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Dream and Hope
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This paper examines the role of dreaming in social change: Is dreaming a method or subject? Do we need ethics in order to dream, or does ethical engagement require of us that we have the capacity to dream? Do we need language in order to transform society through our dreams, or do we need to be able to dream in order to transform our language and thus our society? Can dreaming be a dangerous thing?

My aim is to explore the role of dreaming in creating the hope necessary for bringing about social change. I will argue that dreaming as a method, or structure, requires social content linked to humanism in order to ensure that our efforts toward social change are worthy. I will start with a recent example of an Israeli social dreamer, Daphni Leef, presenting her hopes and thoughts toward change. As we explore her ideas we will link them to the thoughts of several philosophers. I will start with the philosopher Richard Rorty who focuses on the deep connection between the way we use language and the way we structure reality, and how this in turn shapes social hope. I will then draw on the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas regarding the dangers of dreaming without attending to the realm of ethics. Finally, Paulo Friere's Pedagogy will give us inspiration for how we might implement these ideas educationally in the world.

Daphni Leef's Dream

During the Israeli summer of 2011 there was a social protest against Israeli governmental policy. The protest began when Daphni Leef, a film student, erected a tent on Rothschild Avenue, a main street in Tel-Aviv. She was protesting against rental rates in Tel-Aviv, Israel's financial-cultural center. Many people followed her lead erecting more tents and holding weekly demonstrations all over Israel. Two months later, at the end of 'the summer of protest', Leef, now a leader of the biggest social protest movement in Israel, gave an interview to a women's journal that chose her as woman of the year.[1]

Journalist: Your small dream concerning the price of rentals in Tel-Aviv became huge [it became a movement for social change].

Daphni Leef: I put up a tent because I was sick of the system and not because I was complaining about accommodation….They [the government] took away my possibility to be creative and dream. My personal intellectual freedom was taken away and my creativity limited. I am not here merely to survive, but in order to live. This is the important change that has taken place over the last months. Instead of accepting that security and health are the only important things on the social agenda, people started awaking up to their own reality and dreaming about new possibilities for themselves.

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* I am grateful to Dr. Jen Glaser for useful comments.
[1] *Globes*, 2011/9/14. Reproter: Vered Ramon Rivlin, Article title: "Daphni Leef: The leader of the Tents protest is Woman of the Year of Lady Globes" (The English version is a reconstruction based on the Hebrew interview).

Journalist: This is emotional revolution?

Daphni Leef: You cannot make a change without emotions. When people build tents and meet one another the tents become community centers and create magic and inspiration. This is our societal therapy; we become our own huge support group. You admit that your life is impossible, but in order to say 'I deserve better', you need higher self-esteem, so together we rebuild our self-esteem as a society through this social activism. This is a developing process; you are going out of Plato's cave and saying 'this is place is corrupt'. I have two conclusions from this; (i) there is nothing more important than human love and self-feeling; and (ii) I know that it is impossible to buy me.

This interview gives us important insights into the dreamer. Leef's change began when "they", the government, took away "her" possibility of creating movies, and therefore took away her dream. In other interviews Leef talked about the impossibility of saving money for movie production. For Leef, film creation constitutes her intellectual freedom, and limiting her creativity is to limit her freedom. She uses the words 'creating' and 'waking up' as synonymous for dreaming. Living in Tel Aviv she had a nice dream of making movies and owning her own apartment. When she understood that this was unachievable, she dreamed again – but this time it was a huge dream of social change. Here the real dream (in the social sense) began when she extended her dreaming beyond the personal level. You might say that she *really* woke up once she realised that the naive dream that society dictated to her was not possible. This double sense of dreaming can be understood by her use of the metaphor of Plato's cave that describes two perspectives, the view from inside the cave and the view outside of it.

