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Governing through Educational Discourse
The Case of Integration in Israel, 1970-1973

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Issues of ethnicity, culture, and national identity have been central in every political and social circle in Israel since the first days of the Zionist movement. The "new Jew," a term created and lionized by the Zionist movement at the end of the 19th century, shadowed Israeli society and remained a critical part of the struggle for national identity and unity in the State of Israel after its independence in 1948. This Jew was to be a white, educated, westernized citizen, involved in both political and social processes, knowledgeable in the terms of the Western world. The concepts of the new Israeli-Jew completely ignored the fact that since the first days of the Zionist movement, the Middle Eastern Jew, born, raised and significantly involved in Arab countries, was a notable part of it and of the process of building the Jewish state of Israel.

The term "integration" first entered the Israeli social scene during the 1960s, when political and social changes in the U.S. and Europe changed the global discussion of and reference to democracy, minorities, and rights. Concepts of civic struggle, political power, and social change quietly crept into Israeli reality, slowly influencing the ways people thought about and acted as part of the Israeli democratic civic society. At the same time, it was already in the 1960s that social and economic inequality between Middle Eastern (Mizrahi) and European/American (Ashkenazi) Jews was a permanent feature of the Israeli society and created an unrest and discomfort among Mizrahi communities.

With the gaps between the various Jewish communities becoming a significant social factor in Israel over the years, the discussion of integration among the various the Jewish communities became prominent, within and out of the educational scene. It signaled hope, dreams, disappointment, and, finally, despair. During a period of over ten years, the educational system in Israel had constantly tried to adopt and implement various "integration reforms," every

few years renewing old and familiar concepts, trying to conform them into a constantly changing reality.

During the 1970s, the most significant factor in any educational change was the hope that by "mixing" children of different neighborhoods in the same schools, they would gradually open up to each other, and mutual influences would create not only educational excellence among students but also achieve social unity. As time passed, this proved to be a false hope.

In March 1971, the Israeli public was introduced to a new form of political power: a civic, grassroots movement called the Israeli Black Panthers. The Panthers were a group of Mizrahi youth from a slum neighborhood in Jerusalem that called for greater governmental support for unprevieledged Jewish communities of Middle Eastern origin in Israel, a change in social welfare and educational policies. The Panthers did not bring a new and unknown problem or, for that matter, argument, into the Israeli reality; what they brought was a new form of power, one that was threatening to the establishment and able to awaken much of the public from its social "coma.". The actual existence of the problem was no surprise, but the fact that in March 1971 it became *loud* was definitely threatening to the government and the political establishment.

The two years in which the Black Panthers were at the height of their activity were the most significant in the process of creating a new discourse of integration in Israel. After the shock came the political solution: an ongoing effort to divert discussion on disparity to discussion on integration. From this point on, "ethnicity" and "integration" were two terms that would always go together, until "ethnicity" became "integration."

One of the significant points in this paper is the influence, although limited, of the educational system on the political sphere. It is my contention that the formation of discourse is a dialogue rather than an imposition of one power center over a weaker one. What had started as a reform that was precise in its sole educational goals (based on the assumption that simply by placing the children under the same roof, problems of difference and inequality would be solved) developed into an "integrated" approach that imposed responsibilities of welfare, health, and community building upon the educational system. Finally, this change imposed a re-thinking of

governmental resources and distribution. In this paper, I will track some significant points within the dialogue between the educational and political establishment. It is my belief that by following this dialogue, it is possible to expose both social and political discourses and through them understand the power of education within a democratic state as well as the powers that influence the educational system as such.

I: Zionism, Ethnicity and Discourses of Integration in Israel

> Although ethnicity was denied as a legitimate category by which to distinguish Jew from Jew in a utopian Israeli future, ethnic differences among Jews were, and are, highlighted. Ethnicity was always rejected as an ultimate principle, but acknowledged as a social fact.[1]

The manifestation of ethnic relations and multiculturalism within Jewish-Israeli society today is part of an ongoing process that began with the socialization of immigrants in Israel during the early years of Israel's independence (in 1948). These relations touched upon issues of nation-building, international developments, and political change.

The political discussion regarding Mizrachim[2] in Israel began in the 1950s with concepts of "culture-contact" and "absorption through modernization," reflecting the view that non-European immigrants came to Israel without having gone through modernization in their countries of origin. By the beginning of the 1960s, as social disparities became very apparent and the discomfort (both of the majority Ashkenazi and the minority Mizrachi community) from the economic, social, and cultural inequality gained significance in the political sphere, the "Sephardim"—the Ladino-speaking Jews and Arabic-speaking Middle Eastern Jews—were perceived, at least within the public discourse, as a homogenous group and were pushed into a marginal social space where they were looked upon as a community with various interesting *ethnographic* qualities.[3]

By the beginning of the 1970s, as the congruence between socio-economic inequality and primordial socio-geographic origins became increasingly apparent, a form of political ethno-class slowly but surely became a prominent feature of Israeli societal realities. For a nation-state that strived to fulfill an egalitarian vision of one land for one homogenous Jewish nation, such

socio-economic inequalities could not be morally justified. How, then, would this morally unjustified development be rationalized? The Israeli political leadership sought its way out of this by the use of the concept of the "Eastern" or, in its Hebrew version, "Mizrachi" Jews. In the imagery of "Mizrachim," the division of society by geographical origin was recast into social division by *cultural* characteristics. Those of the "East" were framed in various ways as such:

> [In formulating a discourse of "Mizrachim,"] the socioeconomic inequality, a stable sociological feature of Israeli society, is transformed into a transient quality, a negative development, which can be set right by further cultural change among low status citizens of North-African and Near-Eastern origins.[4]

In the Israeli social structure that emerged during the 1970s, 'cultural' defined the differences between two major groups within it: the Western and the Eastern groups, with one opposing the other. In addition to the initial distinction of place of origin, forms of religious heritage were also a basis for this definition of culture and difference. This was a wide and precise way of distinguishing – of creating 'cultures' within the Israeli Jewish society. At the same time, there was an interesting process in which the term "Mizrachim" became significant for the young leadership growing within the Middle Eastern Jewish communities as a political definition of the marginal ethno-class (rather than a cultural other). It was, in fact, toward the "Easterners" *as such* that social and economic inequality was practiced, and it was this marginalized, and, by the new definition of 'Mizrachim,' homogenized group, that was calling, by the beginning of the 1970s, for *political* change.

