

Jacobi, Juliane

Dialogue, relatedness, and community. Does Martin Buber have a lasting influence on educational philosophy?

Zeitschrift für Pädagogik 63 (2017) 5, S. [657]-671



Quellenangabe/ Reference:

Jacobi, Juliane: Dialogue, relatedness, and community. Does Martin Buber have a lasting influence on educational philosophy? - In: Zeitschrift für Pädagogik 63 (2017) 5, S. [657]-671 - URN: urn:nbn:de:0111-pedocs-185977 - DOI: 10.25656/01:18597

<https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0111-pedocs-185977>

<https://doi.org/10.25656/01:18597>

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Leibniz-Gemeinschaft

ZEITSCHRIFT FÜR PÄDAGOGIK

Heft 5

September/Oktober 2017

■ *Thementeil*

**Mobilisierung durch Bildung.
Historische und zeithistorische Analysen**

■ *Allgemeiner Teil*

Allgemeine Didaktik als Reflexionsinstanz.
Versuch einer wissenschaftstheoretischen Grundlegung

Aufgabenstellung als zentrale Gelenkstelle im Schreib-
unterricht der ersten Klasse. Eine videogestützte Analyse

Essay: Dialogue, Relatedness, and Community.
Does Martin Buber have a lasting influence
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Juliane Jacobi

Dialogue, Relatedness, and Community

*Does Martin Buber have a lasting influence on educational philosophy?*¹

Zusammenfassung: Martin Buber gehört zu den wenigen deutschsprachigen Religions- und Sozialphilosophen des 20. Jahrhunderts, die explizit zur Philosophie der Erziehung beigetragen haben und international rezipiert wurden und werden. Aus Anlass seines 50. Todestages wird die Frage gestellt, inwieweit von einem bleibenden Einfluss Martin Bubers auf das gegenwärtige erziehungsphilosophische Denken gesprochen werden kann. Den Ausgangspunkt bilden zwei Kernprobleme der Erziehungsphilosophie, das *Lehrer-Schüler-Verhältnis* und das *Verhältnis der Erziehung des einzelnen Menschen und seiner Verbindung zum Sozialen*. Beide Themen werden von Buber im Rahmen seiner Sozialontologie entfaltet. Die Wurzeln der dialogischen Grundstruktur des Menschen liegen für ihn in der religiösen Tradition des Judentums. Zugleich hat diese Bestimmung des Menschen universale Geltung. Anhand ausgewählter internationaler Rezeptionsbeispiele wird danach gefragt, wie diese existenzialphilosophischen Vorraussetzungen von zeitgenössischen Erziehungsphilosophen rezipiert werden. Hat das Urteil Elijahu Rosenows: „Der Widerhall von Bubers Stimme ist auch heute noch vernehmbar, obwohl der ‚lebendige Laut‘ seiner Rede uns offensichtlich nicht mehr erreicht“ (2003, p. 120) weiterhin Bestand?

Schlagnworte: Buber, Dialog, Lehrer-Schüler-Beziehung, Vergemeinschaftung, Existentialismus

1. Introduction

Education holds a prominent position in the work of social philosopher Martin Buber. His contribution to educational thought was influential in the German and English-speaking world for many decades, but is there a lasting influence on his educational philosophy in the twenty-first century? Recent references to Buber in contemporary educational theory are reconsidered in the light of the distinct ideas that Buber offered re-

1 Revised version of a paper presented at the commemorative conference in honor of Martin Buber (1878–1965), at The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, June 15–18, 2015, Jerusalem. References to Buber’s work in English translation will be noted, if available.

garding the teacher-student relationship and the concept of how to conceive the individual as a singular and a social being.

The first section of this paper will present a brief, quantitative overview of scholarly writing on Buber's philosophy of education. In order to identify Buber's significance for modern discourse on education, some preliminary reflections on topics that recur in it will follow. As a point of departure for understanding Buber's writing, this section will lay out the focus of this essay and some of its conclusions regarding Buber's "lasting influence". Because of the peculiarities of Buber's language and misconceptions resulting from them, a few reflections on language and translation in the field of education must be included. The second section will address the historically-conditioned concept of the *Chaluz* (pioneer) and *Chassid* (the pious one) in Buber's thought, notably, how they relate to education and dialogue when conceived as in *Ich und Du* (Buber, 1923/1962). The final section will examine certain trends in contemporary educational thinking that claim to rely on Buberian propositions, in general, and his existentialism, in particular.

