The Work of Avishai Ehrlich

The Work of Avishai Ehrlich: Political Sociologist, Activist and Public Intellectual

Edited by

Nea Ehrlich, Lesley Marks and Nira Yuval-Davis

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Introduction

A man comes to customs at an airport with a sack.
"What's inside?" asks the customs officer.
"Bird food", says the man.
"Open it!" orders the officer.
He does, it's full of coffee beans.
"Is this bird food?" The officer asks angrily.
"If they want they will eat, and if they don't—they will not..." answers the man.
As I go over the press, I selected some bird food for my thought.
I share it with you.
You do not have to eat or agree!

This quote is part of a series of emails sent by Avishai to his friends and colleagues, sharing his analysis and views on current events. This book is just that, sharing the ideas of a man, whose views may not necessarily be accepted by all, but whose ongoing life-goal is to achieve and disseminate knowledge, create food for thought and do what he believes necessary to create a better and more just world.

This book is about Avishai Ehrlich, his life's work in political sociology, his contribution to the field of sociology in Israel and his role as a public intellectual. As three people who know Avishai very well and very differently—as partner, as daughter and as friend-and-colleague—our idea when initiating this book was to celebrate his work and ideas. By including a sample of his work together with commentaries and personal reflections by leading academic colleagues and friends, these writings introduce the reader to someone who is often described as a "Renaissance man". Avishai Ehrlich's interests span a very wide range: sociology, Marxist theory, political economy, photography, botany and cooking! He is currently reading Jewish philosophy at Tel Aviv University and studying Arabic; he is also considering improving his knowledge of German. This book is about his ideas, his work and the influence he wields among his students, peers and friends.

As a political sociologist, Avishai has been researching the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for over 45 years; and he is a well-known activist in the Israeli anti-Zionist Left. He has taught at the London School of Economics, Middlesex University in London, Tel Aviv University, York University in Toronto, the Academic College of Tel Aviv-Jaffa and the University of

Nicosia in Cyprus. In addition, Avishai was Research Fellow at the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg and at the Austrian Institute for International Politics in Vienna, one of the editors of *Khamsin: Journal of the Revolutionary Left of the Middle East* and today he sits on the Board of Directors of the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI).

Avishai specializes in comparing protracted conflicts; he has written and taught about Israeli and political sociology, sociology of religion, socialism and the welfare state, political economy of the Middle East, globalization and international relations. He was one of the first sociologists to engage with the question of how war and occupation shape every aspect of Israeli society and its political relationships with its neighbors, and has produced thought-provoking analyses of Israeli and global politics. The continuing significance of the Middle East in global politics, and the current discourse about human rights in a society of anti-terrorism surveillance, make these ideas increasingly important to comprehend.

The Work of Avishai Ehrlich: Political Sociologist, Activist and Public Intellectual includes a selection of his own articles, commentaries on his work and his public activism, and experiences related by some of his colleagues and students during his many years of teaching. Ehrlich's own works present the development of his thinking as shaped by changing global events, whilst the commentaries on his evolving ideas by leading academics shed light on how his ideas have influenced and enriched others in sociology and related fields.

This introduction aims to introduce the man behind the ideas, adding the personal to the professional in order to offer a multi-layered perspective and celebrate a special partner, father, friend, colleague and teacher.

Part I includes selected articles written by Avishai Ehrlich at different points in his career. These cover a wide range of topics, reflecting his diverse interests and his ability to piece together different parts of the global puzzle in original and incisive analyses. Also included in Part I, are excerpts from a series of interviews by Nicos Trimikliniotis titled "Avishai Ehrlich, a Pessimist of Intellect but Optimist of Will: a Gramsci-Inspired Sociology", because of the personal nature of these recollections. Here Avishai focuses on experiences which were formative in the development of his political and academic thinking. In particular, his perspectives on Israel as a "permanent war society", his experiences in the student movements during the late 1960s and his participation in the journal *Khamsin* during the 1970s and 1980s.

In Part II, Leo Panitch's "An Exemplary Intellectual: Avishai Ehrlich

over Six Decades" discusses Ehrlich as a multi-faceted personality and examines his life-long commitment to socialist thinking, both in relation to Israeli society and globally. He traces the development of Ehrlich's work since his PhD dissertation on the student movement to his recent comparative work on different divided societies.

Avishai Ehrlich's contribution to the field of Israeli sociology and sociology in general is evaluated and defined by academic colleagues who focus on his insights about Israeli society. In "The Colonization and Conflict Perspective in Israel Studies", Uri Ram describes the different stages in the development of Israel studies, both in sociology and in related social sciences. He highlights the ground-breaking contribution by *Khamsin* in general, and by Ehrlich in particular, to the analysis of the Zionist project as a colonial settler society and the Israeli state and society as a divided and permanent war society.

