

My Friend Ilan Gur Ze'ev

'is the friend the same or the other?' (Derrida, 2005, 4).

My friend Ilan stood bravely as a modern voice of private property. I intend for the meaning of this sentence not to be self-evident. Ilan was not an apologist for private property. Far from it. Nor was he a dogmatic opponent of private property, someone who simply called for its abolition regardless of the self-evident contradictions that underpin varieties of such assertions. Instead Ilan was the voice of the knots in which private property entangles those who dare to question it, and to question its effects on life lived around the globe. Those readers who know Ilan's work well might say that it was rare for Ilan to write directly about private property. But this is not the point. One does not have to write about private property to be the voice of private property and of its critique. One need only speak at all to be always already the voice of private property. And if one speaks against both injustice in general and against the injustice of one's own position in the world relative to those who have less, one is always already the ambivalent voice of the (self-)critique of private property.

I first met Ilan at New College, Oxford in 1998 where he was giving a paper on Kierkegaard. Immediately – and such moments are rare and unforgettable – I heard a voice which clearly suffered from the totality of its own conditions of possibility, but which was neither cynical nor ironic nor intriguing in speaking this. I recognized this to be an honest voice, honest about the preconditions that compromised it. There were, here, two sets of content being presented at the same time: the content on Kierkegaard, and the philosophically and politically shaped experience of the content. I could hear the difficulty of Ilan trying to do justice to the justice and injustice that pertain to the voice that speaks of justice. I found in Ilan the difficulty of being the voice of private property which so many others avoid either naïvely or wilfully. This difficulty, I think, never left Ilan. It was the integrity of his subjectivity that I heard whenever I was with him, something which I miss so much now.

Ilan has left for us a phenomenology, a set of contradictory experiences, which formed his own educational journey – I am tempted to write 'intellectual' journey, but it would be a mistake to think that this meant a *vita contemplativa* somehow divorced from a *vita activa*, or where thinking was separated from the emotional, aesthetic and spiritual. Ilan lived his rational self-critique passionately, lovingly, angrily, beautifully, comically and tragically. Those who insist on holding reason and emotion apart will not understand who Ilan was. Indeed, it is within the relationship of their opposition to each other that reason and emotion challenge not just the identity thinking that holds them apart, but also the private property relations on which these identities, and others, are grounded. The emotion of the rational contradiction – embodied in Ilan – stands as a critique of those who, as merely uncritical voices of reason as property, assert that reason is only cold, calculating and clinical. To be the self-critical voice of private property is to refuse it the stability and identity it craves and which is its major power and influence in the world. This means that Ilan was not just the voice of private property. He was the subjectivity and the substance of the self-critique of the

individual property-owning ‘person’. The ‘person’ here is legally his own person – the bearer of his own rights and the owner of his own property – and ‘we’ are all such persons. But the life of Ilan was the life of the person who learns of the injustice that is embodied in being just such a person, and who then lives out a life and death struggle with that person, a life and death struggle for integrity, for its soul. Those who remain merely persons are those who are resistant to becoming resistant to this person.

To study Ilan’s thinking, then, is to follow this life-and-death struggle – at once physical, spiritual, emotional and intellectual – tracing within it a series of developments which form themselves into one of social and political critique within the conditions of private property law which are always its condition of possibility. His thinking is a critique which carries this ambivalence. Knowing that it carries this ambivalence gives it the form and content of the man Ilan Gur Ze’ev. I will trace this man, this education, now, through four of his most important and inter-related ideas: *counter-education*, *diasporic philosophy*, *improvisation*, and the *new anti-Semitism*. Behind each of these there is an eternal vigilance against the trappings, the seductions, and the rewards, of the realm of the ‘self-evident’.