2. Preliminary Reflections

Buber belongs to the small group of internationally recognized, German-speaking philosophers of his age group that contributed explicitly and substantively to the educational discourse in the twentieth century. A survey of the research literature databases in Germany, France, and the US offers an initial impression of Buber's ongoing influence. Two-thirds of the 96 titles ERIC² cites in the last forty-five years, from 1972 to 2016, are journal articles (USA, UK, Canada, Netherlands, Australia, Israel, and Asia). Only one monograph is to be found on this list. The remaining publications are reports or opinion papers. The literature in English primarily addresses the implications of Buber's approach as a philosopher of education for the field of adult education and education outside the formal classroom setting, particularly with regard to intercultural understanding, conflict resolution, and, more recently, inclusion. In terms of classroom education, the main topic is the relationship of teacher and student.

The German FIS-Bildung³ database lists 191 references from 1984 to 2016: 68 collections of articles and monographs, along with 36 articles in collections and 40 in journals. There are eight authors cited three to four times, some being well-known experts on Buber: Martha Friedenthal-Haase and Kalman Yaron (adult education), Jutta Vierheilig (special education), Ludwig Liegle (comparative education and philosophy of education), and Peter Stoeger (interreligious education) as well as Werner Licharz and Ralf Koerrenz in religious education (religion, Jewish-Christian relations in education).

Due to the unique manner in which the French educational system is organized, the reference tools used for this inquiry do not offer a direct comparison. The Catalogue

2 ERIC = Education Resource Information Center

3 FIS = Fachinformationssystem Bildung Literaturdatenbank

général der Bibliothèque nationale de France primarily indexes the general literature on Buber in German and English, with the majority of the titles listed in German. One publication is a translation of Buber's writing on education published by a Christian publishing house, and there is a second monograph by Kalman Yaron translated into French from Hebrew. There is no title listed in the French equivalents to ERIC or FIS by the former INRP⁴, but in older bibliographies of the INRP journals from the 1970s until 2010 a few articles addressing Buber's philosophy of education are cited. References since 1990 from central European countries like Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary are not considered, but a growing awareness of Buber's thought may exist in the context of the revival of Jewish philosophy in Central Europe. Writing on the philosophy of education in English and German has consistently and clearly made reference to Buber's philosophy.

This essay will explore the reason why Buber is still cited to address challenges encountered in present-day education, despite the difficulties with hearing his voice and translating his approach. Bibliographical references over time reflect the character of educational discourse in modernity, which is determined by two aspects: the historical context of Buber's contribution and its actual impact. Topics characteristically recur in the discourse of the field of education, a feature due to structures implicit in education itself. At one and the same time, the discourse is shaped by the continuity of tasks that education attempts to accomplish as well as the dynamics and conditions at play in its specific historical context. Buber explicitly dealt with some of the iterating core problems in modern education and indicated his approaches to them. In this sense, Buber participated in what could be called the recurring educational discourse typical of the last 300 years. His writings count prominently in collections like *Klassiker der Pädagogik* (Tenorth, 2003, pp. 112–123; Riemeck, 2014, pp. 429–446) in Germany. The historical importance during the first half of the twentieth century is beyond question and has been studied thoroughly by historians of education (Jacobi, 2005, pp. 11–76; Pilarczyk, 2009, pp. 28–42). Apparently, his philosophy of education continues to have merit and challenge those seeking to understand education.

So as to scrutinize Buber's significance, it will be fruitful to concentrate on two of the perennial problems debated in education, challenges that both educators and those being educated encounter: the teacher-student relationship and the relationship between individual growth and community building. These two problems are interrelated. The teacher-student relationship not only refers to the educational objective of individual growth but also to the other important aim of education: to enable the individual to relate in a meaningful way to the social world. With his understanding of education as dialogue, Buber offers ways to conceptualize teaching and learning, individual growth as well as community building, in light of the teacher-student relationship.

Whoever has delved into Buber's writing is aware of two challenges: first, the complicated textual history that stems from the author's work habits, from 1920 to 1965, of editing and reediting his writings, and second, his use of the German language, which

4 Institut national de recherche pédagogique, since 2011 Institut français de l'éducation (IFE).

poses a serious challenge for his readers. The latter is closely connected with the former (Rosenow, 2006). Most of his readers from the English-speaking world of education seem to know neither German, the language Buber used predominantly, nor Hebrew, the second language he used after 1938. As the philosopher Walter Kaufmann, the second American translator of *Ich und Du* pointed out, misreadings of what Buber had in mind can result from his very considered and often-unusual use of language. Kaufmann's most prominent example was the translation of *Ich und Du*, which he rendered as *I and You*, because the "Thou" in the book's original English title *I and Thou* carried a theological connotation that Buber did not intend (Kaufmann, 1970, pp. 14–15, 38). The editor of Kaufmann's new translation kept the original title *I and Thou*, with the result that most English speaking authors also use the phrase "I and Thou" or "I-Thou" when speaking of the philosophical concept. When I am speaking of the philosophical concept I will use "I-You relationship" following Kaufmann's translation.

