



The Stand on Dialogic Pedagogy in Our Times of Peace and War: My Perspective on December 12, 2022



Eugene Matusov
University of Delaware, USA

Abstract

This essay represents the publication of my keynote address at the First DPJ online conference on December 12, 2022. In my speech, I defined how I perceive “our times” and how Dialogic Pedagogy in our times of peace and war may try to address these challenges or even if we should do so. I continued developing the concept of Ontological Dialogic Education. What is the role of Ontological Dialogic Education in addressing the challenges of our times, and is it relevant at all? Why and how can it contribute to a vision of a liberal democracy, if at all? This questioning let me introduce a key post-Enlightenment notion of education based on students’ self-determination and dignity.

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."



Introduction

Initially, I wanted to turn my oral keynote address into a conventional academic essay based on my oral presentation at the Dialogic Pedagogy Journal online conference. However, listening to my talk, I decided to publish it as an edited transcript. I chose to be respectful and faithful to Eugene Matusov circa December 12, 2022. Therefore, I did not update the ideas presented in this address. I cleaned the text of its orality that may disturb some readers, added necessary references, clarified some ambiguous points, and addressed the critique that was kindly provided by the conference audience after my presentation. I am very thankful to Mariëtte de Haan, Ana Marjanovic-Shane, Alexander Sidorkin, and Bridgette Redder for their helpful and thought-provoking critique and support of my address. Also, I want to thank Mikhail Gradovski for organizing the conference, inviting me, and facilitating my session. Finally, I want to express my gratitude to Bob Hampel, Ana Marjanovic-Shane, and Mariëtte de Haan for providing feedback, editing, and very helpful suggestions on a previous draft of this article. Thanks a lot, Ana Marjanovic-Shane, for her careful and thoughtful editing of my previous text as a co-editor of the Dialogic Pedagogy Journal.

Our times

Good morning, good day, good evening, and good night! Whatever fits you!

Today, I just want to present my half-baked ideas that will hopefully lead to a bigger project. Let me start with the statement that I really love the title of our conference: “Dialogic Pedagogy in the Times of War or Peace and War.” I think it is useful to reflect on our times now and the role of Dialogic Pedagogy in it. Therefore, I decided to share with you what I think about our times and Dialogic Pedagogy. What I’m presenting is not THE perspective on Dialogic Pedagogy – rather, it’s MY perspective as it is today, on December 12th, 2022, because it might change tomorrow, if not even this evening. I will present my understanding of Dialogic Pedagogy, our times, and the place of education in society as it is right now, at the time of the key address. Finalizing this manuscript at the beginning of 2024, I tried to resist the temptation to update my key address, mentioning world events that occurred in the last year since my address. It is enough to say that, unfortunately, my arguments only got stronger, especially after Hamas genocidal attack of Israel on October 7, 2023.

I first want to talk about “our time.” After that, I will talk about what I think about dialogic pedagogy, and then I will dive into the relationship between education and society. My disclaimer is – I want to repeat it one more time – that “our times” is defined from my personal vista, here and now. This is how I see our times. I am aware that you may see “our times” in different ways. Let me zoom in on “our times.” What do I see? I see many alarming challenges.

The retreat of liberal democracy

First of all, I see a retreat of the liberal democracy (Zakaria, 2003), a retreat that has been happening probably for, I don't know, the last 15-20 years or, maybe, starting even earlier. Liberal democracy is characterized by tolerance, pluralism, respect for minorities, human rights (i.e., political liberalism), and governance by people (i.e., democracy). By the way, democracy can be illiberal, and non-democratic governance can be liberal (Zakaria, 2003). I see the retreat of *liberal democracy* from geographical and ideological perspectives.

Geographically, more countries have increasingly become illiberal and/or undemocratic. Some of these countries have become illiberal democracies, some have become completely autocratic, and some have even become totalitarian. According to the Varieties of Democracy project, the percentage of countries governed by liberal democracy dropped from its historic peak of 24.9% in 2009 to 18.0% in 2022, which roughly corresponds to 1989 when liberal democracy was on the rise (Herre, Ortiz-Ospina, & Roser, 2023). The global index of liberal democracy is getting more and more alarming year by year.

From an ideological point of view, the appeal to liberal democracy has become less and less strong, less and less persuasive, at least up to this year. Maybe it will change soon, and there is some possibility of these changes in the air. Specifically, I'm talking about the promising results of the congressional elections in the United States this year, November 2022, when the Trumpist red wave did not emerge. Maybe it is a change for the good, hopefully. But maybe not. Maybe it's only a temporary “statistical noise.” But, for some time, liberal democracy has become less and less appealing ideologically, while illiberal democratic, authoritarian, and totalitarian regimes have become more appealing to people worldwide. Of course, the geographical retreat and ideological crisis of liberal democracy go together, hand in hand, feeding each other.

Let me give an example of an offensive of autocratic and totalitarian regimes on ideological fronts. If you look at the, let us say, problem of how different countries have addressed the Covid pandemic, an

important debate about which political regime handled the pandemic better is revealing. Which political regime -- liberal democracy or its alternatives -- did better in dealing with the Covid pandemic? What does it mean "better"? You can look at different things like, for example, Covid-caused deaths per million people in the population. And you can see that some authoritarian or totalitarian regimes, like, for example, China, look pretty appealing to some so far (Chen, 2022). Their statistics look good. Well, we know that right now, there is an ongoing Covid-related unrest in China¹. However, that's another story. If you look at it from the point of view of the people who died, even if Chinese statistics may not be fully trusted, it's very impressive in terms of the number of deaths per million: 4 deaths per million in China compared to 3,315 deaths in the USA². It is true that the Covid-related mortality statistics are probably not reliable, and the story has not ended yet. Still, it is still unclear who handled the Covid pandemic better: countries with liberal democracy like the US (3,315 deaths per million of its population), Germany (1,895), the UK (2,887), Italy (3,027), France (2,438), Israel (1,278), Sweden (2,075), New Zealand (688), Australia (631), South Korea (606), Japan (413), Norway (816), etc., or authoritarian and totalitarian countries like China (4), Singapore (287), Hungary (5,032), Turkey (1,186), Vietnam (436), Saudi Arabia (265), Russia (2,693), Iran (1,682), and so on. The jury is still out.

Anyway, I'm just giving one example of these debates, ideological debates, about political regime effectiveness. There is no clear-cut answer to what political regime is better right now. It used to be clear in the 1980s and 1990s when the Soviet Union Empire and its satellites collapsed. Some scholars claimed "the end of history" because they believed that liberal democracy decisively and conclusively won once and for all (Fukuyama, 1992). However, now we think of a new history without a conclusive victory of liberal democracy -- the painful drama of history continues. Oops!

The normalization of wars

Another ugly thing that has emerged just this year is the normalization of wars. Of course, it's not the case that there have been no wars before this year, but the new issue, a new normal, is the normalization of wars in the global world of the 21st century, including a major war in Europe. Before this year, wars were viewed as an aberration from the global trend toward perpetual world peace, as a historical atavism, as a tragic but annoying nuisance, and as overcoming our sad, savage past (Pinker, 2011). There was a hegemonic post-WWII consensus that wars must be prevented as much as possible. It's not the right policy to launch wars, especially territorial wars of annexation and imperial colonial wars. We thought that wars, especially imperial, colonial, and conquest wars, were behind us, mostly. However, suddenly, after the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, we have learned that not only are wars not behind us, but some countries, like Russia, accept the normalcy of such wars.

Another thing is, again, that since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, people fear and panic again about global Nuclear Armageddon and a new World War. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, we felt that this existential fear was behind us. Today, some say we are already experiencing World War Four -- the Cold War being the Third World War. So, these threats and worries suddenly become more acute and global. This is part of the current trends. The powerful ideal that maybe we can reach an idea of peace, perpetual peace, which was considered to be a viable possibility not so long ago (Pinker, 2011), is fading. Now, it feels less and less possible. There is less belief in the progress toward a warless world.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2022_COVID-19_protests_in_China

² See The World Meter Covid statistics on December 12, 2022, here: <https://web.archive.org/web/20221212215106/https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>

The Kafkaesque oppression by positivism: AI, big data, patternocrata, measurement, accountability

Another interesting but troubling thing marking our times is what I would call the Kafkaesque oppression by positivism. I mean the perpetuation of numberization, patternization, measurement, and artificial intelligence in diverse spheres of our social life. Management of the population by Big Data, what I call patternocrata, has become ubiquitous. This is my new word in my contribution to the English language, digital patternocrata: the power of the patterns. People see patterns everywhere, trying to discover them, create patterns, etc. They think patterns can explain, control, constitute, or replace everything, including emotions, meaning-making, biases, desires, goals, and values. This is a structural-functional formalism I wrote about in the past (Matusov, 2020b; Matusov, Marjanovic-Shane, & Gradovski, 2019b; Matusov, Marjanovic-Shane, Kullenberg, & Curtis, 2019). Patternocrata is also manifested in the widespread of measurement: we're trying to measure everything from love to pain, to learning, to everything. Furthermore, the notion of accountability is another sign of patternocrata.

Let me tell you a personal anecdote about the arrival of the New Brave World of Patternocrata. I was recently banned from Facebook for two weeks. In a Facebook discussion of the origin of lynching with my friends and colleagues, I added the link to a Wikipedia article about lynching, and Facebook banned me for "violating communal norms." I don't know what community they are talking about. Is Facebook a community governed by *communal sensibilities* in the first place? Or is it a *society* governed by *democratically established laws* (Matusov, 2022a)? Why Facebook considers itself as a community is a good question. Anyway, they banned me because of this link to the Wikipedia article on lynching³. Why? Because when you go to the article on lynching on Wikipedia, you will see a very graphic picture of lynching. Hello!!! It's lynching, for God's sake! It was a postcard that the lynch mobs were sending their friends and family as a kind of greeting card. And, because of this disturbing picture on Wikipedia, Facebook banned me. Of course, it was done by the algorithm of Artificial Intelligence. In the email to me, the Artificial Intelligence Lord of Facebook informed me that if I disagreed with their decision, I could appeal. They provided the link to a text window where I could write my appeal. I wrote my appeal in the text window and clicked the submit button. An error message popped up saying, "Sorry, we cannot accept your appeal right now for technical reasons. Try to do it later." Two days later, I gave up on that.

Interestingly, you don't even know you're talking to Artificial Intelligence, but, of course, you do. But you are not informed. Moreover, if Facebook technology of the submit button worked well, if I could submit my appeal, Artificial Intelligence would probably review my appeal. Thus, one Artificial Intelligence monitors another Artificial Intelligence. This is the world we're increasingly living in. That is why the writings of Franz Kafka come to my mind when Big Data, AI, measurements, accountability, and patterns rule the world.

Of course, patternocrata has also penetrated education. Patterns increasingly rule people. For example, as some of you may know, as a part of educational reform The Race to The Top in the United States under President Obama, educational bureaucrats have been trying to create a value-added accountability system for teachers. Based on Big Data, this accountability system tries to assess whether the teachers increased learning – "added value" – in their students by comparing the before and after exam scores. As a result of these value-added assessment systems, some otherwise excellent teachers were fired from their jobs (O'Neil, 2016). Sadly, this is becoming increasingly common in the world we live in now.

Finally, on a much more sinister note of the oppression by patternocrata, I was teaching in China in the Fall of 2019, just before Covid. Two cameras were on the ceiling in my university classroom: one faced me, and the other faced my students. There was probably constant monitoring of what was going on during my lessons: the possible political discourse, loyalties or, at least, neutrality to the Chinese

³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lynching>

Communist regime, a lack of critical political thinking, the accord with the Party's line, and so on. I saw these two cameras hanging on the ceiling in each classroom at this newly renovated university building where I was teaching. And, again, with a high probability, our political loyalties were monitored and assessed not by real people but by Artificial Intelligence.