In this essay, I start my analysis in 1970, with the rise of the Israeli Black Panther movement, which was, in fact, the first political organization that perceived issues of cultural difference as *political* issues. I analyze the rise of the Black Panthers and the governmental reaction to this movement and point to the ways in which issues of welfare, economic disparity, and cultural disparity were all brought into the educational system through the policy of educational integration. I analyze different aspects of the discourse of ethnicity and education within the political sphere, and the ways in which this discussion ultimately governed social and education development in Israel: How did the political leadership talk about ethnicity and

education? When and how did the Mizrachi minority talk about education? What did the Mizrachi voice mean for the Ashkenazi leadership? And, ultimately, *why* was education chosen by the government as the pervasive theme of ethno-political discourse in Israel during the 1970s?

In my analysis, I highlight not only the role and effect of politics on education (a task that has undoubtedly been taken on by many) but also the ways in which education was used as a prominent political tool, giving, at times, political "proof" of social inequality and de-facto exclusion, and at other times providing a solution for such discrimination. In so doing, I attempt to offer an understanding of the creation of educational policies and the role and effect of education on the political discussion, and vice versa. By presenting the case of Israel, I hope to be able to demonstrate a much wider phenomenon of educational and political discourses and the interrelations between those discourses.

In looking at the educational system as a political tool, I find it crucial to highlight its importance in processes of state formation and nationalism in Israel. Apart from the army, the educational system was considered the main means of social assimilation and national identity formation in Israel. In the Zionist movement, education was historically considered a crucial socialization tool, one that followed the Jewish tradition of community building and bonding through religious study and the written word. This Zionist tradition was linked to the European-Jewish heritage and evidently posed yet another assumed difficulty for the "culture-contact" of the Mizrachi students, as their ways of Jewish studies were historically different.[5] Zionism's origin in ideas of modernization in Europe had a marked influence on every aspect of political and social life in Israel. I will briefly describe this in order to allow a better understanding of the circumstances in which many of the ideas discussed in this essay arose.

II: Theoretical Background: Integration as a Post-Colonial[6] Discourse in Israel

In conceptualizing the Israeli nation-building process as a colonial regime, Yiftachel and Meir[7] suggest an account of an "ethnic-survival" form of colonization as the most appropriate in analyzing historical social changes in Israel. Accordingly, it was a particularly territorial rather

than economic form of colonization, and it was highly intransigent due to the status of most colonizers as refugees who were literally fighting for survival (Jews who arrived from both Europe and later the Middle East as refugees). In addition, it had a specific, Central and Eastern European character and was set *a priori* as a project of ethno-national nation- and state-building (as opposed to other colonial societies where local nationalism developed later). Israeli nation building was a project designed to establish an ethno-national-territorial identity, based on a reconstructed "imagined" Jewish past and unity. Israeli state-building was a complementary project intended to establish territorial and institutional infrastructures for reviving and reformulating the nation.[8]

In my description of culture, I borrow Arjun Appadurai's genealogy of the term[9]: hence, "culture" and "cultural" in this framework would be regarded as dimensions of social and political discourse that use ideas of difference in order to create diverse groupings or, for that matter, group identities. Both geographical origin and difference in Jewish religious heritage became the basis for the definition of 'others' among the Jewish population. This basic "cultural" distinction would eventually produce a circumstantial concept of "ethnicity." Here, again, difference plays a major role, as these are initially imaginative historical dimensions of groups. The definition of Israeli-Jewish ethnicity, hence, rested on an extension of the cultural difference into geographical histories, reinforced by one's appearance: the color of one's skin, eyes, hair – external appearances that would place one in specific categories of 'ethnicity' on top of the initial categorization of 'culture'. In this essay I will be using the terms 'culture' and 'ethnicity' as inseparable terms relating both as one to the creation of difference within the Jewish population in Israel.

In looking at various sources of the discourse of ethnicity and integration within the political-educational sphere, I have no intention of proving that discrimination existed, or of highlighting any forms of injustice within the schooling and educational systems. The main thrust of my argument is that, by the beginning of the 1970s, the internal Jewish-Israeli ethnic discourse had evolved into a post-colonial one. A different self-consciousness of identities, roles,

and classes emerged as part of the larger nationalistic shifts in Israel and in the international Western scene, of which the State of Israel strived to be a part. These shifts ultimately created a historical rupture that touched issues of Jewish cultures and ethnicities. The social and political background of this rupture, the actions of the political leadership and those of the opposition, not only changed the realities of the political leadership and government, but also that of the Mizrachi Jews on the margins of Israeli society.

I am aware of the possible critique of using terms such 'colonialism' and theories of post-colonialism in regard to a group that was in no way physically occupied or colonized by another. This is especially notable with respect to the Israeli – Jewish society that has colonized the Palestinian people since gaining independence in 1948. I do not mean to equate Palestinian and Mizrachi suffering in Israel; obviously Palestinians are those most egregiously wronged by Zionism. Nor do I have any intention of comparing the wrong suffered by these two groups. The point is rather the affinity of one aspect of discrimination to another, the ever-so-easy transition between the 'Arab' and the 'Middle Eastern' and the link of dishonor towards both: 'The colonial realities are not simply a reservoir or 'raw' political experiences and practices …they are also the scene of intense discursive and conceptual activity'[10]. It is within this discursive space that I wish to place this article: as part of a creation of a national ideology and, eventually, identity that is embedded within a discourse of colonial thinking and that is in many ways based on the myth and belief in power and control over the 'other'. That other, in Israeli reality, turned to be anything other than European, anything related to the Middle East or, for that matter, 'Arabness'. I believe it is crucial for postcolonial theory to take seriously the psychological implications of colonialism on every dimension of national being; to this end, it needs to historically trace those ways in which the West turned into the 'good,' the East became 'the bad' and accordingly, culture was established and monumented.