Jan Saenredam, according to Cornelis van Haarlem, 1604, Albertina, Vienna

The Greek philosopher Plato's Allegory of the Cave is used in work *The Republic* to compare human nature in respect to education and to a lack of education. (514a). Plato describes a group of people who have lived chained to the wall of a cave all of their lives, facing a blank wall. The people watch shadows projected on the wall by things passing in front of a fire behind them, and begin to ascribe forms to these shadows. According to Plato, the shadows are as close as the prisoners get to viewing reality. He then explains how the philosopher is like a prisoner who is freed from the cave and comes to understand that the shadows on the wall do not make up reality at all, as he can perceive the true form of reality rather than the mere shadows seen by the prisoners.[2]

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[2] Allegory of the Cave. (2012, June 13). In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved 08:44, June 14, 2012, from http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Allegory_of_the_Cave&oldid=497326346.

Inside the cave, Leef's dream was simply to survive according to societies standards. But once she is outside the cave, she discovers that society's goal is not merely to survival but to flourish. Leef notes that the process of leaving the cave requires you to admit your present life is impossible. This in turn requires an 'emotional revolution' that is part of social change. Change comes about when we understand that there is nothing more important than humanism. Humanism for Leef is not just accepting the definition (i.e. "putting the human in the center") but by enacting it through human encounter. Instead seeing society through the shadows and voices in the cave metaphor, the tent city enabled people to see one another as real people and encounter them in real life situations. The tents became a space not just for sleeping, for survival, but a space in which to rebuild self-esteem as members of society. This is why she describes what happens in the tent city as a form of therapy.

Another way to explain the cave metaphor is by analogy to the illusion of cinema. The viewers see what the film maker wants to show them. Leef, as a social-activist-film-maker, tries to convince the viewer that what they experience is just a movie that someone has created for them, and that this is not true 'reality'. How can you convince people of this? One way might be to explore the mechanism behind cinema. Another way is to destroy the machine so the movie will stop immediately. But Leef focuses on: 1. Understand that you are not the only person watching the movie, there are many viewers. 2. To get you thinking about the movie you can in turn create. This is done by gathering, sharing and listening to dreams, and thinking about how to transform them into reality.

The optical theater of Charles-Émile Reynaud, 1892[3]

Leef's protest was also the subject of public discussion and criticism. She was blamed of being selfish, anti-government (political), un-realistic, and utopian. I will use this criticism to ask what is the right or good connection between protest and dreams. Is social dreaming by nature a political form of dreaming? Can we do anything in order to make our dream a reality, or are there limits? Is dreaming a means to an end or an end in itself? I will explore these questions through the eyes of several philosophers.

Richard Rorty

Richard Rorty (1931-2007) was an American philosopher whose work focused on the relationship between knowledge and language. One of his main projects was to create a philosophical conception of social hope suited to the conditions of the 20th Century. For Rorty the 20th century was born out of the worldview of the enlightenment. The philosophical method of the enlightenment was useful for the 18-19th century, but was

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[3] All the images adapted from the Wikimedia Commons file: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main_Page

no longer appropriate in a world that had experienced two world wars and a Holocaust. For Kant, the term 'enlightenment' refers to "man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity"[4] and he points to the role of rationality (rational method) in creating the ideas for which the Enlightenment is so well known (ideas about progress, equality, liberalism and human nature). However despite these great Enlightenment ideas – ideas that still influence us today – Rorty together with other philosophers of his time came to terms with the idea that the latter half of the 20th Century also gave rise to totalitarian ideologies. This raised the question of whether the methods and commitments of the enlightenment could bring us to totalitarianism.

Rorty argues that what brought us from the enlightenment to totalitarianism was a specific use of language. The method of rationality employed in the Enlightenment treated language as describing a 'fixed' stable world. It gave us Truth, and with it knowledge, that was understood to be absolute. The philosophical program of Rorty rejects this representationalist account of knowledge, seeing it as a carryover from a Platonism that shaped Western philosophy over the centuries. He claims that today we need to rethink our use of language if we want to avoid a form of reasoning that leads to totalitarianism. For Rorty, every period, culture or group changes its semantic field. We might be using the same words for describing the 'good' and 'right', but what we mean by them will change over time. For example, in old Greek, the words 'freedom' and 'rights' were attributed to citizenship, however the semantic field that was covered by the term 'citizen' did not include women and slaves. This is why they were not considered to have rights. Today it is hard to imagine using the term 'rights' without it applying to all human beings.