In her article titled "Zionism, Israel and the New Crusaders", Hagit Borer engages with an attempt to answer the question which occupied Ehrlich: the failure of the Oslo peace process. Borer focuses on the political forces which have affected the USA's withdrawal from its commitment to the process beyond giving it occasional lip service. She disagrees with Ehrlich as to the importance of the Jewish Zionist lobby on American policy makers and instead focuses on the crucial role of the Christian Zionists.

In "Postscript: A Personal Memory", Margret Johannsen reflects on the article she wrote with Ehrlich in 2000-1, and how the post-9/11 political reality forced her to re-evaluate the validity of her concept of "security" which was rejected by Ehrlich when they were co-writing the article.

"Ideological Labour", by Michal Bodemann, describes the different historical stages in which German Jewry practiced ideological labour in Germany thus establishing the otherness of a particular subaltern group in a given society. Bodemann claims that similar ideological labour, analyzed in Ehrlich's work, has been carried out by various groupings in Israeli society, such as Israeli Arabs and Russian Jews, among others.

In "Recognizing Avishai Ehrlich's Contribution to Intersectionality Theory in the Understanding of Women's Work in Israel", Orly Benjamin discusses the influence that Ehrlich has had on her work both as a teacher and as a scholar, in his response to her study on cleaning women's employment policies in Israel, and on her thinking about how different categories of women are situated differently in the labour market.

Hanna Herzog describes Avishai's extensive contribution to Israeli sociology as a teacher, activist and researcher in "Landmarks in Critical Thinking: Some Personal Comments about Avishai Ehrlich". She highlights his

crucial contribution to feminist analysis of the Zionist project.

Nira Yuval-Davis' "Avishai Ehrlich—Some Formative Memories" focuses on her intellectual and political dialogical work with Ehrlich, ranging from research into the national identity and education of Palestinian youth citizens of Israel in the 1960s, to their respective PhD dissertations on different student movements in London in the 1970s, and their work as members of the editorial collective of *Khamsin.* Together they examined issues such as the nature of social change and cooption, the gendered character of the Zionist settler project and the role of messianic Judaism in the construction of the secular Zionist movement.

Combining personal memories with Avishai Ehrlich's political activism and academic legacy is apparent throughout this book, but particularly so in the contributions in Part III.

Noa Lavie's "What I Have Learned from Avishai Ehrlich" describes her personal acquaintance with Avishai as teacher, colleague and friend. She refers to his teachings of Marxism and neo-liberalism as influencing her research and social world view, as well as Avishai's personal support and experienced advice that guided her through junctions in her own academic career, influencing her teachings to this day.

In "Avishai Ehrlich, an Authentic Leftist in Continual 'Agonia', Maria Hadjipavlou describes her friendship with Ehrlich, focusing on the similarities between the so-called "Cyprus Problem" and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which have been at the forefront of their respective political and academic endeavours, as well as their personal experiences of "home".

Sajida Madni contributes a short tribute to Ehrlich, "Avishai Ehrlich: A Simple Man with a Towering Personality" as an activist and educator who has enriched her understanding in the different conferences and courses which they shared in the UK, Cyprus and Israel.

Monika Beutel contributes a short "birthday" note expressing her appreciation of Ehrlich as a teacher and friend.

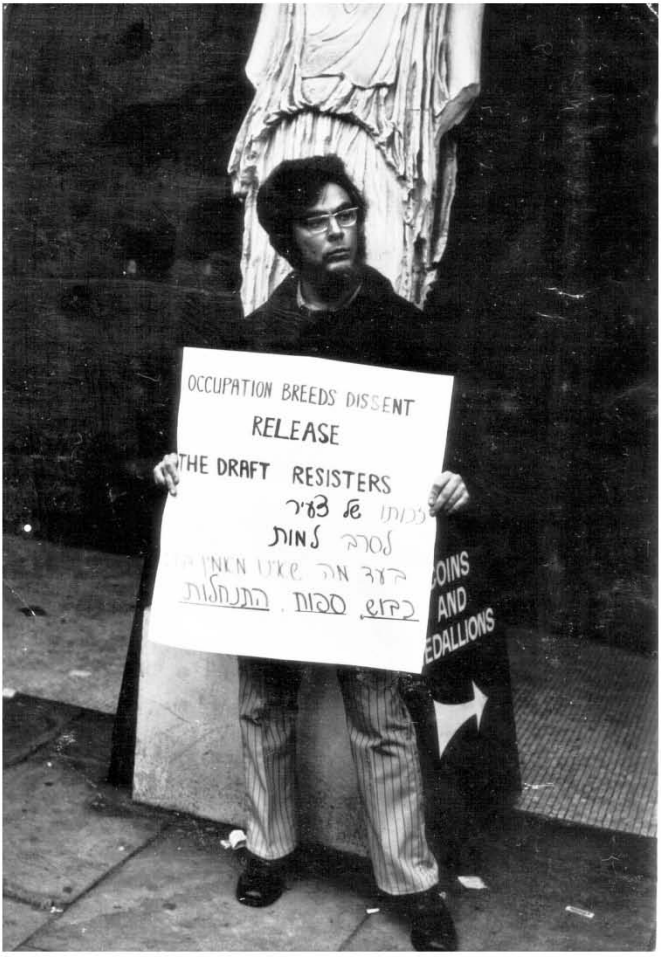
Tom Wengraf has been Ehrlich's close friend since they both became members of the Sociology Department at Middlesex Polytechnic in the early 1970s. In his article "Some Personal Reflections" he examines their long period of friendship and describes himself and Avishai as products of the "1956 Suez/Hungary to 1968" generation.