Counter-education

The first thing I read of Ilan’s was his paper ‘Toward a Non-Repressive Critical Pedagogy’ (Gur Ze’ev, 1998). This paper begins ‘For all their differences, all current versions of critical pedagogy function as part and parcel of normalizing education and its violence’ (1998, 463). This constituted only the beginning of what was to become one of the most serious challenges to critical pedagogy from within critical pedagogy, from one for whom ‘critical pedagogy and the possibility of counter-education are tremendously meaningful’ (Gur Ze’ev, 2010, 1). His own notion of counter-education ran counter to the education in which the economic system of injustice and inequality practiced its own reproduction, within the powerful ideological guise of being the normal, the taken-for-granted, or the self-evident. But it also ran counter to the underlying utopian tyrannies of all projects, including critical pedagogy, which dogmatically justified their own authority within and by the violence of their own uncritical ‘self-evidence’ (1998, 463). This self-evidence refers, in part, to the utopian visions of emancipatory projects, and to the simplistic idea that the ends justify the means. For Ilan these simply replaced one tyranny by another. Twelve years later he would reiterate this: ‘critical pedagogy itself becomes dogmatized and transformed into an oppressive tool, even against those proclaimed to be emancipated by the critical educators’ (2010, 194). So many of my friends in critical pedagogy, he said, ‘do not wrestle with [the] self-critique’ (1998, 203) needed if this reproduction of tyranny is to be interrupted.

The main criticism that Ilan had of critical pedagogy, as of other emancipatory dogmas, was its removal of itself from the difficulties of negating its own critique of power, adopting instead the remedy of positive utopianism. Here Ilan was influenced greatly by what he called

the second stage of critical theory, particularly that of Horkheimer and Adorno. I quote here from the opening paragraph of this 1998 piece.

Counter-education opens possibilities for refusing to abandon human potential to become other than directed by the system and the realm of self-evidence. It enables a chance – which is to be struggled for again and again – to challenge normalizing education in all its versions, including critical pedagogy... Philosophical negativism, I argue, is a precondition for the development of nonrepressive critical pedagogy... Current versions of critical pedagogy lack this negative dimension; all are united by a commitment to positive utopianism, even when explicitly denying it. (1998, 463)

From the Frankfurt School he took the need for a transcendental dimension tied to the potential that is suppressed in existing realities. It enabled him to work with the idea of the *totally other*, something which becomes increasingly important for him over the next fifteen years. It is the lack of transcendence and the refusal of its totally other which led early critical pedagogy, including in Freire, to adopt a ‘noncritical and automatic preference for the self-evident knowledge of the oppressed’ (1998, 469). Behind Ilan’s comment here I find a critique of the idea that the teacher must renounce his or her authority if education is to be either fair – i.e. equal between teacher and student – or emancipatory – where the teacher’s authority will melt into air within the truth that will emerge from the newly forming culture. For Ilan, such yearnings regarding the nature of the teacher and of political education merely repeated ‘the self-evidence of the group and earthly politics’ (1998, 469). Non-transcendence ‘opens the gates to totalitarianism as earthly heaven’ (1998, 469). These positive utopias justified themselves within ‘the self-evidence of the group’ (1998, 469) or the self-evidence of ‘the leader-educator’ (1998, 469). In both cases, for Ilan the group and the teacher were not being critical enough. They would be sufficiently critical when their self-critique could speak of itself *only* negatively, and in a space opened in transcendence. For Ilan, it was important that the *vita activa* work with the *vita contemplativa* or, in shorthand, that practice not be alienated from theory, and certainly not refused it. For Ilan, this *praxis* embodied a ‘negative utopianism’ (1998, 476) which demanded ‘transcendence from the current realm of self-evidence’ (1998, 476).

If Ilan’s critique of Freire spoke of the theme of transcendence which would occupy Ilan thereafter, his critique of Giroux announced another related theme that Ilan became increasingly concerned about in the years before his death. When Giroux, moving from revolutionary worker to cultural worker, made ‘difference’ (1998, 475) the grounding of critical pedagogy, for Ilan it marked a refusal of deep self-critique. It guaranteed that such critical pedagogy ‘will not contemplate deeply and problematize the roots of existence and coexistence and question the possibilities of reality but will realize [again] its potential for philosophical violence and political terror’ (1998, 475). But, *additionally*, Giroux ‘ignores critical theory’s exposition of the systematic destruction of the individual’s potential for autonomy and reflectivity and neglects critical theory’s exposition of the disappearance of spirit and the exile of reason’ (1998, 475). This idea of exile, and of the exile of spirit in

particular, was to become a very powerful part of Ilan's critique of post-modern and post-structural contributions to educational theory.