In post-Holocaust Germany it was mostly protestant theologians who read and admired Buber's work, while the generation of Marxist-oriented young intellectuals of the 1960s no longer valued his efforts. Even if the *Erzählungen der Chassidim* (1949) had a certain literary appeal to them their hopes led them to praise Franz Rosenzweig's *Stern der Erlösung* (1921/1988) more highly. As a student of education in the 1960s I myself belonged to those who became enthusiastic readers of Siegfried Bernfeld's *Kinderheim Baumgarten* (1921) and *Das jüdische Volk und seine Jugend* (1920). Most of us read those texts with amazing disregard for their Zionist impact and a complete ignorance of Bernfeld's affiliation with Buber. Much later, in the course of editing Buber's writings on Youth and Education, a volume in the German edition of his collected works, I studied Buber's contribution to educational philosophy. The wide and far-reaching network of the author, as well as the historical context of his thinking and writing and the uniqueness of his approach, fascinated me. Even if dealing with religion in the secular world had not been unusual among *Lebensreformer* and educational leaders of his time, Buber was not just one among the many syncretistic neo-religious reformers, the most notable being Rudolf Steiner. On the contrary, Buber argued explicitly as a Jewish philosopher. Nevertheless, not only young people from his own religious tradition but also a much wider public listened to him and came to regard the philosophical essay *Ich und Du* as a major religious text. He was a non-religious/religious philosopher operating on an intellectual level comparable to that of the dialectical theology or early writings of Martin Heidegger, labeled as existentialism. In addition, Buber was close to the Religious Socialists, a group influential in cultural life and education after 1918. Educators involved in various initiatives of the international progressive education movement during the 1920s and 1930s were receptive to Buber's philosophy. Further during the years of persecution in Germany, from 1933 to 1938, the philosopher and writer was engaged in educational work for the German-Jewish community. When he went to Palestine, he wrote and republished some of his most influential writings on education. His enormous influence on the Jewish Youth Movement, particularly its Zionist wing and, to some extent, even on the non-Jewish youth movement in Germany lasted from before World War I until 1938, when he left Germany. He also had a gift of being eminently contemporary,

a talent necessary for educational philosophers and leaders in the educational field desiring to become influential during their lifetime. He combined sensitivity to the *Zeitgeist* with a remarkable capacity for teaching and learning. Of the numerous voices praising his outstanding talent, we can quote Hannah Arendt, a witness notably beyond suspicion of benign judgment. In 1957, she wrote to her friend, Zionist leader Kurt Blumenfeld: “Dafür habe ich Buber kennengelernt, und eigentlich hat er mir dann schließlich doch gefallen. Er ist besser als alle diese Juden, weil er eine wirkliche Neugier und Lernfähigkeit für die Welt hat, [...]” (Arendt & Blumenfeld, 1995, p. 191).⁵

Given the close relationship between Buber’s philosophy and Judaism, the following discussion of Buber’s contribution to recurrent themes in educational discourse will take the writings on Buber of Ernst Simon (1899–1988) as its point of departure. Young Zionist Ernst Simon assisted Buber in the 1920s and immigrated to Palestine in 1929. Following Buber’s request for support after the Nazis initiated their politics of prosecution of Jews, from 1933 to 1935, Simon joined Buber in his effort to organize educational institutions for the Jewish community and to counsel the Zionist Youth Movement on the prospects of emigrating to Palestine (Simon, 1959; Weiss, 1991, p. 13, 39, 75–77). From 1950 onward, Simon held a chair in Education at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. An educational philosopher in his own right, he has always been a critical disciple of his teacher (Simon, 1974).

3. Buber’s Philosophy of Education: *Idealtyp* and Dialogue

According to Simon, Buber rejected the offer of a chair in Pedagogy at the Hebrew University with the explanation that he had always been much more interested in practical education than educational thought. Many writings on Buber’s educational thought have quoted Simon in this regard. Yet most of them have disregarded Simon’s next sentence: “Diese überraschende und schon damals nicht ganz zutreffende, inzwischen aber weitgehend widerlegte Äußerung [...]”⁶ (Simon, 1974, p. 38). Simon notes that Buber, through the very character of his philosophical thought, contributed insight to the theory of education as well, namely, to theoretical pedagogy. Simon provides a clue into Buber’s educational thinking, one that is difficult for many educational philosophers to accept but will be argued in this essay as crucial for understanding Buber. As a philosopher, Buber did not construct a system in either philosophy or the philosophy of education; rather, his thoughts about education are those of a religious man reflecting on creation, or – as the mystic would say – arising from *imitatio Dei*, emulation in the sense being commanded. In other words, the foundation for both his philosophical and his educational writing is his critical attitude towards any form of religion that posits a separated realm.

