

Record of discussion known as Think Tank, conducted by Rabbi Norman Lamm with a group of about twenty dormitory counsellors of Yeshiva University on February 12, 1969. After the initial presentation, in response to several prepared questions, the session was thrown open to general discussion.

I am flattered at the assumption behind your invitation that in twenty minutes I can cover Belief in the Unproven, Religion as a Crutch, the Existence of God, Why God Created the World, and God Concerned with Man and History. It speaks volumes, and also requires volumes. Obviously, I make no pretense at being able to answer all your questions, because I have no illusions about my ability to answer all of my questions.

If I may begin with a counselling point, I think that this is the first approach to take to students. Avoid the pretense that you have all the answers. In the attempt to struggle with questions, one of the main things to convey to them is a feeling that it is possible to have unresolved problems and to continue nevertheless with unscathed emunah and mitzvot maasiot -- even while you struggle with those problems. What you in essence are doing is not giving him information as much as transmitting an attitude of confidence that you have a certain confidence and he can take the same confidence from you. If you have a good, warm relationship with the boy then this confidence that you have in your ultimate commitment, despite your problems, can be transmitted. It is not much different from a healthy attitude towards sex education. The physiological information can be given by anyone. (My personal feeling is that it should not be the parents who give anatomical information to their children.) But when it comes to everything

else, to the inculcation of attitude and personal orientation, the most that a parent can do to a child is say - look, this is an area beyond your present experience. You simply have to have faith that it is a wonderful thing, it can be great; but it can also be dangerous. This sense of confidence can be transmitted. Notice that I am not using the word "faith." Faith is a more personal element. But with the confidence that despite the problems and the questions it is nevertheless possible to continue with complete cognitive acceptance of all of yahadut and the living of the life of yahadut, the problems seem to solve themselves, or at least they are reduced from the intensity which is so disturbing to thinking people.

With this introduction, let me proceed to consider your five problems as presented to me. Of course, all I can do is offer a comment here and a comment there and hope that at the very least it will arouse some discussion.

First, belief in the Unproven. This is, I think, a most important point. Students, especially those who are beginning, having their first taste of sophistication, pretend first of all to the idea that the only reality is that which can be "logically" or "scientifically" proven, that unless you can offer logical evidence for any proposition then it is not persuasive. That this idea flies in the face of all our primary experience doesn't bother him. We are all "rationalists" of this rather unsubtle variety at a certain age, and many of us continue this way until past our college careers when we begin to mellow, or

during our college careers, if we read and think enough. But young people simply say, "How can I believe in the unproven?"

Our approach, I believe, should be simply to assert and to try to prove through various forms of familiar experience that there are dimensions of experience and existence that simply lie beyond logic and beyond science. The question of why you love this girl or why you feel so warmly towards your father is not something that can be proved, that can be dissected, or for which syllogisms are going to suffice. Intuition, instinct, emotion -- all of these are areas which make human beings human. The area that is susceptible to "proof" is a very, very small segment of our total personalities. To deny reality to anything except that which is proven is simply to deny the reality of all human existence save the technological or the mathematical. In fact, the newest tendency in contemporary theology is towards a re-discovering of the transcendent. I would recommend to you, and for you to recommend to them, Peter L. Berger, A Rumor of Angels, in which the author supports to discover "Signals of Transcendence" in everyday experience.

The next point: "Religion is a Crutch." Well, isn't it a crutch? The first answer should be, yes, it is. There is nothing wrong with crutches. If you have a broken leg, a crutch is a marvelous thing, and if you throw it away, you fall down. To a certain extent, religion fills a need. Man has a deep-seated need for Someone to rely upon, for Something transcendent to himself. But the fact that we have

a need and religion fills that need does not exhaust the meaning of religion. To assert otherwise is to be guilty of "The Fallacy of Origins," the error of assuming that a wrong premise invariably yields a wrong conclusion. That is not true at all. Plato, for instance, came to certain conclusions about astronomy from philosophical ideas about geometry. Today scientists smile in amusement at his premises - but some of his conclusions approximate what we consider to be factual.

This is an essential of education too. We begin at a singular level, often distorting truth for the sake of simplicity. But the "facts" we learn transcend our primitive motivations. This is what the Rambam recommends in his Shemonah Perakim when he speaks about Reward and Punishment. You start a child off on the road to moral and religious excellence by sekhar and onesh. You give him a toy or a piece of candy for studying. After a while, he can do without the piece of candy; he studies lishmah. But you must begin on the right track for the wrong reasons. Now, adults should have the same attitude towards the idea of religion as a crutch, the psychological undergirding of religion. Yes, it is necessary, but the fact is -- and this is historical fact -- that people who are genuinely committed to religion transcend this level of religion as a crutch. There are people who believe at great personal sacrifice, people who observe even when everything around them screams out that they are mad for continuing to do so. They make a sacrifice, sometimes, of their intellectual integrity, very often sacrifice of their emotional health and, even more often, sacrifice of social and

financial welfare. For them religion is no longer a crutch. People have been known to do this throughout history and you have examples of it all around us. It is a crutch, but not always, and a crutch isn't always a bad thing.

