What to Do About Joseph Schwab and the Rabbis:
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Joseph Schwab's (1909-1988) importance in education research involves his scathing critique of curriculum theories that fail education, together with corresponding efforts to refocus curriculum studies on practice, especially in the classroom. These were centered in College Curriculum and Student Protest (1969) and a series of six articles, The Practicals 1-4 which were published between 1969 and 1983 (1978, 1983).

In College Curriculum and Student Protest (1969), Schwab diagnosed student turmoil as symptomatic of failures in schooling. He prescribed curricular changes and teaching devices based on liberal arts that could actively engage students in their education. Arguing against a body of rote methods or rhetoric of conclusions as the rationale for undergraduate education, he explored the liberal arts as resources that can enable students to find their own questions for texts or problems and to become their own critics. Most importantly, he showed how the disintegrating college communities could be restored and renewed.

In The Practical papers, he proposed that five bodies of disciplines and experiences be represented in a collaborative group undertaking the task of curriculum revision. Schwab called four of these the Commonplaces of educational thinking, which require representatives of the affected learners, teachers, subject matters, and (social-cultural) milieus, respectively. The fifth is that of the curriculum specialist who must work with the other representatives to assure that the commonplaces are properly coordinated and to make all aware that changes in any one will have consequences for the others. Unbalanced deliberations, either dominated by a single commonplace or omitting

some, lead to successive bandwagon curricula each based on an exclusive theory, e.g., of child development, teacher needs, subject matter innovation, or social change.

Schwab designed a set of eclectic arts to join theories across disciplines so that scholarly and research materials could be shaped into teachable curricula. He developed another set of practical arts for the problem-perceiving, problem-posing, and problem-solving activities required by the unsatisfactory curricular situation. (1978, 324-332)

As the members of the curriculum group discover and develop their capacities in an actual deliberation, they turn the common places into particular places, by perceiving details in the pinch of their problem. The process is incremental, local, and ongoing. Institutions need gradual, coherent improvements, rather than to be dismantlement and reconstitution. The affected agents must discover their own problems and resources, without dictation by centralized authorities. Ongoing deliberations change a problematic situation into a situation of problems discerned and solutions undertaken, evaluated, and modified. The deliberative process develops in a spiral rather than a serial progression as the deliberators discover what solutions can run with what problems, when problems or solutions can be combined with other problems and solutions, and how the effects of solutions have unintended consequences that create further problems and opportunities.

From 1969 to 1986, Schwab worked on six articles (the last two unpublished) in the various dimensions of The Practical. Practical 1 gives his basic critique in terms of flights from the curriculum field. Practical 2 demonstrates the polyfocal deployment of the eclectic arts on theories through an imagined course in educational psychology. Practical 3 focuses on the constitution and functions of the curriculum group. Practical 4 gives special attention to the institutional role of the curriculum specialist as chairperson of the group

effecting educational change. The Practical 5 shows how to use subject matter commonplaces through the development of alternative views in literature for teaching stories. The Practical 6 explains how to find subject matter commonplaces that can map subject matters, using illustrations from literature and psychology. Together, these six articles reveal Schwab's polyfocal pluralism and pragmatic thrust.

As a scholar and teacher Schwab pulled together such wide experience in the five bodies of disciplines necessary for curriculum development that he became a genuine polymath in education. He was quick to trace positions to unexpected consequences. Expressed in a down-to-earth, no-nonsense rhetoric, this made him a formidable and challenging presence in public forums and the classroom. These qualities are revealed in tapes of seminars he gave at Michigan State University in 1976 and 1977 as part of the establishment of the Institute of Research on Teaching, and in recently discovered sessions recorded between 1962 and 1966 with the directors and counselors at Camp Ramah during his tenure at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

Schwab's concern for education as a deliberative activity connects him to John Dewey and American Pragmatism. His respect for the formulations and proper uses of theories connects him to the Classical Aristotelian distinction between theoretical, practical, and productive (aesthetic) activities. Internationally, educational practitioners in the European Didaktik tradition, especially in Germany and Norway, have recognized The Practical. Only recently has the full extent of his involvement with and contributions to Jewish education been revealed.

I worked with Joseph Schwab on a variety of projects starting with coursework at the University of Chicago in 1966 and ending with his final illness at Santa Barbara, CA in 1987. These included my dissertation on characterial change (1973), joint teaching in the Department of Education during my doctoral period, work afterwards on the dynamics of classroom discussion, and finally, the last two Practical articles. The Practical 5 (1985) is concerned with the uses of polyfocal conspectus in literature. The Practical 6 (1986) focuses on the formulation of commonplaces by showing how to map them in intrapersonal psychology and by suggesting ways to extend them by combination with interpersonal ones in the context of classroom discussion.