Post-truth and collapse of institutional positivism

On the other hand, from the opposite side of that, we have the post-truth: the proliferation of fake news, conspiracy theories, the shameless spread of “alternative facts,” and the collapse of institutional positivism. By institutional positivism, I mean expert-based institutions trusted with establishing and checking facts on very consequential and publicly important subject matters like vaccination, global warming, overpopulation, history, health, and many, many, many other important things. The public trust in these institutions has been collapsing. Moreover, on the one hand, this trust is eroding because of the academic critique of positivism claiming that the truth is a social construction and a weapon of power (see, for example of such academic critique, Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith, 2008). On the other hand, attacks on the institutions of truth can be pure and cynical political manipulation and rejection of the notion of the truth as such. For example, the Russian oppositional politician and world chess champion Garry Kasparov charged Putin's regime with intentionally overloading the public with a flood of alternative hypotheses of tragic events in Russia (e.g., Russian criminal shooting the Malaysian passenger aircraft down in the Ukrainian sky in 2014⁴) to exhaust critical public thinking. Indeed, Russian propaganda argues, “If you are so open-minded and critical, you must be obligated to investigate each of these numerous hypotheses before drawing your conclusion!” (cf. the discourse among earth flatters, in McIntyre, 2021). Similarly, Putin's former spokesperson, Vladislav Surkov⁵, argued that since all media manipulates, Russian media rejects the fake pretense of objectivity, professionalism, and fairness and instead manipulates openly rather than hypocritically.

The rejection of positivistic truth leads to its replacement by the shameless power of manipulation and lies. The powerful have the right to construct whatever they want and enforce it on the rest because they can. And, because of that, what is the truth? The truth becomes a success in manipulation, lying, or brutal force. Whatever is successful in manipulation becomes the truth. The might is right. Power is truth. In the United States nowadays, the power fight for who owns the truth in institutionalized public education occurs through the so-called “cancel culture,” where the political Right-wing and the political Left-wing banned books from school libraries⁶.

In sum, on the one hand, the total acceptance of positivism oppresses via its mindlessness and heartlessness – i.e., via its deadliness. On the one hand, the total rejection of positivism also oppresses us of its groundlessness, mysticism, and authoritarianism/totalitarianism (Matusov, Marjanovic-Shane, & Gradovski, 2019b). Rejection of truth leads to, of course, politicization and polarization of societies. Almost everything becomes polarized and politicized, as we see in the recent example of the Covid pandemic. That's the kind of world we live in now. I can continue on and on, but I will stop there.

So, this is how I saw our times. It's rather disturbing, but, probably, each historical time is disturbing in its own way; this is how our world is disturbing in our historical times from my point of view. There are also periods of hope and renewal! Also, crisis is also a time of new opportunities. We should not forget that!

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malaysia_Airlines_Flight_17

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladislav_Surkov

⁶ <https://www.inquirer.com/opinion/commentary/book-ban-pennsylvania-left-huckleberry-finn-20221025.html>

And now I will turn to a discussion of Dialogic Pedagogy. What is Dialogic Pedagogy? How can it address our times? Or should Education even address troublesome issues of our times and societies? Is it the legitimate demand on Education to ask for?

Dialogic Pedagogy (DP)

What is it?

Okay, so what is dialogic pedagogy? Before answering this question – how I understand the field of Dialogic Pedagogy today – let me talk about Richard Handler's account of Quebecois nationalism (Handler, 1988). This story helps me define Dialogic Pedagogy. Handler's study of Quebecois nationalism was commented on by anthropologist Daniel Linger (1994), who was my teacher at the University of California at Santa Cruz back then. This story is very interesting and instructive.

At the end of the eighties, the beginning of the nineties, there was a series of referenda in the French part of Canada, Quebec, about its separation from Canada. Probably because of that, anthropologists did exciting research studying Quebecois' national identity: what constitutes and defines it. For that purpose, Richard Handler interviewed French Canadians and asked them what it meant to be Quebecois. Respondents provided different answers like, "being born in Quebec, speaking French, eating typical foods, sharing a history, manifesting certain *joie de vivre*. Taken at face value, these characteristics seem thin reeds upon which to suspend a definite sense of identity, and not everyone cites the same criteria" (Linger, 1994, p. 304). By crossing these definitions of the Quebecois identity together, Handler got near zero of what was in common with all of them that define the Quebecois identity. It appears that the Quebecois could not agree on what Quebecois identity means.

And then, anthropologists Mahmood and Armstrong (1992), who reviewed Handler's study, made a wonderful conceptual twist in their discussion of Handler's findings. They said the content of the publicly constituted Quebecois identity is not zero. Instead, they claimed its *meta* content. This meta content was in the very fact of people's deep interest in trying to define the perceived Quebecois nationalism, which defines Quebecois identity – which was what it meant to be a Quebecois for the Quebecois people. In other words, the very searching for what it means to be Quebecois *is* the common ground for all this Quebecois nationalism.

So, based on that research, I defined the field of Dialogic Pedagogy by educationalists' interest in dialogue in pedagogy or even broadly in education. When we started building our journal of Dialogic Pedagogy in 2012, we had to write a statement defining what Dialogic Pedagogy is. I proposed this type of meta-content definition, coming from that research about French Canadian nationalism. Thus, dialogic pedagogy is defined by the educationalists' interest in dialogue in pedagogy or education:

We loosely define "dialogic pedagogy" as any scholarship and pedagogical practice from educational researchers, philosophers, and practitioners that values and prioritizes "dialogue" in learning/teaching/educating across a wide range of institutional and non-institutional learning settings. At this point, a variety of approaches to dialogic pedagogy have emerged. This includes but is not limited to instrumental, interactional, epistemological, ecological, and ontological approaches to dialogue in education. We embrace diverse perspectives despite their possibly irreconcilable contradictions, disagreements, and dualisms. Juxtaposing conflicting ideologies and dialogic pedagogy practices allows authentic questions and tensions to emerge as scholars across various settings for learning and cultural/historical practices provide rich perspectives on the problematic dialogue in education. We believe that the journal on dialogic pedagogy has to promote a public discourse on what dialogue and dialogic pedagogy is and means rather than provide gatekeeping, censorship, or silencing of other approaches in the name of "true dialogue," "true dialogic education," "authentic education," or "true dialogic

pedagogy” (although this assertive discourse is welcome as well). Indeed, a journal on dialogic pedagogy should not censor ideas or develop an (impossible) consensus. Instead, the journal is founded on the idea that the scholarly community should engage in dialogue about the meaning of dialogue in pedagogy, that is, to practice what it preaches. Through dissemination of scholarship in the journal, scholars will have an invaluable opportunity to engage in an international debate about what “dialogic pedagogy” means across a diverse range of ideologies, values, settings (e.g., formal institutional and informal), histories, countries, social groups, and cultural practices (<https://dpi.pitt.edu/ojs/dpi1/about>)⁷.

Whoever says dialogue is important in pedagogy means this person commits to dialogic pedagogy. The field of Dialogic Pedagogy has a huge umbrella, a very open umbrella that allows different people to claim their commitment to and ownership of Dialogic Pedagogy. It's a collective concept, not an individual or universal one. It is not based on or requires a consensus. Dialogic Pedagogy means different things to different educationalists. So, everyone who is interested in dialogue in education is welcome, regardless of how they understand “dialogue,” “pedagogy,” or “education.”

Talking about patternocrata [speaks ironically], let me provide how I see the terrain of Dialogic Pedagogy now. Like what I see, what landscape is there, which patterns – again, I'm making patterns of Dialogic Pedagogy right now! – which patterns I have recognized for now. Again, I want to emphasize and warn you that these are *my* subjective patterns at this moment. In the past, I saw these patterns of Dialogic Pedagogy a bit differently (Matusov, 2018). Other people might recognize the patterns of Dialogic Pedagogy differently from me. Also, some people disagree about the boundaries of my patterns. Finally, I may see different patterns in the future. So, after all these disclaimers, what are the diverse types of Dialogic Pedagogy for me today?

Types of Dialogic Pedagogy

Currently, I see two major types of Dialogic Pedagogy: *instrumental* and *ontological*, each having several subtypes. The instrumental approach views dialogue as an effective tool for achieving non-dialogic educational goals. In contrast, the ontological approach views dialogue as the heart of education or pedagogy.

Instrumental

The first pattern I see is what I call “instrumental dialogic pedagogy.” Instrumental dialogic pedagogy is a pedagogy in which dialogue is seen as a tool for achieving some educational and non-educational non-dialogic benefits. So, what might these benefits be? One such benefit of instrumental dialogue pedagogy is learning achievement.

Achievement-based: learning outcomes

Some educationalists committed to instrumental dialogic pedagogy think that dialogue can help to increase students' academic achievement, which is often, but not always, defined as learning outcomes. These learning outcomes are usually, but not always, based on the test score results. An illustrative example of such an achievement-based instrumental approach to dialogic pedagogy is Clarke, Resnick, and Rosé (2015) research. This research was done in a classical positivistic way of pretest-posttest using control and experimental groups. Both groups had more or less the same pre-test outcomes. Then, the control group was taught conventionally without dialogue (understood by the researchers as a particular pattern-based social interaction), while the experimental group was taught the same curriculum based on dialogic instruction. The researchers operationalized “dialogic instruction” by a set of specific

⁷ Recently, this text has been updated in part based on my criticism presented in this address.

decontextualized communicative structures and rules that, according to the researchers, defined “dialogue.” Finally, after finishing the instructions, the researchers compared “the learning gains” based on the difference between the posttest and pretest scores of the participating students in both groups. According to the results of the comparisons, the experimental groups that experienced dialogic instruction showed higher learning gains than the control group. The difference was statistically significant. Thus, let’s scale up dialogue in education!

Epistemology-based: a deep understanding of curriculum

I called another instrumental approach to dialogic pedagogy “epistemology-based” (Matusov, 2018). It is aimed at using classroom dialogue to deepen understanding of the taught curriculum. Usually, it’s a preset curriculum, but not always – the emerging curriculum also can be part of that. However, the teacher or researchers must value and approve this emerging curriculum as important and educational. An example of such an epistemology-based approach is research by Lefstein and Snell (2013).

In this approach, dialogue is usually defined as what they call “productive dialogue.” Productive of what? – of deep understanding of the desired curriculum in the students. Moreover, again, like in the case of the achievement-based instrumental approach, this deep understanding is judged by the teacher or the researchers, who define what this deep understanding of the curriculum means, why this curriculum is valuable, and whether the students’ understanding is deep or shallow. However, in contrast to the achievement-based approach, where the teacher’s (and/or the researchers’) judgments about learning outcomes precede the students’ contributions in the instructional dialogue, in the epistemology-based approach, the teacher’s (and/or the researchers’) judgments can emerge in or after the dialogue. The teacher can think with the students, engaging their minds and heart. Still, the last word about the quality of dialogue and students’ learning remains for the teacher/researchers.

Engagement-based: increasing the student’s engagement in the preset academic subject

The third type of instrumental dialogic pedagogy is an engagement-based approach (Matusov, von Duyke, & Han, 2012). It uses dialogue in the classroom to induce and deepen the students’ engagement with the curriculum preset and taught by the teacher. In his dissertation, my colleague and former doctoral advisee Mark Smith documented and analyzed the two-stage instruction by a middle school science teacher in a progressive private school. In the first stage, which the science teacher called “warm-up,” he tried to provoke his students’ interests relevant to his targeted curriculum by organizing an ontological dialogue leading to the students’ ontological engagement. Then, after the students got actively engaged in the broadly defined targeted curriculum, the teacher tried to steer them to the curriculum he wanted to teach while suppressing their “annoying” activism that emerged in the first stage. The teacher was ambivalent about the ontological dialogue that, on the one hand, deeply engaged the students in what the teacher wanted them to engage. However, on the other hand, this ontological dialogue interfered with his guidance during the second stage of his instruction (Smith, 2010, pp. 270-340).