On Barak, Ehrlich's nephew, writes "Science Fiction as a New Frontier for the Sociology of Conflict", an article with an ironic tone linking Ehrlich's analytical work on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and his love of science fiction, arguing that his insistence on analyzing the former in national, regional and global contexts is inspired by his reading the literature

on extra-terrestrial and inter-gallactic warfare.

Finally Nea Ehrlich and Lesley Marks offer two very personal contributions. In "Reflections on Living in Cyprus", Lesley recounts her time in Cyprus with Avishai and how he reacted to living on the island by learning as much about it as he could—both its local characteristics and attributes and its regional significance in the East Mediterranean and its position in global politics. Nea Ehrlich's "My Father the Storyteller" offers a view of Avishai as father. Nea shares her personal insights about his wider teachings about life, beauty and the power of stories, as well as his magical ability to touch others and share his ideas in ever-creative, unexpected ways.

This book engages Avishai Ehrlich's ideas through the voices of established scholars and creative thinkers. Together the contributions locate his ideas in a wide context that reflects his own interests, passions and concerns. *The Work of Avishai Ehrlich: Political Sociologist, Activist and Public Intellectual* will be of interest to anyone who seeks a deeper understanding of how sociological perspectives about labour, religion, gender and conflict shed light on a globalized world shaped by political economy, post-colonialism, fundamentalism, nationalism, terrorism and the discourse of human rights.


OCCUPATION BREEDS DISSENT
RELEASE
THE DRAFT RESISTERS
OINS
AND
EDALLIONS

List of Illustrations

Part I

Works by Avishai Ehrlich

Chapter One

Conflict and Memory[1]

Can you remember a place you have never been to?

I have never been here before; this is my first trip to Poland. I had many opportunities to come but always found reasons not to. It was not for lack of travelling: I travelled around and lived in different countries for many years. I even came close to Poland once, but never landed on Polish soil.

Now I am in Cracow. It is May and I have strong memories of spring in Poland, as if I have been here before: the smell of freshly reaped hay, creamy chestnut blossoms, pink and purple lilacs. But I have never been here before...

My parents came from Poland. My mother, Karola Altman, was born and raised in Czestochowa. From early childhood, I absorbed her stories about Jasna Góra and the Virgin Mary, and pilgrims climbing the hill on their knees singing hymns. My maternal grandparents were born there, and murdered there in 1939. My father, David, comes from Kovel near Lviv, formerly in Poland, now in the Ukraine. He used to tell us about his last elementary school trip to Gdansk after it became the free city. His native area was annexed to the USSR under the Stalin-Hitler Pact and was destroyed completely during WWII. None of his family survived.

My parents immigrated to Palestine in 1936. Karola was 25 and David 27. She died at age 87; he at age 94. Both are buried near Tel Aviv. Most of their respective families perished in death camps. I grew up without grandparents, with very few relatives. My parents' friends and their children substituted for family.

My mother never wanted to visit Poland: "Why should I go there?" she used to say. "It will only bring back sad memories".

So, through my mother's feelings, Poland became a forbidden place for me too... until now! She refused to recognise a Poland in which her past had no place. She preferred her frozen memory of a Poland that is no more. Her memories were not all sad or bad; they were of places and smells, of tastes and music, of events and people she knew. She clung fondly to these memories which were part of her. Involuntarily, she passed many of those memories—more than I am aware of—to her children.

I was born in 1941 in Tel Aviv, in Palestine under the British Mandate, during World War II, during a night air raid by Mussolini's air force. Win-

dows were painted dark blue to prevent the light shining through and guiding enemy bombers. I don't remember this directly; I was only told what it was like. When I was born my parents already knew their parents had perished and they named me, their first-born, in memory of them: l'avi-shai in Hebrew means "a gift to my father". When I was six and a half, in May 1948, 60 years ago, the state of Israel was founded and war broke out immediately, called the War for Independence in Hebrew and al-nakhba (the disaster) in Arabic: one side's independence was the other's disaster.