Next: "The Existence of God." I will not try to offer any of the classical proofs. Whether they are still relevant philosophically is an open question. Since Immanuel Kant, all the classical proofs of God's existence have been dismissed. Much more recently, there has been a very, very serious attempt to revive several of them, especially the ontological proof. But I would not refer to such proofs in religious counselling. God is, for Judaism, supernatural. "Supernatural" is actually a frightening word to the modern mind. It sounds so hopelessly antiquated that you can tell a youngster that bereshit bara elokim and he will accept it; but tell him God is supernatural, and you frighten him. Of course, they are one and the same thing, Bereshit bara elokim means that God is beyond nature, that as the Creator of nature, He is supernatural. This is the essence of our whole faith; without this we can't take another step. But since God transcends the natural universe, than an attempt to discover him via the natural universe is likely to come to grief.

What, then, should our approach be? Here we must refer back to the first item on our agenda, belief in the unproven. Rambam, who is the classical example of one who tries to prove the existence of God, offers a very interesting metaphor. This too refers to sex education. The Rambam maintains that to see all of experience as limited to the realm of nature is hopelessly parochial. He illustrates the point

with the story of a child whose mother died at birth and who was raised by his father. There is no one else on the island but the two of them. Soon the child begins to ask the question, "How did I come into existence?" The father explains to the boy that there is such a creature called "woman," and that the baby grows in her womb, locked in, surrounded by water, without air or light or food -- and he stays there for nine months. What is the reaction of this young man? --Naturally, that his father is crazy! He marshals all the logical arguments proving that the whole thing is absurd. How can you say that a child can exist for nine months without food, when I can't exist for seven days without food? How can he live in water when I would die in water for more than two to three minutes because I have to breathe air? What the Rambam is saying is that this boy has judged pre-natal life by the very limited purview of his own post-natal experience. Obviously, he is all wrong. Similarly, when man entertains the notion that all of existence is limited to the reality with which he is acquainted, he is being terribly parochial. There may very well be dimensions beyond those he perceives.

I can give you an example from another field. When there was great public interest in Einstein's fourth dimension, the famous popularizers of relativity, such as Eddington, used to give this example to show that although we can't visualize a fourth and fifth dimension, that does not mean that it does not exist. For instance, imagine that you were a two-dimensional animal. You would look at this room and all you would see is everything reduced or collapsed to two dimensions. Any attempt

to convince you that there was a third dimension would be futile, unless you had the intelligence to transcend your own limitations and the ability to accept that there is a dimension which does not intrude into your own immediate experience. You can't convince a cockroach, for example, that there is such a thing as mathematical physics. It is beyond his experience. (But if it is an intelligent cockroach, he will understand that there are things he doesn't understand.) Man, in his maturity, should reach that level of awareness to know that he is not aware of everything. According to the Shulchan Arukh (Hilkhos Shechitah), the "shochet" who gives you the wrong answer is disqualified, but if he says eineni yodeia, "I don't know," he is kasher. In the philosophical sense, to be able to say eineni yodeia, there is another realm of experience, is a sign of maturity. So when we speak of the existence of God, we are speaking of something which by its very definition not only transcends our experience but He is other -- totally other -- than our experience. This is the real meaning of kedushah. God is kedushah, differentness. He rejects all attempts by man to grasp Him and to arrest Him and to congeal Him into our own little categories. He is kadosh, beyond all that.

Fourth point: why did God create the world? I don't see why this is a problem for young people, but let us offer a couple of ideas unsystematically. What was God's reason for creating? I think this answer appeared in a recent issue of Hamevaser. (This is an answer incidentally, that is not limited to Judaism, but also has a respectable tradition in Western civilization.) God created because He is a good God and the definition of goodness or chessed is shefa or hitpashtut

-- effluence, givingness. In Kabbalah, of course, chessed and gevurah are dialectically related in the Ten Sephirot. God creates both through chessed and through gevurah. Were He to act only through chessed, only effluence or hitpashtut, there could be no world, because a world which is infinite doesn't exist. Our world has to be finite, there must be a motion opposite to that of infinite effluence. The granting of existence is a function of chessed; the restraint which keeps it finite is an act of gevurah. Primarily, then, God created because He is good. The history of this concept in Western civilization may be found in Arthur O. Lovejoy's The Great Chain of Being. It is fundamentally a Platonic idea, as so much of all of Western civilization is, that has been developed in the course of time. It is essentially the same idea of ki tov which is interpreted by R. Jacob Zvi Meklenburg in a most interesting fashion. (I don't know how valid it is philologically, but it certainly is theologically valid.) In his Ha-Ketav ve'Ha-Kabbalah he comments on the verse: Vayar Elokim Ki Tov, "And God saw that it was good." Was it an exercise in self-gratulation? The author's interpretation is that, for instance, "And God said let there be light" means that there was a ratzon or will that there be light. Now, Vayar is binyan hifil (causative), He made visible; as soon as God willed light, He brought it into being. Then the question arises, why did God do this? The answer is ki tov -- because He (not "it") is good, and it is in the nature of goodness to grant existence and therefore God brought animals, men, etc., into existence -- ki tov, because He is good.

