of success.

Self-Expression: Unfortunately, it must also be pointed out that teaching art, and more specifically drawing, as a means of self-expression does not do justice to the subject. It is not only arbitrary to teach art as a means of self-expression, it is also entirely unnecessary. Picasso said, "Why would I try to put myself into one of my paintings? I'll always be there, since it is I myself who is painting it." Self-expression is not an activity separate from everything else. It is what we do that expresses who we are. There is therefore no need to try to express oneself through art. Self-expression is an inevitable outcome of everything we do, including making art, regardless of what our conscious intentions may be while we are engaged in a particular activity.

Drawing does afford us a means of contemplating and communicating what is seen. Drawing also affords us a means of experiencing firsthand the act of creation. Perhaps it is worth noting that drawing also has numerous practical applications, for anyone who ever wishes to communicate what something will look like before they can see the thing itself.

In art there are no rules but in seeing and in drawing there are basic concepts that can be learned. In his *Treatise on Painting*, DaVinci wrote, “First study science, then follow the practice born of that science.” Art is not science but there is science in art and this science can be taught. Among the topics that must be included in the science of vision and drawing are space, form, color, and light. Today for a brief moment we will consider space. We cannot touch space as we can touch form but we can see it and feel it just as clearly. Space is as real and tangible an element of our visual and physical experience as any form.

In fact, there is more space in our visual and physical reality than there is anything else. When one begins to realize how ubiquitous is space one is baffled by the readiness with which people are content to focus on the surfaces of things, and to ignore what lies in front, between, beyond. Space is most often not seen, not contemplated, not experienced.

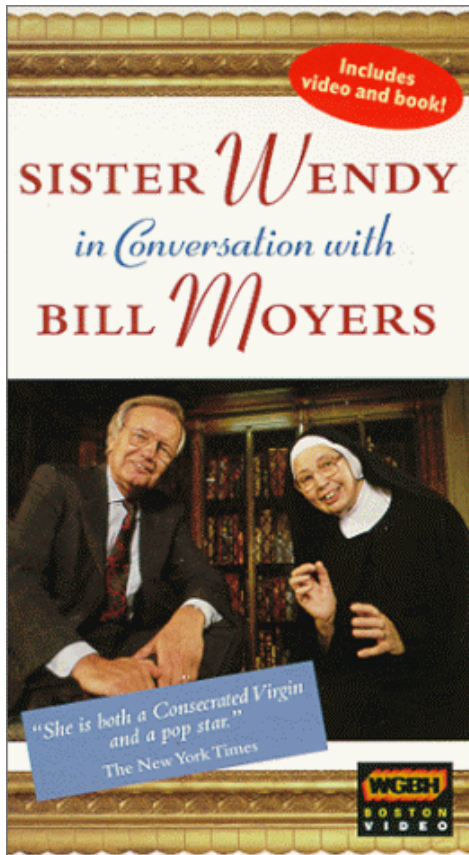
As you are about to begin the workshop, I will remind you that a blank page is an intimidating thing and you may be tempted to respond to the challenge of recording your observations by making many marks without carefully considering each one in the hope that one of these many marks will be true. It is unlikely. I therefore encourage you first of all to work slowly. The task is not to finish anything, only to begin. I also encourage you to refrain from putting down a mark on your page until you have determined for yourself exactly what you intend its purpose to be. There is no reason to make many marks when few will do. And there is no reason to do anything without purpose.

Perhaps, through significant effort we may merit vision and understanding so that we too may declare as did King David: “When I behold Your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and stars that You set in place...” and then: “O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your name throughout the earth!” (Psalms 8:4,10).

Session III: The View From the Schoolhouse

R. Chaim Brovender:

People have asked me, you know that art sometimes confronts you with *halakhic* difficulties and as you have noticed I have taken great pains not to deal with any of those questions.



We are about to see a clip of a video that is an interview between the journalist Bill Moyers and Sister Wendy Beckett. Sister Wendy is a Catholic nun who apparently lives a life of solitude and prayer at a convent in England, but became a television star--which for a nun is kind of unexpected. She did tours of museums and explained pictures and works that she herself appreciated. I think that what she has to say is instructive, and we thought it would be an interesting springboard to begin the rest of the day's conversation.

*Clip of interview, "Sister Wendy in Conversation with Bill Moyers"*⁸

Bill Moyers: What does, has art done for you, other than make you an international celebrity, which you didn't want to be? What has art *done* for you? What has art done for *you*?

Sister Wendy: Well, I suppose it has given me enormous joy. It's also increased my capacity to accept darkness and pain, and not be too bewildered by them. It has, I hope, made me a more sensitive and alert person. The one fatal thing is

⁸ Transcript excerpted from "Sister Wendy in Conversation with Bill Moyers: The Complete Conversation" (Boston, MA: WGBH Educational Foundation, 1997), reproduced with permission of WGBH TV, Boston.

to be a zombie. I think we're all in danger of living part of our lives on the zombie level. But I think art help ones to be perpetually *there*, as it were.

Bill Moyers: "There" is?

Sister Wendy: *There*, alert, constant.

Bill Moyers: In the moment?

Sister Wendy: Yes, in the moment, because God is coming every moment, but we're not receiving Him every moment; of course, we're not even noticing that He's coming, we are drifting through. But you see in art you can't just drift, art is demanding of you, attention, and I would hope that it helps me to be a more attentive person all the way.

Bill Moyers: You said it had helped you to see into darkness and sorrow. Does art sometimes tell us things we don't want to know?

Sister Wendy: Yes, I think that's very true. And that's why I don't like saying, "Art gives one a great pleasure." Of course, it does, but it gives one great pain too.

Bill Moyers: Sometimes it seems to me that we owe to great sin much of our great art. So much of the art that you admire was commissioned by popes and cardinals and princes who led debauched, corrupt lives. So many of the great artists had patrons who were themselves depraved. And I wonder what you think about this coupling between immorality and inspiration?

Sister Wendy: I don't know whether we can say they were sinful; they were just stupid, uninstructed. The only person we can ever say has committed a sin is ourselves, and even there we may be wrong, because only God can judge. We can say they did dreadful things, but what the heart was, only God can tell. So I feel great compassion for these poor, muddled popes.

Bill Moyers: How do you feel when you discover a discrepancy between the character of the artist and the quality of the work? I mean, David during the French Revolution had no second thoughts about thousands of people going to the guillotine. Picasso--we were talking about women--Picasso cruelly mistreated women. I mean, what does it say that a dreadful, immoral person, if one wants to pass judgment, can produce great art?

Sister Wendy: I think one must make an absolute distinction between what the artist is like and what the work is like. All that concerns us, all that we can judge, is the work. And as for the artist, either an artist creates art of the good in them or an artist creates out of a desire for a good that isn't in them. I'm quite interested in artists

in a sort of vulgar, gossiping way, but I'm not in the least interested in them as far as the quality of the work goes, which is why I particularly love medieval art, where we don't know anything about who painted it. And I think we can see more clearly, because it's very hard to look at David and not remember him voting for the execution of the king.

Bill Moyers: You said that all art that really draws us to look deeply at it spiritual?

Sister Wendy: Yes.

Bill Moyers: In what sense?

Sister Wendy: Because it's going to deepen our awareness of the things that matter. It's going to make us, to refer to what I said earlier, more a person of integrity, more true to my own essence than I would have been without this encounter. It is like meeting a great genius; just talking, even being in the presence of such a person, you feel enriched, enlightened. You're more than you were before you had that encounter. Well, that is what painting is, appears to be offering us: encounters. Encounters with greatness.

Bill Moyers: Is religious arts synonymous with spiritual?

Sister Wendy: No, not at all. Religious art can be spiritual. But, it can be very dull. Religious art works on an iconography. And it works to the extent that you believe in it. If you believe in this image, then the image will remind you of your faith and it will have a religious effect.

Bill Moyers: It is a vehicle to God, for the devout?

Sister Wendy: Yes. Spiritual art will take you further than you knew you believed. It will take you into uncharted realms.

Bill Moyers: And that spiritual power is what?

Sister Wendy: The spiritual power is this ability to lift us out of the confines of our ego, out of the traps that so many people are in. Their relationships, their jobs, their worries, mortgages, health. And there they go 'round in the cage. And art opens the door and takes you into something bigger than yourself, something immensely exhilarating and refreshing, so when you come back into your cage you know that is not all there is to life. You know what Kenneth Clark used to say. Whenever he got deeply depressed, he'd go and look at something, some great work of art. And there it was, sailing through the centuries. He didn't use these words, these are my words. Untouched by all our littleness and our anxieties. And we're taken into that, not as an

escape, but as a way of coming back into our anxieties, able to put them into perspective. Art is a great means of getting perspective and all that is worrying, depressing, constricting in your life.

Bill Moyers: What did you mean when you wrote, “All great art is spiritual”--and I think you’ve made that clear—“but not all art is sacred.” There is a distinction between the spiritual and the sacred?

Sister Wendy: Yes. Sacred, I think, goes deeper. Sacred is spiritual at its most profound and emphatic. Sacred, I think, is spiritual art where you know it is spiritual, whereas a lot of spiritual art you don’t know. Your spirit knows, but you don’t know. You’re just delighting in it.

Bill Moyers: Well, what did you mean when you said the sacred art is “the most intense communication of personal truth”?

Sister Wendy: Because it’s the artist’s personal truth confronting your personal truth. If it’s great art, if it’s sacred art, the artist has managed to put their entire truth there in those images. And your truth encounters them, to the extent in which you allow it to. And so, you return to yourself enriched by encounter with the master’s vision.

