

ARTIGO

HUMAN FORMATION, WORLD VISION, DIALOGUE AND EDUCATION:
THE PRESENT RELEVANCE OF PAULO FREIRE AND MARTIN BUBER

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ABSTRACT: This article discusses contemporary issues of education regarding the relationship between teachers and students and training/education, from the theories of Paulo Freire and Martin Buber. Initially, the text explains the proximity between the theories of Paulo Freire and Martin Buber. Next, it highlights fundamental aspects of the works of the two thinkers for favoring training/education that lies in and acts for dialogue, against the dehumanization and any kind of humiliation, discrimination or exclusion. Finally, it summarizes Freire's and Buber's contribution to an education focused on community training/education and that is critical, creative, dialogical. In the final considerations, the present relevance of Martin Buber and Paulo Freire, their theoretical legacy for practical and political actions is evident.

Keywords: Freire. Buber. Dialogue. Community.

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FORMAÇÃO HUMANA, VISÃO DE MUNDO, DIÁLOGO E EDUCAÇÃO: A ATUALIDADE DE PAULO FREIRE E MARTIN BUBER

RESUMO: Este artigo discute questões contemporâneas da educação no que se refere às relações entre professores e alunos e à formação, a partir das teorias de Paulo Freire e de Martin Buber. Inicialmente, o texto explicita a aproximação entre a teoria de Freire e Buber. Em seguida, destaca aspectos fundantes da obra dos dois pensadores por favorecerem uma formação que se situe e que atue para o diálogo, contra a desumanização e qualquer tipo de humilhação, discriminação ou exclusão. Ao final, sintetiza contribuições de Paulo Freire e Martin Buber para uma educação voltada para a formação de comunidade e que seja crítica, criativa, dialógica. Nas considerações finais, fica evidenciada a atualidade de Freire e Buber, seu legado teórico para ações práticas e políticas.

Palavras-chave: Freire. Buber. Diálogo. Comunidade.

“Hope is not a question of crossing one’s arms and waiting. I act with hope in the midst of struggle, and I hope to maintain that hope throughout my struggle.”

(Paulo Freire)

“The truth of a world vision is not demonstrated up in the clouds, but rather in the lived reality of experience.”

(Martin Buber)

INTRODUCTION

Paulo Freire was a reader of Martin Buber’s work. To write about the two authors is to honor them and to acknowledge their immense and significant contributions in all spheres of thought and action-oriented education in various times and spaces. The theory and practice developed and lived by both writers are exemplary of what can be achieved during challenging moments in the political life of a country and society and in the personal lives of citizens. We again face similarly challenging times today in Brazil.

The purpose of this text is to discuss contemporary issues of education, especially regarding the relationships established between teachers and students, as well as issues that arise regarding teacher training. We will focus on themes of dialogue, responsibility, and ethics using the works of Paulo Freire and Martin Buber as points of reference.

Relationships that are established within educational institutions and links between people often become dehumanized and marked by attitudes of confrontation, intolerance, or rejection. Students and

teachers are often seen in fragmented ways: They may be separately valued with respect to their cognitive aspects, moral aspects, and physical aspects, as if people were merely bodies that must be contained and tamed. Adults become afraid to exercise authority and set boundaries; children and young people learn to feel unstable and insecure.

The challenge of education at any level, in any modality, and in any type of schooling, is to transform the concept of “the other” from being a person *of whom* I speak to being a person *with whom* I speak. Teachers must fulfill various functions, no matter whether they are teaching children, young people, or adults. These functions include seeing, listening, accepting, creating a welcoming space, remaining present and focused, and exercising authority. The human dimension prevails over the utilitarian function, and an ethics of care for the other prevails as well.

The teacher-student relationship involves relationships between adults and adults, adults and adolescents, and adults and children situated within determined socio-historical contexts. Therefore, when discussing this relationship, it is fundamentally important to take into account both specificities and commonalities, because the relationship in question is a connection between people. We have to consider, therefore, that this relationship is constructed within a particular time and space and is influenced by values, ideologies, norms, and discourses.

We learn from Paulo Freire that education is a social practice whose purpose is human formation and therefore is not neutral; education presupposes a dialogical relationship and must take place in the place where one is, in daily life, and in practice – not only in theory. It is a concrete experience that takes place in this world, and it has strong political implications.