Social justice based: the betterment of society

The fourth type of instrumental dialogic pedagogy is the social justice-based approach (Matusov, 2018). It utilizes dialogue in order to improve society. Educationalists who commit to this approach often use educational dialogue for noble causes like liberation from oppression, building a just society, ecological sustainability, healthy lifestyle, eating vegetarian food, anarchism, communism, nationalism, patriotism, antiracism, religion, etc. I think the classic proponent work on social justice-based instrumental dialogic pedagogy is presented by Paulo Freire (1986), a Brazilian educator. Again, like in all other types of instrumental dialogic pedagogy, the educationalists define and control education and dialogue as the struggle with oppression for empowerment and liberation. Because of that, instrumental dialogic pedagogy

represents a form of Progressive Education (Matusov, 2021a). Education and its fruits are viewed non-dialogically. Dialogue is instrumental and temporary there. Dialogue is exploited for non-dialogic outcomes.

Ontological

Now, let me turn to the ontological approach. The term “ontological” in application to dialogic education was independently coined by Sasha Sidorkin (1999), who is present here, and by me, (Matusov, 2009a; Matusov & Pease-Alvarez, 2020), but Sasha publicized it before me, so he should be rightly credited for it. The philosophical and theological term “ontology” is polysemic (see my footnote 1 in Matusov, 2009b, p. 14) – at times, it may mean almost the opposite things like “the knowledge of the being” vs. “the being of the knowledge.” Let me give the word to Sasha Sidorkin, who nicely defined the concept of “ontological dialogue” in his book:

...this whole chapter attempts to establish the notion of dialogue as a central fact of human existence, as an ontological concept. The word *ontological* does not refer to just any kind of being, neither does it deal with the existence of dialogue; it refers specifically to human existence. This may not be the most conventional use of the term, but from my point of view, it is the most accurate one. The ontological concept of dialogue explores the place of dialogue in the human way of being. One of the reasons for using the adjective *ontological* is a need to distinguish between what I propose and a number of nonontological concepts of dialogue. In the context of this book, the very existence of a human being in his or her human quality is a result of dialogue. In the nonontological conception of dialogue, this relation between dialogue and human existence is reversed: dialogue is treated as secondary to human existence, mainly as a form of communication (Sidorkin, 1999, p. 7, italics original).

The ontological approach insists that dialogue is not an instrument for achieving something valuable, but it's a value in itself – it has a self-value defining human life. It's a special quality of human life. Ontological dialogue is the final cause of human existence. Dialogization of human life defines the human way of being and the quality of human relations – i.e., humanization of human life (Buber, 2000). You can look at ontological dialogue from an ethical point of view, as dialogic relations are human relations, maybe THE *human* relations. Also, Russian philosopher of dialogism Mikhail Bakhtin pushed forward the idea that the meaning-making process is dialogic, involving asking an interested question by one person and providing a serious answer by another person (Bakhtin, 1986, 1999). Many other arguments can be built for dialogic ontologism or ontological dialogism.

Now, let me turn to the discussion of two major types of ontological pedagogy that I'm aware of: conservative and democratic. I have experienced and promoted both of them in the past.

Conservative: student responsive authorship, dialogic provocations, dialogic pedagogy

I call one of them conservative. I used to think that I defined the term "conservative" descriptively, simply as a label because this approach preserves the conventional educational institution. However, the more I think about that, the more I realize that this label also involves my judgment of it, which I will discuss later.

The conservative ontological approach to dialogic pedagogy is mainly based on student-responsive authorship (Matusov, 2015). The teacher ontologically provokes the students who contribute to the dialogue through their authorial responses. Students' puzzlements, questions, inquiries, curiosities, and wonders emerge in their response to the teacher's dialogic provocations and push the ontological dialogue in the classroom and/or on the class online forum. In the classroom, the teacher creates a lot of dialogic provocations that jumpstart ontological dialogue in the students. As an ontological dialogic teacher, I used

to like to create dialogic provocations. I was genuinely interested in my students' emerging responsive authorship, and with all my mind and heart, I tried to provoke and reply to my students' contributions. Going to teach in my classroom, I was thinking, "How are my students going to surprise themselves and me today?" The emergence of ontological dialogue in my classroom was never guaranteed – I always treated its successful emergence as magic and as my students' gift to themselves and me. This ontological dialogue did not always stay on the topic. Instead, it involved what Bakhtin called "heterodiscoursia" (Matusov, 2011b) – a dramatic collision and juxtaposition of diverse discourses, goals, values, topics, etc. It was the magic of the birth of a new life (see, for example, Matusov, St. Julien, & Hayes, 2005). At times, the students moved completely away from the initial topic they chose.

Why do I call it conservative? It's because, in a way, it accepts, mostly accepts, if not benefits from, the existing conventional educational institutions that predictably send captive students to an ontological dialogic educator. The only demand this conservative ontological dialogic approach has for conventional institutions is to provide space for the teacher's dialogic provocations, the students' responsive authorship, and the emergence of ontological dialogue. Oh, yes, it also demands freedom from the imposed preset curriculum and exams. And grades? Not so fast. However annoying grades are for ontological dialogue, they guarantee the students' physical presence and engagement in the teacher's dialogic provocations, their own responsive authorship, and ontological dialogue. But this ontological approach does not deeply question the foisted nature of education it preserves – i.e., conserves – the main conventional vision of education as patronizing and imposed on the students.

I consider the conservative ontological dialogic pedagogy as a form of Progressive Education (Matusov, 2021a). Progressive Education seeks a "Holy Grail" of teaching all students, all the time, and with all academic subjects in an authentic way in conventional institutional settings (Matusov, Marjanovic-Shane, & Gradovski, 2019a). In this case, "Holy Grail" is an ontological dialogue organized by the teacher.

Democratic: student authorship of self-education, dialogic education

In opposition to the conservative ontological approach to dialogic pedagogy, what I would call "democratic ontological dialogic education" (not "pedagogy"!) focuses primarily on student authorship of self-education and, especially, of self-determined education,⁸ aka deliberate self-education. Education differs from learning by a dialogic evaluation process of this learning, among other things (Matusov, 2023a). A student is truly involved in education only when they evaluate their own learning in a dialogue with themselves and/or others. When only other people have a right to evaluate the student's learning, they rob the student of their education. For education to be genuine education, it is the educatee – not teachers, educational researchers, educational bureaucrats, parents, the general public, taxpayers, or the state – who primarily evaluates learning and defines education and its goals. That is why genuine, authentic education is always self-education. Deliberate self-education, aka self-determined education, involves the educatees in determining their own education by making decisions about whether to engage in studies, what to study, why to study, how to study, when to study, with whom to study, whether the experienced learning is valuable for the educatee and if so, why, and so on. The educatee can make these decisions alone, with the help of others, or in collaboration (Matusov, 2022b).

⁸ My notion of self-determination is very different from, if not opposite to, the self-determination theory common in psychology, focusing on how extrinsic control becomes intrinsic: "Extrinsically motivated behaviors become self-determined through the developmental processes of *internalization* and *integration*" (Deci & Ryan, 1994, p. 5, italics original). In a way, Deci and Ryan, co-founders of the self-determination theory in psychology, describe how culture and society colonize the person with their values, goals, obligations, and motivations. In their article, they described "self-determined education" as the one in which students "find interest and valuable" in doing their homework assigned by the teacher. Also, "self-determination" is defined as a person's activism and enthusiasm in doing what the authorities want the person to do. In contrast, my notion of self-determination is based on a person's authorship: transcendence of the given: culture, norms, society, and so on (Matusov, 2011a, 2020a).

In deliberate self-education, the educator's focus shifts from organizing dialogic pedagogy to promoting students' dialogic self-education. When our journal of Dialogic Education started in January 2013, we discussed the journal's title. By the way, next month, in January 2023, we'll celebrate ten years of our Dialogic Pedagogy Journal. Congratulations to all of us! If you were at the birth of our journal, you might remember this debate, one of our first debates about the title of the journal. Correct me if I'm wrong, but the two most significant options were Dialogic Pedagogy and Dialogic Education. Unfortunately, at that time, I was a *conservative* ontological dialogic educator. Because of that, I was leaning toward Dialogic Pedagogy, not Dialogic Education. If it had happened now, I would push for Dialogic Education as the title of our journal. Nevertheless, I guess it's too late, ten years too late⁹. Back then, 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 want to draw your attention to the fact that educatees, students, and learners were missing from our definition of Dialogic Pedagogy's audience, authors, and addressees. On the one hand, this omission is legitimate because of the journal's primary focus on pedagogy. But on the other hand, it is illegitimate because pedagogy serves education and not vice versa: educatees can exist without educators. Educators cannot exist without educatees, but educatees can exist without educators. Growing up and working in conventional institutions of foisted education, I have realized this noticeable distortion only recently.

Now, I will dive into my discussion of the relationship between society and education from dialogic pedagogy and dialogic education points of view. And I would say these two approaches, instrumental and ontological (especially democratic ontological), provide two completely different visions of the relationship between society and education. So first, I will talk about society and dialogic pedagogy from the instrumental vista. From the instrumental vista, it's very important, in my view, to see the connection or relationship between society and dialogic pedagogy or dialogic education in general as coming from the Enlightenment.

Society and Dialogic Pedagogy: Enlightenment

Enlightenment: Education is a tool for the betterment of society

Specifically, I want to focus on the contribution, terrific contribution, great contribution to defining the Enlightenment and the role of education in the Enlightened society by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant. I'm talking about the article Kant (1784) succinctly called "What is Enlightenment?" His concise, 6-page article is freely available on the Internet. I envy and admire Kant for saying so much in such a short article. Kant was looking at the development of society in which human dignity would be realized. Kant claimed that authority must be rooted in human dignity, defined as autonomy, not as a religious dogma or a capricious sovereign. It must be rooted in people's autonomy of reasoning and decision-making about people's personal lives and public affairs.

Kant saw two big obstacles to realizing such an enlightened society. The first one is an external obstacle of political oppression by an autocratic state restricting people's public use of their reason. And for that, Kant proposed an external political struggle to establish this type of (republican) regime in which human autonomy of reason can be realized. By the way, it's important to acknowledge that Kant was writing under political pressure in the Prussian empire that was on the move of expansion in Germany. Saying what Kant said was dangerous, but Kant dared to make this point.

⁹ Recently, because of the reasons articulated here and some other reasons, the Editorial Board has changed the title of the journal from "Dialogic Pedagogy: An International Online Journal" to "Dialogic Pedagogy: A Journal for Studies of Dialogic Education." We also updated the About page on the website.

However, argued Kant, it is much easier to deal with an external obstacle to achieving a dignity-based society than with an internal one. This internal problem is rooted in the fact that many humans are *not* rational, reasonable, informed, mature, strong character, and well-intended. That's a much bigger problem, according to Kant. "Enlightenment is man's release from his self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage is man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another" (Kant, 1784). Only after people are freed from the yoke of their self-incurred tutelage and, thus, become "reasonable people" can they be trusted to recognize their dignity. While for everybody else who is not "reasonable" yet, compulsory education is the solution.