Bill Moyers: And what do you mean “truth” here in this personal sense?

Sister Wendy: Truth is what you’re meant to be, but haven’t yet perhaps become. Truth is what God made you to be, all your qualities fulfilled, no dead sections that you are afraid to work with within you, no areas of negligence that you just didn’t bother to take seriously.

End of video.

Gabriel Goldstein (*introducing panel*):

This past summer when I was on leave from the museum and studying for my comprehensive exams I was reading a 600 page book on the visionary and visual experience of old medieval nuns, and I was in the library and my cell phone rang, it was my *Rosh Yeshiva*, Rabbi Brovender, and he asked me what I thought about Sister Wendy? My mindset was on nuns and on the visual experience of religion, but it was not a question I expected in any way. But as I think we can see from this video, Sister Wendy’s call to all of us to embrace the sacred in art and as I quote, “To open our awareness of things that matter, to find things that are more true,” is a call to all of us

to re-examine these issues and how we can open--not only our own hearts--but as educators, open the hearts of our students.

This morning we had discussed how the *Litvak* “*Daled Amot*” that we kind of imagined can be expanded and that mentality is not perhaps as rational or as limited as you might expect. I do call upon us though in this discussion of religion and belief and the visual to look also to models beyond Aristotle and Rambam and to think also of things that we have heard discussed also this morning of neo-Platonism and the *kaballah*, and how we can see a chain from the most true examples to examples that we see ourselves within our more limited vision.

I have been thinking of these topics for quite a while and they have been very much on my mind the past few months as this conference has been under discussion. Over the holidays on *Simchat Torah* they really resonated for me and that is as we closed the reading of the Torah scroll, the very last verses in *Devarim* surprisingly resonate in terms of the issues of Judaism’s recognition of the power of the visual. I think we all assume that Judaism understands and Torah understands that the visual has power but the power is often seen to be dangerous and negative. We think of *hihurim* that we have to forbid. We obviously think of idolatrous imagery and the whole issue of *avodah zara*. Within the very last *psukim* of the Torah, which in this situation on *Simchat Torah* actually introduce the next beginning of the Torah, we see what is the greatest glory of Moshe *asher yado Hashem panim el panim*--that only Moshe was able to have this true visual face-to-face experience with Hashem. Only Moshe--the greatest prophet of all times--was able to really allow us to have a relation for all generations had that true visual closeness. The very last three words of the entire Torah referring to the wonders Moshe did *le-einei kol Yisrael*--before the eyes of all of Israel. The great signs of the Exodus, the great signs of revelation, of visual experiences. Visual experiences stand to us for all generations and we take these images of the importance of visuality and juxtapose them with the beginning of the Torah, with creation. We immediately see how we can interpret beauty and aesthetics within a religious mode.

I think it is safe for us to assume at the beauty of creation, the beauty of the created world is how we can see the divine within every day existence. But we know that when actually we are created *Tzelem Elokim* (image of God), right within those very *psukim* again at the beginning of the Torah, which we read on *Simchat Torah*. This idea of being in God’s image allows us, like God, to say “*ki tov*” (it is good), to

recognize that there is beauty within the created world. It allows us in *Tzelem Elokim* to be God like, to be creators, to create works of art and to appreciate beauty and to see within that beauty divinity.

So this afternoon we look at how we can see it within Torah, and within life beauty, and how we can convey that beauty to a variety of audiences. This afternoon we are joined by six speakers. Six speakers all of whom are educators but who address very different constituencies and groups. We have artists who themselves are creative individuals creating works of art, which are personal expressions, but they are also involved in educating individuals, lay individuals, and also people who are striving themselves to become artists. We have teachers and administrators involved in art education and in Jewish education.

In order to save time this afternoon, I am not going to provide full introductions to our speakers. I encourage you to look in your reference materials, in your programs for full biographies. You will have each speaker present for approximately five to eight minutes, a short synopsis of their own outlook and their experience, and then we will have time for discussion amongst ourselves and with all of you as we conclude.

Our first speaker this afternoon is Tobi Kahn. Tobi Kahn is probably well known to you and as you can see by the slashes after his name he is an artist, an art educator and educator involved in a variety of institutions, both secular art institutions and Jewish educational institutions.

Tobi Kahn:

I first want to say that I am a visual artist and therefore I consider English my second language, I do not consider Hebrew my first language but I consider English and Hebrew my second and third languages. I am privileged to be married to a writer and a wonderful lecturer whose name is Nessa Rappaport and every time I start to speak I realize that this is not my strength and after hearing everyone speak so well this morning who are amazingly articulate, I realize that yet again, but I am going to try in any case.

I went to Breur's Elementary School, Yeshiva University High School and then I took off a year and studied acting at Tel Aviv University then I went to a year at Yeshivat Kerem be-Yavneh, two years at Gush Etzion, then I studied and I got my BFA and MFA at Pratt and at Hunter and since then I started teaching at a *yeshiva*

high school, which was a real privilege and one of my first bosses was Dr. Rifka Blau who is here today, the other one was Rabbi Pinchas Bak. I was the first art teacher at the high school and it was thrilling for me today to talk to three people in the audience who were either married to a former student of mine or were former students of mine, and it is really exciting to see that continuation because I have been teaching for the last twenty years at the School of Visual Arts, and my student body from the School of Visual Arts would not be in a Jewish institution and would not be that interested in how Jewish education can be enhanced by the visual arts. So I am really thrilled to be here, not only as an artist but as an educator.

One of the most important things that I would like to start off with saying is, when I taught at the *Mesivta* or now that I am the artist in residence and what does that mean to be an artist in residence at SAR, I will explain that in a minute. I am really there to help the students see. I am really not interested in teaching painting or drawing, in fact I right now don't teach painting and drawing, but I think there is always going to be 10% of a class that are not linear thinkers, that is a fact. I am one of those 10%. That is why even if I try and keep in an order, it is impossible.

People like myself will find the art that they need and I did. I picked Gush Etzion because I had the privilege of being a *ben bayit* at Rav Amital's house, I had *havrutot* that all loved Rav Kook and I found the people that I would be able to learn with, that I would learn insights into the Jewish tradition that I have always been compelled with. I never dropped out for a few years; it was always a central part of my life. But there are the 90% of the students that go through a *yeshiva* high school and those are the people that I am really interested in. I am interested in people that can go through life and not really learn how to see. I think it is a great disadvantage, just like I think it is very important to learn another language.

I remember learning in *yeshiva* and learning to understand Hebrew at first, you know really understanding it. When I learned at Breur's and at MTA I learned from English to Hebrew with such a difference being in Israel, learning in the *yeshiva* from Hebrew to Hebrew. I can only explain to you by giving you some examples.

What did we do just this year at SAR? We decided to take the entire faculty, not only the art teacher, who is a wonderful art teacher who did a program this morning, but the *Talmud* teacher, the math teacher, the science teacher, the gym teacher--everyone in the school--to go through the Met, and what did we do when we went through the Met, we talked about the fact that if you ever are interested in really looking you

begin to realize what a painting, what the wall on the painting is like, will change the way you see the painting. The fact that the lighting in the room will change the way you see the painting. The fact that certain paintings look better in daylight and certain paintings look better with a spotlight, certain sculptures look better when you can walk around. There is a beautiful statement that I love by Jakomede, “it is not the sculpture but it is what is around the sculpture.” Henry Moore: “It is not only looking at the sculpture from the front, you should be able to look at a sculpture and see it from all different vantage points. It is a whole way of seeing.”

What is most thrilling for me this morning was to come into here when, twenty-five years ago when I started teaching at a high school, it was a real rarity. Today almost every Jewish high school sees the importance of the visual arts. I think that is such a breakthrough and I think it is an amazing breakthrough, even though this morning I loved listening and I wished more would talk about what it means to see, and that it is part of the dialogue, is breathtaking. The fact that our children, all three of our children go to day school; the fact that their teachers take them to museums and explain to them that, you know it is so funny to listen to Sister Wendy, I mean she is a riot. I mean she is really funny, I have heard her for years. She is coming from a totally Christian point of view, but she has one or two very valid points to say. Number one is, you don’t look at the artist, and you look at the piece of work. You know I love Shlomo Carlebach’s music, I think it is breathtaking. What I think about what he was like as a person is totally irrelevant. It is the music that really takes us to a place.

I think it is important, it really is important to know artists that are living a Jewish lifestyle, only because it is good for kids to see that it is an open option for them. That is valid from that point of view. But the creative process is a gift of God and I really believe that. I learned that when I was in Gush, both my *Rosh Yeshivas* said to me, “If you don’t use this gift it is *bizbuz*, it is a waste.” So those 10% of the kids should learn how to use that. For the other 90% give them a gift of learning how to see.

You know I lecture around universities in the country and I tell the students all the time, if you believe in the Torah, which I do believe in, and you believe that every word in the Torah was there for a reason, I happen to keep kosher--but kosher is *one* sentence in the Torah. If you look through every part of the Torah, I love what you just said now about the last words, you talk about the flags, the colors of the flags of

the different tribes; you talk about the *parokhet*; you talk about the breastplate that the *Kohen Gadol* wore; if you talk about the *kravim*; you talk about weaving. I mean that is not like one sentence, these are tons of *psukim*. Help make the students of all your schools, not only the art teacher, but when you have a *Talmud* teacher or if you have a *Humash* teacher or if you teach any subject, think of how you can make it come alive to the visual sensibilities.