In regard to the power of education and its relation to power, my initial hypothesis is that the school system in Israel was used as a "technology of power,"[11] a Foucauldian term that implies the manipulation by different power structures (mainly political) in the formation of

social "reality"—the formation of discourse. In using a political approach to educational analysis, I find a direct link between governmental and educational change. I assume that hidden tensions exist between competing social values inside the schools and within the wider educational system. When these values are triggered by external events, individuals and groups demand changes that are eventually reached by political tradeoffs. Although these tradeoffs are bound to have an effect on the schooling system, the schooling system itself will not only indigenize[12] the change and the reform into the specific school setting, but will, eventually, have a counter-effect on the social and political sphere. Hence, a dialogue between the educational system and the political sphere develops eternally.[13] By taking a major role in the social processes that occurred in Israel, the education system enabled certain practices and authorized specific ideas about what should be the character of the "Israeli Jewish Democratic State" and within it the "Israeli Jewish Democratic Citizen." The school system was a part of the normalization process in which social reasoning excluded certain parts of Israeli society, included others, and created a form of political reasoning and action that was manageable and "governmental."

III: Historical Background: The Israeli Black Panthers, 1971-1973

In June 1967, Israel engaged in the Six-Day War. During the years following this war, problems of security were exacerbated, and authorities tended to neglect internal social problems. But after a cease-fire was achieved in 1970, the frontiers were quiet. Many Israelis then turned their attention from grave national problems to personal, day-to-day grievances, and became more aware of internal political and social issues. Within an atmosphere of euphoria after the victory of the war, an improvement in the economic status of the state and its citizens and an optimism regarding Israel's ability to protect itself from the Arab enemy, one particular set of circumstances sparked the fire of a group of second generation Mizrachi youth: changes in the nature of immigration to Israel and in the "absorption policies" of the authorities. The immigrants who came after 1967 were mostly Eastern European Jews (many of whom came

between 1968-1970 when Eastern-European authorities allowed them to leave) and immigrants coming from Western states (mainly the USA and South Africa). Relative to the standards of immigration policies in previous years, the authorities treated the new immigrants exceptionally favorably.[14] The correlation between immigration and low socio-economic status, so common in Israel since the creation of the state, disappeared. The European immigrants had been accustomed to a relatively high standard of living, and the authorities were anxious to give them any possible assistance. Their arrival was heralded as the realization of the Zionist dream.

All this contrasted sharply with the welcome given the Mizrachi immigrants when they had immigrated, as well as with the treatment given to them during their many years in the country. These disparities were interpreted by the members of the second generation of Mizrachim as yet another indication of the state's discriminatory policy. In the case of the Mizrachi youth of the slum neighborhoods of Jerusalem, this particular case was exacerbated by the establishment of new neighborhoods for the new immigrants in the vicinity of their own. While geographically these neighborhoods were so close, they were miles apart by any other standard.

The "Black Panthers" organization in Jerusalem started as a community-based group in one of Jerusalem's community centers (MATNAS) in the slum neighborhood of Musrara and quickly turned into a significant national political movement that brought about a new discourse of ethnicity as well as new ideas regarding social rights, democratic governance and equal opportunity.

Initially, the major scope of the Panthers' activity had to do with the efforts to improve their social and physical conditions within the community centers. But with the attention the organization got, the Israeli Panthers quickly broadened their argument and called for wider social change. Even more so, after the first report on the Black Panthers was published, they were exposed to social and academic figures that helped shape their protest. Links were established between the group and the leftist organizations of "Mazpem" and "SIAH" (the Israeli New Left).[15] Through the connection with these organizations, the group members were exposed

to Marxist writings, and some of them even adopted a class-based approach in analyzing their own social condition. [16] With a growing group of supporters and advisors, and with a response that was initially much greater and demanding than they had expected, the Panthers quickly understood the responsibilities their organization had and they created their forms of action:

> We didn't have any method of action, because we had no backing and no resources. We were young and we didn't have the budget. The government had a wide field of actions and resources with which to fight us … the government of that time created a situation, in which we had to fight the establishment, and our path was demonstrations-police-court.[17]

The rhetoric that grew out of the Panthers' activities was a new phenomenon in the Israeli political scene and signaled the creation of a new political rationalization in Israel. It was no longer enforced as only an internal, local argument, but one that touched the Western-Democratic regime as such, having to do with international goals and aspirations as much as with the internal political scene. The name the group had chosen was a first step in creating a new discourse: in the first article on the Panthers—published in January 1971—one of the group leaders made a reference to the American Black Panthers, proclaiming: "We will be like the 'Black Panthers' in the sense of being militant and frightening the establishment."[18] This reference was picked up by the journalist who used it in the article. It was immediately referred to by Prime Minister Golda Meir and finally adopted by the group leaders:

> Sa'adia came up with the name "Black Panthers." The idea was to frighten Golda [Meir].[19] She said that this name wouldn't let her sleep. That's what we wanted. We succeeded. With this name we changed the entire discourse between the social movements and the establishment.[20]

The reference to the American Black Panthers was reinforced throughout the Panthers' actions and rhetoric, although there was never any contact between the Israeli and American groups. In numerous interviews, members of the Israeli Black Panthers claimed that they did not really know what the American group stood for but were fascinated by the strength and influence the group had in the U.S. and chose the name as a populist move more than anything else: "We needed a way to publicize our cause."[21]