Whether you accept this exegesis or not, the idea of tov as the governing principle of creation or creativity is a very real one. Now, if God created man, ki tov, we have already come from a consideration of mechanical origin to one of teleological end, the relection on purpose. The point is further made in a characteristic way by one of the greatest Musarites of the last generation, Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler, of blessed memory. He points out that it is true that man has a demonic nature to him. Thus the Torah's testimony: ki yetzer lev ha-adam rak ra mi'neurav. What more proof do you need than Auschwitz? Isaac Bashevis Singer has a story called, "The Last of the Demons" The demon speaks, and he begins by saying, "I am the last of the demons. Who needs demons now that man has overtaken his functions?" We of this century have seen the demonic side to him, but he also has another element to him -- goodness. Wherefrom does man derive this goodness? -- from his creation, betzel-lem Elokim, the divine Image. Man as a God-resembling creature reflects the maarkhot ha'elokut; the divine life is mirrored in his own life. And since God is good -- in fact, that is the major notion we learn about God from Bereshit, He is good because He creates -- therefore man must be good too. (This is how I interpret the words lo tov heyot ha-adam levado. Man if he is alone, can not be good because his good is imprisoned, it is incarcerated within himself. It is only when Adam has Eve, another human being, that he can take this goodness, which he possesses because of his divine Image, and express it.)

So, if you ask "why did God create?" we must answer that He

creates because He is good. And since God is good, therefore man is good. And not only is man good, but since the purpose of man is to imitate God, and since God is good, then man's function and purpose is to be good. The doing of good by man is not simply a prudential device for his own self-protection, for his security: "I must be good because otherwise you won't be good to me." He does good not primarily to satisfy a deep psychological need. Rather, he is beneficent because that is the function for which he was created.

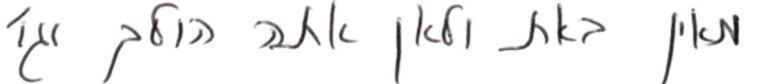
Now, this goodness is expressed in many ways. For one thing, if we say that man's goodness reflects God's goodness and God's goodness is reflected in the first instance by creation of the material world, it follows that man's goodness too is expressed in creativity, in technical-scientific creativity. He is a shutaf be'maaseh bereshit. God created the world incomplete, and man's duty is to complete it. He has to complete it technologically: ve'kivshuha. The idea of tzellel Elokim, according to Saadia, means that man has dominion. He has to take over nature and make something of it. But he must do it benevolently, because when man imitates the divine function of creativity without benevolence, without control, he ends up as did the dor ha-haflagah -- in social chaos and dehumanization. He has to imitate this goodness socially as well, through Torah, thus actualizing the moral order of the universe. Hence, the function of man is to do good to others, leheitiv le'zulato. This is enough of a purpose for any human being: to complete maaseh bereshit technically, morally, and socially.

I would like to make one more comment, referring to something that is important, although I don't know if it belongs in the purview of what has been assigned to me. A fine young fellow, whom I met at Seminar last year at Morasha, a graduate of T.A., now attending one of the city colleges, came to me last week and asked me: Why should I remain Orthodox? It is an overwhelming sort of question to have thrown at you out of the blue. I said: well, tell me more. What do you mean? You have been exposed to it, supposedly you know what it's all about. He answered: I don't "feel" anything. I can get along just as well without it. Why shall I continue putting on Talis and Tefillin every day if it really means nothing to me? This is a very honest question. My approach to him was as follows: First, I discussed with him the whole problem of "experience." After all, it is a question by which we are all troubled. Sometimes you just don't "feel" what you ought to. My response was that Judaism includes, but does not consist primarily of, experience. Religious experience is a goal, not a beginning. And even as a goal, one can live out his life very happily, very fully, and very Jewishly, without ever being stirred by any profound experience. Observance of the mitzvot, especially Talmud Torah, are a means of achieving experience, rather than the other way around. You know the famous Yerushalmi (it is also a Midrash) that God says: פסוקי חיים עולם . ואת חרות לעבדו והנאור שבח חכמים אנוס Moral conduct is superior to religious ecstasy, even to faith. This attitude is true even of Hasidism, which places a great premium on the emotional, on the

affective or experiential factor in observance. After all, Hasidism came into the world as an objection to the cold and dry and dessicated Lithuanian concentration upon the intellect and its tendency to allow the emotions to wither away. Hasidism is emotionally activist. Nevertheless, the Baal Shem Tov recognized that not always can you have inspiration, and you don't refrain from religious and moral performances in the absence of inspiration. Hasidism spoke of mochin de-gadlut and mochin de-katnut. Mochin de-gadlut is the state of the heart and mind opening up, and you are full of inspiration. It is worth striving for this. Nevertheless, most of life is spent in mochin de-katnut, in times when there is no inspiration. So, the Zohar speaks of the two alternate beginnings for various Psalms -- mizmor le'David or le'David mizmor. Mizmor le'David ("A Psalm of David") means he wrote the Tehilim when he was seized by the inspiration; the mizmor came before David. But there came a time when David took the pen in hand, or sat and pecked away at his typewriter, until he was able to coax the inspiration to come. First came David, then the inspiration. Hence, le'David Mizmor ("For David, a Psalm").

