

The Buberian Dialogical Man as a Struggler in the Field of Existential Choice

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This essay presents the perception of dialogical teaching models as one which is concerned primarily with the cognitive layers of the dialogue, and focuses on the cognitive functions of learning, information processing, interpretation and decision making. This perception is presented in the essay as ignoring the relational dimensions of the dialogue. On the other hand, the essay argues that research attempts to offer non-cognitive dialogical models which focus on the interpersonal aspect, while emphasising relations such as containment and empathy, do not necessarily contribute to the realisation of an educational dialogue and may block the creation of the 'sphere of the between,' which is essential to the development of genuine dialogue. The essay suggests referring to the existential approach and argues that the choice of dialogical relation is one that involves a powerful and continuous existential struggle between the 'I-Thou' and the 'I-it' modes of relation.

Keywords: Buber, educational dialogue, existential dialogue.

The Buberian dialogue is perceived as a source of inspiration for the creation of models of inter-subjective relations in various social fields, and in the educational one in particular. One of the declared educational goals in any educational practice which considers itself advanced and humanistic is dialogical teaching. Based on the concept of the Buberian dialogue, this essay argues that the tendency not to delve into the existential levels of the dialogue when relating to dialogical teaching may prevent the creation of a real, genuine dialogue between teacher and student.

The first two sections of the essay describe two perceptions of the dialogue, the cognitive perception and the psychosocial-empathic perception. Based on the concept of the Buberian dialogue, I argue that these two perceptions do not necessarily contribute to the development of an educational dialogue. The third section proposes Buberian existential perception as a process that involves a powerful existential struggle that lies at the basis of human existence.

The Cognitive Perception of Dialogical Teaching

The cognitive perception of dialogical teaching is perceived mainly as a communicative and conversational activity which can be researched and exercised

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as a teaching method in which students play an active role in the way lessons are conducted. The assumption is that an open conversation between teacher and student encourages independent and critical thinking, develops the thought process and enhances learning ability in addition to improving its performance.

The above perception of the dialogue has led to the creation of different models of dialogical teaching, which focus particularly on the cognitive functions involved in the conversation between teacher and student. Dialogue researchers, according to this functional focal point, focus on the question of how the learning takes place within the conversation. Their objective, therefore, is to uncover the mechanism of the conversation and its various stages, while trying to find a regularity that can be controlled and operated during the lesson in order to achieve the desired results.

One such example is the model of listening in studies conducted by Haroutunian-Gordon (1991; 2009; Haroutunian-Gordon and Lavery 2011), in which she analyses the conditions in which listening and openness to new ideas take place. The conversational process is researched thoroughly in order to identify cognitive components and processes, while deducing strategies to create similar processes in teaching and learning. The dialogue is construed as a cognitive process, a functional mechanism, and once you learn its regularity it is possible to learn how to control it, how to divert it to functional objectives and how to operate it in order to fulfill the objectives of learning. This model offers no reference to dialogue as an experience of companionship that goes far beyond the cognitive processes.

An additional model that considers dialogue as a primarily cognitive process is the model suggested by Burbules (1993), in which he relates to dialogue as a communicative technique. He writes the following, 'learning to engage in dialogue successfully is like learning a game' (Burbules 1993, 49). The dialogue between a teacher and his student is studied by Burbules as a model of 'moves' on a chess board, designed ultimately to improve the teaching and learning processes and to produce enhanced learning outcomes. Though Burbules uses the concept 'dialogical relation' and refers to the unique dynamics that take place in a dialogue, and to the companionship which is formed, the training that he suggests for this relationship focuses and amounts mostly to technical enhancement of cognitive functions by 'involvement strategies,' as Burbules describes them (Burbules 1993, 47). The dialogue as a model of interaction between the thinking and learning processes is, according to Burbules, the educational goal, while emotional and relational approaches, such as trust, affection and empathy, are mostly effective ways of reaching this cognitive interaction, setting it in motion and preserving it. Burbules' working assumption, which is typical of the cognitive approach to the study of the dialogue, is that the dialogue's educational benefit is mainly cognitive, and the educational dialogue is mainly a dialogue for the purpose of cognitive development.

