The Need for Belonging

The Connective Power of Rootedness

To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul. It is one of the hardest to define. A human being has roots by virtue of his real, active and natural participation in the life of a community which preserves in living shape certain particular treasures of the past and certain particular expectations for the future.

—SIMONE WEIL

We began this book with the "great paradox"—that is, asking why people who belong to disadvantaged populations fail to think and act in ways others believe to be in their best interest. We probed this paradox in the Israeli context, examining the situation of Mizrahim in the social periphery. Throughout the history of modern Israel, Mizrahim have been viewed through the prism of broad universalist paradigms, such as socialism,[1] modernization, secularization, and liberalism, all of which emerged out of the Enlightenment. "A problem in search of an explanation," Mizrahim were not "modern enough," lacked class consciousness; declined to become part of the workers of the world; and didn't join in solidarity with other minority groups in the name of universal justice and human rights. Critical thinkers have always viewed the political behavior of marginalized Mizrahim as reactive and resulting from the social ills to which they were subjected.

THE EMERGENCE OF ROOTEDNESS

I began my journey by confronting the heart of "the great paradox:" why are the Mizrahi subjects indifferent to their inferior status? Why are they not outraged by their lack of equal educational opportunities? The comments of our focus groups members clearly indicate that they do not doubt that inequality does, indeed, exist; in fact, as the statistical analysis indicates, they are more aware of this discrimination than other groups, such as Ashkenazim and Palestinian citizens of

Israel. However, when during group discussion they were confronted with this supposedly painful realization, they did not express even an inkling of anger toward the state. Even when they recognized discrimination and inequality, they viewed these ills as part of the natural process of state-building and viewed themselves as full partners in that process, even if they had to pay a certain price along the way.

They did not think of themselves as an oppressed minority. We did not witness any process of unmasking or revelation that led to resentment or to the first signs of consciousness-raising. Both Mizrahim and Palestinians accepted the structure of opportunities in the 1970s as natural; yet, contrary to the expectation of the liberal-progressive left, the Mizrahim viewed the position that both groups were victims of the Zionist-Ashkenazi hegemony as a category error.

This apparent awareness of discrimination and absence of moral outrage demanded a deeper explanation. As the research progressed, the subjects' alternative underlying grammar emerged. Its cornerstone was an ontology. While the autonomous individual lies at the heart of the liberal grammar's ontology, our disadvantaged Mizrahi subjects articulated an ontological position characterized by what I refer to as the "rooted individual," deeply connected to an imagined whole that is greater than him/herself. This greater whole is rooted in history and in a sense of temporality, forming a continuum from the imagined past through to the present and into the future. The rooted Mizrahi's lived experience, core identity, and consciousness constitute what I have termed the "rooted Mizrahi subject."

For the rooted Mizrahi subjects, it is the Jewish whole, not the autonomous individual, that serves as the starting point for evaluation, even in the face of oppressive social hierarchies, inequality, and overt discrimination, and even in instances when their position is inferior to that of Palestinian Arabs. They do not view inequality as an irredeemable sin, but rather as part of the sacrifice that participation in the greater, more important story of nation building demands. In their view, they have always been, and will continue to be, full partners in this epic drama, and this is how they evaluate their position, then and now.

The rooted subject is embedded in time, and temporality is an intrinsic dimension of rootedness. The rooted Mizrahi subject in this research crosses between Zionist (national) time and ancient mythic (religious) time. Both of these temporalities and both narratives are fused into their core identity. They do not view the state as a "neutral entity" whose role is to serve universal citizens. For them, the polity is Jewish, and they are an integral part of it. Therefore, they consider the very possibility of a political alliance between Mizrahim and Arabs against the state inconceivable, despite any similarities in the positions of these two groups in the social hierarchy. The concept of rootedness enables us to move beyond the axiomatic equation *inequality = injustice*, derived from the liberal grammar and its notion of *homo aequalis* (Dumont, 1980).[2] This liberal assumption provides the foundation for what Andrew Abbott (2016, p. 350) has defined as contractarian

ontology, the belief that "a nation or society [is] a community of political equals implicitly linked by a social contract. Public life [is] a realm of absolute equality in both rights and responsibilities." The contractarian ontology has characterized much research on Mizrahim, but it provides no explanation for their ostensibly odd behavior. The interpretive process that I presented in the opening chapter sheds light on rootedness as the foundation of an alternative ontology that can provide the answers we seek.

We examined the meaning of time and history and their relationship to social structure and the critical, more pessimistic view of social reproduction. Throughout the group discussions, our informants rejected the critical understanding of injustice as produced by oppressive structures that perpetuate inequality, abuse, and oppression across time; supported by a historical narrative that is the story of the "victors;" and pushing the oppressed to the edges of history. The Mizrahi subjects refused to accept the role of "subalterns" in the critical script, instead embracing the "history of the victorious," which, in our case, takes place in Zionist time. They rejected the pessimistic critical view of social reproduction, domination and inequality; rather, they viewed inequality as the fair of participation in the epic drama of nation building. They viewed social structures as dynamic and perceived positive change in their own situations. When we compared their subjective impressions with external independent data, we saw that their belief in the narrowing gaps is indeed supported by empirical evidence.

While to this point we had put distributive justice to the test, we further confronted the subjects with the politics of recognition, which is the other key logic of liberal thinking. We exposed Mizrahi informants to what a critical approach would view as unforgivable and painful evidence of their underrepresentation, not only in the progressive left-wing parties that they vilify, but even in the right-wing ones for which Mizrahim serve as the political base. Here, too, to our amazement, they did not express even the slightest sense of political indignation. Moreover, they did not view their underrepresentation at a given moment in time as an irredeemable injustice. Rather, they gave priority to the good of the state and the Jewish whole over ethnic representation based on affirmative action. Their objection to affirmative action did not stem from a strategic disagreement regarding the best way to improve the position of Mizrahim as a minority group, but rather from a concern for the greater whole that is embodied in the Jewish state. In other words, they asserted that it is important that good, qualified people lead the state, irrespective of their ethnicity.

Moreover, they believed that Mizrahim were increasingly included in leadership positions. As in the previous chapter, this optimistic impression is once again grounded in empirical reality. In contrast, when seen from a critical-progressive point of view, the apathy of ordinary Mizrahim to situations of underrepresentation and misrecognition is an expression of "false consciousness," the internalization of oppression, or the result of their inferior position in the power structure.

Overall, ethnicity is not the organizing principle of their opposition to the liberal left elites; rather, they oppose its rootless, cosmopolitanism, and the danger this represents to the Jewish whole and the Jewish identity of the state. Rootedness sheds light on what the literature on populism and right-wing nationalism identifies as the tension between the horizontal axis of "we," the people, and "them," the external enemy, and the vertical axis between the people, as plebs, and the elites. From a rooted point of view, the two dimensions are connected. Their opposition to the elite (overwhelmingly identified with the secular progressive Ashkenazi left) stems primarily from the threat they pose to the boundaries of the Jewish whole. They see the people as a bounded community to be guarded from threats (physical or identity-related, domestic or foreign). When the religious and national Mizrahi right do protest their exclusion, as we saw in chapter 4, the protest focuses on their exclusion from the Jewish whole as expressed in the Jewish polity. In other words, the demand made by the national-religious right for recognition and representation was not articulated in universal terms, that is, in terms of civil equality, but rather remained confined within the boundaries of the Jewish whole. Ethnic exclusion in this sense does not focus on ethnicity as an organizing principle that is shared by Arabs and Jews, but rather on the demand for inclusion of their Jewish/Mizrahi/Sephardi heritage and their equal participation in state institutions, politics, culture, and economy.

Once again, by reversing the direction of inquiry, we can understand that the Mizrahi subjects refused to adopt the position of an oppressed minority group working with other minority groups (Palestinians, asylums seekers, people with disabilities, etc.) against the state. In contrast to the moral language of representation and recognition, we revealed the rooted meaning of representation and recognition shared by the Mizrahi subjects and highlighted the collision between these two disparate social networks of meaning.

We then confronted our subjects with one of the most subversive critical theories—the thesis of the Arab Jew as proposed by the new Mizrahi discourse. We showed subjects the historical and cultural affinities between Arabs and Jews, which point to an Arab Jewish identity as an objective possibility (as defined by Max Weber). Subjects were then exposed to a critical-radical attempt to constitute or reinvigorate an Arab Jewish identity, which, from the point of view of critical Mizrahi discourse, represents a political possibility and poses a severe threat to the core identity of rooted Mizrahim.

In asserting this political possibility, critical Mizrahi scholars have sought to untie the Gordian knot between religion and nationality in Mizrahi identity and promote an alternative historical narrative linking Arabs and Jews. This Gordian knot fuses the Zionist narrative and temporality with the mythic narrative and time into their ontological story of "who I am" (Somers, 1994), fundamental to their core identity. Thus, any attempt to untie the Gordian knot, even if it is merely an exercise in political imagination (Shenhav, 2006), produced existential

anxiety and deep, emotionally laden resistance among the Mizrahi subjects. In the Palestinian group, participants were not overly excited about the possibility of Arab Jewish identity, either. Palestinian participants did not challenge Mizrahi rootedness and even reinforced the existing identity boundary. While some of them, especially in the middle-class group, did recognize Arab Jewish identity as an objective possibility, none considered this identity politically feasible. It is important to reemphasize that in the pilot stage of the research, we learned for the first time that almost half of Palestinian citizens of Israel lacked familiarity with the concept "Mizrahi." In the same vein, during the discussions, Palestinian participants viewed Mizrahim through the prism of the specific Arab country from which they came (Iraqi Jews, Moroccan Jews, and so forth). Furthermore, they did not recognize the Mizrahi-Ashkenazi political divide (between left and right) in the most salient social sites (see appendixes 1 and 2). Hence, the Arab-Jewish divide seems to be entrenched on both sides.

