On the Complexity of Solidarity between Parents and the Educational System in the Days of the COVID-19 Crisis[1]

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Abstract

I present here the normative argument that the role of the democratic-liberal state is to ensure solidarity between the public educational system and the parents of students, during routine times and during emergency times. I shed light on the weakness of the values of solidarity and equality, which have characterized the relations of the Israeli educational system and the parent population, especially during the COVID-19 crisis. Based on Michel Foucault's ideas, this article uses the productive-constructive possibilities of power that Foucault termed "pastoral power" for the creation of solidarity between the educational system and parents, especially during emergency period.

Keywords: *Solidarity; Parental involvement; Foucault; Pastoral power; COVID-19*

Introduction

Extreme conditions make it possible to think, and in specific, to think about education, to breach the routine and inertia and to re-examine, in a critical manner, the taken-for-granted, the accepted, the regular. Indeed, in an emergency, which is an extreme situation, the distinction between a democratic and an absolutist regime becomes blurred, and the legal order becomes suspended (Agamben, 2005). As a result, the educational order is also suspended. This situation invites the discipline of the philosophy of education to update perceptions and educational perspectives in a wide variety of educational aspects, including the relationship of solidarity that exists between the educational system and the students' parents.

Thinking about the emergency situation created during the COVID-19 crisis leads to the discussion and exploration of "bio-politics" (Foucault, 1996), which relates to all the actions, the approaches, the techniques and the actual attempts undertaken by the ruling system in order to administer and control in a rational and regulated manner the civilian population. This is the power platform at work in society—"bio-power," as Foucault called it—a form of power that "applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects" (Foucault, 1982, p. 781).

A Judeo-Christian source from which bio-power and bio-politics emerged is pastoral power, that aims to supervise, direct and manage people's behaviour. Later, on the last part of this

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paper, I will elaborate on Foucauldian pastoral power and on its connection to the concept of solidarity. At this point I just wish to draw your attention to the importance Foucault gave to the need for solidarity in society, telling us that "after all, we are all members of the community of the governed, and thereby obliged to show mutual solidarity (Foucault, 2001, p. 474).

According to Foucault, it is worthwhile to free oneself from thinking that sovereign, concentrated and mighty power is the only possible power (Foucault, 1980). In his opinion, pointing to concentrated power, which is in the hands of the national system, cannot explain the entirety of power relations, the action and the response in the social space. This is because the appearance of "bio-power" depends upon the existence of small and numerous social power networks that work among and on the members of the networks.

I will now turn to an examination of how "bio-power" can create solidarity between the educational system and the population of parents and how solidarity, in turn, allows for the action of the "bio-power." Specifically, I will re-examine and clarify and critically examine a number of issues, which connect to solidarity between parents and the educational system (in its widest terms: from the nursery school playground and the school corridors through the discussions in the Knesset – the Israeli parliament, and the government). These issues have been especially visible on every level during the emergency that evolved as a result of the COVID-19 crisis and on the dynamic and vague seam that separates/connects the parents to the educational system. After all: "humanity needed a catastrophe, a hard push to reach a higher level of consensus and solidarity" (El Maarouf, Belghazi & El Maarouf, 2020, p. 16).

The importance of parental contribution to the education of their children in the schools is clear. Furthermore, as Sperling (2019) argues, the welcome influence of good and open communication and continued cooperation between the educational system and the parents has been well-known for a long time (albeit some parents choose different styles of education for their children, e. g. homeschooling. See Neuman, 2019).

As a result, the COVID-19 crisis does not teach us something we did not know. However, it does shed a very strong, clarifying and emphatic light on two notable topics, when trying to cope with the virus. The first is the great need for parental involvement in online learning (Borup, Stevens & Hasler-Waters, 2015; Hasler-Waters, Borup & Menchaca, 2018; McCarthy & Wolfe, 2020). The second is the injustice and inequality in education that are deepening and intensifying when the learning is taking place online. These injustices and inequalities are found between families with a high socio-economic status, who understand the importance of helping their children, invest time in this and possess cultural capital that makes it possible for them to control and use the newest technologies in a good and efficient manner, and other families.

The Questions to be Addressed

I will address the following ethical and principled questions: What is the desired and possible character of solidarity between the educational system and the students' parents during routine situations and during emergencies? Is solidarity feasible between the educational system and parents in the different sectors, in light of the differences in religion, nationality, culture, economic resilience and value perceptions of the sectors? Is solidarity feasible between the educational system and parents who ask for full authority over the education of their children (for example, parents in the Charedi sector – the traditional ultra-Orthodox, religious Jews – or parents who do home schooling)? How does the neo-liberal perception influence the feasibility of this solidarity during routine and emergency times?

These questions will be answered via a theoretical-philosophical examination that problematizes (Foucault, 1984) the concept of solidarity, as it is embedded, or should be embedded, in the relations between parents and the educational system, when it is clear that solidarity is essential especially during times of crisis and emergency. I will discuss normative questions (and not descriptive ones) that arise from the problematics that were discovered in connection to parental-educational system solidarity during the first six months of 2020 in Israel concerning the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

So, in what follows I start (in Part A) with exploring the connection between the idea of the liberal democrat**i**c state and the obligation to express civil national solidarity with the citizens ("organic solidarity" as it was coined by Durkheim). Then (in Part B) I examine the characteristics of teaching in the COVID-19 era, giving special attention to solidarity and justice in education in Israel during the pandemic. Then (in Part C) I build on Foucault's concept of "pastoral power" for the creation of solidarity between the educational system and parents, especially during emergency period.