Our association had several bases. One was my keen interest in practical problems of teaching and, perhaps like Schwab, my willingness to engage in difficult situations, i.e., dissertation research undertaken at the height of the black student revolution and concern with the curricular causes of that uprising. Another was our tendency to think alike. Work that I had been struggling with against unsympathetic faculty in other areas of the University became clarified by my work with him. This was especially true of perspectives gained from the commonplaces as locations of knowledge and appreciation in the Humanities, but more importantly, how they made subject matters available for deliberation and teaching. He also appreciated my interest in poetics, encouraging my writing of “plotlines,” condensed dialogues between myself and the students, which contrasted my experiences teaching standard and engaged curricula. This presaged my present work, focused on performing, publishing, and giving workshops on poetry and aesthetics.

My dissertation was the only one I know supervised by him that involved The Practical in the field. In it, I worked to repair the largest remedial college program in the country in the late 1960s at Woodrow Wilson Junior College (now Kennedy-King Community College). The problematical situation was cross-cultural. The remedial curriculum was a watered-down version of mainstream subject-oriented texts, alien to the students. The curriculum itself had been adapted from the liberal arts model of the University of Chicago taught by its graduates. My courses introduced both minority texts (Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison) and personal parallels to standard curricular short stories, e.g., "What would you do in the circumstance of Shirley Jackson's "'The Lottery'"?—in which ordinary small town citizens ritually and uncritically pick a scapegoat to stone to death). Such approaches enabled the students to connect their personal experience to the foreign texts. One aim was to teach the students to suspend and repair their interpretation of their scapegoat role by showing them a larger whole in which whites also become victims of their own oppression. This curricular innovation is detailed in Schwab (1969, 131-137) and Roby (1973, 1978).

Alan Block has written a valuable and provocative book that brings to the foreground the curricular orientation of Joseph Schwab in a new context. It is valuable because it highlights long neglected traditions of Jewish educational thought and draws many useful parallels between them and Schwab's Practical. It is provocative because it presents a radical thesis of Judaic origins about apparently settled matters concerning the basis in Western thought of Schwab's career. It invites us to gather additional evidence and rethink the relationship of the Practical to an unexpected range of Talmudic issues. Whether of not readers agree or disagree with all or any part of Block's way of reading

Schwab, they will come away with a broader understanding of the possibilities for practice from the perspectives of both Talmud and The Practical.

Block bases his thesis on an illuminating general historical parallel. Talmud is a great example of one kind of deliberation, so there are many points of comparison to make with The Practical: in multiple formulation of problems and solutions; in pains-taking and time-consuming dialogues and debates about them; in tentative and open-ended proposals that must generate more discussions to validate and extend them; in concern for curricular actions that will improve the lives of students; and in appreciation of work for the general good. Since I am not a scholar of Torah or Talmud, for the purposes of my essay I shall take Block's version Talmud as given.

Such parallels are also audible on the recordings from Camp Ramah when Schwab was working on a character education curriculum, in which the methods he used with the directors and counselors were reflexive, were those that they would use with the campers. Schwab's use of narrative and story telling is especially interesting as he elicits the actual experiences of the participants and weaves them into his own personal parallels while imagining further tales to illustrate how the program could be implemented on the ground (1962-1966).

There are also personal parallels for Block in his own book since he has come to his understanding of Schwab by way of Talmud, and his own educational practice owes much to both. This lends a personal cast to the book. A review of its structure is helpful. As I proceed chapter-by-chapter, I will try to suggest an educational orientation that emerges out of them, the very passionate and engaging curriculum of Alan Block

Block's book begins with a Hakdamah, or "forepiece," (framed by two Talmudic stories) in which he uses a personal parallel between prayer and study to introduce his readers to himself, to his topic, and (in a way) to the persons who are subjects in the book. Here is a surprise. Very few books begin with a prayer. Perhaps more authors need to, since both study and prayer involve an ethical way of being in which we acknowledge in public our sense of wonder and awe— a blessing in moments of insight, a humility at how little we really know. It is important to note the personal voice here. Fully stated in the first chapter, it will reverberate throughout the text:

"I am myself concerned with the situation and reception of Schwab's work. I am myself concerned with this issue. I am comforted to find a colleague in Joseph Schwab" (2004, 12).

Thus, each chapter highlights appropriate essays by Schwab.