This text takes on the challenge of facing the theme of teacher training in three sections, with the work of Paulo Freire as a starting point. The first section explains the approach utilized by Freire and Buber and briefly describes the contexts in which they lived and wrote. The second section highlights foundational aspects of the work of these two thinkers, who favored educational formation through dialogue that is situated and that acts against dehumanization and any type of humiliation, discrimination, or exclusion. The third section synthesizes Freire’s contributions to Buber’s work regarding community-oriented education that is critical, creative, and dialogical. In the final considerations, we explore the current relevance of Freire and Buber and their theoretical legacy for practical and political actions in our time.

PAULO FREIRE AND MARTIN BUBER: APPROACHES

Freire quotes Martin Buber (*I and Thou*) in a footnote to his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1975, p.196). In addition to this quote, many concepts from Buber's work (2001, 2003, 2008, 2009, 2011) are present in Freire's work with respect to ideas of dialogue, community, inter human connection, creation, and worldview. The work of the two philosophers makes explicit the need for understanding the world, as well as the needs for action and transformation. When speaking with the student – as Paulo Freire teaches – the educator is no longer “speaking *to*” the student; the relationship is transformed to one where the educator “speaks *with*” the student. This creates new possibilities for the development of language, aligning knowledge and conjectures about a new world.

The attitudes or principles represented by concepts of “I-Thou” and “I-That” are proposed by Buber (2001) to analyze dialogical actions, which are marked by collaboration, and can also be found in Freire's criticism (1975) of antidialogical actions, in which man is transformed into a mere thing and is therefore a dominated object.

For both philosophers, “listening” to each other is a condition for establishing authentic dialogue, that is, a dialogue in which each of the participants is in fact considering the other's presence and way of being. This allows for an intention of establishing a living reciprocity (Kramer, Nunes, Pacheco, Oliveira, & Martins, 2016). Recognition is the perception and acceptance of the other in his or her entirety – his/her feelings, presence, body, and spirit, free of indifference to the other. “Responsibility” is being truthful in responding to the other when discussing what is real for us.

According to Fernandes (1981), the concept of dialogue in the work of Buber and Freire is infused by values of religiosity and is the only means to have meaningful encounters with the world and with other people. The philosophy of both authors expresses a marked concern for social change and understands dialogue as a means for people to achieve the goals of education, in which the influence of the educator is determinative.

Paulo Freire and Martin Buber conceived theories and implemented practices that, through different paths, approached dialogue as a principal concept. They resisted theories that put the individual at the center of analysis; instead, they focused on encounters, dialogue, and relationships between human beings as a starting point, which allows for a critical understanding of reality and history.

Martin Buber was born in Vienna in 1878. He was in contact with his grandfather, who knew of Hasidic mysticism, which became a strong influence in his work, especially with regard to the concept of dialogue. In 1900, after finishing his studies, he moved to Berlin, where he met his friend Gustav Landauer and began to develop his philosophy of dialogue. Buber was one of the most important Jewish thinkers of the twentieth century and is considered a utopian socialist according to the critical philosopher Michael Löwy (1989). Buber, like Walter Benjamin, Theodor W. Adorno, and Hannah Arendt, lived through the period of the Holocaust and the dehumanization brought on by growing modernity.

Buber was a pacifist who even in the 1920s advocated for the creation of a binational state in Palestine. In 1938, the Nazis expelled him from the University of Frankfurt, where he taught social philosophy. Thereafter, he joined the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in Palestine. In his best-known work, *I and Thou* (1923), Buber insisted that the dialogic principle was not a philosophical concept but a reality beyond the reach of discursive language (Pena, 2015). For him, what distinguishes human beings is not reason but the ability to relate.

Martin Buber, as he himself put it, was an atypical man who considered it a mistake to try to classify himself as a philosopher of language, religion, or education, or as a politician or mystic (Bartholo, 2001). He was truly a “Mensch,”¹ an inquiring mind and a person who listened and who brought a dimension of meaning to that word. Where all other thinkers saw ruptures and separations, he saw the entirety. His work reflects this attitude by integrating themes related to art, sociology, education, and politics. Far from being oblivious to what was happening around him, Buber turned to concrete, everyday events, to people and their actions in the world.