Our generation is unrealistic to expect inspiration to come of itself. We live in a highly secularized, urbanized technopolis. In a world of this sort, with its fragmentation of experience and its constant din and clatter and clutter, you lose the ability to see life organismically, in its wholeness and therefore to derive inspiration from it. So you have got to make do with finding inspiration not in nature, but rather in Torah and mitzvot. And even if we haven't found it yet, we act -- and continue

to look. But there is no excuse for inaction.

My second response to the young man was something I urge upon you as well: read that little volume by Viktor Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning. This man speaks with great emunah. If he had a better education, I am sure he would be a religious Jew. He posits as a fundamental aspect of the human psyche the "will to meaning" which he considers equally valid, or authentic, as the will to sex and the will to power. From my own experience, I can state that there is no question that he is right. When there exists a "value vacuum," you have no reason, no satisfactory answer for existence as such. With this existential vacuum, man disintegrates and he neurotically tries to fill the void in 101 different ways -- most of them harmful, none of them adequate. Sex, money, sometimes a tendency to chatter a great deal -- all these are attempts to fill in artificially the value void that results from the fundamental human will to meaning. So, I continued to the young man, maybe you don't feel anything, maybe your emotions are atrophied. Maybe you are living in the wrong kind of surroundings or you haven't matured, and possibly never will. But there is something much more important than experiencing an emotional volcano within you and that is to have a framework which will give you meaning in life; and for this you have only Torah and mitzvot. Of course, you may be that kind of bold atheistic existentialist to think you can create your own meaning, but I challenge you to do it and I know you never will. Torah gives you a framework to know where you are, where you are going,  , You can have

a thousand questions, but at least you have a context for meaning. And this more than anything else should keep you in the fold. I genuinely feel that this is a response to my own probings and questing and therefore probably can serve for others too. I mean that living a life of mitzvah is living in response to a challenge. By doing mitzvot I respond to Something that transcends me, that is beyond me. I am convinced that the will-to-meaning can not be satisfied by an immanent purpose -- which is the position of Sartre, Camus, etc., that man has to create his own purpose. But if I create my own purpose, then it can not be any bigger than I am. My whole problem is that I am so terribly small and finite and mortal I am looking for something that transcends me in which to anchor myself and find the source for meaning in my life. For me, Judaism provides this Source. It provides it in many ways. I identify with a people whose history is an overarching one and a unique one. I am part of a continuum that transcends my own life. I find it religiously through responding to a transcendental Source; therefore, in my response to mitzvah, in the studying of Torah, I reach out to this Source. This is "meaning." I have now found myself in this larger framework. So I know that whatever I do will be meaningful. If it is guilt I feel, it is a meaningful guilt. If it is grief, it is a meaningful grief. If it is joy and happiness, it is a meaningful happiness. At least the whole of my experience is now interpreted in terms of a framework that is bigger than I am.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. -- you said that the purpose of man is to imitate God.
How is this done?

A. In many ways. Ve-halakhta bi'derakhav, to go in the ways of God, means to assimilate ourselves to His character. This is essentially the source of all Jewish ethics. Thus, as God is merciful, so must I be. As He is kind, so I, etc. The Jew's concept of God is that He is an ethical God and therefore I must be an ethical human being. That God is ethical is a belief we reassert three times a day in the Shemoneh Esreh, in the birkhat gevurot. God expresses His moral nature by emancipating the enslaved, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, and ultimately, resurrecting the dead. (Incidentally, this is the understanding of techiat ha-metim offered by the Rav, By Rabbi Soloveitchik. It is both subtle and beautiful. He takes techiat ha-metim out of its dogmatic or psychological frame and puts it into an ethical context. Why does a Jew believe in techiat ha-metim? Because God is an ethical Being. If God helps the sick and releases the bound, then He will also eventually correct the greatest evil in the world which is death. So techiat ha-metim is the ultimate expression of our belief in God's ethical personality) God not only is ethical, but by His being ethical He sets the norms for man's existence. Man is created in God's image. What does it mean? Rabbi Moses Cordovero begins his Tomer Devorah, which, incidentally, is a priceless jewel by saying that the tzellelem Elokim is not a fact but an ideal. The Image exists in us only in potential and we have to achieve

or fulfill it. How is this done? Through hitdamut li-derakhav, through imitation of God. You make God's tzellem your own by imitating His ways. You can't imitate His essence; therefore, when you imitate His ways you have appropriated the tzellem Elokim.

Q. problem of if creation is good, how do you account for evil?

A. This is a problem I find very, very difficult to deal with in counselling, because I find it difficult in its own right. The question of evil and suffering is an enormous one and it will do no good to try to give part answers unless you are dealing with young and immature high school kids. Otherwise, you have to be honest. And to be honest is to say "I don't know, but it bothers me." You must point out that we are not the only ones who don't know; it was true from Avraham down. It bothered everyone.

