Ethical Slippery Slopes and “Easy” Solutions for Social Responsibility

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The first time it was reported that our friends were being butchered, there was a cry of horror. Then a hundred were butchered. But when a thousand were butchered and there was no end to the butchery, a blanket of silence spread.

When evil-doing comes like falling rain, nobody calls out “stop!”

When crimes begin to pile up they become invisible. When sufferings become unendurable the cries are no longer heard. The cries, too, fall like rain in summer.

Bertolt Brecht
“When Evil-Doing Comes Like Falling Rain”[1]

The Social Dimension of Values

Individuals are part of a community that gives meaning to their values and rules (or standards of practice). The common shared meaning of each value is derived from its role in the community discourse in the public sphere and from the mode in which it is used by the

* Trans1ated by Karen Gold..
Excerpted from Bertolt Brecht, 1976 [1935]. “When Evil-Doing Comes Like Falling Rain,” trans. John Willett, in *Bertolt Brecht: Poems 1913-1956*, New York: Methuen.

community members. However, often different people analyze and interpret reality in different and even contradictory ways and vary in their social points of view, their values and the way they morally evaluate activity and personal and social decisions. These factors are significant in establishing spheres of personal and social priorities.

People in democratic societies hold different values and social views that help create a space of varied individual and societal priorities for acting on these positions. Where there is free, unfettered public debate, this diversity of opinion and judgment enriches the perspectives of all involved. A adds new information to B; B might expose the argument's weak points to C; C may correct the errors of D; and D—exemplifying how information travels through the public space in ongoing cycles—endeavors to teach something to A.[2] Thus for example, A might have characterized a certain law as "just," but after being exposed to new information or a different position, now sees this same law as "unjust." Likewise, B might have deemed a certain act "inappropriate," but in light of societal debate or an updated assessment of the benefit or harm entailed in the act, now sees it as "appropriate."

Every individual should determine without coercion—by means of the knowledge and positions to which one is exposed in open, public debate—one's attitude toward one's own actions and decisions,

2 A different perspective was provided by the RaN, R. Nissim ben Reuven Girondi, who argued that there is no perfect individual and that perfection exists only in the community. According to Zeev Harvey (2005, 226–227), the RaN held that "no human individual is perfect . . . the vices of one are different from those of another, and sometimes even their opposite. When human beings are together in a community, their vices neutralize one another, and cancel each other out. Thus, the community as a whole is perfect, although composed of imperfect parts. . . . The virtuousness of the community is thus dependent on the presence of all different kinds of conflicting opinions."

those of one's colleagues, and those of the society in which one resides. Moreover, in addition to the necessity of applying personal judgment to every act or decision of society, public discourse helps every individual in society verify how others judge reality and how they choose to act.[3]

Every individual is part of a community, which gives meaning to the values that he or she espouses as well as guidelines for the implementation of those values. The shared meaning of each value to the members of the community stems from the role of that value in the discourse of that society, and the way in which the members of the community apply it. Basic values cannot exist in a given society without members who promote—or oppose—them. In other words, values exist in a given society when their meaning is clear to members of that society, whether they agree or disagree over the practical expression of this meaning.

In general, examining the nature of relations between the individual and society leads us to the conclusion that participation in society means sharing a certain perspective, which includes a common moral

3 We often wish to know that we have done the right thing. Thomas Nagel (1997, 110) argued that the manner in which the individual assesses his options is not only "first-personal," as the assessment must be such that other individuals can also judge what is right and wrong in specific cases. Moreover, the other individuals must be able to consider and justify their decision. Yoram Dinstein (1980) stated that "the desire to justify the actions of the individual and society, that is, to confer on them the 'stamp of justice,' is a feature of human civilization since the dawn of its existence." Among the examples that Dinstein brings of the desire to justify society's actions are the legal arguments of Franciscus de Victoria, who justified the Spanish wars against the Native American Indians in that the latter harmed "the basic freedoms of the Spanish . . . to move freely in the New World, to trade with the Indians, and to convert them to Christianity" (28).

foundation and various commitments. Michael Walzer (1970, 5) has stated that "commitments to principles are usually also commitments to other men, from whom or with whom the principles have been learned and by whom they are enforced." It is a commitment of sorts to a collective worldview, loyalty to its values, and involvement in it. Patrick Devlin (1998 [1959], 132) argued this view from a broader perspective.