On the post-modern community of educational theorists Ilan says 'they all refuse philosophy and anything that hints of a "theory" or "elitism."' This is the background to their political and educational impotence, which leads to nothing but empty negativism and fruitless pessimism' (1998, 475-6). Again, I read this to be a critique by Ilan of the refusal of the very structure of education and teaching, a refusal to accept that some things are important enough to be taught and learned about by all. This is the same refusal which connives with the violence of the self-evident, and with normalizing practices. It is, in effect, a refusal of *education itself* or, if you prefer, a refusal of the kind of education that presupposes that one person has the educational authority to teach another things that fall outside of the mistaken idea of an 'organically' generated realm of the self-evident. For Ilan this was a refusal of the challenges of theory and of its contradictions, a refusal which took refuge in the violence of the self-evident. This obviously goes to the heart of a major controversy in education, namely, should the oppressed be taught by themselves alone, or in cooperation with other oppressed groups, or should they be taught by intellectuals (often seen as a vanguard), or by a combination of all three? Perhaps for Ilan it was just another oppression of the oppressed to refuse them the *canon* by asserting that they must teach themselves.

Ilan challenged critical pedagogy to reform itself in line with the change that Horkheimer announced in regard to critical theory. The first stage of critical theory had been characterized by positive utopianism. The second stage presented 'an explicit anti-revolutionary strand' (1998, 476) against the way revolution had itself become an oppressor of the oppressed. Citing in particular the dialectic of enlightenment Ilan argued that the instrumentalization of reason is irreversible. Moreover, all solutions to the problems of this totality cannot avoid becoming instrumental. This is where myth becomes enlightenment and enlightenment returns to myth. Nevertheless, there is an ontological significance here, not least in the ahistorical Godly or redemptive sphere, for which history, and its instrumental totality, is just one of its moments. Justice here is 'basically a theological category' (1998, 478) and is the starting point for a critical pedagogy that is not dogmatic and hastily optimistic' (1998, 478). Of course, for some of Ilan's critical colleagues around the world, the theological sphere itself is just such a dogma. For Ilan, however, the antinomy that bedevilled critical pedagogy, that of a positive anti-metanarrative, was the road to transcendence, and to a necessary humility in regard to the earthly solutions to problems. Its real danger was that the earthly solutions to the antinomy of solutions elicits 'violence' under the authority of 'collectivist and positive' (1998, 478) utopianism. Within the critical pedagogy of Freire, Giroux and, says Ilan, certain versions of feminist pedagogy, the dialectic of authority, or of enlightenment, makes commitment to solidarity based on identity both mythical and violent. 'None of these three models of critical pedagogy has succeeded in synthesizing the problematics of essentialism, foundationalism, and transcendence, as well as the recognition of the "others" suffering, rights and potentialities, with the precondition of a philosophy demanding human reflexivity and emancipation. All three versions lack critical theory, while neglecting the price of this disregard' (1998, 479).

One of the things that made Ilan distinct within the names that populate critical pedagogy was that, ever since I knew him, he was prepared to work with the aporetic and, for him, objective truth that under the conditions of the total instrumentalization of reason, ‘it is impossible to escape the omnipotence of the system’ (1998, 479). As such, consensus of the identity of participants in a dialogue – Freirean, cultural, or feminist – ‘is naïve’ (1998, 480). The implication of this is as powerful as it is uncomfortable: ‘marginalized and repressed self-evident knowledge has no superiority over the self-evident knowledge of the oppressors’ (1998, 480). The prejudice in favour of the former ‘cannot avoid vulgar realism and naïve positivism based on the “facts” of the self-evident knowledge, ultimately realized against the self-evidence of other groups’ (1998, 480). This observation, I think, marks out Ilan as the objective ambivalent voice of private property and its self-critique. The heteronomy of the identity of each oppressed identity, even in being ‘open’ to the truths of all heteronomous oppressed identities, is nevertheless based on the self-evidence of private property relations. Herein the victory of each critical pedagogy is secured not over the system, but over other similarly oppressed identities within the self-evident world of private property.

