

## **Sharing Pains in Community-of-Inquiry-Pedagogy in the Arab-Israeli Context**

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### **Abstract**

This article seeks to contribute to the discussion of Jewish-Arab dialogue in the Middle East in general and the Israeli-Palestinian context in particular by exploring the adoption of philosophical communities of inquiry pedagogy based on a pedagogy of searching. Briefly reviewing the teaching of history as an example of the problematic pedagogy espoused in the Israeli education system (excluding the West Bank and [occupied] territories) that serves both Jewish and Arab students, it then sets out a model of joint dialogical-search pedagogy designed to construct a “community of equal participants” in a non-egalitarian world in order to strengthen pupils’ civic-democratic foundations. Finally, it discusses the way in which Philosophy with Children with young Jews and Arabs/Palestinians can encourage dialogue that bases mutual understanding on their shared pain rather than a resolution of the national conflict.

*Keywords:* Israel-Arab conflict, community of inquiry, sharing pain

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### **The centrality of the Jewish Zionist narrative in the Israeli history curriculum**

Within its sovereign borders (excluding the West Bank/[occupied] territories), the State of Israel administers an education system that covers diverse sectors—the secular mainstream (state education), in which the majority of students from kindergarten to Grade 12 are Jewish, the religious, and the Arab population (taught in Arabic). The curricula and matriculation exams are largely the same across all sectors, some variations existing—primarily in history and some humanities subjects.

This education system reflects the Jewish Zionist narrative. In *Subservient History: A Critical Analysis of History Curricula and Textbooks in Israel, 1948–2006* (Kizel, 2008), I argued that a critical analysis of the general-history curriculum in Israel determined by the Ministry of Education and the general-history textbooks written in the State since its establishment through to 2000 reveals that they not only serve but are in fact subservient to this narrative. The latter makes no room for the Palestinian narrative, Israeli history teaching thus largely repressing Arab national identity and the narrative/identity of other minorities.

As scholars (Apple, 1979, 1982, 1989; Connerton, 1989) and others (FitzGerald, 1979; Funkenstein, 1995; Gagnon, 1987) recognize, textbooks play a key role in shaping collective identity. While they claim to be objective methods of transferring knowledge devoid of any political agendas, in practice they wield the power to neutralize critical thought (Apple, 1991; Marchiano, 1997; McLaren, 1994; Schwartz, 1997). History teaching being meant to free students from the fetters of class, political, and gender fetters, at its best it can equip students with tools that encourage independent thinking so that they can become critical (Zerubavel, 1995; Podeh, 2002). Unfortunately, this is not the case in Israel.

Historically, Israeli general-history textbooks have toed the line set out by state curricula guidelines (Kizel, 2005; Kizel, 2015; Kizel, 2023), general history being made secondary to Jewish Zionist history as part of the attempt to harness general-history teaching to the strengthening of the national Jewish heritage and its passing on to coming generations. These including the Arab-Palestinian populace, the policy was designed to glorify the history of Israel and the Zionist narrative—from exile to revival.

Textbook analysis reveals that since the creation of the Jewish State the authors of general-history textbooks have tended to devote greater space to the theory of political and military history than social or cultural history. Both Israeli textbooks and curricula have sought to realize the goals of state education. When the State was established, this objective was directed towards security needs and the formation of an Israeli collective (Kizel, 2008). As it grew, however, curriculum designers were increasingly expected to address other issues and give place to different interpretations—even if textbooks continued to focus on Jewish/Israeli history.

The primary victims of this policy have been Israeli Arab students—some of whom identify as Palestinians. As the years passed, increasing numbers of the latter began feeling that their national identity was excluded from the curriculum, Israel's definition as a Jewish democratic state (i.e. the nation state of the Jews) impinging on their study of their own history—and their national identity. Suppressed by the State's meta-narrative, the narrative of a large sector within the State became structurally inferior—at least from an educational perspective.

Like the educational community, the classroom contains a network of narrative identities, every participant seeking self-expression. Personal identity includes diverse elements—ethnic and religious background, socioeconomic status, gender, etc. These not only form an integral part of a student's status as a subject but also directly affect the

classroom educational milieu—relationship dynamics, individual viewpoints, the way in which students interpret what is said to and about them, their mode of learning, etc.