On Solidarity in Democratic Countries

I adopt here the normative assertion that worthy citizenship is citizenship that "sees democracy and its organs not only as a governmental procedure, but rather as expression of an essential value platform, whose principles can be summarized by the slogan of the French revolution: liberty, equality, fraternity" (Michaeli, 2014, p. 25). However, in extreme conditions, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the legal order is suspended (Agamben, 2005) and, in Israel, like in every other place in the world, the liberty, the first word of the slogan, has been harmed and is decreasing. However, at this time, there is no necessity to abandon equality and fraternity (which, in this essay, will be termed, solidarity – the more common name), and specifically not as they appear in the relations between the educational system and the students' parents.

Solidarity and equality are not concepts from a distant culture, which are alien to Israeli reality. Rather, they are basic values of the State of Israel. They are the clear desire of the right-wing in Israeli social thinking (Maor, 2004) and in the left-wing (khenin & Filc, 2019). I assert that the role of the State of Israel is to ensure solidarity of the public educational system toward all of the students' parents.

I will begin with an exploration of the connection between the obligation to express solidarity with the citizens, and the liberal basis of the State of Israel. I will then discuss the value and ethical question if the state is required to express solidarity with groups that do not wish to express solidarity with all the other groups in the country.

On the Connection between the Obligation to Express Solidarity with the Citizens and the Idea of the Liberal State

As a preface to this section, I will provide here a short context explanation about the complex social-educational situation in Israel.

The Israeli society is roughly comprised of four population sectors that correspond to four official educational streams in Israel. Three of them are full state-sponsored and full state-supervised streams of mostly public schools: General-secular Hebrew education stream, comprises 38 percent of first graders of 2018; Arabic-language education stream whose students are mostly Muslims but Druzes and Christians as well and comprises 25 percent of Israeli 2018 first graders

(I am not discussing here the case of the Palestinian Arabs who have been living under Israeli occupation since 1967 and are not Israeli citizens); National-religious Hebrew education stream (with 15 percent of 2018 first-graders). The fourth is the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish education stream (the Charedi sector, with 22 percent of first graders) that is characterized by largely independent curriculum and loose state supervision (Sachs & Reeves, 2017). The schools in that stream are private schools, and about half of them are full state-sponsored.

The State of Israel is a liberal state, even if it is not completely so (Smooha, 2016), and even when more voices in the public are calling to change this characteristic of the country (see, for example, Haivry & Hazony, 2017). The country can be seen to be a liberal country by relying on, for example, the basic principles of the country – the Declaration of Independence – which painted Israel in strong liberal colours. As such Israel does place the values of freedom and equality in the center (Sagi, 2017, p. 71).

If this is so, it appears as if the liberal state, according its definition, is required to act according to the value of equality between citizens. This is certainly so concerning everything that is connected to equality in the education of the future citizens. And, what about the value of solidarity?

Following Menachem Mautner (2013), I differentiate between two kinds of liberalism: the liberalism of the negative rights, or liberalism of the autonomy, which is the dominant kind of liberalism in Israel, and "the liberalism of the individual and social prosperity," which is the kind of desired liberalism in a country that aspires to wave the flag of solidarity.

The liberalism of the autonomy deals with the conditions of freedom, which will make it possible for the subject to be autonomous, and it will provide him/her with liberal rights, such as freedom of movement, freedom of religion and freedom from religion.
It appears as if this kind of liberalism has no special interest in the existence of a state with wide social solidarity, altruism, or the spirit of volunteerism. Moreover, of course, there appears to be no interest in the promotion of solidarity that is supported and advanced by the state.

The second kind of liberalism, according to Mautner, is liberalism of individual and social prosperity, which deals with the development of human abilities and their realization: intellectual, moral, and artistic abilities. This kind of liberalism does not focus solely on the value of freedom in liberalism of autonomy, but rather on the conditions, which make it possible for citizens to realize their freedom in a way that will be meaningful for them and to be able to fully realize this personal autonomy. The pre-condition for personal prosperity is that the person be rooted in her/his society.

Therefore, this kind of liberalism is not only concerned with individual rights, but also with social rights (such as, the right to education, the topic of this essay, as well as the right to health, to housing, or to the guarantee of income). Liberalism places the obligation to realize these rights on the state and on society. The essence of this liberalism is:

> [...] seeing the person as the source of the value and striving for the creation of the conditions in which the person can realize his humanity to the highest degree. This is liberalism in which the state will discover interest not only in the education of children, but also in the ongoing spiritual enrichment of the adults and will ensure that the person will be awarded the best spiritual products, not only the elites, people with means, but rather all of the country's citizens. (Mautner, 2013, p. 67).