An additional model of dialogical teaching that focuses on cognitive processes is that suggested by Pulvermacher (2009). Pulvermacher presents a model of 'ambiguity' that is inspired by Frankenstein's dialogic perception, which refers to dialogue mostly as a tool for the development of thinking skills. As such, it is analysed in accordance with the psycho-cognitive processes that are involved in it. Pulvermacher argues that ambiguity in dialogue means a simultaneous containment of different aspects. In her approach, dialogical teaching focuses primarily on thinking processes. Its objective, according to Pulvermacher, is to encourage the student to discover the hidden meaning of the content, to develop possible applications and promote alternative thinking.

Yechieli (2006) refers to dialogical teaching as a negotiation for knowledge. The dialogical encounter enables students to discuss their perceptions and those of the teacher in a sceptical and critical manner. The objective of the dialogue, according to Yechieli's model, is clarifying ideas, asking questions and reaching a common meaning.

Dialogue involving cognitive functions is, therefore, a perception that is widespread among scholars. These scholars will usually indicate that it is also important to have a respectful and present approach, which considers the student as a subject with personality, wholeness and a unique value. However, the question of how to develop such an approach does not arise. While the conversation principles, as cognitive principles, receive attention and careful analysis, the inter-subjective references, the presence, companionship and acceptance of the student's complete personality, still have had no profound investigation.

As a result, the area of dialogical relation or, as Aloni (2008, 102) calls it, 'the area of pedagogic presence and empowering dialogue', remains an area that is discussed unendingly, but that is not necessarily being realised. Aloni (1996) points to the gap between humanistic statements on the importance of dialogical teaching, and the lack of implementation in practice. The declarations remain hollow, and the dialogue exists only on the declarative level, according to Aloni (1996), since there is a lack of adequate training in its application in the teaching field. The humanistic values are voided, and teachers are not taught how to apply them in reality. Aloni considers the emphasis on the functional-instrumental aspect of dialogue as a process that turns the teacher into a teaching technician. In this case, the teacher devotes less to his/her presence and so the human companionship, which is essential to humanistic education and the nurturing of the full human potential, becomes absent in educational practice.

The Psychosocial-Empathic Perception of Dialogical Teaching

As opposed to the techno-functional approaches to dialogue, one might think that the answer to distress relating to the development of dialogue is found in educational approaches that focus on dialogue as an interaction based on emotions, such as empathy and sympathy. An example of the psychosocial-empathic perception of dialogical teaching is the pedagogy of caring suggested by Noddings.

Noddings (1984; 2003), inspired by Gilligan's feminist philosophy, goes against the functional-instrumental approach, which, according to feminist philosophy, is associated with a masculine means of relation and male ethics. As opposed to this ethics, she presents a feminine ethics which relates to interpersonal interaction. Noddings argues that the male ethics stems from the point of view of the separate person. It creates a clear-cut hierarchy and a principled priority between informed thinking, logic and rationality, and between the world of emotion and relationships. Male ethics emphasises individualism and individual autonomy, and values the relational context much less. On the other hand, feminine ethics places as top priorities the relation to the other, the basic caring for him/her and concern for him/her. Pedagogy based on this ethics emphasises one's responsibility for the other, while the social context in which the student lives is of great importance. According to Noddings, a person is educated through, and out of, the interactions that s/he experiences. S/He grows from caring and thus learns to display a caring approach towards other people and the environment. The dialogical-caring aspect, is therefore crucial for educational work, and is as important as imparting knowledge, developing thinking skills and cognitive abilities.

When trained for a pedagogy of caring, a teacher is required to learn how to relate in a caring manner, and s/he has to learn how to be open and receptive, and not to focus just on one pre-defined absolute ideal, or on one structured process of measurement and evaluation. In his class, s/he should strive to create a reality of caring for the individual needs of each student.

When writing about the caring relation, Noddings was largely inspired by existential philosophy, while relying, among others, on Heidegger's definition of caring, and through examining how Sartre described emotion and its relation to the human choice. In particular, Noddings relies on Buberian philosophy, as she considers dialogical thinking and *I-Thou* relations to be the key to understanding the caring relation between people, as well as between a person and his world.

Similarly to Buber, Noddings emphasised the need to listen to the call of the 'Thou' to whom one relates. She warned against the imposition of the teacher's will on the

student. Noddings, like Buber, stressed that in the caring encounter one cannot rely on an organised regularity or on prediction attempts. The encounter has no ready-made formula and the teacher is required to find a unique way to the heart of the student.