Chapter I—By Way of an Introduction—Block makes three points, namely that 1) the long dominance of Western curricula by Greco-Roman-Christian principles and practices has 2) distorted the interpretation of Joseph Schwab's curricular work, which 3) can be rectified by an infusion of Talmudic study. The rest of the book is an effort to deliver on the third point. Block notes not just deliberation as a connection, but underlines the extent of deliberation in the Babylonian Talmud (2004, 17) as well as the emphasis on "discussion as curriculum" in both Schwab's practice and in Yeshivah (2004, 6, 11). He also begins his documentation of the pervasive anti-Semitism in Western culture that excludes Jewish educational contributions while forcing assimilative behaviors on its Jews.

Chapter II—The Value of Schooling—continues Block's Jeremiad on Western education, using a Marxist image of trade to show how the educational standardization of subject matter into commodity knowledge has short-changed students, who need social and intellectual growth in exchange for the efforts of learning. Here he introduces the key concept of meshikhah, which the Rabbis defined as an act of physically pulling an object toward the one who wishes to acquire it. This is not education as the learning of objectively given truths, but as learning "what is immediately important to our lives" (2004, 31). It is also highly relevant to Schwab's "Eros and Education" (1978, 105-132)

Chapter III—What is Jewish about Joseph Schwab—is pivotal, showing in detail the connections between Rabbinical Judaism and The Practical which lead to the conclusion that Schwab's work is steeped in the Talmudic discourses that are his model for translation into curriculum (2004, 64). Block sees Schwab's translation, however, as distorted by its assimilationist need to employ Greco-Christian language. Central to the comparison is Schwab's "polyfocal conspectus." Talmudically speaking, this is the bringing together through inquiry of "multiple interpretations of scripture, multiple opinions of in the law, that is, with multiple approaches (but the only approaches) to the truth" (Kraemer, 1990, 190). No subject of interest failed to find its way into Talmud which focuses its wide-ranging exegesis of holy texts on practices possible and actual (2004, 62-3).

Chapter IV— In <u>Gold Acquires Silver</u>—Block further integrates the two curricular approaches in an adroit and unsettling replication of Talmudic thinking that challenges us to rethink the monetary context of currency exchanges in terms of spiritual understandings. The Rabbis emphasized the process of exchange over the extrinsic value of the material acquired. The meshikhah, e.g., the drawing of meaning from a text, must come from within the students, their desire to know, rather than valued by their passive acceptance (2004, 70, 73). Block shows how the meaning of "acquired" shifts in terms of the context, not of fixed standards, but of exchange, a key concept for pragmatic curricula (2004, 77-94).

Chapter V—"<u>They Pelt Him With Stones</u>": <u>Standards, High-Stakes Testing, and Culpability</u>—involves a series of stories from Talmud and Block personally.
Their interpretation exposes the inherent contradictions of performance-based tests that test no actual teacher's performance, but instead have deleterious effects on students and their ability to learn how to function as human beings and citizens. He shows how a valid testing program would evaluate not the students but the entire educational process, demonstrating why students should not be executed by testing, using an extended analogy in a long exegesis of Deuteronomy 21:18-21 in which the Rabbis exempted a stubborn and rebellious son from execution (2004, 108-123).

Chapter VI—<u>"Who Holds This Book": Ethics, Reading, and Responsibility</u>— uses its Walt Whitman quote as an ongoing refrain to remind us that readers hold persons, the authors and themselves, in a complex set of obligations. These are required by the act of

"Inquiry and the Reading Process," the Schwab essay about the participative reader that anticipates Harold Blooms' declaration, "the relationship between texts…depend upon a critical act, a misreading or misprision, that one poet performs upon another, and that does not differ in kind from the necessary critical acts performed by every strong reader upon every text he encounters (2004, 127). Block develops the Talmudic side of the argument by using Kabbalistic literary criticism and updating the obligation toward lost/borrowed scrolls/books.

Chapter VII—"They Sound the Alarm Immediately": Anti-intellectualism in Teacher Education—includes Block's further Jeremiad against the standardizing causes of current degeneration in schooling, which he delineates through a series of stories aimed at our possible penitence, fasting, and healing. This requires an act of teshuvah, the name for the act of turning to the world to work towards the world's redemption. It is as Buber says "more than an act of personal (or even public) contrition; it is an act of personal (or even public) commitment" (2004, 161)

Chapter VIII—Obligation's Time shows how to break the bonds of time-bound school structures reaching for fixed objectives, in order to create educational time that fulfills our obligations to teaching and learning. For the Rabbis, actions were not to be deadlined, but meant to make time come into being with respect for its full dimensionality, its past present future. Otherwise, our teaching is for a future that is not yet, from a past that is erased, in a present that does not exist.

I have listed the chapter titles to give a flavor of this book's unusual thematic structure, its striking rhetoric, and its movement from the predictable to the surprising. For instance, Block's criticisms of broken Western educational structures and institutions pile on top of many previous such critiques. Their extensive basis in Torah and Talmud, however, is fresh and interesting, especially in prophetic tone and replication of Talmudic method. Additionally, the front begins with a clever Acknowledgements based on the written form of the Hebrew language.

