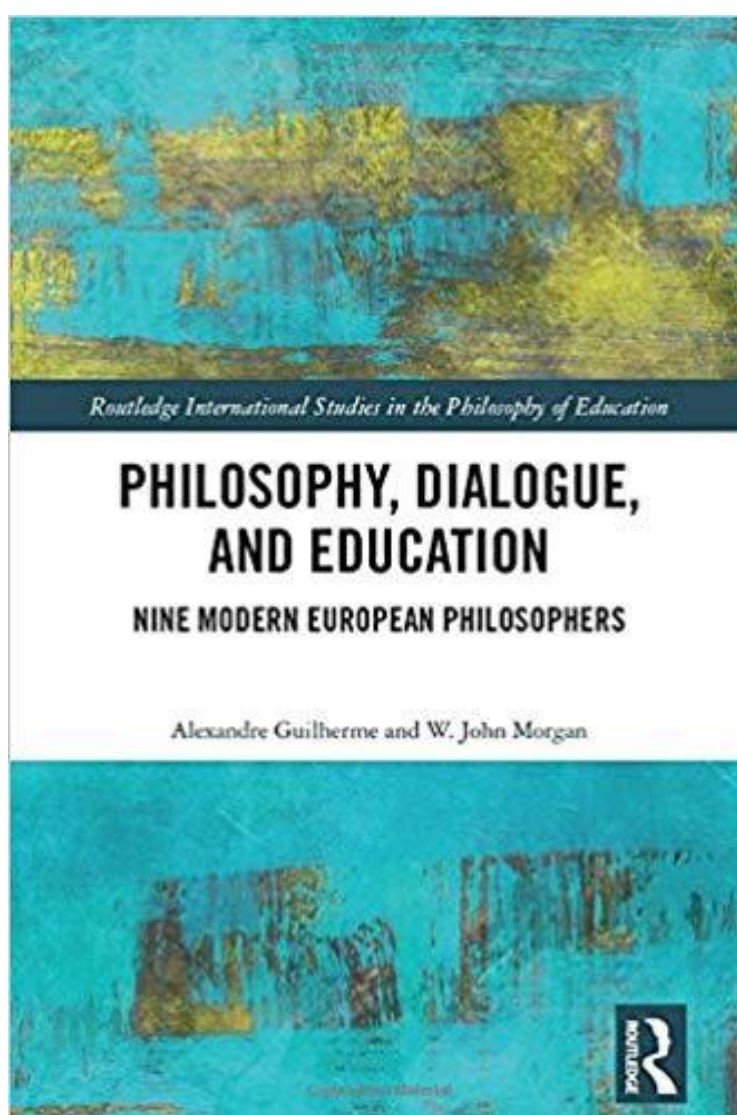


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**GUILHERME, Alexandre Anselmo; MORGAN, W. John. *Philosophy, Dialogue, and Education: Nine Modern European Philosophers*. London: Routledge, 2018. 190p.**

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What is dialogue, in the view of nine of the most important modern European philosophers? What are the implications of such understandings of dialogue for education? It is from this double question that Alexandre Anselmo Guilherme and W. John Morgan set out to discuss, along *Philosophy, Dialogue, and Education*, the ideas of Martin Buber, Mikhail Bakhtin, Lev Vygotsky, Hannah Arendt, Emmanuel Levinas, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Simone Weil, Michael Oakeshott, and Jürgen Habermas.

The intersection of dialogue and the educational field is present in the trajectory of the authors, both exponents of Philosophy of Education. W. John Morgan is professor emeritus at the School of Education, University of Nottingham, where he chaired the UNESCO Chair in Political Economy of Education. He is also an honorary professor at the School of Social Sciences and the Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data, and Methods, at Cardiff University, and fellow emeritus of the Leverhulme Trust, conducting studies on comparative political economy of education (especially Russia and China), civil society and Anthropology of Knowledge, as well as peace education. Alexandre Anselmo Guilherme is an assistant professor in the Escola de Humanidades [School of Humanities], Departamento de Educação [Department of Education], and the coordinator of the Grupo de Pesquisa Educação e Violência [Education and Violence Research Group] at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS) [Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul], Brazil, working mainly on education and violence, education and dialogue, immigrants and refugees, and Educational Psychology.