This membership in a society brings with it a complex set of feelings of belonging, solidarity, and loyalty to society, its members, and its values. But in addition to defining the meaning of values, and to setting the guidelines for their implementation, participation (that is, membership) in society carries moral meaning and thus also entails both commitment and responsibility.

One of the ways in which the individual is supposed to act on his membership in society is by expressing his commitment to the common values shared by him and his fellow members. In democratic societies, such a commitment—to a collective worldview, to values, to involvement—includes a responsibility to guide one's own actions and those of society as a whole in accordance with democratic values, and not solely on the basis of other value systems that may exist in society, such as nationalist or faith-based values. In the view of Cornel West (1999, 10), "the roots of democracy are fundamentally grounded in mutual respect, personal responsibility, and social accountability." In other words, an individual who considers a certain law or action of society, identifies an inconsistency between it and a particular democratic value, and acts in accordance with this personal assessment, is upholding a basic social obligation. Participation in democratic activity as well as opposition to undemocratic laws and actions are both an expression of that individual's commitment to the fundamental values shared by him and his fellow members of society.

The democratic value system is intended to provide the individual with a social-moral "compass" that aids him in dealing with a complex social reality. At times, the commitment to the society in which the individual grew up is mistakenly perceived—or deliberately presented—as an obligation of loyalty to the institutions of the state and to all the choices made by the accepted social decision-making systems.

The question of commitment to democratic values frequently comes up for discussion precisely at those times when there is a dissonance between the primary commitment to the set of basic democratic values and those actions or decisions seen as emanating from a commitment to society and its governing institutions. Often, decisions and actions that appear, or are presented, as stemming from a commitment to values or to society in fact originate in a perceived commitment to government institutions, the law,[4] or other actors.[5] It is important to recall that the basic commitment of all members of a democratic society is to democratic values, even if this sense of obligation is often mistakenly translated into a commitment to government institutions or to other members of society. From this commitment to democratic values comes the responsibility for society

4 Norberto Bobbio (2003, 14). Shlomo Avineri wrote (1986): "In a democratic situation, the minority has only one path open to it: to attempt—using the tools of democracy, while complying with the law—to alter the law, to turn itself from a minority into a majority via the ballot box or the creation of alternative political coalitions. And in the meantime—grinding its teeth but with no other democratic option—to obey the law."

5 Yehuda Meltzer (1985, 157) wrote to the members of Peace Now who took part in the First Lebanon War: "You went because you got a call-up notice, and behind that notice stands a force that you could not resist: Not the state . . . but the force because of which you always answer the call to duty: comrades . . . what every normal reserve soldier understands and feels: that what lies behind the notice is not a state but comrades."

and its actions, and only secondarily, the obligation to the institutions of government established by society, and to their decisions.

A classic example of presenting commitment to an institution as commitment to democracy is the way that society perceives those who refuse—or call for others to refuse—to take part in a war that they see as unjust.[6]

Democratic Partnership

In societies in general, and democratic societies in particular, we expect members to take responsibility not only for themselves and their actions but also for the actions of society as a whole and of their fellow members. On the one hand, this responsibility is seen as deriving from the internalization of democratic values that grant importance to other members of society and to their actions as individuals and as a collective; but on the other hand, this responsibility is perceived as stemming from the collective—from the ties that have developed between individuals, the internalization of a sense of belonging to the

6 Wars of choice—that are not for purposes of defense and are not wars of necessity—are classic examples of this type of clash between government decisions and individual value systems; hence, we can learn from them about the way in which basic commitments are expressed. Thus, for example, in the "Declaration of Conscience Against the War in Vietnam" (1969 [1965], 160–161), organizations and individuals not only declared their "conscientious refusal to cooperate with the United States government in the prosecution of the war" but also encouraged refusal to serve in the American armed forces and issued a call to refrain from taking part in the military industry on universal moral grounds. Encouragement for conscientious objection was based on the disparity between the humanist values espoused by the signatories and the actions being carried out by their government. So too, the "Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority" (1969 [1965], 162–164).

group, the sense of security that the group provides its members, and the individual's identification with the group.