These findings echo previous research on the differences in meaning that autonomous and rooted subjects apply to group boundaries. In the liberal imagination, group boundaries constitute an inherent obstacle to peace and coexistence because they limit the ability of autonomous individuals on both sides to fulfill their desires to cross national and religious boundaries (as in interreligious marriage, for example). The Mizrahi subjects and their Muslim counterparts view these religious-national boundaries as constituent features of their core identity (Mizrachi and Weiss, 2020). Indeed, additional ethnographic research has shown that for ultra-Orthodox, Mizrahi, and observant Muslim rooted subjects, maintaining these boundaries is a prerequisite for expressions of common humanity and creation of a shared, respectful space for peace and coexistence (Sadeh, 2021). In a broad sense, this is thus a study of the rooted meaning of identity narratives (Somers, 1994) and group boundaries.

Finally, we explored the idea of defiance as a means of social change. The term emerged in response to the trigger we created by introducing the informants to vignettes featuring fictitious individuals with varied characteristics. When asked to evaluate the affinity they felt toward these characters, subjects objected most strongly to those who used "defiance" against the social and political order in the name of universal reason.

The act of defiance, which has captured the modern political imagination since the French Revolution, is often regarded as a noble quality of the individual who uses his or her moral judgment (in the Kantian sense). It is part and parcel with the emancipatory spirit that is deeply ingrained in the liberal grammar. As both a personal and general quality, both groups of Mizrahim opposed defiance, although there were differences between them. While working-class subjects objected to defiance against the social order because they viewed it as a threat to the state and to the Jewish whole, middle-class respondents viewed defiance in the name of Mizrahiness as dishonorable and irrelevant to their lived experience

of full integration in the Israeli Jewish mainstream and as full partners in its creation.

From a progressive critical view, the opposition of the working class to defiance is primordial or "primitive" or a reflection of their dichotomous position as victim-victimizer. Middle-class mainstreaming as rootedness, in the critical view, is possible only because the middle class takes its Jewish-Zionist identity for granted, and this is an expression of its submissive and cowardly conservatism.

Once again, freeing the interpretive space from essentialist universalism, which asserts that liberation from the Jewish-Zionist narrative is necessary, made it possible to view this as merely one possibility alongside others. It also enabled us to recognize that these other possibilities are not based on "error." Rather, they stem from an alternative internal logic that exists beyond the liberal grammar of the critical discourse.

ZOOMING OUT

We will now expand our gaze and situate the Mizrahi rootedness that revealed itself in this research within a broader analytical and empirical framework. Rootedness defines the relationship between the individual and the collective. Following Eisenstadt's conceptualization of collective identity (1998), I will present a broad typology of rootedness. Within this typology, we will place Mizrahi rootedness along a continuum, from closed religious rootedness to the rootlessness of the radical left, which is congruent with the liberal grammar of the pervasive critical discourse that I have described at length.

Rootedness and Sources of Collective Identity

In its generic form, rootedness has two basic elements. The first is the code of collective identity, which defines the boundaries of the whole; the second is temporality. Rootedness is deeply embedded in a narrative of time, including the birth of the whole and the story of its development through time. The group's continued existence is perceived as a link in a chain through time, from the past and into the future, connecting the generations.

Eisenstadt (1998) distinguishes between three codes that define the collective identity of every society at this time: the primordial code, the transcendent code, and the civil code. He writes:

> The primordial code [. . .] focuses on components such as gender and generation, kinship, territory, language, race, and the life for constructing and reinforcing the boundary between insider and outside. This boundary, though constructed, is perceived as naturally given. The second, civic code, is constructed on the bases of familiarity with implicit and explicit rules of conduct, traditions, and social routines that define and demarcate the boundary of the collectivity. [. . .] These rules are regarded as the core of the collective identity of the community. The third code—the

sacral or transcendent—links the constituted boundary between 'us and them' not to natural conditions, but to a particular relation of the collective subject to the realm of the sacred and the sublime, be it defined as God or Reason, Progress or Rationality (p. 232).

Eisenstadt further notes that these codes combine in different measures, degrees, and styles in different societies at different times and according to changing geopolitical and social milieux. In the real world, they do not appear to be mutually exclusive. More than one code is typically present, even in groups and individuals who are closely identified with one and reject the others.

For the democratic-liberal public in Israel and throughout the world, the civil code is the central code that demarcates the boundaries of the political community as defined by the modern state. Indeed, in Israel, as in other countries in the West and elsewhere, for many in the secular democratic camp, the civil code is the only code that defines the boundaries of the collective. In his ambitious book *The Civil Sphere*, sociologist Jeffrey Alexander (2006b) presents three points that are important for our discussion. The first point (which is also the least original) is that civil society is a sphere, or a social area, that is analytically (and to a great extent empirically) separate from other spheres, including the political, economic, familial, and religious spheres. The second point is that the unique purpose of civil society is creation of solidarity with a universal character—that is, not narrow, communal or particularistic solidarity, but rather the creation of a national, regional or international "we" that generates a sense of connectedness among all members of the community and extends beyond particularistic commitment and narrow loyalties. Third, civil society is not solely an institutionalized space; it is also a cultural space based on consciousness or on a "network of understandings that creates structures of feelings that enable social life" (p. 54). This network exists under the surface of social institutions and the self-awareness of social elites, and in order to recognize it, one must be aware of its particular symbolic codes.

The distinction between "pure" and "impure" or "contaminated" is the foundation of these codes, enabling the distinction between a legitimate member of a democratic society and one who should be marginalized or, alternatively, must undergo "purification." With these codes, Alexander is presenting a form of "ideal type" of civil society, as it developed in the West. More specifically, he distinguishes between the characteristics that define the *motivations* of the legitimate players in the civil space, such as rationality, autonomy, and activism; the characteristics that define the relationships between those legitimate players, such as openness, criticalness, and modest altruism; and the characteristics that define its institutions, such as law, inclusivity, and quality.[3]

The civil border, which distinguishes between the political community of the state that is "us" and the human space beyond—"them"—is the sacred code for the determination of the proper moral, political, and cognitive order. In Israel, the civil code emphasizes Israeliness as the definition of the collective, in contrast to Judaism,

which is the nucleus of a collective identity that stems from a primordial and religious-transcendent code. In its secular iteration, familiar from liberal democracies throughout the world, "the civil collective" is not homogeneous. In the Israeli context, we can distinguish between at least two primary forms. The first marks the left-most point in the civil collective, which is the radical progressive position that I have termed "rootless," based on the individualist ontology described above. The autonomous, choosing, and equal individual is the universal citizen who resides in a neutral state, free of any social connections that may obstruct his/her autonomy. Therefore, any sign of rootedness, any connection to a national, religious, tribal, or particularly racial whole that limits the autonomy of the individual and his/her civic status as a universal citizen, generates discomfort, along a spectrum from suspicion to resistance and repugnance. In this view, the justification for the social order is human rationality and universal reason and the autonomous individual is assimilated into universal humanity. Progressive rootlessness, in its most extreme iteration, breaks down temporal connectedness to any whole if it limits individual autonomy: ideally, the autonomous individuals build their lives without any connection to a whole imagined to have existed in the past and without any sense of needing to limit their choices according to collective belonging (for example, in choice of a partner), and without concern for maintaining the future of any whole. I repeat that this definition refers to an ideal type, although it does reflect the position of many progressives in the world as well as the liberal grammar.

Let us turn to the other dimension of civic code—the temporal dimension. Republican-secular rootedness is embedded in "national time," or, in the Israeli case, "Zionist time." The Zionist story, "From Holocaust to Redemption," is the story of the whole that was reborn in national time. It is important to note that Zionist time does not only mark the birth of the nation; it also marks the birth of "the new Jew," who is modern, rational, secular, and suitable for the democratic-liberal order and the modern marketplace economy. Zionist time is thus not only a national project; it is also a project of identity. Those who are unfit for this project are religious Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews, Mizrahi traditionalist Jews, ultra-Orthodox Jews (Mizrachi, 2004) and anyone who rejects the Jewish identity born out of the European Enlightenment.

Religious rootedness, on the other hand, is connected to ancient, pre-national mythical time, the epic time of religious revelation. The extreme "closed rootedness" of the ultra-Orthodox sanctifies the boundaries of the religious-Jewish collective and depends on Halacha (ritual law) as the sole source of authority for the moral, political, and cognitive order. The democratic-civil space is seen as a secular dimension, external to the "sacred whole," and the Jewish-sacred whole and the closed rooted identity that lies within its boundaries must be protected from any influence from the secular surroundings. The refusal of some Ashkenazi ultra-Orthodox to recognize the Zionist state is a clear expression of this position.

As we have seen in the previous chapters, the rooted Mizrahim who are at the center of this research cross between religious and national temporality, and between the civil, primordial and transcendental codes, encompassing both the religious and the secular logics. This rootedness is composed of a combination of mythical, ancient Jewish identity and Zionist nationalism, moving between them flexibly, but remains inextricably within the national-religious node. In a similar fashion, they make a connection between the democratic-civil, collective, and the primordial religious codes; they are full participants in the civil-democratic space yet are deeply respectful of Orthodox religiosity. Shlomo Fischer (2010) has referred to this as "vicarious religious," that is, religious belief that is based on religious authority and intermediary religious figures (such as rabbis, etc.), even if it does not entail full commitment to religious observance. For this reason, the progressive Ashkenazi left continues to suspect Mizrahim of being the "unmodern" and contaminating the secular, modern space, at times presenting them as repugnant.[4]

This description of Mizrahi rootedness is congruent with accounts of Mizrahim in the literature on traditionalism in Israel. Meir Buzaglo (2008, p. 19), for example, describes the "loyalty" to the mythical Jewish identity (the revelation at Mt. Sinai) as part of the Mizrahi traditionalist position, yet, he notes, at the same time, the Mizrahim remain flexible and adapt tradition to changing circumstances in the present, which is an integral part of their Jewish identity. Other scholars, such as Yadgar and Halsall (2015), have emphasized the deep connection to tradition that coexists with a pragmatic and reflexive adaptation to the changes in the present as an essential part of the traditionalist structure.[5]

However, rootedness is a broader analytical and empirical concept. Unlike traditionalism, it is not embedded in the singularity of the description of one feature of Mizrahi behavior. Rather, this is an attempt to suggest a broader analytical term for a general form of belonging and to place it alongside other variations, including the non-Mizrahi and the non-Jewish. Unlike traditionalism, rootedness is positioned in the current research literature as an alternative to the individualist ontology of the liberal grammar in the current critical discourse. To be clear and to state the obvious one more time: the rooted subject, in all of its forms of belonging, is not necessarily a traditionalist, whereas the traditionalist, as described in the literature, is definitely rooted. The congruity between these two analytic concepts in the Mizrahi context demands further empirical and theoretical exploration, which is beyond the bounds of our discussion.