There is an Afterword by Peter Applebaum consisting of 8 short stories, the first introducing himself by way of how he began his relationship with Alan Block. In the other tales, Applebaum adds to Block's examples using Talmudic curricula with his own students. Interlaced with the stories are 7 short commentaries on them. In the last commentary Peter adds an important assertion that "There is nothing about Talmudic scholarship that presumes a particular religion or viewpoint; (2004, 220). On the other hand, Block's text has been steeped in Talmud. Here is a puzzle. Two ways of using Talmud. Is one better? In different circumstances? What circumstances? What do the Rabbis have to say about a Torahless Talmud?

Block concludes with an "addition," a Hosafah: By Way of an Introduction. This final story is about Rabbi Mendel's reply to students who asked him why he did not write a book. Mendel describes all the distractions that prevent his people from reading, ending with the question, "Now tell me, why I should write a book?" Why, then, should Block end his book in this way? Many influential teachers, such as Buddha, Jesus, Socrates and

Mendel, have lived and worked in the moment. Socrates suggested living words become inert on the page, unable to explain themselves. How can we have a conversation with a book? With whom are we talking? Or does Block write because writing a book is a way for him to study, which is a form of prayer?

This last question returns us to The Beginning, the last two words on the final page (followed by a six-pointed star). But do we have to go directly to the beginning of the book? Or can we work from these points back towards the front, chapter-by-chapter, paragraph-by-paragraph, and even sentence-by-sentence to review the journey of the book. I especially advise a shift to back-and-forth for Chapter IV, after readers going forward have experienced its conundrums and puzzled about the hierarchies of acquiring. In addition, since there is no index, readers can begin their own with the Acknowledgements and annotate it using the practical arts of review and revision to reflexively criticize their initial reactions as part of their educational experience of the book. These are practical arts that I added to Schwab's in my work with him (1978, 103; 1986, 63-64).

Here is a text rich in surprises and puzzles at both ends, and one that in many respects challenges readers to get into the middle of it, to put it together for themselves, and to do something educational with it. It is a challenge to have it on one's bookshelf for ongoing reference, since it requires re-reading and re-thinking.

Among the riches here are many instructive stories, interesting song lyrics, and wide-ranging references to philosophy, literary criticism, and a Charlie Brown cartoon, all layered and coordinated with quotes from a large Jewish and educational literature. Block works Joseph Schwab's essays into this mix by comparison, by proximity, by theme and topic, rhetoric and argument, community and obligation, repetition and refrain. Overall, Block seems to be replicating the Talmudic rhetoric that he believes can save us. In addition, there is poetry in Alan Block's prose. His Whitmanesque repetition of "Who holds a book holds a man" is often effective (2004, 125-158). Especially attractive are the later chapters where Block's own curriculum develops out of his exegesis of Talmud's stories. It is religious without becoming evangelical; humanistic without losing sight of transcendent realities, and disputative but not nihilistic, nurturing irenic debates that feed the mind and spirit. This narrative use of Torah and Talmud makes a more trenchant criticism of our educational problems than his more standard issue reviews in Chapters I, II, VII. The story-telling has a positive voice. It indicates what to do.

Nevertheless, historical parallels consist of instructive differences as well as helpful similarities. Schwab also contrasts to Block's comparisons. Block places great emphasis on the eclectic arts and polyfocal conspectus to which Schwab devotes Practical 2—citing the Talmud's wide-ranging collection of stories, love poems, laws, ellipses, arguments, association, etc.—to justify the statement that "Talmud is the translation of theory into practice." 2004, 62) The Torah, however, is not a theory about God, but, as Block tells us, a divine mandate, a narrative of the events which embody that mandate, in

itself an event, which must be actualized in the decisions and deeds of its people: I am Holy therefore you shall be holy.

Talmudic eclectic, in its associative use materials and poetical method, ranges way beyond anything written by Schwab, or discussed by him. Schwab's eclectic refers to theory, to the very activities he differentiates from practice in Practical 1 (1978, 288-291). This is generalized knowledge, warranted conclusions arrived at by inquiry into evidence confirming hypotheses tested and verified in ongoing investigations against competing hypotheses. Schwab was a Western scientist who worked with theories (1940), and taught theories (1965). He was also conversant with and able to use a wide range of theories from social sciences and aesthetic criticism, e.g., 4,000 articles for "What Do Scientists Do?" (1978, 185); eight ways of reading William Faulkner's short story, "A Rose for Emily" In Practical 5 (1986). His focused description of the eclectic arts in Practical 2 refers to 1) systematic comparisons and contrasts of theories; and 2) their semi-systematic applications (1978, 324-326). These are two very different kinds of eclectic, though they do share a purpose, since the Talmud is a scholarly commentary on the Torah, which contains laws and other general propositions that require their own kind of polyfocal translation to resolve ethical conundrums in the here-and-now inherited from apparent absolutes of the there-and-then.