Dialogue-agreement: Reaching consensus among reasonable people as a proxy of truth and morality

Before focusing on Kant's vision of Enlightenment *education*, I want to discuss the Enlightenment *society* a bit more: how Kant envisioned it. According to Kant, this society would be run by the public dialogue of agreement (i.e., "dialogue-agreement," Kurganov, 2009). Of course, in a dialogue-agreement, people can and do also disagree – even more, they should have the right to disagree freely. Disagreement is very important in Enlightenment society, but disagreement is temporary. That's why freedom of speech – public reasoning – is a very important right. However, the purpose of this disagreement is to establish an agreement through public and free reasoning, which creates a basis as a proxy of truth and morality from the point of view of Kant, in my interpretation. So, well-informed, mature, rational, strong-character, and well-intended people (aka "reasonable people") eventually and unavoidably arrive at a consensus due to the universal nature of objective truth and morality (cf. Kant's categorical imperative, Kant, 2013). A person's reason does not need to be perfect, but it must be correctable through this dialogic reflective process of searching for a consensus among reasonable people. This consensus not only helps to achieve the truth and morality but also establishes who reasonable people are to be trusted with their dignity of autonomous decision-making. Of course, in a way, it's a little bit of circular construction: reasonable people establish the truth and morality through reaching a consensus in a free public dialogue, while this dialogic consensus establishes who should be considered as "reasonable people" who have the legitimate right to think for themselves in the Enlightenment society.

Kantian educational paternalism

Now, what about not-yet reasonable people who are, for one or another reason, not able or do not want to make their own understanding without the direction of others? If you're not "reasonable," if you do not belong to the group of "reasonable people," if you live under the yoke of "self-inflicted tutelage," you become a problem in the Enlightenment society. You cannot be trusted with your understanding, judgment, and decision-making. You are not autonomous. And thus, you are not dignified – you do not have the right to have your dignity recognized by society. Yet, in the ideal Enlightenment society that Kant called "an enlightenment age," eventually, everyone should have this dignity, which must be earned. How can the imperfect Enlightenment society break the yoke of not-yet reasonable people's self-inflicted tutelage?

His answer was paradoxical. Kant suggested addressing self-inflicted tutelage with... – guess what? – with compulsory tutelage, called "education." Fight the fire with fire! To liberate not-yet reasonable people from the oppressive yoke of their self-inflicted tutelage, autonomous, reasonable people must impose a compulsory tutelage of education on them. People can be trusted with their own reason, decision-making about their own life, and governance of their society *only if* they're rational, well-intended, informed, have strong character, are mature, and so forth. If they're not, and most people are not, then they need to be moved into this state of autonomy forcibly and, if they resist, violently. Forced moving people into the position of "reasonableness" is Enlightenment Education. It is based on educational paternalism: limiting the freedom and rights of non-reasonable people yet for their own benefit.

What do paternalism and Educational Paternalism specifically mean? Paternalism is when somebody knows better what you need and even what you want and has the right to impose this good on you. Paternalism is a limitation of your freedoms for your own good (Dworkin, 1972). So, in my summarizing, Kant essentially says, "In order for people to be free, to be autonomous, they must be forced into that freedom; they must be unfree until they can be trusted with their freedom." Kant was aware of this paradox. Unfreedom now is freedom in the future.

His later disciple Johann Gottlieb Fichte formulated the paternalistic nature of Enlightenment education with the ultimate clarity: "Compulsion is also a kind of education" (cited in Berlin & Hardy, 2002, electronic edition). Thus, for the Enlightenment based on Kant and Fichte, the forceful action of the imposition of education on the students is education in itself. It is both revealing and disturbing that in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the compulsory nature of education is presented as a human right: "Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. *Elementary education shall be compulsory.* Technical and professional education shall be made generally available, and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit" (Article 26.1)¹⁰. Forcing people to study is declared as their right! In this sense, education is a unique sphere of human life where Enlightenment paternalism has reached its highest.

Enlightenment Education based on paternalism segregates people into the "educated," who are the designers of education, and the "students," who are the objects of education (cf. Bibler, 1976). The former has the right to force their image of education on the latter. The former people have the right to form the latter in their image. The former are adults, teachers, politicians, scientists, bureaucrats, the State, the powerful, the mature, the moral, the strong, the pure, the straight, the good, and the people of solutions. The latter are children, students, the ignorant, minorities, savages, criminals, the handicapped, the powerless, the immature, the immoral, the weak, the polluted, the deviant, the evil, and the people with problems.

I argue that Kantian educational paternalism is embraced by instrumental dialogic pedagogy and, to some degree, conservative ontological dialogic pedagogy. These types of dialogic pedagogy are very much concerned with creating pedagogical regimes that promote the conditions in which good pedagogical dialogue, dialogue-agreement, occurs. These favorable conditions involve the formation of dialogic attitudes, dialogic spaces, and dialogic rules in the classrooms and students. Let me illustrate the dialogic pedagogy's embracement of Kantian educational paternalism, the Enlightenment Education, through my analysis of Mariëtte's chapter (see below). Thanks, Mariëtte [de Haan], for attending this conference and sharing your chapter in preparation with me.

Dialogic pedagogy: The embrace of the Enlightenment educational project

I'll analyze the following three quotes from Mariëtte's wonderful chapter (de Haan, 2023, in press). It's very fresh and is still a work in progress for the book that will hopefully be published next year. It is incredible that in her chapter, Mariëtte was working almost precisely on the central theme of our conference. At least, this is how I see it. Mariëtte, feel free to disagree with my interpretation. Nevertheless, I see your chapter in the spirit of our conference to consider how dialogic pedagogy can contribute to our difficult times defined by political and ideological polarizations, the phenomenon of post-truth, and so on. In your chapter, you focused on how dialogic pedagogy can help to deal with this situation. I think it is a program paper for dialogic pedagogy.

¹⁰ <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

Thus, Mariëtte raises three research questions in her chapter, which I thought were terrific. Her first research question is: “[Do] the [dialogic] spaces we have designed for dialogue, in schools, and in our society at large, [...] mediate between different voices, function appropriately to accommodate newcomers, or to address issues between polarized groups[?]” (de Haan, 2023, in press). This research and practice question addresses “us,” the representatives of “the community of autonomous reasonable people” (e.g., dialogic pedagogy educators and researchers). How should “we” create dialogic spaces for “them,” not-yet reasonable people oppressed by the yoke of self-inflicted tutelage (e.g., students, lay people in general). It also predefines what is good – namely, appropriately functioning dialogue mediating different voices is good – and what is evil – for instance, group polarization is terrible¹¹. Finally, it assumes the legitimacy of the forceable action of designing dialogue in schools and our society. These are all birthmarks of Kantian educational paternalism and Enlightenment Education.

The second research question is: “[Will] dialogue still work between parties that represent world views that are or are considered to be incompatible[?]” I believe this question also implies “us,” educationalists, i.e., members of the reasonable autonomous community acting on “them,” not-yet reasonable people. It is “us” who will define if the dialogue is “working” or not and whether worldviews are considered compatible or not, for whom, why, and why it might be important or unimportant for them (and within what framework)¹².

Finally, the third research question, “...how [does] intersubjectivity, as the step-by-step process of creating understanding and bridge individual perspectives through interaction function in polarized settings[?]” Achieving intersubjectivity (i.e., agreement, common understanding) among not-yet reasonable people (e.g., students) and between them and reasonable people (e.g., teachers) is the goal of pedagogical dialogue as the way of bringing those people into the community of autonomous reasonable people and the elimination of harmful political, ideological, and epistemological polarization. Also, education is viewed as the tool for solving problems of our times (e.g., post-truth, polarization, the proliferation of conspiracy theories, and mistrust)¹³.

So, my point is that if you look at the three research questions, they are aimed at the realization of Kant’s enlightenment project, which is how to make education an effective tool to make our society better. We have the problem of societal polarization, so – boom: education can help eliminate this problem¹⁴. The central research question is how can we create such an education? Can dialogic pedagogy help to solve this problem of polarization in our society? If so, how? Again, in my view, these questions and desires behind them are a continuation of the Enlightenment project.

Hallmarks of Enlightenment Education

Here, I want to summarize the main features characterizing Enlightenment Education, its birthmarks, and how I understand them:

I. Education and Dignity vs. Paternalism

1. Society is segregated into two unequal groups:

¹¹ Mariëtte de Haan commented in her feedback on an earlier draft of my essay: “I agree that it is assumed that dialogue is good, and that dialogical spaces should accommodate a variety of voices” (personal communication, August 11, 2023).

¹² Mariëtte de Haan disagrees with my interpretation and analysis here as she wrote in her feedback comment to my previous draft: “However, I don’t see there is one reasonable group of people assumed in this question, but multiple reasonable people – who according to their own judgment are all ‘reasonable’.”

¹³ Mariëtte de Haan commented: “It is correct I start to define intersubjectivity as the step-by-step process of creating understanding and bridge individual perspectives through interaction (more of an enlightenment version), but in the rest of [my] paper, such a vision is criticized.”

¹⁴ Mariëtte de Haan objects: “I agree [my] paper assumes that education should try to contribute to this problem. It does not assume education can do this in any easy way. So I object to this interpretation.”

- a. fully reasonable people who have the right to be autonomous and
 - b. not-yet-reasonable people whom fully reasonable people must paternalize.
 2. Human dignity based on autonomous decision-making, self-governance, and governance of society is conditional, not universal – it is recognized only in and by the reasonable people who are proven to deserve it.
 3. The goal of education is the liberation of unreasonable people from the oppression of the yoke of their self-inflicted tutelage.
 4. Compulsory, foisted education is the means of such liberation.
 5. Education must be based on educational paternalism:
 - a. Education practice consists of:
 - i. the designers of education (e.g., educators), coming from the reasonable community, and
 - ii. the objects of education (e.g., students), coming from the not-yet-reasonable community.
 - b. The education designers define education – what learning is good for the students, – its goal, and its quality – what constitutes achieving this goal – for the students.
 - c. The education designers have the legal right to force the students to engage in education.
 - d. The main responsibility of the students is to cooperate with education designers unconditionally.
 6. Paternalism and compulsory themselves are a form of education (Fichte).
- II. **Education and Society**
 1. Disciplinary society: Fears, anxieties, credentialism, societal needs, worst-case scenarios, and necessities often drive educational decisions by the educational authorities (Foucault, 1995).
 2. There is deep distrust in the students' judgments and decisions about their own education and life.
 3. Education is primarily a societal business controlled by the autonomous reasonable community (e.g., the State).
 4. Education is one of the major tools for the betterment of society. Education can and must be used to solve emerging societal problems.
 5. There is a fight for the monism of the educational approach in which the opposing sides use the State to create a monopoly on an educational philosophy in compulsory (and generally foisted) education.
- III. **Education and Learning/Guidance**
 1. Pedagogization of education: The primary concern of education is with pedagogy – the design of the teacher's guidance. "One way of highlighting the categorical difference of integral [democratic] schools is to notice that traditional and modern paradigms in education, such as Montessori and progressive [i.e., Enlightenment Education], prescribe aspects of the *classroom* milieu: teaching, learning, curriculum, and activities. In contrast, the democratic model [i.e., post-Enlightenment Education] prescribes aspects of the *school* milieu: structure, governance, rights, and limits. Traditional and modern models are mostly silent about structure-governance-rights-limits, and assume the familiar hierarchical school structure of administration, teachers, and students. In contrast, the democratic model is mostly silent about teaching-learning-curriculum activities and assumes the familiar civil structure of a democratic society. The difference in focus — school versus classroom —

places democratic schools alone in a new category of schooling paradigms. [D]emocratic schools thus represent more a theory of *schooling*, and less a theory of education, teaching, or learning.” (Rietmulder, 2019, pp. 34-35).

2. Learnification of education: The primary goal of education is the production of the learning desired by the educators in the students (see Matusov, 2021b, for more discussion and critique).