5 “I met Buber, and actually I finally liked him very much. He is much better than all these Jews, because he exhibits a genuine curiosity and an ability to learn from the world around [...]”.

6 “This surprising answer was not quite appropriate even then and, at this point in time, has been largely refuted.”

Simon interprets the ethical implications of Buber's educational thought from this perspective. He demonstrates the dual character of the new *Menschentyp* that Buber sets forth: the *Chassid* (known for his naiveté, vitality, simplemindedness, and immediacy) and the *Chaluz*. These are *Idealtypen* (in the Weberian sense) for realizing national and social objectives. The *Chassidim* did not succeed, due to the failure of their religious leaders, while the *Chaluz* proved effective in the concrete role of a pioneer in *Eretz Israel*, striving to be a man capable of creating a community that is both functioning and just, a new socialist society of a *Jerusalem* beyond *Rom* and *Moskau*, at once temporal and eternal. Similarities to young Siegfried Bernfeld's argument, particularly in *Das jüdische Volk und seine Jugend* underlines the historic contingency of this concept. On the other hand, it points to the universal truth that only the individual man exposing himself to the absolute can build a just community. This ideal, Buber's concept of religion – which he sometimes called biblical Hebraic Humanism – is valid for and accessible to Jews and non-Jews alike.

How did this utopian thought become a powerful idea for the philosophy of education? Utopian thought was a common feature of those educational ideas that proved attractive to Buber's contemporaries, particularly young Jews. However, the use of utopian concepts to obtain revolutionary changes clearly lost their appeal in the second half of the twentieth century. Yet Buber was compelling to a certain degree. In contrast to most other "utopian" thinkers, he insisted on the individual in her or his own right and regarded society as a community composed of individuals. While, after the disasters nationalism and communism brought upon humankind, secular educators were unable to turn to dogmatic organized religion, they might find consolation in Buber's individualistic presupposition.

Simon addresses yet another feature of Buber's concept of the *Chaluz* that might prove difficult to accept. The ideal of the *Chaluz*, even as an *Idealtyp*, has an inherent limitation: it cannot be transferred from one time and place to another. The *Chaluz* is not an ordinary man, but a chosen one, a member of the elite. What does this mean in a community of equals? Even if, as Simon and Rosenow (2006) have argued, the demand for mass education in a democratic society challenges both the elitist concept of the *Chaluz* and the promise of advancing community, both positions contribute to the ongoing discourse about education. *Imitatio Dei* is still a consolation for the educator suffering from a frequently thankless task. And, this consolation is closely linked to the idea of education as *dialogue*.

Most philosophers of education hold *dialogue* to be the guiding ethical principle that Buber provided to the world of education. Some of them perceive Buber as a social philosopher in a more limited sense of the word, understanding dialogue as meaning conflict resolution, namely, conflicts between both individuals and communities. To respond to this interpretation, it will be useful to reconsider Buber's concept of the I-You relationship as a philosophical answer to educational challenges intrinsic to the teacher-student relationship and community building, both in practice and in theory.

How does one teach and enable the student to become him/herself and relate to his/her social reality? While the I-You relationship is grounded in the experience of God's

absence, at the same time, it offers an answer to the question: How does the eternal, as well as the present *absolute*, become real for humankind? It occurs in the *betwixt and between* of the I-You relation, where the *absolute* emerges *im Zwischen* (in the in-between), in other words, it is the dialogical character of the I-You relationship that differentiates it from the I-It relationship, in which the self relates to the other as object. The dialogical relation means that humans experience God's reality only in relationship. Buber's closely-related notion of language, conveyed by the term "Zwiesprache" underlines this notion that the *absolute* is disclosed only in dialogue.

Having distinguished the relationships of I-You and of I-It as two modes of relating, Buber engages in criticizing the long-standing philosophical tradition that holds the self to be a substantial and independent reality, in relation to both the other and the world. I-You is a pre-social relationship (*vorgesellschaftliches Verhältnis*), as Michael Theunissen has demonstrated. The mode of relating has a meaning that is, in itself, prior; it is primordial and independent of the social relation that human functioning requires (Theunissen, 1981, p. 243–346).