Rather than a blank slate or objective space, the classroom thus serves as a dynamic locus for a variety of forces. Most of these are covert rather than visible, thus being easy for the educational system to ignore. Despite narrative identities being central, critical, and representative of human essence, the normative learning process requires students to leave them outside the classroom.

In recent years, the Israeli education system—like many others—has embraced a scientific-educational jargon dedicated to transforming pupils into a homogenous group. Students who bring their Arab-Palestinian identity into the classroom being asked to relinquish it in favor of Israeli collectivism, the intersubjective relationship between the I and the Other—two independent and separate beings that are simultaneously codependent—is impeded.

While not negative in and of itself, this homogeneity ignores individuality as embodied in the narrative identity of each and every student. Although the pedagogic classroom can only benefit from multiple narrative identities, the traditional Israeli system has sought to standardize students. This move most adversely affects weak populations such as the Arab-Palestinian, these being particularly vulnerable to efforts to reduce, diminish, and obliterate their particularity.

In the framework of collective memory, narrative serves national and cultural projects. Generally functioning as a meta-narrative, it enables construction, destruction, renovation, and restoration. While allowing people to wallow in their suffering and nurse chronic pain, fostering bitterness, distrust, and a sense of deprivation on the part of national/ethnic groups, narratives can also offer hope of redemption. Established and structured in terms of power relations, they constitute a powerful discursive element. Exposing the force informing the

intellectualism that represents the “proper” order, Foucault notes that “It’s not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power ... but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time” (1980, 133).

Mainstream educational frameworks such as that in Israel tend to ignore narratives, teacher-training institutions traditionally focusing on “educational advancement,” “striving for excellence,” and “learning achievements as the basis for a better future.” The modern trends towards social planning and engineering within education have turned students into a social project that focuses on the future. Hereby, education has been transformed into a system intended to shape an entity into a form for which it was not naturally designed. Constituting a deliberate attempt to direct development along an essentially artificial route, the natural character of this approach can thus only be maintained by treating education/students—artificially and instrumentally—as planned objects.

Theoretically and practically, the classroom operates on the premise that it can deliver precisely what its agents ask of it. When supplied with the correct resources—teachers, staff, inspectors, and tools—at the right developmental time, it will attract outstanding educators who will produce well-educated graduates. This form of education is characterized by an all-embracing totality. Creating and paralyzing outlooks and standards of objectivity, subjectivity, neutrality, and what is forced and irrelevant, the Israeli classroom thus all too often serves as a mechanism for the re-creation (reproduction) and preservation of the existing social order and its cultural representatives.

### **Construction of a dialogical-search pedagogy as an egalitarian alternative**

The fact that Israeli citizens are predominantly Jewish or Arab and the supremacy of the Jewish Zionist meta-narrative that excludes the Arab-Palestinian narrative creates a structural inequality in society in general and the education system in particular. Undermining

Israeli democracy, this bias is not only formal but also essential, the very definition of Israel as a “national homeland for the Jews” granting Jews greater rights—such as automatic citizenship to Jewish immigrants.

The first part of this section lays out a new philosophical-pedagogical model intended to encourage dialogue between the Jewish mainstream and (primarily) Arab minority. Neither of these populations are homogenous, of course, the Jewish sector consisting of numerous streams, from Ultra-Orthodox to die-hard secularists who differ in lifestyle and beliefs/ideology—the Arab populace similarly being largely Muslim but with Christian and Druze minorities (themselves religiously and politically diverse and varied).

The model presented herein—the pedagogy of searching—is designed to enhance communication between the two groups rather than find a solution to the political (and other) problems that plague Israeli society at large. It thus seeks to promote an egalitarian-collaborative alternative form of dialogue between the two sectors on the basis of the recognition that minorities must be allowed to articulate their narrative in the same way and to the same degree as the mainstream—i.e. in a non-hierarchic framework. Hereby, each side is given the opportunity to express its historical, cultural, religious, etc. distinctiveness as a legitimate phenomenon, no judgment being made as to which is better or right.