Table 2 shows the varieties of rootedness in Israel. On the two poles of the vertical axes, we find the Ashkenazi ultra-Orthodox and the liberal-progressive left. In each of the codes of collective identity and temporality they show up as almost complete opposites, as if they were mirror images. The relationship between groups in Israel today reflects the deep split that occurred in Europe during the

TABLE 2 Varieties of rootedness among Jews in Israel

	Collective Codes				Temporality		
	Transcendental				Mythic Rooted Time (ancient)	Zionist Rooted Time (nationality)	Out of Rooted Time
	Universal Reason	God	Primordial	Civic			
Ultra-Orthodox (*close rootedness*)		×	×		×		
Religious Zionists (*utopian rootedness*)	×	×	×	×	×	×	
Rooted Mizrahim (*pragmatic rootedness*)	×	×	×	×	×	×	
Secular republicans (*open rootedness*)	×			×		×	
Progressive liberals, radical left (*rootless*)	×			×			×

Enlightenment. Indeed, the only category that the two groups share is a rejection of Zionist time as a constitutive event in collective identity, and both reject the definition of a collective border that distinguishes between "us" and "them" according to modern Jewish nationalism. While the Ashkenazi ultra-Orthodox adopt an a-Zionist position that rejects the state as a source of their nuclear identity, the radical left adopts a post-Zionist position that rejects the definition of citizenship on the basis of Jewish nationalism. The republican-secular position, which is characterized by "open rootedness," appears in the chart above the rootless position of the radical left and is distinguished from the radical left precisely at this point, as it is connected to both Jewish time and open Israeli-civil rootedness.

We can see that rooted Mizrahim and religious Zionists share common spaces. Both groups oscillate between Zionist time and mythic time, between civic and primordial codes, and between belief in God and belief in universal reason. It is important to note that we are not talking about a distinction between Mizrahim as a whole and religious Zionists, since, as I have noted, Mizrahim can be found in all of the political and cultural segments of Jewish society, including religious

Zionism, where they form part of the spiritual and political leadership. It is instead rooted Mizrahim from Israel's social periphery, those who are at the center of the "great paradox."

Despite the ostensible similarity between the two groups in terms of their position across both modern secularism and the faith and bounded communitarian spaces, there is an essential difference between them. The rooted Mizrahim from the social periphery combine modern secular and religious beliefs and are organically connected to Zionist and mythic time, without holding on to a vision of change for society as a whole or attempting to redefine the political center. They accept secularized social reality, connect both to the modern state and Jewish tradition, and move flexibly between different spheres of life (see Fischer, 2016). In contrast, religious Zionism is an ideological movement that views the state as a means to achieving utopian aspirations. The philosophy of Rabbi Kook, the defining thinker of religious Zionism, argues for participation in the modern, mundane political sphere in order to effect transcendent goals (Mirsky, 2014), marking a fusion of mythic time with Zionist time.

Events taking place in Israel while I write this chapter illustrate the significance of this chart. In January 2023, Benjamin Netanyahu established an extremist right-wing government, unlike any he had formed previously, composed of Likud (which serves as the left boundary of the coalition), religious Zionist parties, and ultra-Orthodox parties. Several months after the government was established, it undertook initiatives to limit the powers of the judicial branch. These efforts were met with unprecedented public protest on the part of the liberal-democratic center-left, which brought the judicial initiative to a halt (see Shultziner, 2023).

Ostensibly, this was a constitutional crisis regarding the meanings of democracy, but it quickly revealed itself to be a deep crisis of trust and identity between two polarized camps. The alignments within and between these camps is striking and sheds light on the social codes that guide their political behavior. The public conduct and behavior of Likud activists are often described as "contaminating" the ideal of the civic code. Their behavior is viewed as "irrational" and "dependent" (on a strong leader, for example) rather than independent, not blindly obedient to the rule of law, and based in personal relationships rather than formal codes (see Alexander, 2006). The democratic-liberal camp fights for proper civic ideals, such as the rule of law, rationality, secular democracy, and the authority of professional experts. This group is composed of the republican-secular center together with the radical and progressive left, an alliance that is not self-evident. The republican-secular center includes prominent former senior military officers, well-connected academic experts, and members of the economic elite, including from the powerful tech sector (Shultziner, 2023).

The Zionist republican center has always been, and remains, the focus of severe criticism by the radical left, which perceives the military elite as responsible for the perpetuation of the Israeli occupation and the economic elite as representatives of

exploitative capitalism. Yet they have joined together against what they view as a threat to the power of the judicial branch, the institution that to them represents the holy of holies, the sole source of authority for the civil order, and which, in essence, makes the country livable. In this time of crisis, these two camps share civic codes through which they distinguish themselves as worthy from the right wing, made up largely of Mizrahim (whom both camps view as populists and whose attachment to tradition and Orthodoxy is repugnant) and the ultra-Orthodox (for whom civil space is secondary or even meaningless when compared to the sacred Jewish whole, the Torah of Israel and the people of Israel). From the other side, and especially for the Likud-voting rooted Mizrahim, the protestors, and most certainly the radical left among them, represent a traitorous, rootless elite that is refusing to accept or even see the will of the people.

Each side has used negative images from the repertoire at its disposal (Mizrachi et al., 2007; Swidler, 1986). Right-wing politicians have called the protestors anarchists in order to reveal the "real face" of the protest as nothing more than an outburst by the radical left that is outside of the broad public consensus. From the other side, supporters of the legislation are seen, often very broadly, as messianic and anti-democratic. The republican and democratic elite, in particular, has also marshaled its influence on media and elsewhere to disseminate opposition to the legislation and demonization of its supporters (Shultziner, 2023).

The judicial crisis revealed a deeper crisis rooted in the struggle over collective identity. To describe the two sides solely along the vertical axis of the "people" vs. the "elites," a struggle determined by social and economic forces, would not be a mistake but does not fully capture the deep identity crisis. The right-wing Mizrahi rootedness that characterizes the hard-core voters for Likud and Shas represents a sense of peoplehood[6] along both the horizontal and the vertical axes (Brubaker, 2017, 2020). Rootedness serves as an organizing principle for both sides in the conflict over Netanyahu's judicial reforms.

As we see in table 2, Mizrahi rootedness is located between open civil rootedness and ultra-Orthodox closed rootedness. From the point of view of open civil rootedness, which is characteristic of the center-left democratic camp, "Israeli" identity as a civil identity defines the boundaries of the national collective, its inclusions and exclusions. As we move to the left, toward the progressive radical position, not only is Judaism viewed as an obstacle for the *homo aequalis*, but the very use of Judaism as a collective boundary comes to be seen as immoral and even repugnant (racist, misogynist, exclusionary, etc.). In terms of temporality, this position is "out of rooted time," since rootless progressives do not view themselves tied in any obligatory fashion to a particular collective chain or ancestry. From the other side, if we focus on the closed ultra-Orthodox rootedness (in its Ashkenazi form), we see that that the civil code is not only not sacred, but represents a merely administrative space. Democracy, from the ultra-Orthodox point

of view, is a foreign idea. It therefore has no deep moral validity, and certainly cannot define the boundaries of the collective. For them, the sacred collective is the Jewish collective, which draws its sources of moral authority from the divine and not from any universal reason. The Torah, which was given to the Jewish people at Sinai (in the mythic time), defines morality, not the secular institutions, such as the Supreme Court, which are imported from other peoples.

Research by Rosner et al. (2023) sheds light on the axis of the forms of rootedness between these two extreme positions. Their research, conducted among the Jewish population in Israel, presents vignettes that deal, among other issues, with the dilemma between civil and Jewish identities. One of the vignettes:

> Betty, born to non-Jewish parents, who came to Israel for love and is serving in the IDF. Most Israeli Jews (58%) see her as non-Jewish, but a substantial minority (34%) think that Betty should be considered a Jew. Why? Apparently, living in Israel and serving in the IDF are the explanations for this, as is evident from a cross-referencing of the responses pertaining to Betty's Jewishness with those of another question, in which the participants were asked whether they agree or disagree with the statement 'Those who serve in the IDF and self-define as Jews, are Jews.' Four out of ten Israeli Jews concur with the proposition that IDF service reflects a process of joining the Jewish people. Among secular Jews 64% agree. Agreement declines among the more traditional groups with traditional-not-so religious 36%, traditional-religious 18% and so on" (p. 35–36).

Most Jews in Israel are positioned along the continuum between these two types of rootedness, and the radical rootlessness, which is homologous with the liberal grammar of the current critical discourse, actually represents the identity of a small portion of the Jewish population (and a small portion of the Palestinian population, although they were not the focus of this research). It is therefore important to emphasize that, as previously noted, some of the characteristics of rootedness, especially of "closed religious rootedness," echo the typical portrayal of premodern societies or communities, with all of the accompanying political and cultural implications. However, we emphasize that the rooted Mizrahi subjects discussed here are utterly modern. They are fully integrated into the modern industrial state in which they live. In their personal life, they experience freedom of choice and movement, participate in the democratic politics and accept its rules, accept liberal ideas such as the LGBTQ discourse and gender equality in the job market, and cope with many other emerging modern-liberal contemporary challenges in our time. Furthermore, rooted subjects should not necessarily be equated with rooted communities or groups, and rooted subjects do not necessarily belong to a socially bounded group. Although rootedness can be related to a community, as in cases of religious or ideological communities in Israel or elsewhere, rootedness appears in different guises. Its proximity to the concept's "ideal type" varies from right-wing Orthodox nationalist (Mizrahi or Ashkenazi)

to moderate secular republican. Among Mizrahim in Israel, rootedness runs along the full spectrum, including progressive or other non-rooted Mizrahi individuals. Put simply, Mizrahi Jews in Israel belong to all political camps, from radical progressive left to closely rooted ultra-Orthodox and religious Zionist settlers. Rootedness, it its various manifestations, thus represents what Eisenstadt (2002) identified as "multiple modernities," a reality that transcends the old, entrenched dichotomy between "tradition" and "modernity."