In response to each of these violences, wherever he found them, it was Ilan’s vocation to remind us that behind the heteronomous identities of different identities, behind difference itself, lay the unthinkable homogeneity of the human. This humanity should not be deferred either in the name of fragmentation, or by those strategies which reify uncertainty. Instead, for Ilan, it should be expressed negatively as transcendence, which meant expressed as *homelessness*. In the 1998 article he stated that critical pedagogy needed to ‘present itself as an elaboration of the possibility of an alternative spirituality and as part of an effort to transcend reality and the present realm of self-evidence’ (1998, 481). In the final analysis, Ilan’s counter-education grounded in the second stage of critical theory, ‘implies a negative utopianism, in which the only possible appearance of justice is in the presence of its absence, in the acknowledgement of the violence of its negation’ (1998, 482). In the totality of private property there is only resistance, and more resistance, against the *self-evidence of private property which itself resists the capacity to resist*. This includes the way the self-evident seduces resistance into positions that are not resistant, and from which identities are allowed to believe themselves organic, natural constituencies. As such, believing it to be self-evidently otherwise, these groups, these identities, therein become resistant to resistance – they seek only to affirm themselves. Counter-education, says Ilan, has no ‘counter-poison’ (1998, 485). It has ‘no positive and evident alternative to false consciousness, such as “the memory” or “the knowledge” of women, minorities, or the marginalized and oppressed’ (1998, 485). What makes counter-education different, and very much also the same, is that ‘it does not accept reality as having the last word’ (1998, 485).

Counter-education is therefore an invitation to live with the dialectic of enlightenment of resistance to the self-evident. Resistance is already enlightenment, and enlightenment returns to be resisted. It was with pain that Ilan acknowledged that critical reason and human solidarity contradict each other within present conditions of private property relations. This same pain recognized that ‘a nonrepressive critical pedagogy might be realized only for

isolated individuals and cannot become a matter of collectives' (1998, 486). As such, the realm of the self-evident labels this not only pessimistic, fatalistic, and resigned, but it also calls it elitist. Nevertheless, resistance to the self-evident requires that this elitism continue to resist all elitism, whether that be of the critical theorists, the teacher, or of the 'ethnocentrism of the oppressed' (1998, 486) which is the act of an elite who reify the oppressed. Ilan's conclusion to the work of resistance required in the world is that 'critique is in this sense a prayer that cannot change the world, but allows transcendence from it. This is the only nonrepressive form of hope possible in such an educational project' (1998, 486).

I now turn to the three ideas by which Ilan took up the challenge of this prayer. These are the ideas of *diaspora* as the negative life, improvisation, and the *new anti-Semitism* which for Ilan underpinned recent anti-metanarrative philosophies.

Diaspora

It is well-known, perhaps, that Ilan formed his critical pedagogy workshops to bring together interested parties in the search for a new critical language in education. But in some ways Ilan was the only contributor who seemed either to have or to see the possibility of a new critical language. What he really invited us to do was to respond to the challenges he had set us. If we were interested in critical pedagogy then how do we deal with his powerful accusations that critical pedagogy really only managed to repeat the violence of the self-evident by claiming that its standpoint, its version of education, was self-evidently necessary?

At the heart of the meetings the question he set us was, how do we explore our complicity within the self-evident? In what emerged it became clear that few, if any, of the attendees cared to explore such questions. Each of us had our own self-evidently necessary work to occupy us, and self-evidently this did not require us to have to join Ilan on his solipsistic quest for negative nomadic existence. A new critical language was offered, but refused. A new immersion in aporia was offered, but declined. Everyone went on their way as self-evidently themselves as they had been when they arrived, as self-evidently important as they knew themselves to be, and as self-evidently justified in doing what they did in the ways in which they did it. Reading the two books that emerged from these meetings (Gur Ze'ev 2005 & 2010) it is clear that very few of the contributors joined in a dialogue with Ilan at all. I note that he had grown weary of these meetings by about 2010, and he spoke to me of his disappointment with them. Few it seemed in critical pedagogy were prepared to join him in the negative prayer of critique by facing up to the aporias of their own theories and their own practices.

Ilan, nevertheless, opened his edited collections up to all of the perspectives and the theorists that he disagreed with. At times I think his openness to these perspectives led him to import concepts into his own work which were not really compatible with it. As I note below, he also became increasingly suspicious of many of these fashionable academic trends.

