

# Between Denial and Witnessing: Psychoanalysis and clinical practice in the Israeli context.

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## Abstract.

This paper focuses on the dilemmas facing the professional mental health community that functions in the Israeli context, a context saturated by current and ongoing existential anxieties and the legacy of a traumatic history. I will describe the dilemmas experienced by myself and others as those occur in two arenas: that of organized actions addressing the general public and in the arena of private, secluded spaces of our clinics. Through these, I will try to elucidate conflicts of belonging, identity, recognition and acknowledgement that surface in our work. In this talk I am trying to sketch the inevitable dialectics and constant tension that exists between psychoanalysis as a haven supposedly freeing the individual subject from his or her unconscious constraints partly constituted by their socio-cultural milieu, and the embeddedness of psychoanalysis as a profession and as a community, in that very same milieu. I will argue that in the current sociopolitical and cultural Israeli context we are bound to oscillate between the two poles of denial and witnessing, where major blind spots and areas of disavowal co exist with a very elaborate and sophisticated professional attention to trauma. I am also interested in elucidating the difficulties of taking ethical responsibility, in the sense that Frosh describes, when issues of belonging, national and professional identity and trauma intermingle, in the clinic and beyond.