



Relationships between Democratic Education and Dialogic Education: Conclusion



Eugene Matusov
University of Delaware, USA

Abstract

In my conclusion, I want to return back to the issue raised by the co-editors of this special issue: what are the relationships between Democratic Education and Dialogic Education, between dialogue and democracy? For that, I consider the following three topics: 1) their polysemy, multiple meanings, of these two concepts, 2) their complementarity; and 3) their tensions and incompatibilities.

Eugene Matusov is a Professor of Education at the University of Delaware. He studied developmental psychology with Soviet researchers working in the Vygotskian paradigm and worked as a schoolteacher before immigrating to the United States. He uses sociocultural and Bakhtinian dialogic approaches to education. His current research and practice focus is on Democratic Dialogic Education. His recent books are: Matusov, E. (2020), "Envisioning education in a post-work leisure-based society: A dialogic perspective." Matusov, E., Marjanovic-Shane, A., & Gradovski, M. (2019), "Dialogic pedagogy and polyphonic research art: Bakhtin by and for educators."



Polysemy

Democratic Education

As reported by a co-editor, Ana Marjanovic-Shane, in her introduction to this special issue (Marjanovic-Shane, 2023a), they had a problem with the polysemy of the notion of "democratic education." Being familiar with the literature and discourse on democratic education, I have abstracted at least five distinct understandings of this term among educationalists, including in this special issue. Although these five understandings can overlap or can be combined together, they have their own educational realms.

Democratic Education as a civic curriculum: education about democracy

This way of understanding the term Democratic Education is often also referred to as civic education. It involves teaching students about diverse forms of state or organizational governance, including democracy. Democracy is often defined as people's direct or representative participation in governance and involves issues of elections, representation, division of powers, and so on.

There are two important aspects of this type of Democratic Education. The first is that it does not usually affect the educational and organizational processes of the students' education per se. It does not try to democratize the educational or organizational processes of the students' life by engaging them in decision-making about what to study, why to study, how to study, whether to study, and so on. Probably,

following the Kantian principle of educational paternalism (Kant, 1784), many educationalists do not see democracy as a form of governance suitable for ignorant, irrational, and immature students who cannot make informed and responsible decisions about their education and lives.

The second is that Democratic Education as a curriculum does not necessarily affirm democracy as a desirable form of governance. For example, my study of civic education¹ in Soviet schools in the 1970s was about the critique of “bourgeois democracy” in favor of the “proletariat dictatorship” led by one Party.

As a co-editor Ana Marjanovic-Shane reported in the introduction, they received many submissions for this special issue which interpreted “Democratic Education” solely as a civic education curriculum. These submissions were rejected by the co-editors. However, I think all submitted articles described elements of Democratic Education as a curriculum because practicing democracy often involves reflection on it.

Democratic Education as a civic instruction: education for democracy

The goal of such education is to instill the value of democracy into students as the most desirable form of state governance and develop basic skills in the students necessary for participation in democratic structures and processes. Such a form of Democratic Education involves limited democratization of educational structures and processes: the school curriculum – by giving students some choices, the school instruction – by organizing debates and involving argumentation, the school organization – by having town-hall decision-making meetings and writing students-based class constitutions, and so on. Students are socialized into the process of how to participate in deliberate democracy skillfully.

At the same time, Democratic Education, as education for democracy, tries not to lose control of the overall education of the students to make sure that the overall values and curricular endpoints are instilled in the students, including the value of democracy, which is unquestionable. Kantian educational paternalism also remains but gets subtle and less visible to the students. The hard imposition and hard paternalism based on rewards and punishments are replaced here by the soft imposition and soft paternalism of manipulations by finding the key to the heart and mind of each student. Although educational processes get democratized in this approach, this is “managed democracy,” using Putin’s comment on Russian democracy in the 2000s. Often, Progressive Education (Matusov, 2021a) utilizes this type of Democratic Education (Dewey, 1997).

In this special issue, the echo of this approach can be found in the discussions during the general assembly of the Norwegian democratic school in Oslo (Jørgensen, 2023; Marjanovic-Shane, 2023b, 2023c, 2023d; Marjanovic-Shane, Kullenberg, & Gradovski, 2023). Also, Jim Rietmulder mentions education for democracy in his democratic school (The Circle School) (Rietmulder & Marjanovic-Shane, 2023). The difference between the democratic schools and this full-blown progressive type of education for democracy, however, is that in the democratic schools, education for democracy was/is a by-product of the students’ practicing unlimited democracy rather than as a targeted imposed curriculum.