The partition of Palestine was voted at the UN Assembly during the Cold War by a rare majority of western and eastern bloc countries on November 29, 1947. Jewish suffering during World War II was still fresh in people's minds. My only sister was born that night. I remember how we brought my mum to hospital and then joined the rejoicing crowds in the streets of Tel Aviv. Hostilities broke out that night. In the morning I had a sister and the first funerals were held. My parents named her Deborah after my maternal grandmother who was murdered by the Nazis in the street in Czestochowa. The partition of Palestine was never executed: the Palestinians, who represented two-thirds of the population, rejected it. Riots broke out, and Arabs and Jews fled, seeking safety among their own communities in ethnic enclaves. As a sociologist who studies partitions in other parts of the world, I can attest, though not justify, that almost as a rule where ethnic violence erupts, atrocities happen on both sides.

When the State of Israel was declared, several Arab states sent their armies against it. By the end of the war, about 750,000 Palestinians had fled or had been forcefully expelled from territories that became Israel. Israel seized 78% of Palestine and the rest was controlled by Jordan and Egypt. Jordan annexed the West Bank and Egypt administered the Gaza Strip without annexation. A Palestinian state was never formed in those sectors, and the refugees were not settled or absorbed in the Arab states where they now lived. In most Arab countries until today, with the exception of Jordan, they are denied basic human rights, even if they and their parents were born there. A Palestinian friend who lives in Beirut wrote to me last year about events in Nahr el-Bared, a refugee camp taken over by a Jihadist group and bombarded by the Lebanese army: "...everyone loves Palestine but hates the Palestinians". They were made to believe—and wanted to believe—they would return to their homes. In their memories, they recalled a Palestine before the Jews arrived. My mother never wanted to go back.

Between 1949 and 1953 Israel absorbed a number of Jews from Arab countries similar to that of Palestinian refugees. The Arab Jews left their homes hurriedly, after centuries of living, mostly amicably, among Arabs.

They had to leave because of growing nationalism and hostility to Jews caused by the first Israeli-Arab war. The majority lost all their property. These "Oriental Jewish" immigrants, or "Arab Jews", settled mostly on Palestinian land, and almost 418 Palestinian villages and towns were demolished by Israel during the war and in subsequent years.

When my parents emigrated they became citizens of Palestine and gave up their Polish citizenship. I never regarded myself as a Pole. My place of birth on my birth certificate was still called Palestine. I suppose I am therefore also a Palestinian. However, since Israel went to war with the Arab states, Palestinians today are understood to be Arabs—in contradistinction to Israeli Jews. However, "Arab" is not a religion but a linguistic and cultural group (like Slavonic, Germanic, Turkic). There are Christian and Muslim Arabs, as well as non-religious Arabs. Most of the Jews who came from Arab countries spoke Arabic and were steeped in Arab culture; they are Arab Jews. It must sound strange, but it is only strange because there is a conflict between Israel and the Arabs. Upon arrival in Israel the Arab Jews were labelled by the mostly East European Jews as "Oriental Jews" rather than "Arab Jews". They were regarded inferior and suffered discrimination. Still, to be an Oriental Jew in Israel was better than being an Arab.

How ironic this must sound to those who know history, for the euphemism "Ost-Juden" was a derogatory term used by Germans towards Jews who migrated to Germany from Poland and Russia. Outside Israel Jews are seen as a religious group but in Israel Jews are regarded as a national group. However, about 28% of the people in Israel are not regarded as Jewish by the religion; non-Jews by religion are not equal in Israel. We see that every oppressed group can become an oppressor, and every difference can be racialized.

There are no Jews today in Czestochowa, but I found a distant relative there, whose mother converted and so survived. My mother's home in Czestochowa still stands at 23 Warszawska Street. I knew many details about the house that I heard from my mother. On this first visit to Poland I went to see it with my daughter. I wanted to have my own impression of the place; it was also homage to my mother. It is a big house built around an inner courtyard, but it is in a very poor state. Many poor families live there now; I don't know which part was my grand-parents' flat. I brought my daughter with me, so that she too would have a personal memory of that place. For her it will never be, however, the memory of home as it was for my mother. Her home, like mine, is somewhere else. But this may add to her memory of her grandmother whom she knew—unlike me who did not know my grandparents.

When I was a student at the Hebrew University I rented a room in an Arab house in a quarter of Jerusalem that had been inhabited by affluent Arab families before 1948. The oriental house was beautiful and lavish. We students could only afford to rent rooms in the servants' quarters. One day in the summer of 1967, shortly after the Six Day War, an old Palestinian couple knocked on the door and asked politely, in very good English, if they could look around for a while since the house, they said, had been their family home until 1948. A Jewish family from Yemen occupied the house, and they were anxious that the visit may lead to these Arabs claiming the house back.

Palestinians made keys and hung them on gold chains or strings on the necks of their children, a symbol of their determination to return to their land and homes. The homes are mostly not there; they were demolished long ago and new homes built for Jews stand in their place. The Arab names of the villages and streets have also been changed; the Arab past in the Jewish State has been systematically erased. Most Jews do not know what was there before; do not want to know. But the memory of home lingers on. In my mother's case she talked about the chestnut tree that stood in front of her window and the apple orchard behind the house. In the Palestinian stories it is usually a fig or pomegranate tree by the house, and an olive grove behind the village. Palestinian refugee camps are named after abandoned villages; children born there, when asked where they are from, say they are from the place that is no more. A memory of the home that we have never been to is also a memory transferred from generation to generation. It becomes the collective memory of those forced to leave their home or land, and have nowhere else to call home.

