

## Thinking and the Other: Inclusive education, nationalism and hostility to refugees and immigrants

In his essay, *Notes on nationalism*, Orwell identified three characteristics of nationalism: obsession, instability and indifference to reality. In his discussion of these characteristics, nationalism emerges as a strange condition in which the nationalistic individual is simultaneously absorbed with their own being and in denial of that absorption, a condition that sees the projection of the self onto the nation or an 'ism'. Drawing on these insights, along with Buber's (1997) equation of nationalism with the expansion of the individual's ego, Levinas's (1969) exploration of 'dwelling' and, finally, Deleuze and Guattari's (2004) account of European racism, this paper suggests countering hostility towards immigrants and refugees occurs in education when children are given space and time to think critically about issues of global power and justice. Far from being a technical endeavour, this involves including children in an education that is first of all ethical, an education that might prepare them for the welcoming of otherness, where otherness is understood, not in opposition to what is regular, normal and familiar, but as the alterity and irreducibility of the other person (Levinas, 1969; 2011). As it attends to how thinking in and of itself might counter the *condition* of nationalism, and its consequences for refugees and immigrants, the paper turns to Levinas (2011) philosophy of time. Levinas's conception of time gives rise to an important distinction between education carried out in quantifiable time, in the time of results and moving forward, the time of not wasting time, *and* education in the time of the other. This is the difference between an education carried out in the lived time of the self, the time of one's own birth, one's being here now and one's death, and an education in the time of responsibility, wherein one responds to the other person who cannot be assimilated into one's own time. Taking its lead from Levinas (1969; 2011), the paper contends that thinking in education - the process that Arendt (1971) identified as the unclosed dialogue between me and myself - owes its perpetual inconclusiveness to the other person who, welcomed in their exteriority, eludes all final words. The paper concludes that while this thinking dialogue can add nothing to the totality of one's knowledge and can do nothing to enrich one's experiences, it can confirm the barbarity latent in all forms of self-obsession and nationalism and, in this way, sustain one's capacity to question one's pride in knowing, and one's delight in the possession of, other persons. This matters, because nothing more curtails opportunities for thinking in general, and for thinking about immigration and the lives of refugees and immigrants in particular, than egoism. The paper concludes that if Levinas (1999) was right to contend that it is the entirely other person that sobers one up from one's obsession with one's self, then it is thinking that sustains this sobriety and thus guards the young and those who educate them from the temptations of egoism and nationalism and the accompanying reduction of the other person.

### References

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