Democratic Education as a problem-solving tool for social problems

Armando Marino Filho (2023) demonstrates an instrumental version of Democratic Education where democracy is used for solving problems of children’s violence. His hypothesis that children’s violence is heavily rooted in adults’ paternalism and authoritarianism seems to be very plausible, especially after he provided evidence that under his democratic pedagogical regime, the children’s violence subsided.

¹ Literally, this academic subject was called “sociology” (обществоведение).

Yet, this instrumental approach to Democratic Education is not without a problem. Since, in it, democracy is seen as an educational tool for solving problems with students' violence, disengagement, disobedience, and so on and not as the value in itself, democracy is prone to manipulation and a temporary application. When the goals are more or less achieved, educational democracy can be withdrawn or weakened, as, indeed, happened in the Brazilian NGO case described by Armando.

Democratic Education as the governance in a democratic school: a self-value

In many democratic schools, democratic governance is viewed as the best form of collective, communal, or societal life and decision-making. Here democracy is a practice that has a super important self-value: it is not a curriculum as it is in Democratic Education as civic education, not an instruction as it is in Democratic Education for democracy, not an educational tool as it is in Democratic Education as a problem-solving method for social problems. Usually, such democratic governance involves deliberate democracy where each member of the democratic school – students and staff – has the right to participate in: a) identifying a problem in the collective life requiring a collective decision, b) proposing solutions, c) debating the pros and cons of particular proposals, d) deciding which proposal to adopt, e) enforcing the collective rules and laws, f) the judicial process of investigation of the violations and passing the judgment, g) sanctioning the violators, and so on. The specific forms of rulemaking, rule enforcement, decision-making, and judicial processes may vary in democratic schools. Some democratic schools use majority voting, some consensus, some judicial committees, some by delegation and representation, and so on, as discussed in many articles in this special issue. As several contributors argue in this special issue (e.g., Matusov, 2023a, 2023b; Rietmulder & Marjanovic-Shane, 2023), the final test for democracy as a self-value is for one to accept and obey a democratically chosen decision with which the one disagrees:

The democratic education paradigm requires an educator's full faith that their students are the final authority for and authorial agency of their own education and life (Klag, 1994; Neill, 1960). The students have an unalienable right to define the purposes of their own education, their own curriculum, instruction, and organization of their education (with or without the help of a teacher or peers), including their decision to engage or not to engage in their education. Essentially, democratic education is the affirmation of education as a self-education (Matusov, 2021b). When faced with conflicting choices for their collective education, the students have the right to make decisions democratically, which may include public deliberation, voting, delegation of a decision to others, flipping a coin, deliberative consensus, compromising, splitting the class into smaller groups, studying solo, and so on. Democratic education rejects the imposition of curriculum on the students, the teachers' unilateralism, legitimacy of the institutional authority unsanctioned by the students, mandatory attendance, non-consensual assignments, unconditional obedience, pleasing the teachers and institutions, grading (unless asked by the students), and so on (Gray, Riley, & Curry-Knight, 2021; Greenberg, 1991; Holt, 1976; Llewellyn, 1998; Neill, 1960; Rietmulder, 2019) in (Matusov, 2023a, p. A57).

Both Democratic Education as governance and Democratic Education as a self-value reject Kantian educational paternalism. Proponents of these approaches hope that any mistakes in the democratic decision-making processes are self-correcting: when the participants experience the negative consequences of their decisions, they change their minds and make necessary collective corrections again through the democratic process. The processes of democratic deliberation and self-correction themselves have educational power for their participants. The participants' diversity of knowledge, information, expertise, experience, reasoning, sensibility, value, creativity, and maturity in democratic school may constitute its strength in these democratic processes, thus, rejecting Kant's arguments about ignorance, irrationality, and immaturity of students as the reasons for educational paternalism.

Yet, my own contribution to this special issue (Matusov, 2023b) problematizes this approach. Democratic governance is not the only intrinsic value that Democratic Education may want to embrace. The other self-values and instrumental values may be, at times, in a non-harmonic relationship with democracy as governance. For example, democratic governance can become at odds with self-education or with protecting the long-term interests of democratic schools over its immediate interests, and so on. Contextual, dynamic, authorial, and, thus, problematic prioritization by the participants of important self-values is required.