The individual's commitment to democratic values, and his responsibility for the democratic conduct of his society, are not confined to accepting the decisions of the majority, voting in elections, expressing an opinion from time to time, or obeying the law. This commitment should also include sharing daily responsibility for the actions of other members of society as well as all decisions and actions of that society. Democratic responsibility means that, in addition to the legislature, the government, or other source of power, the responsibility for actions carried out under their authority also falls upon those who directly or indirectly obey them as well as those who only "close their eyes" to the actions or their consequences. Even if it were others who acted contrary to a democratic value, each individual in a democratic society must oppose such actions by virtue of his membership in society and his commitment to these values.

Commitment and willingness to take part in actions decided upon in a socially acceptable manner, and unwillingness to participate in social actions that run counter to democratic values, are rooted in the primary obligation to these values—a commitment that carries with it responsibility on the part of every individual for the actions of the society in which he resides. In fact, this responsibility generally falls on every individual in a society by virtue of his or her membership in that society; it is the responsibility of the individual to the democratic collective of which he or she is a member.[7] Of course, it is often difficult to accurately judge the democratic status of a society's

7 Different authors recognize different potential sources of authority for the binding status of social values. These sources span the spectrum from a personal, binding source of authority that obligates the individual who shares its values, to an external source of authority that is similarly binding on the individual.

actions and decisions. For this reason, I will be focusing in particular on those actions and decisions of society that stand in stark contrast to the democratic system of values.

Personal Responsibility

Agnes Heller (2005, 21) noted that "There are many different characterizations and quasi-definitions of the decent person, but all of them indicate the same essence: responsibility." This refers to the individual's taking responsibility for his own actions, those of other members of society, and those of society as a whole. But responsibility is a vague and "slippery" concept in public discourse. David Miller (2001) examined the notion of responsibility, dividing it into four categories: causal responsibility, moral responsibility, remedial responsibility, and communiterian responsibility. With regard to causal responsibility, participants in social discourse generally see individuals as responsible for the consequences of their actions. Thus, for example, an individual who throws a stone that shatters a window is responsible for breaking the window; an individual who avoids taking a medication that he needs is responsible for his state of health; and an individual whose reckless driving causes an accident is responsible for that accident.

Moral responsibility relates to those who could have prevented or corrected the faulty situation. For example, the throwing of the stone or the car accident, and did not do so. An individual does not bear causal responsibility for his society's deeds in which he did not take part, but he is morally responsible for societal conduct.

Miller (2001) also examined the category of remedial responsibility in cases where there is no institutional mechanism that holds a certain individual responsible; no causal factor identified with the situation that needs to be remedied; more than one agent whose

actions can be considered as causing the situation; or one agent who is causally responsible for the situation but whose actions are viewed by us as legitimate.

The central problem in assigning responsibility is that the search is generally focused on the past: "The question it asks is always 'Who is responsible for bringing this bad situation about?' and never, for instance, 'Who is best placed to put it right?'" (Miller 2001, 460). For example, when those who are causally responsible for polluting a particular environment, or for driving into a pedestrian, are not known, government bodies such as the Ministry of Environmental Protection, in the first case, or the National Insurance Institute, in the second, are expected to clean up the environment or financially support the injured party until he has been restored to health. The principle of "capacity to rectify" determines remedial responsibility by the ability to remedy the situation, ignoring the question of factual cause or moral culpability.