When I was 18, I joined a Kibbutz in the south of Israel, across from the Gaza Strip, and became a shepherd. While wandering with my sheep, I discovered the ruins of Arab villages and deserted orchards surrounded by prickly fences made of cactus. This was next to my Kibbutz, yet, we were all told that the area was desolate until the Jews settled there. I started to doubt the Zionist narrative. I left the Kibbutz shortly after and became an anti-Zionist. I came to believe, as I still do, that Israel was founded on an injustice to the Palestinians; that the solution to the Jewish predicament in Europe came at the expense of people who were not responsible. I used to argue bitterly with my Zionist father who believed that the only viable solution to anti-Semitism was the gathering of all Jews in one place where they could become a majority, able to govern themselves and no longer at the mercy of others. These arguments would usually end with his trumping sentence: "I only know one thing, my son. I came to Palestine and I am

alive, while those of my family and friends who remained in Poland perished. That", he would say "is the best proof that Zionism was right." A few months before his death in 2003, he said while watching the news on TV showing the Israeli bulldozers demolishing the town of Jenin in the West Bank, "My son, this is not what I and my friends envisaged when we came to Palestine."

My parents, especially my mother, were very Polish in their culture, manners, composure, emotions and self-righteousness. They made a conscious decision, however, as did a whole generation of their peers, to cut themselves—and us—off from the culture of their countries of birth and raise us as "New Hebrews" in Palestine. We were Jewish by virtue of being born to Jewish mothers, but not Jewish in any religious sense. My parents were atheists and socialists; they rebelled against their religious orthodox parents. During my youth, secular Zionism was still ardently anti-religious in the sense of radical enlightenment. In Tel Aviv we lived mostly among other secular Jews. We were Jewish but we did not need to do anything about it. We did not go to synagogue or adhere to Jewish customs or prohibitions.

The strongest trait that distinguished us was that we were raised entirely in the Hebrew language and culture. My parents only spoke to us in Hebrew, though over the years we picked up quite a number of Polish and Yiddish words and phrases. For them Hebrew remained a second language; a hard and harsh language which they spoke well but never perfectly. We corrected and laughed at their mistakes. We were bred on Hebrew culture which was secular and nationalist, with a strong emphasis on the Land, the ancestral Land of Israel which waited for us, sons of Israel, to return. We were taught to look down on diaspora Jews as weaklings or assimilationists.

Most of us did not know any Palestinian Arabs as youngsters. Jews and Arabs lived mostly in separate towns and villages. Tel Aviv, where I grew up, was founded in 1909 as a Jewish city, a modern, Bauhaus-influenced, Mediterranean city on a white sandy beach. Next to Tel Aviv was the Arab Jaffa, an ancient port and a thriving centre of commerce. In 1948 it was conquered and annexed to Tel Aviv. Most of its population fled, and it was ransacked and looted by people from Tel Aviv. Much was demolished but many Jews settled in the more opulent Arab houses. A minority Arab population remained, and eventually became Israeli citizens. They are referred to as Israeli Arabs or, as they call themselves, Israeli-Palestinians. They now comprise about 20% of Israel's population. They are not equal citizens; most of their lands have been taken away and given to Jews. Until 1965 they lived under military government which restricted their movement and

did not allow them to participate in the labor market. Arabs in Israel suffer discrimination in the allocation of resources, development, education, employment, cultural autonomy, political freedoms and political participation. They are the poorest section of the population. Jewish Israel has never accepted them as legitimate citizens, only as part of the plural but not multicultural composition of Israeli society. At best they are tolerated but are suspected of being a fifth column. Most Jews do not distinguish between them and Palestinians in the West Bank or Gaza. On several occasions the army and police resorted to killing Israeli-Arabs, seen as insurrectionists, to nip any potential rebellion in the bud.

We constantly select what to pay attention to and what to ignore; what to remember and what to forget. We cannot remember everything, so we remember what we regard as meaningful and translate it into a narrative. Narratives can be created by individuals to give meaning to their existence; but the most important narratives—those which affect multitudes of people and persist through time—are collective narratives. We grow up with narratives and pass them on from generation to generation through socialization. The very fact that narratives are accepted and shared makes them "true". We organize time and space according to our narrative; we create shared symbols and rituals and places of memory. We create "regimes of memory" and we live in the narrative we create.

The most important collective narratives in modern times are still religious and national. Religions and nationalisms are organized around narratives which tell a story of emergence and development of communities. Also our concept of time as cyclical, linear, tragic, heroic, epic, happy-ending, etc, is itself a ploy of narration. It is important to recognize that memory is not simply just out there, but that it is socially constituted and reconstituted, regimes of remembrance are also regimes of truth. By virtue of what we choose to remember, we also choose what to erase. What we choose to remember becomes shared, taught and "true"; similarly, what we erase becomes unknown, suspect or "false".