While clearly the teacher/student relationship has a social dimension, Buber describes it as a relationship found prior to being embedded in society, though he does not deny its being thus embedded. Not only in the postscript to *Ich und Du* (1957/1962, p. 131) but also in a few other writings, in the first instance *Rede über das Erzieherische* (Buber, 1926/2005, p. 142), Buber examined the dual aspects of the teacher-student relation. It is the linguistic switch from education (*Erziehung*) to the educational (*das Erzieherische*) that is important for understanding this turn in Buber's thoughts on education, according to the concept developed in *Ich und Du*. *Das Erzieherische* first appears in the famous Heidelberg speech. Translations into other languages make apparent the difference between these two terms. *The Educational* does not reflect the nuance of action found in *das Erzieherische*. In Hebrew Buber used the grammatical form for "doing education". Yet, even more important than the notion of action is the intrinsic dialogical aspect, captured in the term *Umfassung* (= embrac(e)-ment), a concept he developed in *Ich und Du*. *Umfassung* means both action and primordial relationship. Buber clarifies that the teacher-student relationship is different from the I-You relationship of adults. In the case of the educational relationship, embracement involves no reciprocity on the part of the student. However, if one relates to the young in the educational setting differently than otherwise, how do they discover the sacred in an unholy world? The teacher's everyday actions have to be "holy" in a way that they enable the student to experience the meaning of our existence. The objective of this teaching is to give the one who suffers from unholiness the ability to participate in the humanly holy. This will enable him or her eventually to participate in holiness in the sense of *imitatio Dei*.

Buber provides his most precise answer to what this means for the task of the educator in his talk *Über Charaktererziehung* (Buber, 1947/2005) and in *Philosophical Interrogations* (Friedmann, 1970, pp. 13–117). In the talk, given originally in 1939 in Hebrew to Jewish teachers in Palestine, the author poses the following questions: How is it possible to liberate the individual from his/her distorted state so as to relate to him- or herself? How is it possible to awaken the longing for the absolute, to be-

come oneself, without, at the same time, destroying the relationship with one's environment? Heinz-Joachim Heydorn and Robert H. Hutchins addressed the same issues in *Philosophical Interrogations*, how it would be possible to develop a meaningful relationship to a world that the young experience as distorted. How would an educator possibly master this difficulty (Friedmann, 1970, pp. 62–68)? In answering, Buber actually repeats earlier statements that the first task of the educator is “to keep the pain alive [...] the individual suffers through his distorted relation his own real self” (Buber, 1947/2005, p. 333). This, he concludes, is “the indispensable presupposition” of education (Buber, 1947/2005, p. 333). At the same time, one can only become a genuine person through a genuine relationship to the real, through genuinely saying *You*. “To further, to strengthen, and to encourage the readiness and the openness cannot be separated from the first task” (Friedmann, 1970, p. 63). The relationship between the two tasks occurs in teaching and learning as a synonym for education in a concrete situation with a real person. To awaken the longing and to keep the pain alive, as well as to encourage the openness to the *You*, proceeds from the true guidance, trust and trustworthiness of the educator. With regard to individual growth, education will only take place when the student enters into the relationship with the teacher and instructs the educator. While some authors have argued for mutuality instead of reciprocity, Buber himself speaks of the latter. Whatever might be the adequate translation, Buber's answer is clearly of no practical use for teachers. He is not thinking of a kind of teaching that “lies to hand and needs only to be transmitted to those who suffer” (Friedmann, 1970, p. 61) from the unholiness of their lives.

Among progressive educational ideas of the early twentieth century, the notion of mutuality/reciprocity in the educational process, which Buber himself knew well in practice and theory, was notorious (Jacobi, 2005, pp. 68–71). At the same time, many educators have criticized this notion, arguing that the teacher alone should guide the process of learning, not the student. In this debate, Buber insists on reciprocity of a certain type in the educational process. He does not hold to a teaching dialogue that lacks reciprocity/mutuality. He clarifies his point by discussing the classical Greek educational philosophy that Plato developed. First, Buber points to the non-mutual character of the Socratic dialogue. The Socratic dialogue means “posing questions to determine whether the answers received are tenable or not. Socratic questions are not really questions but, rather, move in a dialectical game with a goal, the goal of revealing a not-knowing.” (Friedmann, 1970, p. 67). In contrast to this type of dialogue, Buber imagines the teacher entering into dialogue as someone who wants to know the person before him/her and, thus, to learn from the pupil in order to teach her/him. This relationship between those educating and those being educated is not one of equals, of reciprocity, as some progressive educators have conceived it. Critical of the hierarchical power relationships in educational settings, these educators referred to the Platonic Eros. They claimed an inherently erotic drive toward a meaningful, mutual pedagogical relationship between teacher and student. Buber refutes this progressive educational concept of reciprocity. In *Rede über das Erzieherische (On Education)*, he states that the task of education is not driven by Eros, namely, learning is not grounded in choice

according to affection and never signifies full partnership. The teacher has to learn from the student in order to instruct the pupil (Buber, 1926/2005, pp. 145–147). Yet, educating (*das Erzieherische*) means that the student, from his/her side, does not participate in “embracement” (Buber, 1923/1962, p. 131).