The Universal Essentialism of Rootlessness

From the discussion to this point, we see that Mizrahi rootedness is one among other forms of rootedness all of which display different collective representations of belonging. Not only is the definition of right-wing voting Mizrahim as rooted not unusual among Jews (and of course, among non-Jews as well, including Muslims, Druze, and other groups in the region), but rootedness is the prevalent position, while the rootlessness shared by the progressive left and the liberal grammar of the current critical discourse represents the outlier position in the social fabric of Israeli society.

From this point, I wish to return to the argument that I presented at the beginning of the book, the significance of which is clearer now: my main goal is not to essentialize right-wing Mizrahim or other non-liberal subjects; rather, it is my intent to de-essentialize the liberal grammar by which they are read. From the point of view of the rootless liberal grammar, the political conservatism of disadvantaged Mizrahim is perceived as an *anomaly*. Their behavior is a "symptom of a problem" rather than beliefs and actions in and of themselves. There is an assumption here regarding the unfulfilled essence of equal and autonomous individualism that is free of any social binds that would prevent individuals from fulfilling themselves according to their choice.

A "real" representation could take place only if the subject were to undergo a liberal-progressive redemption that would liberate him/her from the chains of rootedness. The critical scholar's concern with granting representation to rootedness is understandable and, at times, is even justified. In the eyes of the modernization theorists, who were tainted with orientalism and at times with cultural racism, rootedness was considered "premodern," or, to be blunter, "primitive." It is important to remember that theories of modernization, as well as critical theories, which sought to expose the oppressive meaning of the former, evaluated the behavior of right-wing Mizrahim from within the framework of universal moral, cultural, and political frames. Ironically, both of these paradigms impose one essential representation on Mizrahim and other rooted subjects, which liberates them in preparation for their true purpose in life as autonomous, rational, equal, and choosing individuals suitable for the liberal-democratic order.

The lack of representation of Mizrahi rootedness has created a severe misrepresentation of the Mizrahi subject in the research literature and a consistent failure to

understand the frequent resistance of rooted Mizrahim to the liberal-progressive "liberating" message. As I have argued before (Mizrachi, 2016, p. 36), with regard to the objection to the ideals of human rights by Mizrahim from the social periphery: "The politics of universalism, rooted in the liberal grammar of human rights and viewed from the liberal standpoint as a key to social emancipation, is experienced by the target population as a heartless betrayal and a grave identity threat." Lest we create the impression that these are static and stable divisions, as if it were a stable topography of social reality, I will reiterate that among real people, connected to the social networks of meaning that I briefly described in chapter 4, reality is dynamic, and movement between the networks is evident. In line with the cultural turn in sociology (Alexander 2021), I certainly do not regard forms of rootedness as "cultural entities" that entirely dictate people's consciousness and behavior in a top-down manner. Moreover, the components of rootedness presented in table 2 are not always clearly distinct from one another in peoples' minds. For example, Zionist time is actually anchored in mythic time and deeply embedded in the Zionist ethos of returning to Zion after two thousand years in exile (Raz-Krakotzkin, 1994), and the civic code for the many democratic liberals in Israel who accept the Law of Return is neither uncomplicated nor purely universal (see Haj Yahia 2021). Yet, in unsettled times (Swidler 1986), such as, for example, during the constitutional crisis when opponents to the legal reform felt that their collective identity was under siege, people tend to over-emphasize the civic democratic code and deepen the entrenched moral divide (see Lamont 2002) between "we"—the liberal-democratic protesters—and "them"—in their view, the repugnant ultra-orthodox, messianic religious Zionist and populist Likud members (who are predominantly Mizrahim). At the same time, members of the coalition called upon democratic rhetoric and civic codes, such as the rule of law and standard procedures, in their attempts to gain public legitimacy and reach their political goals.

Yet, I argue that as an ideal type, forms of rootedness shape more than visions of moral and political order and group boundaries. As we have seen, both the intensity of closedness and openness can vary along different types of rootedness, thus shaping the cultural repertoire available to people (Swidler, 1986; Mizrachi et al., 2007; Alexander, 2021). Furthermore, of course, all forms of rootedness, including those shared by the various political and scholarly discourses, are equally embedded in history and culture.

To be sure, the ontological position of the liberal grammar that is identified with the progressive left occupies an extreme place on the continuum of rootedness. The entire spectrum, from the rootless position on the one side to closed rootedness on the other, represents a structural tension intrinsic to social life, the tension between liberty and belonging. The rootless position represents the belief that individual and group liberty is essential to human wellbeing. Yet in its extreme form, I suggest, it denies another essential aspect of human wellbeing, that is, the need for belonging (see Seligman 2023).

The tremendous space that universal reason has taken in the political imagination since the Enlightenment has made it difficult to entertain any thinking about its own particularistic sources. The position that views reason as the universal and sole precept for the moral, political and cognitive order poses a challenge to any attempt to turn the enlightened gaze upon itself and explore its parochial roots. As Hans-Georg Gadamer (2004, p. 273) wrote, "the fundamental prejudice of the Enlightenment is the prejudice against prejudice itself, which denies tradition its power."

Facing the gravitational pull of Enlightenment thought in its current progressive iteration, we had to reactivate our sociological imagination, which had been trapped within the boundaries of the liberal grammar, so that the "recalcitrant subjects," who insist on spoiling the critical-progressive researcher's precious universal story, could make their voices heard. The attempt to deny tradition its power has not been the only way in which Mizrahi rootedness has been denied. Indeed, blinded by the Enlightenment, critical discourse has failed to see that its own position is, in fact, a tradition.

Against the gravity of the liberal grammar and its exclusive ontological stance, I sought to open space to a number of different coexisting, rooted ontologies. In contrast to the interpretive position of the critical discourse, which is characterized by the hermeneutics of suspicion, I present the interpretive position that stems from the suspicion of suspicion, accompanied by the activation of the subject by means of methodology that I have termed multiple hermeneutics.

Finally, in contrast to the politics of liberation, I strive for a politics of liberation from liberation, and I suggest a very preliminary design for an alternative politics, based in political and research experience. Recognition of rootedness provides a foundation for an initial design of a politics of relationships.

Beyond the Liberal Grammar

As we have discussed, the liberal grammar as an ideal type combines an ontological position that places at its foundation a social world characterized by relations of power and domination and views the equal, free autonomous individual as trapped within oppressive structures, with an interpretive position that is motivated by over-suspicion and negation of overt reality. As a political position, it emphasizes the politics of liberation and seeks to free the individual from those oppressive forces and structures through acts of resistance, subversion, and disruption.

The Ontological Stance and the Limits of Power as Domination

With regard to power, my argument is simple. Whether conscious not, the liberal grammar has narrowed the use of the word "power" to mean domination, which is an image of conflictual reality based in hierarchical social, economic and symbolic relationships. This image is appropriate, for example, for the vertical dimension in the literature that relates to populism as a "glitch" in the democratic-liberal

structure. Indeed, the literature on the populist left (and even Laclau's [2005] sophisticated analysis) relates to material and social relationships of domination as the organizing logic of populist behavior.

I am aware that many critical readers may still, even after my explanations and reservations, feel uncomfortable with the fact that I consider them to have an individualist ontology and narrow vertical perception of power. However, it is important to remember that whether current critical research is attending to predatory market forces, processes of social reproduction, historical processes, or the justifications for social hierarchies, most of this research is guided by the axiomatic principle of the *homo aequalis*, according to which inequality is an anomaly. Therefore, even if the individualist ontology of the liberal grammar is not consciously present in its working assumptions, the focus on inequality as an anomaly derives directly, as mentioned earlier, from individualistic ontology. The assumption that it is a problem rarely requires explanation. This is another indication of its status as doxa within current critical research. Thus, recognition of rootedness as a non-individualistic ontological position based in the need for belonging, which cannot be reduced to hierarchical structures, expands our interpretive space and even opens up new horizons for political thinking.

I am endeavoring to disentangle the dimensions of identity and meaning from any hierarchical social structure. Recognition of rootedness as a meaningful dimension with its own internal logic, rather than derivative of hierarchical structures, is a key to understanding the "paradox" with which we opened this research. Disentangling meaning from concepts of social domination leads us to another theoretical possibility regarding the necessary connection between power and meaning, which might shed light on the prevalent conceptual ambivalence in the literature on populism.

As Roger Brubaker (2020) notes, the connection between the vertical dimension (which distinguishes between the "people" and the "elites"), and the horizontal dimension (which distinguishes among the "people," between "us" and "them," the external and internal enemy) remains analytically and empirically controversial and ambiguous. Brubaker acknowledges that these dimensions are empirically intertwined, although they are analytically distinct from one another. He explains, "Trumpism and European national populism bring the vertical and horizontal registers together by characterizing 'the elite'—political, cultural and economic—as 'outside' as well as 'on top': not only as intensive to the economic struggles of ordinary people, but also as indifferent or condescending toward their way of life. The elite are seen as not only economically insulted but also culturally deracinated: in effect, as rootless, cosmopolitans, even if that older anti-Semitic populist language is not used" (2017, p. 1192). Recognition of the intertwining of the two dimensions leaves us, Brubaker says, with "an impure definition of populism" (2020, p. 62), which, he argues, is not necessarily a bad thing, as it enables us to follow the ambiguity and complexity of populism itself.