Gabriel Goldstein:

Our second speaker is Archie Rand. Archie Rand is a professor of Visual Arts of Columbia University, and is well known as a muralist for works in America and Israel--frequently but not exclusively--on Jewish themes.

Archie Rand:

First of all I am very pleased to be here today. Tobi and I made a joke before we got on the platform about how he and I represented the circuit that is with the two Jewish artists that get called on whenever somebody has a panel some place, and the obligatory five people show up, and then Tobi and I do our thing. Tobi and I have very different takes on this. I, being non-observant, have gotten some of the wrath--probably deservedly--of the more observant community for my work, and Tobi in his blissful wonderment has gotten the support. So between the two of us we make up the parenthesis of the Jewish art experience.

I would like to address some of the things that I have heard spoken about today. Again picking up Gabriel and Tobi's lead about how important it is that the visual art be not only included but encouraged in a Jewish curriculum. I am going to paraphrase something that I said publicly a couple of years ago because it seems appropriate now.

Rabbi Lamm alluded to the fact that *halakhah* and art should, I think he didn't say temper, but that is my word, temper each other. I am lead to think that Tobi's point about how many *psukim* are dedicated to the visual has to be underscored because although I cannot of course disagree with Rabbi Lamm's position, as a working artist who has thought seriously about the arts in Jewish education, I want to underline the imperative nature of Rabbi Lamm's suggestion. I don't want to simply leave it on the table as *halakhah* and the arts tempering each other. To do that I want to bring up something from Torah.

Now chances are very good that as far as learning is concerned I am literally the least learned person in this room. That being said, I have the arrogance to produce my own *dvar Torah*. I am doing that based on my experience as an artist from within the Jewish community, and it goes like this: I have been thinking for many years now about in the Torah at the highest point of Jewish consciousness--as Sister Wendy talks about God being transmitting all the time--and our inability to be alert, Hashem is transmitting enormous amounts of energy on *Har Sinai*, it is really a big bang of *Yiddishkeit* and Moshe is up there, re awaiting tablets and it occurs to me that I have never read a sufficient rabbinical commentary to what happens next, despite the fact that this is one of the most important points in the entire Torah.

The thunder is coming down and the lightening and right before Hashem gives the *luchot* to Moshe, God says, "Oh by the way there is this guy Bezalel and he is going to have the knowledge of creation, you don't have it, he has it. When you get down, work together with him. By the way here is the *luchot*." The placement of that statement as an artist has always been the most instructive thing in my commitment to maintaining both my profession as an artist and my loyalty to Judaism. Because what I have realized--and I could be wrong and I could be challenged by every learned person in this room, but I need to realize this and I have realized it--that the Torah is truth and if the Torah is truth, the placement of that statement is absolutely essential. What God is saying to Moshe, in my opinion, is, "Look, the golden calf is going to end up dust. The people saw the signs and wonders coming out of Egypt and now they are in the desert. By the way, when you get down from this mountain, you are going to take these *luchot* and smash them into smithereens, which means that the people will have absolutely nothing visual to fixate on, as they wander through this anonymous bleak desert, looking for the promised land. The reason that you need Bezalel is because you Moses are the administrator, you are an academic, you are a politician--and as such you are great, you are the greatest of the great. However there is a spiritual component which operates in direct conflict to this, it is anarchic but it is also hard-wired into the genetic structure of all people and that needs something transcendent, that needs something visual, some evidence of the wonder of Hashem in the world. I have given Bezalel that, so Bezalel is your partner, like it or not Moshe and he will provide that stuff for you."

But *yeshivot* and schools of learning, for various historical reasons, have excised that and I can understand historically why that may have been possible, but

we are living in a particular golden age right now, not that these golden ages haven't existed before, and God forbid they should ever cease, but right now the opportunities are ripe for the realignment of the claim, of a visual culture for Jews, by Jews and the glory of Jewish learning. Thank you.

Gabriel Goldstein:

Our next speaker will be Rabbi Alan Stadtmauer who is the principal of the Yeshiva of Flatbush High School in Brooklyn.

Rabbi Alan Stadtmauer:

I would like to speak from a completely different point of view and a completely different angle. My own art career, I think, ended shortly after my first piece of artwork was sold--and it was not to my mom--but I could not invest much time after that.

What I do want to spend time talking about this morning is as a principal and as an administrator thinking about curricula as well as an educator who has done work over about ten years trying to help guide students, particularly teenagers, through spiritual experiences. Coming from those points of view, I really want to raise two questions and I don't have the answers to either of these questions, but I think they are questions that can inform us through the rest of the day and beyond.

The first really goes to the nature of curricula. Let us take it as given: I think it is absolutely completely obvious that we should be teaching art in *yeshivas*. But then again I take it as completely obvious that we should be teaching math in *yeshivas* and I take it as completely obvious that we should be teaching English in our *yeshivas*. Those subjects, like the subject of art, tend to be in the area that if you have been touched by the spiritual moment or intellectual moment of math, it needs absolutely no defense. If you have not been touched by that moment, you probably will try to defend mathematics on pragmatic standpoint. If you don't see the pragmatic standpoint or the spiritual-intellectual standpoint within math, no polemic in the world is going to convince you that math is a fantastic, wonderful thing and has to be taught. I think the same thing holds true for art.

For those of us in this room, most of us have that, if not all of us have been touched by the spiritual moment within art and therefore it is obvious to me and I think it is obvious to most people that we should be teaching art and much of the rest

of what we do is polemics and apologetics and people who can't be touched by it or have not been touched by it will not hear the argument. But that begins to beg the question. If what we are doing is, and I think it is the case, that we want to be teaching art from among many reasons, including and especially the spiritual moment that can be found within it, it raises the core question about curriculum. Because the nature of curricula is that curriculum as opposed to good teaching or as opposed to our activities in the room, curricula are definable outcomes meant for a whole group. When we teach math or when we teach English literature or history, some students will be touched by spirituality, some students will be touched by its intellectual grandeur, some students will just barely get by and some students will absolutely hate it. When we choose to teach *Bava Kamma* some teachers are going to make *Bava Kamma* the most spiritual experience in the world. In the hands of other teachers, it is going to be deadening and lifeless and kids may end up hating *Gemara*, but there is a curriculum on *Bava Kamma*.

How do we define the components of a curriculum in art that can give rise to the potentiality of spirituality, when we know that curricula themselves have to be defined as something that all students can be measured upon, and not only all students can be measured upon, but curricula can't be what this particular teacher feels like doing now and the moment they retire from the school it is gone and we have to hire another Tobi Kahn. You have to have curricula, which can be defined.

An example of the problem is last year I was addressing the question from a completely different end. At the Yeshiva of Flatbush we have a course in Jewish meditation. It is a mentored independent study and I spent some time with the teacher of the course trying to answer the question: how do you grade the students? You know, ultimately what we came to is the course had a significant academic component of readings and this the students were able to be graded upon their comprehension of. Likewise the students were able to be graded on their ability to write free response, personal response to readings and to experience, but where the criteria was based upon what their writing and their ability introspect. You can't grade the students on "Did you reach God? Did you do it through your meditation?" I raised the same question with our curricula. How do we define these curricula and how is that different from good teaching?

At the other end, a comment on spirituality. In my experience with teenagers, trying to move teenagers through spiritual experiences, I have tended to find that the

vast majority of them are grouped based experiences. Teenagers see the world--and I think appropriately so, I think it is developmentally correct--they see the world through their social life, through their experience of relationships and of group. When teachers and students sit together at a *kumzits* all can reach incredible spiritual moments. If you talk to the teachers about the spiritual moment, very often it will be a very individual one. If you talk to the high school students afterwards about what it was to them, they will describe it in terms of, "We were all together, feelings of unity, feelings of just like it felt like one room, one school, one *Shabbaton*."

The spirituality of art though is intensely individualistic. It takes a personal journey and even if we can help groups move through a museum, I would raise the question, it is not a critique and it is not an attack, it raises a question of how do we help large groups of students move through the kind of spiritual experience involved in art, especially given the fact that it seems to require a lot of openness and vulnerability?

In the workshops that we had earlier today on drawing, one can see the drawing from a very technical point of view and keep the self out. But in order to be able to draw and to be able to produce any kind of art it requires an intense level of vulnerability and an intense sense of comfortability with oneself. In going to a museum and being spiritually inspired by a piece of work, by a piece of art, requires standing before that piece of art with an openness to whatever will come. Spiritual experiences have beginnings and unknown ends. I stand before the masterpiece and let it speak to me. But to let it speak to me I have to be incredibly vulnerable and incredibly bold and incredibly willing and honest that it is going to take me somewhere that I may not want it to. The question I have for this audience is, whether that kind of experience is typical for a teenager? This is a moment in life in which they are incredibly self-doubting and very much have difficulties with this kind of vulnerability unless they want to go there.

So again, to come back, I just raise this as a question. It is a given I think that we need to teach art. It is a given that I think that we need to construct curricula and curricula are going to be group-based, but then how do we construct curricula for art, art history and studio art (I think both are critical and different) that will set up the possibility of at that time or later that personal spiritual experience in art? How much is curricular, how much is co-curricular? How much is about classroom? How much is about mentoring? Likewise, when we talk about the spiritual experience in art, how

do we help a group of teens and our lessons who tend to be very group oriented be able to experience the very personal and very vulnerable kinds of requirements that great art demands?

I think these are some directions that we need to be able to go into if we are going to be able to figure out how and exactly what we need to do in at least the high school classroom.