This second kind of liberalism relates to social rights of all citizens, who live throughout the country, and together form civil society. Therefore, its call for solidarity is not for a narrow local solidarity, like Durkheim's "mechanical solidarity", neither for wide cosmopolitan solidarity as was suggested by Camus. However, it calls for civil national solidarity, coined by Durkheim as "organic solidarity".

Even if it is very important to create solidarity between the governmental system and the groups of citizens – a solidarity that grew "from below," in the initiatives and motivation of the citizens – when taking a real look, it is clear that it is not enough to depend on the good will of the different groups of parents for the creation of solidarity between them and the educational system. The responsibility for the central role of the creation of sustainable solidarity, needs to be placed on the sovereign, which is the main powerful entity here, as I will demonstrate in the third and final part of this article.

Is Solidarity of the Liberalism of Personal and Social Prosperity Possible? Specifically: Is it Possible in Present-Day Israel?

It is clear that "It is all too easy to have refined sympathy for those close to us in geography, or class, or race, and to refuse it to people at a distance, or members of minority groups, treating them as mere things" (Nussbaum, 2010, p 109). That is the way of the world. However, there is room for the question if the emotion of solidarity can also exist between groups in the country whose members cannot eat at one another's home, whose sons and daughters cannot marry one another, who, at times, do not speak the same language at all, and whose customs, dress and culture are different.

However, in this article, I am focusing on very limited Israeli solidarity, educational solidary between parents and the educational system, as it has been shown to exist during an emergency situation. Solidarity in the educational space is influenced by the weakness in general solidarity in the country. The weakness is considerable in the Jewish sector: The Democracy Index of 2018 describes "a real decrease in the appreciation of solidarity in Jewish-Israeli society" (Hermann et al., 2018, p. 13); as well as in the Arab-Israeli sector, whose members estimate that solidarity in Arab society is even lower than the estimate within the Jewish sector (Hermann et al., 2019). Furthermore, there is very little solidarity between the Jewish and Arab groups (Smooha, 2018).

If this is the case, the liberalism of personal and social prosperity, from my viewpoint, neither honors nor accepts the existing situation, which clearly lacks solidarity, but rather aims to establish in its place a normative goal: solidarity between the different groups of parents of students and the public educational system, especially during emergencies.

To all the short-sighted people, who have a hard time seeing the feasibility of general Israeli solidarity, I recommend using empathic imagination, as described by Martha Nussbaum. This leads to "the ability to think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person's story, and to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have" (Nussbaum, 2010, pp. 95-96).

It appears that empathic imagination has a basis in Israeli reality since the distances and the gaps between the groups, even if they are indeed large and wide, are neither static nor fixed. It is possible to notice growing, slight movements of nearing a common denominator in the Israeli space. For example, the language of speech is becoming more and more shared by the diverse social groups (Abu-Bakr, 2007; Assouline, 2014; Brand, 2015); Furthermore, there is noticeable

willingness of Charedim, the ultra-Orthodox religious Jews, to set up their households close to people who are not Charedim (Kahaner & Shelhav, 2012). At the same time, it is possible to identify movement of the Israeli Arabs toward general Israeli society. They have:

> ...undergone partial modernization in their lifestyle and in their thinking. They have become accustomed to Israeli standards and Jewish society is a reference group for them. They appreciate the advantages of the life in Israel – accessibility of modernization, the services of national welfare and the provision of allowances, the rule of law and democratic institutions and defense against Islamic control or Jewish fundamentalists (Smooha, 2013, p. 23).

In light of this trend, in my opinion, the answer to the question that was posed at the beginning of this section is positive: solidarity of liberalism of personal and social prosperity is possible in Israel.

Is the State Obligated to Maintain Solidarity with Parents of Students in All of the Sectors?

In this section, I will briefly relate to the questions that deal with the extension or the exclusion of solidarity between the educational system and parents, in routine and emergency situations. As I noted above, such solidarity is essential. While I relate here to the Israeli case, the responses to these questions also have universal relevance (with slight differences in semantics). Should the state care about solidarity with parents from groups that do not look for solidarity with all of the groups in the country? Should the state express solidarity with the Charedim, who do not accept the State program of core studies? With Arabs who refuse to sing the national anthem? With parents who do home schooling and whose approach to education says, 'we feel no solidarity with the public?' I aver that the answer to these, and similar, questions is simple and clear. The aim of solidarity between the educational system and the parents, which is presented in this essay, is the safeguarding of the rights of the students for education and for equal education. One of the famous is that the State of Israel declared, at the time of its independence, that it would completely safeguard equal social and political rights for all of its citizens. Moreover, the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (which was ratified by the State of Israel in 1991, and its principles are integrated into Israeli law – see, for example, Arbel, 2018), determined that, "the states that are members acknowledge the right of the child to education [...] on the basis of equal opportunities" (Section 28). Here, there is no condition for the provision of this right to a child. The convention promises that,

> States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.

The convention further states that,

> States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members (Section 2).

As a result, the beliefs and perspectives of the parents, including the character of the needed solidarity in the country, neither increases nor decreases the right of the child to education on the basis of equal opportunity.