Brubaker's important distinction between the economic and cultural dimensions is critical for understanding the vertical axis of the consumers of populism, who are most often absent from the discussion. The assumption about power in the vertical axis, which is so prevalent in the literature on populism, narrows the meaning of power to relationships of social and economic domination. However, the meaning that the "consumers of populism" (in our case, the rooted Mizrahim) attribute to liberal elites is not limited to their political and economic domination. The bulk of their resentment focuses on their domination over the meaning of morality and the political order. They are occasionally bothered by the universalist civil positions, even in its national forms (such as the broad use of the discourse of human rights), the minimization of the Jewish identity of the State, and so forth. This is not because the elite is primarily Ashkenazi, or because this elite is economically predatory, but rather because some of the norms and values that it promotes constitute a threat to the identity of the Jewish whole in which the Mizrahim are rooted.

When we position Mizrahi rootedness with regard to the three meanings of "people"—plebs, sovereign demos, and bounded community—we realize that Mizrahi rootedness includes all three. These meanings are frequently used when referring to both the vertical dimension—in which Ashkenazi liberals are the elites and Mizrahim serve as plebs—and the horizontal—boundaries between "us" (as a bounded community) and "them" (those outside of the ethnic community). However, rooted Mizrahim demand their right to recognition as sovereign demos in the struggle against the left-wing liberal elites with regard to the meaning of democracy. They protest against the rootlessness and cosmopolitanism of the liberal left (see Mizrachi, 2016) and its frequent challenges to the Jewishness organizing principle of the state as a bounded community.

The liberal-democratic camp is mostly characterized by an intermediate, secular republican position, which is loyal to the civil code, engaged in a struggle over the image of the state as liberal, democratic, and secular, and shies away from, and even sometimes opposes, Jewish tribal discourse, the presence of religious symbols in the public sphere, and religious authority in civic contexts, such as rabbinic control over the institution of marriage among Jewish Israelis.

Mizrahi rootedness moves along and between these axes and reveals itself as an organizing principle for the behavior of right-wing disadvantaged Mizrahi Jews, who are often defined all at once as fascists, racists, and populists. Although Mizrahi and other forms of rootedness we have discussed here may seem to be limited to the singularity of the Israeli case, similar cases may be found in other contexts. Other forms of Israeli rootedness likewise remain to be explored, and some of them may add analytical clarity to this complex phenomenon.

In the broad theoretical context, it would appear that the meaning of vertical "power" has been narrowed down to power-over, which solely comprises economic, social, and political relationships of domination. This is common in the critical discourse in general and research on populism in particular. However,

it ignores the struggle over the meaning of identity as an integral part of power struggles. In this regard, it echoes Michel Foucault's (1978) concept of power, which is deliberately distinct from hierarchical domination.

For Foucault, power exists inextricably within a power-knowledge nexus that constitutes the social weave in which meaning and subjectivity are deeply ingrained. Power is "everywhere," and it encompasses all dimensions of knowledge and meaning. Any power-knowledge network exists in time and place, and at any moment in history there is no escape from the power-knowledge nexus that envelops our lives and defines their meaning. However, within the power-knowledge nexus, power and meaning are intrinsically interwoven, and power is an all-encompassing dimension that swallows up other dimensions of meaning. If we attempt to describe the case before us from within a Foucauldian framework, we might view the Mizrahi subjects' rejection of the liberal grammar and their refusal to be "liberated" as a form of resistance to the liberal-progressive regime of truth rooted in the Enlightenment.

However, there are several important differences between the view I am developing and the Foucauldian position. The first point is methodological, in the broader sense of the term. I have reservations about Foucault's starting point, that power is everywhere, which implies that people's full subjectivity can only sink into power's black hole. By contrast, we keep asking about the precise meaning that living subjects in the present attach to the power-knowledge nexus within which they live. We ask whether rooted Mizrahi subjects experience their world of meaning as resistance.

We also note the implications of the difference between the diachronic (historical) view of the subject and the synchronic view that I present, which follows the living subject.[7] I will briefly deal with the reality of "deep diversity," in which rooted subjects live within different power-knowledge systems that coexist simultaneously in one political space. This reality resists being categorized according to Foucault's diachronic position.

Let us begin with the distance between engineered and real-life subjects. The meaning that living subjects attach to the power-knowledge nexus in which they live and their resistance to other networks of power is not completely foreign to Foucault. He attends to these issues in his later works, in which he examines the actions of subjects as creators of meaning—as ethical agents who have the ability to constitute themselves by attaching ethical meaning to their lives and changing surroundings. In these later works, which deal with pleasure and concern for the self in ancient Rome and Greece, Foucault examines the active element of the subject, their role as a creator of meaning, and the actions they perform in order to constitute and maintain the self when faced with codes and systems of meaning in a historical context (Foucault, 1988, 1990).

However, Foucault's genealogical approach to the study of a subject examines change diachronically, so that historical changes become evident only in

retrospect. For example, in the Middle Ages, body and desire made up the components of the "self," while in the modern period, emotions have become the fundamental components of the self along with other transformations (such as different manners of subjectification, techniques of the self, and telos).[8] In contrast, my research, like many studies in the social sciences, is synchronic and seeks to closely follow a living subject. More broadly, in any particular power-knowledge nexus, we ask: what is the meaning the subjects attach to that nexus in real time? The meaning of such a nexus does not derive from a general, necessary, and universal principle, according to which we can evaluate how living subjects makes sense of the present.

However, the subject's refusal to be categorized according to the universal liberal grammar is not necessarily a form of resistance. In our analysis, power may be everywhere, but it is not everything: our rooted subjects do not experience rootedness as a form of resistance. Foucault's diachronic analysis cannot capture the polysemic nature of people's "sense-making," action, and creativity before they became a subject cast in a historical and genealogical script.

Finally, Foucault's diachronic analysis follows leveled and chronological discursive transformations. As we face a global reality of "diversity" and "deep diversity," we are witness to different networks of knowledge-power that coexist in a common political space. This is evident, for example, in the deep rifts among various forms of rootedness, which often represent distinct communities that share some political space and hold fundamentally different, often clashing, underlying justifications and sources of authority for the social and moral order (see Mizrachi, 2014; Taylor, 1999). As we showed in table 2, different forms of rootedness relate to different codes of collective identity, are tied to different temporalities, and are attached to different transcendental sources of authority. In these cases, questions of sovereignty and the role of the state, which play a secondary role in Foucault's approach, are significant factors, and we have yet to explore the full set of questions about the conditions of possibility for disparate systems of meaning to coexist, take their place in the public space, and penetrate other systems of meaning and social networks.

The Interpretive Turn: From "Suspicion of Suspicion" to Multiple Hermeneutics

In contrast to the hermeneutics of suspicion, the accepted interpretive position in the critical discourse (Felski, 2015), I entered into a conscious process of a pendulum swing, from the position of over-suspicion to the position of meaning. This involved turning the suspicious gaze upon itself, a suspicion of suspicion. To achieve this, I took an unusual methodological route, which enabled me to place the interpretive suspicion to the test among the subjects in the field.

Thus, activating the Mizrahi subjects was my first mission. This was accomplished through a methodological process I have termed multiple hermeneutics,

in which subjects were shifted from one interpretive position to another to enable them to read the data they had helped create. In addition to activating the Mizrahi subject, *multiple hermeneutics* served as my own methodological tool, helping me remain alert to the risk of becoming overly suspicious and sustain a mode of suspiciousness of suspicion throughout all stages of the research process. Throughout this research, I put the liberal grammar of critical sociology to the test by engaging the Mizrahi subjects, as individuals and as a group, with key issues, including social (in(equality and the structure of opportunity; representation and identity politics; social boundaries and collective identity; history and temporality; and social change and the meaning of defiance.

In and of itself, the bottom-up reading of the meanings that subjects attach to social inequalities is not new. Luc Boltanski (2008), for example, examined the gap between sociological assumptions about inequality and the meaning that "ordinary people" attach to evidence of inequality. He contended that when inequality is seen from below, there is a gap between the quantitative description of asymmetries in resources and opportunities (empirical measurements based on stratification studies of distributive justice) and the value and meaning that people who live within that inequality attach to it. Furthermore, Boltanski examined the suspicious interpretation that leads sociologists to assume that hierarchy = oppression. In many cases, he argues, this assumption has no basis in reality. There are different forms of hierarchy, and they have different meanings, so a hierarchical structure does not necessarily generate an experience of oppression.

In *On Justification* (2006), Boltanski and Thévenot identify six domains in which people define the common good. These domains are influenced by the tension between two constraints: *equality*, which is derived from the assumption of common humanity, and *order*, according to which a hierarchical structure creates a sense of stability and meaning.

I agree with most of Boltanski's (2008) assumptions, as well as those of Boltanski and Thevenot, yet it is important to point to two key differences between their research and my own. While Boltanski examines the gap between sociology's assumptions and the everyday experiences of people, in the current study I place critical sociology's internal grammar in a defined ideological and political context. In this way, I am able to identify the roots of the collision between that grammar and the "alternative grammar" provided by the subjects. I argue that the gap between sociology's assumptions and people's experiences cannot be fully explained by a description of individuals' attitudes in various contexts, but requires a collective representation (of course, as an ideal type) embedded in the alternative ontological position. In other words, people's moral experiences are embedded in collective systems of meaning, through which they interpret phenomena. These collective systems of meaning do not determine the way individuals think and act, but form part of a larger repertoire through which they create new meaning and make sense of the social world (Swidler 1986).

The methodological route that I took and the alternative grammar of root-edness that emerged from my inquiry call for revisiting another key concept in critical research: the adjective "critical."

Is It Critical?

What is criticism? Who are the critics? And what are the targets of the criticism? Over the past few years, responding to these questions has become ever-more challenging, and examination of critical discourse reveals a troubling situation. In Israel, criticism, whose initial supporters sought to position it as a liberated, universal, intellectual-political space, is largely identified with the progressive left. Its social boundaries are limited to the bourgeoisie, a homogenous elite that is well-educated, secular, and liberal. The methodological route I have taken in this study invites us to reexamine the adjective "critical," often attached to sociology and characteristic of current mainstream social research. What does this descrip-tion mean? And who is permitted to criticize whom?