According to Panko (1976), Buber’s greatest contribution lies in the area of anthropology, for it is by understanding his deep concern for people that he himself can be understood. Zuben (2003) considered that Buber always had anthropological questions as central to his philosophical thought and his preoccupations, both theoretical and those related to the concrete facts of daily life. When he died in 1965, Buber had worked for forty years in adult education and traveled to various countries for conferences, courses, and speeches whose emphasis was always placed on education as a dialogue and community endeavor.

Paulo Reglus Neves Freire was born in Recife, Brazil in 1921. His father Joaquin followed the Kardecist religion and his mother Edheltrudes was Catholic. According to Freire, “with them I learned

the dialogue I seek to maintain with the world, with men, with God, with my wife, and with my children. My father's respect for my mother's beliefs taught me from childhood to respect the choices of others" (Freire, 1980, p. 13). During the crisis of 1929, the family moved to Jaboatão in search of a better life. The death of Freire's father brought the family into difficulties: "I tried to read and pay attention in the classroom, but I did not understand anything because I was so hungry." (Freire, 1980, p. 40).

At age 18, Paulo Freire became a private language teacher of Portuguese; he also had the dream of becoming a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst. The central theme of his work, the development of consciousness, stemmed from these interests. While in law school, he also studied philosophy, psychology of language, and Brazilian and foreign literature. These studies gave him the opportunity to deepen his reflections on social injustice, leading him to identify more with the oppressed than with the oppressor.

From 1946 to 1956, Freire worked in the Industrial Social Services Agency (SESI). Responsible for the entire primary school network, he promoted teacher training seminars. At this point he was already concerned with improving teaching practices, and he began his work on adult literacy in fishing communities. In 1958, Freire was invited to work at the City Hall of Recife, which was managed by Miguel Arraes. Freire became one of the founders of the Movement for Popular Culture (MCP), while continuing to work with children, adults, and with popular theater programs. Rosas (2002) attributes one of the factors leading to the expansion of the MCP in the state of Pernambuco in 1962 to the leadership of Arraes, who, along with other intellectuals involved in the movement, believed in the human potential of northeastern Brazilians and had a vision for progress. In 1959, Freire defended his thesis in a public competition to become the Chair of History and Philosophy of Education at the School of Fine Arts of Pernambuco. This gave rise to one of his first texts: *Education and Contemporary Trends in Brazil*.

With the Movement for Popular Culture, the prevailing understanding of illiteracy was transformed due to the strong influence of Paulo Freire. Illiterate people came to be seen as equally capable and productive subjects of their own lives and histories. Due to his successful experience in Angicos, begun in 1963 in Rio Grande do Norte, Freire became world-renowned and was invited to work in the MEC National Literacy Program (PNA) in Brasília.

During the military coup of 1964, Paulo Freire was arrested and subsequently obtained political asylum in Bolivia. From Bolivia,

he traveled to Chile, also for political reasons. Thereafter he was once again forced to move, this time due to General Pinochet's dictatorship in Chile. In 1969, Paulo Freire went to Harvard in the United States and then to Geneva, where he participated in various actions with representatives of African countries.

In 1980, no longer forced to remain in exile, Freire accepted the challenge of becoming the Secretary of Education of the city of São Paulo, working with Mayor Luiza Erundina. He held this position from January 1989 until May 1991, and he sought to democratize the public school system and to invest heavily in the ongoing training and formation of professionals (Freire, 1992a, p.23). In his role as Secretary of Education, he created the Youth and Adult Literacy Movement – MOVA/SP. He died in 1997, leaving an important legacy that has been recognized worldwide.

FORMATION TO RESIST DEHUMANIZATION, AND IN FAVOR OF DIALOGUE

Basic themes for what comprises the critical and creative potential of an educational training program that stands against dehumanization include knowledge of the other, dialogue, and world vision. Freire and Buber made significant contributions to the prominence of this perspective in modern education.

According to Buber, there are three ways of perceiving the other: through observation, through contemplation, and through experiencing intimate knowledge. Experiencing intimate knowledge requires a receptive, open, and accepting posture in order to see the other not as an object, but as a person (2009, pp. 42-43). Before the other – whether the other is a child, youth, or adult – a teacher, manager, or researcher must take proactive responsibility in order to prevent exclusion, humiliation, aggression of any kind, or dehumanization.