Guilherme and Morgan indicate the relevance of the questions that underlie *Philosophy, Dialogue, and Education*: dialogue is understood usually as a conversation, as an exchange involving questioning and answering between two or more individuals and, simultaneously, dialogue has been the focus of many projects and enquiries in modern Philosophy of Education. However, most research in this area tends to focus on just checking for communicative exchange, resulting in “simplistic and reductionist ways of understanding dialogue which do not consider the relations involved in the dialogue” (GUILHERME; MORGAN, 2018, p.3). In opposition to the reductionism rejected by the authors, “a range of complexities, dynamics, and effects implied and

caused by dialogue that the simple notice of a process of questioning and answering does not capture successfully” (GUILHERME; MORGAN, 2018, p.4) is highlighted.

The selection of the philosophers addressed emphasizes the polysemic, multifaceted and complex character of dialogue. *Philosophy, Dialogue, and Education* reflects on the complexities inherent in dialogue, situating the sociopolitical perspectives of thinkers in the European tradition of dialogical philosophy. Each philosopher is treated in a separate chapter, whose title summarizes the concept of dialogue developed. After a brief presentation, followed by key life and career events, the reader is led to a consistent and detailed overview of how dialogue is conceived of and related to education.

In the first chapter, Martin Buber: Dialogue as the Inclusion of the Other, dialogue is referred to as a symmetrical relationship, inclusive of the other, without prejudice and expectation, in which one simply accepts the other as he/she is. The dialogical relationship takes the form of “I-Thou” and is thus in contrast to the “I-It” relations, based on the objectification of the other and the absence of dialogue. “I-Thou” and “I-It” are the “basic words” that indicate the quality of the experience contained in the relationship they describe. To the philosophical reading of Buber's work (cf. Buber, 1971;<sup>1</sup> among others) a theological appreciation, founded on its Hasidic Jewish roots, is added. This appreciation illustrates the attention to the connections between the thought, experiences, belonging, and subjectivity of the observed philosophers, elementary in *Philosophy, Dialogue, and Education*. In Buber, Hasidism is the theme to highlight the convergence of all genuine relationships with the eternal, from which humans relate to God. In the philosophy of education, Buber's theory is focused on defending the importance of horizontal, living, and inclusive relationships between teachers and students, grounded in genuine dialogue, so as to positively impact motivation and the ability to collaborate.

Guilherme and Morgan's interpretation of Buber's ideas in Chapter One articulates with Chapter Five, Emmanuel Levinas – Dialogue as an Ethical Demand of the Other. For Levinas (cf. Levinas, 1969;<sup>2</sup> 1995,<sup>3</sup> 2000,<sup>4</sup> among others), in contrast to

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<sup>1</sup> BUBER, M. *I and Thou*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Touchstone, 1971.

<sup>2</sup> LEVINAS, E. *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1969.

<sup>3</sup> LEVINAS, E. *Ethics and Infinity: Dialogues of Emmanuel Levinas and Philippe Nemo*. Translated by Richard A. Cohen. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1995.

Buber, the ethical notion of dialogue comprises an asymmetrical and preconceived relationship, established to satisfy the demands of the other. The encounter with the other, named by Levinas as “face,” implies an ethical demand, urging the subject, from top to bottom, to respond to the other. However, this asymmetry should not be understood as a hierarchy of human relations, since it is reciprocal: the subject is urged to respond while demanding an ethical response from the other. The bilateral asymmetry of the encounter with the ‘face’ is further characterized by the presence of a “third part,” considering that all humanity faces the subject through the eyes of the other. Thus, while for Buber dialogue is based on the recognition of the other as a pair, due to equality with the subject, for Levinas, the dialogue exists because the subject recognizes the absolute otherness of the other. Levinas's influence on Education is also anchored in otherness, in the ethical recognition of the encounter with this other that is different from the subject, causing him restlessness, questioning, and innovation.

The other is also central in Chapter Six, Maurice Merleau-Ponty – Dialogue as Being Present to the Other. The chapter discusses the existentialist and phenomenological understanding of Merleau-Ponty, for whom dialogue configures ‘being present’ to the other. Although it has some affinities with the thought of Buber and Levinas, Merleau-Ponty (cf. Merleau-Ponty, 1967,<sup>5</sup> 2013,<sup>6</sup> among others) is based on different assumptions. Dialogue needs the encounter with another embodied, present in a relationship in which the subject is also present. In dialogue, the demands and intentions of this other become understandable to the subject, as if he “inhabited” him. From this perspective, subjectivity and objectivity meet in the body. Also through this “theory of embodiment” the phenomenon of learning is explained as a habit acquired by the body, and the acquisition of a habit corresponds to the apprehension of meaning. It is a process that involves spontaneous and intentional movements interconnected with experiences that solidify habits.