IV. Education and Monologism

1. Excessive monologism: “In essence [excessive monologism] knows only a single mode of cognitive interaction among consciousnesses: someone who knows and possesses the truth instructs someone who is ignorant of it and in error; that is, it is the interaction of a teacher and a pupil, which, it follows, can be only a pedagogical dialogue” (Bakhtin, 1999, p. 81).
2. The primary human relationship: agreement as the proxy of the truth and collaboration as the main social instrument to solve shared problems.
3. Others’ consciousnesses: transparent to use and manipulate, the bird’s eye view.

Society and Dialogic Education: Post-Enlightenment Education

Now, let me turn to considering society and dialogic education from a democratic ontological point of view. And let me start from not a big picture about society but from a small picture about learning. I know that it’s probably not the best way to do that [laugh]. At least, some people say that. I’m not sure that this is true. So, I’ll start with a small picture about learning and move to the big picture about post-Enlightenment education and then post-Enlightenment society.

Learning is ubiquitous but not necessarily dialogical

The small picture is that learning is not necessarily dialogic or educational. According to a sociocultural theory of learning articulated by the American educational anthropologist Jean Lave (1992, April), learning is ubiquitous and inescapable. To live means to learn. We live in and through the learning flow. The vast amount of this learning is invisible to us. Even less is intentional or planned by us or others. Most, if not all, learning has an emergent property. As Jean Lave argued in her seminal AERA presentation in April 1992, the occurrence of learning is non-problematic – it always happens in any setting. Learning is naturally happening to people (and other animals), like breathing. However, the content of this learning – what exactly the person learns (Lave called this content “the emergent curriculum”) – is problematic, according to Lave. Although emergent learning may involve conscious deliberation, it is not always predictable or even known what a person learns even when the person promotes and desires certain learning themselves (Lave called the content of desired or planned learning “the teaching curriculum”). Learning does not require self-awareness, especially when it is emergent. In contrast, conventional institutionalized education assumes that the planned learning content (“the teaching curriculum”) is not problematic because it is present by the educational authority, but the occurrence of this learning – whether the student learns the preset teaching curriculum – is problematic. That is why learning tests and exams are so important in conventional schooling (Lave, 1992, April).

By the way, it’s a very misleading modern trend to equate learning with education. In my view, education involves the educatee’s value judgment about their noticed learning embedded in a dialogue with self and/or others. And as I claim in my recent paper, education may be based not only on learning. Education is a value judgment not only about learning but also about *insight*, often not well-recognized in modern Western civilization. However, this matter is beyond my current talk (see, Matusov, 2021b, for more discussion of this point).

Learning is not necessarily dialogical. Even more, often, learning is not dialogical. Learning can be based on pattern-recognition and pattern-production and not necessarily on meaning-making, which is dialogic in nature (Matusov, 2020b). In contrast, education as a process of value-judgment-making is mostly dialogical. However, education may involve non-dialogic parts, such as, for example, noticing one's own learning or insight. But, again, mostly, education is dialogical.

Education is dialogical as the person's value-judgment about their learning (and insight) in a dialogue with themselves and/or others

Why is education dialogical? Because unlike learning, which is the ongoing transformation flow in a person's life, education is the person's value judgment about the person's learning or insight embedded in a dialogue with themselves and/or others. I'm not going to discuss here what insight is or why insight is different from learning – I'll refer you to my 2021 essay (Matusov, 2021b). In other words, people make a value judgment about whether the noticed learning is good or bad or neutral for them. Making value judgments involves meaning-making and, thus, is dialogical. People make a value judgment about their learning or insight that has occurred to them or that they plan to induce in themselves. That's why education is always ephemeral because it's about the person's judgment about their learning or insight, – the judgment, which may change with time. People may change their value judgments about their learning and insights – what they think is good for them today may not be their judgment tomorrow. Most importantly, education is self-judgment about the value of their own learning or insights, and, thus, it is embedded in dialogue with the self and/or others. Because of that, education is always self-education.

Self-education

I define self-education as an educatee's positive value judgment of their own learning and/or insight. I can distinguish two major unequal types of self-education: spontaneous self-education and deliberate self-education. Spontaneous self-education involves an educatee's recognition of the learning and/or insight that occurred or is occurring to them and making a positive value judgment about it. Spontaneous self-education is past- or present-oriented. In contrast, deliberate self-education, aka "self-determined education," is when an educatee plans their own education by making decisions about their future actions aiming at inducing desired learning and/or insight. Deliberate (self-determined) self-education is future-oriented. In practice, spontaneous self-education always accompanies deliberate (self-determined) education; however, it is not true the other way around.

Deliberate Self-education

Thus, anyone who tries to impose this value judgment – what good learning is – on another person robs this person of education. Educational paternalism robs students of their authentic education. Deliberate, authentic education is always self-determined, even when others facilitate and participate in it. *Deliberate* self-education involves the educatee making various decisions about their own education with or without the help of other people. These educational decisions involve whether the educatee wants to study, what to study, why to study, how to study, with whom to study, when to study, with what kind of help to study, whether this study is good for the educatee, and so on. All these reflective value judgments and decision-making can be done solely by the educatee themselves or with the help of other people who may assume different roles: co-educatees, teachers, advisors, navigators, mentors, tutors, coaches, etc. I won't go over that (for more discussion, see Matusov, 2022b).

Paradoxically, self-determined education (aka deliberate self-education) may include "self-inflicted tutelage." It does not limit itself to the educatee's autonomous studies, self-directed learning, also known as an autodidact. Self-determined education may involve collectively directed learning with fellow educatees. It may involve advisement from professional educators. It may involve teacher-directed learning.

Finally, it may even involve autopaternalism, when the educatee asks their teacher to *force* them to study what the educatee wants to study. However, in contrast to Enlightenment compulsory or foisted education, in Post-Enlightenment Education, the educatee's submission and trust in their peers, advisors, and teachers is conditional, based on the educatee's overall value judgment of how this submission and trust are helpful for them. The educatee has a legitimate right to seize their cooperation, trust, and submission and move away from their peers and educators at any time (Matusov, 2022b).

My next point is that education is primarily the *personal* business of the educatee and not societal as it is assumed in Enlightenment Education. Why? Because authentic education is about the educatee's value judgment about a transformation that has happened or will happen to the educatee, how it's desirable for the educatee, and why. Take away this freedom of the value judgment-making, and authentic education evaporates.

Educators' pedagogical fiduciary duty toward their students

Of course, educators, who might help this process of their educatees' self-determined education, must commit to the fiduciary duty to their educatees. Fiduciary duty is a term that has been developed chiefly outside of education, which is symptomatic for education based on paternalism. Doctors, lawyers, and financial advisors are supposed to commit to fiduciary duty toward their patients and clients. What does fiduciary duty mean? It's actually a very peculiar notion because, on the one hand, educators have to serve students and their own educational goals. However, the problem is that students sometimes do not know what is good for them. And in this case, educators can help the students figure out what's good for them if they ask for their help. Although, it doesn't mean educators always know what's good for the students, either. If you think about that, that's very similar to what's going on in the health field, for example, when doctors commit to medical fiduciary duty. The doctors try to help their patients find out what's good for them healthwise without making medical decisions for them, except in some emergency cases.

Similarly, pedagogical fiduciary duty involves the educator's commitment to helping the student find and realize what is educationally good for the student while accepting that the student is the highest authority for their own education (and life) (Klag, 1994; Matusov, 2022b). The final educational decision and value judgment about the student's learning and insight remain in the student's hands, again, except, possibly, in some extreme cases, even if the educator might disagree with the student's decision and judgment (see Matusov, 2022b, for more discussion).

Whose business is education?

In post-Enlightenment Education, educatees, not educators, have the legitimate right to decide for themselves what the purpose of their education is. The educatee may see their purpose of education as intrinsic, existential, or ontological education (Matusov & Marjanovic-Shane, 2019), critical or uncritical (Matusov & Marjanovic-Shane, 2012), or instrumental education such as training or even drill (Matusov, Baker, Fan, Choi, & Hampel, 2017). Either way, it's acceptable and legitimate as far as it is the educatee's choice. In post-Enlightenment Education, an educatee is seen as self-determined in defining their own education. Education must not serve primarily for the betterment of society, as it is the Enlightenment project.

Like many other fields, such as, for example, art, education has its own realm of autonomy. Must art always serve to make society better? Well, some people think that way, and some people disagree with that. It's an even bigger question about science. There is a joke with some grain of truth that science is the satisfaction of the personal curiosity of a scientist at public expense. There is disagreement about science as well. Some people think it is up to artists and scientists (and their audiences) to decide. However, it can

be safe to admit that art and science have intrinsic and instrumental realms. Intrinsically, art and science exist as the existential needs of each human and humanity as a whole. Instrumentally, art and science provide their fruits for other spheres of human life. Similarly, my colleague and I also argue that education has both intrinsic and instrumental realms, and it is up to the educatees to decide which realm to prioritize in their educational endeavors (Matusov & Marjanovic-Shane, 2019).

Society, leave education alone!

But for some reason, for a long time, education has been under the yoke of the Enlightenment project that education must serve primarily, if not solely, as a tool to make society better. That education is primarily public, societal, and not personal business. In contrast to art and science, where the value of the contributions is assessed collectively through public discourse, educational practice is based on the value judgment of the educatee about their own learning and insight, which is embedded in dialogue with others. And that's why I want to say: "Society, hands off my education! Hands off!" Society – through its representatives such as teachers, parents, educational scholars, politicians, state bureaucrats, and so on – does not have the legitimate right to define education, its goals, and its curriculum. The legitimate role of society is to facilitate addressing the existential needs of its members. Of course, practice, institutions, workplaces, and so on can create “natural” demands and pressures on self-education, but these pressures can be accepted, rejected, interpreted, transformed, resisted, or transcended by the educatees who will take responsibility for or have to live with the consequences of their responses to these pressures for them. This is what I call the post-Enlightenment attitude to education. From this Post-Enlightenment perspective, education mustn't be used to address the challenges of our time unless a particular educatee chooses to do so.

Pluralism of educational philosophies

For the first time, I started developing this idea of education as a personal business of the educatee with Ana Marjanovic-Shane, who is here at our conference, in our article “The State's Educational Neutrality: Radical proposal for educational pluralism” (Matusov & Marjanovic-Shane, 2016). We thought about how to democratize education and how to make it pluralistic rather than monopolistic. Except for Democratic Education, all other educational philosophies fight with each other for a monopoly on compulsory public education, using the State as the primary tool to enforce this monopoly.

According to the Jewish-Russian-British philosopher Isaiah Berlin, radical pluralism involves recognition of the fact that many good values are often irreconcilable – justice vs. mercy, friendship vs. truth, freedom vs. wellbeing, etc. (Kelly, 1978). In education, radical pluralism means that I must tolerate and accept different educational philosophies, not necessarily because I think they're good, but because I commit to pluralism. There is also the dialogic argument for pluralism. My dialogic position exists on the boundaries and in response to alternative dialogic positions (Bakhtin, 1999; Matusov, Smith, Candela, & Liliu, 2007). That is why alternative and even hostile dialogic positions must be tolerated and affirmed (Matusov & Marjanovic-Shane, 2016). Finally, the third and probably the most crucial reason for educational pluralism is rooted in the fact that genuine deliberate education is always self-determined. Self-determination of education inherently leads to the pluralism of educational philosophies.

Paternalism and human dignity

In my view, the Enlightenment project generates an over-paternalistic society. It is driven by concerns of necessities, fears, anxieties, reduction of risks (risk management), protection, control, distrust, and so on. The problem is not so much with the content of these concerns but with the totalization of these important concerns. Enlightenment prioritizes the protection of life over life itself. We exist to live, not to live in order to exist. That is why Enlightenment is defined by overprotection and overpaternalism.