Beyond the Panthers' immediate argument against material discrimination, there was a larger issue of symbolic neglect. The Panthers' protest was largely intended to vent feelings of

exclusion: "Golda, teach us Yiddish" was one of the slogans in the Jerusalem Panther demonstration (the biggest demonstration the Panthers organized in May 1971), asserting the feeling that only those who know the European-Jewish language of Yiddish could become a part of the Israeli society. The main thrust of the Black Panthers was against the government. They held the authorities responsible for the demoralizing effects of the slum conditions on Mizrachi youth; they wanted these youth to be taken within the fold and rehabilitated, or upgraded, for example, by admitting them to elite army positions, or to elite high schools.[22] Although the Panthers wrote no formal platform, it is possible to outline their specific demands quite clearly. Of primary importance was education: to break the cycle of poverty, the Panthers demanded the establishment of "long day schools." They also wanted better teachers and a more widespread system of scholarships for poor Mizrachi students whose families could not afford to pay high-school tuition fees.[23]

Due to the Israeli Panthers' problematic political position as an ethnic minority group with no contacts with national political powers and a desire to draw as much public attention as possible, their tactics, rhetoric, and ways of protest were usually bold and dramatic. They relied heavily on demonstrations in large cities; placards and chants emphasized poverty, discrimination, and a demand for equality in educational opportunities and housing conditions of the Mizrachi community; they emphasized the use of the term "Blacks" when referring to the Mizrachi community; and often the language chosen toward the government was characterized by mocking taunts. For example, in the Panthers' demonstrations, there were signs reading: "The Hell with It," "Teach us Yiddish Golda," "We are the dogs from Musrara," and a coffin with a sign reading "Discrimination" on it. The Panthers' "formal" sign was a closed black fist (standing both for "stop" and "fight back"); the members of the group wore black t-shirts with "Black Panther" written on them in white. The demonstrations were often very heated and at times violent, with police intervention and arrests occurring often.

Already in January 1971, after the very first reports about the Black Panthers were published in local newspapers in Jerusalem and in national television news broadcasts, the

Jerusalem Municipality initiated a committee to look at "ways to prevent youth involvement in unlawful actions." Their main mission was to look at the youth involved in the Black Panther movement and ways to prevent that involvement. In its final report, published in February 1971, the committee wrote:

> 1. The committee is extremely worried from the ways in which the media and the public television had treated the issue [of the Black Panthers]. This publicity caused the public to think the problem [of ethnicity in Jerusalem] is much greater and the condition far worse than the actual situation…
>
> 2. We are in fact dealing with a small group of about 20 youth, 70 percent of them with criminal history, 6-7 of them criminals with serious past charges.[24]

These conclusions are an example of the initial public and media response to the Panthers. The rhetoric the group used and the publicity they received were definitely unsettling to the government. On April 13, 1971, the Panthers' leaders met with Prime Minister Golda Meir in her office. The discussion between Meir and the Panthers is a wonderful example of the power of the Panthers' rhetoric:

> **G. Meir**: How did you choose the name Black Panthers?
>
> **R. Abergil**: Just us … we sat together a few friends and thought … that people like us, or Sephardim … tried all kinds of names, like … the organization for the Sephardim or for the Iraqis … different movements tried this thing and no one heard their cry.
>
> **G. Meir**: How did you think of your name?
>
> **R. Abergil**: There is an organization "Katamon for Katamon" and a few other organizations that came up over the years; they all either disappeared or fell asleep. This name [Black Panthers] is a reviving and vulnerable name.
>
> **G. Meir**: Where did you find it?
>
> **R. Abergil**: It's a vulnerable name.
>
> **G. Meir**: Didn't you hear of it somewhere else?
>
> **R. Abergil**: We know about them[25] that they support the P.L.O.[26] and that they are against Jews.
>
> **G. Meir**: Then why did you choose this name?
>
> **S. Marziano**: Because it gave us the punch line, it awakened everyone around us, it made everybody respond.

> **R. Abergil**: About the name, it may be that we adopt about 40 percent of the American Black Panthers' ideology, they were also deprived, screwed, and the fact that they are violent—we're not.
>
> **G. Meir**: They are also anti-Semitic.
>
> **R. Abergil**: We are dedicated to our country; we are patriots and we love the country. The fact is that we are aware of the problem that keeps our children and us behind, and we want our children to go to the army, we want them to be healthy and worthy of serving in the army, and [we think] they should be nurtured for that—that proves this point.[27]

A few important points rise already from this initial meeting between the Panthers and Prime Minister Meir. First, note Meir's tone: she was obviously trying to make a point in discussing the name with the leaders, and—even more so—she was trying to educate them. From the standpoint of the political establishment, Meir representing its most significant leadership, the Panthers were unaware of the meaning of the name they had chosen and did not know the "truth" about the American Black Panther organization.

Looking at the Panthers' response to Meir's words, another important issue comes up: The young leaders of the group were in no way shedding their Zionist loyalty or calling for a separation from the state institutions. On the contrary, Abergil, one of the core leaders of the group, was clearly stating that the goal was to create a better chance for Mizrachi children to fit into the state institutions, namely, the army. This is a very strong statement of loyalty to the country. Within the Israeli-Zionist discourse, one's loyalty to the nation is ultimately tested in the army: the unit one is admitted to will be part of his/her adult identity and will determine much of the social status one will achieve.[28] This initial respect to the establishment and call for the inclusion of the Mizrachim in Israeli society is apparent in many of the Panthers' interviews during 1971. In an interview with the Panthers after the meeting with Golda Meir, Raffi Marciano, one of the Panthers, described the conversation:

> We told her: Dear Golda, hundreds of children, some of them criminals and some aren't, but they are all discriminated, they all think of you as their mother. You are our children's mother, you are our mother. If you won't help us today, who will? Who will be the mother that will help us? Please, be aware of our problems and do everything you can to help us and to help our country.[29]

Still, when looking at the government's response to the Panthers, there was a clear lack of respect toward the group and an assumption that a short "re-education" would solve the problematic tones. Meir's words to the press implied her lack of respect and her deeply colonial thinking in regard to the abilities and the importance of the group. In an interview she gave right after the meeting with the Panthers, her first sentence was: "They are not good boys and I doubt they will ever be good boys."[30] In the yearly Government report of 1972, under the title "Social and Economic Problems," Meir wrote:

> Many of the people coming from Middle Eastern lands brought with them a load of discrimination from their lands of origin. The Jews coming to our country from Islamic countries were much smarter and better than the social environment in which they were situated, but their fate was such that they lived in countries that were not developed—in their educational industrial or cultural levels, and hence these Jews were deprived of their right to develop their own talent and to bring their intellectual abilities to their best, to study and learn like those of us coming from developed places like Europe or America.[31]

These responses to the Panthers' activity and the clear disrespect, along with the fear of the growing influence of the group, only enhanced the group's actions.

