

### Rights, values and culture war

The contribution of the Director, Rabbi Dr Shimon Cowen, to a conference held recently in Canberra on religious and cultural liberty under a bill of rights, has now been published in the October issue of the Australian journal "Quadrant" with the title "Rights' as a weapon in culture war". It is an attempt to focus the heightening opposition of an essential secular and hedonistic materialism (for which the term coined is "Hedonomat") with the return of commonly held – objective and universal values – from shared religious tradition. The essay seeks to delineate both standpoints, their relationship to the concept of the separation of religion and state in democratic theory, and recent manifestations of this conflict of world views in Australian – and especially Victorian state – legislatures. There has been favourable feedback from a number of quarters.

The Institute has long been interested in the common religious values, identified as the "Noahide laws", which were endorsed by the US Congress in 1991 as the bedrock of society since the dawn of civilization, and by the Australian Governor General in 2008 as ethical principles which "apply to all contemporary issues and therefore play an important role in our day-to-day lives". See the monograph published by the Institute on this subject (*Perspectives on the Noahide laws*) and the essays published on the Noahide laws and their application to contemporary issues in the Journal of Judaism and Civilization via the cumulative index on the Journal of Judaism and Civilization page (on website: "publications").

### New online interactive course: principles of religious belief

The Institute has revised the commencement date for a new course on the basic principles of religious thought, underlying the root ("Noahide") theology of the world cultures. These relate to the existence and unity of the Creator, Revelation and Divine law, Providence and Redemption. It is based on the "Thirteen Principles of faith" set out by the great medieval philosopher, Moses Maimonides. The course text is a work published by the Institute, "Maimonides' Principles. The course can be taken both in Melbourne and online interactively. The course runs once weekly from November 13 to December 18, 2009. Applications close 28 October. For course description, registration details, dates and costs see: <http://www.ijc.com.au/courses.html>

### Upcoming event

**CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE:  
FROM DNA TO SPEED CAMERAS**

CONVICTIONS NOT BASED ON EYEWITNESS EVIDENCE,  
BUT AS THE RESULT OF CONJECTURE.

**Rabbi Shimon Cowen**  
Director  
Institute of Judaism  
and Civilization

**Mr Jeremy Rapke**  
Director  
Public Prosecutions,  
Victoria

**Mr John Schaffer,**  
Acting Director,  
Victoria Police Forensic  
Services Department

**Mr Gerry Ryan,**  
Detective Superintendent

8:00 pm  
Monday night, Dec. 14  
Glen Eira City Hall  
"Caulfield Cup Room"  
\$10/\$5 Entrance Fee

for more information contact [admin@ijc.com.au](mailto:admin@ijc.com.au)

On Monday evening, 14 December, at 8 pm the Institute will host at the Glen Eira City Hall (corner Glen Eira and Hawthorn roads) a special seminar on "Circumstantial evidence: from DNA to speed cameras" with the Victorian Director of Public Prosecutions, Mr Jeremy Rapke. This is part of the Institute's general research interest in the ethical review of the legal system. Lawyers should consult the Law Institute of Victoria website to see how attendance may be reckoned to continuing professional development points.

### The gift of self-transcendence

One of the greatest gifts which could be provided to contemporary youth (and to individuals generally) is the ability to "self-transcend" towards higher values. It is this which provides the ability to withstand, meet and deal with challenges. This is one of the principal messages of the work of Viktor Frankl. **See over page.**

## REPORT

### Psychotherapy and Religion by Rabbi Shimon Cowen



The Institute for Judaism and Civilization has long been interested in the work of Viktor Frankl. The interest originally had a religious impetus. One of the greatest figures of modern Jewry, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson – known as the “Lubavitcher Rebbe” - coming from the tradition of pure religious orthodoxy, but with an open and transformative stance towards the secular world, knew of the work of Viktor Frankl and long ago encouraged its dissemination. Apart from the general significance of this – which is that Frankl’s work is consistent with monotheism - was the personal significance for Frankl of the Rabbi’s support, as a recently disclosed story relates.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe reportedly asked an important contemporary writer in psychotherapy to write a biography of Frankl and otherwise publicise his work. For whatever reason, this was not undertaken by that individual. I, as an

academic and a Lubavitcher Chassid, once aware of this as well as of a letter of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, in which he wrote explicitly of the significance of Frankl’s work, took it upon myself to translate a number of key essays by Frankl, in which the spiritual dimension of Frankl’s work, that is to say its nexus with religion, becomes explicit.

It would seem that Frankl’s later work, whether this was a matter of his own choice or pressure from publishers, seeks to neutralize this explicit connection. In his early writings, however, there is no ambiguity whatsoever, although Frankl made it a matter of philosophical and therapeutic practice not to “preach” religion to his patients. The therapeutic principle is a clear one: only a spiritual meaning to which the patient came on his or her own, could be a truly therapeutic one. In addition to the translations I wrote a number of essays exploring the relationship between Frankl and religious conceptions of the human being, including the moral tenets of ethical monotheism.

Prior to the Institute’s engagement with the work of Viktor Frankl (which also included the organization of a number of forums on his work and a conference, together with Chabad on campus, at the University of Pennsylvania to celebrate the centenary of his birth), the Institute was interested in the therapeutic relationship of religion and psychotherapy. A large conference was held in 1996 (prior to the actual formation of the Institute, but in anticipation of its general mission) on Psychotherapy and Judaism. The Institute has been interested to

explore the spiritual dimension of specific psychological conditions from a theological perspective, whilst at the same time always having regard to existing supplementary clinical and other therapies available to these conditions. Amongst published proceedings of these seminars are “Jewish spiritual concepts in clinical practice” by Dr M. Greenbaum published in the *Journal of Judaism and Civilization* Vol 5 and more recently “Torah reflections on disability” by Mrs Z. Oliver in the *Journal of Judaism and Civilization* Vol 8. Already after the 1996 conference the Institute held a series of talks on the “therapeutic triad” of patient, therapist and religious mentor.

Work by the Institute on Frankl has thus taken the form of (a) translations from his work, which were gathered into a monograph of the Institute, entitled *The rediscovery of the human: basic texts of Viktor E. Frankl* and (b) essays on Frankl, of which the Institute has published a number, proceeding from forums and conferences organized by the Institute. These can be inspected in the cumulative index to the *Journal of Judaism and Civilization* on the Institute’s website (via the publications tab).

Amongst international participants in forums on Frankl, run by the Institute, have been Professor David Guttman of the University of Haifa, Professors William Breitbart and David Kissane of the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, NY, and Professor Kate Loewenthal of the University of London, in addition to distinguished Australian scholars.

Kindly sponsored by  
Dr Howard Goldenberg