In this regard, too, I find it important to relate to Boltanski's work. His prag-matic approach led him to examine criticism in the real world. He is correct when he states that sociology's critical language and the social sciences' focus on inequality have already seeped into other fields, including, for example, the media, and into public and political discourse; the added value of sociology as a distinct critical position becomes redundant. From the point of view of prag-matic sociology, there is a difference between a description of reality and a cri-tique made on the basis of what that reality is "supposed" to look like. From the point of view of people as social agents, criticism does not necessarily amount to antagonism toward system itself, but rather complaints and grievances in concrete, specific social contexts. For example, for critical sociology, entrance examinations to universities are a means to reinforce and maintain the strength of the strong. But ordinary people do not perceive the individual case (failure, for example) as proof of group bias, nor do they necessarily interpret failure as an injustice. This "lack of understanding" does not stem from error or false con-sciousness (internalization of oppression); rather it is a result of the desire of ordinary individuals to pass the test and receive the value that it can provide (Boltanski, 2008). Boltanski recognizes the importance of the way critical soci-ology has described the world. However, he contends that the point of view of these descriptions is itself social, partial, and bound by institutional contexts. And it is a pessimistic view.

In *On Critique* (2011), Boltanski discusses the interactions between real people and meaning-making institutions and points to the complexity of their herme-neutic relationships. However, according to Boltanski, the criticism of "ordinary people" does not extend beyond a pragmatic, micro- and institutional level analy-sis, nor does he identify bottom-up criticism that is rooted in a collective logic that

would serve as an alternative to the progressive criticism adopted by the sociology of domination.

How does recognition of rootedness expand and deepen the critique of the drift of critical sociology toward the liberal grammar? Is the suspicion that accompanies attempts to extricate dimensions of meaning from relationships of power and domination nothing more than a reactionary process that sends us back, in retreat, to "non-critical" sociology?

Between "Critique" and "Social Criticism"

When we attach the adjective *critical* to sociology, what do we really mean? The term encompasses a set of meanings that stem from diverse intellectual traditions. Since its inception as a scientific discipline, sociology has wrestled with two distinct meanings of the term: analytical critique and social criticism. The latter refers to a particular normative position, while the former refers to understanding the conditions of possibility of a social phenomenon (in the Kantian sense).

Throughout its history, sociology has been plagued by a tension between a commitment to the production of scientific knowledge (to study the conditions of possibility of social phenomena) and the quest for social justice or reform in particular normative terms (Boltanski, 2011) that derive from the Enlightenment. In fact, modern scientific sociology developed against the background of the social and cultural changes that began in the sixteenth century and led to criticism as a cultural phenomenon (Eisenstadt and Curelaru, 1976). Among the founders of classical sociology, it was Weber (1958), the father of interpretive sociology, who emphasized the need to maintain the boundary between science and values so that sociology could continue to exist as an academic discipline. In presenting his position on the need for scientific investigative space, Weber had been influenced by Dilthey's (1989) distinction between understanding (*Verstehen*) and explaining, which is the epistemic disposition necessary for science. He was therefore fully aware of the interpretive, subjective nature of human sciences. He sought to protect sociology from the encroachment of politics (as social criticism) into science (as critique). Drawing the line between politics and science is necessary, according to Weber, because it makes it possible to separate critique in the analytic-scientific sense from the conflictual arena of good and bad.

Of course, this does not mean that analytical critique takes place in an apolitical space. Rather, its deep political meaning is fully revealed in those instances in which the analytical description of reality shakes up the listener, contradicts their normative beliefs, and forces them, in Weber's words, "to recognize 'inconvenient facts'—I mean, facts that are inconvenient for their party opinions."

Although in critical circles over the last decade Weber's notion of value neutrality has often been equated with simple or even naïve positivism, many of those critics failed to recognize Weber's nuanced reading of terms like "neutrality" and

"values" (see Hammersley, 2017). More importantly, Weber's warning about the risk of conflating values and science is often read one-sidedly, as an attempt to protect science from the inroads of politics. Less intuitively, Weber's distinction between science and politics can also act in reverse, referring to the use of the former in the latter (see Gieryn, 1999; Shenhav, 2006). Modern attempts by scientific disciplines such as genetics, biology, psychology to anchor the social order in science were heavily criticized by critical sociologists, who have exposed the political assumptions underlying various scientific theories and their constitutive role in ratifying existing power relations (Gieryn, 1999; Gould, 1981; Mizrachi, 2004; Shenhav, 2002).

Yet, I ask, is contemporary critical sociology not complicit in the very phenomenon it criticizes? Does its political loyalty to liberal justice and human rights not constitute science in the service of politics? Most representatives of critical discourse would reject this suggestion, and a review of some of the classic critical schools reveals that most critical thinkers carefully preserved the line that divides between social criticism and critique, most adhering to the tenets of analytic critique. Even Marx does not offer a "social criticism," but rather a coherent, reasoned description of the nature of social reality, the course of history, the place of consciousness, the source of class differences and so forth. Gramsci's notion of hegemony and Foucault's portrayal of the knowledge-power network, to name just two, follow similarly in this vein. Not one of these "critical" approaches is colored by a "social criticism" that stems from a partisan position based on loyalty to a political faction or a declaration of allegiance to a set of values; none take such partisanship as the starting point for scientific inquiry. Nevertheless, as can be seen in the following excerpt from Max Horkheimer (1978, p. 148), the intrinsic tension between social criticism and analytic critique persists:

> People always ask what should be done now, they demand an answer from philosophy as if it were a sect. . . . [P]hilosophy . . . holds a mirror up to the world. . . . But it is no imperative. Exclamation marks are foreign to it. It has replaced theology but found no new heaven to which it might point, not even a heaven on earth. But it is true that it cannot rid itself of that idea, which is the reason people always ask it for the way that could take them there. As if it were not precisely the discovery of philosophy that that heaven is none to which a way can be shown.

Concomitantly, Theodor Adorno warned against the "danger . . . of judging intellectual phenomena in a subsumptive, uninformed and administrative manner and assimilating them into the prevailing constellations of power which the intellect ought to expose" (in Butler, 2001).

Clifford Geertz's paper "Anti Anti-Relativism" (1984) warned us some four decades ago that attempts to bring back lost certainty in absolute moral standards have failed, and they are motivated by fear of the nihilism and the loss of a moral anchor to which relativism can lead. Negation of anti-relativism, as the title of

the paper suggests, does not necessarily mean, Geertz argues, adopting relativism, a label that is sometimes used to brand someone as morally defective and lacking any conscience. The anti-relativist position that he rejects is the position of certainty that adopts the liberal grammar as a starting point that is transparent to itself and thus removes itself from culture and history. This is a particularistic and narrow position of social criticism: normative, partisan, and sectarian. Today, Geertz's paper seems like a desperate attempt to extract anthropology from its position as a moral science and to reposition it as a science of morality, which investigates different forms of moral life. In retrospect, we see that his attempt failed (see also Fassin, 2012).

Foucault freed critique from political purpose or liberation, whether concrete or imagined. For him, critique was first and foremost a praxis whose goal is the constant disruption of any "truth" presented as self-evident, or central to the order of things. Such purported truths, he warns, conquer the space of sovereignty through subjugation of all other truths. Hence, even analytical critique cannot be divorced from culture and history and is always deeply engrained in time and place, in a world of meaning, within which it operates alongside the object of its analysis. It does not call, therefore, for judgment that distinguishes between "good" and "bad" in the name of universal reason or any other truth.

Yet even if we have weathered the storm of the suspicious reactionary approach, we are still left with questions. Would freeing sociology from the bonds of the liberal grammar and the mode of suspicion lead to a kind of "emancipatory" critical stance? Is analytical critique itself a product of history? If so, is its particularity likewise an object of critique? Is a hermeneutic position that rests on analytic critique able to serve as a firm anchor for scientific inquiry in an age of "deep difference"? The most radical move to break the limits of secular interpretation in the social sciences is the 2009 collection edited by Talal Asad, Wendy Brown, Judith Butler and Saba Mahmood, *Is Critique Secular*? In the introductory chapter, Brown claims that the idea of critique is itself an Enlightenment conceit that assumes that reason, which enables us to arrive at scientific truth through the objective method, is revealed only when the authority of religion is shed. Kant's demand to subsume everything within critique, including reason itself, captures this idea. Critique is thus intended to supplant religious authority or any other authority not anchored in reason, and, as such, it is able to replace belief with "truth" and subjectivity with "science."

Theologian John Milbank (1990) pioneered this direction of inquiry by introducing the notion of "radical orthodoxy." Milbank proposed to overturn the ingrained perspective of the secular academy on the relationship between theology and social theory. In his incisive study of the founding figures of social theory, Milbank exposed the limits of secular logic. This reading discerns the field's theological foundations, undermines the notion of a secular and "emancipated" social theory, and offers a theological alternative.

Milbank's radical move inspired anthropologist Joel Robbins (2006) to call for a reexamination of the theoretical grounds for the concept of otherness in contemporary anthropology, which, he claims, poses a fundamental problem for the field. Robbins argues that the Christian cosmology furnished by Milbank, which assumes a connection between people based on peace and shared humanity, challenges the secular basis of anthropology regarding otherness, which it views in terms of conflict and protection. Robbins suggests that anthropology consider the other not only through this conflictual lens, as "the suffering subject" (Robbins, 2013) in need of protection, but as someone who can teach us about the ontologies of human relations that animate Western thought. Indeed, rootedness, as a counter-ontology to that of the autonomous individual, transcends the conflictual limits of the sociology of domination and identity politics and opens new channels for thinking and acting.[9]

The question we ask is, therefore, what political horizon does the recognition of rootedness open before us?