From the similarity between Noddings' ideas and those of Buber, it might be concluded that the pedagogy of caring and empathic relation may be the way to direct teachers towards dialogical relations and dialogical teaching. However, in spite of the great similarity there is in fact a major difference between them, in terms of how they perceive the dialogic relation. Noddings considers dialogue to be empathic caring. She suggests a feminine interpretation of the empathic approach, as acceptance and containment of the emotions of the other. She writes: 'Caring involves stepping out of one's own personal frame of reference into the other's. Our attention, our mental engrossment is on the cared for, not on ourselves' (Noddings 1984, 24). Education, according to Noddings, is required to foster a dialogue which represents a departure from the frame of the teacher relating to oneself, to exclude and diminish oneself, for the benefit of the needs and desires of the student. She describes the empathic experience as follows: 'I have been invaded by the other. I shall never again be completely without regard for him' (Noddings 1984, 31). From the moment of empathic acceptance, the other becomes part of the one that relates to him/her.

Buber, on the other hand, strongly disapproved of the identification of the dialogic 'I-Thou' relation with the psychological perception of the interpersonal relation in general, and the empathic perception, in particular. Generally speaking, Buber criticised the therapeutic approach, and warned that in the therapeutic relation there is not necessarily an inter-human encounter. He distinguished between the therapeutic relation and the 'I-Thou' relation. He did not consider therapy to reflect the implementation of dialogical thinking. His explanation, referring to the Heideggerian relation to the other, is as follows: 'For the relation of solicitude which is all he considers cannot as such be an essential relation, since it doesn't set a man's life in direct relation with the life of another, but only one man's solicitous help in relation with another man's lack and need for it' (Buber 1947, 169).

Buber explains that in the therapeutic relation, there is no encounter between one being and another. Basically, the therapist does not offer her/his presence and her/his entire being and self, and does not open wide the barriers of his/her being. As opposed to the therapeutic relation, in the essential relation in which the 'I-Thou' encounter takes place, one complete presence stands before the other complete presence, the barriers fall and a human companionship of the beings is formed.

Further to Buber's reluctance to generalise psychological concepts to his ontology of relation, he also strongly criticised the prevalent use of the term 'empathy' among education researchers and educationalists. He coined empathy an 'empty term' (Buber 1947, 97), signifying distance from the live and concrete situation. According to Buber, the empathic attempt is an attempt to feel the other through dismissing or diminishing the self in his/her presence. This means that the self is not fully present, and this, in fact, does not enable a dialogical experience.

Standing in front of the other, accepting her/him and her/his entire concreteness, while relating to her/him in a way that stems from the complete concreteness of the person that relates, this face-to-face existential position is essential for the presence and the encounter. For Buber, dialogue is formed in the 'between', which is the space between the relating 'I' and the 'Thou' to whom the 'I' relates. The sphere of the 'between' is not created between the containing and caring 'I' and the other, who is the receiver of an empathic relation. It is formed within the space between the completely present 'I' and the complete presence of the other that meets him as his 'Thou.'

According to Buber, in the 'sphere of the between,' the 'I' that relates allows her/himself to be known to the other as a complete unit and therefore, in the 'I-Thou' relation there is no reduction of the 'I,' as it exists in Noddings' empathic relation. In fact, it is quite the opposite. In the 'I-Thou' relation there is an expansion of the experience by inclusion. The one who relates does so as an 'extension of one's own concreteness without forfeiting anything of the felt reality of his activity' (Buber 1947, 97).

Buber considers the moment of inclusion to be a defining moment in educational practice. The inclusion is formed within the 'sphere of the between' in which a transfusion occurs, when the teacher, in his own skin, experiences what the student experiences as a result of the teacher's own actions. In this way, he can criticise himself, filter actions which are not aligned with the needs of the student, and provide the student with what s/he needs in order to come into being and materialise.

From this, we can understand that the danger of the caring relation, according to Buber, is that the empathic teacher who diminishes himself will not turn towards the other as a complete person, with his entire being and concreteness. He will be a tool of support, mediation or assistance, but he will not stand in front of the student as an existential partner, i.e., 'as a fellow creature lost in the world' (Buber 1947, 87). No companionship of being, no 'sphere of the between' and no moment of inclusion will be formed.