We can ask a harder question: Is the state obligated to express solidarity with parents from groups who have behaved in ways that do not reflect solidarity and, perhaps, even expressed anti-solidarity stances during the COVID-19 crisis? Mautner (2020) averred that, "We will need to treat the Charedim's lack of solidarity." Adopting the assumed secular and national religious public viewpoints, Mautner accused the Charedi public of expressing anti-solidarity with Israeli society, of not following the guidelines of the sovereign regime and of not taking precautions to avoid infection or to take care not to infect others with the COVID-19 virus. In a similar manner, he accused the government project manager of the battle against the virus, Professor Ronni Gamzu, of not expressing solidarity when he said: "The Arab sector in the last two weeks, after the Eid al-Adha holiday, almost carried out an attack that would have resulted in hundreds of patients" when having meals with many participants, and holding parties and gatherings (Lukash & Yanko, 2020).

In light of this, we can ask if engaging in collective blaming of moral transgressions, which reflect a lack of solidarity during the pandemic crisis, constitutes acts of morality or solidarity. My answer to this question is negative: if we adopt Anderson's words, the Charedi collective is an imagined matter, which is divided into imagined sub-collectives, such as the Lithuanian stream, the Hasidim, and the Mizrachi Charedim. Moreover, these three streams can also be sub-divided into internal groups. Therefore, there should be no blaming of an abstract figure of a Charedi person, who lacks solidarity. One can blame a specific person, who happens to be a Charedi to this or that degree, but one cannot blame the collective. This is also true for an Arab-Israeli citizen, who is not at all responsible for the lack of solidarity expressed by an anonymous Arab-Israeli. There should be no collective blame placed on the Charedi collective or the diverse Arab collective due to certain individuals expressing a lack of solidarity, even if their numbers grow. A people should not be blamed for not behaving in ways that reflect solidarity or morality (Jaspers, 2000, p. 34).

Erecting fences between the general population, which is adhering to the solidarity promoted by the state, and a specific public, which is excluded from the general solidarity and which is prevented from receiving state benefits because of the transgressions of individuals in the group, is a kind of collective punishment. The Justice, Haim Cohen, stated: "that every 'collective' punishment, in which the sin of a person is visited upon his family or village or organization is fundamentally wrong and is neither in line with justice nor with the law of the Torah (Cohen, 1996, p. 692).

I will now move from the theoretical and principled plane—the worthy, as it was presented above, to the given, which is discussed below.

The Given

The Characteristics of Teaching in the COVID-19 Era

In 2020, the Coronavirus changed the character of learning in the world. Many of the students in the pre-school, elementary, middle and high schools, post-high school and academic institutions began learning at home, learning that is both synchronic and a-synchronic, and mainly based on online technologies. The ministries of education, which are responsible for the schools, and is the focus of this essay, compelled the teachers to move from teaching in a classroom in a school to teaching online. Furthermore, this change demanded the preparation of completely new

lesson plans and demanded completely different didactic emphasis than what was required beforehand in classroom teaching. For example, during the months of the lock-down in the United States, there was an increase of 90% in use of the instrument, EdTech, which combines technology and education, in comparison to the previous year (Molnar, 2020). The new way of teaching has required teachers to depend more on the parents and on their cooperation. Research has shown that parental involvement in their children's online learning is essential. Therefore, it is important to relate to this involvement in a different way than their involvement in education and learning that takes place within the school (Borup et al., 2014).

The importance of parents' support, of course, depends upon their desire to help their children in the process of online learning and in their ability to do so – in terms of their educational abilities, their technological skills, their command of the language of the studies, and their availability – tied to obligations concerning livelihood or responsibility for additional children of different ages – as well as having a technological infrastructure at home that can support all the children, without disturbing others at home, who need the technology for their work or for their studies.

We can understand the importance of parental support if we look at this issue via a critical viewpoint held by many teachers (for example, in Australia and New Zealand), who felt that, after the schools were closed, because of the pandemic, that they were not receiving the expected support from the parents, because the parents have not upheld anyone of these conditions (Flack et al., 2020). This can also be seen from the viewpoint of the parents of children in elementary schools (for example, in the United States), who need technological support in order to organize online learning for their children at home (McCarthy & Wolfe, 2020).

If, indeed, online learning during a crisis, such as the COVID-19 crisis, requires technological infrastructure and the ability of parents to help their children in their studies, it is clear that there will be inequality between the education that children of parents who can provide what is needed and that of children who come from homes where the conditions are not possible. Therefore, inequality that already exists in the educational system in the world, during quiet periods, has grown during the COVID-19 crisis, because education is now increasingly dependent on technology. Studies have shown that families with a high socio-economic level consume more online education than families with a low socio-economic level (see, for example, Bayrakdar & Guveli, 2020; jaeger & Blaabaek, 2020). The inequality is even more conspicuous when we examine the gaps in education between students who are home schooled and students in the regular educational system. These gaps have widened considerably since the pandemic began. A gap has been created between students in regular educational frameworks and students whose parents possess pedagogical, didactic and technological abilities, who themselves teach their children in joint and small frameworks ("pandemic pods," "learning pods," microschools"), while the schools are closed.