This concept invites us to ask: “What is your worldview? What you do with your worldview?” This means that we must not merely defend our worldview and seek to persuade others of its validity; we must also live and experience it in the moment, wherever possible (Buber, 2003, p. 32).²

Freire (1983) exemplifies a commitment to the world. This commitment must be humanized, and it requires taking responsibility for historical context. “A commitment to human existence exists only insofar as one engages with reality, in whose ‘waters’ truly committed men get ‘wet,’ or soaked. Only then is the commitment true.”(p.9).

It is not possible, according to Freire and Buber, for educational formation to be viable unless it is also a form of humanization in

which each of us engages and commits. And this is not an idealistic or illusory way of conceiving of the educational act. On the contrary, it is an indispensable concept with ongoing relevance. The authors state:

The notion of modern man that “considering the other” is sentimentalism and is not in accordance with the density of present-day life, and the idea that considering the other is impracticable amidst the turmoil of modern life, is a grotesque error and is merely a masked admission of the weakness a person’s own initiative in light of the situations of the times (Buber, 2009, p.57).

The moment society looks inward and begins the difficult search for authenticity, society then begins to prioritize concern for a long-term, historical project. The more this concern grows, the more unfavorable the climate becomes for commitment (Freire, 1983, p.13).

This vision of educational formation is linked to the authors’ understanding of language and dialogue. Their texts demonstrate this connection. Freire asks:

And what is dialogue? It is a horizontal relationship between A and B. It is born of a critical matrix and it generates criticality (...) It is nourished by love, humility, hope, faith, and trust. Therefore, communication happens only through dialogue. And when the two poles of dialogue are linked in this way, with love, with hope, and with faith in one another, they become critical subjects in the search for something bigger (Freire, 1992a, p. 115).

For Paulo Freire (1992a), “one cannot think for others; nor can one make others think, and neither can one think without others” (p.117). The significance of dialogue lies in the fact that dialogic subjects grow with each other. A dialogue does not force people to be on the same level; it does not reduce one to the other. On the contrary, “it implies a fundamental and mutual respect between the subjects who are engaged with each other in dialogue” (p.118). In this sense, the relationship between language, thought, and the world is dialectical, procedural, and contradictory.

Any dialogue must take into account the different meanings of words. In addition, language brings along with it a conception of the world – a worldview or cosmovision, in the words of Buber. Conceptions of truth, theory, and practice in Paulo Freire’s work are not monological. On the contrary, theory is practiced without forcing it into a mold or crystallizing it. To practice science, according to Freire, is to find and unveil truths about the world, about living beings, and about things that have yet to be discovered. It is to give meaning to the emerging needs of social practice. Perhaps it is for this reason that Freire insists on the idea that “theory emerges wet from the waters of lived practice” (Freire, 1994, p.32).

Language is a guiding thread through which history is understood, analyzed, and re-signified, including with regard to particularity (such as life stories) and to wholeness (linking these individual stories to a long-term perspective of time). However, science often fragments knowledge and disregards the instances where knowledge is produced in everyday life. Research in education plays a central role in shifting the focus from a preoccupation only with written texts and encourages a reinterpretation of context. Thus, a subject says: “the way this conversation is going does not make it possible for us to understand one other. While you (pointing to a group of educators) talk only about salt, people here (referring to rural people) are interested in seasoning, and salt is only one aspect of seasoning” (Freire, 1992b, p. 72).

For Buber (1974), language is a carrier of being, which is established through the two attitudes of man in relation to the world, explained in terms of “I-Thou” and “I-That.” These pairs of words, as the author denominates them, create a foundation for existence and are uttered by a living being in his or her totality or wholeness, and in his or her partiality or limitation. In the sense of wholeness, the I-Thou attitude occurs in the context of the relationship, of the totality of being, and of presence. With regard to partiality or limitation, the I-That attitude manifests in the facts of lived experience, of the egocentric self, and of the object.

Buber (2001) warns that the two attitudes (I-Thou and I-That) cannot be confused with each other or viewed in a Manichean way. Each attitude has its own function; the problem is that there is a growing predominance of the I-That relationship to the detriment of the I-Thou relationship. This is a characteristic of modernity. The I-Thou relationship requires reciprocity, a posture of one person toward the other, and a commitment to the relationship. According to Buber (2001), “relationship is reciprocity” (p.9).