Miller also proposes a principle of community responsibility in a broader sense:

> [W]hen people are linked together by such ties, whether arising from shared activities and commitments, common identities, common histories, or other such sources, they also (justifiably) see themselves as having special responsibility to one another, responsibilities that are greater than those they have towards humanity at large; and this in particular imposes special responsibilities towards any member of the relevant community who is harmed or in need. (Miller 2001, 462)

Combining this principle of community responsibility with the moral principle by which the individual carries ethical responsibility and commitment to democratic values, coupled with the ability of

the individual to redress infringement of rights as a partner in the decision-making process in a democratic society, it follows that every individual in a society has a responsibility and an obligation to, when needed, "repair" the actions of his society.

Added to the above are causal and moral responsibility if the individual took part in an unacceptable action. Obviously, there may be diminished responsibility where there are mitigating circumstances—lack of knowledge, inability to act, etc.—that did not make it possible to take full moral responsibility. The causal responsibility of the individual for his own actions is not the same as his causal responsibility for the actions performed by another. An individual who is witness to a murder is causally responsible only if he had the ability to prevent the killing and did not do so; but his causal responsibility for the murder is not the same as that of the killer.

By contrast, his moral responsibility is not contingent on the outcome: Whether or not the victim died, the individual's moral responsibility rests on whether he intervened to prevent the act. So too, the citizen who witnesses racist conduct on the part of his society. Such an individual bears full moral responsibility for his intervention or non-intervention to prevent the implementation of racist decisions, in addition to remedial and community responsibility—as do all other citizens who are witness to this behavior. He is responsible for racist conduct even if his causal responsibility for racist actions is different than that of a member of the establishment who carries them out in practice.[8]

8 As Yigal Elam so aptly stated (1991, 60), part of the problem is of course that "legal judgment is armed with sharp teeth, means of enforcement, and exemplary punishment, whereas moral judgment has no teeth at all."

Responsibility, however, is a vague and politically biased concept in the public realm. It is actually those who do disobey institutional decisions whom we tend to hold accountable for their actions, to accuse of conduct unbecoming or dangerous to society, or to subject to discussions of their responsibility or lack thereof, all the while ignoring the responsibility of those who comply and cooperate. Those who obey, who cooperate, who sit on the fence—hesitating, apologizing, circulating petitions, “shooting and crying”—those who wait for others to right wrongs, are all personally responsible, and must account for their choices and their actions.

All citizens, obedient and disobedient, should be accountable for their decisions and conduct. They are individually responsible for their own judgments and acts. They are morally, remedially and communitarianally responsible even when another legislator, another commander, or another obedient citizen did the wrong thing and they just stood by. Their responsibility for injustice is total, even if another legislator, another commander, another follower of orders committed the action and they were only a bystander. Over 2,000 years ago, in 44 BCE, Marcus Tullius Cicero wrote:

> There are, on the other hand, two kinds of injustice—the one, on the part of those who inflict wrong, the other on the part of those who, when they can, do not shield from wrong those upon whom it is being inflicted. For he who, under the influence of anger or some other passion, wrongfully assaults another seems, as it were, to be laying violent hands upon a comrade; but he who does not prevent or oppose wrong, if he can, is just as guilty of wrong as if he deserted his parents or his friends or his country. (Cicero 1913 [44 BCE])

Among the cases of injustice that changed the face of social psychology was the murder of Kitty Genovese in 1964, committed at night near her apartment in New York City. Because she resisted, the murder lasted roughly half an hour. During this time, some 40 neighbors heard her screams; but not only did they not come to her aid, they did not even call the police to summon assistance or to report what was happening. The murder, and the knowledge that so many people were witness to it, sparked a far-ranging debate on the reasons that led the witnesses to refrain from taking any action.[9] Even if the situation was not sufficiently clear, and may have been open to multiple interpretations, and even if the abundance of possible interpretations might have led each of the neighbors to check what the others were doing in response to the incident, the diffusion of responsibility still stands out in this instance.

