

Toward Dialogical Education

Arie Kizel

According to Ilan Gur-Ze'ev, the various current versions of critical pedagogy do not pursue the attempt of critical theory to propose a holistic utopia. The absence of love, creativity and a human vista have led critical pedagogy into a blind alley. A critical perspective, incorporating the possibility to loosen the chains as envisaged by Plato, is merely one aspect of critical theory, a fundamentally theoretical one, however rich and manifold. This option has an emancipatory effect on teachers and educators, who feel attracted ideologically to the principles of critical pedagogy, providing them with a home base in their shunning of normalizing education. However, they tend to feel increasingly more despondent – as described so well by Elizabeth E. Heilman: “Critical Pedagogy fails to offer stories in which ordinary active citizens and teachers work for positive social change as part of their ordinary lives.”

The principles of dialogical education may be anchored in a compromise between various versions of critical pedagogy. They can be based on the principles proposed by Martin Buber, who perceives education as a dialogue between people whose humanity is fully manifested in its reciprocity. This is an unequivocal stance, maintaining that neither skillful technique nor exciting content can replace the experience of the spontaneous, authentic concrete presence of the educator's personality. Buber places belief and experience at the center of the dialogic encounter. He perceives as all-important the human encounter and is interested in the dialogic dimension in concrete situations. He calls for the presence of the whole being and opposes any splintering, manifested in restricted approaches (psychoanalytical, sociological or historicist).

The dialogic dimension may also draw its significance from the principle of responsibility, as expressed by Emanuel Levinas. It is based on the idea that the human being, as a speaking subject, does not place himself in the center, but turns to the Other. This committed attitude of the Other must be expressed in action – in clothing the naked, feeding the hungry. These principles can be combined with the Diasporic option, proposed by Ilan Gur-Ze'ev, expressed in his statement:

“Responsibility, within the framework of Diasporic Philosophy is part of and enables The Good, yet it is a Diasporic Good, not a domesticated good.”

The responsibility of dialogic education in the Diasporic sense can be actualized in educational procedures in the field, combining theory and practice.