Paternalism in itself – i.e., deciding what is good for other people and limiting their freedom in the name of this good, i.e., “positive liberty” (Berlin, 2017) – is not necessarily a bad thing. One of the important biological peculiarities of the human animal is rooted in the fact that it is born super immature and incapable of surviving on its own. Paternalism as defining good for another human being and protecting and enforcing this good is biologically inbuilt in us, especially concerning our youngsters. The biological immaturity of newborns and the in-built paternalism of their caregivers allow our bodies to mature within a particular human culture. This makes our body and our brain shaped by culture. Without this biologically rooted paternalism, our species is not viable.

However, I argue that paternalism must be strategically, globally, and in the long run, subordinated to human dignity. Aristotle (2000) defined human dignity as a person being the cause of their own deeds for which the person takes responsibility rather than being determined by the necessities, traditions, orders by others, and so on. Human dignity is the societal recognition that a person is the highest authority for their own life even when society (i.e., other people) might not agree or fully understand the person’s authorship of their own life (and, of course, of their own education since education is a part of one’s life). Thus, the notion of human dignity is always relational, based on recognition, and pluralistic, based on the recognition of “negative liberty” – a bubble of freedom where the person can legitimately make decisions for themselves without the need for permission or approval from others (Berlin, 2017). Society or community (Matusov, 2022a) can legitimately limit the sphere of human dignity, i.e., unconditional acceptance of a person’s authorship of their own life. This acceptance is always limited. Also, human dignity cries for dialogic personal responsibility (see the next section below).

Kant reduced human dignity to autonomy. In contrast to Kant, I think human dignity is not necessarily based on autonomy, although it may sometimes include it. For example, a person may reject the concept of autonomy for themselves temporarily, contextually, or permanently and universally as a part of the authorship of their life, as the person’s choice. In self-education, an educatee may choose to submit themselves to the authority of the teacher, even asking the teacher to force them to study what the educatee wants to study. However, this dignified submission is conditional: the educatee constantly evaluates the teacher’s action and can divorce the teacher at any time when the educatee stops seeing the teacher’s guidance or the teacher’s paternalism – i.e., paternalism allowed by the person, autopaternalism – useful and helpful for themselves (Matusov, 2022b).

Strategically, human dignity must beat paternalism. However, tactically, locally, in the short run, paternalism can and even must be legitimately prioritized over human dignity. The Post-Enlightenment proclaims that paternalism must serve human dignity; human dignity must not be sacrificed for paternalism enforced on the not perfectly reasonable or perfectly agreeable ones. Paternalism must serve human dignity and not the other way around.

Enlightenment must be appreciated and credited for putting a high value on human dignity. For the last three hundred years or so, this value has been gradually extended to more and more groups of people. It started with male adult aristocracy, then extended to rich adult males, then included poor males, then spread to non-White males, then incorporated women. Still, many categories of people have been left out undignified: felons, youngsters, non-citizen immigrants, etc. Some want to extend the recognition of dignity to non-humans, like some or even all animals. Still, in Enlightenment, not-yet-reasonable people and creatures are viewed with distrust that justifies the application of total or near-total paternalism.

In contrast to Enlightenment, which has granted respect for human dignity only to the few, only those who deserved it – i.e., “the reasonable people” – post-Enlightenment extends the recognition of human dignity to all people unconditionally. The Enlightenment sees “full people,” “reasonable people,” as

universal beings united by their universal reason, universal rationality, universal maturity, universal knowledge, universal solid character, and universal maturity, however imperfect this universality might be. In contrast, the post-Enlightenment sees all people as unique and, thus, as full-beings and imperfect, unfinalized and unfinalizable (Bakhtin, 1999), an open being capable of transcendence and unpredictable change. Their human dignity of being the final authority for their own life is being both affirmed and problematized (i.e., questioned, asked for responsibility). Post-Enlightenment does not know the segregation of people as “reasonable,” whose dignity is recognized by society, and “not-yet-reasonable,” who are the objects of paternalism by the reasonable people. Human dignity is a universal and unconditional right in the post-Enlightenment. If Enlightenment is the Age of Paternalism, post-Enlightenment is the Age of Dignity.

Birthmarks of post-Enlightenment Education

Here are the main features characterizing post-Enlightenment Education, its birthmarks, and how I see them for now:

I. Education and Dignity vs. Paternalism

1. Human dignity is based on recognizing each person as the highest and final authority for their own life (and education, of course), self-governance, and governance of society. Human dignity is recognized for all people, regardless of their age, maturity, knowledgeability, etc., unconditionally.
2. Even when paternalism is accepted as necessary at times, it must be strategically subordinated to the recognition of human dignity.
3. Paternalism, however necessary and legitimate it might be at times in non-educational spheres, in itself is not education.
4. Defining and imposing education for and on others is robbing others of their education.
5. The only legitimate form of educational paternalism is the educatee’s autopaternalism, when the educatee grants temporary and conditional power to the educator to force the educatee to study what the educatee wants to study (Matusov, 2022b).
6. Deliberate, organized education is self-determined education in which the educatee makes decisions about their own education with or without the help of other people. Such decisions involve whether to study, why to study, what to study, how to study, with whom to study, when to study, what constitutes a successful study, and so on.

II. Education and Society

1. Education is exclusively a personal business of the educatee. Education is not a tool for the betterment of society unless the educatee defines their own education as such.
2. Society must acknowledge and respect educational pluralism and the diversity of educational philosophies practiced by willing educatees and educators.
3. The main responsibility of society is to provide conditions, opportunities, and resources to all people for their personal (self-)education.

III. Education and Learning/Guidance

1. Collaboration with peers, advisement, guidance, and autopaternalism are conditional on the educatee’s consent and approval. The educatee has a legitimate right to move away from their educational peers and educators at any moment when their consent and approval are withdrawn (i.e., “no-fault divorce”).
2. Learning and insights are omnipresent in the flow of life.
3. Education involves the educatee’s value judgments about their recognized learning and insights, embedded in dialogue with the self and/or others (Matusov, 2021b).

IV. Education and Dialogism

1. Dialogism: "A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels. What unfolds in his works is not a multitude of characters and fates in a single objective world, illuminated by a single authorial consciousness; rather a plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world, combine but are not merged in the unity of the event [i.e., encounter, co-being]" (Bakhtin, 1999, p. 6).
2. The primary human relationship: encounter, my interest in other's consciousness which is different from mine, dialogue.
3. Others' consciousnesses: opaque for me, to be addressed and replied to.

In sum, since what I call post-Enlightenment education must not be viewed as a societal tool to solve the societal problems of our times, I'm rejecting the central premise of our conference of considering how dialogic pedagogy can help address the challenges of our times. Still, I think it is worth considering what the ontological dialogic *framework* – not dialogic pedagogy or education! – can offer to our times.

What can the ontological dialogic framework offer to our times?

Raising challenging questions to provoke societal dialogues

In my view, one thing that the ontological dialogic framework can offer to help address the challenges of our time is to raise questions to provoke societal dialogues challenging common sense and hidden assumptions about contemporary hot issues. Such provocations may involve the creation of searches for contextual and authorial boundaries of the truth. For example, let us consider the challenges of our times, such as positivism, polarization, war, patternocrata, etc. Where are the boundaries of their truth? When each of them can be helpful? When each of them is not helpful? Where can gray areas be?

What?! Can war be helpful? Can Polarization be helpful?! How can war be helpful? How can polarization be helpful? How can positivism be helpful?

My search for contextual and authorial boundaries for truth:

When is positivism/polarization/war helpful, not helpful, or in a grey area, and why, in my view?

Let me give you one example using this terrible ongoing colonial war in Ukraine that Russia started. You might be surprised, but one of the concurrent slogans of Putin's propaganda machine is, "Let's reduce polarization." Russian propaganda claims: "It's not that all clear!" Or, in Russian: "He всё так однозначно!" – which basically means, "Let's not polarize! Let's look at the complexities of the events." Like, "What's going on in Ukraine is a very complicated issue." You know, "There's no black and white, right or wrong!" And it's precisely in opposition to this Putin's claim that the Ukrainian discourse, political discourse says: "No! It's exactly black and white. It's a fight between good and evil! It is a fight between Ukrainian liberal democracy and Russian fascist totalitarianism." Moreover, as soon as you're saying, "He всё так однозначно," it's now the indicator that you actually are colonized by Putin's ideology and support Russian imperial aggression. Okay?

Another issue is about war being a good thing in some contexts. I don't know how much you follow what's going on in the Ukraine war, but now, Putin's regime calls for peace talks between Russia and Ukraine, "Let's have peace negotiations. Let's have peace negotiations. Let's stop fighting!" And the Ukrainian side says, "Let's have a war to decide that."

And that's, in my view, a very interesting thing that, you know, all these seemingly humanistic ideas are formulaic: "War is bad, polarization is bad. Negotiations are good. Peace is good." Let's review them – not so fast! Not always! Sometimes it is not true, and we need to admit that. For example, as was historically proven in the case of the British Prime minister, Chamberlain, who negotiated peace with Hitler about Czechoslovakia in November 1938. Peace negotiation with Hitler was not good! It is up to us to find these contextual boundaries and make authorial judgments when war is bad, good, or a gray area. These authorial judgments will define what kind of people we are. We should go away with the search for the correct formulae that remove personal responsibilities from us.

When are *dialogism and authorship* helpful, not helpful, or in a grey area, and why, in my view?

The same is true about such apparently nice things as dialogism and authorship. They sound like great things, but not always.

Not so fast! There can be interesting contextual boundaries requiring our authorial judgments when they can become actually bad things. Again, let me give a political example to illustrate that seemingly nice things can become bad. Let's consider the role of dialogism, authorship, and creativity in creating conspiracy theories and "alternative facts."

One of the things about conspiracy theories is a rejection of positivism and positivist institutions of establishing the facts by the consensus of experts (Weinberger, 2011). Engaging with conspiracy theories involves a lot of dialogism, authorship, and creativity. People engaged in conspiracy theories are often extremely creative and very dialogic (McIntyre, 2021). They are engaged in so many dialogues. They generate a lot of creative alternatives in defense of their conspiracies. Their critical thinking spins like crazy to undermine the hegemonic worldviews and facts.

Also, it's just fascinating to consider the conspiracy theories themselves. Often the term "conspiracy theory" sounds like a diagnosis of some mental illness: if you are committed to a conspiracy theory, you are cuckoo; you are crazy. It implies that conspiracies are always wrong, which is, of course, not true. Sometimes, conspiracies do exist. Moreover, the question is when a conspiracy is true or reasonable and when it's not. Just let me tell you Woody Allen's famous joke: "From the fact that you are paranoid, it doesn't mean that the world is not going to get you." The fact that a person is a conspiracy theorist does not mean that the person is wrong, even when the person is indeed crazy <laugh>. You see?

So, wanting to be responsible and smart requires rejecting the formulaic thinking that conspiracy is always bad, politicization is always bad, war is always bad, peace is always good, dialogue is always good, creativity is always good, or authorship is always good. Not always. We need to make an authorial judgment and take responsibility for it by defending or abandoning it in each particular case. And this process will define our fate and our reputation (Bakhtin, 1999).

The ontological dialogue values

The freedom of non-dialogue in education: No-fault divorce

This approach leads to what I call "ontological dialogue values" – values that support ontological dialogue in society. One such value is paradoxically the freedom of non-dialogue. This is especially important in schooling because conventional and progressive institutionalized education is so obsessed with forcing students to engage in "good dialogue," considering how to create "good dialogue," how to bridge polarized social groups, and so on. Modern institutionalized education, except democratic one, often doesn't appreciate and doesn't respect non-dialogue. It doesn't respect a student's right not to engage in

dialogue with the teacher and/or peers. I think we need to problematize our pedagogical desire for dialogue at all costs.