A more difficult question concerns the personal, historical parallel Block raises about Schwab's own relation to Judaic thought. There is a sequence of approval- seeking statements that start early on where Block says, "I would like to think that Joseph Schwab

would have appreciated this kind of thinking," viz., Block's comparison between study and prayer (2004, 3). While tentative at first, his statements about the Talmudic source of Schwab's thought evolve into the certainly that Schwab approves (89) and agrees (123), so that towards the end of the book it becomes an identity prefigured in Block's early repetition of Schwab's opening statement in Practical 1, "I shall have three points." (1978, 287-288; 2004, 10-30) Thus, Block rewrites Schwab as follows:

And Schwab writes: "A curriculum ought to be known by the persons it produces, as well as by other signs and standards." In the language of the Rabbis, I would offer, "read not 'known,' a situation in the past, but rather, read 'knowing,' a process active in the present (2004, 185).

I leave to other readers whether this gloss improves Schwab's text in the direction that Block wants to take it. More important is the assimilating basis by which he arrives at this authority.

The bases are several. One is the technique by which one interprets books through the cultural background of the author's presumed world, Another is how a reader can use this background to apply a "strong" reading, as Harold Bloom put it, "an act of misprision in which the reader misreads in order to achieve self" 2004, 126; Block's italics). These can be useful critical stances, especially for the assimilative stances of poets (2004, 127), but they work less well for scholarship, which attempts to discriminated its subject and distinguish one inquiry from another.

They also work less well as global perspectives. When Block italicizes "Interpretation is all" (2004, 63), whose only opposite is Indoctrination (2004, 173), he overstates the dialectic opposition. Readers who apply such assertions reflexively, one of Schwab's tests for viability (e.g. 1978, 182-183), will find that discussants have to agree with their misrepresentations of each another because it is, after all, his or her interpretation. Moreover, there are clearly interpretations that will not hold up under Rabbinical inquiry, for instance, that God doesn't exist or that He doesn't care whether his people are holy or not. There is a text here, and you cannot do just anything with it. Perhaps for his own work Block means to push this hard on interpretation, but it will not do to pull Schwab along with him.

Block's strings of quotes seem to integrate Schwab seamlessly into Block's context, but sometimes he loses some important parts of Schwab's concepts. For instance, when Block writes (2004, 6) that "Schwab argued strongly for the institution of "<u>discussion as curriculum</u>, 'an engagement in and a practice of the activities of thought and communication'" (1978, 106), (Block's italics, my underlining) he omits important upfront qualifiers that open the quoted essay, "Eros and Education: A Discussion of One Aspect of Discussion":

Discussion, by itself, does not constitute an education. There are many things it cannot do or cannot do well. It cannot teach the whole art of reading well. It cannot do much toward teaching a student to write with clarity and to the point. It cannot efficiently give

one the statements of fact or the experience with concrete things which knowledge and wisdom must sooner or later include. It cannot substitute for the solitary labor or organization and memory which underlies knowledge. Nor is it the place for the work of lonely creation which crowns knowledge if one is lucky (1978, 105),

Such misreadings constitute a misprision in Block's approach that leads him to conclusions about Schwab the man that are unprovable by his approach to text, ascribing Schwab's "silence" on Talmud to Gentile oppression of Jewish thought and action. He suggests that important facets of Schwab's Jewish origins could be hidden from this deeply reflective man (who undertook psychoanalysis) in such a way as to affect his work (2004, 47). He compares Schwab to Mortimer Adler as "another assimilated Jew at the University of Chicago" (2004, 26). Adler, however, was not just "assimilated," e.g., a secular Jew, but a Catholic convert. Schwab was a known Jew, perfectly able to defend his Judaism, to speak at Hillel at Chicago, to work on Torah curricula at Melton, to publish that work (1964). Moreover, Block's comments imply that there is only one real way of engaging Schwab, Block's way of the Talmud. He maintains that Schwab's deviation from that path is the reason for distortions in his writing that make it difficult to understand, albeit decipherable by rabbinical exegesis as its Rosetta stone. Block says he is not writing a biography, but here he crosses the line (2004, 47).