It can be deduced that, according to Buber, education must go beyond the focus on caring, empathy or containment. In educational practice, what should be emphasised is the creation of the 'sphere of the between'. When training teachers, the teacher should be developed as a person who can stand in his entirety, his/her entire concreteness, self and presence, in front of the student in order to create the possibility for the formation of the 'sphere of the between', that leads to the creation of a dialogical encounter.

How to Develop the Teacher's Ability to be Present in the 'Sphere of the Between' when Relating to the Student: The Existential Approach

Anyone who investigates the Buberian ontology and dialogical philosophy in depth, discovers that the choice to relate dialogically and to exist in the 'sphere of the between' is a choice that involves a powerful struggle, one which lies at the basis of human existence.

In order to understand just how complex, difficult and not quite obvious the choice of dialogical relation is, this essay will attempt to go beyond the common presentation of the 'I-Thou' vs. the 'I-It' relations, and their clear and distinguishing characteristics, and will focus on clarifying the inherent difficulty in this ontological duality.

Between 'I-Thou' and 'I-It' –The Buberian Relation Ontology

Martin Buber's philosophy of relation focuses on the way in which the human turns to the world and to the other. At the core of his philosophy is the dialogical relation, namely a present and holistic relation, which consists of openness, listening, devotion and responsiveness. In the sphere between one person and another, which Buber calls the inter human sphere, humans live *with* each other, as opposed to the social sphere in which humans live *side by side*, but there isn't necessarily a dialogical relation between them. In the inter-human sphere, one turns to the other as a whole, tunes in to the other whole heartedly, and opens up when encountering him. His/Her appeal is free of image and impression calculations, it is direct, immediate and personal. This type of contact opens the door to the formation of an 'I-Thou' encounter between one human being and another, one being authentically and profoundly touching another, and this encounter is what gives human life its meaning and fullness.

As opposed to the 'I-Thou' relation, there is the 'I-It' relation, which focuses on a feature, a need or a use, based on a regulated knowledge, category or pattern. Man/Woman has the choice to turn to the other in a present and complete dialogical

manner, as an 'I' turning to meet the other as 'Thou', or not, or to turn to the other as 'It', which is an indirect reference, limited to a specific aspect of the other.

Buber sees the two ('I-Thou' and 'I-It') modes of relation as 'profoundly twofold' (1937, 18), a duality that is an essential part of man's daily existential struggle. He argues that man's 'melancholy of our fate' (Buber 1937, 23) is that although the 'I-Thou' existence is a form of existence that gives human life its full meaning, he cannot escape from the 'I-It' existence. Moreover, he is not even required to do so. We study our world through our senses, minds and concepts. Surviving and functioning in daily life require references through structured frameworks and defined concepts, features and needs. However, as we learn to function in our world through frameworks and concepts that regulate and structure our perception and way of thinking, we lose the reality of the present, direct and one-time encounter. In fact, the realisation of what is revealed in an 'I-Thou' encounter transforms the 'Thou' into 'It'. For example, if during an 'I-Thou' encounter, man experiences the other as a partner in existential distress, he will transition to the 'It' mode of relating, in order to help to solve this distress and to arrive at structured solutions and the means to implement these solutions. . If he encounters the same person again, he may define him/her by means of the distress that was revealed to her/him, and will not experience her/him as newly present before him/her. Her/His definition of that person will become a mediating factor in the encounter, and so, a direct encounter will not take place. The same applies to an idea or vision that is revealed during an 'I-Thou' encounter. It will inevitably transition to the 'It' level, once the human strives to fulfill that vision in his/her life's reality. Buber wrote: 'The stronger the response the more strongly does it bind up the Thou and banish it to be an object (Buber 1937, 41).' This is, according to Buber, man's sorrow, but also his greatness. Man is required to learn how to move within this existential duality, to accept the revelation, guidance and vision from the moment of the encounter, and to fulfill it in the 'It' world.

A movement in this duality occurs, for example, at the moment of inclusion that takes place in the dialogical sphere of the between, when a teacher discovers what the child needs in order to overcome a certain difficulty. S/He then chooses to implement a teaching method that provides a solution to that child's need. The discovery of the child's mental need occurs in an 'I-Thou' moment, but the response to that need causes the teacher to transition to the 'I-It' sphere while employing a structured method with pre-defined steps.

