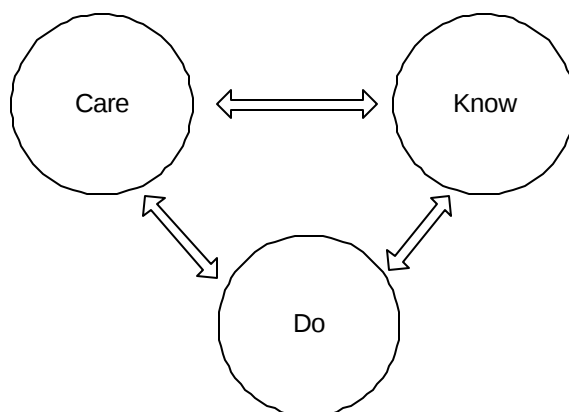


A View of the Conference Theme

Context: Root and Branch: *Torah and Ecology Conference*
Larry Pfeffer, Jan 20, 2002 lpfeffer@acm.org

To Care, to Know and to Do

Rabbi Chaim Soloveichik will present at the conference his father's, Rabbi Ahron Soloveichik's (Z"L), views on Judaism, ecology and activism. Rabbi Ahron Soloveichik's life seemed to have been a blend of "*Logic of the Heart and Logic of the Mind*" and "*To Care, to Know and to Do*" and captures the essence of the suggested conference theme. Many would argue that all of halakha is "*To Care, to Know and to Do*", but reality shows the three concepts and their interplay need to be illuminated and reinforced. Often the *Know* is emphasized out of proportion to *Care* and *Do*. In a sense Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik's (Z"L) message in "*Halakhik Man - Part II: His Creative Capacity*" is the boldest reinforcement of the conference theme from another perspective. (See **Quotations** after this message.)



To *Care*, perhaps because "*Logic of the Heart and Logic of the Mind*" in part implies that if one perceives even a long-term ecological problem then one is "activated" and "empowered" to *Know* and *Do*. In addition, *Care* is an important glue between *Know* and *Do* - as is *Know* between *Care* and *Do*.

There is a subtle issue of what drives *Know*. It shouldn't all be utilitarian¹. The mind may aggregate a critical mass of "thought objects", which at a given moment seem irrelevant. Yet, faced with a given problem, some of these "objects" may spontaneously "fuse" and provide insight enabling and setting in motion a process of *Perceiving* the problem, *Caring*, additional *Knowing* and *Doing*. If it is appropriate to *Do* without *Care* and *Know* is another issue.

"*To Care, to Know and to Do*" means looking in Judaism beyond prescribed positive and negative commandments. A self-perception of being *Tzelem Elokim* leads to empowerment "*To Care, to Know and to Do*" and periodically *Perceive*, *Invent*, *Create*, *Actualize*, etc. ... bold new visions which transform the world to make it a better place and continue the saga of ethical creation and "fixing" (*Tikun*).

¹ old arguments about pure and applied science, math, etc.

Multiple, Interrelated Scopes of Concern

In context of ecology "*To Care, to Know and to Do*" means understanding local, regional and global - as well immediate, medium and long-range ecological challenges and being pro-active and creative about what needs to be done. This may lead to pragmatic steps, such as an obligation to invent and put in place superior transportation systems², alternative energy³, more energy efficient homes/offices, new sewage handling systems, radically new medical systems and techniques, improved social systems (latter two part of *Human Ecology* - implied by discussion with Rabbi Chaim Ze'ev Lifshitz), etc.

Realm of Actual and Realm of Potential

An abstract message is that prohibition of wanton destruction extends from the *Realm of Actual* to the *Realm of Potential* - that which isn't but can be if we *Care, Know and Do*. If we *Care*, but don't follow thru with *Know and Do*, or *Know* but don't *Care and Do* - we, in effect, destroy something valuable which already exists in "Potential" and fail in our basic existential purpose: to fulfill the mission implied by being in *Tzelem Elokim*: ethical creation and fixing. Ministers and their technocrats are surely negligent if they don't rigorously follow the dictum of "*To Care, to Know and to Do*" and if they are not creative (calculated) risk takers - meeting major challenges and opportunities of the time. The same applies to religious leaders.