A curriculum vita is not a life. "He who holds this book holds a man," but not the whole man, not the life story, even of Walt Whitman in his one enormously important book. And where is the corrective when the reader supreme reads a book as a person? At

Ramah in response to a question about the religious content of the Camp program, Schwab says he is religious in the sense that "you can be a religious person without finding yourself identified with any particular formal treatment of it." He defines a religious person as one who confronts The Numinous (my caps) that he describes in an extended discourse best set forth here in his summary, pointing out that a religious experience unavailable to secularists who fail to realize

weights I can't pick up, they're too heavy for me, so that's…not a sign or a signal of other things that are too much for me, much less a sign or signal of some things that are too much for any man, much less a sign of the possible existence of somethings that are too much for any and all men collectively and cooperatively. The Numinous then requires the further step of conceiving of a focus, a locus, a place where the powers that no man could possibly have, might indeed be located…the real possibility of the existence of a focus or place where the powers…indeed exist…when what you lack, you can conceive as existing in some other being (1962-66, disc 7, tracks 21-25).

Schwab says he has personally experienced what he has been describing.

One can find parallels to the Rabbis here, to the fourth level of Kabbalistic reality (2004, 143), or to passages in Block's Hakdamah (2004, 2-3). Nevertheless, Schwab mentions neither Talmud nor Kabbalah nor any other official religious source. Taking him at his word, then, the omissions are not accidental. He had, as he indicated, the experience of confronting The Numinous without help or interference from observant or scholarly

helpers. As with The Numinous so with the Practical. Just because the Rabbis come first, doesn't mean they must be the cause.

The biographical thrust of Alan Block's account of Joseph Schwab has only his understanding of the text behind it. It is not too late to try for greater insight into Schwab's Jewish engagement, however, beyond the generalized descriptions of William McNeill about the culture of the University of Chicago Campus in the Hutchins' era (2004, 18). A number of counselors, directors and faculty from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America are still alive with their memories of Schwab's tenure. It may be even possible to return to the Mississippi that he left, since Southerners have long memories.

The most salient characteristic of Joseph Schwab was (and is) that he is unassimilable. Unlike the Thomistic ex-Jew Adler, he conforms to no doctrine or method in the many fields he researched and taught (virtually every course in the Hutchins College). He is neither Augustinian nor Aristotelian, not beholden to Dewey or Rabbinical Judaism or Block. He is therefore free to challenge them all. This independence is the source of his great strength. Walt Whitman might have observed that Schwab "contains multitudes," but in this he is a Schwabian original, possessing an ability to represent contrary positions as if they are his own, then turn and constructively compare, contrast, and criticize them. Alan Block would like to think that Joseph Schwab would approve of the (for me) instructive comparison between study and prayer in Block's opening Hakdamah. More likely Schwab would challenge it, question it, take it apart, analyze its metaphorical roots,

debate appropriateness on both sides of the comparison, and finally agree or disagree with Block on some surprising basis that came up in the discussion. I think Block knows this.

The key to how Schwab was able to do this involves his extensive use of commonplaces, a major omission in Block's account. This is not surprising, since few commentators note their usage, but if Schwab is to be better understood, the commonplaces must be better known. In Practical 2 he speaks of them in terms of a "tool:"

It is constructed by a certain mode of systematic comparison of the principles, premises, methods, and selections used by and in each enquiry. This mode of comparison generates a set of factors to be called 'commonplaces' or 'topica' (the names pilfered from Aristotle and Bacon). These commonplaces represent, in effect, the whole subject matter of the whole plurality of enquiries of which each member-theory reveals only one façade at best, and usually only one façade seen in one aspect. An adequate set of commonplaces, then, provides a map on which each member of a plurality can be located relative to its fellow members. (1978, 339-340)

The commonplaces are not fixed, but broad, flexible, and open-ended (1978, 340-342), as indicated in Schwab's unfinished attempt to combine personal and interpersonal commonplaces of psychology (1987), a task suggested in Practical 2 (1978, 349-356). There are texts, subject matters and fields of study here. The most obvious commonplaces are the four in education as a field of study. He uses them, for instance, in

his numerous appeals for coordination, rather than superordination-subordination, of Learner, Teacher, Subject Matter, and Milieus (1978, 372). There are also commonplaces involved with each of the educational one, e.g., of subject matters: such as Author, Audience, World, and Work in literature (1953, 6; 1979, 54-58), that Block himself uses, substituting his words: writer, reader, and text for three of them (1986; 2004, 125-7). Translating the common places into particular places is one of the jobs of curriculum work, e.g., to see how a given critical theory interprets a certain story in a way that makes it available for particular students. Practical 5 develops eight ways of reading William Faulkner's short story, "A Rose for Emily," as an "anticipatory generation of alternatives" from critical scholarship for curricular possibilities (1978, 315-318; 1986)