Many years ago I travelled in Wales and spent a night in a remote bed and breakfast run by an elderly lady. In the morning, before leaving, the lady asked me to inscribe something in her guest book, and I wrote my address in Jerusalem. When she saw it, she was overcome with excitement and asked: "Oh, Jerusalem, does it really exist?" When I assured her that we actually lived there, she asked, "And the Garden of Eden, does it exist too?" Jerusalem is a place of memory shrouded in myth. Yehuda Amichai, a famous Israeli poet, wrote that Jerusalem "...is a place where everyone remembers they forgot something there!" Jerusalem stands at the heart of

the narratives of Judaism, Christianity and Islam; each has a foundation narrative there. Zion (Jerusalem) is the place where the Word of God (Truth) is supposed to come from. To own Jerusalem is thus to assert the 'truth' of one narrative over the others. Many wars have been fought over Jerusalem from Canaanite times, to the Babylonians, Romans, Arabs and Crusaders, up until the present day; Jerusalem is not the city of peace it is envisaged to be. Over many centuries it has been divided and subdivided, a place which attracts extremes and zealotry.

What happens to narratives in situations of protracted national conflicts? Wherever there is a national conflict there are at least two narratives. Each side of the conflict has its own version of truth; usually even more than one version. To a sociologist, to study conflict is to study the narratives of the parties to conflict in order to understand how they perceive their own and each other's positions. However, this is not done within each conflicting camp. The parties to the conflict do not regard it as an exercise in academic objectivity; more usually each tells and re-tells their version of the narrative.

When the conflict is protracted, it is necessary to prepare the next generation to continue the conflict; to mobilize their sense of truth, justice, motivation and resolve; to prepare them to take their place when their time comes and to accept the hardships and the sacrifices the conflict entails. What is being transmitted is that "we" are right and the "other" is wrong. However, when required to explain the motives of the enemy, the explanations are usually essentialist, naturalist and irrational: They murder because they are murderous; it is in their nature; they are evil. To represent the narrative of the other as equivalent to our own is perceived as treacherous, subversive and weakening of our resolve. Similarly, when required to explain death in the armed conflict, our side's dead are always victims, martyrs, never perpetrators; "theirs" are never innocent. Our side's deaths are never meaningless or futile. When commemorating the dead, we tell our youngsters, "It is thanks to them that we are alive". Their lives become heroic examples to be followed. We teach their stories in our schools. We erect monuments in their memory. We remember them in special places and at special times.

As parties to the conflict, we do not talk to each other directly; we fill the empty spaces of the conversation. We ask the questions and we answer them. Thus, our opponent is constructed by us, usually as an irrational demonic creature. When we talk about the conflict in this one-sided way, all we achieve is a perpetuation of it—with each side becoming more firmly entrenched in its self-righteous position.

Palestinians are now a separate nation; they are not "just" Arabs. There

are no generic Arabs, there are Egyptian Arabs, Lebanese Arabs, Jordanian Arabs, Syrian Arabs, Iraqi Arabs, etc. And there are Palestinian Arabs, that is, Arabs whose patria is Palestine. Similarly, Israeli Jews are no longer a religious community as they were in the 19th century. They have become a nation in a place they call Israel—the same geographic space that the Palestinians call Palestine. The fight over the name is a fight over whose place it is. People in Poland know similar double names from their own history. Jews and Palestinians became modern nations, on a par with other nations in the present world. Jews became Zionists due to their experience in Europe. Palestinians became a nation in their struggle against British colonialism and the colonization of Palestine by Jews. Israeli nationalism and Palestinian nationalism moulded and shaped each other in their struggle.

All material and cultural resources are channelled to serve the conflict. Religion is also a major resource for internal solidarity and alliance. In most protracted conflicts today, religion plays a role but that is not to say that most conflicts are religious. For example, to depict the troubles in Northern Ireland as a struggle between Catholics and Protestants, rather than as between Republicans and Unionists, does not facilitate an understanding of the friction between these communities. I view the causes of conflict in Northern Ireland as colonialism, inequality, discrimination, not religion, though it can be expressed through religion.

Most protracted conflicts nowadays are national. They are about equality in the state or, where this is seen as impossible, about the right to have a separate state. Religion still touches very deep layers of our identity. In many nations religion and nationalism have historically come to overlap. The conflict in Israel-Palestine is not religious at root but national. It is about mutual recognition of two nations and about the land and whose it is. It is about dispossession, inequality, oppression and security. Both sides mobilize religion to enhance in-group solidarity and to gain support from wider forces: Islamic, Jewish or "Judeo-Christian". It is wrong in my opinion to view the rise of Hamas as first and foremost a religious phenomenon. Hamas is a nationalist-religious movement that increased its power due to the failure to resolve the conflict and due to the disintegration and corruption of the secular-nationalist Fatah. Fatah mobilized national feelings in the name of Pan-Arabism and anti-colonialism and Hamas mobilises the same national feeling in the name of Pan-Islamic solidarity. Hamas is not a cosmopolitan Jihadist group; it is a mistake to categorize it under the same caption as Al-Qaeda.