The I-Thou relationship is linked to presence. Even love happens in the “between” and is a responsibility of the I to the Thou: for Buber (1977), “the opposite of love is not hatred, but indifference” (p.17). Buber the philosopher presents the word as being dialogical. Understanding that the primordial category of dialogicity is the “between,” Buber develops an ontology of the word. The word is the act of man through which he becomes a man and places himself in the world with others. Therefore, the “between” allows, like an epistemological key, for a man to approach the other in dialogicity. If in modernity there is a fertile discussion about the individual, for Buber the crisis of man is a crisis of the *between*, where

the predominance of appearances about being, the insufficiency of the perception of the other, and the imposition of a way of living and thinking by one man on another are factors that, according to the philosopher, impede the growth of interhumanity. The basic movement of dialogical life consists of turning toward the other, perceiving and accepting the other in his or her entirety – his or her presence in body, mind, and spirit – while taking responsibility for the other, which means freeing oneself from indifference.

According to Buber (2009), the domains of dialogic life and monological life do not coincide with those of dialogue and monologue. For him, there are three kinds of dialogue: authentic dialogue, in which there is a living reciprocity between the interlocutors, whether spoken or silent, which is considered rare by the author; technical dialogue, which comes from the need for an objective understanding of information; and monologue disguised as dialogue, about which Buber writes that “there exist not only great spheres of dialogical life that in their appearance are not dialogue, but there is also a way of life where dialogue is not dialogue, that is, it has the appearance of dialogue, but not its essence”(p.53).

The monological movement does not consist of separating oneself from the other, but rather in folding in on oneself, withdrawing, and admitting the other only in the form of one’s own experience, only as “a part of myself” (Buber, 2009, p. 57). In this way, the individual is considered a fact of existence only insofar as s/he is placed in a living relationship with other individuals, with the encounter being the recognition of the other in all its otherness, in the same way that one recognizes him or herself. “In order to get outside ourselves when relating to the other, we must undoubtedly start from within ourselves. It is necessary to be and to reside in oneself. A dialogue between mere *individuals* is only a sketch. It is only when whole *people* in their entirety are involved that true dialogue can be realized” (Buber, 2009, p. 55).

In the extension of one’s own self-consciousness, one observes other men who gradually stop being perceived as “things” and start being perceived as subjects, in the sense that one becomes more and more capable of establishing relationships between the self and the world, by articulating and unveiling true reality. “Dialogue is this meeting of men, mediated by the world, to articulate, without destroying oneself, the I-Thou relationship” (Freire, 1975,p. 93). Man recognizes himself as a presence in the world while also recognizing the presence of the other as a non-self. “It is a presence that thinks about itself, that knows that it has presence, that intervenes, that transforms,

that speaks of what it does but also of what it dreams, that ascertains, compares, evaluates, values, decides, and destroys” (Freire, 2013, p.20). The need for ethics and responsibility is established precisely due to powers of decision, evaluation, freedom, and rupture.

And what would the expansion of consciousness mean to Freire? It would involve reading words, which presupposes and necessitates the consideration of a previous version of the world and requires returning to that reading. Reading the world and reading the word are an inseparable process that has at its foundation the exercise of “rewriting” the world, that is, transforming it. Reading the word is linked to reaching an understanding of the world and to its transformation – the reading and the making of a new world.

In the circles of culture, conceived in collaboration with Paulo Freire, the practice of trying to re-see, re-think, and re-articulate was taken to its ultimate consequence: “to re-articulate” what had been said before, and to “re-read” what had been lived. In dialogue with rural workers, Freire (1992b) notes that the process of breaking up a culture of silence brings to light the discovery of a critical discourse about the world and the possibility of re-making it: “It was as if they began to realize that the development of their language, which allowed for an analysis of their reality, would lead to the possibility that the most beautiful world which they hoped to experience was already being heralded, and in a certain sense anticipated, in their imagination.”(p.40). Once again, the thinking of the two authors converges in the following passages:

There can be no dialogue without a deep love of the world and of men. (...) Being the foundation of dialogue, love is itself also a form of dialogue. (Freire, 1975, p. 94). (...) How can I dialogue if I see myself as a man apart from others, virtuous by inheritance, and different from the “other” in whom I do not recognize forms of myself? (Freire, 1975, p.95).