In 2008, the invitation from Ilan at the workshop was to reflect on diasporic existence. He conceived this as a resistance to the totality of the self-evident, of instrumental reason, of commodity fetishism, and, I would add, to all forms of critical thinking which were subsumed under the self-evident world of private property. It was an invitation to ‘rethink ourselves’(2010, 1) and to walk out into ‘new forms of homelessness and diasporic existence’(2010, 1). The invitation was not to ‘redeem’ critical pedagogy (2010, 2). More bluntly still, ‘this meeting is not an invitation to a new attempt to sail for the still undiscovered shores of integration of the current most fashionable academic cultural commodities with the traditional ethos of critical education: I oppose these attempts, as prescribed at their best by some of our friends participating in today’s Oxford critical dialogue here at New College’ (2010, 2). There were to be no hiding places. Many in the room who had been invited were, for Ilan, part of the recurring problem of violence in critical pedagogy and its associated activities. We were challenged by Ilan ‘to offer courageous replies to aporia’(2010, 4) which did not include ‘the joy of being celebrities, being cited, interviewed or looked upon in admiration’(2010, 4). We were challenged ‘to overcome the rhetoric of “solutions”’ (2010, 4). And we were reminded that ‘the new language has not yet honoured us with its blessed presence’(2010, 5). Nevertheless, he asked, have we ‘genuinely tried to overcome the language of “emancipatory education”, and open ourselves to the *essence* of the saying of the aporia of our era?’ (2010, 6)

Diasporic philosophy for Ilan was part of the second stage of critical theory. It had no beginning, and importantly no end. In this sense it was resistance without an end.¹ It loved life, and never settled for a security or an identity that would be less than life. In this sense, diasporic philosophy resembled the importance of movement in the ancient world, where for Socrates, that which is stationary stagnates and dies. For Ilan, never being at home was a way of saying never settle with the self-evident, and always refuse all identity thinking. As such, diasporic philosophy ‘insists on consistent negativity as a form of life’(2010, 27). And in an expression which reminds one of the way the Hegelian *Aufhebung* both negates and preserves, Ilan says ‘diasporic life here questions, deconstructs, subverts, yet preserves, accepts and transcends’(2010, 32). For Ilan it commends ‘an alternative kind of ethics’(2010, 33), a response-ability for leaving home and risking exile from the truths of the self-evident. With Horkheimer, this became not a struggle for revolution but for the spiritual individual. Freire’s work, for example, was ‘anti-diasporic’ (2010, 44) because it was ‘committed to establishing a “homecoming” project for the oppressed’(2010, 44). Freire and other leading critical pedagogues including McLaren and Giroux, did not inform their thinking with the diasporic anti-foundationalism aspects of critical theory. As such, for Ilan, ‘a philosopher worthy of the name must become what I call “a diasporic human being”’ (2010, 51).

As genuine diasporic philosophers both Adorno and Horkheimer refuse any philosophy that leads to consensus, synthesis, and the end of dialectics and worthy suffering. Yet at the same time they refuse to abandon the quest for the Messiah or human emancipation. The *quest*, as a Messianic tension, is central here, not its ‘successful’ fulfilment. (2010, 53)

¹ See Howard Caygill, (2013) *On Resistance*, London, Bloomsbury.

Ilan cited Adorno who argued that Judaism is the symbol of the powerless. For Ilan this second stage of critical theory offered critical theory as a 'Jewish Negative Theology' (2010, 54). It turns 'praxis into *prayer*' (2010, 57). 'In prayer, the yearning for a dialogue between the human as an infinite challenge to her finitude and "God" as a representation of Infinity is realised. Intimacy with holiness is re-established. The relation is a religious one... A self-contained, domesticated, human subject cannot make possible the true human, since he is essentially Diasporic when true to himself' (2010, 57). One must be vigilant against the instrumentalization of love and prayer, against their becoming slaves to the reality they are committed to transcend.

Improvisation

It is perhaps not surprising that Ilan turned to an idea such as *improvisation* to find a way that expressed how one could live and love as diaspora and counter-education. In an essay on the ambivalence of 'peace education' Ilan employed improvisation as a counter to the under-theorised presuppositions of violence that were part of a normalised idea of peace education. The latter, he said, as yet has no historical consciousness. More worryingly, he believed that present versions of peace education were actually a threat to 'free, anti-dogmatic, creative and erotic humans' (2010, 64). Peace is seldom examined in relation to its own violence, and this means it can sometimes be a 'naïve agent' (2010, 65) of the violence it contests. Here again Ilan takes seriously the unavoidable complicity of an idea with the conditions of its possibility, specifically the complicity of peace with the normal when it is enacted as a political action opposing the normal. This ambivalence, he says, sees violence 'have the upper hand in the form of "peace" and "normality" that makes possible the invisibility of normalizing violence' (2010, 70). Note too that Ilan's anger comes through here, specifically against the proponents of resistance and struggle for a peaceful future who live in 'the academic ivory towers or in million-dollar roomy-tranquil apartments on prosperous suburbs' (2010, 71).