Solidarity and Justice in Education in Israel during the COVID-19 Era

The COVID-19 pandemic led to the closure of the schools and nursery schools in Israel on March 13th, 2020. After this date, students, theoretically, had the opportunity to participate in online studies, provided by the educational system, via synchronic and a-synchronic lessons taught by the teachers and nursery schoolteachers.

It is possible to learn about the real feasibility of this theoretical possibility by reading the *2018 Yearly Israeli Statistical Report*. According to the report, the possibility of participating in online learning was available mainly for members of the strong socio-economic group (The Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, 2018). According to data from the Ministry of Education, it was not

clear at all the number of students from economically disadvantaged populations (low income families, migrant workers, refugees, etc.) who did not participate in online learning, and more specifically, the number of students, who did not have access to the internet, during the COVID-19 crisis. As a result, it is not known if there was any governmental response to the needs of these population (Dahan et al., 2020; Weisblei, 2020).

Equality does not only connect to technology; it is influenced by other factors, such as, the ability of the parents to help, in terms of general education or their command of the Hebrew language. Moreover, the importance that the parents give to their children's studies (religious, cultural, economic or social importance) greatly influences the feasibility of learning during emergency situations. For example, it is logical that Charedi children will have an advantage over other children in exercising their right to education in emergencies. The reason is that, for the Charedi population, attending Torah study institutions, has huge personal, community, national and overall human value. Therefore, cancellation of school and its resulting harm is a very serious decree for this population (Pfeffer, 2020).

Who are the groups with no internet access, that are not part of the strong Israeli populations, and who especially need solidarity during the pandemic?

One group is the Palestinian-Arabs, who are not one homogenous sector, but despite the group's variations, I can generalize and contend that the Palestinian-Arab students faced many difficulties when they were told about the closing of the schools and that there would be a shift to online learning (Hassan, 2020).

Most of the Arab population in Israel does not have computers at home and use of the internet is through smartphones. However, most of the content of the educational materials on the internet have not yet been adapted to the smartphones. Moreover, when the schools were closed, not all the materials had been translated into Arabic, Even not an official portal for the parents. In comparison to the Jewish sector, the physical infrastructure for computers is worse in the Arab sector, especially in the unrecognized Bedouin villages in the Negev, which are lacking the most basic infrastructure, such as, electricity (Hassan, 2020; Mazor & Edres, 2020; Farah, 2020).

Solidarity was also missing when the decision was taken to return to school, without listening to the voices of the parents in the Arab sector. If the cabinet and the head of the educational system had listened and consulted with the Arab parents, these parents might have brought up the special difficulty of returning to school, since many of these schools are very crowded and do not have yards. Or, perhaps, the officials might have heard about the uniqueness of returning to routine studies when the Muslim students were beginning the holy month of Ramadan (Hassan, 2020).

Other special groups, which are not part of strong Israel, belong to the Charedi sector. The concept, "Charedim," or the "Charedi community," includes different religious groups – different orthodox groups, which, at times, are adversaries (Baron, 2015). However, in spite of this, we can aver that many people in the Charedi sector do not use the internet or smartphones at all, due to beliefs and tradition. Therefore, online learning for this group is not possible. Moreover, closing Charedi educational institutions brought the children from the boarding schools back home, and in many of the homes, the families were not prepared to provide all their many children with the possibility of listening to the lessons broadcast on the regular phones (Tucker, 2020).

If this is the case, the Arab public and the Charedi public have not been able to gain solidarity from the educational system and the political system in the country. It can be assumed that had there been solidarity, this would have supported the existence of online educational activities.

The lack of solidarity in the educational system has also characterized the relationship between the parents and the students from other groups that do not belong to the strong, dominant

group. For example, after the decision was taken to return to school with certain limitations, students, who belong to a high-risk health group, or who come from families who are in this high-risk group, had to remain at home and were not provided with any relevant educational solutions (Kadari-Ovadia, 2020). During the COVID-19 era, many of the children of foreign workers and asylum seekers, who receive the services of the public educational system during quiet and routine times, were also neglected (Dahan et al., 2020).

Special education students, who receive help from teachers' aides during routine periods, were also harmed. They were forced to manage at home without teachers' aides when the schools were closed. The plans that were made for the kind of studying that would take place during the new school year, in which part of the time the children would go to school and part of the time they would study online, placed the responsibility of the online learning on the parents of the students in special education. This was because the teachers' aides do not go to the children's homes, due to fear of infection (Hilaie, 2020).

Furthermore, even if the students, parents, and teachers in special education were offered the support of art therapists, after the decision was taken to close the schools, this support was conditioned upon the cooperation of the parents. "There needs to be partnership between the families in the therapeutic activities, according to the judgement of the therapist, the needs of the student and the readiness of the parents" (Mendelson & Marnin-Shacham, 2020). It appears as if the special education staffs would have a harder time helping the weaker parents. It is clear that difficulties would arise when there was a demand to match the technology to the special needs of the children (Dahan et al., 2020), for example, in situations in which there is a need for augmentative and alternative communication for children who have difficulties with written and oral communication. A special difficulty would appear when attempting to help parents of children in special education, who do not have a good command of the Hebrew language, during the crisis, when schools moved to online learning.