Democratic Education as self-education

According to this type of Democratic Education, there is the recognition by all participants that each student is the final authority for their own education, if not life. As the final authority, the student is the one who defines whether to study, what to study, why to study, with whom to study, when to study, where to study, how to study, and so on. This educational decision-making can be done with or without the help of other people. Elsewhere, I conceptually justified this type of Democratic Education by distinguishing education from learning: education is the educatee's decision about the value of experienced or planned learning (and not only learning) (Matusov, 2021b). Thus, making educational decisions for the educatee robs the educatee of their education (Matusov, 2021b). Often, many democratic educators – e.g., Jim Rietmulder (Rietmulder & Marjanovic-Shane, 2023) and Martin Duberman (in Matusov, 2023a) in this special issue – equate self-directed education with self-education. However, as I argued in my contribution (Matusov, 2023b) and elsewhere (Matusov, 2022b), self-directed education is only one among many forms of self-education, which may not necessarily be self-directed.

From my point of view, there are at least two major limitations of this approach to Democratic Education, mostly discussed between Ana Marjanovic-Shane and Jim Rietmulder (2023) and in my contributions (Matusov, 2023a, 2023b). However, one also may find these issues in the articles on the Oslo democratic school (Marjanovic-Shane, 2023b, 2023c, 2023d; Marjanovic-Shane et al., 2023). The first limitation is external. The broader society imposes non-democratic values, such as upward social mobility, credentialism, social efficiency, etc., on the participants of Democratic Education. For example, some students at democratic schools have to prepare for SAT tests in the USA to enter many (but not all) American universities.

The other limitation is intrinsic. Jim Rietmulder stated, “As I wrote in my book (Rietmulder, 2019), The Circle School represents a ‘theory of schooling’ rather than a ‘theory of education’” (Rietmulder & Marjanovic-Shane, 2023, p. A45). I think Jim is on something very important here. As soon as we start focusing on education, like on happiness, it escapes from us. It is because education exists in close contact with non-education and is supported by the latter. The Greek word “school” means “leisure.” Intrinsic, non-instrumental education is a form of leisure along with other forms of leisure like playing, hanging out with friends, and hobby (Matusov, 2020). All these forms of leisure are surrounded and supported by mundane non-leisure activities and concerns like safety and survival, keeping order, keeping resources, providing lodging and food, and so on. Without promoting all these non-educational forms of leisure and mundane non-leisure activities, education becomes impossible or, at least, very difficult. Also, which is probably, an even more important point, self-education resists a “theory of education” because it is the educatee who defines what education means for themselves at the given moment: whether it is a critical examination of life (cf. Socrates), creative socialization, closed socialization, training, their combination, or something else (Matusov & Marjanovic-Shane, 2012). That is why, in my view, the focus on schooling as the ecology, culture, and institution of joint self-education might be more warranted for educators and educatees than their sharp focus on education.

Dialogic Education

When we (The DPJ Main Editors) created our journal *Dialogic Pedagogy* 10 years ago, we had to make many important decisions. Two of these important decisions are relevant to this section on the polysemy of the concept of Dialogic Education. The first important question was to define the term “Dialogic Pedagogy.” Our first temptation was to define it by our consensus – fortunately, we rejected this temptation. Instead, I offered to define Dialogic Pedagogy heuristically: “We loosely define ‘dialogic pedagogy’ as any scholarship and pedagogical practice, from educational researchers, philosophers, and practitioners, which values and gives priority to ‘dialogue’ in learning/teaching/educating across a wide range of institutional and non-institutional learning settings” (<https://dpj.pitt.edu/ojs/dpj1/about>). I think it was a very fortunate move for many reasons, but primarily because it was a very inclusive definition, preventing the journal from becoming a paradigmatically exclusive club. This open-ended heuristic definition invites an investigation of how diverse educationalists, including the authors of this special issue, understand “dialogic pedagogy.” As I discussed elsewhere (Matusov, 2018), I abstracted two major types of Dialogic Pedagogy: instrumental and ontological.

The second important question, which the members of the proto–Editorial-Board decided that is relevant to this section, was about the title of our journal. The two most popular options were: “Dialogic Pedagogy” and “Dialogic Education.” I was the proponent of the former, which, unfortunately, as I judge it now, won. Not only is Dialogic Education a broader and more inclusive concept than Dialogic Pedagogy, but it focuses on the primary actors: educatees rather than educators. Please notice that educatees, students, and learners are missing from our definition of Dialogic Pedagogy above. This omission is both legitimate because of the journal’s primary focus on pedagogy and illegitimate because pedagogy serves education and not the other way around: educatees can exist without educators, but educators cannot exist without educatees. I suspect that growing up and working in conventional institutions of foisted education, I have realized this obvious distortion only recently.