The question then, is how might peace education relate differently to the violence that is often propounded on the path toward harmony and peace? The problem lies in the manner in which peace education does not make of itself its own problem. For example, the way in which peace education is 'very much influenced' (2010, 76) by the Enlightenment vision of a future perfect world. Notably here he turns to Rosenzweig to find a Messianism that refuses any vision of a future peace of positive utopia.

To this ambivalence of peace education Ilan offers improvisation as a work of eternal diaspora, a *co-poiesis* that might open the gate to 'an alternative for present peace education' (2010, 78). Just as Ilan is a critic of the violence of private property from within this violence of private property, so, he believed peace education on earth, and even in diasporic life, is never peaceful. As such he states 'The absence of "peace" and the overcoming of the illusion of peace is the birth moment of an *alternative togetherness* as offered by responsible

improvisation' (2010, 79). This *co-poietic* improvisation serves what is not-yet or is potential in a life of love, and in an idea of hospitality. This hospitality will be improvised because it is not ruled by pre-determined demands, but as rather a 'participation for the Otherness of the Other as a friend, as a companion, as a worthy rival, as an unanswered question, as an indispensable manifestation of the entire cosmos and its holiness' (2010, 79). This responsible improvisation is thus an alternative to the peace education that exists only as 'hegemonic normalizing education' (2010, 80).

In short, improvisation as peace education is precisely the absence of tranquillity, for it is a creative act of birth-giving. If improvisation here is a way of life practising the ability to respond to the other in ways which are deemed self-creating, then this is the same responsibility I always found in my meetings and conversations with Ilan. It is the practice of counter-education lived in and as human relations, and it is, he concludes, more 'fundamental and responsible' (2010, 83) even than the peace of peace education.

Ilan also turned once again to the nature of prayer in describing the notion of improvisation. He compared the *tefilat hayahid* with the *minyán*. The latter was 'the institutional prayer of the collective' (2007, 6), framed by text or convention, and maintaining 'a positive "homecoming" attitude' (2007, 8). Ilan warned here that 'as so often happens with love, happiness and creativity, prayer too, when instrumentalized and institutionalized, negates its own essence and becomes a devoted slave of the reality it is committed to transcend' (2007, 52). The former, *tefilat hayahid*, 'is fundamentally spontaneous and improvisational' (2007, 8). But as he points out, the law and improvisation here 'are very much connected' (2007, 8). 'There is no meaningful improvisation without responsibility, tradition and laws' (2007, 8). Interpretation in Judaism has always maintained this creative tension, and here again Ilan saw the possibility of 'responsible improvisation' (2007,8) in diasporic life. He even extended the idea of improvisation to seeing it as a new 'deterritorialization in the spirit of Adorno and Horkheimer's religiosity' (2007, 40).

Taken to education specifically, improvisation 'is *essentially different* from the various attempts to transcend all versions of normalizing education, cultural politics, and other manifestations of imposed "consensus"' (2007, 6). Improvisation, for Ilan, was a (*co-*)*poiesis* which can negatively claim 'the lost intimacy with the cosmos, with the laws, and with the tradition and togetherness' (2007, 6). Embodying the spirit of openness and possibility that was so central to Ilan's project, and characterizing counter-education and diasporic education, improvisation for Ilan was transcendence, for it was 'a pre-condition, as well as a manifestation of genuine creativity' (2007, 62).