As the Panthers grew larger in numbers and influence, their rhetoric became increasingly radical. Specific references to "the authority" and "the establishment" were made, and a much more structured list of demands was created. Within their radical rhetoric, a call for inclusion was still apparent, and for most of the time, the basis for any demand or dialogue with authorities was the Panthers' desire to be included within the existing social and political structures. The ways of influence and political participation may have been blurred, but the goal was clear: the Panthers wanted to become "Israeli," or, for that matter, "Israeli-Mizrachim," referring to the goal that their culture and history be included in the Israeli social scene and considered an integral part of the Israeli state and culture. They wished to develop, with the help of the educational system and the political establishment, the "backward" Mizrachi community and to turn this community into an equal participant in the modernized Israeli identity.

As I will present in the next section, almost all the discussions regarding ethnic tension in the Knesset started as general assembly discussions that were to deal with more specific issues, such as housing policies, police actions, and education. At times, they did in fact touch upon

these issues; but in the vast majority of the discussions, the suggested "solution" to social and economic disparities came as a re-assertion of the educational goal of equality in educational opportunities and a call to create a more integrated educational social environment. This is an astonishing documentation of the colonial ethnic discourse so dominant in the political system at the time.

IV: Governing through Education: Political Discussions Regarding Social and Cultural Inequality

The Initial Parliament and Government Reaction to the Black Panthers

The first demonstration of the Black Panthers took place in Jerusalem on March 3, 1971. A week later, on March 10, the Knesset held a special hearing dedicated to the Black Panthers. In this very long discussion (in which as many as 15 speeches on the Black Panthers were given by Knesset members), three main issues were discussed: the reasons for the uprising of such a marginal group of youth, the reasons for their apparent success, and the possible solutions and actions that the government should be initiating in regard to the actual claims of the group.

Much of the discussion was based on the recommendations of the Melamed Committee (of the Jerusalem municipality) and hence dealt, for the main part, with the rhetoric of the group and the more general questions regarding problems of "marginal youth" (a definition that many of the Knesset members chose to use in regard to the Panthers).

In the first speech in this session, the speaker, Knesset member Porush, concluded:

> … There is a single source for all this: in that we did not think enough of the education of these children. Jewish education, education for *Tora*[32] *and Mizvah*[33]—that is the vaccine; that is historically what vaccinated our youth in the Jewish history and prevented it from sinking for centuries.[34]

Porush was a member of the ultra-Orthodox party, and hence his remarks concerning "Jewish education" are almost expected. But the speaker that spoke after him was Knesset member Bibi—of the Labor Party:

> The crisis of our youth is not only economic, but mainly a cultural and spiritual crisis … we must see that the youth that was lucky and had better education and social

> circumstances become a partner of the youth whose fate was different and help them relieve their misery.[35]

Avraham Katz, of the Liberal Mahal Party, was very clear as to how the problems of "troubled youth" should be addressed:

> Getting the social environment [of these children] healthier is a necessary step, even if not enough. But this would be a long and expensive process. I believe that at this stage we should concentrate our human and financial recourses at the weakest link, that which causes these children to drop out of school …[36]

The last speaker in this discussion, before the government response, was Knesset member Moshe Zvi Neria of the MAFDAL, the Jewish conservative party: "We should work through the schools: a good family will adopt a backward family, the children will sit next to each other in school, and help each other."[37] The government response to the Knesset members' words came from two representatives: the Minister of Welfare and the Minister of Police (who addressed issues of handling the police response to the Panthers demonstrations). I find Minister of Welfare Hazani's words especially interesting:

> It is a shame, I must say, that our society awakens to its poor and desperate only when, I would say, "social accidents" such as the Black Panthers happen ... and then all of a sudden we all awaken and create a much exaggerated picture of a specific case, such as this case of a group of youngsters in Jerusalem.

Hazani then gave yet another list of possible causes for the group's actions, once again sounding voices that claim for the "the lack of those morals and norms that have guided our people for centuries among the young Mizrachi community," "the lack of norms that call for hard work, the jealousy towards those who have achieved," and, of course, the "crisis of coming from Islamic countries to Israel."[38]

It was suggested that a special Knesset committee be established to "discuss the problems and possible steps to correct economic, educational and social disparities." Prime Minister Golda Meir did, in fact, declare a special committee to deal with the disparities in Israeli society a few days later. It was only in June of 1973 that the conclusions and recommendations of this committee were published. But from this point on, the discussion of ethnic disparities and inequality shifted, as I will demonstrate below, into a discussion of equal educational opportunity and means of educational integration. Every reference I found in Knesset or governmental

documents regarding ethnic inequality and discrimination was either part of a discussion regarding education or was shifted toward such discussion. I will present these trends in the next section.

Knesset Committees and Further Discussion of Social Economic and Educational Disparities in the Knesset and Beyond

During the weeks after the discussion in the Knesset, the Israeli media was preoccupied with issues of social and economic disparity. Issues of poverty, juvenile delinquency, and educational disparity were discussed constantly during March and April of 1971. At the same time, the Black Panthers were at the peak of their activity: they were frequently interviewed and discussed in the media; they organized "shadow groups" in Tel Aviv, Haifa, and development towns, and they held demonstrations in these places. In May 1971, they organized their biggest and most notable demonstrations in Jerusalem.