It would be interesting to know what is the enlightened Jewish view (inasmuch as there is A view) *on Destruction of the Potential* - especially if the potential is an important way to resolve an existing or predicted crisis. There may be guidelines - e.g. prevention of potential new life is prohibited (contraception) and the law against destruction of a fruit tree (whose fruit is in the potential).

Ecological Mega-Problems (and Mega-Opportunities)

There are major ecological problems outside the realm of recurring "Green" concerns. Let's call them "Mega-Disasters" - e.g. asteroid hit⁴, major volcanic eruption⁵, potential collapse of a major volcanic wall into the Atlantic Ocean⁶, accelerated arrival of Ice Age, etc. "In theory", these and similar potential massive global threats ought to energize humanity to refocus on survival vs. local strife and prevention of such Mega-Disasters requires significant individual and group effort. On the other hand, AIDS is a mini-Mega-Disaster - and this global threat didn't seem to have a unifying effect ...

Outside of typical "Green" issues lurk other concerns which may require 25, 50, 100 etc. year long planning cycles for study, R&D, deployment, etc. Sort of like NASA style projects, or

² e.g. perhaps PRT-s - Personal Rapid Transit - at municipal, suburban and inter-urban scope with technical compatibility, to enable non-stop, point-to-point rides (with automated inter-system routing)

³ e.g. solar, geothermal, etc.

⁴ with massive destruction of life and species - we had a possible "narrow miss" in early January 2002

⁵ one theory is that Dark Ages set in because of a major "dirty" eruption in Philippines

⁶ e.g. in Canary Islands, sending devastating 100 meter tsunamis to Europe and 50 meter tsunamis to North and South America East Coast (recent Scientific American article)

perhaps like nano-technology, where the desired "revolutionary" result⁷ is maybe 20-40 years off. Clearly if we "*Care, Know and Do*" and envision major potential ecological threats, we can't wait until the threat is imminent⁸, but must develop the conceptual framework, capitalization, engineering methodology, technology tool-kit, ... and deploy in time⁹. This requires massive capital, intellectual resources and global unity. As any major defense system¹⁰ some of these defensive ecological measures may never be "activated", and hopefully become just expensive "insurance" with considerable technology and methodology fallout¹¹.

There was a recent example of actual engineering intervention to prevent a natural disaster: in Philippines, where a volcanic crater lake was filling up to the brim. If allowed to overflow, the lake could have caused a massive landslide and considerable loss of life. Engineers cut a controlled "canal" in the volcano and drained part of the lake in a safe manner. Presumably "Mega-Engineering" would have positive impact in major earthquake zones, etc. In a sense, if we know a major ecological threat is likely¹², and intervention may be feasible, it is mandated by *pikuach nefesh* ...

Put another way:

- 1) we *Care* about the planet's ecological survival - surely for immediate, selfish reasons: our racial [biological] survival - or survival of knowledge and intelligence
- 2) we *Know* about a number of potential ecological Mega-Disasters and in theory can allocate resources to develop remedies
- 3) what do We *Do*? ("We" = the "I"-s and the various collaborative hierarchies of "I"-s and "We"-s: groups, corporations, nations, alliances, UN)

Memory of the Past and Memory of the Future

There is another Jewish underlying concept. A more balanced sense of "Time" is required. Judaism seems to look *backward*¹³. We have a detailed *Memory of the Past*, but seem to lack *Memory of the Future* (Hope, Aspiration, Coherent Vision, etc. --- **NOT** prophesy) Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik speaks about a more balanced, fluid sense of time in Judaism¹⁴, where there is a "*Memory of the Past and of the Future*". Having a "*Memory of the Future*" is at times prerequisite of great creative endeavor or fixing (*Tikun*) work. NASA, for example, was and is mostly about *Memory of the Future*. So is the quest for nano-technology, etc.

