

addresses serious violations of morality. Etiquette restricts freedom of expression; law restricts freedom of action. But they are mutually dependent: Law cannot be administered justly without the order provided by courtroom etiquette.

As for Mrs. Foot, as the authors are care-

ful to call her, her fundamental error was in assuming that morality and etiquette are two different things. Both are part of a single, highly complex system of rules for the governance of social conduct, the authors insist. Without both of them, civilization would disappear.

Inventing The Yarmulke

"Holy Headgear" by Harry Steinhauer, in *The Antioch Review* (Winter 1990), P.O. Box 148, Yellow Springs, Ohio 45387.

Harry Steinhauer was troubled when he received a fund-raising appeal from Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.) in 1988. Lautenberg told the story of Captain Simha Goldman, an orthodox rabbi in the U.S. Air Force who had been barred by his superiors from wearing a yarmulke while on duty. The rabbi's case went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, which upheld the Air Force, and then to Senator Lauten-

berg, who helped win congressional approval of a 1987 bill allowing servicemen to wear religious apparel. Lautenberg enclosed a yarmulke with his letter, along with the warning that we "can never take our freedom for granted." Nor, the letter suggested, could the Senator's reelection be taken for granted without a generous contribution.

What bothered Steinhauer, a professor

The Language of Hope

The Austrian philosopher Wittgenstein said that only those who have mastered a language can know how to hope. The inability to express hope, writes Leon Botstein in *Daedalus* (Spring 1990), not simply incompetence in reading instruction manuals or newspapers, explains why mass illiteracy—or pseudoliteracy—is a threat to American democracy.

If indeed the categories of freedom, justice, truth, and humanity are to flourish, a language must be mastered. . . . We need to retard the evolution of thoughtless language use exemplified, ironically, by the way we use the word hope. It is now accepted (and has been since the 1950s) to use the adverb hopefully as a replacement for the phrase I hope. . . .

A shift in thinking is perceptible in the linguistic change. In the shift one can perceive a distancing from the idea of personal responsibility and a weakening of faith in personal efficacy. "I hope," the older formulation, makes clear the presence of the speaker as actor. Indirectly, one knows that the speaker not only holds the view but is in a position to

say the next logical point. "I hope," if used, can and ought to be followed by "since I hope, I will . . .," or "I think . . .," or "I urge . . .," and so forth. The older formulation carries with it the assumption of personal responsibility to act on hope and expressed the potential of utility in hoping, speaking, and acting.

The abuse of hopefully, in contrast, signals the idea that what happens is the result of neither one's beliefs nor one's actions, that one is powerless and subject to amorphous circumstances and impersonal forces apart from one's existence. . . .

In the shift in our usage there is camouflaged a pessimism and an exhaustion—a sense of the superfluity of individual belief and influence. This cuts against Wittgenstein's suggestion and (perhaps) admonition that we command a language sufficient for authentic hope. Since hope is contingent on language, real hope derives from a confidence in human knowledge and action. In this sense, it is the dissemination of language and its consequent capacity to spread hope—the essential meaning of literacy—on which the future depends.

emeritus of German at the University of California at Santa Barbara, was the assumption (which even the Supreme Court made) that the yarmulke is an old and sacred part of the Jewish faith.

In the Torah, he notes, nothing is even said about covering the head, much less with a yarmulke. "Neither in the 248 positive, nor in the 365 negative, precepts listed in the Torah (the dos and don'ts), is there any mention of this rite." Throughout the Old Testament, "covering the head was a mark of sorrow and shame," as when King David fled his son, Absalom, with covered head and bare feet.

The Talmud (completed about A.D. 500) makes contradictory statements about covering the head, which is not surprising since it is basically a record of debates about Jewish religious law. In several Talmudic parables, a *bared* head is considered a sign of deference to God.

Yet, Steinhauer concedes, although learned Jews throughout history have tended to favor the bared head, "it seems to be an incontrovertible fact that in the course of the centuries—some say as early as the third or fourth century of the com-

mon era—the custom of covering the head spread and became more and more firmly entrenched in Jewish life." The real turning point came with the birth during the 19th century of liberal Reform Judaism, which "goaded the orthodox into endowing the rite with a significance it had not enjoyed until then."

Even so, Steinhauer continues, the custom was far from uniformly observed. When Pope Paul VI visited Israel in 1964, an Israeli newspaper printed a photo of the nation's president greeting him, with the caption, "The one with the yarmulke is the Pope." Even among those who preferred covering the head, the yarmulke did not prevail until after World War II. It is Steinhauer's guess that young Jews, like their Gentile counterparts of the era, simply found the plain hat too old-fashioned. And only in recent years has the yarmulke become *the* overt symbol of being Jewish.

The point of all this, Steinhauer says, is that even if Captain Goldman felt obliged to keep his head covered on religious grounds, his service cap would have sufficed. Jews, he concludes, should save their ammunition for more worthy causes.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

The Search for Babel

"The Mother Tongue" by Vitaly Shevoroshkin, in *The Sciences* (May-June 1990), 2 E. 63rd St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

Hopscotching from the words *nigi* and *gini* (predecessors of the English nag and gnaw), to the Sino-Caucasian word *gin*, to Austro-Asiatic *gini*, and to Congo-Saharan *nigi*, linguists may have arrived recently at a monumental destination: the mother tongue of all mankind.

All of these words are cognates for the word *tooth*, says Shevoroshkin, a linguist at the University of Michigan, and they suggest that the original terms, uttered perhaps 100,000 years ago, were *nigi* and *gini*. So far, he and other researchers have reconstructed between 150 and 200 words of the language they call proto-World.

The search for proto-World began, in effect, more than two centuries ago when William Jones, an English judge stationed in Calcutta, India, noticed strange affinities between Indian Sanskrit and the languages of Europe. The cognates for *brother*, for example, are *bhratar* in Sanskrit, *phrater* in Greek, and *frater* in Latin. In 1786, after intense study, Jones announced his startling conclusion: Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin had all "sprung from some common source which, perhaps, no longer exists."

Other researchers soon added Germanic, Persian, Baltic, and Slavic to the