Gabriel Goldstein:

Our next speaker is Dr. Elizabeth Lazaroff, a professor of education at Stern College, and also an artist, and will discuss this from both vantage points.

Dr. Elizabeth Lazaroff:

I want to shift our focus a little bit. I come to this both as someone involved in scholarship in education and teacher education as well as via the arts. I think from the moment I was born I was really exposed to the arts in two different ways. One was more formally, my father was always passionate about the arts really in just an appreciative sense, an avid theater goer; and my mother is a professor of home economics and she has an unbelievable visual sense and just through osmosis, growing up in an environment where sensory experiences--both actively and accidentally--is something that has opened me to all of the arts. But most intensively I studied ballet from the age of nine and I taught ballet, I have been involved in modern dance both here and in Israel and I have that deep experience with one art form that has very much shaped the work that I do in education in its most general sense and also the work that I do specifically in arts education.

I would like to focus a little bit on three aspects that I believe to be unique and crucial in the arts, but also these three aspects, I think have really helped deepen my own experience as a Jew. They are not necessarily aspects that I think have been highlighted thus far today.

The first is that within the arts there is a complex interdependence between thoughts, feeling and action. First of all, thought: the arts are extremely deliberative. Contrary to popular notion that people kind of pour out their feelings through the arts, there is no artist who doesn't intentionally pursue the work that they are doing. The arts are intensely thoughtful and cognitive.

The second point, feeling and the arts--feeling and action are intertwined. Again, the arts are not emotionally neutral. Nobody approaches the arts without some feeling--positive or negative--not like the way a crying baby expresses feeling. The arts by contrast are about *compression*, about taking feeling and intentionally framing them. The artist frames it for the consumption of an audience but art is not about its unbridled expression of emotion as a baby might express pain. For example, an action, the arts are fundamentally experiential--whether it is music, visual art, dance, architecture, photography, there is an experiential basis that is at the heart of activity in area of the arts. It is kinesthetic, whether it is developing the nuance detail and using a paintbrush or learning how to play the piano, dancing, there is always a kinesthetic to mention. It is the interrelationship between thought, feeling and action that conflicts interaction between the three that is unique about the arts, I think unique about Judaism as well.

The second point that I want to highlight is the relationship between the part and the whole and I believe that art experience intensifies within the practitioner the ability to identify the relationship between parts to the whole. For example, take an example from ballet. The way a dancer holds her hand is not just a matter of aesthetic flourish; it actually impacts the way in which you carry your entire upper body. It impacts the way in which you are able to point your toe, believe it or not, that there is almost a scientific component to the way in which one holds her hand and the way in which one executes the dance. But there is also an inexplicable part to it. There is something inexplicable to the way in which you hold your hand and how that impacts the totality of the artistic product.

Here too, I think there is a strong relationship to *halakhic* Judaism that we can't take each piece independently, but it is how they all function in concert that really relates to a total experience of it. Nuance, detail, ambiguity, the inexplicable, these are all components that are inherent in the art and components that I believe are inherent in life in general and certainly in Jewish experience.

A third point that I wanted to bring out was the interface between culture and individuality that I think is also inherent in the arts. No artist works in isolation, even the lone artist in his or her studio, even that artist is working somehow in connection to some tradition of artistry that came before him or her. I think that it is within the arts this sometimes tension between affiliation, between relationships to a tradition and risk taking and individuality that is at the heart of artistry, because artistry does

not exist if you don't do something different and new and give the work your own imprint. Here too, I have personally seen a relationship between this aspect that I think is inherent in the arts and my personal experience and understanding of Judaism. All three of these, the inter-relationship between thoughts, feeling and action, the relationship between the part and the whole and the interface between culture and individuality I believe are aspects of life that are far too infrequently addressed in education.

I think that we often stay away from ambiguity, at least stay away from things that are uncomfortable. We stay away from these types of ideas that don't have one right answer and as a teacher educator I see this problem in terms of how we prepare teachers. We can't help children or young adults develop these types of intellectual attributes if teachers aren't prepared to deal with these kind of ideas.

If time permits, I wanted to talk a little bit about some of the things we are doing at Stern College to respond to this. One initiative that I am coordinating is a relationship with Lincoln Center Institute for the Arts and Education. Now in higher education, teacher education within higher education, there are two goals. One is higher education, Stern College is a liberal arts college and we are interested in the education of young women. But we are also training teachers. So our relationship with Lincoln Center Institute is a way to address both of these educational goals. I should say that in general the arts are infused across our program in teacher education. Our relationship with LCI, Lincoln Center Institute, is one way to bring the arts across our curriculum because we believe that college students are at a particular juncture in their intellectual, social and emotional development where they need to confront these sorts of ideas, understanding the interrelationship between thought, feeling and action. How to deal with ambiguity, how to deal with nuances, and so on and so forth. Secondly we feel that the arts need to have a common position in education and a comprehensive program in teacher education needs to include the arts. LCI is a program--I urge you to look at their website to get more information--because we don't have a lot of time, but in brief the idea is to use the study of works of art across the artistic domains as tests, as objects of investigation and to use an experiential approach to investigating the tests.

So there are these two layers. There are the arts as the arts that we are studying, but there is also an art-spaced approach to studying it. This is where I feel very strongly that there is a special connection between the doing of the art and the

perceiving of the art. One need not become a professional ballet dancer to be able to understand or make sense of or have a profound experience with the work of art. But I do think that some aspects of doing of the arts and understanding of what it takes to actually produce works of art, not to become a professional per se, but to understand the relationship between working within a medium and the creation of a work of art is essential and this is what we do at Stern. This week, for example, we will be studying a performance, a music performance and in our course work, our students will do workshops that have been planned with the professor and teaching artist collaboratively to help them be better able to unpack what it is in that performance that might be relevant to the subject matter, in particular, but to education in general. Thank you.

Gabriel Goldstein:

Our fifth speaker is Rabbi Moshe Simkovich, he is the Head of School of the Stern Hebrew High School in Philadelphia.

Rabbi Moshe Simkovich:

I should have realized that when I was going to take the fifth position, that many of the things that I was thinking about would already have been spoken about by others. One of the things I was going to speak about at length was curricular issues, and how new curriculum gets implemented in a high school. But all I really want to do now is just add one thing to what Alan said. As an administrator, I think that one thing we have to make sure of as we go and we try to create a part of a high school curriculum is to make sure that it is part of the school's mission, it is in the mission statement. It is part of the school's identity. If visual arts are not found somewhere, it won't happen. If it does happen, it will be weak, it will be pushed around, it will be constantly threatened, it will be seen as a frill. That is one of the things administratively you should come away with from here today.

Again, as some of the things I was thinking about have been discussed, I am going to focus on one thing that hasn't been fleshed out as much in making a mission or a vision for a school. If you want to say that: "Art is an entry point to spirituality," you will find that most people in the Jewish community are somewhat suspicious of the statement, it makes them very nervous. I know when I talk to parents in particular they worry: "Is that going to get in the way of my kid's getting into college? Is that

going to somehow distract them from their *real* purpose here?” So I will address myself to their question for the rest of what I am saying.

I am going to start with a passage from a Hermann Hesse book, *Narcissus and Goldmund*, which is one of my favorites. What I am going to quote is a conversation towards the end of the book, between Narcissus the monk, and Goldmund the artist. Towards the end of the book Goldmund is about to die, and the monk begins to get it about what the artist is doing. So here is a conversation, representing the spiritual intellect of Narcissus coming to terms with the artistic intellect in actions of Goldman. Narcissus says:

Thinking is a constant process of converting things to abstractions as looking away from the sensory, an attempt to construct a purely spiritual world. Whereas you, Goldmund, take the least constant, the most mortal things to your heart and in their very mortality show the meaning of the world. You don't look away from the world, you give yourself to it and by your sacrifice to it, raise it to the highest, a parable of eternity. We thinkers [the Narcissus type] try to come closer to God by pulling the mask of the world away from his face. You come closer to him by loving his creation and recreating it. Both are human endeavors and necessarily imperfect, but art is more innocent.

Two points about this, as far as people being nervous about art. Some of this was, like Sister Wendy said, art taking the concrete and seeing if in different ways there are intimations beyond it. But it makes people nervous. Not everybody thinks there are. She herself would admit not everybody thinks so when she discussed Rothko (which didn't make it into the clip). It is clear that some prefer to pull away from the world, exclude the world and think on that realm.

Now, some people might identify that as “*yeshivish*.” I don't know if that is right or not, but that is definitely one stream. I think it is clear that Judaism does worry about what we do with the concrete that we see, because art is openly interpretable. We are suspicious of visual art, because we are suspicious that instead of getting real spirituality out of something, we get a false, easy fix of spirituality. After all, even though the character here in this book that I read from said, “Art is innocent”--we all know that it is *not* so innocent. It can be *pretty not* innocent.

In a classroom, we meet the vision of what we have to do not only through doing some of what you mentioned before, which is teaching appreciation to many of our students, and then hopefully taking the students who are really inspired and talented and have the talent to go further to mastering art, just like we would math, or

science (or Talmud, for that matter). We have to think about this spiritual issue. How do we go spiritually beyond, so that the intellectual creativity and artistic creativity that we are trying to develop work together?