⁷ e.g. self-assembled near zero-cost, nano-meter scale, mobile, flexible, super-computing, communicating, etc. nano-machines

⁸ e.g. day before a suddenly emerging asteroid hits the planet, a huge volcanic wall collapses into the Ocean, the magma under Yellowstone bursts and triggers a Dark Age, ...

⁹ e.g. for protection against asteroids - a "defense perimeter" at critical points in space

¹⁰ e.g. NORAD, and latter "Star Wars", etc.

¹¹ e.g. mega-engineering

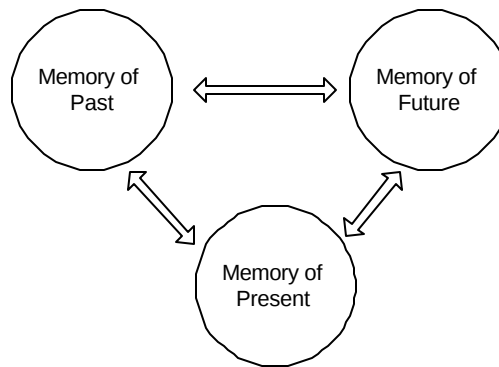
¹² e.g. as we know a major earthquake is likely in Israel or California

¹³ notable exception: coming of Messiah

¹⁴ Rb. Joseph Soloveitchik, **The Unique Experience of Judaism** (in Joseph Epstein, Shiurei HaRav)

The ultimate Jewish experience of the last 50 or so years: Israel, at this stage, seems to have *No Memory: No Past, No Future*. Only the *Now*. The substandard transportation infrastructure (and unusually high accident rate), the chronic water problem, lack of coherent vision of national destiny, failing education system, increased fragmentation of Jewish people, etc. are some indicators. Since there is no memory, there can be no coordination¹⁵. In context of Israel we are fixated on the *Do* ("*Tachles*", "*C'ik-C'ak*") - perhaps we are not even capable of that at this stage, as our focus is at best patchwork fixing: a weakened sense of *Do*.

In terms of Judaism all "streams"¹⁶ seem to have asymmetric memory: *Memory of the Past* - and no *Memory of the Future*¹⁷.



A fundamental challenge is assuring a balanced sense of memory¹⁸ throughout the Jewish community. This would be an invigoration of Judaism¹⁹. This change in perception can have monumental ecological and other impact.

Suppose we had *Memory of the Past* and *Memory of the Future*. The former is already extensively developed in Judaism; we look back at various epochs of our history, back to the two Temples, to Moshe, Abraham, Adam, moment of Creation and thru Kabbalah to primordial - perhaps pre-Bereshith events. With a new, balanced sense of memory the Jewish community would likewise structure its *Memory of the Future*. We look back neatly six millennia. The implications would be phenomenal if individually and collectively we had a memory (exhilarated anticipation) of the next six millennia²⁰. If such an ambitious span of vision (not prophecy) is impossible - then we ought to set a less ambitious goal: to look out the "forward" window of time hundred, even fifty years. This view of Judaism empowers to address potential ecological Mega-Disasters (or Mega-Opportunities), which may only be relevant to down-stream generations. Judaism teaches various obligations regarding *Memory of the Future* - many with ecological significance. E.g. "*Be fruitful and multiply*." (surely a Future oriented concern) and rules

¹⁵ that requires at least three disciplined steps: *Envision, Coordinate, Do*

¹⁶ haredi, orthodox, conservative, reform

¹⁷ with some "streams" even *Memory of the Past* is dimmed and cloudy

¹⁸ also "*Spatial Memory*" - the ability to balance local, regional and global (and soon inter-planetary) concerns

¹⁹ Ref. Quote by Rb. Joseph Soloveitchik, **The Unique Experience of Judaism**

²⁰ ignoring "details" such as concepts about anticipated time of the Messiah's arrival

concerning planting a fruit tree²¹. The story of the Flood, surely an ecological Mega-Disaster, has strong element of *Memory of the Future*. Noah was given opportunity of a long planning cycle. Etc.