Rorty developed a form of pragmatism in which scientific and philosophical methods are seen to rest on contingent vocabularies which can then be abandoned or adopted over time according to social conventions and usefulness. Rorty believed that abandoning representationalist accounts of knowledge and language would lead to a state of mind he referred to as Ironism. Ironism points to a stance toward knowledge in which people are aware of the contingency of their place in history and the workings of their own vocabularies. For Rorty, this opens up a space for new possibilities including social hope. This programmatic stance creates:

> "…the sort of person who faces up to the contingency of his or her own most central beliefs and desires... Liberal ironists are people who include among these ungroundable desires their own hope that suffering will be diminished, that humiliation of human beings by other human beings may cease... For liberal ironists, there is no[ultimate] answer to the question "Why not be cruel?" - [that is,] there is no - noncircular theoretical backup for the belief that cruelty is horrible."[5]

We can see this philosophy embodied in Leef's practical strategy. We can imagine his philosophical writings as providing direct advice to her regarding how she should deal with the objections of the government toward her claims: "…try to make the vocabulary in which these objections are phrased look bad, thereby changing the subject, rather than granting the objector his choice of weapons and terrain by meeting his criticisms head-on."[6]

Indeed, during the summer, Leef insisted on not talking with the government in their own vocabulary of 'security' and 'economics'. She pointed to the ridiculousness of their claim by asserting that the vocabulary of government needs to be about social justice and integrity. Her banners read: "The people demand social justice", "Money is government is corruption" and "The answer to privatization: Revolution". She did not try to define social justice, but pointed to how ludicrous the governments 'central belief' was that poverty was a product of security. Leef was criticized for not defining social justice, but Rorty would agree

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[4] "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" Konigsberg in Prussia, 30 September 1784.
[5] Richard Rorty: *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, p. xv.
[6] Ibid, p. 44.

with her that to play the game of definition would be a bad strategy because it would be to play by their rules and lose.[7] The new semantic field of 'social justice' will emerge over time as a result of the new discourse. One example of how this played out is through an embodied semi-protest of the conventions of public discussion in Israel that is oppositionary and in which people shout one another down in the name of 'reason'. Instead of oppositionary argumentation, many people tried to reshape the dialogue using a new vocabulary of hands signs that allowed for participation without verbal interruption. In Rorty words, he seeks to: "reformulate the hopes of liberal society in a non-rationalist and non-universalist way - one which furthers their realization better than older descriptions of them did."[8]

> Rorty creates dreams by the act of imagining:
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> In my utopia, human solidarity would be seen not as fact to be recognized by clearing away "prejudice" or burrowing down to previously hidden depths but, rather, as a goal to be achieved. It is to be achieved not by inquiry but by imagination, the imaginative ability to see strange people as fellow suffers. Solidarity is not discovered by reflection but created. It is created by increasing our sensitivity to the particular details of pain and humiliation of other, unfamiliar sorts of people. Such increased sensitivity makes it more difficult to marginalize people different from ourselves by thinking. "They do not feel it as *we* would," or "There must always be suffering, so why not let *them* suffer?[9]

Leef, however, does not take the last piece of Rorty's advice here, because, while she sets out to create solidarity, she is seeking to do this through inquiry by creating a new public space (a new sphere and environment) where people can express their solidarity and explore ideas together.

Are these differences simply differences of method? Rorty focuses our attention on this ambiguity of language. He defines "Ironism" as a tool we can use to explore this property of language and to see its contingency. In doing so, we will, in his opinion, be led to an empathic and respectful solidarity. This is his utopia, a dream of social hope.

But what if, using Rorty's method, something else was to happen? Will his strategy always leads us to a humanistic dream? I think there is a danger here because his anti-foundationalist method could still lead us to a totalitarian ideology. Humanism is only one possibility among many; each human reality will lead us to its own ideology (its own social dream). It raises the question of whether Ironism saves us from the dangers of moral relativism. In light of this challenge, let's turn to an alternate option of dreaming that is based on a form of foundationalism, and explore its structure.