Government officials, on the other hand, constantly tried to shift the discussion away from the apparent injustices as were described by the Panthers. In numerous interviews, Finance Minister Sapir claimed that the achievements of the government were underemphasized and that the problem of social disparity was not nearly as bad as it appeared: "I think these talks about poverty are exaggerated";[39] "when they will ask me what I did to help reduce poverty, I will be very proud of my actions";[40] "what we should be worried about is staying united regardless of our differences. Need I refresh your memory as to the immigrant camps that we had just a few years ago? Do you think we can get rid of our social problems in only a few years?"[41]

In an article regarding educational disparities in Jerusalem, *Ha'aretz* publicist Uzi Benziman (a well known and widely read publicist in Israel) wrote an article under the title: "Exaggerated Reports over Jerusalem schools".[42] This article claimed that, as reported by Ministry officials, the children from Katamon (the neighborhood in Jerusalem which was the center of the Panthers' activities) did not *want*, for various reasons, to come to a new school that

was built close to their neighborhood and attracted many of the Ashkenazi families, although they were offered a chance to do so.

At the same time, the tone calling for an integral ministerial approach was widely highlighted by the more scholarly published media. In fact, many of the editorial articles related to issues of social disparity spoke against the government's response to the civic uprising, and claimed that concentrating on education was not enough. Many of the publicists, scholars, and civic activists called for wide reform that would deal with aspects of housing, community facilities, family, and health education.[43] On the other hand, the larger headlines of the news media called for a vast educational change. On March 26, for example, on the front news pages of *Yediot Ahronot*, the headline of an interview with Yizhak Shapira, a well-known educator in Israel, read: "The Panthers' Roots Can Be Found in Elementary School." In the article, Shapira asserted that "the basis of all this is education … if we had a much more intensive and integrated school system, this would not have happened."[44]

Although in many of the discussions in the Knesset and in the media a call for an integral approach for social and economic disparities was apparent, within the Knesset committees I did not find any related discussions in committees on welfare, finance, or health. The only related discussions I found were within the Education committee of the Knesset, reasserting the importance of education for any social process in Israel. In one of the first discussions, Elad Peled, the Ministry's executive director, said:

> [in trying to create social integration in Jerusalem] we are confronting a difficult dilemma: on the one hand, there is a strong social pressure coming from residents of slum neighborhoods that are demanding a better chance. This is a legitimate pressure that we cannot ignore. On the other hand, there is the pressure coming from the Ashkenazim, the educated, the smaller families, the parents who want the best for their children. And we, those sitting in the ministry on behalf of the establishment, have to walk between the drops and try to stay dry … if we decide anything drastic—we will without a doubt irritate one side or the other … what we need is to keep it steady. [45]

Peled's metaphor of "walking between the drops and staying dry" correlates to Rachel Elboim-Dror's description of educational policy-making in Israel.[46] In this description, Elboim-Dror states that one of the most apparent characteristics of educational policy-making in Israel is

the Ministry's ability to "ignore, veil or mitigate differences … in order to avoid touching a wound which might erupt in a 'cultural war.'"[47] Peled's words are not a surprise under the circumstances. It is precisely for this reason that this committee was discussing the issue of disparity in the educational system in Jerusalem now: by discussing, without issuing any recommendations or decisions for implementation for the Ministry of Education, the Knesset was creating the most fruitful outcome (one that was comfortable to all parties); it was sending the message that the issue was being discussed, that a solution would, eventually, be found; it was governmentalizing the public response through discourse, no more. Time, for that matter, was the most important political tool: "It is the Israeli answer to satisfying most of the people some of the time. It is a kind on on-going, slow-motion, never-ending decision process, evolving bit by bit, allowing each group to obtain part of its demands."[48]

Rarely, a more constructive voice would be heard in the government discussions: for example, among the visitors at this particular meeting, there was a school principal. Mr. Gotterman, the principal of the school in the slum neighborhood of Ir-Ganim, which was the focus of this discussion, dealt with issues of ethnic disparity on a daily basis and tried to express a more practical approach:

> I have no intentions of hurting anybody's feelings, but I do want to touch the actual problem in this discussion. You say that you want to create educational integration. Did you ever think about what this "integration" is … and not only from the standpoint of announcing it as "the integration reform"? … announcing "integration" is nothing if it does not have real meaning behind it.[49]

Note, once again: from this straightforward statement, a new discussion arose in the committee concerning the meaning behind the "integration reform" and the ways in which one would be able to overcome it. All the Knesset members on the committee called for a stronger hand in the implementation of the reform:

> **Knesset Member Levine**: 15 kids in a slum school won't make a difference….
>
> **Knesset Member Raziel-Naor**: … the problem is that parents don't want their children to study alongside children from the Mizrachi community. They are afraid of bad influence on their children…. We need to do something in the education system and in the municipality to get these people's hearts closer to each other….

> **Knesset Member Feinberg-Serani**: I think we should make sure the integration starts very early in the schooling process … as early as pre-school.
>
> **Knesset Member Herman**: The issue is about educating the public…. I want to know how the public officials in the schooling system are educated so that they can better deal with problems of ethnicity.[50]

Although the issues raised by the school principal had to do with various aspects of ethnicity and education, as well as with the problematics of implementing an "integration" reform that was opaque and unclear to educators, none of the Knesset members took the discussion any farther than questioning how the system could better implement this opaque construction of 'educational integration'; there were no suggestions beyond the very basic discussion regarding "the reform" (a concept orphaned of any clear definition).

It is clear, from the discussions quoted here,[51] that the government sought to quiet social unrest through the discussion of education, through the influences of inscribed educational changes that were to be the solution to many of the ethnic-based tensions. But in fact, very little was done within the educational sphere; governmentalization, as it came, remained within the political discursive sphere. Note these words, of the Ministry of Education executive director:

> The integration policy is only a fraction of what should be a wide social policy of the state, as much as such exists … we can do a lot at school, but the child's destiny will not change only by education and school. This said, it is obvious that we consider the integration policy a crucial part of education in Israel and believe integration can in fact change social circumstances, but all under the understanding that the educational system's abilities are limited.[52]

Peled then went on to give a long and detailed review of the problems and difficulties of implementation of the integration reform. One of the most interesting points he raised had to do with the political difficulties of the reform:

> One of the things we are constantly trying to form is a clear definition of our goal, meaning—what are we trying to achieve in every stage of the reform … in this respect, the educational leadership in our country has never consolidated a clear definition, and in this we are not a rare case in the world.[53]

In October 1973, the Yom Kippur War broke out-- the hardest and most painful war the State of Israel had gone through up to that point. The elections were postponed until December 31, 1973, and once again discussions of social importance were set aside.