Another example of the disappearance of the needed solidarity between the educational system and the weak parents is the closure of the boarding schools and youth villages. These frameworks sent home minors at risk, who are lacking a family home front, without providing a real solution, neither for the continuation of online studies nor for help for the families – the same homes that sent the children away to these frameworks in order to protect them (Ibid.)

To erase any doubt, the lack of solidarity is especially harmful to parents (and, as a result, their children), who belong to the weaker groups in Israeli society. However, the strong groups were also harmed when the system was unprepared to cope with the crisis and were unwilling to consult with the parents and to cooperate with them to find possible solutions. We can learn about the harm from the publication of a position paper of the psychologists' union of Israel. According to this document, the plan for online learning, created by the Ministry of Education for every child in Israel, was not tailored to the abilities of nursery school children. Most of the proposed activities require the ongoing presence of the parents (Schleyer, 2020), which was not fully kept. These examples of the existing condition point to the weakness of the solidarity between the educational system and the students' parents, specifically during a period when there is a greater need for solidarity, mainly with the weaker sectors of society.

Solidarity between the Educational System and the Parents as Foucauldian Pastoral Power

In this section, I propose that the educational system use its power and take responsibility for the development and nurturance of solidarity with the parents of the students. Solidarity is a

pre-condition for coping with crises, in which significant involvement of parents is necessary in educational activities. I base my proposal on Foucault's ideas and even suggest possible directions for implementing this responsibility. It is clear that there is a need for solidarity between parents and the educational system and always desirable, not only during periods of crisis. Therefore, acceptance of the proposal can contribute to educational activity in Israel when quieter days return.

On Foucault and the Concept of Power, On Pastoral Power and On Pastoral Power in Relation to Parents-the State

Foucault's ideas concerning power are often used in criticism or as a call for resistance to power that is used by the State or by the social hegemony against weak or disadvantaged groups in society (see, significant examples in Butler, 2011; Said, 1978). At other times, we find criticism levelled against Foucault's ideas concerning "evil power" and attacks on what the critics see as power that negates, prevents or destroys, and the implications of this harmful and injurious power in real social life (Walzer, 1983).

Indeed, this criticism accuses Foucault of only seeing everywhere oppression, arbitrary violence, imprisonment, exclusion etc. However, critics ignore the importance of the idea that power can create, makes things possible and can be positive (especially in the field of education – Leask, 2012). Due to limitations of space, it is not possible to develop here the entire range of creative uses of power, based on Foucault's ideas. In contrast, I will focus here on ideas, drawn from Foucault, that connect to the creative-constructive possibilities of power, in order to tie these ideas to the attempt to create solidarity between the educational system and the parents, especially during crises.

Power, the central concept in Foucault's theory, is not something that can be divided into those who have power and those who do not, and thus, are subordinate to the power holders. Power is a relation and not a "thing" or an "object," which can be held or owned. It is not like merchandise that is transferred to a merchant, even though it is something that moves. It is operated via social networks and the individuals in these networks accept its authority, operate it, and send it onward. The individual is also influenced by power (and in a certain sense, which I will not be able to detail here, the power is what constituted him/her), and is also relayed to others. According to Foucault, we should not look at the issue of power from up high, but rather from below, from the small units. We need to begin exploring its concrete action, from the level of the family unit (Foucault, 2003). This is what I will do here when I discuss the power of action of the educational system on the family unit.

Foucault pointed to the discovery of different kinds of power in society and he described the actions of three prototypes of power that were developed from one another in a historical way.

A. The first type is sovereign power, which is basically negative power, comprised of limitations and things that are forbidden, which threatens punishment for those who oppose it. This is the power of coercion. The sovereign power worked on a few and in an ostentatious manner, based on the assumption that whoever saw the strength of the harm it could cause, the individual would obey and cooperate with the sovereignty.

B. The second prototype is disciplinary power. It is dispersed power: it reaches everywhere, it is found everywhere and it works on everyone all of the time. People subjected to this type of power feel that they are constantly seen and observed. "The sovereign

power to punish" has changed and became "the power to observe." Disciplinary power aims to shape the subordinates, without them feeling that they are being shaped. If this shaping succeeds, it leads to voluntary acceptance of the disciplinary power on the part of the subordinates and to an unwillingness to rebel against it.

C. The third kind of power, according to Foucault, does not focus only on individuals, but rather focuses on the population. Indeed, Foucault, in his lectures, focused on the appearances of this kind of power, in which the main interest is on the population and control of it:

In the beginning, Foucault presented bio-power and the bio-political technique through which bio-power comes to be expressed. This bio-power is not directed at the individual body of the subject, like in disciplinary power, and it no longer has the right to kill the subject, like the sovereign power had. Rather, it is power that actually aims to safeguard the life of the subject (Gallo, 2017). Afterwards, Foucault changed the concept of bio-power to the concept of governmentality (gouvernementalite), which is more efficient (Niesche & Gowlett, 2019). He also changed the idea of bio-politics to the idea of governmental administrative mechanism of governmentality, which he termed "mechanisms of security" (Foucault, 2007). For these mechanisms of power, the population is both an object and a subject of the governmental administrative mechanism. That is, it is both the object of the power, as well as what carries it.