This insight into the educational relationship was a landmark in the history of educational thought and shed new light on the core problem of how to teach. Since Plato’s time, dialogue has been recognized as an important concept in the realm of teaching. Debate about the meaning of dialogue is endemic to the ongoing tasks of education and has been controverted since the time of the Sophists and Plato. Some of the most influential writings in early modern western educational thought are cast completely or partially in the form of a dialogue between a teacher and a pupil. Rousseau’s *Émile* contains a large number of “dialogues” of this type, and the writing of Rousseau’s friend Madame d’Epinay consists of “conversations,” dialogues solely between a female educator and a female child (Rousseau, 1762/1969, p. 317–318, 352–353, 449–450; d’Epinay, 1781). The choice of literary genre is not accidental. Educators who regard teaching as more than mechanical are naturally drawn into dialogue. Yet, the eighteenth century thinkers assumed a self whose self-consciousness grew through its interaction with the world of knowledge and sociability. Their concept of dialogue was didactic. This is clearly not the way Buber conceives dialogue. What Buber maintains, consistently through the years, is the concept of dialogue that he developed in *Ich und Du*, namely, he adheres to a religiously grounded concept of dialogue. *Imitatio Dei* determines teaching and, at the same time, community building. It connotes education, in an ontological sense, it happens only in meaningful relationships. What Buber envisions is neither an ideal (save the concept of *Chaluz* discussed above), nor a normative presupposition, nor an act to be empirically comprehended, in the sense of a psychological action and reaction. At the same time, he claims that the educator, as a person, has to master the difficult task of offering the student a representation of the world. The educator has a clearly didactic task, but one that cannot succeed in any meaningful sense without the ontological relationship.

4. Conclusions

First, after 1900 progressive educators sought to save education from the evils of mass education, cultural decline, and ethical demise (Baader, 2005). In the decades following mass murder and genocide by the Nazi regime, this perspective did not experience a significant revival. Yet in contrast with most of his contemporaries in the philosophy of education during the first half of the twentieth century, Buber’s impact on educational thought has been lasting. Despite the religious dimension of his work, after World War II his influence in the field of education has not disappeared in the Western world, which has subsequently become more secular than ever before.

Second, the religiously rooted concept of dialogue, from which Buber’s educational thought derives, opened up a new perspective on education. The reciprocity/mutuality

of the relationship does not mean that teacher and student are equals. On the other hand the student does not only learn from the teacher, but also, in order to teach the student, the teacher learns from him/her. The teacher “stands at both ends of the shared situation, while the student does not” (Buber, 1926/2005, p. 152).

Third, Buber’s answer to the ethical question of how to teach in a world without universal norms lies in the attempt to enable the one being educated to reach him/herself through dialogue with the other, an attempt that must be made over and over again.

Fourth, the existentialist notion of deriving community building from dialogue, as developed in *Ich und Du* and in many later writings, means the building of an *Us* through a bond between independent individuals. These persons are connected through an ontic immediacy, meaning that they share the reality of being an *Us* in the face of God.

5. Buber in the Twenty-First Century: Between Moral Education and Ethical Challenge

The twentieth century leaves open some questions for the historian of education, the most interesting being the tension between historical constraints and abiding presence in educational discourse. Historical constraints are particularly apparent in Buber’s use of specific German terms like *Volk*, *Nation*, *Gemeinschaft*, and *Gesellschaft*, terms that play an important role in his talks on education. Specifically, the texts *Bildung und Weltanschauung (Education and Philosophy of Life)* (1936) and *Nationale Erziehung (National Education)* (1939) have a complicated history. The German versions were revised over time. An indispensable prerequisite for our understanding these works, a comparison of the translation of these various versions into Hebrew and English, has yet to be undertaken (Rosenow, 2006, pp. 24–27).