I guess the goal, as far as I would see it, would be to develop artists who could create in visual images what we see created in word images in *Tehillim*. Now, we could think about *Dovid HaMelekh* and Betzalel as sort of parallel. King David put together a great deal of intellectual creativity and artistic creativity in creating a psalm. You could think about Betzalel the same way, and that is what we really want from our students. We want appreciation enough so that they could do something that is imbued with Jewish spirituality when they do art. Now that doesn't mean that everything they do in art will have Jewish spirituality, but we do want them to be able to have the skills and the appreciation to do that. For a school to put that in their vision and make it a conscious part of the school's program, when we have to do so many other things, is really, really difficult.

In summing up, I would say that what you saw from Sister Wendy is important, but it is not enough to submit to art, to be swept away by art, if you are looking at it from our perspective. We want everything to be somehow in touch, informed with the Judaism that the person is living as a whole person. If we can get across that that is the potential of what we are doing, with no greater failure rate than in any other subject, then I would hope that parents' nervousness about going into programs in high schools that take this seriously will be dissipated. That is going to be quite an accomplishment, because from what I see, we haven't really worked this out completely yet. I hope for people to participate in working it out in the few years to come, so that it is done quickly. Thank you.

Gabriel Goldstein:

Our sixth and final speaker is Elana Silton Moskowitz who is an elementary school teacher, teaching both *limudei kodesh* and art.

Elana Silton Moskowitz:

I was introduced as an art educator and a *limudei kodesh* educator. Those have always been my two loves. I was always into art and I always loved learning, but in sixth grade I had a wonderful teacher who had come to my school in Albany, New York. His name was Tsion Boukabza z"l and he would stand at the chalkboard and

teach *Humash* or *Navi*. And from his presentation came the spark of why I am here today.

What he did was teach with one hand holding the *Humash* or the *Navi*, the other hand a piece of chalk. He would either draw or calligraphy key words or concepts and I, taken by the art, drew and wrote calligraphy in my notebook. My peers--who were mostly not engaged--would complain, “Tsion, Elana is drawing in her *machberet* again.” He would just smile and move on. That was really what started my passion for uniting Judaism and teaching Torah with art and art making.

At the Maimonides School, in Brookline, MA, I taught *limudei kodesh* and tried to sneak in the art as much as I could. In my third year I was finally able to convince the school to let me design an art and *limudei kodesh* program for the first through sixth grades. I have since moved to Baltimore for the last five and a half years and have been focusing on my own little family. But the question still is: how do we fit it in? How do we fit art in so that it is not just during recess, it is not just an elective? How do we do that?

One thing that I feel is so amazing, having experienced art as an artist myself, as an art teacher, as a *limudei kodesh* teacher and now, thank God as a parent of three, is an amazing parallel. If you look into the beginning of *Bereishit*, then think about the process, one finds a parallel to the developmental process that a child experiences in exploring art making.

I feel very strongly that young children should be given a chance to explore materials, that is where we begin, that is where we begin with all of our senses. Even my one-year-olds I will give a marker if they stick it in their mouth I redirect them, eventually they learn that it is for making marks.

Temima Gazari, from the Bureau of Jewish Education, once wrote, “Out of confusion young children establish a degree of visual order, sense and beauty. It is our responsibility as caring adults and teachers to encourage such creation so that it may continue to advance spontaneously and joyfully throughout life.”

Okay, so where did I begin in designing a meaningful *limudei kodesh* art program? I started by insisting that we as *limudei kodesh* teachers, principals, and art educators need to look at children’s development. Looking at each phase we can see the spiritual nature of the child’s exploration and discovery of what they can do and what they can create. *Be-tzelem Elokim nivra ha-adam*. In making and discovering art, children can begin to get a glimpse of what Hashem experienced in creating the

world. At every stage of the way Hashem looks at what he has created and the text says, “*Va-yar ki tov.*” Hopefully, if we are good teachers we will allow our children to look at their work and reflect upon it, and see that it is good.

So here are questions to consider: What are the values and ideas inherent in the developmentally appropriate visual art program that make them compelling and of meaningful significance to our goals in Jewish education? What are the components of an art experience that can strengthen Jewish values and strengthen *ahavat Hashem*? What do drawing, painting, sculpting and examining the work of other artists have to do with teaching Torah and the observance of *mitzvot*? What is an example of an art lesson that utilizes these elements in exploring art and Jewish values? Finally, what do these ideas mean for our work in schools?

Now, I think we need to go back to our beginning session in the morning. For many of us as adults when we look at and think about art, we think about the concept of beauty, which we discussed this morning. Children are starting without any labels. They don’t know they are not beginning with labels; they are just starting with what is around them, what they are manipulating. Really for children, art is a language for expressing their own sense of what they know about the world and what they feel about the world. That is not to say that adults can’t use art to express themselves. Obviously adults do, but for children art begins as a *language* for expression.

Since at this moment, time does not allow for an in-depth study of artistic development, I will highlight the Torah values gleaned at key stages in the process. We should start with the *pasuk*, “*Ve ha’aretz natan livnei adam*” (“The earth belongs to mankind”) from *Tehillim*. Our art values that we can cull from the developmental process are the ideas of *shmirat ha-teva*, *ba’al tashchit*, and *tikun olam*. These are values that we really want to impart to our children. The way in which we teach our children to care for their art materials, from the simple task of washing the brush when you are done, or not leaving the brush with the bristles in the water imparts respect for the materials and the idea that we don’t waste materials. We try to use them to their fullest potential. This is *tachlis* teaching of Torah values, specifically of *ba’al tashchit*, and how to make things possibly from trash into treasure.

One simple method is to give children fewer materials. In doing so, you are actually demanding of them to maximize the potential creativity. Instead of giving them a large assortment of colors to paint with, you give them one or two. Thus they

can learn a lot more about the relationship between the colors and what the paint can actually do by itself on the paper.

In the beginning stages of development, children engaged in mark making, are actually learning that their action has a reaction. They are learning that they have a responsibility, and that they really can have an effect on the world. As children try to develop their skills, they learn about mixing colors. One of the most amazing, awesome, and spiritual experiences is mixing colors. When I was painting, I could spend hours just mixing colors and seeing what I could come up with. That in and of itself was amazingly powerful.

Acquisition of techniques, knowledge and confidence in expressing and understanding ideas and feelings are challenges that children often struggle with. As Sister Wendy said, “Not all art is joyful and not all art comes easily. It is often the struggle that gives people so much fulfillment when they finally get through something that they have been trying to acquire.” As they go through the process, as you are looking at art, you finally finish your piece of work and you put it up in the classroom along with the work of your peers. This process of looking at the work and self-critiquing your work is an amazing parallel to the process of *teshuvah*. You are trying to look at the good in your work, as well as looking for areas of improvement. In looking at other people’s work, you are becoming aware of other points of view. The process of art, as Sister Wendy said, demands an alertness and wakefulness, it is not just tired, sleepy motion. One has to make choices. What color will I use? What stroke will I use? How will I begin my painting? Where will I begin? What will I begin with? Then in the process of reflecting on work together as a group, one learns *chesed*, *rachamim* and *kavod*, a sensitivity in realizing that variety and similarity in the human experience and appreciation in admiration of the delicate balance that *Hashem* has achieved in his creation of rhythms and patterns in life.

What are the elements of an art-making experience that explore Jewish values? The first is an introductory motivation and discussion with time for students to associate and visualize images and ideas. Secondly the instructor must choose a specific material or media and the art activity, obviously the process and then finally time for concluding observations and follow up discussion and review of artwork.

Here is an example (show slide). This was a beginning project that we had done with actually several grades on several levels. In the art world we often begin with still life drawing or just drawing from observation, as we did today. I felt that

many students would say, “Oh yes, we learned about the *rimon*, we learned about the apple and honey--we know what they are all about, we know what they symbolize,” but I wanted kids to try to think about the symbols of Rosh Hashanah in a different way. We draw them or try to express them through the arts.

I would set up a still life of Rosh Hashanah symbols, in the classroom, which included a shofar, a real fish, a cut-open pomegranate, a Machzor, and a Tzedakah box. Here I wanted to emphasize the idea of realizing different points of view. So the children would sit around the still life and in this situation they were using pastels. The students were focused on one angle that they were seeing of the still life. Again looking up close, looking far away, everybody had a different point of view. In these slides, you can see every child had their own way of expressing what they are seeing and obviously you can see the joy on their faces, having completed something, an expression of their study.

In conclusion, through a thoughtfully designed, implemented and respected art program, children learn to express themselves in a way that speaking and writing cannot always accomplish. Through the process of art-making Jewish values of *Yirat* and *Shevach Hashem*, *Bal Tashchit*, *Teshuvah*, *Chesed*, *Rachamim*, and *Kavod* are actualized and reinforced. Years of experience in attaining technical and conceptual skills in art-making, builds children’s confidence. Confidence engenders potential leadership qualities. Art becomes a gateway to other disciplines of thought and knowledge and finally it has a humanizing effect on students, faculty and community. Thank you very much.

Gabriel Goldstein:

I would like to thank all six of our speakers for a very insightful and thoughtful remarks and I should thank them particularly for keeping their remarks brief, which affords us some time to actually have a discussion among the six of us and with all of you.

I want to raise one first question. Rabbi Stadtmayer raised a challenge to us, and how can we create curricula activities and plans, which really embrace topics that are more creative and individualistic? Particularly from the spiritual lifestyles in terms of artistic creativity as well. He addressed this particularly in terms of obviously teenage audiences, and as he said, under group dynamics of teenagers. I wondered if

Tobi and Rabbi Simkovich could comment on what kind of case that is and how they have had successes in this within their own environments.