The narratives that manifest themselves in the classroom are very powerful, their existence being a function, *inter alia*, of the conflict between them. Not only do they contend for memory resources, historical truth, and the distribution of means but they also oppose the forces that seek to silence other narratives with which narrative coalitions might be built. Even if imaginary, narrative conflicts thus become a site for ongoing manipulation, reproduction, and design.

When students enter the classroom with something in common—whatever it might be—their narratives immediately become part of the class network. Narratives thus serve as a

central identity-shaping tool on both the individual and collective level. Frequently, (invisible) narrative coalitions develop within a classroom, creating a unified discourse that threatens other narratives. When identity narratives encounter others in a group, they in effect act as monological tools for self-examination and self-understanding. While most individuals feel secure within themselves and their environment because they draw on family, community, religious, ethnic, traditions, etc., the first dialogical tool groups employ is narrative. Collectivity thus creates a methodological framework for discovering people's views about themselves and those around them in various areas of life.

This forms context within which narratives are recounted. In contrast to the philosophical act of discovery, wherein questions serve as vehicles of clarification, students' narratives are not interested in finding out "truth." Functioning primarily as an organ for bearing personal or communal identity, they are the product of the choice and interpretation people apply to others in recognizing their "identity" out of a desire to create certainty, safety, and stability.

Narratives thus form the foundation for the construction of personal identity. On this view, Jews and Arabs alike organize their life experiences and give them meaning by means of a narrational process that allows them to select specific aspects and arrange them into an order. Narratives enable them not only to organize and set up mutual relations with their environment but also to develop personally through self-realization. Personal-identity narratives are thus also significant because they act as vehicles for individual development and the embodiment of individual humanity (vs. collectives or groups), serving as a person's private safe space.

Jewish and Arab students also bring into the classroom narratives that are the result of social formation. As narratives unfold, people live and re-experience their culture in a process that, according to Bruner (1986), enables them to reconstruct and reshape their history and

background. Herein, their patterns of behavior, views, and beliefs about life are reflected, formed, and changed, supercultural ciphers being reproduced without individual or groups being able to decode any internal and external manipulations performed or adopted—either with generosity and self-conviction or without critical thought (Gergen & Gergen 1988).

In group settings, narratives are also perceived as social-discourse events. Influenced both by personal psychological structures and by the social constructs of interpersonal situations, they are a joint creation rather than belonging solely to the narrator. Even when the listener seeks to reduce the narrator’s direct impact, the very circumstances—face to face, for example—generate an interpersonal process (Corradi, 1991).

The narratives that enter the classroom represent a movement through time, making not just students and all the elements they bring to the discourse present but also the group to which they belong—and, as noted above, the long history and identity chain they carry. Each individual further carries a “basket” containing an array of identities. Narratives thus serve as the “central function or instance of the human mind” (Jameson 1981, 13). In light of Giroux’s (2000) argument that identities are labile and variable, acting as pawns in the hands of history, culture, and power, narratives may be perceived as enabling subjects to understand themselves non-systematically—inquiring into their origin and/or the principle of the group to which they belong—despite their tendency towards negative formulation.

When narratives collide, as in the Israeli case, they engender a discourse of violence informed by (a pedagogy of) fear (Kizel, 2015a, 2016, 2021). This revolves around disdaining the Other, viewing him or her as an enemy that must be fought. Hierarchical in nature, it is dedicated to victory and submission. The pedagogy of searching, in contrast, seeks to promote dialogue between narratives in order to avert violence, even on the symbolic level. In order for it to exist, students must adopt the philosophical and methodological principles embraced by P4wC—first and foremost the six dimensions I have identified



(Kizel, 2016a) that distinguish P4wC from the regular classroom discourse. The hope is that this will lead to the following outcomes:

- Establishment of egalitarian community that does not favor one narrative over another. Philosophical communities of inquiry afford an opportunity to raise and discuss questions in an egalitarian framework within which students can freely and openly bring and share their personal background, the historical pain of their community, and their group culture. The rules of the game laid out when the philosophical community is formed determine that its goal is to “give room” to questions, beliefs, and ideas rather than subjugate or dominate. Acknowledgment of the philosophical perception of reality rather than a focus on historical facts creates a rich conceptual space in which personal/collective identities can express themselves.
- Non-judgmentalism: The basic rule governing relations within the philosophical community of inquiry is that no one/group judges another or his/its past. The community seeks to constitute a space in which questions and notions—and their supporting narratives—can be raised without being judged. Facilitators are trained to guide the members away from blaming or accusing one another in order to help them foster mutual empathy (Kizel, 2023a). The inherent problem this model faces lies in the fact that each group may recount an erroneous “factual history.” Its express goal must thus be to articulate narratives rather than find the truth—an important but not paramount aim. Right from the outset, facilitators must make it clear that, the discussion possibly including “facts” some members will regard as outrageous lies, the purpose is to allow participants to speak rather than establish what is “right/true.” This being the challenge non-judgmentalism poses, the model seeks to prevent members from determining who is to blame, who/what is right, or who/what is wrong in favor of expressing their own experiences—in particular their pain from their own historical perspective. In the case of

the Israeli-Arab/Palestinian conflict, Jews and Arabs/Palestinians have a long history of conflict been perpetuated, *inter alia*, by the Israeli education system and other social agents. Exposure to “caring thinking” through non-judgmentalism can help divert community members away from trying to claim that they are right and towards listening to the pain embodied in historical narratives. In this way, it is hoped, students will acknowledge one another and be more open to “walking in their shoes.”

- Non-resolution: In contrast to dialogical models based on the raising of issues (à la Freire, 1970) or problem solving on the basis of mutual concessions, the model I am proposing is predicated upon the premise that pupils do not need solutions in order to listen or develop empathy. “Problem mazes” or “dead ends” should thus not be introduced. The complex Arab-Israeli/Palestinian conflict rests on claims to historical rights, accusations of violence on both sides, and military subjugation. Discussion of possible solutions can thus only heat things up and lead to frustration and mutual hostility. The declaration at the very start of a philosophical community of inquiry that the goal is to look for possible points of contact rather than truth-based solutions thus seeks to help reduce tensions and focus on getting to know the Other.
- Identity-enabling rather identity-hierarchy: At the heart of this model lies the idea of “identity-enabling” (Kizel, 2019), whose goal is to avert what Murris (2013, 245) calls cases of “structural epistemic injustice,” in which discourses about children and hearing their unique voice are essentialized and normalized. Students thus require an opportunity to actively engage in democratic decision-making processes—first within the school and then within their local communities—before they can learn to abide by subsequent decisions in society as grown ups (Lansdown, 2001). In this context, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulates that children have the right to express their views and should be taken seriously in accord with their age and maturity. This

global convention asserts the obligation to ensure that competent children receive a voice as citizens (MacNaughton et al., 2003).

Although communities of inquiry aspire to be friendly and safe places (Lipman et al., 1980), some members may feel trapped within an oppressive, repressive discourse and, on occasion, even in a conceptual prison they do not understand or that does not correspond with their experiences. This is powered by the mechanism known as “normalizing education,” which consists of a matrix of practices and theories devoted to establishing, shaping, and policing the human subject in order to create a desired type of human being.

According to Gur-Ze’ev (2010), this type of education creates the conditions that determine what a person can and cannot do within and in face of the world, thereby “produc[ing] the human subject as some-thing and prevent[ing] her from becoming someone, a true subject” (Gur-Ze’ev, 2002, 66). Kohan (1995) and Rainville (2000) similarly argue that ignoring the foundations of systematic discrimination and the way in which institutions have arisen out of—and continue to perpetuate—the repression of minoritized groups is not a neutral stance.

Students—especially children from marginalized groups such as the Arab-Palestinian populace—quickly recognize the people surrounding them and hegemonic Jewish-Zionist voice/narrative. They thus mute their inner voice (i.e. the background from which they come), feeling it to be illegitimate or perhaps even forbidden and asking inauthentic questions in order not to betray their Otherness. The “enabling identity” model (Kizel, 2019) seeks to give them a place in which to speak by challenging the mainstream hegemonic discourse that governs the discourse wherein communities of philosophical inquiry operate.