We can give some tentative suggestions of how to approach the problem, but don't forget that the question of theodicy, of trying to justify God's righteousness in the face of evil, is an old one. It is as old as man. You find the problem dealt with in Job. Part of the message of Job is to show the sham of those who have easy answers. There are no easy answers. The three friends who try to give their canned answers are dismissed. God rebukes them. We know the fact that Job was a tzaddik, so the answer that he must have sinned is simply false. How about Job with his sharp questioning? He also doesn't get away with it. His questions are psychologically understandable in light of his suffer-

ing. But in the climax of the book, God appears out of the whirlwind and says, "Where were you when I created the world and did this and that, etc." The answer is that the "kashe is kain kashe nisht." Or, better yet, the question is a question but he can't ask it. Why? What Job is saying is simply that in the presence of God he experiences awe, yirat ha-hitromemut, to such a great extent that he feels the infinity of God, the gadlut Hashem, that he realizes that his little, logical question -- tzaddik ve-ra lo, rasha ve-tov lo, and derekh reshaim tzalecha -- they just reduce to nothingness, they just disintegrate. Not that you have a logical answer, but that the question is a kind of impertinence in the face of God. Now you ask: Does that give me a logical answer? No, it doesn't. The answer is that for a man of faith, faith itself, not faith in the sense of blind commitment, but faith in the sense of the presence of Hashem, is an answer. What I mean is that there is no answer, that man can give you no satisfactory answer to the question of suffering. How then do you approach suffering? The answer is, by coming into the presence of Hashem. Therefore, if you ask me a logical question, how can I explain evil, the answer is: I have no answer. If you ask me an existential question, I'm suffering, what should I do? You know what I would advise a person in this case? Tefillah. It has a remarkable therapeutic effect. This is religion as a crutch, the greatest crutch in the world. Why tefillah rather than Torah? Because halakhically, without going into the philosophical and psychological aspects, the famous prayer is fundamentally (According to/analysis of R. Hayyim Brisker) the

awareness that you are omed lifnei ha-shekhinah. The awareness that you are in the presence of God, that is tefillah. This means that what you are doing is reenacting Job's answer. Like him, you stand before the presence of Hashem. So, for a person who is suffering, tefillah does have a solution, even if it doesn't have an answer. (There is a Hasidic "vort" that really expresses the same thing. In mizmor shir channukat it says shivati elekha va-tirpaeni. What does it mean? Hasidim answer: va'tirpaeni -- the tefillah healed me!) Tefillah itself has therapeutic qualities not because of any psychological reasons, but primarily because awareness of the shekhinah, the omed lifnei ha-shekhinah, knocks the ground from under the question, it takes the sting out of real suffering.

Beyond this you can go to other answers you want to give. And here you have to refer to the Rambam, namely, that in a world created so that man is free, there has to be evil that is man-generated. Furthermore, if the world were created perfect, man could not be a partner in maaseh bereshit. The very idea that we say we are shutafim, already grants that maaseh bereshit is incomplete and man must complete it. So the world begins as a rotten place, and you have got to complete it. Each of us starts with a defect, with a strike against us, and there are things, "givens," we can't explain.

Much more important than the logical explanation of the origin of suffering is the insight of Samson Raphael Hirsch. When David suffered, he cried out, Keli, Keli lamah azavtani? "Why did You forsake me?" Hirsch translates differently: Not "why did You forsake me," but

"for what purpose did You forsake me?" -- lemah. If you think about it, it is fantastic. David is not asking God to give a reckoning, an accounting, an April 15th up in Heaven. Rather, this is an actional question: God, granted You have Your reasons for abandoning me, but what am I to do with this abandonment? For what reason? If you think about it, it is the only sensible question. Because if you ask madua, "why," you will never get an answer. To offer a theodicy in philosophic terms is out of the question. Even the Jewish answers don't make too much sense. The real question, the existential question that counts in man's life, is lemah azavtani, for what end?

Obviously, I am going to grant you that religion which is only a crutch, is inadequate. Religion should be based on convictions. What I am saying is -- let us not overdo it. Religion does also serve as a crutch. Look through Psalms and you find King David constantly referring to God as the source of comfort, solace, security. Does it mean that faith is only a crutch? No. Because David, even when he didn't need a crutch, kept his faith. (Incidentally, the whole Freudian idea that religion is only the satisfaction of an irrational need has always failed to impress me, because those who march to Freud's drumbeat are known to have sought satisfaction for their irrational needs in other activities, primarily sexual. I don't find that this kind of activity is any more creative or productive or meaningful than religion. If I had the choice of offering escapes in LSD or learning a lot of Gemara, I wouldn't have too much difficulty in coming to a decision. If you transpose this into technological terms,

you suddenly have no problem. The fellow who is unhappy at home and spends all night long in the laboratory and comes up with a cure for cancer, will you say the whole thing was a crutch? Yes, it was a crutch, But look what the world got from it. So I will grant you that to some extent religion is an escape; but sometimes the world is made to escape from.