I and We

There was mention of interplay of *Care, Know* and *Do*. Also interplay of underlying concepts of *Past* and *Future* time domains and *Local, Regional* and *Global* spatial domains. Effective practice of "*To Care, to Know and to Do*" requires yet another interplay: between "*Individual*" and "*System*" ("*I*" and "*We*")²². Judaism teaches one to be an *individual* (one attribute of *Tzelem Elokim*) and part of a *system* (community). The "*I*" must be able to soar as high and wide as it can, to find its own special place, that is different for each person - yet maintain pragmatic connection to reality. It must be a "connected I" - rooted in common reality shared by all/many "*I*"-s and "*We*"-s. There needs to be a new way of seeing this relationship of "*I*" and "*We*". Systems composed of imprinted individuals²³ have severely diminished capability and are not up to par facing the major ecological and other problems ahead²⁴. Similarly, individuals with ego-driven individuality can't effective form collaborations required to address major problems.

Super-Empowerment

September 11, 2001 showed how much "*leveraged damage*" can be achieved by terrorists who are "*super-empowered*". As a corollary, "*To Care, to Know and to Do*" unlocks massive untapped capabilities and potential to enable even higher magnitude "*leveraged creation and fixing*".²⁵

Conclusion

If the conference can make "*To Care, to Know and to Do*" the/a central theme, then it can indeed plant an important seed

²¹ In the *Now* of planting there is no practical gain. Only a seed or a seedling. In the first years there is no fruit. We must wait a number of years before eating the fruit. Only then is the fruit tree yielding pragmatic benefits. The gain is all future oriented.

²² This section is based on fusion of ideas by Rabbi Chaim Ze'ev Lifshitz and I. (LP)

²³ who are in effect at best components in a machine - and are thus unable actualize having been created in *Tzelem Elokim*

²⁴ Note Klotzker Rebbe and Zussia quotes on the "need to be I".

²⁵ Mr. David Devor (Jerusalem) proposes a phenomenally super-leveraged project - he calls "**Project Mind**". His book "Project Mind" (under pseudonym T. Kun) and Web site (www.projectmind.org) elaborate.

Quotes

Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik Z"L

"Man is obliged to engage in creation and renewal of the cosmos.", **Halakhic Man - Part II: His Creative Capacity**

"Halakhic man is the man who longs to create, to bring into being something new, something original.", **Halakhic Man - Part II: His Creative Capacity**

"This wondrous spectacle of the creation of worlds is the Jewish people's escatological vision, the realization of all its hopes.", **Halakhic Man - Part II: His Creative Capacity**

"The peak of religious ethical perfection to which Judaism aspires is man as creator.", **Halakhic Man - Part II: His Creative Capacity**

Halakhic Man - Part II: His Creative Capacity contains many similar thoughts.

"The time awareness of youth is future oriented while the time awareness of the old centers on the past. Existentially, to be young means to be committed to the future, while to be old means to contemplate what once was but is no longer. The young man is essentially a searcher, a questioner, and a believer, while the old man is primarily a reviewer, a mediator, and a skeptic.

Judaism attempts to combine the experience of youth and age and requires of the Jew that he be simultaneously, and perhaps paradoxically, both young and old. Like a tree whose roots absorb their nourishment from the soil and whose foliage is caressed by sunlight flowing from a distant and unknown future, the Jew must be deeply rooted in the past and inspired by a vision of the future.", **The Unique Experience of Judaism**

"Just as the past can be experienced in the present, so can the future. Experiential anticipation means that the Jew anticipates an event not just because it is bound to occur -- that would only be intellectual anticipation; it means that the Jew becomes excited and rejoices and sings and dances as if an event which will first transpire on some unknown date in the future had already taken place. The future is experienced as reality and is integrated into the frame of reference of reality even before it occurs.", **The Unique Experience of Judaism**