In this context, philosophical communities of inquiry allow the expression of multiple identities without fear. They thus afford three constructs: 1) multiple perspectives; 2) identity diversity; and 3) legitimization. When they constitute a liberating space for Jews and Arabs,

they recognize Lévinas' Other (Levinas, 1996; Levinas, 1998) and Buber's Thou (1957). Under optimal circumstances, these ethical principles allow multiple narratives to coexist without seeking to dominate, thus enabling discussion of diverse narratives and their legitimization as the unique identities of the young participants of philosophical communities of inquiry expand.

Recognition of the Other/Otherness of the Jewish and the Palestinian narratives is a prerequisite for a philosophical community of inquiry that seeks to be safe, protective, enabling, and open to diverse identities. According to Lévinas (1972), Otherness entails the understanding that the human unity in whose name modernity speaks has sought to blur difference—including, I would posit, the personal identity we wish to be present within philosophical communities of inquiry.

Enabling identity should also encourage the responsibility for both sides that Lévinas propounds. This shuns the violence that occurs when understanding serves to engender a sense of control over the Other or his or her negation. It thus provides us with an excellent tool—or warning—for engagement: an encounter is an encounter and must not be exploited as a way of manipulating or controlling the Other. To be in relation with another face-to-face precludes killing (Levinas, 1998). As he notes: “This is also the situation of discourse” (Lévinas, 1996, 9).

Seeking not to evade the responsibility that Lévinas proposes, philosophical communities of inquiry facilitators should demonstrate sensitivity on entry into a multi-narrative community in order to override ethics as “good” and “right” behavior or action. Treating the obligation towards the Other as infinite and ongoing, his “first philosophy” regarding the ethics towards the other and its centrality in his thought can enrich communities of philosophical inquiry.

### **Communities of shared pain**

Being a meta-approach and field practice, Philosophy for/with Children (P4wC) exists both within and without educational institutions, thus not being confined to a specific time or place such as a school (Kizel, 2023a). As a way of life and educational method, Philosophy for/with Children differs from philosophy as taught in schools and academia alike. While the teaching of philosophy is becoming increasingly common in schools (especially high schools), within the history of philosophy and philosophical thought Philosophy for/with Children has established itself as a model for cultivating human beings who ask existential questions about themselves, their world, and their surroundings from an early age (Kizel, 2022). In contrast to the academic study of philosophy, in which students are passively exposed to philosophical ideas, P4wC seeks to create a place and space for active engagement in philosophical thought that promotes broad, critical thinking skills in its young practitioners. Rather than focusing on acquaintance with philosophy as a field of knowledge to be mastered, it revolves around questions relating to the pupils' existence in the world. It thus develops young people's philosophical sensitivity, presenting questions to them as a living, breathing, vigorous space that fosters creativity, caring, and concern.

In the framework of an approach adopted in schools worldwide that has been extensively empirically documented, children sit in a circle and read or watch a text (clip, drawing, etc.) that prompts them to ask questions. Deciding in a democratic fashion which of the questions they will discuss, they listen to one another, creatively develop their thoughts, and gain experience of a space marked by empathy and trust.

Philosophic communities of inquiry are frequently run by the children or adolescents themselves, without adult intervention or necessary ties to an educational institution. Taking place in a school environment, as part of a youth movement, or private initiatives, they provide a framework within which students can think and talk about problematic issues with support from adults and their peers. In this way, classes may be transformed into communities

of inquiry whose members listen respectfully to one another, construct ideas together, challenge one another, and above all look for and discover their fundamental values and tenets.

The existence of philosophical communities of inquiry that shun sterile educational spaces will, it is hoped, enable them to express pain as a shared human emotion lacking any comparative dimension. One of the gravest threats to dialogue in the Middle East is preoccupation with questions such as “Who was here first?,” “Who hurt whom and why?,” “Who hurt more?” Educators on both sides must thus encourage study of the history of each people and the injustices they have perpetrated. A focus on accusations based on accurate historical facts—even if only by one side—will impede common understanding, even if not intended to bring about a political resolution to the conflict.