Q. You spoke of chessed as giving. But doesn't it mean kindness or love?

A. Its initial sense does not have the ethical connotation to it. When we say chessed, we normally mean warmth, generosity -- the ethical quality. But chessed also has a metaphysical signification, that of giving, primarily giving existence. You find the same thing, the same two-track definition of chessed, in Emunot Vedeot, in the part where Saadia speaks about the taamei ha-mitzvot. There he speaks about God giving the Torah because of chessed, and there too he uses the term in both senses; first, chessed in the sense of giving reward to people; and second, because it is His nature to reveal Himself, it is His desire because He is good. Goodness means givingness. To be a tov means to be a metiv. I am saying that ethical goodness ultimately reduces to metaphysical givingness. To be good without giving is fraudulent. The Jew who doesn't give but says he is "good" is a phoney. And it is not only everything. true of money; it is true of time, of effort, of teaching, of/The world's existence is the result of God who in His goodness wanted to grant existence. But in this particular scene wherein we flourish, He made

us His co-creators. Now we have got to create, le-taken olam be-malkhut Shaddai means that we have to set things aright ethically.

Q. Why did God give, why did God create the world?

A. The Kabbalists say:

, God wanted a physical world infinitely remote from Himself that will strive to reach Him. God wanted a scene wherein the actors will strive for Him. And He wanted them to reflect His own self, namely, to be creators and doers of good.

Q. But we are seeing God~~anthropomorphically~~.

A. I am not a "farbissene" rationalist. Rambam said the purpose of creation is immanent: God created every item because this was His will, and in His Wisdom (His will and His wisdom are identical) He simply fulfilled His will. Tell me, does this answer your question? Don't forget that the anti-anthropomorphism tradition, which was carried to the extreme by Rambam, is not the only tradition we have. We have another tradition which is slightly anthropomorphic. We also have a tradition which is, incidentally, wildly anthropomorphic, which I don't recommend, because it is embarrassing. But to a certain extent, I am not shocked. I have a colleague who grew up in a German atmosphere of early 20th century liberalism, which held as incontrovertible dogma the idea that God is completely perfect, absolutely self-sufficient. I once made the statement in a lecture that God needs man; he turned pink, white, blue -- it implied that God has a lack in Himself. But philosophically or theologically. I am not frightened by it, I am nor really sold on the whole line of

medieval Jewish philosophy, namely, that there is only one way to conceive of God and that is the absolute. Because when you conceive of God only in absolutes, then you face the great problem that none of them answer, and which only one of them had the courage to say is insoluble, and that is Yehudah Halevi. That is how are you going to reconcile the god of Greek philosophy, the god of Parmenides, with the God of Tenakh? Yehudah Halevi said the god of Aristotle is not the God of Abraham. Does that mean that you have to abandon everything that the chakhmei Yisrael of the Middle Ages said about God in His perfection? No. There is another way out. I don't want to go into it, but in contemporary philosophy the man who developed this - what he called bi-polar monotheism - is Hartshorn, and it is an extremely profound and fascinating approach. It will really set you thinking. This is an approach that can at one and the same time make room for the personal God of the Bible and at the same time keep you philosophically sophisticated in your thinking about God. It can give you theology and religion in one philosophic framework. The book is by Hartshorn and Reese, Philosophers Speak of God. He shows that the error of Greek philosophy, which was taken over by all the medievals, was that they posited dualities and assumed that one was good and one was bad. For instance, immutable and mutable: mutable is bad and immutable is good. Or: passive and impassive: the most importance of these dualities is: changing or unchanging, mutable or immutable. But I don't want to go into detail; look it up yourselves.

Q. What do you mean by transcending man's nature? How does man get meaning from transcendence?

A. In order for a person to have meaning, the source of that meaning must be transcendent to his own life. He can't find meaning by setting the rules for his own game himself. If he does, he pretends to win, but he doesn't really. When Sartre says that God is, kaveyakhol, dead and he has touched His corpse, he is asking what meaning there is in life. Camus describes the absurd, meaningless life. But then both come to the conclusion that it can't be absurd, there has to be meaning. Their answer is that we have to create our own meaning. I can testify that for me this is inconceivable. When someone says to me, "I have created meaning in my life," I challenge its authenticity. I just can't accept it. Meaning to me is by definition something that is beyond me.

Q. Which value do you think would be most educationally effective? What area of existential meaning can we show to be most attractive?

A. Let me try to recast that question. What happens if I were born a Moslem? This kind of question has psychological roots. It is part of the same search for identity that goes on in a young boy when he asks himself, what if I had been born a girl? Maybe there are really not my parents? It is part of a whole syndrome -- the quest for identity. When you sit down and start thinking it through, you can see that this is fruitless questioning. To the whole question of what if I had been somebody else, the answer is: you aren't. Any kind of serious quest for meaning begins with certain "givens." The most basic given is: you are