The new anti-semitism

To counter-education, improvisation and diasporic philosophical education was aligned a fourth and perhaps even more powerful current of Ilan's thinking. When I last met Ilan, on his visit to talk to students at the University of Winchester (UK), his overriding concern was the idea of the 'new anti-Semitism'. This was a logical development of his critique of critical

pedagogy, and of his notion of diasporic education. If the realm of the self-evident is uncritically made the ground of post-modern educational theory, and if a hierarchy of knowledge is eschewed in favour of a pluralism or ethnocentrism of the oppressed, then this combination becomes the self-evident prejudice against the transcendent, against the religiosity of second stage critical theory, and against Judaism itself. Ilan found this new anti-Semitism in the death of metaphysics

New anti-Semitism is a total and ironically also universal substitute to the Enlightenment's telos; a transformation of progressivism from a humanist-oriented ethos committed to the Enlightenment into a new progressivism that is committed to destroy Enlightenment and finds much relevance in the tradition of 18th and 19th century counter-Enlightenment, in the proto-Nazi literature and in present new neo-Marxism and post-structuralist philosophies; an unrestrained ecstatic strive to oppose and destroy the essence, the history and the aim of the West and its Judeo-Christian foundations. (2010, 86)

This amounted to killing God anew each time and, as he said to me, it meant crucifying the Jew again and again. Behind the attack on metaphysics, on the transcendent, and on the hierarchy of knowledge that leads out of the self-evident, he found an anti-Semitism aimed against 'the Jewish spirit, "Western civilisation" or "colonialism"' (2010, 87). This anti-Semitism was 'directed against (Western) pretentiousness to deliver the word of "redemption" or "liberation" in a genuine, just and universally valid manner'(2010, 87) believing them to be the foundation of the 'predatory practices of capitalism, oppression and destruction of the Others' identity'(2010, 87-8), and believing also that the "impetus for this Western oppressive drive is the Jew'(2010, 88) and its 'most extreme, violent and fragile representative'(2010, 89) – the state of Israel.

I think that for Ilan, the hostility he saw in others' perception of a Jewish agenda, a hostility made actual under many different banners, took refuge in the self-evident *error* of transcendence and metaphysics, and in the equally self-evident error of their attendant colonialism and imperialism. For Ilan, this conjoining of critical pedagogy and post-structural educational theory saw the new progressivism united in '*the truth of the post-metaphysical moment*; the exile of the holiness of transcendence or progress in the form of a humanist killing of God'(2010, 89). Against the self-evident errors of metaphysics, Ilan warned that those who are united in the self-evident critique of the Judeo-Christian tradition 'are normally unaware of the powers manipulating them'(2010, 89), i.e. the powers that ride the wave of the new anti-Semitism, in which Israel becomes 'an icon for all evil'(2010, 90). He noted too the inversion that the new anti-Semitism takes. Previously the Jewish spirit was totally other to Western civilisation; now it is charged and found guilty of being its essence. This new anti-Semitism is a 'zeitgeist-without-Spirit' (2010, 92). As with his comments on friends who are also critical pedagogues, so Ilan noted that many new progressivists, some of whom were his friends and some of whom were Jews, 'do not see themselves as racists and anti-Semites. Many of them are proud anti-racists and are explicitly and consciously against (old) anti-Semitism. It is quite a challenge for them to face their anti-racist credo as part and parcel of the new anti-Semitism'(2010, 93).

I can offer two depressing examples of the difficulties that Ilan is alluding to here. Both are from within the world of the academic conferences that Ilan attended. The first concerns of paper being given on Heidegger. When a member of the audience raised the question of Heidegger's Nazism he was rebuked by the chair of the session who said we don't need to hear such things. The second, much more poignant, was Ilan's final contribution to a conference he had regularly attended and contributed to. At the end of a paper on religion and education, Ilan rose from his position high in the stalls and proceeded in his passionate, vulnerable, yet commanding way, to remind us that the heart of these issues concerned the struggle for humanity. The love of life that the presenter had successfully suppressed could be heard in Ilan's critique, but he too was cut short by the Chair and told that we didn't need to hear any more from him on this. This was the last contribution I ever saw Ilan make at a conference. If it was one in which this new anti-Semitism displayed itself, then in a grotesque way, this is a miserable endorsement of Ilan's own warnings about the new tyranny of the self-evident. This Jew, Ilan Gur Ze'ev, became again 'an acid test to the stance of the human'(2010, 103) taken by others.

a final prayer

I do not want to offer critical comments here on Ilan's thought and work. My dialogue with him was set out in the responses which I wrote to his papers and which he was generous enough to publish in two of his edited books. Instead I want to finish by placing Ilan's work within a very specific form of Western and modern self-critique.