This approach lies behind Schwab's method of interpretation in "Inquiry and the Reading Process," Block describes Schwab's participative reader from this essay as "the constructor of meaning and of the self's meaning" (2004, 128). For Block the reader becomes the text; the reader becomes the writer, and reading becomes the world (2004, 125, 127). Schwab, however, does not support this absolutism of the reader, no more than he embraces the clarity alleged by the semantic doctrines of discourse, of reading the text, reading that he is debating (178, 152). Although in the end there is "no certainty that one has received an author's intended meaning," the reader has "correctives which tend to resist our pushing meanings very far from the alternatives used by an author" (178, 157)

Such correctives involve the commonplaces of the author, "and the more we push our meanings into the context of his own inquiry, the more will we tend to correct in ourselves those usages of his field in favor of his own frontier meanings" (1978, 157-8). Schwab's uses passages from F. H. Bradley and Aristotle as examples of inquiry into what these authors are doing with their words, terms, and distinctions. The descriptions involve specific rejection of some meanings that readers and students bring to the text. In the case of Aristotle, what emerges is a schematic of enquiries into the problem of classification of sciences according to subject matter, method, outcome, or different abilities of the investigator. Inquiries into inquiries, as well as inquiries into subject and problem (the basis for the idea that "any apparently definitive or highly persuasive solution to a clearly defined problem ought to appear in a context which will indicate that there is yet more to know or more to know about" (1978, 153) result. These procedures are quite different from those that rely on the triumph of the reader.

Schwab was also an advocate of Devil's Advocacy, able to challenge and change his own critical positions and so find the differences (1969, 60-61). Discussion method (1978, 105), though required for education, is not the single approach to it. Even the deliberative approach itself is not the universal method. Schwab was a superb lecturer, a deadly debater, and an outstanding scientist, operating educationally with all these orientations.

What was at the center of his self-possession? I have never been exactly sure. There was a Zen-like quality at his end of a phone conversation, as if the subject (on whose notes I

had been sweating, about which he had talked before) had come out of the blue. He treated every class as if it were a Taoist uncarved block, full of possibilities, coming prepared as best he could, but expecting the unexpected 1962-1968, discs 1-3). In his interdisciplinary emphasis, he exemplified the Buddhist conception of the interdependence of things. He had a rational intuition that told him what was appropriate to do in various circumstances. He would make quick decisions in classroom discussions and other educational forums, moving forcefully with their implications. He was fearless about being wrong as he forged ahead. In this, his deliberations seem less "deliberate" than the Rabbis'. But like them, he was also reflective on the possibility of becoming wrong-headed, when the need came to change course. While this is one way I have tried to make sense of the mystery of the man, I have not postulated a hidden Orientalism in him. Original thinkers appear from time to time with fresh ideas that take us in new directions.

The suppression of the Jewish voice in Western society is reprehensible, and is receiving its judgment, but not all Western thinkers are responsible for the repression, or for the distortions of their interpreters. There are stiff-necked and flexible souls in every tradition. Block may have a tendency to idealize the Rabbis at the expense of the alternative discursive and practical orientations in other traditions, East and West. Socrates, founder of discussion method in the West, is dismissed and buried under layers of disputative quotes. Moreover, in such passages Block's Talmud-like repetitions and circumlocutions prove not to be practical for cross-cultural discourse. The space taken up by them could have better been used by making connections between Torah-Talmud and

the more positive participants in the Western drama of educational thought, thereby moderating some unnecessary negativity in his reviews. This engagement, however, is now irenic debate for another book.

It leads, however, to another point. Although Block is pluralistic within the Talmudic tradition, he is univocal outside it. What other reasons might there be for Schwab's "silence?" Since he knew Talmud, why didn't he use it in the friendly confines of the Melton curricula? Was it because he thought the Talmud was too "Talmudic," overly involved with hair-splitting analysis and extravagant alternatives, while insufficiently concerned with the reflexive arts of termination and action (1978, 326)? Alternatively, that he thought Talmudic study could lead away from Torah? I don't think that Block's book needs this distracting personal parallel—the hidden Jewishness of Schwab—to support it.

My last words, like Block's, are also about beginnings. They concern the whole literature on The Practical and its students, advocates, critics, commentators, and interpreters. A problem runs through us all, including this article. We are all hard to understand because to write about doing practice is not doing practice, and thereby we become subject to our own complaints. This is seen in our endless rhetoric about engaging "the immediate," "the particulars", "the concrete," "the here-and-now," "real students in real classrooms," etc. Such calls for action are written in what I call the Generic Particular. The best parts of this literature have bits and pieces from more extended deliberations and are suggestive of them, but do not themselves qualify.