A more blatant example can be found in an essay written by Gordon (1985). Gordon studied Buber's philosophy and dealt with education for peace following Buber's ideas. He claims that in order to receive funding to realise his dialogical peace vision, to which he had felt spiritually committed, he was forced to use

different manipulations with the powers that be, who were supposed to transfer funds to him, but refused to do so. Gordon illustrates how sometimes fulfilling the 'Thou' calling is actually realised by 'It' actions of aggressive strategies, in a world that is run in an aggressive, self-serving and manipulative way.

This raises a question: if each 'Thou' is destined to turn into 'It', how can one preserve 'I-Thou' encounters, and the present and holistic quality in one's life, when relating to one's world and to the other? Buber replies by pointing to another transformation, that occurs and completes the transformation from 'Thou' to 'It', the additional transformation to the 'Thou'. Indeed, the 'Thou' is transformed into a defined and organised 'It', and the sense of direct exclusivity disappears, while the other is experienced as a network of definitions and features. Yet, that same 'It' may be transformed again and revealed as 'Thou', when the rays of the 'Thou' penetrate and dissolve the order of the 'It'. What has already turned into 'It', is required to be transformed back again into 'Thou'. Buber says that this is how the 'spark' of human existence is purified again in the fire of the 'Thou'. The man whose 'Thou' has transformed into 'It' in mundane routine life, should continue and should choose to open himself up to a dialogical relation towards his world, in order to offer a chance for the 'Thou' to reappear to him. The moments in which the 'Thou' is encountered will appear and will release the regulating 'binding' of the 'It', to reveal the other again in the light of the 'Thou', in a full and direct presence.

This dynamic movement of concealing the 'It' and revealing the 'Thou', 'binding' the other in the 'It' and releasing him as the holistic and complete 'Thou', is the heart and secret of the normal course of human life according to Buber. In the 'It' world, in which man lives and functions, he has to sustain the 'Thou' as it is revealed to him in his dialogical encounters. This is, according to Buber, the right route: 'Thou in its purity yet daily confirms its truth in the It, in accordance with what is right and fitting for the day, drawing – disclosing – the boundary line anew each day...' (1937, 49)

According to the example described above, the teacher who employs the teaching method with the student in the 'I-It' sphere, is required to continue and also to try to meet the student in the 'Thou' sphere. In other words, the teacher must, as much as possible, attempt to remain present, open, attentive and complete when turning to the student. S/He must try to meet him/her beyond the system and its organised steps. It is possible that, at a certain moment, he will feel that the student needs something else. Then, he must be able to break out of the 'It' framework and transition to the dialogical sphere of the between, while responding to the demand of the encounter in any way that he deems necessary from his/her experience of mutuality with the student. In fact, his/her leap and his/her breaking into the 'I-Thou's' sphere of the between, again 'purifies' the educational practice, taking it

back to its basic source, to the educational 'core' of the existential dialogue and its right and proper track.

On the other hand, if the teacher remains firm in the 'It' practice, i.e., continues to employ the teaching methods without being present and attentive to the student, unknowing how to occasionally break into the dialogical sphere of the educational practice, then the educational practice remains stagnant, bound by automatic actions, and is impersonal, non-nurturing, and untrue to the teacher's educational and spiritual commitment to his students.