Conclusion

As I stated in the theoretical section, I base my perception of culture on Arjun Appadurai's genealogy of the term. Accordingly, "cultures" "are multiple dimensions of societal differences that create diverse groupings."[54] To this basic definition, I would like to add another dimension: that of discourse. Culture, and the forms through which it is produced, can be seen as multiple discourses, occasionally coming together; at times, this would be an interaction of acceptance; at times, one of conflict. By *discourse* I am referring to the concept of "truth," that is, an everlasting configuration of social and political ideas and ideologies that, through various sophisticated forms of power and sovereignty, are constructed as "absolute" and unchangeable. But, in fact, changes of "truth" have an inevitable effect on the perceptions of differences, and on the relations between one group and another. Hence, shifts of discourse create change of cultures. *Coming together, these changes reflect the ongoing process of the Governmental formulation of a nation, a national identity, and a self (or lack thereof).*

Let me present this theoretical argument through the process I have presented in this paper. With the uprising of the Israeli Black Panthers in March 1971, the Israeli public and its political establishment were certainly not surprised with the actual claims of discrimination and inequality the various cultures in the Jewish –Israeli community were a known and accepted fact. The Black Panthers, hence, did not bring a new and unknown problem into the Israeli reality; what they brought was a new form of action. The choice of the Black Panthers' name, language, and forms of action all brought a new dimension of social and political discourse to Israel. The discourse that was, in part, exposed in this paper reflected a change in societal truths and beliefs, and, eventually, brought a change in the perception of governmental power. By 1973, The initial

attraction of the Black Panthers faded, and instead came a softer message, highlighting the need for education and better educational services, and, respectively, educational integration. Education was now perceived as a tool to obtain governmental power and control.

When presenting these perceptions of discourse and culture, another layer becomes apparent: that of power, as such. Power can be perceived through an understanding of the role and nature of the "political" in social life. This perception regards a variety of settings as "political settings": Politics and political power are inscribed in the texture of everyday life as much as they are within such "purely" political settings as ministries or public offices. Power can be executed as physical force, of course, but it can also be the power of knowledge making, the construction of truth, and the inscribing of societal norms.

The most apparent struggle over the creation, and constant re-creation, of power would naturally take place between the "political" and the "cultural" settings. If, to echo Foucault, politics is analyzed on the basis of the state, then the political establishment, almost by definition, must assume commonalities. Any national government assumes a common basis of national identity upon which the existence of *a nation* is formulated. By government, in this case, I am referring to the major political parties or organizations that have considerable influence on the legislature and the apparatus of the state. Without these political assumptions, control would be impossible. This is also why it is of major interest for any government to sustain these commonalities and, at times of crisis, to reinforce them. By consequence—sustaining these commonalities would imply the erosion of difference.

It is between the insistence on commonalities of the political power, on the one hand, and the struggle for differences of civil society, on the other, that national discourses evolve.

In fact, from a theoretical perspective, the Panthers' initial organization was a civil movement that demanded that the political establishment finally acknowledge the existence of a difference between the various groups in Israel. More specifically, it was a call to acknowledge the existence of a difference based on ethnicity—an ethnic otherness. The reaction of the government, by contrast, was one that struggled to undermine this difference: as stated earlier

this is the heart of the existence of 'nationality' as such: the ongoing shifts of power between the civil society and the government. But in this specific case, the government's struggle was overshadowed by a different underlying theme: that of the colonial ideology that was as pervasive (at least) as the dream of a homogenized Jewish society. The only possible solution for both the Mizrachi struggle and the "national mission" of the government was to create a societal space in which the otherness would be accepted and, at the same time, the hegemonic center would be kept. In effect, the discussion of educational integration during the years 1970-1973 became the means of establishing the center. This was the reason it quickly became a discourse that was "good for all": it enabled the government and the Mizrachi political organizations to act each according to their different centers at the same time and within the same political discourse. In fact, these centers gradually turned into *A Center* in which differences were acknowledged and driven into what was meant to be a homogenizing process.

The discourse of ethnicity in Israel changed again after the Yom Kippur war of 1973, and shifted considerably during the years 1974-1977, creating a political rupture in 1977 that has changed the political realities in Israel since. But throughout these changes, the political discussion and governmental actions in regard to ethnic differences among Jews in Israel were always very closely connected to educational and school reforms.

Notes

[1] Arnold Lewis, "Phantom Ethnicity: 'Oriental Jews' in Israeli Society," in Alex Weingrod (ed.), *Studies in Israeli Ethnicity After the Gathering* (New York: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1985): 149.

[2] I use the terms "Mizrachim" and "Ashkenazim" to distinguish between non- European born Jews (those whose origins are from Muslim countries of the Middle East and North Africa), and European or American - born Jews, respectively. Although both communities span over various continents and regions, the terms have been used and generalized in Israel and abroad to make a basic distinction between them. The genealogy of the term "Mizrachim" signifies the change from a cultural to political ethno-class discourse in Israel. For the origins of the names of the two groups, and a sociological overview of their relations, see, for example, Shlomo Swirski, "The Mizrachi Jews in Israel: Why Many Tilted Toward Begin," *Dissent 31* (1984): 77-91; Eliezer Ben-Refael and Stephen Sharot, *Ethnicity, Religion and Class in Israeli Society* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 24-5.

[3] Lewis, Arnold. *Power Poverty and Education* (Israel: Turtledov Press, 1979), 148.

[4] Ibid., 150.