Other quotes from Jewish sources

"If I am not for myself, Who will be? If I am only for myself, What am I? And if not now, When?", Hillel

"If I am I because I am I and you are you because you are you, then I am I and you are you. If, however, I am I because you are you and you are you because I am I, then I am not I and you are not you.", The Klotzker Rebbe

"If in Heaven I am asked why I wasn't like Moses I have a convincing answer. I didn't have this and that aspect of his greatness. If I am asked why I wasn't like Abraham I also have a

convincing answer. I didn't have that and this aspect of his greatness. If I am asked why I wasn't Zussia I will be unable answer.", Zussia (paraphrase)

"Moses and Aaron are the archetypes of these two differing attitudes: Moses would say, let the law prevail over all else; Aaron, however, loved peace and pursued peace, and made peace among people." Moses symbolized the preeminence of law and principle, Aaron—that of peace and unity. Gemara (Sanh. 6a) (From talk by Rabbi Norman Lamm)

"Group action--yes; group thinking--no", Rabbi Norman Lamm

"Mutual commitment to ideals--yes; the stifling of all dissenting notions--no.", Rabbi Norman Lamm

*"Each of us must have tucked away in some corner of his and her brain a contrarian--or **ipkha mistabra**--compartment whose function it is to seek out views other than those we readily consent to because they swarm around us. The devil's advocate can well turn out to be an angelic emissary. And swimming against the stream may be the best way to avoid drowning.", Rabbi Norman Lamm*

Quotes from "secular" sources

*"A stand can be made against invasion by an army; no stand can be made against invasion by an idea.", Victor Hugo, **Histoire d'en Crime, La Chute X***

*"Here is a great institution devoted to and expert in science and technology. Why, in this time of anguish, do you not apply your instruments, your techniques, to the burning social questions of the times?", Joseph Weizenbaum, **Computer Power and Human Reason** (Quoting from address to MIT by Kenneth B. Clarke)*

[One could paraphrase for a view of "Passive Judaism", looking only backward - and not creatively and aggressively addressing the burning social issues of our time.]

"To see what is right, and not do it, is want of courage, or of principle.", Hosea Ballou (1771-1854)

"The desire for safety stands against every great and noble enterprise.", Tacitus

"Don't be agnostic. Be something.", Robert Frost

"Great minds have purposes, others have wishes", Washington Irving

"It is common sense to take a method and try it. If it fails, admit it frankly and try another. But above all, try something.", Franklin D. Roosevelt

"To do is to be", Camus

"To be is to do", Sartre

"These people, these politicians, these statesmen, these directive people who are in authority over us, know scarcely anything about the business they have in hand. Nobody knows very much, but the important thing to realize is that they do not even know what is to be known. They arrange so and so, and so and so must ensue and they cannot or will not see that so and so must ensue. They are so unaccustomed to competent thought, so ignorant that there is knowledge and of what knowledge is, that they do not understand that it matters.", H. G. Wells, **World Encyclopaedia**

(Paraphrase of statement about European politicians and policy makers in the post-World War I era by Maynard Keynes. Apt description of our politicians and religious leaders of diminished stature.)

"If you wish it, it is not a dream.", Theodore Herzl

"The baby figure of the giant mass of things to come.", William Shakespeare, **Troilus and Cressida**

"The most precious commodity we have now is the few years of lead-time before the problem grows beyond our capacity to control.", Prof. Alan F. Westin

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.", William Shakespeare, **Hamlet**

"You can count the number of seeds in an apple, but can't count the number of apples in a seed.", Unknown

"The only way to predict the future is to invent it.", Dr. Alan Kay

"Anything that is theoretically possible will be achieved in practice, no matter what the technical difficulties, if it is desired greatly enough.", Arthur C. Clarke

"When a distinguished, but elderly scientist states that something is impossible, he is probably wrong.", Arthur C. Clarke, **Clarke's First Law**