If the individual faithfully perceives the word of his historical-biographical time, (...) he captures the situation of his people and of his own situation as a sign and a demand that is made to him, if he does not lay aside concern for himself or his community ... A man who lives in a responsible way can also carry out political actions – and omissions are naturally forms of action as well (Buber, 2009, p. 113).

PEDAGOGICAL ENCOUNTERS, CRITICAL EDUCATION, AND COMMUNITY FORMATION

Buber (2003) deals with the concept of pedagogical encounters that, for him, differ from pedagogical intentions, which is the effort of the educator to obtain results. A pedagogical encounter concerns a teacher’s attitude towards the student’s concrete needs, and the

teacher's concern for helping the student to position himself in the world. It involves responding responsibly and giving answers that can go beyond the alternatives contemplated by the students' questions. "The teacher's mission is not to dictate what is good or bad, but to answer a concrete question" (p.41). By creating an atmosphere of trust, the educator participates in the lives of the students with whom he is in contact, going beyond a merely pedagogical intention, and assumes the responsibility that derives from this pedagogical encounter.

The true educator has as a basic objective the development of the student. He knows that this is not possible through the imposition of his will and his ideas on the other, but is feasible only if he is able to listen to the other and to establish an authentic dialogue (Buber, 2009). An authentic dialogue is one where each of the participants has in mind the other or others, taking into account their presence and their way of being, and approaching them with the goal of establishing a living reciprocity. The educator distinguishes himself from the other people who make up the world of the educated by the intention that guides his purposeful action to participate in this process of dialogue. Therefore, education is understood as assuming a responsibility to the other, which is an element of an authentic relationship and which can only happen where there is openness and confidence.

For Buber (2008), education prepares the student to experience a sense of community. Therefore, it cannot be theoretical; it can only occur through the community and through what the subjects experience together. For this to happen, it is necessary to know what is being taught and who is educating. "What is taught is, in the final analysis, something spontaneous" (p.90). Here, the author is not defending spontaneity: The opposite of the spontaneous in this case is not control or direction, but rather omission. The teacher educates with his presence, with his personal existence, with his example, and with his questions and his opinions. He influences the student when the relationship between them is spontaneous to the point of the student not knowing or perceiving that he is being educated. For Buber, the child and the teacher are situated together at the center of the educational process (Hilliard, 1973).

According to Buber (2003), the educational relationship is a dialogical relationship by nature, characterized by the elements of inclusion and reciprocity. Reciprocity is an element that is particular to the educational relationship. Reciprocity cannot, however, be complete in the relationship between teacher and student; while the educator experiences how the student is being educated, the student, on the contrary, cannot experience how the educator educates him.

The educator is generally on both sides of the situation; the student is on only one side. With this concept, Buber points out an asymmetry in the relationship between teacher and student and, in this sense, distances himself from the position of Paulo Freire. Freire believed that replacing the oppositional dynamic of educator/educated with a relationship of fellowship was the only way to create the possibility of a liberating educational practice (Santiago, 2008).

For Freire (1975), education is not only the act of transmitting knowledge; he did not see teaching or learning as a one-way street. He believed the process must be based on the values of educational agents. This kind of education can only be based on dialogue between educational agents. The articulation of the world and of the relationships between men is a necessary condition for the process of humanization and the construction of identities. “The articulated world, in turn, becomes problematized in the eyes of the subjects of articulation, to demand new articulations ... Men become men through words, through work, and through action-reflection” (pp. 92-93). In pedagogical discourses, it is necessary to understand the students’ reality.

Students’ verbal and non-verbal expressions become a way to understand their experience based on their living conditions (slum dweller, poor sanitary conditions, absence of a nuclear family, restricted vocabulary). It is easier to identify what is thought to be lacking than what the student (whether child, teenager, or adult) possesses. The meaning of these living conditions is not discussed; doing so could create and reinforce stigmas. Without understanding the symbolic dimension, reading between the lines, and noticing body language and nonverbal cues, it would be impossible for the teacher to have a firm presence, an authentic encounter, or an act of educational creation.