I am impressed by Peter Applebaum's description of his non-Torah Talmudic curricula, but have next to no information on how it came about, its failures that became successes, its successes that became challenged. I think the idea of a Torahless Talmudic method is intriguing, and unpacking the condensed list of questions that end his last commentary (New Questions) would be a start. As a model of method, however, it is as condensed as any of Schwab's.

This, however, is subject for another book. Meanwhile I love the way Block uses the apparent archania of Talmudic debate to clarify contemporary issues, although I would need help to use it to construct a curriculum syllabus on curriculum. His day-to-day classroom decisions would be interesting in the way they would very likely deviate from the class outline. Without further information, we will have very little idea why. Everyone who is working in Joseph Schwab's shadow is working on his or her piece of The Practical, but there is neither context in which to view the whole of it, nor place for its implementation.

Schwab himself is not exempt from this critique. He tries to concentrate whole worlds in grains of sand. The resultant compression becomes abstract. It requires unpacking by readers untrained in either philosophy or close reading of text, much less experience of The Practical. Moreover, readers have to have read what he has read, a formidable challenge, even for a group. This is the source of their ongoing difficulties. Those of us who experienced his teaching, prudential handling of dissertation problems, and

administrative desiderata have witnessed the unpacking. We have the lame excuse, "Well, if you had been there, you could see it," when what we need is extended sessions where Schwab is leading deliberation. These we now have from Camp Ramah. A short review will provide context

Virtually none of Schwab's own extensive work in curriculum deliberation has survived, for instance, from the end-of-week three-hour-review meetings that each of the various Hutchins College staffs held on their courses as they were teaching them (1989, 79). The periods when he was personally involved are clear enough, beginning at the University of Chicago, especially in the Hutchins' years during the 1940s when he chaired the natural sciences sequence in the College. Later, In the Department of Education during the decade after 1965, he supervised a small number of dissertations, mostly on the eclectic arts. There are also a few classroom recordings from that period. After retirement, he consulted. From this last period, there are cassette recordings and unfinished transcripts of the two seminars mentioned earlier, in 1976-77 as part of his work in founding the now defunct Institute for Research on Teaching at Michigan State University with Lee Shulman and others. The seminars are great examples of Schwab teaching, but come to us without deliberative context.

Schwab's other extended curriculum deliberation was in the late 1950's to middle 1960's, when he worked on curricula for programs at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, in its Melton Center, and especially at Camp Ramah. Records do survive from this tenure—in correspondence, curriculum guides, and recordings. These last are crucial. They show Schwab actively deliberating with the Ramah directors and

counselors on a problematic situation—the uncoordinated programs (religion vs. crafts) of the camps and their possible integration by modification towards character education. Listeners can hear him using the forms of inquiry—involving the eclectic and practical arts—that he later conceptualized. The sessions sound the themes of his educational career: the inevitable incompleteness of any single psychological theory, the effort to combine and modify such theories to prepare young egos for character growth, the quest to discover the meaning of problems in raw and immediate experience rather than pre-formulated responses, and the dialectical engagement with unruly details. The recordings show what happens when the generalized and abstract formulations in the Practical papers meet with real circumstances, flesh and blood students, and pressing, conflicting educational needs e.g., between becoming the best baseball player/team and using baseball as the vehicle for personal/social growth through the experience of teamwork.

These 18½ hours (1962-1965) have been transferred to CD and are available for interested scholars. They are important segments of Schwab's nearly decade-long tenure at Melton. As stimulating as they are and important to study, we need to get beyond Joseph Schwab's available contributions to curriculum. We need to channel our calls for the reality of The Practical into establishing an active center with an archive for collecting the scattered studies of his students as well as searching out other effective practices (small schools come to mind). In Chicago, Peter Pereira and I have the beginning of such an archive. This constitutes a call for such material, especially any other recordings of Schwab's live appearances.

Such a center would operate training programs, seminars, and conferences. The generation that knew and worked with Schwab has about another decade to go. We should put our energies towards training future generations to gain a critical mass of quasi-rabbinical students for the implementation of programs of The Practical at all levels of education. He himself said that such a program could be underway in two years (1978, 320), but like the proverbial thousand mile journey, we have hardly taken the first steps.

Not just one center but many such, coping with the variety of educational problems cogently lay out by Block and other critics. Such centers need not function only at schools of education, but need to communicate and interact with one another, as did the synagogues that established the Talmud. This is the most important parallel that comes out of Alan Block's book, the future parallel for practical education. For this, he has my thanks for bringing a Talmudic perspective so effectively in support of The Practical that I have been stimulated to discover the idea of this program for Schwab Studies and invite comment, dialogue and debate on all of it.

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