In the second and third chapters Guilherme and Morgan deal with two Russian thinkers influenced by Marxism. Mikhail Bakhtin is mentioned in Chapter Two, *Mikhail*

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<sup>4</sup> LEVINAS, E. *Entre Nous: On Thinking-of-the-Other*. Translated by Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.

<sup>5</sup> MERLEAU-PONTY, M. *The Structure of Behavior*. Translated by Alden L. Fisher. Boston: Beacon Press, 1963.

<sup>6</sup> MERLEAU-PONTY, M. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Translated by Donald Landes. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2013.

*Bakhtin – the dialogic imagination.* The authors allude to the notion of “dialogical imagination” (cf. Bakhtin, 1981)<sup>7</sup> to unravel a philosophy notably inspired in Kant, characterized by the insistence on the necessary and mutually enriching relationship between thought and action, and in Nietzsche, visible in the concept of discourse that mirrors the idea of dialogue. The chapter takes into account the ambiguities perceived in Bakhtin, especially about real-world architecture, aesthetics as an action or process, the ethics of politics, and finally the ethics of religion. These ambiguities raise a critical reflection, in which the philosopher of the act (cf. Bakhtin, 1993),<sup>8</sup> dialogy (cf. Vološinov, 1986;<sup>9</sup> Bakhtin, 1984)<sup>10</sup> and heteroglossia vindicates “dialogue and the polyphonic participation of different voices in the exchange of ideas through language and literature” (GUILHERME; MORGAN, 2018, p.24) while proposing Bakhtin as an ethical thinker. Bakhtin’s “dialogical imagination” points out that language only acquires meaning in dialogue, necessarily in the social and cultural context of which it is part. The understanding of the self is thus constructed in a dialogue shaped by the mutual and continuous interpretations of the other. This perspective contributes greatly to philosophy and education, as Bakhtin encourages subjects to be protagonists in the pursuit of knowledge, not accepting things as given.

This can be compared to the understanding of Lev Vygotsky, the object of Chapter Three, Lev S. Vygotsky – Dialogue as Mediation and Inner Speech. As mediation (cf. Vygotsky, 1986;<sup>11</sup> 1978,<sup>12</sup> among others), dialogue concerns the relationship between individual and society, mediated by objects, signs and language, tools provided by culture. It also concerns the more psychological interaction of the individual with himself, crucial for human cognitive development, which Guilherme

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<sup>7</sup> The expression is the title of a collection of Bakhtin’s essays, titled *Epic and Novel: Toward a Methodology for the Study of the Novel, From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse; Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics; and Discourse in the Novel.* BAKHTIN, M. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* by M. M. Bakhtin. Edited by Michael Holquist; translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981.

<sup>8</sup> BAKHTIN, M. *Toward a Philosophy of the Act.* Trad. Vadim Liapunov. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1993.

<sup>9</sup> VOLOŠINOV, V. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language.* Translated by Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986.

<sup>10</sup> BAKHTIN, M. *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics.* Translated by Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

<sup>11</sup> VYGOTSKY, L. S. *Thought and Language.* Edited and translated by Alex Kozulin. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1986.

<sup>12</sup> VYGOTSKY, L. S. *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes.* Edited by Michael Cole, Vera John-Steiner, Sylvia Scribner, Ellen Souberman. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978.

and Morgan claim to “provide a powerful alternative to both Pavlovian behaviourism and the Piagetian focus on cognitive biological maturation” (GUILHERME; MORGAN; 2018, p.39). The impact of Vygotsky's thinking on Education is captured from interpretations that privilege social analysis, until they seek to understand or elucidate consciousness, relegating social relations in the background.

The political aspect of dialogue is examined in Chapter Four, Hannah Arendt – Dialogue as a Public Space. Guilherme and Morgan emphasize Arendt's defense of the authentic expression of democracy, possible when citizens come together in a public space of deliberation and decision about collective interests (cf. Arendt, 1973;<sup>13</sup> 2018,<sup>14</sup> among others). The separation between the dimensions of “labor,” “work” and “action” precedes the requirement of public space, the context in which people face each other as members of a Community, and unveil their points of view on discourse and action, agreement and disagreement. This relationship with others is preconditioned by another type of dialogue, which underlies the internal capacity for thinking through which the individual confronts himself/herself. Within this framework, education aims to provide a safe environment for children, preparing them to participate in the public sphere. However, Guilherme and Morgan consider that schools and universities have not been connecting the public to the private, as seen by Arendt. This is due to obstacles, such as the processes of commodification that transform citizens into consumers and public space into markets.