The proposed model treats pain from a different perspective, highlighting the cycle of violence from which both sides suffer and its effects on each. It naturally stands in opposition to all nationalistic forms of education that so often encourage collectivism and sometimes also nationalism, by focusing on the “rightness of the way,” “the rightness of our view vs. the enemy’s,” “know your adversary so you can be careful of him, because tomorrow he will rise up to destroy you.” It thus promotes recognition of shared pain and to enable youngsters on both sides to “hurt together.” In contrast to traditional educational spaces, which too often claim to be neutral and objective, it encourages all facilitators and members of philosophical communities of inquiry to “subjectively” engage with their pain. While at first glance this appears to be dissonant—seeking to express pain rather than apportion blame—the question that lies at the heart of the model is: can we separate blame/guilt and pain?

Over the years, educational discourse has regarded itself as “pain-less,” setting out to avoid stepping on explosive “identity charges” and clearing the classroom of the mines of personal narratives. As a “professional” space, the classroom has thus a place for aseptic

learning, the material studied lying at the center and students on the periphery. Within a Vygotskian (1965, 1978) framework, however, the classroom can function as a positive source of human interaction. Recognizing that human beings are affected by social processes, this undermined the prevalent view of the day—identified, *inter alia*, with Piaget (1972)—according to which individuals change in line with biological development. When schools and schooling are regarded as stimulating thought/learning processes, they can serve as a vehicle through which children can exercise their innate psychological abilities while simultaneously undergoing radical changes. In the Middle East context, Jewish and Arab students must be understood in dissociation in relation to their environment, an essential part of their being stemming from the internalization of their socio-cultural world, which feeds their mental functions.

Vygotsky's theory regarding the relationship between learning and the development of thinking skills highlights the importance of social interaction with one's surroundings, the influence of the individual, and the (direct or indirect) human mediation students encounter as central elements that help explain the evolution of thinking and learning processes. Referring to formal schooling as "cultural learning," he stressed (1965, 1978) that study must take place within a social-media framework, mediated by a skilled and significant adult—the classroom becoming a laboratory of sorts for promoting networking. Catch phrases such "the advancement of cognitive ability through social contact," "mutual social relations," and "social learning" have thus now become an integral part of the educational discourse.

In theory, the classroom seeks to be inclusive, setting out to understand reality *in toto*—i.e. as a perfect, closed conceptual system in which everything is contained in accordance with its principles. It thus adopts a universalistic attitude Lévinas regards as a philosophical yearning for totality, looking to serve as a learning lab dedicated to fostering a universal scientific process within the framework of which the participants'

(students/teachers) identities must be acknowledged and be amenable to collective conceptualization. Whatever cannot be included in this group process is insignificant and must be driven out of educational doing. This mission involves a large measure of symbolic violence. Hereby, the personal narratives students bring with them (which reflect their group narrative identity)—in particular those of weak, marginal sectors who represent the particular—are de-differenced. As personal narratives are replaced by the present and sameness, they become a necessary and existing *sein*.

Following the same logic, the classroom also practices exclusion, representing the prohibition against deviation from the self-evident. Contending that we are all aware that not everything is allowed to be said, that we cannot speak about a subject in any and all circumstances, and that not everyone can address every issue, Foucault (1980) argues that this makes the subject taboo in a ritualization of the situation, a game thus being played between three intersecting types of prohibition that creates a complex, endless puzzle. An expanding series of black squares contains a section that represents politics. While these empty spaces, in which we cannot speak freely—the personal narrative identity of the members of a group, for example—are powerful, they are also the subject of numerous prohibitions that, rather miraculously, the group members know how to observe: what they can and cannot speak about. Within this educational space, power systems that exclude some and weaken others, the underprivileged being marginalized by the mainstream, are both fought over and celebrated.

These spaces enable the classroom to distinguish between those for whom it is important to speak and those who need to think twice before doing so, weighing the words they use. This division has traditionally been the function of history, which marks the strong groups and bestows great power on them, making others respect and fear them. Imposing order on discourse, the classroom distributes justice rather than being fair. According to



Foucault (1980), where exclusion exists the desire for truth rests on institutional support—held and guided by a set of practices such as pedagogy, textbooks, publishing houses, libraries, etc.

Socially and pedagogically, the classroom and its pedagogical act represent what at first glance appears to be a positive form of group power that promotes learning, advancement, and excellence. Its internal activities also rest on a covert supervision that classifies, organizes, and distributes what is determines to be legitimate and illegitimate, however. This superintendence not only rests on but also serves pedagogy.