The themes that Ilan worked with were not new, and he never claimed them to be. He worked within the aporias of critical theory, aporias which today remain with us and show no sign of relenting or releasing their grip on theory and practice. From critical theory we are offered a new form of melancholy, to add to the melancholia which has accompanied the self-critique of the Western tradition across two and half millennia. The great triumph of modern enlightenment reason was its coming to know itself as rational law. Its criterion was that all rational beings could bring themselves under their own sovereignty. This sovereignty would be the law of this law and its fundamental basis would be the equality of all who are under it.

But with this advance in the organization of social relations came unforeseen terrors. Not only was this law achieved only after much bloodshed of those who stood in its way, but the victory rebounded on itself. The reason that declared itself the universality of each rational sovereign individual immediately set itself over against each rational sovereign individual. This is the process by which instrumental reason – cold, impersonal, calculating, bureaucratic, efficient – stands opposed to the 'human' – emotive, artistic, creative. In this opposition reason stands divided against itself as objective and subjective. This divide is the ground of the modern realm of the self-evident. Against this manifestation of the self-evident, Horkheimer and Adorno offered the new melancholia of the totality of the dialectic of enlightenment. They offered the aporetic rationality of the experience of the self-critique of the self-evident. In this rationality, the myth of the irrational was subsumed and grounded

within the universality and sovereignty of enlightenment reason. But enlightenment reason also had to be self-grounding in its being experienced rationally if it was to be consistent with its own truth. In this experience, however, it returned to myth and mere assertion. This is the totality of the experience of the self-evident, where the self-evident refers not just to manifestly ideological elements, but more importantly to the self-evidence of the reason which critiques such ideology. It is reason which is 'obviously' most self-evidently true as the tool of critique, but when it critiques its own self-evidence, when the self-evident self-evidently can only repeat its own sovereignty *aporetically*, what then...?

This wheel of experience and objective validity turns in such a way seemingly as to offer no resolution to its puzzle. This, I think, is the ground of Ilan's work, from counter-education as prayer, to diasporic learning, to improvisation, to the critique of anti-Semitism. All of his thinking bravely accepts Adorno's challenge that 'politics aimed at the formation of a reasonable and mature mankind remain under an evil spell as long as they lack a theory that takes account of the totality that is false' (Adorno, 1991, 28). The totality of the self-evident includes the falsity of the totality. From within this all-pervasive totality a diasporic existence will speak of the possibility of the totally other but without pretending to have overcome the political conditions of its possibility. When this aporia is replaced by what Ilan called positive utopianism then, from within the totality, the denial *and* the assertion of the totally other threaten to become a new fascism of the self-evident.

It is here, in having a theory of 'the totality that is false,' that I believe Ilan is revealed as a voice of modern private property relations. Property is so completely the realm of the self-evident that it is repeatedly ignored by educational theorists. Yet the dialectic of enlightenment itself is a shape of modern property relations. In the experience of this aporia – for Ilan, 'the aporia of our age' (2010, 6) – is the actual experience of the totality of living within private property relations. This means that the property relation is actual in the subjectivity that experiences freedom *aporetically*. Private property is never more powerful, never more the master of the self-evident, than when the critique of modern social relations is made *as if private property were not always already the condition of the possibility of both subjectivity and its critique*. The dismissal of the aporetic nature of the critique of private property plays right into its hands, taking such aporetic experience to be *self-evidently* nonsense, irrational, and nugatory. As a result, most critiques of rational instrumentalism and global injustice, along with the exile of spirit, the reification of self-evident 'home' truths, and the new anti-Semitism, proceed without seeing the domination of the self-evidence of each of them as always already the actuality of private property. This is where Ilan was so brave in taking a stand not only against the self-evident, but also *for it*, so that its pernicious prior mediation would not be erased or avoided. This is how and why he has to work with aporias and against his friends. This is what truly makes him an exile from the self-evident: that he is prepared to struggle with the self-evident freedom *and* non-freedom of critique. One can hardly be more diasporic than to be an exile from freedom *and* non-freedom, from private property *and* from its critique, from the self-evident *and* non-self-evidence of the self-evident. To his exile, to his struggle, and to the friendship of self and other, I offer my own prayer of education.

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