Emmanuel Levinas
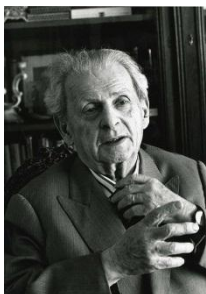
Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995) was a Jewish-French philosopher whose method of inquiry was informed by the style of discussion that occurs in the *Talmud* and the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger.[10] For Levinas the promise of humanism is the idea that we are able to encounter one another "Face to Face". This is made possible through dialogue with the Other, which is a way of encountering the human being from the inside. Levinas believes that philosophy is dead because the traditional role of philosophy as arguing for an objective good can no longer be achieved. So

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[7] Playing by their rules which conform to the enlightenment view of reason as requiring formal definition.
[8] Ibid, p. 44.
[9] ibid, p. xvi.
[10] The Talmud is a central text of Judaism that takes the form of a record of rabbinic discussions pertaining to Jewish law, ethics, philosophy, customs and history.

what then is the humanistic task? Are we left without hope?[11]

Levinas looks for an alternative way to ground humanism, and finds this in the concept of reconstruction. This reconstruction does not to set its foundations in epistemological assumptions about the nature of the universe or thoughts, but instead sets its foundation in Ethics. This stands in contrast to Rorty's methodology of Ironism which rejects foundations altogether. Levinas takes his inspiration from Jewish thought. He takes the commandment "You shall not kill" as the grounding for his ethics. Through this commandment we can be sure that the most evil thing (killing) will be avoided. Taking this commandment as the grounding for ethics needs no justification or further explanation. This idea is the special contribution that Levinas believes Judaism offers the world. Levinas can be taken as a foundationalist about ethics because he believes that ethics comes prior to human existence.[12] He opposes single comprehensive theories of understanding the world and human experience. Instead, he begins with a commitment to pluralism, to the openness of languages and conceptual schemes, however this commitment does not lead him to reject foundationalism. He knows that even a pluralist can be committed unconditionally to reducing suffering, to treating others humanely and with concern, and to fighting for justice and equality. Through this we can understand Levinas' position as being a mid-ground position between two contradictory attitudes: traditional foundationalism (based on assumptions regarding Truth and looking to justification) and Rorty's anti-foundationalism (based on Ironism).

Rorty and Levinas

It seems that Rorty and Levinas can agree on the dichotomy of imagination and inquiry, the only difference is that Levinas believes in inquiry as a form of discovery rather than as a dream. Despite this difference, Levinas' ideas can be used to adapt Rorty's program, it can ensure that although we don't know for sure the kind of solidarity we will have (because we cannot define it), we will be able encounter each other face to face and seek to understand the words of the Other. This establishes a preliminary hope for humanistic dialogue, without being afraid that someone will kill us in relativistic world.

This argument is support by Michael Barber and Eduard Jordaan who show that while Rorty and Levinas start from differing philosophical bases, they converge methodologically in their treatments of the self by both avoiding paradigmatic notions of human nature and a philosophical project of justification.[13] Barber and Jordaan point out that both Levinas and Rorty display considerable concern for the suffering of others, and note the importance of a self-critical subject becoming more aware of its own injustice as a critical factor for recognizing our responsibilities to others. They stress the importance of recognizing the other outside of the ordinary, objectifying, categories since it is the uniqueness of the other that reminds us of our responsibility for the Other. Rorty and Levinas disagree, however, on the legitimacy of not responding to the Other. Rorty refuses to prioritize a moralist account of the self over its romanticist rivals (but his presentation relies on the reader's response to the ethical appeal of the other as depicted by Levinas).

Can we see this special relationship between Rorty and Levinas in the 'tent revolution'? Leef creates a worldly practical framework in which both of the approaches live together. The tent city creates the 'face to face' encounter that ensures a humanistic basis to solidarity and empowerment. Leef refuses to speak in the language of the government and to suggest

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[11] After similar conclusion the young Wittgenstein choose to left the metaphysical life of a distinguish philoso-pher and started working as a school teacher.

[12] Morgan, Michael L., *The Cambridge Introduction to Emmanuel Levinas*, Cambridge University Press, 2011.