After being a progressive educator for a very long time, I have finally realized what was wrong with my pedagogical desire to force “good dialogue” on my students. Good dialogue is freedom, including the freedom of non-dialogue – forced dialogue is a misnomer. The insistence on “good dialogue” leads to forced collectivity and imprisonment of a student. Each of my students should have a legitimate right to move away from me, their peers, the classroom, and/or the course itself. This is what I call “no-fault divorce.” This term comes from the legal sphere of marriage, where it has become recognized that the absence of no-fault divorce often leads to domestic abuse and violence. Similarly, non-recognition of the students’ freedom of non-dialogue and non-faulty divorce often leads to pedagogical violence and abuse (Matusov & Sullivan, 2020).

Non-dialogic aspects of education

Another ontological dialogue value, which is also somewhat paradoxical, is the recognition of non-dialogic aspects of education. As I already argued, learning and insights are non-dialogic in nature; although they can be dialogic, they are mostly not. And that part, we need to consider that as well. And again, I hope Sasha [Sidorkin] will do that, or maybe not, later in his keynote address. And, if it's not, that's fine as well.

Another non-dialogic aspect of education is an educatee’s noticing their own learning and insight. This notice may or may not be embedded in dialogue. Learning and insight might not necessarily be dialogical, based on pattern-recognition and pattern-production (Matusov, 2020b). Finally, the way the educatees define their own organized education may or may not be dialogical. For example, if the educatees define their education as drilling, memorization, pattern recognition, training, and even socialization, it may not be very dialogical. However, suppose the educatees define their education as the critical examination of life, self, the world, and society. This type of education is highly dialogical (cf. Socrates' motto: "The unexamined life is not worth living," Plato & Riddell, 1973). I want to remind you that what makes education highly dialogical is the educatee’s authorial value judgment about their learning and insight embedded in dialogue with the self and/or others.

Dialogue-disagreement: Agonism

I want to stress the third ontological dialogue value here: the focus on dialogue-disagreement rather than on dialogue-agreement. Chantal Mouffe, a Belgian political scholar, examines liberal democracy. She introduced this notion of *agonism* (Mouffe, 2000). It's kind of a relationship between friendly enemies, frenemies. Mouffe sees that the task of liberal democracy is to turn antagonisms into agonisms. This task involves an appreciation of the opponent as an important contributor to their own position without necessarily agreeing with them, rather than annihilating this opponent. The primary focus of this agonistic challenge is not to annihilate the opponents or force them to agree with you but rather for you and them to reveal blind spots in each other’s positions that lead to self-growth. You are addressing your opponent’s challenge not necessarily to convince your opponent or to move them (and the political undecided) to your political camp but mostly to promote self-growth in yourself by making your position stronger for yourself, your proponents, and bystanders who may join your camp. I think Mouffe’s political theory applies not only to liberal democracy but to scientific practice as defined by Thomas Kuhn (1996) – his idea of “scientific paradigms.” Agonism is a targeted relationship between scientists from different paradigms constantly challenging each other.

Agonism is basically what dialogue-disagreement is. In dialogue-disagreement, the participants aim to explore their disagreements to promote self-growth and the growth of their positions. They do not

search for an agreement (Matusov & Marjanovic-Shane, 2015). This term was introduced by Ukrainian scholars from the School of Dialogue of Cultures in Kharkiv, Ukraine (Kurganov, 2009; Osetinsky, 2009; Solomadin & Kurganov, 2009; Solomadin & Matusov, 2009). Unfortunately, I just want to tell you that my heart is bleeding because their school called "Ochag" (meaning "Hearth") was destroyed by the Russian bombing, forcing many Ochag teachers and students to move away to too many places, too many countries. Some Ochag teachers, students, and administrators remained in Kharkiv; some people had to move to Europe. They try to continue running the school online across different countries. The notion of dialogue-disagreement was coined by Sergey Kurganov (2009), one of the founders of Ochag and the School of Dialogue of Cultures. It is based on the philosophical ideas of the Soviet philosopher Vladimir Bibler (Berlyand, 2009; Bibler, 1988, 1993, 2009), who was influenced by the Soviet philosopher of dialogism Mikhail Bakhtin (Bibler, 1991).

Dialogization of antagonism: Dialogue with Evil

The fourth ontological dialogue value I want to recognize is the dialogization of antagonism. As mentioned above, Mouffe defined the democratic liberal project as transforming antagonisms into agonisms. I want to remind you that antagonism is just zero tolerance for another's position, another's paradigm, to another's being because antagonism views the opponent as the evil obstacle to be destroyed. Dialogization of antagonism reminds me of Sasha [Sidorkin]'s book, the title of a chapter in one of his books, "Dialogue with Evil" (Sidorkin, 2002). "Dialogue with Evil" is probably the final formulation of the problem of the dialogization of antagonism. Is it possible? Is it always possible or even desirable? Of course not.

<<At the end of my talk, Sasha Sidorkin provided a historical anecdote about the impossibility of Dialogue with Evil, told him by Haim Gordon (1988), who was a student of Martin Buber, a philosopher of dialogism: "Haim told me that Buber actually had this fantasy when Nazis came to power, that he would enter dialogue with Himmler, the chief of SS. He was quickly disabused of that notion and had to flee [Nazi Germany], of course.>>

However, dialogization of antagonism must be tried against all the odds. Let's consider the dialogization of war itself, which sounds bizarre: how systematic killings can be dialogized, but nevertheless, it's necessary. Because if you think about all these international war conventions about "civilized war," "non-criminal war conduct," "ethics of war," and so on, which sound kind of crazy, but nonetheless, they're very important. Which war conduct is legitimate, and which is not? What weapons are legitimate to use, and under what conditions? What constitutes war crimes? Who is the combatant? How to treat combatants and non-combatants? How can the international community make a legal judgment about war crimes? How should the international community investigate war crimes and punish war criminals? What if one side of the war conflict systematically violates the laws, norms, and traditions of war conduct – how the other side can legitimately respond without losing the war? And these debates are going on about this war, about any particular war. There have been so many debates about particular war events: whether they are legitimate or not legitimate and why from a moral or legal point of view. I think this is part of this dialogization of the war. And I think that's the important thing that is happening.

Demand for the responsibility of my authorship in a dialogue

The fifth ontological dialogue value important to consider, in my view, is the authorship as a responsible deed (postupok, поступок, in Russian). The authorship of my relationships with other people, my worldview positions, and my value judgments is the center of my life, to which I must respond when facing challenges of my authorship from others and myself. This is especially true when I'm standing by my authorship. Why is that? What is important? Why is it especially important in the Age of post-Enlightenment?

This is important because post-Enlightenment is responding to the Enlightenment project's flaws. The Enlightenment project constantly tries to find objective, thus desubjectivized, formulae of morality, truth, good judgment, etc. While Kant tried to find universal formulae, some other people (e.g., sociocultural scholars) right now are trying to find contextual formulae, conditional formulae, sociocultural formulae, but still non-personal, objective, positivistic formulae, rather than an authorial dialogic response (Matusov, 2023b). An authorial dialogic response consists not of objectivity but responsibility – taking personal responsibility for my deeds and my authorship in dialogue with the self (i.e., conscience) and/or others. Taking personal responsibility is always risky for my fate, my prestige, my relationship with other people, my credibility, possible punishment of me, and so on. I must accept the demand for my responsibility in dialogue. What does it mean “to accept the demand for my responsibility in dialogue?” I think it means that my authorship and especially my deeds – my values, my judgments, and the consequences – will be challenged by myself and others in dialogue. And taking responsibility, in this case, means for me to engage in that dialogue in a serious and honest way. This is my understanding of Bakhtin's notion that "I don't have an alibi in being" (Bakhtin, 1993) and that I must commit myself to reply to the dialogic challenges of my deeds: my actions, inactions, words, and silence.

Avoiding impersonal bird's eye views

Finally, I think the biggest challenge for me and whoever wants to join the post-Enlightenment project is to decolonize myself from the hegemony of this Enlightenment project rooted in paternalism, necessities, objectivities, distrusts, fears, anxieties, shackles of the given, and so on, while not to commit myself to the opposite pitfall of mysticism, rejection of truth, fake news, alternative facts, manipulations, rejection of objectivity and positivism, and so on, which, I suspect, are the shadows of the Enlightenment project. The Enlightenment project is also based on the idea of a constant impersonal bird's eye view of everything. Rejection of impersonal bird's eye-views is extremely important for post-Enlightenment education. By the way, the beautiful work of Benedict Anderson about “imagined communities” just comes to my mind (Anderson, 1991). In this book on the origin of nationalism, Anderson argued that the Enlightenment project had generated a new type of narrative involving the bird's eye view of everything. In his book, Anderson analyzed the people's accounts of traveling to exotic places before and after the Age of Enlightenment. He showed that from the beginning of the Age of Enlightenment, people's travel narratives were structured by these powerful, ubiquitous impersonal bird's eye-view descriptions. Before Enlightenment, travelogues were personal, subjective, overly biased, and very particular observations and commentaries of the lives of others. Very, very interesting. The post-Enlightenment framework guides us away from the Enlightenment grand narrative. It moves back to more person-centered dialogic accounts, personal responsibility, centered-in-the-world grounded perspectives, etc.

Let me finish with my traditional question: What do you think? Thank you.

Conference discussion

I included only a part of the conference discussion here, challenging some of the points from my keynote address.

The charge of individualism

Mariëtte de Haan: Thank you, Eugene, for a wonderful presentation. I indeed need more time to think. I just wanted to say that I think it's very thought-provoking, but I can't really figure it out. I mean, I agree with a lot of what you say, but I struggle with your perspective. When you come up with a person-centered perspective on education or learning, I struggle with that because I think I agree with the basic ideas that you share on learning and everything. But somehow, I also think that we need

collectives in order to solve these very complex problems. So, it seems that you try to solve these issues too much at the level of the individual's cell. So, where are the collectives? So, this is one of my thoughts, but I really like your lecture, and I want to think more about them and hopefully dialogue more about these ideas. And I've really enjoyed it.

Eugene Matusov: Thanks A LOT, Mariëtte! I want to make two comments in response to your charge of my post-Enlightenment paradigm in individualism. First, I feel a little bit handicapped by using English for my presentation because, in Russian, it would be very different. English is caught in a *bad* dualism between the individual and the social. In English, there is either one or another. Individual means indivisible. It's an indivisible entity, atomistic. And, of course, that's the last thing that I want to imply about the atomism of humans. The Russian or Slavic term is 'lichnost,' which can be loosely translated in English as "personality," "personness," or "personhood." Lichnost' is neither the individual nor the social. Lichnost' is a unique universe constituted by dialogue with other lichnosts. You value your children, spouse, friends, and family not because they are similar but because they are special and unique to you. Lichnost' is authorial, constantly transcending the given: given culture, society, biology, technology, values, etc. Lichnost' is committed to the responsibility of seriously answering to other people and/or themselves who challenge its deeds and words. Because they are lichnosts to you. Lichnost' is social, but nevertheless, it cannot be reduced to sociality. The post-Enlightenment paradigm focuses on the issue of dignity as the primary lichnost-relationship with other people. That's one comment.