Another example of a dialogical break into the 'I-Thou' sphere, within the dogmatic practices of the 'It' world, can be found in Dasberg's essay (1992), in which he describes a scene that is taken from his therapy room, which becomes significant only when his relationship turns, for a moment, from a dogmatic therapeutic relation into a dialogical relation, as Buber described. Dasberg describes the story of Mr. K. who grew up as an adopted child, because his parents had been sent to the death camps in 1945. At some point, people who claimed to be his real parents had come to take him, and this transition, for him, became a crisis. Later, he was told that those who had claimed to be his parents, were actually his aunt and uncle. The rage that was bottled up inside him created a sense of emptiness that was devoid of any sense of identity and roots. Questions such as who he was, and who was his father, tormented him, but he refused to deal with these issues and remained entrenched in his distress. For six meetings, the therapist has tried to reach him, but had failed. At the end of the sixth meeting, Dasberg writes, he unintentionally glanced at a picture of a zebra on the Kenya plains, which was in the room. The picture triggered a memory of what his zoological guide had once told him, that the face of a zebra resembled a mask. The following is his account of what took place in the room: 'As a daydreamer, I looked again at the patient's expressionless face, and it was as if he was also hiding behind a mask. I was scared, because I suddenly realized that we were both hiding something behind our masks' (Dasberg 1992, 150). At that moment, Mr. K. said that, during family gatherings, no one had asked him about his father's identity and he remembered feeling lost and full of guilt. Dasberg writes that, at that moment, he could have related to the memories in many professional ways, but he responded precisely from the dialogical mutuality that prevailed in the room at that moment. Dasberg expressed anger at the family's response, which ignored the memory of the real father, because the memory of his own father had surfaced. He found himself completely there, *with* the patient, and not *just next to him*. At the crucial moment, they both stood on a human-existential common ground, while: 'above them expanded the horizon of an intimate and direct relation' (Dasberg 1992, 150).

In fact, this description illustrates the creation of the sphere of the between, as described by Buber, which is created from the holistic revelation of the I in front of the other, and the opening of the barriers of his being. In face of the intensity and mutuality of the moment of the encounter, Mr. K.'s mask had ruptured, and it was possible to continue with the structured therapeutic process in light of this defining moment of grace.

An additional example, taken from the field of special education, can be found in the account by Rothenberg (1977), a teacher and therapist, from her work with a boy named Danny. Danny was a six year old boy, diagnosed with autism. He avoided all contact with others, and his behaviour was extremely destructive, full of rage and violence. The relationship between Mira and Danny was slowly being built, but she could not fully understand the experience of horror and fear with which he was confronted and, therefore, she could not truly help him. Then, Mira says, on one rainy day, during the meeting, Danny suddenly started shaking and screaming. He ran over to her and clung on to her. Mira writes: 'And then it happened, this awesome thing that happens between two people. No words, no conscious knowledge but a knowledge that makes one suddenly know, feel the other' (Rothenberg 1977, 176).

Rothenberg describes the moment of complete presence, as Buber had described it, as a moment of inclusion, which takes place in the 'I-Thou' encounter. She felt Danny and she felt her actions affecting him. At that moment, it was clear to her what his soul needed in order to be saved. She understood how she could help him free himself from his anxiety, and the terrible sense of helplessness that he was facing. The next step was to choose a role play in which the traumatic experience was reconstructed, while creating a corrective experience. That is to say, from the revelation and purification in the 'I-Thou' encounter, she understood which tool she should choose from the 'I-It' world.

Buber claims that when the human remains trapped in the 'It' world without occasionally breaking into the 'Thou' world and the sphere of the between, the liberating and purifying dynamic movement does not occur, and the process of binding and existential stalemate gradually takes over. The 'I-It' relations multiply and expand in our lives, the dialogical encounters diminish, and our lives are diverted from their correct human-existential track. We are gradually losing the ability to experience dialogical moments, and are thus losing the chance to experience 'I-Thou' encounters.

The Basic Problem with the Twofold Relation

According to Buber, the seed of the destruction of this reductionist process is found in the problematic nature of the twofold relation, the difficulty to relate in an 'I-Thou' relation, as opposed to the relative ease and temptation that are found in the 'I-It' relation. The difficulty in employing the 'I-Thou' relation stems firstly, from the unique nature of relating to the 'Thou', and from the 'exit' point that it requires. When one chooses to turn to the other in a dialogical manner, s/he: 'may withhold nothing of himself' (Buber 1937, 10). This means that s/he must, with tremendous intensity, put his/her entire self into the encounter; into the other. The 'I-Thou' encounter does not 'permit' this intensity to be let go, and once one lets go, the real encounter with the 'Thou' is ended. The intensity means delving into the other, when the 'I' is fully and completely present. The presentation of the self takes place in front of the presence of the other, and so the demand is twofold and highly intensive.