### **Conclusion**

Classrooms frequently reflect the social structure that informs society in general and Israeli society in particular. Herein, hegemonic groups control numerous resources—capital, cultural, economic, social influence, etc.—at the expense of underprivileged, non-mainstream sectors. Some of the latter have been excluded for many years, lying on the margins of society for various reasons—ethnicity, class, economic background, etc. This social structure creates a network of narratives marked by tension and contention, much of which is inevitable. In Foucauldian terms, discourse production is simultaneously determined, supervised, organized, and disseminated via a number of procedures in every society, its role—strength and authority, for example—being to control random discursive events created and represented in the school.

Incapable of recognizing the web of tensions, the classroom structure prevalent in most schools prefers labeling them as “multiculturalism” or “cultural diversity.” As Charles Taylor (1985) observes, minority or marginal groups seek recognition within the political framework of multiculturalism. This demand frequently takes precedence in light of the assumption that recognition and identity are linked—“identity” referring to the fact that people understand who they are and what makes them human beings. People are thus likely

to be damaged and perverted when the surrounding society reflects a narrow, humiliating, or demeaning image of them.

Lack of or distorted recognition can hurt or even act as a form of oppression, leading to a false, constricted state of being. Students do not voluntarily or automatically accept this situation in the classroom, however, schools preserve power structures and impede the possibility of recognition and thence the flourishing of personal identity narratives. Under these conditions, classrooms inherently lack a capacity for openness that allows for the free expression of diverse personal narratives. This fact may be accounted for in several ways:

- a) School pedagogy customarily rests on a meta-narrative determined by state/municipal education systems. These possess several features that preclude any possibility of an egalitarian narrative network: they are hierarchical, privileging the “high”—in the system structure (higher vs. lower classes) in relation to teachers (high school vs. elementary), the level of knowledge (higher in the higher classes), and assessment (high school exams are considered more prestigious). Based on learning/assessment homogeneity, this meta-narrative favors the group over the individual, subjecting itself to state/local authority curriculum demands and pedagogical restrictions.
- b) It also privileges national over personal narrative. In many countries in the world—in particular but not exclusively in nation-states—the education system serves as a central tool for championing the national narrative by making the curriculum subservient to its purposes—most frequently in the field of history. The national narrative seeks to teach a specific set of historical/religious/ethnic events to the next generation in an orderly and systematic fashion under the guise of science. Effectively serving as a “transfer agent,” it imposes its view principally through civics and history classes, field trips, memorial services, and visits by exemplary figures. In this way, it directs the students to accept

certain forms of social life as right and natural and to support them uncritically, without examining the social and cultural interests embedded within them.

Schools play a prominent political role in this framework, the curriculum directly contributing to the “normalization” of students so that they become active agents of the system once they have left school. Via the collective memory shaped by the education system, students navigate themselves in space and time, shaping their self-perception, individual identity, and group affiliation that imparts a sense of belonging. Hegemonic bodies regard the curriculum as a type of encoding and summarizing memory-anchor that fosters lofty national ambitions and collective inspiration. The curriculum thus places the collective center stage, embracing a cluster of social symbols and codes that guide the instruction and learning processes and promoting an appearance of school autonomy that in actual fact disguises a binding collectivity.

According to Paulo Freire (1970), education is always a political act, social elites thus exploiting schools in order to advance their own agenda. On this reading, education helps students look at the world through a better lens and loose the fetters of nationalism and patriotism that bind history textbooks and classes. This potential is not properly utilized within the framework of the modern national state, however, due to the center’s control of the education system.

The model proposed herein seeks to promote a basic human discourse between Jewish and Arab/Palestinian students that can turn them into empathic subjects/communities by enabling them to see that the conflict has caused pain to both sides. Being shareable as an essentially human emotion, pain promotes identification with and caring thinking towards the Other. While not an easy process, this can help students develop a dialogical attitude that will serve them well later in life, encouraging them to use interhuman dialogue as a starting point for all their encounters, searching for the person in—and taking responsibility for—the Other.

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### *Biography:*

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