Tobi Kahn:

This year is SAR's first year of having a high school. What I think that you had said earlier on was really important that you have to get the school to buy into the concept that art has to be an integral part of the school. In both schools that I worked at with Pinchas Bak twenty-five years ago, and with Tully Harkstock now, we spent months talking about how it would actually work. The part that I found most important was from a *tachlis* point of view is that the other faculty had to see the value of the visual arts, and that was by far the most important part, so that it wouldn't be like, "Oh it is art today, well we can continue our class--it is not that important, we can get twenty-five minutes and we will move into that and it can be done during the lunch," that is by far the most important thing. In other words, *zman kavua*, that you have a time that is used for making art and thinking about art.

Number two is you have to, at least I think, I am only talking for myself I am not talking for either school, I am talking for how I think of art as an educator, is that you think of having students for three and a half years, because usually the twelfth year and a half year either the students go to Israel or there is something else going on. So you don't have to get everything happening in the first ten minutes.

So, the first program that we did this year was after *Rosh Hashanah*, it was a fast day and we talked about having a day that the kids would go to Wavehill, which is a park and we would divide the classes up into three sections, and one section we would talk about literature, one would have music and the other part would have photography or the visual arts segment. In the visual arts segment, what I did, I bought instamatic cameras and each of the students had a partner, you know I made it like in a *yeshiva*, like you had a *havruta* and each kid would talk to the other kid and they would go around Wavehill and they would look at visual images that they said something to them. They would have to be able to articulate to the person, the other person saying why they were taking this picture. If they were taking two chairs together, this is only about the fabric, is it about the fact that they each share one armrest and what does that mean to share an armrest. What does it mean that two chairs, some are together, some are apart? When you look at the beautiful, it was not a sunset, it was a rainy day and looking at the trees with the weight of water on the

trees, what does that feel about weight, what does it feel about size? It was an amazing morning. They were blown away by it.

Then what they do is they come back and as the artist in residence, what do I do? I meet them once a month and we do over three and a half years we will have different projects. We will work on photography; we will work on different elements in sculpture; we will work different elements in going to the net and looking at the museum. We would work on all different things. We will look at a section of *Tanakh* and try flush it out in one way or another. They will be doing their own yearbook. They will not be hiring somebody to come in and do the yearbook, they will interview each other. So it will become much more of a group activity.

Then what happens was, in youth that it is so crucial and university also and working with adults at conferences, getting the students to talk to each other as a group of why they did what they did. You can't imagine how open people become. You put a microphone in front of anybody--they are going to love to talk. I mean not only artists, everybody. That is amazing and crucial.

Then you get to the point of what happens, I love what the speaker said this morning about drawing, you are learning about volume, you are learning about space, you are learning about how to see things, what color does, you said about mixing color. It is breathtaking; it is unbelievable to see by adding one little thing how things change. As they learn as a group they get closer and closer socially, that is what I think really happens. In other words, there is going to be one person in the class that is breathtaking at photography. But then they all learn how to crop and find what is the beautiful part. What makes a great photographer? Percentages. I have never met a person who can take a half a ream of film and not get at least one good shot. It just doesn't happen. Even if you have to help them crop it a little--but it is in there. It is like finding a jewel in the rough. It has been years, and I tell you, you can talk to people, you know if you ever meet somebody who says they were a student of mine twenty-five years ago, ask them about it. I am sure they will tell you all different things.

So what I say here, you have to find great teachers. But that is what you are striving for. We want to be able to find inside our own community that next time, please God, I love Sister Wendy, I met Sister Wendy. We should have a Jew up there during that. I mean I respect her, but you know there are Jewish people out there. I can name you twenty great artists who are out there, who are very knowledgeable,

maybe they are not so in touch with their Judaism now, but give them a chance. Let them come in. They are very bright, articulate and some of them will tell you that they wished they had an opportunity to re-embrace their Judaism. There are people out there like that.

Rabbi Moshe Simkovich:

To add a couple of things. There are some “Sister Wendys” amongst the Jews, you are right. I know in Philadelphia there was someone named Mordechai Rosenstein who is an artist who came and gave a bit of exhibition to students and there are others. If you want to, you can find them.

A couple of things that we have done to help encourage kids get into it. First of all the school has an annual banquet, and we feature our artists at the banquet. That it is a source of pride for students. They know that the people who are coming to their banquet will see their work. This is an important element in having kids get enthused, excited about it as a group, because they know it is a group exhibition.

Another thing that we have done is encouraged teachers to use art in the classroom; it has particularly worked well with *Tanakh*, although I think it could be done with virtually any subject. As a matter of fact, Anne Gordon (who is here) is a good example. Our first year, she was with us as a teacher, and she put together something along those lines. That is something that you look for--the teachers who will do that much. You need to find teachers with that sensitivity, and make it work. I also agree with you that we need a four-year program. Without it being so, it is like telling your kids you are going to have math for a year and that is it. The value of math will go down. It doesn't mean to me that every student must take the four-year program, but anybody who wants to do art has to try for excellence and be associated with others who are trying for excellence in their field. Therefore, you have got to create a program where they can go and grow through it.

One of the things we do to encourage kids to actually end up that way would be twelfth grade senior projects. Yes indeed, as you get to the end of the year, kids look at it as, “Well I am already into college, I am already into where I am going to Israel, what do I have to think about anymore?” Sometimes students are actually more open at that time to responding to these sorts of areas that they would run away from during the years that they had before.

Again, this doesn't really work if you are doing it out of the blue, if there has been no background, no training, and then all of a sudden in twelfth grade you say create a Matisse--that is not going to happen. But if you have been helping them get there and then even encouraging them to integrate it with other courses and other interests, you get all sorts of things, and not just in visual art.

I know that when I was still in Boston, for example, one year there was a project like this in twelfth grade, and a student who the school never quite figured out what to with. When he was presented with this opportunity to do the project, he said, "I want to do photography." So we found a photographer on the West Coast in Seattle who did black and white photography with a spiritual touch. He went and did photography with him, worked in his darkroom five hours a day and then they learned *Gemara* two hours a day. That changed this student's life. There are all sorts of potential, but again you have to be aggressive in finding the ways to get kids into it. Otherwise, it won't happen if you just leave it to chance.

Gabriel Goldstein:

I would like to suggest that we also perhaps reach beyond integration of *limudei kodesh* in art by actually using *limudei kodesh* to encourage art and look at topics like "zeh keli ve-anvehu" or *tzitzit*, which provide a role model or an example within *mesora* of how the visual can enhance religion. I actually did a small seminar with my daughter's second grade class at last week as they entered into the study of *Humash*, looking at the words "zeh keli ve-anvehu"--three words--we looked at it first in the *siddur* and then in the *Humash* and we looked at it in some Torah objects and how we kind of beautify the Torah and what that means in a *mitzvah*-driven aesthetic and concept.

I would like to open up the floor actually for a general discussion to any of the six speakers and myself, addressing both topics from this afternoon and this morning for a few minutes, if that is possible. You can identify yourself and if you have an affiliation, when you stand up, that would be great.

Jessie Nathans:

I am an artist and I work with Yeshivat Noam in Bergenfield, New Jersey. My question is about parents of the students. Do you think parents can appreciate that all

students don't have to make a great art but that the process of learning art is important enough to make a good program?

Rabbi Alan Stadtmauer (*responding*):

I actually don't know the answer to the question but it was a problem that was raised by the Chairperson of the Board of Education just the other day referring to our early childhood program. There the teachers are trying to work with the students to develop their own art capabilities. It is a brand new program and the word is coming back that the parents are saying, "Well, the projects aren't creative enough." That just means that parents really want beautiful things to hang on their refrigerator and the three year-olds are busy developing their own artistic abilities. So I just want to echo that we definitely need some parent education if we are going to accomplish anything.

Tobi Kahn:

I appreciate that all students don't have to make a great art, but that the process of learning art is important enough to make a good program. I think that is by far the most important thing is if the parents understand what creativity means, it means those parents never had a chance to really study the arts. We always know when a school has a very good art program if it is not stenciled. Then you know there is a good parent body too. They like seeing things that are not in the lines or out of lines. To tell you a funny story, I failed art at MTA. I always laugh and they have wanted to honor me so many times since then and I go, "Well, I got a C because I wouldn't draw in the lines." I think it is a lot to do with education, not only the children but also the parents.

Richard McBee:

I am a writer for the *Jewish Press* and I am also an artist who does nothing but Jewish art. On a kind of a practical note, you were talking about high school courses, you were talking about programs. I daresay that in all of your schools, all of your subjects have an enormous amount of precedent to it. Science courses start with simple things and move to complex things, the same thing with mathematics, certainly history. I would imagine you also even teach Jewish history and you don't just say, "We should be active in our world Jewishly," you try to give people precedent. The same thing, of course, is true about not only making art but also very specifically Jewish art.

Students need to know, not only a general art education, so that they can have a precedent that people do this and then just not other people, but Jews do this and have done this throughout our history. That will provide some kind of foundations. If there is someone who wants to actually do hands on art, they have a world in which to fit. So I would simply suggest that is one piece of programs that will be proposed for art in Torah schools.

Gabriel Goldstein:

Thank you. To hear as many of us as possible, let us take four or five comments and then we will kind of answer them as a bunch.

Isaac Mann:

I teach rabbinics at the Academy for Jewish Religion. When I was in high school we had a course in art. I was at Rabbi Jacob Joseph School on the Lower East Side and the course in art consisted basically of art history. I didn't hear much discussion about teaching art in terms of art history. But my question or comment is, to what extent, if you do teach art from an historical point of view, how can you make it more Jewish, more spiritual? I guess that would probably be directed more to those who are involved with high school students. If anybody wants to comment on that I would appreciate that.