who you are. Now, who are you? Again the identity question stares you right in the face. Well, part of the answer has to be given in this historical context. You are not only a healthy male of 20 years old who happens to be studying in a particular university in a degraded area of Manhattan, but you also are part of a very long continuum called Jewish history. And just as you can't question what if you had been born to Negro parents in the wilds of Africa, because right now you start from where you are, you also start from where you are as a member of a particular people. Furthermore, it is interesting to point out that there are two ways of viewing ourselves. Really, they are two different codifications of reality. We can view ourselves either as individuals, considering that this is the rock bottom reality, and our being members of a society or of a people is an artificial projection. I am primarily Norman Lamm, I happen to be a member of YU. But YU is not a real being, it is not a body. YU is nothing but a collection of the people associated with it. I am a member of the Jewish people. The Jewish people is a sociological mask. When you add them all up, and you give it a name. But it is not a reality. This is a peculiarly Western form of nominalism. The other way of looking at it is by beginning with the collectivity as the reality. I am a differentiated unit of that reality, whether it is Israel or New York or mankind. The primitive mind always looks at it from the second point of view. The modern mind is equally primitive. It takes only the first point of view. Obviously, it is an open question as to which is correct. But this much is certain, that to take cognizance of only one point of view is to leave your life and your vision decimated. If I see

myself only as a Jew and not as an individual, I will never develop my individual talents, express my singular self. If I see myself only as an individual, then the world might as well go to the blazes because I have no real, organic relation to anybody. Ultimately, the vision of myself-as-an-individual as the foundation of reality leads to the breakdown of the whole social fabric. Obviously, a middle point of view, one which takes cognizance of the maximum data available to us, will consider both. I live as an individual and I have questions as an individual, but it is equally true that I am not only Norman Lammbut I am also part of a larger, collectivity which itself is part of a long continuum. And tzibbur eino met: I will die and be forgotten, but that aspect of me which is part of am Yisrael will live forever. Similarly, you can see the American people as a sociological mass of individuals, in which case you don't see anything beyond the people, or you can see the American people as an organic whole. Walter Lipman points out that when, in the Declaration of Independence, it is said, "We the people of the United States," it does not mean only those who lived in 1776. It means the people of the United States, including the living, the dead, and the unborn. This is what the Torah meant when it said the souls of all Israel were at Sinai during Mattan Torah. It means that am Yisrael was committed to the Covenant, to the berit, and the Covenant includes all of us. After all, we are still paying for the Spanish-American War. I am part of the American people, so I pay for it. Similarly, we are part of kelal Yisrael. Hence, "Yisrael, af al pi shechata, Yisrael hu" is not

only halakhah, it is metziut; it is not only juridical, but empirical.

Q. Within the constellations of value in the masorah, what do you suggest as one particular area to which you can direct someone who is questing, doubting, and does not find any meaning generally within the masorah? Is there one particular area you found most effective?

A. I don't think there is any one across-the-board answer to that question. I think that, as in all such cases, you have to know the individual whom you are speaking to, his tastes, fears, and idiosyncrasies. Different personality types respond to different nuances. Part of your job, like a good doctor, is to examine the patient. You find out what kind of personality he is, for there are no two people that are alike. If you have a logic-oriented, academically-minded person coming to you, it is best to direct him to Talmud Torah, especially Talmud itself. If he is a poetic person, a more spiritual and ethereal type, direct him more to Torah she-bikhtav and tefillah. An action-oriented person should be thrown into work -- for Eretz Yisrael, for Russian Jewry -- and let him know that this work is spiritually therapeutic, it provides its own answers in its own non-verbal idiom.

Incidentally, I wrote an article for Tradition a short while ago, entitled "Faith and Doubt," in which I tried to analyze some of the problems we are dealing with now, and I would like to repeat one or two items. One is a reference to Buber, who points out that emunah, the whole faith-approach, is not completely an isolated, individual activity; it is also part of a communal activity, part of the stance of a faith community. A community is maamin too. Va-yaaminu ba-Hashem u-ve'Moshe

avdo. The Israelites committed themselves to berit, which is a commitment of emunah as well as of maaseh, and is a folk-commitment. Now, there are certain kinds of doubt that can be "bracketed" while involving yourself in a faith-community. This is gemillat hasadim in its broadest sense; to identify with a community. This is in addition to Torah and avodah, which we've already discussed. It may not work, but it is worth a try.

You also have to plead for patience in another way. A youngster, for instance, sooner or later is beset by doubts that his parents really love him (most of us learn later on that our parents really love us, some of us learn that they really don't). No matter what the ultimate resolution of this question is, the first doubts result in highly temperamental responses. There is an outburst of anger; you want to run away. But it is only the extravagant kid who does run away at first doubt. The more mature child remains and works it out for a couple of years. Ultimately, he may have to leave, but usually he doesn't, and the problem is resolved. The person who leaves at the first sign of doubt, when he is first seized by this feeling of emptiness, this dreadfully lonely feeling, is immature. What you have to do as a religious counselor is simply to establish a relation of confidence with the student, and tell him that you went through the same thing. Don't tell him that he must never give up. Tell him: if you want to give up, you have time for that later on. Work on your problems now. Don't give up now, because if you do you will find it extremely difficult to come back. Hold on.

You have time to become a goy, and it is very, very hard to do teshuvah. Now it is not a philosophic answer, but you are asking for a counselling approach.