An example of such intensity can be found in the account of the teacher Mary McCracken (1976), about her first meeting with her student, Hanna, who was diagnosed as being mentally retarded and with suspected Schizophrenia:

'I watched Hanna... The moans and screams were stronger and deeper than before. How can she go on this way for so long? I walked towards the playground ladder, not knowing what to do. I only tried to feel something for her, feel her... How does it feel to be a hurt, angry and confused 8-year old girl? If I were Hanna, what would I want? What would I need?... with no plan, I climbed and lay flat on the top surface, while trying to listen not only with my ears, but with my entire being...' (McCracken 1976, 12-13)

On the other hand, turning to the other in an 'I-It' manner, through examining impaired functions, categories of irregularity, or through a defined mediation system, does not demand the burdening intensity, as well as entering and delving into the experience of the other. It requires knowledge and schemes of coping that the teacher or therapist learned and in which she specialised, yet it does not demand his total devotion to the encounter with the student, with all his/her differences and irregularities.

Apart from the relational exit point, the 'I-Thou' relation demands that you do not rely on any intermediary measure, nor do you have to hold on to anything other than the presence of the encounter. At the time of the encounter itself, no definition, label, method or tool, are to be applied. The person relates to the other without the mediation of a strategy or a technique.

An additional difficulty is that the 'Thou' world unties the proven contexts that provide certainty in human life. It exposes a world of uncertainty and a lack of

control. When meeting the 'Thou', one discovers the demands of the living, pulsing encounter, which sometimes contradicts the behavioural model or the choice and the relational model of what is expected of one throughout one's life. These 'spiritual I-Thou' demands sometimes force one to let go of one's defences and safe psychological space, and to be stripped of any image, while devoting oneself to the encounter. This stripped exposure can therefore, be intimidating and daunting. one must respond as one aligns oneself and authentically determines, while risking vulnerability, and having nothing to cling to or rely on, other than the power of the encounter and the belief in what is revealed to one during the encounter.

Such an example can be found in Stekrling's book (2002), in which she describes a therapeutic process following the breaking of the boundaries of therapy and leaving its territory, while devoting herself to the calling heard in the encounter. She admits that she has taken a risk by leaving the safe and marked boundaries and by exposing herself to the shared experience. She shares the pain and helplessness of the patient and describes it as follows:

'I am sitting next to her, and with my words or maybe with their melody, I give her pain and burden a right to exist. Maybe like in the story 'Hanna's Shabbat Dress', if I support the heavy bag of charcoal, even with a fluttering touch, it will be easier for her to carry this burden. And then, like little Hanna, I will look at the dress and at my hands, and the spots of the charcoal will be there, joining other spots, and I will see that my dress and my hands are unclean and are not unaffected...' (Stekrling 2002, 54)

One more example can be found in another educational-therapeutic account by Rothenberg (1977), who describes her meetings with a group of girls who had lived in an institution where she worked as a teacher. Rothenberg describes a by-the-book, reasonable educational climate, in which she defines the boundaries and keeps herself slightly apart, refraining from taking a risk, since she was afraid to approach them and to be exposed to a feminine wound that she also shares with them. The change occurs when she finds herself in a violent quarrel between the girls and, in a moment of rage, she bursts out of her 'okay' shell and shares with the girls her own personal, painful experience. She moves out of her defined boundaries and enables the girls to also move out of their own boundaries, and yet she risks being vulnerable herself.

The dialogical mutuality of the experience is also the mutual sharing of pain, as the teacher does not stand outside, but together with... open to meeting the student as 'Thou'. S/He takes part, and is sometimes even bruised as a result of exposure to the student's experience and pain, which often joins his own pain.

Escape Mechanisms from the 'I-Thou' Relation

In light of the difficult and demanding nature of the 'I-Thou' relation, a temptation to run away from the heaviness of the encounter may emerge. Buber indicates several escape mechanisms. One such mechanism is a declarative use of the 'Thou' language, when the reference is in fact an 'It' reference. Declaring dialogue to be an idea does not necessarily guarantee a true dialogical relation. The world of the idea is sometimes chosen as 'a refuge and repose from the oncome of nothingness' (Buber 1937, 13), but this is an illusion and an existential escape. Buber condemns the use of 'Thou' declarations and statements as ideas, without truly being in the 'I-Thou' sphere. Like Buber, researchers of dialogical education, such as Aloni (1996), as mentioned earlier, and Sigad (1999), criticise the gap between nice humanistic statements about dialogue and listening, and the lack of their implementation in educational practice. Sigad refers to the widespread use of the concept 'dialogue' as fraud and deception, with nothing behind it. She claims that there is a big gap between the meaning of dialogical education and dialogical teaching, in the way it is practised in reality. The term 'dialogue,' according to Sigad, has turned into a pleasant idiomatic expression. Yet, it is the declarative use of this term which allows educationalists to implement its opposite, while maintaining a nice, flattering feeling. At best, Sigad argues, dialogical teaching today is, in effect, an alternative approach for technical preparation for the lesson (Sigad 1999).