Instrumental Dialogic Education

Instrumental Dialogic Education views dialogue as a tool for achieving other ends. These ends can be learning achievements, or learning outcomes, – for example, raising test-scores (Clarke, Resnick, & Rosé, 2015); deepening students’ understanding of some curricula viewed by educators as important (Lefstein & Snell, 2013); making students deeply engaged in the preset curriculum (Böheim et al., 2021); improving society through social justice (Freire, 1986); and so on. In Instrumental Dialogic Education, dialogue is not self-valued, but it is viewed as an effective means for achieving non-dialogic ends. In such an approach, usually, the genre of classroom discourse and the teacher’s instruction are dialogized and codified by the educators – e.g., “productive dialogue” (Webb et al., 2019) or “productive talk” (Alexander, 2015), – toward educational goals defined by the educators. Thus, dialogue is very limited and, actually, monologized by the goals unilaterally selected and preset by the educators.

In the special issue, a good example of Instrumental Dialogic Education involves some, but not all, participants of the Oslo democratic school (Jørgensen, 2023; Marjanovic-Shane, 2023a, 2023b, 2023c, 2023d; Marjanovic-Shane et al., 2023) who saw dialogue as an effective way to establish a consensus for school goals or solve emerging problems through a consensus or a majority agreement.

Another example of Instrumental Dialogic Education may be the article by Armando Marino Filho (2023), who used open-ended dialogue (and democracy) as a tool or a method to overcome violence among children in his Brazilian NGO – dialogue as a tool for social justice. However, I am not sure. I wonder if a used sociocultural framework, which I consider to be rather positivistic (Matusov, 2022a), might blind Armando from his recognition of the ontological nature of democracy and dialogue in his educational

practice, where dialogue and democracy are self-valuable ways of living joint lives together rather than tools for decreasing violence, which was a by-product of such living.

Ontological Dialogic Education

Ontological Dialogic Education views dialogue morally as the primary venue for the humanization of life, epistemologically as the basis of meaning making, and ontologically as a way of living (Matusov, 2009). Jim Rietmulder articulated this point in his interview:

Dialogue, you can't keep human beings from dialoguing. Meaning making is really an essential part of human being. And democratic schooling throws people together in a community which necessarily leads to negotiation of one sort or another. ... Conflict, tension between differing meanings, and it's a stage on which existential needs are experienced and met or not met, but a venue in which people can pursue satisfaction of those existential needs. Community generates, as I point out in the book (Rietmulder, 2019), an endless stream of situational challenges that all require meaning-making, much of that meaning-making in dialogue with other people (Rietmulder & Marjanovic-Shane, 2023, p. A33).

The dialogue here has a self-value being the end and the mean of education (and not only). However, learning and insights are not necessarily dialogic. A student's learning and insights become educational only when the student passes a value judgment on their own learning and insights. This value judgment is embedded in a dialogue with other people and/or the student themselves (Matusov, 2021b).

In conventional and progressive schools, a full-blown dialogue about the value of learning for the student is not legitimate because education and its curriculum are imposed on the students and not negotiable. As a result, not only is education monologized there, but essentially, students are robbed of an education. Education is effectively replaced with learning there: learnification of the education (Matusov, 2021b).

In the special issue, Ontological Dialogic Education was presented by the articles on the Oslo democratic school's general assembly (Jørgensen, 2023; Marjanovic-Shane, 2023b, 2023c, 2023d; Marjanovic-Shane et al., 2023). The students at the Oslo democratic school discussed the educational values of the school, including who must set them and why – which was one of the central foci of the heated meeting, in my judgment. The interview of Jim Rietmulder by Ana Marjanovic-Shane (2023) also focused on similar issues. My essay on Martin Duberman's educational experiment (Matusov, 2023a) discussed the educational philosophies behind his experiment, which again considered the values that made students' learning education. The struggles for educational values can be found in the essay by Armando Marino Filho (2023), which defined both the success and the abrupt end of this innovative educational practice. One of the primary issues in my article about benevolent dictator (Matusov, 2023b) was a collision of values, constituting my students' education.

Considering the polysemy of the concept of Ontological Dialogic Education, some educationalists, including me in the past, defined ontological dialogic education as *a critical dialogue* (Matusov & Pease-Alvarez, 2020). Now I view critical dialogue as a particular type of Ontological Dialogic Education. This vision of Ontological Dialogic Education was eloquently articulated by Socrates at his terminal court: "The unexamined life is not worth living" (Plato & Riddell, 1973). Ontological dialogic education is understood as a critical examination of life, self, world, society, and education itself against alternative ideas and values in a dialogue with other people and themselves (Matusov & Pease-Alvarez, 2020). Not all educatees want to engage in critical dialogue all the time, nor should they do that. Not all educatees value critical dialogue as a type of Ontological Dialogic Education.