Another important topic that this paper does not discuss is the renaissance Buber’s philosophy enjoyed following the genocide of European Jewry in post-Nazi German intellectual life in general and in the field of education in particular. Among those pedagogues who became interested in Buber’s theories after 1945, Fritz Bohnsack is probably the one who addressed Buber’s approach most persistently. In addition to various studies on the educational philosophy of John Dewey, Bohnsack has recently published a work on Buber (2008). In 1952 young Bohnsack, who was among those marginalized by racism during the Nazi regime, met Buber in person. As a doctorate student he wrestled with the question of how to educate in an unholy world (Bohnsack to Buber, 24. 06. 1953). Christian authors have generally dominated the interpretation of Buber, particularly in West Germany, and until recently, there have been dissertations on his theory of education published in the field of Christian Protestant theology (Ventur, 2003). Buber’s contribution to adult education and other aspects of educational practice were discussed among German pedagogical writers, as indicated above.⁷ Among a younger generation of pedagogues one can observe a growing interest in twentieth-century Jewish social

7 Grytzka (1981) offers a sound review of writing on Buber in pedagogy.

philosophy that reconsiders Buber in the light of Emanuel Levinas' philosophy of the other (Kaminska, 2010).

Instead of addressing specifically German perceptions of Buber's work, the following paragraph will focus on Buber's contribution to contemporary discourse in the philosophy of education in English-speaking countries. As mentioned above, Buber's philosophy of education has been translated from German into a wide range of foreign languages, English being the most prominent among them, resulting in not only a wider geographical perspective but also a more general critical acclaim for his thought. Buber's contribution to the understanding of dialogue and what that could mean for education regularly attracts those philosophers of education interested in a phenomenological approach, as Mordechai Gordon's sound article, *Listening as Embracing the Other: Martin Buber's Philosophy of Dialogue*, reveals (Gordon, 2011).

This widespread recognition of Buber's thought is particularly remarkable, in light of the global shift in educational thought over the last fifty years, namely the ascendancy of evidence-based knowledge of educational performance and teachers' effectiveness. Following Lawrence Kohlberg's experiments in developmental psychology, it is the notion of *just community* that reflects these changes, an attempt to address the problem of the relationship of individual growth to social demands. Yet, this psychological approach does not discuss Buber's philosophy, nor employ the conceptual framework of the above-mentioned recurring themes, specifically, teacher-student relations and the individual and the social. Instead, Buber's writing in this respect is discussed in two subfields of the study of education closely related to one another: critical education and educational philosophy in a multiethnic society.

Some representatives of the Anglo-American approach to *critical pedagogy* view Buber from the perspective of humanistic psychology in the tradition of Carl Rogers (Suter, 1986). Yet, the most influential appropriation in this regard is to be found in the postcolonial educational philosophy of Paulo Freire.

In the last decades of the twentieth century Freire's concepts of alphabetization and the empowerment of the oppressed were widely discussed not only in Latin America but also in most Western countries. The Brazilian educator summarized his experience in the essay *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), in which he appropriated the terms *dialogue* and *I-Thou relationship*. A fair number of differences exist between Freire's and Buber's approach, which has the result of obscuring the fact that those who claim to follow Buber's philosophy have sometimes misunderstood it. First, Freire's concept of dialogue does not share Buber's existentialist connotation of the inner meaning of dialogue. Freire employs the Hegelian concept of *Herr und Knecht* (master and servant), to criticize any authoritarian relationship in educational settings. Furthermore, he combines these ideas with Marx's assumption regarding constraints that history exercises on human relations, along with Frantz Fanon's anticolonial assumption of the *incorporated oppressor in the oppressed*. In developing his concept of empowerment, Freire refers to Buber's concept of dialogue. At the same time, though, he puts a great deal of emphasis on the role that the enlightening power of knowledge plays in leading citizens to actively participate in society. In this regard, it is important to note that Buber has not

given much thought to enlightenment and the power of knowledge. Most likely, Buber would have neither rejected this analysis, nor deemed it essential to his concept of education as dialogue. It would entail another essay to address the issue of Buber's disregard of enlightenment. Yet, Buber's elitist view certainly separates him from the strictly egalitarian concept that Freire is seeking. Finally, Freire's concept of community education is grounded in an understanding of the human condition that differs Buber's; pivotal for Freire's view is the Christian theological concept of love. This notion of love does not necessarily include that of dialogue. In Buber's concept of community, without dialogue the individual would miss her or his place in life. The longing for the absolute can only be realized through dialogue. In conclusion, Paolo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* stands at some distance from what Buber had in mind when he spoke of education in light of the I-You relationship.