The discussion therefore becomes a question of ethics. Freire and Buber favor rethinking ethics in terms of pedagogical action. The challenge is to understand knowledge as a dynamic, constantly changing process. Knowledge consists of multiple ways of creating and re-creating the world, and its aspects include politics, values, and ethics.

Encouraging more dialogue in school, Freire (1982) addresses an aspect considered by him to be fundamental: discipline is portrayed in terms of concepts of freedom and authority, as the expression of a harmonious relationship between contradictory poles, “with an indispensable and inseparable nexus in educational practice” (p. 18). When this nexus is broken, discipline ceases to exist. Instead, disorder alternates with authoritarianism, and freedom is seen as antagonistic to authority. Dialogue turns into monologue, as when everyone speaks at the same time and no one listens – that is, when

there is no collaboration – and also when there is only one voice allowed and no room is allowed for an authentic response.

Freire (1982) points out the importance for the teacher-student relationship of constructing a common language that makes students feel that they belong and that invites them to think and learn how to learn. Only a democratically oriented school that is centered around students and in communities can lead students to adopt a new attitude in the face of problems – an attitude of intimate proximity with the issues at hand and an attitude of curious investigation, instead of mere tedious repetition of excerpts and statements that are dangerously disconnected from students' own living conditions (p.37). Unless it is connected to culture and unless it resonates with truth, language will carry a tone of authoritarian rule that imposes a monologue on what should be a creative process of learning. For Freire, schools are neither good nor bad *per se*, but are historical-social institutions that are contextualized in political space. Schools can be transformed when there is a concern for and action taken with regard to issues related to culture, issues that are part of a wider process of social transformation.

Thus, the capacity for relationship and dialogue are principles that influence social groups in their work toward building a society that is to greater or lesser degrees just or unequal. Education was the ground to which Buber and Freire anchored and expressed their ideas about the humanizing actions of man, with an understanding that “the transformation of education cannot automatically transform society, but any societal transformation will require education” (Freire, 1991, p. 84).

Freire (1991) considers the act of educating as an act that instills our daily tasks with new meaning; Buber (2008) understands the educational act as being fundamentally oriented toward the formation of a community where people can live with mutual respect in a space of solidarity, reciprocity, and dialogue. Thus, for both authors concepts of education and community allow for opportunities to rediscover what is common and to educate students to learn how to understand a sense of community, inclusion, and diversity such that students will come to recognize the other within the mutual dimension of a relationship.

A real community, according to Buber (2008), is created when its members are all united with each other in reciprocity. A community is built from this kind of relationship as a starting point, and a successful community must have an active and living center. The educational community, for Freire, is built by praxis. It consists of reflection and action taken by men to transform the world. Without this, it is impossible to overcome the diametrical opposition between oppressor and oppressed.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS: FREIRE AND BUBER'S PRESENT RELEVANCE FOR PRACTICE AND POLITICS

In October 2016, during the writing of this text, the Federal Constitution of 1988 (Brasil, 1988) was undergoing a series of amendments in the area of education. The Constitution was written at a time when democratic currents sought to challenge patterns of oppression, with the goal of building a free and fair society based on solidarity. These principles, which are important for education as well as for communities and are expressed in Article 3, are now at risk. In this context, pushes for reform in high schools, the “*Movimento Escola sem Partido*” (the Movement for Schools without Regard for Party Affiliation), and the twenty-year freeze on financial contributions to public education, demonstrate the current state of the discourse and the importance of putting the ideas and proposals of Freire and Buber into practice.

This has been the common path of movements and groups whenever they carry a sense of community: They bring their voices and values to discussions of the disputed political models in question. The kind of education they support is related to epistemological curiosity. Perhaps they are advocates for a sense of concern for the value of life and for the future, and they experience the creative exercise of liberation. According to Novaes (2012), in order to understand the importance of these groups, it is necessary to remember:

There is an unprecedented historical confluence between the proliferation of firearms (subject to the interests of the war industry), the corruption and violence of police who are unprepared to deal with youth (and who demand money from the richest while subjecting the poorest to various types of humiliation), and the existence of poor areas dominated by the illicit drug trade (which represent only the most visible part of a much larger and more complex worldwide network to generate profits). In these spaces, so-called cultural groups function as antidotes to “address discrimination,” since they open up spaces for aesthetic creation and experimentation, for the (re)creation of bonds of belonging, and for the affirmation of territorial identities (Novaes, 2012, p. 45).