From the Politics of Liberation to the Politics of Liberation from Liberation: Toward a Politics of Relationships

As we have noted, the liberal grammar's political stance extols liberation. In its progressive version, it is characterized by an emancipatory spirit, prioritizing resistance, subversion, and disruption in the struggle against repressive power structures and the breaking of individuals' shackles. In the spirit of the French Revolution, liberation from oppressive tradition in the name of universal reason is at the center of the liberal political imagination. In the spirit of the socialist International's dream that "the earth shall rise on new foundations," the liberal grammar seeks to free the rooted subject from his/her rootedness. As I have documented in previous research (Mizrachi, 2016), the failure to recognize rootedness leads to fervent objection by the rooted subject (Jewish, Muslim, and other) to a politics that threatens their nuclear identity, which is deeply embedded in a greater whole to which they are connected in a chain of time (see Mizrachi and Weiss, 2020).

But how can we think of an initial outline for a politics that recognizes an ontological alternative to the individualistic ontology of the liberal grammar? First, the very recognition of an alternative ontology can free the liberal imagination from the drive to liberate the autonomous individual from their connections, and help us to recognize the power of the social and ethnic rootedness as meeting the fundamental need for belonging. In this regard, liberation from liberation frees the political imagination from the need to impose top-down universal reason as the key to the fulfillment of a moral and political vision. However, the political position of the liberal grammar is not merely a cognitive position seeking universal redemption. It is nurtured by an Eros that seeks to deconstruct and undermine the existing order. Its very reason for existence is the negation of the existing order as the starting point for thinking about "the political." This position is prominent

in traditions like the Frankfurt School, but is also alive in Foucault's approach to the political, which hardly be characterized as the universalism of the liberal grammar. Foucault (1977, p. 225), actually seeks to undermine this when discussing the political role of the intellectual: "I dream of the intellectual destroyer of evidence and universalities, the one who, in the inertias and constraints of the present, locates and marks the weak points, the openings, the lines of power, who incessantly displaces himself, doesn't know exactly where he is heading nor what he'll think tomorrow because he is too attentive to the present."

Thus, recognition of rootedness would appear to be an incarnation of Foucault's dream. It can be read as a subversive act that destroys universal truth and may therefore be regarded as a pristine act of resistance. To a great extent, the proposed effort to make rootedness present reveals its power to redefine the order of things. Yet, once again, if we bring our analytic lens closer to living subjects, we see that not only is the deconstructive political position not part of the life experiences of the research subjects as political subjects, they do not experience rootedness as a form of resistance. As we saw in chapter 6, the politics of defiance and deconstruction is met with resistance. While Foucault does state that the work of the intellectual is not necessarily identical to political praxis, the spirit of his thought is connected to an ethos of defiance, identified with the critical politics and viewed as a necessary model for political action (Katriel, 2020). Recognition of rootedness requires that we forgo the certainty prevalent in contemporary critical discourse and, in opposition to Foucault's approach, adopt a more modest political position.

Recognition of rootedness entails recognition of a continuum of forms of belonging, with individual and group differentiation in terms of connection to the whole, that is the need for both difference and belonging (Seligman, 2023). Recognition of rootedness does not mean that we must ignore the extreme position of rootlessness. Rather, we can enter into a political space of relationships, within which it is possible to learn about the conditions of possibility for radical connectivity between groups embedded in different ontological positions.

The Connective Power of Rootedness: From Radical De-construction to Radical Re-construction

If we refer to this imagined political space as the politics of rootedness, we will see that the strength of rootedness as observed in the field is not its power to "deconstruct," but rather its ability to "re-construct," that is, to connect networks of meaning and to repair relationships from within.

From this modest position, I will present several instances of rooted politics in the fields of research and politics that exemplify the connective power of the alternative position and enable us to open new horizons for political thinking and action in situations of deep diversity.

It is important to note that while most of the prominent entrepreneurs and thinkers who act in the name of rootedness do not deny or ignore the various

forms of power differentials, the meaning of their activity is not derived from Foucault's conception of power or from the sociology of domination. They do not view cultural and political activity as part of a battle between conflicting forces. Nor do they view themselves as warriors who seek to liberate—in the name of universal reason—Mizrahim, Palestinians, or others from the Jewish state's structures of domination. However, as we have seen and as we will see, the politics of rootedness does not comprehensively reject liberal principles and often connects with them organically.

Theorists of "rootedness" who belong to the traditionalist stream in Israel that we discussed in chapter 6 do not act as "destroyer(s)" of the power of universal reason, but as restorers of the power of particular traditions, linking conflicting worlds and networks of meaning.[10] Rootedness, as the key to social renewal and social repair, is not based only on opposition to power but also on bolstering fraternity, even though most traditionalist thinkers are well aware of the state of power relations. At the end of the last chapter, I discussed a critical Mizrahi position that, in contrast to the familiar critical-progressive stance, does not view the Mizrahi as merely reactive. Here, I drew attention to the ways "traditionalism," as a deep, valid position, is attempting to bring the internal content of Mizrahi rootedness to the fore. This relatively new and growing Mizrahi discourse joins "Mizrahi tradition" with a critical language. This new movement, comprised of Mizrahi activists and intellectuals, demands recognition of traditionalism as a positive identity worthy of representation in the public and cultural realms and in the educational system. Furthermore, they seek to turn Mizrahi traditionalism from "the problem with the Mizrahim," as it is viewed in universalist visions, into a key to the solution of the problems faced by Israeli society as a whole.

Meir Buzaglo, one of the most prominent intellectuals of the traditionalist school, views the meaning of loyalty to the Jewish whole as essential for the renewal of Israeli society. Similarly, politician Shai Piron, a former Minister of Education, and social activist Ophir Toubul both express this position. While fully aware of power relations and the marginalization of Mizrahi traditionalism, they stress the power of tradition to mend the cleavages rending Israel society. Toubul views traditionalism as the cultural springboard for achieving the common good, a mission that reaches beyond the "melting pot" project, which effectively erased traditional identities, or the liberal multi-cultural model that reinforced the politics of difference and the dismantling of society into distinct identity groups. These adherents to traditionalism view it as dynamic, revitalizing, yet pragmatic—as a stance that effectively links "old" and "new" traditions, acts on behalf of the common good, and can serve as the key to general renewal.

Their use of tradition does not signal a return to the past (which is in any case impossible) or to "tradition the way it used to be." Rather, it brings tradition into present modernity while, at the same time, recognizing that the representation of tradition always relates to some imagined origin in the past and that tradition itself

is in a constant state of flux (Buzaglo, 2008).[11] Concomitantly, it is important to note that the new discourse is quite removed from the "authentic" rooted working-class Mizrahi subjects, the meaning of traditionalism for whom has yet to be adequately investigated. Yet, as a political program, traditionalist rootedness holds connective power and embodies the drive toward renewal rather than resistance.

Grassroots efforts to promote unity in the name of rootedness are often not noticed by progressive critical observers. If they are noticed, they are viewed with suspicion and disgust, even when these activities ostensibly lead to positive results. This is because signs of unity are thought to be contaminated with primordiality or to derive their strength from tradition as a source of authority that deviates from the sacred progressive-civil code. According to the prevailing critical-progressive stance, it is the battle over liberty and equality that will culminate in universal fraternity.

The striking and persistent failure of this position across the globe in this highly contingent, illiberal moment seems to indicate that fraternity has deeper roots, some of which stem from a different ontology that is positioned outside the liberal grammar. However, the evidence of meaningful non-liberal fraternity remains unrecognized by critical-progressive observers. For them, fraternity that does not derive from freedom and equality is suspect; it is seen as a sort of deception or "cover story" that masks the essential power structure lying beneath the surface. The "true" state of affairs is known to critical-progressive observers but concealed from the rooted subjects in the field. This situation, as mentioned earlier in this book, perpetuates the overly suspicious hermeneutic mode.

Thus, recognition of the unifying power of rootedness becomes possible, as we have stated, only if we free research from the bonds of liberal grammar, as part of a conscious process against the predatory power of universal reason. From this position, it is possible to identify the internal logic that motivates the political entrepreneurs who act in the name of rootedness and to examine the conditions of possibility of its power as a unifying force.

Here, I mention the project to improve the status and living conditions of people with disabilities belonging to Israel's Palestinian community (Mizrachi, 2014). Recognition of rootedness was necessary for social change through a process I have called *modular translation*, by which Muslim imams could mediate between two worlds of meaning—disability rights, on the one hand, and Muslim tradition, on the other. I described the imams' strategy as "decoupling norms of conduct from their underlying justifications" (p. 133). By this I mean the creation of normative change for the benefit of people with disabilities by relying on religious rather than liberal sources of authority and justification. The imams emphasized unique traditions and stressed a positive approach to disabilities as a traditional obligation, thus strengthening faith among believers, reinforcing the moral duties of the religious community to treat people with disabilities equally and with respect, and making public space inclusive and accessible. This process

enabled normative change toward people with disabilities that was not articulated in terms of disability rights, which place the individualistic ontology (in the liberal grammar) at the center and imagine "emancipation" through a disconnect from the oppressive traditions and structural change. The change that occurred in this instance was based on the alternative worldview of rootedness, in its dual meaning as an organic connection between the individual and the greater whole (the concrete and imagined Muslim community) and as a deep connectedness to continuity and a return to the community's roots.

In another arena, I discuss the power of rootedness to connect two communities from opposite ends of the political spectrum who met with the explicit purpose of advancing shared life. In this case, which I described at length in chapter 5, Mizrahi and ultra-Orthodox supporters of Shas and Muslim supporters of the Islamic movement, both considered the enemies of peace by the progressive camp, convened in order to imagine peace and a shared living space. As I have already noted, both sides perceived the preservation of group boundaries (religion) as a necessary condition for living together in peace. While religious boundaries are essential for revealing their shared humanity, from the progressive perspective, group boundaries of any sort hinder members of both sides from fulfilling their humanity, as the boundaries placed by rootedness obstruct equal and autonomous individuals from exercising their free will (Mizrachi and Weiss, 2020).