It is clear to me that Martin Duberman (in Matusov, 2023a) and me (in Matusov, 2023b) are committed to the value of critical dialogue – some of his and my students have become interested in it. It is an interesting question of whether any of the students at the Oslo democratic school were interested in critical dialogue. From his interview and personal communication, it seems that Jim Rietmulder has become interested in it.

Recently, I started distinguishing two types of Ontological Dialogic Education: conservative and democratic (Matusov, 2022, December). A *conservative* approach tries to organize Ontological Dialogic Education within a conventional educational institution, however, without rejecting its foisted nature. In contrast, a *democratic* approach to Ontological Dialogic Education rejects foisted education altogether. My understanding of the debates at the general assembly at the Oslo democratic school was, in part, a struggle between these two approaches. In Martin Duberman's educational experiment, the tension between these two approaches was also very strong. At the same time, after all the temptations and doubts, he was firmly committed to the democratic approach, although within certain limits that I discussed in my essay (2023a). I sensed that Armando Marino Filho (2023) was also committed to a democratic approach rather than to a conservative but also with some trepidations and reservations. Of course, Jim Rietmulder's Circle School espouses and practices a democratic approach after its transition from a conservative approach (2023). As to me (Matusov, 2023b), I started making my transition from a conservative to democratic Ontological Dialogic Education in 2011 when I realized that dialogism requires deeply down an unfettered democracy: democracy as governance, self-value, and self-education.

Complementarity

In my essay here, I argued that "Participatory democracy requires dialogue, while dialogue requires voluntary participation and students' ownership of their education" (Matusov, 2023b, p. A255). For dialogue, democracy is a political regime of dialogue. Democracy assures that dialogue is voluntary, non-participation is legitimate, the participants define the topics of dialogue, the ownership of dialogue (and life) belongs to its participants, freedoms, rights, and so on. For democracy, dialogue is critical deliberation. Dialogue is the heart of democracy. It promotes opportunities to raise issues and find satisfactory solutions, the quality, and depth of decision making, assurance of the unique personal voice to be revealed, affirmed, heard, and responded to, revelation and articulation of alternative ideas, approaches, values, and paradigms. Dialogue can reveal and legitimize the existing and emerging tensions and prevent violence. Dialogue humanizes democracy.

Biographically, I came to democracy in my university classes from dialogue, from my Dialogic Pedagogy, when I recognized that my non-negotiable impositions, my unilateralism, and institutional foisting education at large are enemies of ontological dialogue and Dialogic Education. In contrast, Jim Rietmulder seems to have come to dialogue from democracy, from his Democratic Education, in his democratic school. Dialogue deepens democracy, "...judicial committee, it seems to me, is just loaded with dialogue that involves everybody in the school, some people more than others, but it's tremendously about meaning making from the rules. "Why do we have this rule? If I do this, why does it violate the rule? Or why doesn't it? Or why doesn't this rule... Why doesn't this rule say what we mean?" And that's a huge one. [chuckle]" (Rietmulder & Marjanovic-Shane, 2023, p. A35).

Tensions

While dialogue and democracy need each other, it does not mean that they can have harmonious relations or are even compatible with each other. Elsewhere, Ana Marjanovic-Shane and I discussed this issue (Matusov & Marjanovic-Shane, 2015). Let me reiterate some points from our past essay and provide

new areas of the dialogue-democracy tensions that, in my observation, were present in all essays in this special issue.

The first area of the dialogue-democracy tensions is their attitude toward power, politics, and collectivity. Dialogue rejects any power, while democracy accepts it. Of course, democracy is a particular political way of establishing power. Power is the imposition of a particular perspective, value, solution, or worldview on a person who disagrees with it. Bakhtin's notion of "internally persuasive discourse" rejects any politics and power (Bakhtin, 1991; Matusov & von Duyke, 2010). Dialogue does not know voting, compromises, manipulations, bargaining, peer pressures, threats, procedures, closures, decision-making, solutions, and so on. Any political regime, including sociocracy² (Shread & Osório, 2018), is anti-dialogic. Any obligation, obedience, or commitment is anti-dialogic as a compromise with one's views. Dialogue is *lichnost'*-based³, it does approve and affirm civil disobedience as the assertion of personal responsibility above any law of the *socium*. Dialogue's credo was articulated by Bakhtin (1993): "I don't have alibi-in-being."