Likewise, in Chapter Seven, Simone Weil – Dialogue as an Instrument of Power, public space has noticed relevance. Dialogue is thought by Weil in power relations dimensioned in public space by language and words (cf. Weil, 1978;<sup>15</sup> 2001a;<sup>16</sup> 2001b,<sup>17</sup> among others). The dynamism of reality is the source of potential conflicts, as subjects read the world using imperfect language, however expressive of attitudes and practices. Dialogue is a power relationship that lends itself to cruelty, but also to justice and kindness. This instrument is crucial for education, as are attention (the will to receive) and silence (the unanswered reflection of the outside world), because the knowledge

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<sup>13</sup> ARENDT, H. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1973.

<sup>14</sup> ARENDT, H. *The Human Condition*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018.

<sup>15</sup> WEIL, S. *Lectures on Philosophy*. Translated by Hugh Price. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.

<sup>16</sup> WEIL, S. *The Need for Roots: Prelude to a Declaration of Duties Towards Mankind*. New York: Routledge, 2001a.

<sup>17</sup> WEIL, S. *Oppression and Liberty*. New York: Routledge, 2001b.

process can only be reached in a critical path that involves desire for knowledge, commitment, effort, and maturity. Thus, it is imperative that education provide the individual with insight into ideas, the power of writing and discourse, and their use not for the conquest and annihilation of the other, but for justice, particularly social justice.

Weil's position can be compared to Michael Oakeshott's, which Guilherme and Morgan discuss in Chapter Eight, Michael Oakeshott – Dialogue as Conversation. Dialogue is here seen as a form of conversation, indispensable to the development of civilization (cf. Oakeshott, 1989, entre outros).<sup>18</sup> Civilized values are rooted in people's ability, through conversation, to enter into dialogue, which is fostered by liberal education. The voices that take part of this conversation are the different forms of the experience of seeing the world; they are historical and practical. Oakeshott regards the conversation as an open and polyphonic dialogue, an exchange between the various functions and conditions in which humanity develops – and therein lies its importance for Education. The individual learns to be human while participating in this conversation, assimilating the multiple meanings and purposes that also integrate it.

The ninth and last chapter, Jürgen Habermas – Dialogue as Communicative Rationality, is dedicated to the concept of dialogue as communicative rationality, understood from the extensive work of the German philosopher (cf. Habermas, 1984; 1987, among others). Guilherme and Morgan highlight the Habermasian critique of scientism and the resulting positivist, bureaucratic, and authoritarian approaches prevalent in studies of public sphere issues, resulting in the “marginalization of public dialogue and debate” (GUILHERME; MORGAN, 2018, p.141). The consequent democratic deficit is confronted, according to Habermas, by two distinct and interdependent forms of action: (i) instrumental, quantitatively measured and perceived in work and material construction; (ii) communicative, qualitatively measured and perceived through social interaction and dialogue. Communicative rationality is the key to action, and the act of communication itself already initiates a dialogue between peers, partners open to the possibilities of agreement and social action. Habermas's contribution to Education is defended in what Guilherme and Morgan detect as an alignment with Critical Pedagogy, according to which the awakening of the subjects' awareness dialectically leads to democratic and emancipatory social action. The

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<sup>18</sup> OAKESHOTT, M. *The Voice of Liberal Learning*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989.

responsibility of educators is to create conditions for this action to take place, underlining teaching and learning as political acts and, in the same sense, the non-neutrality of knowledge.

*Philosophy, Dialogue, and Education* is a dense work, in which the authors promote a theoretically consistent and sophisticated reflection, without, however, sacrificing readability and intelligibility. The conceptions of dialogue are discussed in an articulated way between thinkers and concatenated with contributions from other theorists and commentators, which provides a rich and grounded interpretive horizon.

In this complex context, Guilherme and Morgan approach dialogue permeated by power relations, history and culture, normative values and the need for a common space. The potentials and dilemmas of dialogue, especially in Education, are topics of renewed interest – even greater when recent events and social dynamics call into question the ability to dialogue. As they point out (2018, p.4), “dialogue is not simple to achieve; rather, it is dependent on disposition and on situation and is often difficult to initiate, let alone sustain.” Cultivating this disposition is, therefore, the ethical challenge of the present day, which the Philosophy of Education does not avoid.

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