For Buber (2003), all education must have a focus on inclusion³ in the difficult but achievable goal of building community. “The goal of education is communion which, as opposed to coercion and humiliation, is part of a process of liberation” (p.20). This is a kind of education where dialogue, presence, and authentic encounters take place, and where inclusion of all is prioritized in the fight for equality and against all types of discrimination, exclusion, or lack of rights for people, groups, or social classes. In a community, what people do matters. People’s actions

must be respected without regard to their ethnicity, race, religion, social class, gender, sexual orientation, or disability.

Paulo Freire, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1975) and *Pedagogy of Hope* (1992b), highlights obstacles that prevent the oppressed from recognizing themselves as such and, through the exercise of reflected action (praxis), transforming their condition of being dominated. The potential for the oppressed to become active subjects in their own lives is closely related to the need for windows of consciousness to be prolonged throughout historical moments (Nunes & Kramer, 2011).

Listen and answer responsibly. A responsible response begins with listening to the other, which is a basic presupposition of quality education and research. Planning, space, everyday relationships, and pedagogical proposals and practices contribute to responses that will make sense in the context of day-care centers, pre-schools, and schools for children, as well as for the adults who work with them (Kramer, Nunes, Pacheco, Oliveira, & Martins, 2016). “Genuine responsibility only exists where there is true accountability” (Buber, 2009, p.49).

Freire and Buber continue to contribute – through their ideas and the projects they conceived – to the field of education in Brazil. They call on us to act in ways that help to engender achievements in the political as well as the practical sphere.

Thus, poor people, women, people of African heritage, indigenous people, disabled people, people living on the street, and people who have been deprived of their freedom – all the people who make up the diversity that is Brazilian society, with diverse creeds, religions, and sexual orientations, are finally gaining visibility in public policy agendas. The struggles of the past were not for nothing; on the contrary, there has been a broad social movement, led by community groups and sometimes by school university groups, that has made itself heard in the debates about rights for all and education for all.

Paulo Freire presented himself as an educator who was capable of analyzing and discussing education. He made a commitment to formulating a philosophy of education that would be liberating, so that education would contribute to the learner’s ability to become the subject of his own development. In all Freire’s work, he focuses on the relationship between consciousness and reason and on language as a pathway toward strengthening citizenship. This process occurs by overcoming initial conditions and opening the mind to a critical worldview. It continues by unmasking the contradictions of reality, by acquiring an inquiring posture with respect to the world, by the student understanding his role as a historical subject who can make history and is capable of reconstructing knowledge that opposes the dominant

worldview (Nunes & Kramer, 2011). That is, through the educational process, man can transform himself and transform his social context.

Buber (1974) stressed the importance of man being free, autonomous, and able to resist being manipulated. Buber sought to understand the origin of a man's acts through his relationships. We are living through difficult times in the world, in a context of high stakes for many countries. Situations of intolerance, social segregation, and gender, ethnic, and religious persecution are worsening in several places in the West and East. The work of these philosophers, therefore, remains pertinent because it helps us to understand that through education and a sense of community, we can recognize the struggle for social justice and its achievements. That way, it is possible to reinvigorate and envision ways of continuing to fight.

The ideas of Freire and Buber are relevant because they speak to and mobilize political action in the present, in daily life, and in a state of intellectual, aesthetic, and ethical alertness. We can respond to each and every situation in a responsible and integrated way, even – and especially – when the scenario does not seem favorable or promising. Whenever crisis sets in, their way of understanding reality and their worldview can provide us with keys to a critical understanding of the world through words and action.

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NOTES

¹ For Buber, the meaning of “Mensch” refers to a whole person being linked in relationship to the presence and encounter with the other. (Zuben, 2003).

² The translation of Buber's original text was made by the authors of this text.

³ For Buber (2003), there are three elements of inclusion: (i) a relationship that is carried out between two people; (ii) an event experienced by both simultaneously, and in that case, one of the two behaves actively; and (iii) when a person simultaneously experiences the same event as the other person without sacrificing any part of his own reality. “A dialogical relationship is a relationship between two people that is determined, to a greater or lesser extent, by inclusion” (Buber, 2003, pp. 25, 26).

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