These are mechanisms relevant for the COVID-19 crisis. This is because, according to Foucault's conceptualization, during a pandemic, this power operates on the general population, and these mechanisms provide answers to the questions that arose for the first time in the nineteenth century and continue to be asked to this day: How many people have been infected? How many were vaccinated? What is the ratio of the dead among us? What is the probability of being infected? These are questions that do not have the goals of exclusion, but rather attempt to stop the pandemic.

Discovering the third kind of power, which is my focus here, is characterized by the fact that it does not change the placement of people and it does not try to draw and rebuild their living space to make it easier for the power to control the population. Instead, the power rests on information from the field and distribution of the population. The mechanism of security attempts to organize the milieu (using Foucault's term) in a multi-value and dynamic network of possible, temporary and unsure events that work within the same given human living space. This space is also used as a means of action that impacts the often dynamic and changing population, and also serves as a mediator through and in which the activity occurs.

Bio-power or governmentality does not relate to the population solely as a collection of subjects, but rather as a natural phenomenon that cannot be easily changed by a sovereignty. According to the logic of this new type of power, it is indeed possible to organize the environment and to undertake a certain change in the population. However, the change cannot take place in an arbitrary or violent manner. The change can only take place via agents of change and enlightened, reflexive, analytic, and calculated techniques of change.

There are biological, social, political and belief connections to the events, the movements, and their dispersal in the milieu. The sovereignty, and in our case, the educational system in its wide sense, needs to become involved and act within this milieu, for the benefit of all citizens. Here, in the discovery of the third kind of power, the mechanisms of security no longer work solely

for the security of the sovereignty, as the mechanisms worked in sovereign power, but rather, first of all, they work for the security of the entire population.

Pastoral Power Creates Solidarity

In order to better understand the actions of the bio-power and the governmentality, there is a need to look closely at the source from which they emerged, according to Foucault. This is the Christian pastor, whose foundation is in Hebrew sources. The abstract concept of the pastor uses the image of the shepherd and the flock and the relations between the two. It points to a relationship with a certain kind of character that exists between the leader and the followers. Within this framework, certain individuals serve others, not as kings or judges, but rather as spiritual shepherds (pastors). Pastoral power is a specific kind of power that aims to supervise people or manage their behavior (Foucault, 2007).

In the transition, from managing a small community to managing a population of a country, pastoral power uses statistical and other methods of organization, which make it possible to direct people. It adopts a goal in which, in the end, people will self-direct their behavior. This is not a one-way power relationship: the pastoral power does not only give commands and demand things. The spiritual shepherd was also willing to sacrifice himself for the lives of his followers. Moreover, the pastoral power cared for the entire community, but was unique in that, simultaneously, he worried about the needs of every individual in the community, in a personal manner, throughout the individual's entire life. This power, in contrast to sovereign power, works from inside the social body and not on the social body, from a distance (Foucault, 1980, p. 38). It works when the power holder understands the desires of the members of his community and knows all of their secrets.

It appears to me that pastoral power is relevant, possible, and required in a multi-cultural society, such as Israeli society. Fretwell (2020) describes the English link workers as present-day examples of educational pastoral power. These workers provide the community of English students' parents with "tailored made" support for their needs. They serve as a bridge that connects the school and the parents. These are people from within the community, who have strong ties in the community. They were trained to serve in this function, and they exercise their pastoral power on parents through friendship, listening, empathy, care and concern, persuasion, and control. They develop these ties from close up, in the community and not with a remote control from the school buildings. In this way, they change the traditional ways of acting in order to manage the parents in relation to the public educational system. They provide the parents with improved tools and abilities to help in the education of their children.

Link workers do not only support the parents, but also stand against inequality in the educational system and try to overcome or to decrease it. They teach the parents learning strategies, they explain to them how to create a supportive, learning environment at home and they develop needed pedagogical behavioral habits.

The link workers do not only work with the very problematic or weak parents, or with parents who need more services. They work with the entire community. In pastoral terms, it can be averred that they work with the entire "flock." In a more human terms, it can be said that they work with the entire ethnic group. The link worker, who stands alongside the "shepherd" in the pastoral power arrangement, cares for each parent in the ethnic group, as well as each individual parent, and s/he does so on a daily basis. S/he gives each parent the sense that s/he is important, has value and can influence others.

In the Israeli educational system, there is partial use of this idea, in helping families of new immigrants. "Multi-cultural Educational Bridge Builders," who speak the language of the immigrants, have been appointed "to help the school staffs, the families and the student immigrants in order to bridge the gap between the culture of school and the customs of the country of origin and the Israeli educational system" (CEO, Ministry of Education, 2020).

The pastoral power works, in these examples, via technology of governance. It does through secondary agents that succeed in managing the parents, even when the central system is physically distant from the milieu and even when each milieu is characterized by cultural-educational, belief system-educational or national-educational uniqueness.

This is a description of possible creative, positive, and constructive actions of power. Through this care and concern for the "flock," the "shepherds" encourage the parents to be reflective and responsible since they are the ones who manage their children's studying at home, as they adopt ideal norms (from the pastor's viewpoint) of parent-educators.