When an individual believes that others are witness to the same act, law, or order, he feels that the responsibility is not only his but is in fact shared by all the individuals associated with, or witness to, the act or law. Even when they are required to take a stand and perform an action, many individuals assume that someone else will respond and act, and that there is thus no real need for they themselves to take action.

Alan Carter (1998, 40) describes the hypothetical case of a person who sees a child drowning, discussing the question of that person's responsibility to save the child: If there were some people at the edge of the water who witnessed the event and could have saved the child, did this lessen his responsibility to save the child? If we start with the assumption that when an individual is witness to an injustice he must take responsibility and aid the victims, the question arises of whether, when additional individuals witness these actions, the responsibility is shared by all of them; for example, a third of the responsibility if three

9 For additional details, see Atkinson, Atkinson, and Hilgard (1983, 566–568).

spectators are present, and a tenth if there are ten witnesses. Carter argues that the responsibility is total with regard to each of the witnesses. In fact, if we posit the division of responsibility according to the number of spectators, witnesses, or participants, the argument becomes absurd. Thus for example, the greater the number of witnesses to a murder, the lesser the moral responsibility of the uninvolved spectator; or the more soldiers who take part in shooting civilians, the lesser the causal responsibility of the individual soldier for the shooting.

Our individual moral, remedial, and communiterian responsibility as citizens of a democratic society for the way that our society operates should be identical to that of our fellow members of society. The individual in a democratic society is expected to take full personal causal, remedial, moral, and communiterian responsibility for his actions—and moral, remedial and communiterian responsibility for the actions of other members of society, even if he was not a causal participant in these actions. When the individual absolves himself of moral responsibility for society’s decisions—for example, by diffusion of responsibility based on the presence of multiple participants in, or witnesses, to a decision—he is in effect ignoring his obligation to consider, decide, and act, and his responsibility for the actions of the society to which he belongs. This denial of personal obligation quickly exacerbates the dangers of the “slippery slope” of individual ethical decisions, and upsets the moral compass of society, whose task is to aid its members in charting their course in a complex moral world.

“Easy” Solutions and Their “Complex” Personal and Societal Weight

Compounding the diffusion of responsibility are other accepted ways of circumventing individual responsibility for the actions of society and the commitment to democratic values. The easiest and

most popular solution to the tension between laws and values, and between specific laws, is total or near-total conformist obedience.[10] Conformist obedience as a behavior pattern frees the individual from decisions and conflicts, ostensibly allowing him to renounce all responsibility for his actions. In this way, he absolves himself of the need to pursue the true meaning of the law in the specific context in which it is applied, to grapple with different possibilities, or to deal with ethical problems and obligations to society.

Not every incident or activity that requires personal judgment allows for examination of the individual's decision and his response to the event. But where the incident clearly violates the democratic system of values, conformist obedience is not acceptable. When a new law is passed that divides up public property (for example, placing control over a sizeable portion of state lands in the hands of a particular ethnic group); when an order is issued (for instance, to take part in targeted killings); when an individual is witness to an act of injustice (for example, inequity in the distribution of resources to injured children from various ethnic groups), as long as the injustice does not raise a large black flag,[11] or spark significant opposition, the

10 Hannah Arendt (1994 [1963]), in her report on the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem, wrote: "The trouble with Eichmann was precisely that so many were like him, and that the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were, and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal" (276)—yet they nonetheless followed orders and took part in genocide and in crimes against humanity.

11 Thus for example, the justices of Israel's Supreme Court (HCJ 425/89: 730–731) asked in astonishment of soldiers who followed orders to break the arms and legs of Palestinians as a collective punishment against their village: "Is it at all possible to speak of 'ambiguity' and 'vagueness' when the matter in question is an order to remove people from their homes, to bind and gag them, to strike them with clubs in order to break their arms and legs? What ambiguity can there be regarding a manifestly illegal order

“easiest” and most common social solution is obedience. The rules of disobedience, by contrast, are extremely vague.[12]