In contrast, democracy is *socium*-based, it rejects civil disobedience: "We wouldn't tolerate, or we don't wanna tolerate civil disobedience in that sense, but those policies don't dictate interactions" (Rietmulder & Marjanovic-Shane, 2023, p. A45). A German philosopher Max Stirner insisted that freedom of thinking is rooted in personal safety from communal persecution, when the pursuit of an inquiry can be prioritized over the harmonious communal relations⁴, "The thought is only my *own* when I have no hesitation about putting it in mortal danger at every moment, when I don't have to fear its loss as *a loss for me*, as a loss of me" (Stirner, 2017, p. 354, italics original). Yet, this dialogic ideal cannot realize itself is a social vacuum and, thus, requires its limitation – a compromise with democracy as the best political regime/oppression for dialogue out of all possible⁵. It is worth noticing that out of the five ways of defining Democratic Education listed above, it is the last one, Democratic Education as self-education is the most compatible with dialogue.

The second area of the dialogue-democracy tensions is the speech-action divide. While pure dialogue is pure speech, pure democracy is pure action. The speech and the action have different rights and different obligations. The speech has the right to be free, while the freedom of action is not legitimate. Dialogue accepts any utterance, however unpleasant, problematic, and disturbing, which is not an action. Democracy cannot accept any action but only lawful action. The realm of dialogue is ideas, worldviews, perceptions, convictions, judgments, paradigms, values, and so on. The realm of democracy is decision-making, solutions, pragmatics, morality, responsibility, deeds, and so on. Of course, there is a grey area between speech and action – any speech has its action component, while any action has its speech component – which requires a judgment about their contextual boundaries and compromises. Setting boundaries and compromises is in itself another act of democracy.

The third area is the crucial difference of what dialogue and democracy are about. Dialogue, especially critical dialogue, is about bottomless depth of understanding. Democracy is about maintaining

² Like in "democracy," "sociocracy" is a compound word with the second root "cracy" meaning "power": the power of *socium*.

³ Unfortunately, English does not have an analog to the Slavic word "*lichnost'*." It can be inadequately translated as "personality." However, I can often hear my colleagues' charge me with "individualism." The Slavic term "*lichnost'*" allows transcending the individual-social dichotomy so powerfully inescapable in English. See also Marjanovic-Shane et al. (2023) in this special issue, its discussion of "Tensions between individual and collective rights" (pp. A107-A109)

⁴ Cf. Aristotle wrote in his book "*Nicomachean Ethics*": "*Amicus Plato, sed magis amica veritas*" translating from Latin as "Plato is my friend, but truth is a better friend (literally: Plato is friend, but truth is more friend (to me than he is))." This is a societal maxim involving the legitimacy of the transcendence of friendship. In contrast, in a community, the maxim is the opposite: keeping harmonious relations is often more important than truth.

⁵ Cf. Winston Churchill's famous statement about democracy: "democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time."

peace in the face of disagreements by searching for livable solutions. As Jim Rietmulder told in his interview: "I think part of democracy is peaceful co-existence of difference. I think that democratic schools generally, and I know that The Circle School in particular, as a community, is able to work through differences in a civil way, and there's very little vilification of people who hold different opinions." (Rietmulder & Marjanovic-Shane, 2023, p. A30). Dialogue is essentially *deconstructive* (Marjanovic-Shane, 2016), while democracy is essentially *constructive*. Dialogue lives in the unfinalizable, reversible, and imaginary time where every word can be taken back. This dialogue time is constituted by the events of deconstruction of the given, deepening our understanding and liberating it from being colonized by the given culture, socium, and nature. Any particular dialogue is embedded in the Big Dialogue of humanity that does not know its beginning or the end (Bakhtin, 1999; Bibler, 2009). In contrast, democracy lives in finalizable, irreversible, and real-time, when its deeds cannot always be easily taken back. This democracy time is constituted by the events of the construction of a new peace negating the present disagreements. In this sense, I respectfully disagree with my dear friend and colleague Jim Rietmulder, who said in his interview:

Jim: We're trying to get at differences or conflicts between dialogue and democracy, but even where our democratic judicial system, where the rubber meets the road, where pushing comes to shove, or where it really... There's a lot at stake, when the judicial committee finalizes its findings by voting on it, when the judicial committee charges somebody by vote, when the judicial committee imposes a sentence, all of those are finalized in one sense, that is, at least on a temporary basis, it's declared an end of the dialogue.

Ana: Exactly.

Jim: But that's not non-dialogic and it's not a conflict. Decision-making is not in conflict with dialogue... What do I wanna say here? All of those decisions are still open. School Meeting reviews all of those decisions, every week. And even a year later, if somebody said, "You know, I think I was falsely convicted in this case," they could bring it back to School Meeting. I think one of the reasons I oppose capital punishment is because there is a finality to that dialogue. I think it's a denial of due process. So I don't object to... Frankly, I don't object to a society killing somebody because they think an offense has been so great, but I do object to a society determining with that degree of finality that they should die. And so I oppose capital punishment for that reason. But I don't see any incompatibility or conflict between "finalizing" decisions, between finalizing anything and dialogue. Dialogue doesn't imply open-endedness, and democracy doesn't imply rejection of expertise. (Rietmulder & Marjanovic-Shane, 2023, p. A39).