Nevertheless, a number of English/American writers in educational philosophy and policy have read Buber through the lens of Paolo Freire's thought (McLaren, 2003). In particular, philosophers of education and educational policy who are primarily concerned with how to implement and support education for peace are attracted to Buber's philosophy of education. Presently the two educators among them best known for writing on Buber are W. John Morgan and Alexandre Guilherme (2012, 2014). These two authors look for educational development in an international context, found, for example, with UNESCO and NGOs. Their main interest lies in conflict resolution in societies made up of multiethnic communities. When discussing Buber's life and philosophy in light of his contemporaries, as well as his contribution to various fields in educational policy, they relate Buber to Georg Lukács and Bertrand Russell as well as Franz Fanon, arguing that these authors share some of the same intentions for education in a conflict-stricken world. Morgan and Guilherme have an understanding of Buber's concept of dialogue that enables them to turn dialogue into policy strategies for international contexts, both within the formal school setting and apart from it. Recognizing that social-political crises or instability can lead to an I-It mode of relationship and suppress I-You ways of relating, they state that in his essay *I and Thou*, Buber "established a taxonomy by which to describe the relationship in which people engage" (Morgan & Guilherme, 2014, p. 4). They interpret the historically stable and "cordial" relations between the Israel and the West German government after the Holocaust as an outcome of Buber's inspiration (Morgan & Guilherme, 2014, p. 8). The claim that the relation between these two countries since World War II is shaped by Buber's remarkable attitude toward Germany after the Holocaust is unconvincing. This view neglects the many debates that sprang up in Germany from the *Wiedergutmachungsgesetz* to the current state of affairs (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2015). Needless to say, Buber's attitude towards Germany and the Germans has been highly controversial in Israel. But the authors' references to Buber are also debatable on grounds other than this oversimplified historical interpretation.

Morgan and Guilherme ascribe a pragmatic aspect to social philosophy and offer several examples of projects in moral education involving conflict resolution, both successful and unsuccessful. They reassure the reader that dialogue fosters moral and eth-

ical attitudes towards conflict resolution (Morgan & Guilherme, 2014, pp. 90–102). Much of what is said in this respect need not draw on Buber’s philosophy. The claim that Buber has demonstrated a way for educational projects to be evaluated is not convincing, since his existentialist approach certainly had no pragmatic intention of providing “a taxonomy of dialogue.” Though well-supported and important peace educational projects might offer a chance for what could be called felicitous education in a Buberian manner, they do not result in the I-You relationship. From Buber’s perspective, the teacher, in rare moments, will experience “das Gefühl des gesegneten Werks” (*the sensation of a blessed task*), a religious experience (Buber, 1947/2005, p. 334). The failure of these authors to mention the religious foundations of Buber’s philosophy of dialogue (as discussed in the first paragraph of this essay) is striking and reveals misunderstandings – despite the authors’ good intentions. They neglect the difference between education and the educational in the light of dialogue as *imitatio Dei*.

The legacy of Buber’s existentialism does not lie in the evaluation of modes of moral education in conflict societies. It lies in the challenge to teach future teachers, who seek to open the student’s mind, about Buber’s existentialism. They might find that there is more to education than didactics without neglecting the didactic. What might be even more difficult but nonetheless extremely important would be learning that ethical education in modernity does not lie in propagating normative standards or eternal values but, rather, in “keep[ing] alive the pain” (Buber, 1947/2005, p. 333). In this respect, Jan Masschelein is more precise than those of Buber’s followers who identify “Charaktererziehung” with moral/ethical education. He argues that, according to Buber, the educator should establish an adequate relationship between knowing (*Wissen*) and conscience (*Gewissen*) (Masschelein, 1996, pp. 198–203). The lasting legacy of Buber’s thoughts for educational philosophy is the insight Buber developed for capturing the dynamics of a felicitous educational process.

This approach refutes the judgment Rosenow makes, in his otherwise precise and convincing outline of Buber as a *Klassiker der Pädagogik*, that “we no longer hear the sound of [Buber’s] voice” (Rosenow, 2003, p. 120; translation J. J.). According to Masschelein, Rosenow’s conclusion could be revised: We hear echoes of Buber’s voice, and there are educational theorists who still hear the sound of his voice.

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Abstract: Martin Buber engaged in an amazingly wide range of fields of thought in twentieth century intellectual life. Education certainly holds a prominent position in his work, and Buber's contribution to educational thought was unusual for his time and extremely influential when viewed from a twenty-first century perspective. As a result, Buber's unique approach to education should be reconsidered in order to understand the educational discourse of the first half of the twentieth century. Yet, does his thinking continue to influence educational philosophy in the second half of the 'Century of Extremes' and even in the twenty-first century? Or should one agree with Elijah Rosenow (2003) writing in the German reader *Klassiker der Pädagogik*: "We hear echoes of Buber's voice, but we no longer hear the sound of his voice" (p. 120)?

Keywords: Buber, Dialogue, Teacher-Student-Relationship, Community Building, Existentialism

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