Q. What if someone says he will do what he wants, as long as it doesn't hurt anybody.

A. Well, that is a typical question. That is the New Morality position. And here we face a very difficult problem. Because as long as the New Morality was confined within the Playboy Clubs and in associations with "bunnies," it wasn't so bad. But now, of course, the New Morality has been adopted by a number of Christian churches. And this is going to give us a very tough time.

I can't go into the whole question (I've written about it in Tradition), but let me mention a few points briefly.

First, the idea that "it doesn't hurt anyone else" is really sham. Ultimately, to some extent, everything affects everybody else, and especially yourself. We are all born with some degree of moral feelings. Some people are shocked that there are Yeshiva boys who touch a girl's hand, and in Camp Morasha they have a satirical song about negiah. Others are not at all surprised to learn that there are those who commit adultery. Others are even "unshocked" when they learn about Sodomy and homosexuality. There are various degrees of being outraged. But all of us have some minimal moral conscience ingrained in us. And this basic minimum cannot survive the kind of ethos implied in the question. This idea that everything is kosher provided I don't hurt anyone else effective-

ly spells the destruction of all morality. First, homosexuality is perfectly correct, provided the fellow consents. We now accept a world in which homosexuality is accorded moral status, as some Episcopalian priests recently concluded - "provided they love each other." But then, you also have to agree to adultery. If the husband agrees that his wife can commit adultery, then you have to agree that that too is all right. You have to agree to everything. In other words, there no longer are any rules. So morality has come tumbling down completely. Ultimately, the world is reduced to a jungle, and a world in which everything is permitted "provided you don't hurt anyone else" very, very soon becomes a world in which everything is permitted unconditionally.

I recently saw a show off-Broadway, called "Tango." It's a great show. It is the study of permissiveness in a family setting. The normal situation is parents make rules, and children reject them. Here we find the reverse. We see the children of our permissive, New Morality, society now become parents. There are no rules, no prohibitions. In walks the son and insists that the father behave morally. The son is well-dressed, tight-lipped, the typical exacting type, stiff, square, uptight. He wants rules. And he is in anguish. His great grief is that he has nothing to rebel against, and so he begins to become a tyrant, and takes over the household. He takes over for ideological reasons. There has got to be order, because he can not survive without order. The parents still thrive on their early ethos, which was to reject order. He has nothing to against which to test himself, so he decides to institute order -- tyrannical order, repressive order-- because man cannot survive

meaningfully in a totally permissive society. What happens is that he creates a monster that runs out of control. Order ultimately becomes its own justification, and moves with its own force. It has its own life, and a brute -- a man who has no feelings, no ideals -- takes over the whole household. What this playwright is telling us is a very, very real and frightening commentary and prophecy. There cannot be total permissiveness. If there is, it must be followed by reaction, and the reaction is absolutely dreadful. It is an awesome kind of reaction. So the New Morality obviously is going to end up in chaos or in tyranny, one way or the other.

Q. Experience is a goal and one may not ultimately experience it. If someone doesn't find value in life, you can't dismiss it and say I never achieve this goal -- shouldn't I look elsewhere?

A. I think we are suffering from some semantic confusion. Two terms are being thrown around loosely: "Value" and "experience" and two different things. Values exist independently of experience. A value is a worth that has a practical effect on my life. For instance, not to hurt others is a value in Judaism. But I have no commensurate "experience," I am not getting any kind of thrill out of not hurting someone. Now, when I speak of "experience," I am speaking of two levels of experience. I daven. Normally my davening is empty insofar as needy, emotional, moving experience goes. I don't "experience" anything. There is no iyyun tefilah, there is just the feeling of "upgedavent." But at other times I do have an experience, a feeling of genuine "davening," of warmth. Sometimes when I learn a "blatt Gemara" I experience ahavat

Hashem. It is a very vague but noble kind of thing. I am not speaking about that kind of experience which is available to anyone willing to try hard. But you are speaking about the typical modern hangup on "experience" as something transforming. I am thinking about a psychedelic generation, kids who have grown up expecting to have kicks out of religion, part of the whole modern idea that man must taste of every cup of experience passed at the banquet of life. I have got to go on a cruise, I must taste "soul food," etc. I have got to try everything. It is a modern ideal, of presuppositions of our culture. You have got to have every experience around. So even homosexuality must be tried. Kids want to feel that religion gives them a kind of kick. But this misconception of "religious experience" is something we have to discourage. The genuine religious experience is a culmination of an arduous process. You can't take it on a sugar cube. If your customer wants it, you have to send him to another grocer, that's all there is to it. To an extent, you have to shift the focus of all concerns from the person himself. It is a very rough deal, because kids coming into adolescence, which lasts approximately from ages 11-40, are very much concerned with themselves. What's in it or me? They don't voice it that selfishly, but it is a legitimate thing. But you, as counselors, have got to get them to move beyond themselves because, after all is said and done, what we have to sell is a very rough discipline. Judaism tries to get man off that center of himself. Fundamentally, avodah zarah means any kind of existence where God is not the center of all concerns. And it is very unnatural in this sense. Religion

demands that our major concern should be the will of God, when our major concern normally and naturally is our own will. But then, who ever said that religious counselling is an easy task?