In the spirit of my argument here, let me abandon⁶ my conclusion with this disagreement between us and my traditional question to the readers: "What do you think?"

References

- Alexander, R. J. (2015). Dialogic pedagogy at scale: Oblique perspectives. *Socializing intelligence through academic talk and dialogue*, 429-439.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1991). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays by M. M. Bakhtin* (C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Trans.). Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1993). *Toward a philosophy of the act* (V. Liapunov, Trans. 1st ed.). Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1999). *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

⁶ Cf. Leonardo Da Vinci: "Art is never finished, only abandoned."

- Bibler, V. S. (2009). The foundations of the School of the Dialogue of Cultures Program. *Journal of Russian & East European Psychology*, 47(1), 34–60.
- Böheim, R., Schnitzler, K., Gröschner, A., Weil, M., Knogler, M., Schindler, A.-K., . . . Seidel, T. (2021). How changes in teachers' dialogic discourse practice relate to changes in students' activation, motivation and cognitive engagement. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, 28, 100450.
- Clarke, S. N., Resnick, L. B., & Rosé, C. P. (2015). Dialogic instruction: A new frontier. In L. Corno & E. M. Anderman (Eds.), *Handbook of educational psychology* (3 ed., pp. 392-403). New York: Routledge.
- Dewey, J. (1997). *Democracy and education: An introduction to the philosophy of education*. New York: Free Press.
- Freire, P. (1986). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Gray, P., Riley, G., & Curry-Knight, K. (2021). Former students' evaluations of experiences at a democratic school: Roles of the Democratic Processes, Staff, and the Community of Students. *Other Education*, 10(2), 4-25. Retrieved from <https://www.othereducation.org/index.php/OE/article/view/305/304>
- Greenberg, D. (1991). *Free at last: The Sudbury Valley School*. Framingham, MA: Sudbury Valley School Press.
- Holt, J. C. (1976). *Instead of education: Ways to help people do things better* (1st ed.). New York: Dutton.
- Jørgensen, M. (2023). From a school rebellion to a rebel school – its people and their initial struggles with democracy in education. *Dialogic Pedagogy: An International Online Journal*, 11(2), A133-A157, doi:10.5195/dpj.2023.414.
- Kant, I. (1784). An answer to the question: What is Enlightenment? Retrieved from https://www.stmarys-ca.edu/sites/default/files/attachments/files/Kant--What%20Is%20Enlightenment_.pdf
- Klag, P. (1994). A new look at Invitational Education. *The Collaborator*, 5(14), 1-2.
- Lefstein, A., & Snell, J. (2013). *Better than best practice: Developing teaching and learning through dialogic pedagogy*. New York: Routledge.
- Llewellyn, G. (1998). *The teenage liberation handbook: How to quit school and get a real life and education* (Rev., 2nd ed ed.). Eugene, OR: Lowry House.
- Marino Filho, A. (2023). A way to overcome violence through a democratic and dialogical process. *Dialogic Pedagogy: An International Online Journal*, 11(2), A261-A284, doi:10.5195/dpj.2023.283.
- Marjanovic-Shane, A. (2016). “Spoilsport” in drama education vs. dialogic pedagogy. *Dialogic Pedagogy: An International Online Journal*, 4, A45-A80. doi:10.5195/dpj.2016.151
- Marjanovic-Shane, A. (2023a). Dialogic pedagogy in democratically run schools: Introduction. *Dialogic Pedagogy: An International Online Journal*, 11(2), A12-A20, doi:10.5195/dpj.2023.559.
- Marjanovic-Shane, A. (2023b). Four person-ideas in a soul-searching internally persuasive discourse. *Dialogic Pedagogy: An International Online Journal*, 11(2), A198-A216, doi:10.5195/dpj.2023.478.
- Marjanovic-Shane, A. (2023c). A paradigmatic dialogue-disagreement in a democratic school: A conceptual analysis of a soul-searching assembly meeting. *Dialogic Pedagogy: An International Online Journal*, 11(2), A217 - A244, doi:10.5195/dpj.2023.445.