Daniella Robicsek:

I teach *Tanakh* at Ramaz high school. I haven't been teaching very long but I have been trying to incorporate getting the students engaged creatively and visually into the stories which are incredibly engaging, like convey how you feel when you think about the Golden Calf? What I found so frustrating is that, like you said, the 10% of the students that are incredibly artistic will produce stuff that is really breathtaking and extremely humbling. The other 90% of the students won't take it seriously because they don't know how to bring art into *Tanakh*. Also, what I find very stressful as a teacher, how do I grade it? So that is my question. I was wondering if you could get back to that a little bit.

Chana Liwerbrant:

I am at South Warren College and an art major. I had art classes in high school, but for the most part I found that if you did have art classes, the art was very disengaged with everything else. The rest of the classes there is a huge emphasis on the tension between living a Jewish life and being an artist. I was wondering how you can resolve that and how you can help students resolve their issues of being both, because it is a hard lifestyle to be both and there are a lot of conflicts.

Shira Apple:

I am an artist and an educator. I am from Baltimore. Forgive me for stating what might really obvious but I think you have tremendous resources right here in this room. I mean I, coming from out of New York, can name three people in this room who are practicing artists who are educators and who certainly competent enough in their knowledge of Torah to be useful to all of us, I think as educators. So I would definitely say, please take advantage of that.

Two comments I guess. If the artists on the panel could maybe address the experience that they maybe have or don't have in terms of the process of making art and how that can be an experience of the divine or not. Also given that art is a form of self-expression, even if you are dealing with issues of Torah in your art, there comes a point where the Torah meets you as yourself and yourself maybe crosses over and becomes the more important aspect of expression. Sometimes I think that can be very challenging, depending on the audience in connection with issues of *ahavat Hashem*. I know in my own work I found that and I feel like I have really pushed the envelope and that some people would maybe be offended by some things that I have done and I felt it is very much an expression of my Judaism and yet I think other people might find it difficult. So if you have comments on that, I would appreciate them.

Gabriel Goldstein:

I see we have seen sort of three clusters of questions. One was sort of on the role of the history, art history, and Jewish art history in the pedagogy--strictly for a high school audience. The second was the personal identity issue for artists in terms of their own creativity, expression in that creativity as an expression of the divine, but also in terms of the conflict somewhere between a personal and communal identity or a religious identity. The third a little bit of practicalities and how we reach out to

children who are not perhaps as successful and how we might grade them in a curricula level.

So I will take that as an art historian, I will take the art history aspect, I think it is crucial. I think the kind of standard body of great artists, great masterpieces, which was the body of art history for a long time has now expanded its discourse within the art historical realm and the idea of reception. How people receive the work. What their interaction was when viewing the work also we studied.

I am looking at both kind of secular or Christian art or other cultures as well as Jewish art, if we include that discussion from both ends, the creator, the glory of the work but also its audience and how they felt about it. We can help broaden the experience for all. Let us go to quick issues in grading.

R. Alan Stadtmauer: Actually if you don't mind I would like to take that together with the question about art history and being more spiritual, because I think that both of them might have some more directions, if I can just give a story.

A few years ago I had the opportunity to mentor one of my students through a trip to the Museum of Modern Art. There was a student who was busy trying to make up a failure in studio art by doing an assignment in the museum. We went and we spent a lot of time in front of Matisse's *The Dance*. If people are familiar with the painting, they can image it in their heads. It is really about this very intense spiritual group experience in the dance, which is very much not found in American social dancing and is very much found in what was called the *yeshiva shlep*, for a lack of a better phrase. Fortunately, at the Yeshiva of Flatbush we kind of specialized in kids being given spiritual experience during dance and by drawing a piece of art from art history and lining it up with the spiritual, two spiritual experiences that students have, that is exactly one way to be able to bring out Jewish spirituality through art history.

It goes with the grading issue in the sense that it is a very delicate exercise. This student needed to come through that experience, we spent three hours together and eventually he was going to be graded on the ability to draw a piece of art and write about it, not the quality of the drawing, but being able to simply draw a piece of art that he saw in the museum that he chose and then being able to write about it in a free and responsive way of what he thought the artist was doing and his response to it. I felt a lot of measure of success for the morning for the fact that he chose one of the white on white canvasses to draw and write about and it took him forty-five minutes

to draw in black on white a white on white canvass and he was a kid that had absolutely no artistic abilities whatsoever.

The question then goes to the grading. If the grading had to be structured on the ability of the student to demonstrate seriousness of purpose. The teacher, this teacher is no longer teaching at Yeshivah of Flatbush, tried to structure this assignment on the basis of something that was going to require a student to go to a museum, have a real experience there, write about it and deal with it and that was a definable outcome--not the ability to sketch. Unfortunately, the end of the story is the teacher not realizing that he had not gone on his own assumed that the reason why he sketched out the white on white canvass was to make a joke about modern art and actually at first failed the student again, until the student really explained that he spent forty-five minutes looking at this painting.

So, to answer the question on the grading is very careful definable outcomes that the students have been mentored to be able to achieve this outcome and then an enormous amount of trust that maybe the student is taking something very seriously, even when they look like they might not be, because we are asking of them an enormous amount of vulnerability and openness.

Archie Rand: I think that all of the questions that have been asked are related and I am going to try to make some sense of this. I think that it is important, very much the way disenfranchised people, Rabbi Lamm said this morning something like, "A culture can't be expected to function with a certain part of its necessary cultural apparatus amputated." The Jewish culture existing without the notion of an attendant and active visual culture is a problem that has to be cut to the quick, sort of immediately. It is no accident that the speakers today have quoted Spinoza, Hesse, Kierkegaard, Kant and Sister Wendy. The fact is the way the African-American community had to rebuild its history from a lack of existing written history, we as Jews, more than any other people look toward the written history. So you open up our history text and you find a dearth of Jewish artists.

Well, in a certain sense at the high school level and even at the elementary school level this has to be curricularly re-instituted as a new and independent form of study. That is this is a revolutionary and active activity that you people in the room have to consciously take upon yourself. For instance, the visionary painter Pissarro invented everything that later became impressionism. He invented Monet, he invented

Manet, he invented Renoir, he invented Cézanne, he invented Van Gogh, but being a Jew he felt no particular ability to claim land. He couldn't say, "This is mine," it was the wandering Jew syndrome. So he was a great teacher and as such he had two significant students. One of them was a failed priest who got beaten up for ten years for being so empathetic to the town's people who were starving that they couldn't stand him. That was Vincent Van Gogh. The other one was devout Catholic, who went to church every single Sunday, never missed a mass in his entire life and that was Paul Cézanne. Now, if there were Jews who were willing to fill in that space instead of Van Gogh and Cézanne, Pissarro would have been the leader of the Jewish dynasty, certainly a tremendous amount of praise.

Gustave Moreau is the teacher that picks up Henri Matisse because Matisse is thrown out of a fascist anti-Semitic academy of Bouguereau. So he goes down the hall and studies with Moreau who says to him, "It was obvious to me you were born to simplify painting," and Gustave Moreau becomes Matisse's teacher, Gustav Maro was Jewish, Pissarro was Jewish. These are important things to know. Take the history books and cut the *Goyim* out, they get enough. I am absolutely serious. We have to find these people; we have to say that Frida Kahlo's Jewish father had a tremendous amount to do with her work. We have praise Chagall to the skies because of his courage in painting *rabbonim* at a time when Paris was still suffering under the stinking anti-Semitism of Dreyfus. Chagall is a human hero; he is an enormously courageous person. For us to sit here and accept the *goyish* art historians and the self-hating Jews that say things like, "Oh those candy colors, that immature look, that childlike stuff," that is accepting the same kind of thing that nobody would tolerate if said about an African-American. "Oh he is so childlike." Go ahead, try it on, see how it sounds. That is what they say about Chagall.

Anyway, how does it fit into a Jewish life? You go with a bunch of *goyim* and you go out sailing and you are all drinking and everyone is sitting around and you are wondering, "What kind of Jewish life is this? This is not a Jewish life." So Ralph Thorend tries to liken and incorporate this and say, "It can be a Jewish life, we can dress," but think about what it is. What they are talking about is they are talking about the concept of pure pleasure, unrelated to lifestyle. This is a very un-Jewish concept. Jews don't have the notion of pleasure, somehow not attached to life. What we have is the notion of celebration.

However, a Jewish educator can know that when an artist makes a selection—what Ophir Agassi was talking about this morning--the artist making selections, that selection is a form of celebration by the artist. When you get to the great artists who read people like Rainer Maria Rilke who say finally “All an artist can do is praise.” Or you read people like Louise Bourgeois who today says something like, she wrote a letter to the College Art Association a couple of years ago where she said, “Thank you, that is my philosophy. Thank you very much.” That is once the artist realizes that gratitude is the greatest creative tool, that gratitude can be linked into love of Hashem, it can be linked into love of learning, it can be made a totally Jewish value, it can be played into the curriculum without having to take garbage from the long line of anti-Semitic junk that comes with the difference to iconography, which was the product of the Christian church.