[5]In Europe, much of Jewish study was related to Western forms of teaching and learning; it was held in schools, as part of a wider, modern curriculum, and taught by teachers. In contrast, studies in the Middle East were often held in very small settings in which only Jewish studies were taught by rabbis; see P. Motzaffi-Haller, "Mizrachi Intellectuals, 1946-1951: Ethnic Identity and its Borders," in H. Hever, Y. Shenhav and P. Motzaffi-Haller, *Mizrachim in Israel: A Critical Observation into Israel's Ethnicity* (Tel-Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 2002).

[6] By using the term "Postcolonial Discourse," I am relating to the discursive effects of the colonial phenomenon as such. The basis of this discourse is the historical process of internal colonialism in Israel and its effects—a creation of marginality, otherness, and difference within the Jewish Israeli community. The postcolonial discourse is situated within the colonial realities and concerned with the encounter of cultures and the reaction of various parts of society to it.

[7]In Oren Yiftachel and Avinoam Meir, *Ethnic Frontiers and Periphery: Landscapes of Development and Inequality in Israel* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1998).

[8]Ibid., p. 8.

[9]Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*: C*ultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 3-27: "The most valuable feature of the concept of culture is the concept of difference, a contrastive rather than a substantive property of certain things. [The term difference's main virtue] is that it is a useful heuristic that can highlight points of similarity and contrast between all sorts of categories: classes, genders, roles, groups, and nations. When we therefore point to a practice, a distinction, a conception, an object, or an ideology as having a cultural dimension … we stress the idea of situated difference, that is, difference in relation to something local, embodied, and significant."

[10] Leela Gandghi *Postcolonial Theory, A Critical Introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998): 5.

[11] G. Burchell, C. Gordon, and P. Miller, *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

[12]Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 32; Gita Steiner-Khamsi and Hubert Quist, "The Politics of Educational Borrowing: Reopening the Case of Achimota in British Ghana," in *Comparative Education Review* 44: 290.

[13]Larry Cuban, "How Schools Change Reforms: Redefining Reform Success and Failure," *Teachers College Record* 99/3: 453-477.

[14]Elazar Cohen, "The Black Panthers and Israeli Society," in T. Herman (Ed.), *Social Parties and Political Protest in Israel* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1997), 43-65.

[15]Shlomo Hasson, *Urban Social Movements in Jerusalem* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).

[16] See: Bernstein, Deborah *The Black Panthers of Israel 1971-1973: Contradictions and Protest in the Process of Nation Building* (Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Sussex, 1976); Hasson, Shlomno, *Urban Socical Movements in Jerusalem*

[17]Interview with a leader of the BP movement, quoted in Hasson,Shlomo, *Urban Movements in Jerusalem* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993); 37.

[18]*Al Hamishmar*, January 13, 1971, p. 7.

[19]Golda Meir was the Prime Minister at the time. She was an American-born Zionist who immigrated to Israel as a 20-year-old and, as will be noted in further discussion, had a very heavy American accent and an explicit emotional attachment to America.

[20]Kochavi Shemesh, one of the initial BP leaders, in an interview in "The Black Panthers (In Israel) Speak." (Documentary film. Directors and Producers: Eli Hamo, Sami Shalom Shitrit, Israel: 2000).

[21]Saadia Marciano, *Jerusalem Post,* March 25, 1971.

[22]Cohen, "The Black Panthers and Israeli Society."in T. Herman (Ed.) *Social Parties and Political Protest in Israel* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1977), 43-65.

[23]Mark Iris and Avraham Shama, "Black Panthers of Israel: The Movement," *Society* 9/7 (May 1972): 42-43.

[24]Melamed Committee for the Prevention of Youth Criminal Involvement (Jerusalem: Government publications, February 1971), 30.

[25] Referring to the American Black Panther Organization

[26]Palestinian Liberation Organization.

[27] The meeting between the Panthers and Prime Minister Golda Meir was described and quoted in *Betaon Ha'Panterim Ha'Shchorim* (*The Black Panthers Journal*), No. 3, November 11, 1972.

[28]Oz Almog, *The Sabra. The Creation of a New Jew* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

[29]*Yediot Ahronot*, April 14, 1971: 3.
[30]*Haaretz*, April 13, 1971: 1.
[31]*Government Yearly Report, 1971-2* (Jerusalem: Center of Government Publicity, Ministry of Education, 1972), 18-19.
[32]The Old Testament.
[33]The Jewish term for "religious obligation."
[34]*Knesset Assembly Protocols* (March 10, 1971), 1789.
[35]Ibid., 1790.
[36]Ibid., 1798.
[37]Ibid., 1801.
[38]Knesset Assembly Protocols (March 10, 1971), 1802-3.
[39]*Yediot Ahronot*, March 19, 1971, 9.
[40]*Yediot Ahronot*, March 23, 1971; 9.
[41]Ibid.
[42]*Ha'aretz*, April 15, 1971, 11.
[43]For example, "We cannot expect an improvement in the education of minority communities without doing more in other aspects of social welfare," Shlomo Agami, *Ha'aretz*, March 3, 1971, 10; "When we talk about education, we really should be talking about educational atmosphere in the community, in the family and especially among the parents," Dr. Eliyahu Ha'Yardeni, *Ha'aretz*, March 3, 1971, 10.
[44]*Yediot Ahronot*, March 26, 1971, 7.
[45]Knesset Education Committee Protocols No. 68 (May 12, 1971), 3.
[46]Rachel Elboim-Dror, "Conflict and Consensus in Educational Policy Making in Israel," in Ernest Krausz (Ed.), *Education in a Comparative Context: Studies in Israeli Society* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1989), 45-58.
[47]Ibid, 48.
[48]Ibid, 50.
[49]Knesset Education Committee Protocols No. 68 (Mat 12, 1971), 57.
[50]Ibid., 60-64.
[51] Many more discussions are quoted in: Tali Yariv Mashal *Integration in Israel 1970-1980: A Discourse Good for All?* (Unpublished PhD dissertation, Columbia University New York, 2004).
[52]Knesset Education Committee Protocol No. 36, July 24, 1974: 5.
[53]Ibid., 7.
[54]See also Fredrick, Jameson, "On Cultural Studies," *Social Text* 34 (1993): 33.