- Marjanovic-Shane, A. (2023d). A Soul-Searching Assembly — A Vignette. *Dialogic Pedagogy: An International Online Journal*, 11(2), A165-A197, doi:10.5195/dpj.2023.360.
- Marjanovic-Shane, A., Kullenberg, T., & Gradovski, M. (2023). Scandinavian experiments in democratic education. *Dialogic Pedagogy: An International Online Journal*, 11(2), A158-A164, doi:10.5195/dpj.2023.477.
- Matusov, E. (2009). *Journey into dialogic pedagogy*. Hauppauge, NY: Nova Science Publishers.
- Matusov, E. (2018). Mapping dialogic pedagogy: Instrumental and non-instrumental education. In A. Rosa & J. Valsiner (Eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Sociocultural Psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 274-301). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Matusov, E. (2020). *Envisioning education in a post-work leisure-based society: A dialogic perspective*. New York: Palgrave.
- Matusov, E. (2021a). Progressive education is the opium of the educators. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, 1-34.
- Matusov, E. (2021b). The relationship between education and learning and its consequences for dialogic pedagogy. *Dialogic Pedagogy: An International Online Journal*, 9, E1-E19, doi:10.5195/dpj.2021.425.
- Matusov, E. (2022a). Sociocultural positivism: Critical evaluation in three research vignettes. *Culture & Psychology*, 1-27, doi:10.1177/1354067X221114131.
- Matusov, E. (2022b). The teachers' pedagogical fiduciary duty to their students. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, 1-26, doi:10.1007/s12124-022-09690-8.
- Matusov, E. (2022, December). *The stand of Dialogic Pedagogy in our times of peace and war: My perspective*. Paper presented at the The International Dialogic Pedagogy online conference.
- Matusov, E. (2023a). Democracy, dialogism, therapy, progressivism, anarchism, and other values in Martin Duberman's innovative pedagogy. *Dialogic Pedagogy: An International Online Journal*, 11(2), A49-A92, doi:10.5195/dpj.2023.385.
- Matusov, E. (2023b). Teacher as a benevolent dictator: Promoting an educational culture of democratic dialogic education. *Dialogic Pedagogy: An International Online Journal*, 11(2), A245 - A260, doi:10.5195/dpj.2023.331.
- Matusov, E., & Marjanovic-Shane, A. (2012). Diverse Approaches to Education: Alienated Learning, Closed and Open Participatory Socialization, and Critical Dialogue. *Human Development*, 55(3), 159-166, doi:10.1159/000339594.
- Matusov, E., & Marjanovic-Shane, A. (2015). Rehabilitation of power in Democratic Dialogic Education. In K. Jezierska & L. Koczanowicz (Eds.), *Democracy in dialogue, dialogue in democracy* (pp. 193-209). Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.
- Matusov, E., & Pease-Alvarez, C. (2020). Moving from collaboration to critical dialogue in action in education. *Dialogic Pedagogy: An International Online Journal*, 8, A1-A19, doi:10.5195/dpj.2020.292.
- Matusov, E., & von Duyke, K. (2010). Bakhtin's notion of the Internally Persuasive Discourse in education: Internal to what? (A case of discussion of issues of foul language in teacher education). In K. Junefelt & P. Nordin (Eds.), *Proceedings from the Second International Interdisciplinary Conference on perspectives and limits of dialogism in Mikhail Bakhtin Stockholm University, Sweden June 3-5, 2009* (pp. 174-199). Stockholm: Stockholm University.

- Neill, A. S. (1960). *Summerhill: A radical approach to child rearing*. New York: Hart Publishing Company.
- Plato, & Riddell, J. (1973). *The Apology of Plato, with a revised text and English notes, and a digest of Platonic idioms*. New York,: Arno Press.
- Rietmulder, J. (2019). *When kids rule the school: The power and promise of democratic education*. Gabriola Island, Canada: New Society Publishers.
- Rietmulder, J., & Marjanovic-Shane, A. (2023). Freedom, dialogue, and education in a democratic school. *Dialogic Pedagogy: An International Online Journal*, 11(2), A21-A48, doi:10.5195/dpj.2023.488.
- Shread, C., & Osório, M. (2018). School Circles: Wondering school in the Netherlands [Documentary film]. Netherlands: Wonder school.
- Stirner, M. (2017). *The unique and its property* (W. Landstreicher, Trans.). Baltimore: Underworld Amusements.
- Webb, N. M., Franke, M. L., Ing, M., Turrou, A. C., Johnson, N. C., & Zimmerman, J. (2019). Teacher practices that promote productive dialogue and learning in mathematics classrooms. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 97, 176-186.
-



New articles in this journal are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 United States License.



This journal is published by [Pitt Open Library Publishing](http://open.library.pitt.edu).