The existential sense of rootedness shared by participants of both sides provided a common ground for a respectful dialogue necessary for living together with difference. In the broader context of the international arena, we have recently witnessed the constitutive role of rootedness, or rooted politics, in the formulation of the Abraham Accords. Ofer Zalzberg (2021) recently wrote:

> At first glance the Abraham Accords seem similar to previous peace accords Israel signed with Arab states. They are contractual agreements which determine the character of relations between states according to international law and the rights it grants. However, the Abraham Accords are distinct because they incorporate into the legal, rights-based framework of a diplomatic agreement explicit, operative references to the cultural and religious traditions of the Middle East—Jewish, Christian and Muslim. The operative dimension stems from referring to the traditions as part of the act of endowing legal recognition. The recognizing party commits to act in the future in light of the content of the recognition.

The Abraham Accords rely on a primordial tale about all peoples in the region, Arabs and Jews, who are children of the same ancestral father and share the same land. Their identities stem from the same root. This is the first time that the Arab side has recognized that the Jews are in fact a people and not merely adherents of a religion. Moreover, the wording of the agreement reveals an understanding that both peoples share a common ancestor in the Middle East, indicating recognition that Jews, too, are native to this place and not a foreign colonial power

(Zalzberg, 2021), and that they share kinship relations with Arabs (whether Muslims or Christians).

Although it has yet to come to fruition, another dramatic example of the power of rootedness to nourish fraternity between zealous Jewish and Arab rivals is the project initiated in Judea and Samaria[12] by the late Orthodox rabbi Menachem Froman, who was a founder of Gush Emunim, the original and most influential settler movement. Froman recognized the power of shared religiosity to serve as a deep wellspring of fraternity that could engender a political turnaround. He soon found receptive ears among a number of Palestinians. Today, on the basis of Froman's work, we can find several projects between Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank through a group called Roots, which brings together Israeli Jewish settlers and Palestinians.[13] Referring to Gazan Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, who was killed by the Israelis, who considered him to be an arch-terrorist, Froman told the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, "Yassin once told me: You and I could make peace in *hamsa dakika*—five minutes. How so? Because we are both believers."[14]

The collection of empirical evidence I have presented is by no means exhaustive, nor am I promoting a naïve view of rootedness as the path to ultimate redemption. Recognition of rootedness can neither negate nor erase the body of liberal tenets. In many cases, rootedness joins together with liberal principles and allows for the opening of new avenues for contemplation.

Research conducted by Sadeh (2021) contributes an additional layer to our understanding of conditions that support a dialogue between rooted and progressive communities. Her study documents a rare event in the history of the Association of Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI).[15] For two consecutive years, as a result of some of the initial insights stemming from my work, representatives of ACRI's senior administration met with senior educators from Shas (the political movement of ultra-Orthodox Sephardic Jews), which had been a coalition member in all of Israel's right-wing governments for two decades. The meetings took place with the support of Shaharit (Creating a Common Cause), an institution that has spearheaded a political vision of the common good based on dialogue and mutual learning through meetings held between communities associated with diverse, often conflicting worlds of meaning.[16]

Sadeh shows that recognition by the leadership of ACRI of the Shas representatives' Jewish rootedness was an essential condition for initiating a dialogue between them. Recognition that both rootedness and progressiveness were distinctive and valid positions was reached through adoption of a position of unpretentious self-parochialization. That is, both sides renounced any stance of absolute certainty regarding the truth, and this was a crucial precondition for the respectful and productive give-and-take that ensued.

Sadeh's work is the first sign of a new research space that focuses on ways in which individuals and groups that belong to very different worlds of meaning

develop a praxis for living together (Seligman et al., 2008, 2015) and for shared political activity. Freeing the research gaze from the boundaries of the liberal grammar enables researchers to identify these spaces, to identify the conditions of possibility for radical and surprising connections that develop within these spaces, and to empirically locate areas of disagreement/agreement.

Another recent study in Israel examines the crisis of legitimacy faced by rights constitutionalism. This trend is of deep concern to many liberals. Drawing on a bottom-up direction of inquiry, Dana Alexander (forthcoming) argues that opposition to human rights by broad parts of the public is far from sweeping or overriding. Rather, she notes, anti–human rights attitudes manifest themselves when human rights discourse comes into conflict with what Alexander terms an "ethic of belonging." This ethic is at the heart of rootedness, and refusal to recognize its power and prevalence could deepen the crisis of public trust in rights constitutionalism and its agents, such as the High Court of Justice and human rights NGOs.

However, the ethic of belonging, according to Alexander, cannot be categorized into a clear-cut dichotomy between two conflicting political camps, each motivated by a ready-made consistent ideology. Rather, Alexander points to a more complex reality, in which both the liberal "rights" camp and its opponents rely on an ethic of belonging in different contexts, and the ethic of rights is widely accepted, even outside the liberal camp, when it does not clash with values of collective belonging and boundaries. Alexander's research thus sheds light on the way in which rootedness, reflected in an ethic of belonging, as well as the discourse of individual rights, shapes the terms of negotiation over collective boundaries. Recognizing the role played by the ethic of belonging in political discourse can lead to a deeper understanding of the roots of the liberal constitutional crisis, as well as a reexamination of the conditions needed to preserve legitimacy of the liberal constitutional paradigm.[17]

These examples do not exhaust the ramifications and implications of rooted identity in its many forms. The very identification of rootedness constitutes an initial response to the current crisis in research and politics. In the research arena, the process proposed here points to the urgent need to extricate our research gaze from the bonds of the liberal grammar and to emancipate critique from the chains of progressive partisan politics. In the political arena, it calls for new horizons that extend beyond the liberal imagination.

Concern in the progressive camp over the more extreme examples of rootedness as self-secluding, tribal, chauvinist and racist makes it difficult to recognize that rootedness is a crucial component of social life and has value even for those who belong to its opposing camp. The theoretical and political implications for recognizing rootedness are not confined solely to the understanding of the "other," or, if we dare to use orientalist language, "the exotic other," among "us" (the enlightened progressives). It involves recognition of the partialness and limitations of the progressive utopian platform that seeks to "solve" the problem of

the lack of fit between the transcendent dimension of universal reason and social life on earth that refuses to obey its imperatives. Rootedness reveals an important dimension in social life and enables us to recognize that the tensions inherent in all types of transcendence (whether God or universal reason) cannot be resolved. It reveals the antinomies inherent in the utopian progressive vision, as well as the antinomies within utopian visions with rooted characteristics, such as religion and primordialism.

It points to, for example, the realization that the conflict between the universal politics of human rights and the modern idea of sovereignty of the state and defense of its borders (Arendt, 1958) is intrinsic to the human rights project itself. Indeed, this tension is at the heart of human rights, defined as universal but dependent on recognition by a particular political community. As Arendt notes, "From the beginning the paradox involved in the declaration of inalienable human rights was that it reckoned with an 'abstract' human being who seemed to exist nowhere" (p. 291). Hence her conclusion that the basis of all human rights is the right to belong to a political community.

These insights are too often forgotten by human rights advocates who embrace a position of certainty. The recognition of rootedness in its different guises may be a remainder of the liberal-progressive vision's own parochial roots as well. It may shade new light on the failure of the liberal left to break out of its own social boundaries and reach the hearts and minds of ordinary people, especially those who belong to disadvantaged communities. This is the paradox we faced as we began our journey. Rootedness sheds light on the gap between the universalism of the utopian progressive vision and the social particularism of both its supporters and its opponents, which echoes the unresolvable tension between the transcendent ideal and actual social life. Finally, as we have seen, rootedness appears in Israeli space along a continuum, on the one end of which we find "closed and sanctified rootedness," and on the other end of which we find rootlessness.

The fear of closed rootedness in liberal-democratic contexts is understandable. Nazi Germany provides the most dramatic example and continues to be the defining trauma in the history of the people of Israel. This example often serves to warn against any injury to democratic space and its institutions. In Nazi Germany, the extreme form of "closed rootedness" based on the primordial code was nurtured by racist ideology and canceled out the civic democratic code. This primordial code was not only utterly modern but its mode of operation in the Holocaust serves as an exemplar of modernity (Bauman, 1989). To be sure, religion did not serve as the source of legitimacy and the organizing principle of Nazism; it was sidelined, denounced, and even repressed by Nazi authorities. ISIS provides a closer example of an extreme model of "closed rootedness" fueled by a transcendent-religious code. In this case, the organization seeks to completely destroy the civic code, which is identified with the modern state, and replace it with an Islamic caliphate. Similar to other imperialist movements, in the primordial sense, ISIS

has been relatively open to inviting "others" (from Europe and elsewhere) to enlist in its ranks as foot soldiers in the struggle to fulfill the transcendental-religious vision for a new world order (as long as they meet the high bar of religious loyalty).

With these extreme examples before us, the importance in recognizing of rootedness in its different forms, and its ability to address the need for belonging, becomes even greater. On the other extreme, rootlessness also reflects a basic and necessary element of social life. I do not see these two poles as mutually exclusive. Rather, I see the very notion of the autonomous and the rooted subjects as representing two contradictory yet essential aspects of human good and wellbeing, that is: difference and belonging (Seligman, 2023).

In the current divisive climate in which we live, the politics of difference, which emphasizes the right of individuals and groups to demand equality on the basis of difference (Mizrachi, 2014; Taylor, 1994), exists alongside various rooted positions, which uphold an ethics of belonging (see D. Alexander, forthcoming). This conception might help find some means of connecting them as two opposing yet complimentary forces in social life.

I view this study as a point of departure for more detailed, nuanced research into aspects of rootedness in different political and social contexts and their implications for the global political and cultural crisis that liberal democracies are currently facing. The translation of the insights emerging from this study into an articulated normative platform is well beyond the scope of this book. Yet, on a normative note, I conclude that recognition of rootedness as a fundamental form of belonging is necessary for coping with the dual rift—the scholarly and the political—we are facing and the search for answers to the most acute political challenges in Israel and other democracies. This is the challenge of living together with difference. The task appears timely and even urgent at this current historical juncture.