Nationalism harks back to an imagined past that it wants to revive, but there is no going back in history, only going forward. The wrongs that were

done have already happened; the past is not a DVD that we can rewind. Israelis and Palestinians may wish the other were not there, but they are and they are there to stay. How can we move forward? As my topic is "memory and conflict", I would conclude by saying that we have to use memory to re-construct a viable, better future. We have to try to create a narrative that will take account of the painful narratives of both sides. Many Palestinians refuse to listen to stories of the Holocaust; they have had enough of its use by Israel to justify the disaster that befell them. Many Israelis refuse to recognize that their revival is at the expense of Palestinian society. Israeli-Jews and Palestinians now compete over victimhood—who suffered more. This is how two different horrible events are wrongly equated or denied. To move forward both narratives will have to be recognized, understood and mutually internalised. Both sides will also have to forgo the simplistic, innocent and romantic images they have about themselves, and see that they did, and are capable of doing, horrible things. The narratives of both sides tell a partial truth, but each reveals what the other narrative tries to hide. If the two narratives could be taken in they will tell a fuller, complementary story. In a critical narrative both sides will be less heroic but also less demonic, more humane. I do not believe that to forgive is to forget. On the contrary, to forgive is to remember all, to know and forgive—see the example of the truth commissions in South Africa.

Is the forging of a critical mutual narrative possible at this point in time? There was a beginning of this while there was a dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians from the mid-1980s to 2000. It was broken up by the failure of the Camp David Accord. Since 2000, the two sides have reverted to more violence. When there is violence, it is hard to conduct a dialogue, but that is precisely the time when dialogue is most needed.

Chapter Two

Language and Narrative in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict[1]

Our meeting and our discussions in the autumn have faded into what seems like the distant past following events since October 2008: the Israeli war on Gaza and the Israeli elections have shown starkly and brutally the reality of our conflict.

By evacuating its settlements from Gaza, Israel did not stop its occupation; it only moved to more effective, indirect control. The closure and control of the passages allows Israel to retain an effective hold over the livelihood of Gaza's population. Israel's refusal to deal with Hamas led to recurring stoppages in the transfer of goods and resulting acute shortages in Gaza; inadvertently this created the tunnelling industry. The tunnels, once constructed, enabled the transport of longer range missiles which were deployed against greater swathes of southern Israel and were, thus, an excuse for the military campaign.

The campaign had no military achievements; it was a cruel punitive strike against Gazans and the infrastructure of Gaza. In its limited scope and short duration—the same time as the transition from Bush to Obama—it failed to topple Hamas. Hamas cadres melted into the population and people had nowhere to flee. The result was a very high proportion of civilian casualties. Israeli efforts to minimize casualties among its own soldiers, thus making the war more acceptable to Israelis before elections, were also a factor in the wanton destruction and killings. Hamas came out of the campaign stronger, and Fatah weaker. Each side declared an ostensible unilateral truce, but hostilities around Gaza continue. While western governments continue to boycott Hamas as terrorists and back Israel's right to security, public opinion in most European states and, to a lesser extent, in North America has turned significantly against Israel.

It was shortly after the Gaza campaign that the Israeli elections were held. The results showed a clear majority for the bloc of parties which are against continued political negotiations with the Palestinian Authority, against a two state solution and for expanding settlement in the West Bank. The manifest trend, since Hamas' election victory in 2006, the violent split between the West Bank and Gaza and in the latest Israeli elections shows

growing radicalization and disillusionment among Israelis and Palestinians alike; moderates are on the wane on both sides. Under such pessimistic conditions, the discussions about either a two-state or a one-state solution sound hollow. A one-state solution cannot be imposed by the Palestinians; it requires an end to violence, an extended period of trust-building and the working out of the minutiae of power sharing; at present this looks purely imaginary.

One only hopes that because the situation in the Middle East remains so volatile, and as the question of Iran's nuclear power looms higher, the involvement of Arab states, Europe, the US and the UN will not let the antagonists sink into a long period of more futile violence.

In my opening remarks I would like to say few things about inter-related discursive aspects of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, specifically narrative and naming in the hope that these ideas will initiate wider discussion. In the second part of my paper I would like to comment on the experience of the conference and on the aftermath of the events in Gaza and the elections results in Israel.

Narratives

Both Israeli and Palestinian nationalisms are grounded in traumatic experiences of the violent destruction of the respective communities. I say this without comparing *al-naqba* with the *shoah*, each is different but both involve the destruction of community. Though Zionism came into being before the holocaust, it was the previous world crisis and Nazism, not Zionist propaganda, which more than doubled the number of Jews in Palestine within six years of Hitler's rise to power. Enough immigrants arrived to create a critical Jewish mass which demanded a state from 1939. It was Nazism which decimated European Jewry and, following the holocaust, it was guilt in the Christian world which underpinned the UN majority support for a Jewish state and for the partition of Palestine.