My second comment is about my autobiographical groundedness. I came to the United States from the Soviet Union, where the biggest problem I experienced, one of the biggest oppressions that I experienced, was forced collectivism. Of course, when I came to this society, alienation and loneliness were one of the biggest problems. Thus, we – you, Mariëtte, and I – are kind of moving in the opposite direction culturally. I don't know how you, Mikhail [Gradovski, who also came from the USSR], Ana [Marjanovic-Shane, from Yugoslavia], and Sasha [Sidorkin, from the USSR] feel about it because you, too, were coming from this kind of culture and history of forced collectivism. But I feel like "society, leave me alone, please" – that's my biggest desire. Yes, I don't care much about this loneliness. I don't have this loneliness. I want the opposite thing. I still experience forced collectivism even in the United States, this oppression of forced collectivism. That's probably legitimate cultural and autobiographical tensions, Mariëtte, between us. These tensions might lead to philosophical differences driven by different concerns and sensibilities. I think our differences are valid, coming from different histories of us.

Mariëtte de Haan: Yeah. I think this is super interesting. I just want to [consider it] from the other side, thinking from the other side. I don't believe that getting together is a bad force in humanity. Because I think that we also need a collective and we need each other to build these utopians, so I do agree with the danger of utopia – utopia can become dystopic, et cetera. I mean, the issue is very complex, of course. But to break it out to individuals and autonomy, I don't think this is the only answer. I think that has its own problems of loneliness and, you know, we are very social beings. So, an ideology of a better world should be built from that nature – we are stronger together, you know? So, I don't think this is the right direction, really. I think you know what I mean. So that is a little comment that I wanted to make, so we need to think more. But I really like the ingredients that you brought in, Eugene; it was super interesting. Thank you very much.

Eugene Matusov: The Enlightenment's primary human relationship is a collaboration among people who try to solve their common problems together, amplify and complement each other, and achieve oneness (Matusov & Pease-Alvarez, 2020).

The post-Enlightenment's primary human relationship is dialogue, inextinguishable interest in others, in others' uniqueness, opaqueness, authorship, disagreement, and principled disunity. The dialogic relationship is the relationship of dignity. I'm not against collaboration occasionally, but I see it as the primarily instrumental relationship among people. I argue that human excitement is not to solve important problems together but to dialogue with one another through authorial self-actualization.

Why is Dialogue so difficult to achieve in education?

Sasha Sidorkin: Thank you, Eugene. I'm pleased that, like myself, you've begun contemplating the constraints of a dialogical worldview. Understanding this is crucial, I believe. I was a student of Haim Gordon, who was in turn, a student of Martin Buber. Haim told me that Buber nurtured a fanciful thought of initiating dialogue with Himmler, the SS chief when the Nazis seized power. He was rapidly disillusioned and had to escape, understandably.

However, I think what you're alluding to is the societal ideal that dialogical thinking proposes, correct? It's evidently not classical liberalism, where autonomy is the focus. Yet it isn't what one might term progressivism, structuralism, or what I would refer to as a neo-Marxist approach, where personality and personhood, or 'lichnost', are defined by social structures. Living in California, many of my colleagues and friends are progressivists who believe everything is about the structures. I often have to intervene, reminding them that a significant number of Russians have been traumatized by such a Marxist outlook on life. I don't subscribe to that ideology, namely progressive neo-Marxist structuralism.

However, I believe the contemporary political strife can provide a midpoint where there's an emphasis on both freedom, as you mentioned, and engagement with others, or 'being-with-others'. Ontologically, being with others, I feel, does a more effective job in abstract terms. But once you delve into practical issues, such as the types of schools we want to establish, the dialogical relationship becomes significantly more complex and harder to realize. I'm unsure of the reasons behind this. I don't have a definitive answer. It's just an observation that what you're suggesting is that the theory of dialogue creates an incredibly attractive ideal. However, it struggles to realize it within the realities of our world. It's a beautiful icon, yet reaching it appears exceptionally challenging. I'm intrigued to hear your thoughts on why this might be the case.

Eugene Matusov: Thank you, Sasha. Again, being grounded in Bakhtin, I don't know if it's a metaphor or, maybe, a conceptualization of 'lichnost' as authorship. Bakhtin was interested in the author. It's like people authoring their lives, authoring their relationships, authoring their education, and authoring their responsibility. These processes of authorship define this notion of the 'lichnost' for me. Paradoxically, as the famous German writer Thomas Mann pointed out, Sigmund Freud insisted that a person is defined not so much by their past but by their vision of the future – I'd add their *authorial* vision of the future: "The free folk are the people of a future freed from fear and hate, a ripe for peace" (Mann, 1956/1936, p. 115).

And in terms of that, Sasha, I can sense a very interesting tension in your question about why it's so difficult to achieve Dialogue in educational practice. Mikhail [Gradovski], Ana [Marjanovic-Shane], you, and I, we all came from the places of a failed utopia. The Communist utopia turns out to be a kind of dystopia. The relationship between utopia and dystopia is very important. Our autobiographical and historical trauma of the Communist dystopia leads us to a temptation to avoid any utopia, to limit ourselves to the given, to the given practice, given institutions, given values. Pardon its sexism and classism, but I want to remind you of a memorable quote from a terrific novel,

“A Gentleman in Moscow,” “A gentleman seeks dignity in undignified circumstances” (Towles, 2016). A gentleman preoccupies with the given present.

On the other hand, I want to remind us of the work “The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity” by David Graeber and David Wengrow (Graeber & Wengrow, 2021). Unfortunately, David Graeber, who was an anthropologist, anarchist, and a leader of the leaderless Occupy Movement (Graeber, 2013), recently died of Covid 19 in his academic prime. Graeber defined freedom in three aspects. Imagining and trying for a better life is one of them. Thus, imagining and trying utopia is an important and necessary part of freedom. Many of us, people of Eastern Europe, have developed utopia-phobia. According to Graeber, this trauma makes us unfree. Of course, our historical and autobiographical experience teaches us, people from Eastern Europe, that we need to be extra careful to avoid an uncritical acceptance of a beautiful utopia, this attractive paradise, which might end up us in hell. But I agree with David Graeber, that if we stop imagining utopia, our better life, we will become unfree.

What is utopia? ‘Utopia’ is a very interesting Greek word. I wonder if it has at least two meanings (Matusov, 2020a). One, it means “a better place.” “Utopia” is a compound word. It consists of the word “eu,” which is Latinized Greek “ev,” meaning “noble” or “good.” It is like in my first name: Eugene (literally, “born noble” in Greek). The second word in the compound “utopia” is “tope,” meaning “place.” Thus, “utopia” means “a better place.” I’d call it “evtopia” to distinguish from the second meaning.

The second possible meaning is “u-topia.” “U-topia” is denying the place, this current place, “not from this place.” Both imagining and trying a better life and rejecting the oppressive given are important, especially in the context of Dialogue, as defining the desirable human relationship.

Rejection of evtopia and u-topia is an imprisonment trap of unfreedom. Without utopia, we would hang over the cliff of the given, being afraid of change because things might get worse if we try to change them. It’s like in Russia now; many people feel that there is no alternative to Putin and that changing Putin may make things worse. Or, like in the time of slavery, enslavement was unthinkable because slavery had accompanied humanity for several millennia and probably felt like being the necessary evil forever from the dawn of humanity. Back then, at the end of the eighteenth, beginning of the nineteenth century, sober realists, like Thomas Jefferson, tried to humanize¹⁵ slavery, while radical utopists, like John Brown¹⁶, tried to abolish it here and now. I wonder if similar tension between diverse transformationist approaches goes on in education now.

Let me provide a more recent example relevant to social sciences. Sociologist Will Van den Hoonaard wrote a terrific book titled “The Seduction of Ethics: Transforming the Social Sciences” and published it in 2011. In this book, Van den Hoonaard provided a deep and grounded critical analysis of the institutionalized practice of Institutional Review Boards¹⁷ (IRB) that consider the ethics and, based on this review, permit or forbid social science research in Anglo-speaking countries, mainly in Canada, UK, USA, and Australia. The author concludes that the IRBs distort and undermine research practices and science itself, paternalize both social science researchers and their research participants, lead to “a homogenization of research methods and the pauperization of the social sciences” (Van den Hoonaard, 2011, p. 286), do not provide any evidence that the IRBs fulfill their mission, trivialize and hijack the ethic research issues to allow institutions to cover “their ass,” and

¹⁵ I don’t use quotation marks for “realists” and “humanize” here to represent their historical sensibilities.

¹⁶ [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Brown_\(abolitionist\)](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Brown_(abolitionist))

¹⁷ These boards have different names in different countries (Van den Hoonaard, 2011).

so on. While reading this book, I impatiently waited for the last chapter, where the author promised to suggest how to “puncture the gloom.” And yet, he started his chapter with this disclaimer:

While lamenting the particular effects of research-ethics codes on social science research, one cannot take a stand on whether ethics codes should be either retained or dismissed. To hope for, or to engineer, the collapse of ethics codes (because they do not serve the social sciences well) is unrealistic. The codes express the temper of the times and are here to stay (Van den Hoonaard, 2011, p. 287).

The lack of bravery, lack of authorial agency, the lack of creative imagination – not giving oneself the permission for the creative and critical imagination of addressing research moral issues with IRB gatekeeping or ethics codification, – the acceptance of oppressive “realism,” – in short, the acceptance of one’s own unfreedom often leads to the one’s platitude, if not, to plain stultification. Thus, the author, Will Van den Hoonaard, ended his otherwise super informed and thoughtful brilliant book by providing very unconvincing, dull, and, if not, bureaucratic suggestions of how to reform the IRBs: provide more resources to the IRB, make researchers know the ethic policies in advance of their research proposals, commit the universities to the goodwill of following ethics rather their egoistic interests, etc. (Van den Hoonaard, 2011, pp. 289-292). In my judgment, Van den Hoonaard’s proposal is much more unrealistic than considering going away from the IRS and coded research ethics in the sense of the goals of the research ethics reform that Van den Hoonaard wants to achieve.

Elsewhere, I called the sad phenomenon of a thoughtful person’s hanging on to oppressive realism for dear life an “awareness without responsibility” (Matusov, 2009a, pp. 261-263). The phenomenon of awareness without responsibility involves a person being fully aware of the oppressive reality but refusing to address it, refusing to dream of how to transcend this oppressive reality because of hanging on to the person’s dear ideas (e.g., “realism” in the case of Van den Hoonaard). The awareness without responsibility is another birthmark of Enlightenment, as well as being guided by the worst-case scenarios and paternalism embedded in the IRB institutional practices.

My warning to myself is that the ideology of Dialogue can create a terrible dystopia. The history of the twentieth century is a huge cemetery of people who were sacrificed to these utopias turned to be dystopias: Communist, Fascist, Antiracist, and religious. And, unfortunately, this history has not been over for us. We need to constantly be aware of that. And that’s why, by the way, Sasha, I so much like your writings because you constantly warn us against this dystopia. In the name of utopian Dialogue, we can surely create a terrible dystopia. But, at the same time, this warning should not make us paralyzed, and unable to take our freedom and responsibility to imagine and to try a better world to live. Elsewhere, I argued that to avoid utopia becoming dystopia, there must be an inbuilt open path out of this utopia when it starts feeling oppressive to its participants (Matusov, 2020a). Utopia must be humble rather than dogmatic and fanatical.

Back to your question, Sasha, of why Dialogue feels so impractical in education. In short, I think it is because current educational practice is very undialogical, if not antialogical. It was not by chance that Bakhtin used conventional institutionalized education as his example of extreme monologism (Bakhtin, 1999; Matusov, 2009a). Educational practice based on paternalism driven by Enlightenment robs its students of both genuine education, which can be only self-education and genuine Dialogue. So, I want to redefine your question from “What kind of schools do you want to build?” where a “you” is an educator, school administrator, parent, politician, government bureaucrat,

taxpayer, employer, etc., to where “you” is a student, learner, or educatee. Or, should it even be called “school”?

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