Another popular solution is to rely on the complexity of the matter in question and to appeal to sources of authority or trustworthy interpreters, such as the legislature, the courts, rabbis, leaders, or commanders, who help the individual to avoid a personal decision. The individual who chooses such a solution is actually making a clear decision, though it may appear as if he is refraining from doing so. He is deciding in favor of the actions committed in the name of, or per the decision of, the leader, the legislature, the commander, or the rabbi. Avoiding a personal decision constitutes a waiving of the right and the obligation to decide; it is akin to granting the power and the right to another, or to the government apparatus, to decide in place of the individual. In the words of Hannah Arendt:

> [W]e have become very much accustomed by modern psychology and sociology, not to speak of modern bureaucracy, to explaining away the responsibility of the doer for his deed in terms of this or that kind of determinism… Israeli law, in theory and practice, like the jurisdiction of other countries cannot but admit that the fact of “superior orders,” even when their unlawfulness is “manifest,” can severely disturb the normal working of a man’s conscience. (Arendt 1994 [1963], 289–290, 294)

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of this type, which, in the words of the Military Advocate General, has ‘a black flag hanging over it,’ and which it is obligatory to disobey?”

12 “Illegality that pierces the eye and inflames the heart …” is a poetic example of this type of ambiguity (Military Court MC 3/57, Chief Military Prosecutor v. Major Shmuel Malinki et al.).

As noted by Yigal Elam:

> Those who carry out orders are never blind tools in the hands of their leaders. It is convenient for them to believe this or to present it this way, solely to avoid responsibility for acts of omission or commission in which they were involved and which they executed with great initiative and resourcefulness … [In effect,] the leadership wins prizes not for playing a genuinely responsible role but for its willingness to absolve the people of responsibility. (Elam 1991, 179–180)

A third popular solution is what we will call "internal exile." This refers not to emigration, i.e., relocation to a different country, but to the individual's "exiling" of himself from the society in which he lives. In practice, it means refraining from taking responsibility for the actions of others and of society, and from commitment to democratic values—in effect, declaring that we have severed our ties with society, "keeping our hands clean" with regard to negative things in which the majority of society takes part, and avoiding commitment to values that demand opposition to such acts. This "internal exile" consists of various levels of estrangement from society, from actual disassociation from the activity and from fellow members of society to private awareness of this internal exile-by-choice.

A fourth "easy" solution is to take responsibility after the fact: beating one's breast, expressing remorse, asking for forgiveness, and so on in an endless cycle—the so-called "shooting and crying" phenomenon. Itamar Pitowsky (1990, 186) described this state of mind as participating in an act that is morally wrong and then taking credit for being aware of it and experiencing pangs of conscience.

The one who shoots and cries “basks in his remorse, even exploiting it for personal gain. He believes that the torment itself is a virtue that confers some sort of moral credit on the individual.”

In many instances, despite the diffusion of responsibility and these “easy” solutions, the individual has clear knowledge and/or an intuitive moral sense that the laws or actions of his society are wrong. Despite this, he takes part in these acts and obeys these laws, edicts, and orders that should not be obeyed, as a result of moral weakness, a weakness of the will.

Membership in society brings with it a complex mix of allegiances, conflicting loyalties, desire to conform, and aversion to going against other members of society, to swimming against the current. At the time of the Kafr Qassem massacre (1956), members of the Border Police reacted in different ways to the battalion commander’s order to shoot to kill those who violated curfew. There were those who intentionally disobeyed the order,[13] those who attempted to avoid carrying it out without openly disobeying it, those who tried to follow it without killing anyone, and those who obeyed the order without question. According to Ruvik Rosenthal’s account (2000, 22), First Lieutenant Aryeh Menashes was asked by the court how he explained the fact that after he had asked questions (during the briefing prior to the curfew) about women, children, and people returning from work, he did not continue questioning despite his grave concerns about a potential disaster. His response was, “The people who were in the room at that meeting began looking scornfully at me—what do you mean, asking

13 The company commander, Yehuda Frankenthal stated, “There is the commander’s order and the dictates of one’s conscience . . . I understood the order, but I acted according to the dictates of my conscience” (cited by Ruvik Rosenthal [2000, 39]).