Now, the Christian church deserves a tremendous amount of credit for keeping this alive. That is, we know from Dura Europus that Talmudic rabbis *davened* in *shuls* when not only with their full figures, but there was even, you will excuse me, the hand of Hashem coming out of the wall. I don’t have to worry about whether or not this was kosher. This was kosher then and through a series of historical events, all of which may be understandable in retrospect, that is no longer tolerable to the contemporary Jewish situation. However, as Rabbi Lamm said this morning, “things are in flux all the time,” and we have to go to the most contemporary examples. Going to the most contemporary examples, art is something that Jews not only can do, but must do. If you go through the history of post-war art, 50% of the artists, almost all of your critics and curators and your museum people and your magazine writers, it is a Jewish event art. You would be hard pressed to find *goyish* artist now. I mean everybody is Jewish. Pick up an art magazine and somehow the Jewish artists don’t want to be called Jewish and the Jewish institutions don’t want to accept these people. When Tobi says that you could find twenty of these people at the drop of a hat standing on a corner waiting to be readmitted into the communities that have cut them out and if you can find those communities willing to readmit them, there will be a revolution and those revolutions have to start at the level of elementary and high school education, has to be start in the curriculum and has to be started with people like Modigliani and Lee Krasner and Eva Hesse, God only knows, I mean you can go down the list forever. I think that that kind of curriculum has to be rewritten and has

to be instituted into Jewish institutions and the benefit of that is obvious and everything that has been said the rest of the day.

Tobi Kahn:

One thing that somebody said in the audience about what we are doing at SAR and I know many high schools are doing this now. Every year we are going to have two visiting artists in different fields, coming in and they will be there for a month or two and at the end of that six week or two month period there is going to be a show of their work and then students can get to know these Jewish artists who are both male and female, every type of art. So it is not only one type of art, even though they have a fantastic art teacher who did a program here today, that she is not the only one that they meet, but they see a great diversity, just like you had many different Talmud teachers.

The other thing that somebody brought up, it is very hard, and I think that is such a valid thing to say. Every month I get a phone call from somebody who says, "You know, I don't know if you know who I am, but my husband went to high school with you and my cousin knows you--you know my kid is going into art school. Is it really bad?" I go, "I don't know, I don't know your kid, I don't know if it is really bad or not." Being an artist and wanting to stay observant is not easy. But I think being an artist and wanting to do anything is not easy, you know, like having a family. I will tell you a story that I had that I will never forget. I love the work of Agnes Martin and when I showed it at the museum in Santa Fe I asked to have a private meeting with her and spent an afternoon with her and it was a wonderful, wonderful few hours. Then in the middle of the time I am talking to her, she is one of the artists your student, I love was doing the white on white painting, that is Agnes Martin and she said to me, "So do you have a partner?"--that is the proper way to say "Are you married?" without saying are you married. I said, "Yes." She said, "Do you have children?" I said, "Yes, I love my children," and she said, "You didn't do that for your wife?" I said, "No, I always knew I wanted children." The conversation was dead. I mean it was so sad, I felt like I had gone into the garbage, I wasn't even in existence anymore. It took me twenty minutes to get the conversation going again because she really felt that one had to make a decision at that time in your life, either you are going to be an artist or anything else. You couldn't be an artist *and* a wife or a husband; you couldn't be an artist if you wanted to have children. I said, "We have

an egalitarian marriage, I always knew I wanted children. I am very involved in the raising of our children.” It was such a sobering conversation and I realized again that, yes it is a hard life.

Somebody else asked about how do I feel about *Avodat Hashem* and making art? I have always felt from the minute I started making art in elementary school that it was my way of *davening*. I still use *tefillin* every day, I always have, but this is a way for me to get much closer to my creator. I feel while I am in the studio I have a direct connection, I feel I am doing something that is not only about me. There is a beautiful *dvar Torah* about Bezalel that he was given all the gifts that he had, he was not really such a great artist. I think there are many artists that will tell you that when they are making something they feel that there is something larger than themselves that is going on.

Elizabeth Lazaroff: Throughout this discussion, I still am troubled, I feel like jumping the gun and this is what my comments really are directed towards, talking about what is the place of a course in art? How do we add that to the curriculum? I think it is really where we step out and really understand the extent to which artistry, art making, art appreciation is just basic foundational human experience. Nobody walks down the street without seeing the world, feeling the world, smelling the world, touching the world. We are at base sensory beings and until we all can be better versed in Howard Gardner, Elliot Eisen or Suzanne Langer on and on and on, Maxine Green, we are not going to be able to articulate to our constituency’s parents, administrators, even kids why we are doing this.

I think a lot of it has to do with packaging. We have to think about the language we use to talk about what it is that we are doing and creating a learning environment where it is just natural. Because the only way people learn really is in a multi-sensory way. I am not talking about having gimmicks all day long. That is not the point. The point is recognizing more deeply the ways in which people learn, the ways in which people learn well and creating curricula that respond to that. Until we have a better grasp on human psychology, the psychology of learning, understanding how curricula need to be aligned with that, the arts are going to continue to feel like something else we are adding on. We are going to need to justify how they are useful in and of themselves, especially in early childhood and elementary levels.

The arts should be, and if they are not there is something wrong with the curriculum, part and parcel of how teaching happens because that is how people learn and interact with the world. It is not even a Jewish question; it is a question of learning and understanding human cognition. I think that is really where the discussion needs to begin before we jump into how we are going to design the curriculum and how we are going to convince people that we need a course in sculpture and so on and so forth.

That ability to articulate well why it is that we need to learn in this way, is really, I think the precursor to being able to really adequately articulate why it is that we should have courses in the arts, perhaps even more so the arts just infused across the curriculum where they are appropriate.

Gabriel Goldstein:

I want to thank all six of our speakers for their eloquent and inspiring comments. We have seen today, in order to teach our students we have to cultivate our own education and understanding, we have to cultivate board members, educational systems, parents, administrators across the board, so that they can brighten as it says those last three words of the Torah—*“le-einei kol Yisrael.”* Thank you.

Conclusion

Rabbi Jeffrey Saks:

At ATID one of the ideas that guides our work is that, sadly, teaching is the lonely profession. Every educator knows that we go into our classroom with our piece of chalk and we close the door, and perhaps art and artists may be closest to educators professionally in this realm. A sense of professional performance, which is at the time it is happening, taking place somewhat in isolation from colleagues. You are aware that they are out there, you know they will be seeing your work or hearing about your work, but they are not there with you.

Most professions are not like that. Most people practice in a community of professionals. By contrast, education is very lonely. Because of that we find it difficult to overcome problems. We find it difficult to think reflectively about what we have done well and what we have done poorly--and that happens sometimes also. We in ATID have committed ourselves to attempting to create a professional community.

Many people have asked and correctly so, *tachlis*--what is going to come out of today? I can't really tell you. We at ATID are committed to moving this issue more to the center. We at ATID are committed to trying to produce materials, bringing people together, generating ideas that have the potential to energize our practice in Jewish education. But we are also committed to having a day like this where we can come together and hear ideas, some we agree with, some we disagree with. To hear different perspectives from the tradition, from the studio, from the classroom, from the boardroom, from the parent on the other end of the phone and together, as I think someone earlier said, to be a resource to each other, to know what is happening outside of our own classrooms, and if we have succeeded in doing that, if there were conversations that began today, we hope they will continue. People will now sit and discuss what has been brought up today with each other. If you will take it back to your schools, even better: to move forward, to make it happen, to generate more of this.

In our book, Rabbi Brovender concludes his discussion with a quote from the great novelist Joseph Conrad who writing in the introduction to his *The Nigger of the Narcissus* said:

Art is long and life is short, and success is very far off. And thus, doubtful of strength to travel so far, we talk a little about the aim--the aim of art, which, like life itself, is inspiring, difficult--obscured by mists. It is not in the clear logic of a triumphant conclusion; it is not in the unveiling of one of those heartless secrets which are called the Laws of Nature. It is not less great, but only more difficult. To arrest, for the space of a breath, the hands busy about the work of the earth, and compel men entranced by the sight of distant goals to glance for a moment at the surrounding vision of form and colour, of sunshine and shadows; to make them pause for a look, for a sigh, for a smile--such is the aim [--and I might add: such is the aim of Jewish education; such is the aim of the religious life--], difficult and evanescent, and reserved only for a very few to achieve. But sometimes, by the deserving and the fortunate, even that task is accomplished. And when it is accomplished--behold!--all the truth of life is there: a moment of vision, a sigh, a smile--and the return to an eternal rest.

Just to conclude by quoting a Jewish thinker, I jotted down this morning a comment made by Ophir Agassi in his instructions to us before he went off to those workshops and I hope you had an opportunity perhaps over lunch, if not in the workshops themselves, to really deliberate, to really consider what that exercise means for us in the classroom. It means a tremendous amount. Ophir commented, "There is no need

to draw many lines when few will do.” Then he said, “There is no reason to do anything without a purpose.” That is the mission of the religious life. That is the mission that the Rambam who sketches out in those great final chapters of the *Moreh Nevukhim* that there is a palace, the king is in his palace and there are many roads to the palace and there are some that are in an anti-chamber and there are some that are outside the palace and there are some out of the city walls and everyone ought to be trying to get to that place. The trick, the insight, the key to the palace, the key to the ultimate religious aim, is consciousness, is awareness, is to know that there is no reason to do anything without a purpose. Art is surely one of the avenues to help us all enter the palace of the king.

Copyright © 2003

ATID

Academy for Torah Initiatives and Directions

9 HaNassi Street, Jerusalem 92188 Israel

Rabbi Chaim Brovender, President

Rabbi Jeffrey Saks, Director

Tel. 02-567-1719 • atid@atid.org • www.atid.org

Video links of the conference sessions available at:
www.atid.org/art.htm