"The empires of the future are the empires of the mind.", Winston Churchill

"The important thing is not to stop questioning.", Albert Einstein

"Imagination is more important than knowledge.", Albert Einstein

"When I examine myself and my methods of thought, I come to the conclusion that the gift of fantasy has meant more to me than my talent for absorbing positive knowledge.", Albert Einstein

"The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all art and science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead; his eyes are closed.", Albert Einstein

"How many times in the course of my life had I been disappointed by reality because, at the time I was observing it, my imagination, the only organ with which I could enjoy beauty, was not able

to function, by virtue of the inexorable law which decrees that only which is absent can be imagined.”, Marcel Proust

“The Golden Age lies before us and not behind us, and is not far away. Our children will surely see it, and we, too, who are already men and women, if we desire it by our faith and by our works.”, Edward Bellamy, **Looking Backward**

“Man seems to be entering one of the major crises of his carrier. His whole future, nay the possibility of his having any future at all, depends on the turn which events may take in the next half-century. It is a commonplace that he is coming into possession of new and dangerous instruments for controlling his environment and his own nature. Perhaps it is less obvious that he is also groping toward a new view of his office in the scheme of things, and toward a new and racial purpose. Unfortunately he may possibly take too long to learn what it is that he really wants to do with himself. Before he can gain clear insight, he may lose himself in a vast desert of spiritual aridity, or even blunder into physical self-destruction. Nothing can save him but a new vision, and a consequent new order of sanity, or common sense.

...Visions, if they are to be permanently helpful, must embody the whole breadth and depth of experience. They must not be crude, extravagant, lopsided. They must be conceived not only with originality but with sanity, even if sanity has to take up a new orientation in consequence of the new vision.”, Olaf Stapledon, **Last and First Men**, 1931 (Forward to the Original American Edition)

“There is nothing more difficult to arrange, more doubtful of success, and more dangerous to carry through, than initiating change...”, Nicollo Machiavelli, **The Prince** (1513)

“It must be remembered that there is nothing more difficult to plan, more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to manage than the creation of a new order of things. For the initiator has the enmity of all who would profit by the preservation of the old institutions and merely lukewarm defenders in those who would gain by the new ones. The hesitation of the latter arises in part from the fear of their adversaries, who have the laws on their side, and in part from the general skepticism of mankind which does not really believe in an innovation until experience proves its value. So it happens that whenever his enemies have occasion to attack the innovator they do so with the passion of partisans, while the others defend him sluggishly so that the innovator and his party alike are vulnerable.”, Nicollo Machiavelli, **The Prince** (1513)

“As sober professionals, we are not supposed to step outside our specialised fields of knowledge to criticise the private interests that threaten the global system and cause mass human rights violations. We are supposed to restrict our public statements to topics that will not reflect badly on our employers or upset funding sources. Adopting such an impartial, apolitical role means that we acquiesce in research and education moulded to fit a corporate-shaped economy. In truth, neutrality is impossible: to do nothing is to vote for disaster.”, David Cromwell and David Edwards, **Silence is Tarnished**, *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 10 Nov 2000, p. 18.

“We advocate and practise non-violent civil disobedience as a method of causing people to know the perils to which the world is exposed and in persuading them to join us in opposing the insanity which affects, at present, many of the most powerful governments in the world.”, Bertrand Russell, **Autobiography**, III, 1969, p. 139.

“But, in terms of the practical problems we must face in the next few generations with the foreseeable technology, it is clear that we will greatly increase human misery if we do not, during the immediate future, assume that the world available to the terrestrial human population is finite...A finite world can support only a finite population; therefore, population growth must eventually equal zero.”, Garrett Hardin, **The Tragedy of the Commons**, 1968.

“To know and not to act is not to know.”, Wang Yang-Ming

“It is time to speak your truth. Create your community. Be good to each other. And do not look outside yourself for the leader.”, **Hopi Indian advice**