It was obvious in 1947 to the majorities in Christian countries, west and east, that Jews were persecuted not just on grounds of religion, but because they were a distinct people (ethnicity or "race" as the Nazis put it) and therefore deserved a state. Only a minority thought then that this solution was wrong.

The vote in the UN on 29 November 1947 was a very rare moment of agreement during the cold war era. Very few states have been established by a decision of the UN, and since the UN was responsible for the creation of the situation in Palestine it has been involved in it more than in any other conflict since.

Judaism as nationality or religion

Allow me here a short digression on Judaism as nationality or religion. This is germane to our topic as it seems to produce endless futile arguments between Jews and Muslims, and also among some non-Jews in Europe born long after WW2. The debates about whether Jews are a religious group or a nationality are as old as the French Revolution; they were raised in the context of granting citizenship to French Jews after the revolution (Emancipation). At that time (and for many even today) nationality was viewed as analogous to religion; as an indivisible and exclusive loyalty. It was argued, for example, that just as one cannot be both a Christian and a Muslim, one could also not be both French and German. If Jews were a nationality, how could they be French? The question was turned over to the Jews, and they were asked to define themselves.

Christianity, from its inception, distinguished between state and God as separate spheres of influence: "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21). In early modernity this led to separation of church and state and is held in the West as a fundamental condition for tolerance, freedom and democracy. This separation is at the core of current debates about secularism and the constitutional values of the EU.

However, this concept, so central to modernity, is uniquely Catholic and Protestant and does not feature in eastern Christianity, Islam, Hinduism or Judaism wherein a closer overlap between these two institutions is prescribed. In Islam, for example, the term for nation is *Umma* (from the word "mother") and it means both the community of believers in Islam and the modern nation state (*ummat al mu'minin'* means Community of the Believers and *Al-Umam Al-Muttahida* equates to the United Nations).[2]

After long deliberations, the representatives of the Jewish community in France opted to define themselves as "French of the Mosaic faith" and were granted citizenship in 1791. France was the first state to give equal citizenship to Jews in Europe. In their debates, which have been preserved, they argued that the very question either religion or nationality was Christian in nature. That is, the French Parliament demanded that they translate Jewish "otherness" into the dominant Christian conceptual framework which did not correspond to the Jewish conceptual discourse. To use a present-day EU phrase, it was conditionality for accession to French citizenship: adapt yourselves to fit our terminology or forego citizenship. The demand was an act of power by a majority which could exclude a minority which had a strong interest in belonging. This problem is even more pertinent today with

Europe's expansion: What are the limits of otherness that Europe is willing to tolerate? Today this conditionality weighs even more with Muslims in Europe than with Jews.

Modern western Jewry was transformed by European thought and today it spans the entire spectrum of possible permutations on a continuum between religion and nation. It is this plurality and lack of agreement which divides Jews and confuses non-Jews.

In Israel, there are Jews at one end of the continuum who view themselves entirely in national terms and are totally secular or atheist and maintain no overlap between nation and religion. Next are those who see Judaism as a nation that partially overlaps with religion and therefore they maintain that Jewish state law must respect and incorporate some religious laws too. These are the traditionalists and they differ among themselves. Then are those who see a full overlap between religion and nationalism and thus advocate a Jewish state in which state law should dovetail with religious law. These are the national religious and they differ between themselves too. At the other end of the continuum are those in Israel who view Judaism solely as a religion. They do not accept that Israel is a Jewish state and they are anti-Zionist.

Outside Israel, many Jews see Judaism solely as a religion. They practice various degrees of religiosity, or none at all, but their civic identity is determined by their country of domicile. Still, the majority of Jews outside Israel feel an affinity to Israel either as an idea, as the Holy Land, as a place where they have family ties, or as a possible haven for times of persecution.

While Palestinian nationalism started around the turn of the 20th century, it was the *naqba* and its consequences which became the constitutive experience of Palestinian nationalism. The Israeli, so-called War of Independence of 1948 was not between the imperial power and the colonized, as was the case in most colonial wars of independence, it started as an internal war between a majority and a minority community determined to establish a separate state in the territory.

Partition in Palestine had dire consequences: many thousands died on each side. To Palestinians it was the end of their community; the expulsion and flight of the majority of the Palestinian population, the destruction of hundreds of Palestinian villages and towns, the establishment of a Jewish state on 79% of British Mandate territory and the occupation of the rest by Jordan and Egypt. Most important, however, is the resulting lack of statehood. Unlike partitions in India or Cyprus, the distinguishing feature of the Israeli-Palestinian case is that partition resulted in statehood for the Jews but not for the Palestinians. This meant that the national reconstruction of