I believe it is possible to satisfy those who wonder about the chances that the "secondary shepherds" will succeed. After all, in order to realize pastoral power, the shepherd needs know his/her "flock" in a full and intimate manner. If this is the case and the "shepherd" receives the blessing of the "flock's" natural or traditional leaders, the probability that s/he will succeed in his/her task increases. According to Foucault, people have no desire to oppose being governed, to give up on all guidance and supervision. The question that the person asks him/herself is not whether to be ruled, but rather who should be his/her ruler. Furthermore, s/he will reject the person that s/he does not want to rule. There is acknowledgement of the necessity that "the community of the flock" will agree and desire to be ruled in a certain way. The good shepherd must win the trust of the flock.

Foucault averred that pastoral power no longer sees its goal as leading the "flock" to salvation in the next world, but rather to care for salvation in the present – welfare, health, security and defense against accidents and unexpected events. According to Foucault, the pastoral power of our time is also used in the institution of the family, as well as among philanthropic bodies and public institutions, in order to implement and actualize the pastoral functions of caring for both the entire population and its individuals, especially in the area of education.

The idea of pastoral power is relevant for the educational situation in Israel, which is characterized by numerous cultures. This is especially true during times of crisis and distress. My normative assertion in this essay is that the state needs to adopt the role of the "link workers" and to expand the approach of the multi-cultural bridge builders as a strategy for the realization of pastoral power as a creative power in Israeli society. As much as possible, the state will award pastoral power to the local authorities, who have economic and administrative abilities to encourage solidarity in their jurisdiction. The "Israeli link workers – bridge builders" will be found from within the community and will be given their blessing to engage in this work. After all, not all of the knowledge, for example, knowledge concerning the appropriate way for parents to act concerning the education of their children, especially when they have to study online from home, is in the hands of the state's authorities.

There are also kinds of knowledge that come "from the bottom," from people on the ground. These are kinds of local, regional knowledge that is not accepted, and does not need to be accepted, by everyone (Foucault, 2003), for example, the knowledge concerning the worthy way to teach Charedi children, and specifically children from Charedi families that belong to a certain stream of Hassidim, during a crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of this knowledge is

found in the hands of educators and rabbis from this stream. Furthermore, they have the power to motivate the Hasidim to action.

It is possible to characterize the behavior of the Charedi public (as well) during the pandemic as behavior of people who follow the instructions of its leaders. These are instructions that are transmitted in different and efficient ways to the followers, which place much trust in the leaders, while not placing trust in the states' leadership and instructions. Furthermore, the local community has diverse institutions of mutual aid (Malchi, Malach & Friedman, 2020). Similarly, the knowledge concerning the worthwhile way to cope with the difficulty of educating during the pandemic in Arab society is found within Arab society (Hassan, 2020).

The Responsibility of the State for the Creation of Solidarity

Richard Rorty (1989) rejected the assertion that solidarity is a natural inter-subjective phenomenon that exists between all of us – a phenomenon that needs to be expressed and exposed. For Rorty, solidarity is a human creation of members of a certain group that agree to act in solidarity, in either an explicit or implicit manner, with and toward members of their group.

In other words, solidarity needs to be created, and in order not to leave its success to fate, the state needs to initiate, administer, and budget solidarity between the educational system and the parents.

Ostensibly, the creation of this kind of solidarity, directed by the state, collides head on with the neo-liberal stance, which has been adopted by the Israeli government. According to this, the State needs to interfere as little as possible in the lives of its citizens and to give them the responsibility for their children's education during a crisis, based on the assumption that parents, more than anyone else, want to maximize the good for the children.

However, neo-liberal ideology, which is the prominent ideology among leaders in many countries in the western world, does not necessarily represent the Israeli spirit, which according to sociological research, supports solidarity.

Being Israeli also includes consensus that Israel is a welfare state. All of the sectors of the wide public do not only support a high-level welfare state, but also support a socialist-democratic ideology that opposes a neo-liberal ideology of the elite and the governmental policy that erodes welfare services. (Smooha, 2018, p. 70).

As I proposed above, the state will award local authorities, who have administrative and economic pastoral abilities, the mandate to work for solidarity. They will, furthermore, help them implement the desired solidarity, in terms of budget, legislation and its construction. It will help local authorities develop solidarity and share knowledge to help create this solidarity.

I can summarize and assert that the creation of solidarity between the State and the students' parents is both possible and desirable. Even if the initiative for the creation of solidarity needs to be in the hands of the State, who can initiate such solidarity, this will not be one-directional power, working top down, from the national educational system and directed to the entire country, through the last parent. Even when the pastoral solidarity power that I proposed above, for work with families of parents, is initiated "from above," its existence and length depend on parents' responses to such an action. Its intensity and efficiency depend, as we learned from Foucault, on feedback from "below," from the parents, and on their agreement to simultaneously serve as subjects that transfer power and as objects of power. That is, they need to agree to function as a relay station that constantly receives the power of solidarity, uses it, and transfers it onward to

additional relay stations, while constantly increasing its strength. The importance of the actions of the relay stations will reach a climax during a crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

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