all these questions. They simply sneered. Because of the snickering, I didn't ask anymore. It's possible I was embarrassed."[14]

According to Agnes Heller:

> Dostoyevsky once said that every person is responsible for every other. If everyone acted accordingly, there would be paradise on Earth at once. To assume absolute responsibility is to promise salvation itself. The opposite of absolute responsibility is to assume no responsibility at all: to make no promises. Both absolute responsibility and the total absence of responsibility are extreme cases, beyond the possibilities of the human condition. (Heller 2005, 21)

Where, then, does responsibility end? Is there a limit to personal responsibility?

Moshe Greenberg (2006) went back to the Jewish sources to consider these questions. The Talmudic sages discussed the question of why a punishment was decreed against Amasa and Avner—two distinguished commanders of King Saul who refused to follow his

14 Another case in point is the story of Major Rami Kaplan, who participated in reserve duty in the Gaza Strip during the second intifada (2001). Kaplan recounted that one day, the division commander came to his unit and briefed the soldiers on the IDF's new guidelines: "At this point, I tried to tell him that, as I understood it, he wasn't briefing us on the guidelines for opening fire but on how to get through an investigation by the Military Advocate General. 'No, what are you talking about?' he dismissed me. Given the atmosphere in the room, Kaplan did not continue with his questions or comments since he believed that if he said anything else he would be criticized as defeatist, an extreme leftist, a bleeding heart, an Arab lover. He was only surprised that he didn't notice any similar discomfort among the rest of the participants in the briefing" (*Haaretz*, weekend supplement, April 27, 2001).

order and refrained from taking part in the killing of the priests of Nov, who had helped David in his flight from Saul. The answer given by the sages was that they were punished because they only refrained from obeying Saul's order to kill the priests—but did not prevent others from killing them. The fact that they did not participate in the killing, and kept their own hands free of blood did not help Avner and Amasa; they were expected to take a stand and actively prevent the killing of the priests. The neighbors of Kitty Genovese likewise refrained from taking action: they did not spill her blood with their own hands, yet by not coming to her aid nor attempting to summon help, they bore moral, communal, and perhaps even causal and "non-remedial," responsibility for her death.[15]

Moral responsibility that is not "weak-willed"—that does not take refuge in obedience, the complexity of an issue, the shifting of responsibility to others, or internal exile—should ideally cause the individual to take a clear stand when there is a blatant disparity between actions, laws, and orders that he witnesses and the democratic system of values that he espouses. Every individual is expected to act in such a way as to lessen the inconsistency between his democratic stance or intuitive moral sense and an action, law, or order that contradicts them. Despite the fact that the preceding discussion of

15 A clear example drawn from Israeli law is the Cohen Commission of Inquiry into the events at Sabra and Shatila. Avigdor Feldman (1985, 79) noted that the commission broadened the "circle of responsibility to include so-called 'indirect responsibility,' that is, placing responsibility not only on those who carried out prohibited actions but also on those who were capable of preventing these actions and did not do so." Another notable example of Israeli jurisprudence is the conviction of Margalit Har-Shefi for not preventing the murder of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, since she knew of Yigal Amir's intentions but did not prevent him from acting on them and did not notify the authorities about them (see for example: *Haaretz*, July 19, 2001).

"easy" solutions and "weakness of the will" shows that theoretically the progression from knowledge to action should be an obvious one, the imbalance between the real and the ideal is often not pronounced enough to cause individuals to do the right thing.

In his analysis of the concept of heroism, Yeshayahu Leibowitz (2006, 121) wrote that heroism "is always bound up with the struggle between a conscious moral decision that the individual chooses to make, and an innate, subconscious, even involuntary, instinct. . . . [It is] dedication to a value that does not 'contribute' anything to a person (in the objective sense) but rather demands something of him." Sadly, it seems that, too often, one has to be a hero to be a responsible, democratic citizen.

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