[13] Barber, Michael D., "Rorty's ethical de-divinization of the moralist self", *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, January 2006, vol. 32, no. 1, pp. 135-147. and Jordaan, Eduard, "Affinities in the socio-political thought of Rorty and Levinas", *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, March 2006, vol. 32, no. 2, pp. 193-209.

alternative agendas. This approach made uncommon cooperation between different people possible, and created non-violent activity within the biggest protest in Israel. Leef brought people together in tent areas which had the "magic of community centers". She described it as "societal therapy, a huge support group". What happened inside the tents? What is their magic? Or, if we use Plato's cave allegory, how can people go outside the cave?

Paulo Friere

"It impossible to live without dreams"

Paulo Friere (1921-1997) was a Brazilian educator. His pedagogy evolved as he sought to empower the people that lived in the poor neighborhoods of Brazil to take part in the political process and thereby to be able to begin again to have dreams of hope. These people were poor, uneducated and without any rights and felt that they had no possibility of changing their reality. Friere believed that by educating them to be able to initiate and take part in dialogue, they would come to see how the mechanisms of society kept them in their place as 'the poor'. By participating in dialogue they were able to free themselves from the language of the oppressed, and come to dream of themselves in a better place. This has some parallel to Leef's activity inside the tent city, where dialogue groups helped develop hope and made dreaming possible. Friere believes we need dreams in order to bring about social change:

> There is no change without dreams just as there are no dreams without hope…The understanding of history as *possibility* rather than *determinism*… would be unintelligible without *dreams*, just as a *deterministic* view feels incompatible with them and, therefore, negates them."[14]
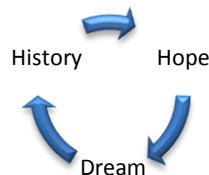
History   Hope

Dream

We can see that this is a circle. There is a deep connection between dreams and hope. In order to have hope we need to believe that history is not deterministic and that it has possibilities. This requires dreams, but in order to have these dreams we must have hope. Without hope we cannot change the given (i.e.; hopeless) reality and history. So how can we go out from this circle? Leef also talks about going out from the deterministic viewpoint. She says: "you admit that your life is impossible, but in order to say 'I deserve it', you need high self-esteem". For Leef, going out from Plato's cave requires "rebuilding our self-esteem as society." This requires us to combine reality (outside) and dreams (inside); facts (outside) and hope (inside).

According to Friere the "language of possibility" supports utopia (the ideal reality) as a "possible dream". The problem is that pragmatic discourse makes people adapt to facts as if they could not unfold in a different manner. Friere thinks that it is possible to accept realistic discourses while at the same time keeping dreams alive. "We should awake political consciousness by creating a context in which people can question fatalistic perceptions of the circumstances where they find themselves."[15] This is what happened in the summer of protest, and this is the solution we can offer for Plato's cave.

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[14]Paulo Freire, *Pedagogia da esperancea* (Pedagogy of the Oppressed), 1992: 90-92; cited in *Daring to Dream*, p. ix, vii)
[15]Paulo Freire, "Impossible to Exist without Dreams", *Daring to Dream*, p. 3-5.

Summary

Dreams can be a danger. They become a danger if we go out of Plato's cave – Leef's metaphor – without an ethical foundation, or when the dreams we have are not for everyone, or if they are without a consistent method, or when people cannot believe in the possibility of change in their lives. By combining the theories of Rorty and Levinas, we can ensure that dreams do not lead to the opposite outcome. Dreams will lead to a truth that is worthy when they are situated between in foundationalism (Levinas) and anti-foundationalism (Rorty). This is a coherent attitude for a society that seeks true freedom through ethics, education and politics.

Dreaming enables us to believe in the possibility that we can make the world better. I have argued that we need the possibilities provided by language and we need ethical grounds. I have described several dreamers who believe that humanism provides us with the possibility of hope such that we can change the world for the better. By describing their projects and pointing to their struggles we can better appreciate the role of dreams and hope in the social-political activism Leef initiated. I have tried to show how these dreams and hope come alive in the immediacy of real world problems.

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