In addition to the mechanism of declarative use, which covers up for the lack of actual implementation, Buber, as mentioned before, warns against the use of emotional terms as being those that correspond to the 'I-Thou' relation. Many humanistic teachers use the term 'love' as being similar to the 'I-Thou' relation, while Buber believes that emotions are part of the 'I—It' world (1937, 12). Buber differentiates between emotions and the experience of mutuality and presence. The emotion is 'mine', it takes place within the self, while the encounter contains both the 'I' and the 'Thou'. In addition, the use of emotional terms, such as affection and love, is often accompanied by a superficial relation that does not tackle the problematic and less flattering facets of confronting these emotions. Buber's dialogical philosophy warns against the use, prevalent among teachers and humanist thinkers, of flattering, 'nice' emotional expressions in the context of the dialogue. The statement of the need to love the student, care, worry or contain him/her, with no reference to the complex, problematic, dull, and not always flattering, existential levels of these emotional expressions, leaves these expressions insubstantial, serving the teacher's self-esteem and not necessarily the student or the educational work. Buber explains that this situation stems from the takeover of the 'Eros' in education. The 'Eros' is manifested in the teacher's infatuation with his/her own self-image. When s/he is preoccupied with his/her image of the 'loving', 'receiving' and 'containing' teacher, s/he loses the ability to criticise his actions and behaviour towards the student. This

preoccupation with images, or as Buber called it 'seeming', as opposed to 'being', is one of the major barriers to authentic dialogue. Beyond the declaration of love and containing, it is therefore also necessary to refer to human situations, in which there is a lack of the ability or will to love. There is a need to examine the situations in which there is reluctance, fear, or unwillingness to contain, or a difficulty to face failures. The lack of attention to the less flattering or pleasant layers of the educational encounter leads to a purely partial experience. This partialness, in effect, creates a lack of presence, a lack of authenticity, and a lack of attention to the student's whole being and needs. The encounter's intermediate sphere becomes limited, where the 'self' of the teacher focuses on her/himself and his/her delight, and so, there is no real possibility of the formation of a dialogue.

Existence in a Technological Era as a Stumbling Block to Choosing the 'I-Thou' Relation

Buber claims that, in addition to the problems that stem from the demanding and weighty nature of the dialogical relation, living in a world of technological progress makes it even more difficult to choose the 'I-Thou' relation.

In his philosophy, Buber draws a parallel between the technological principle and the 'I-It' relation. The technological principle, according to Buber, is based on using knowledge to fulfill needs. The components of the technological relation are, therefore: 1. Knowledge 2. Usability and functionality 3. Focus on benefit, profit and interest. According to Buber, the 'I-It' relation essentially revolves around these components. The technological relation is a relation, in which the knowledge about the world (knowledge about features and components, their definitions, uses and arrangement) is found at the centre of the relation to the world and to the other, rather than to the direct and complete encounter.

The technological man is in pursuit of perfecting knowledge, its applications and uses. As the perfection of knowledge increases, the power of dialogical relation diminishes, that is, the more the human relates to his world through knowledge about it and its refinement by use of categories, features and functions-namely as the 'I' of 'It', he draws away further from the ability to relate to the 'Thou', holistically and completely.

This leads to immersion in the technological world, since the contemporary human is in pursuit of the control and conquest of the world through the 'It' world, abandoning existential dialogue, which, according to Buber, can only itself save wo/man from the alienation and binding force of the 'It' world. The technological way of relating is not ineffectual of other relations, but is of a growing and expanding nature. The more one chooses to relate as 'I-It', the more s/he shapes her/himself

as a different 'I'. The 'I' that turns to the 'It' is different from the 'I' that turns to 'Thou', and s/he creates a different form of existence for her/himself. The more one experiences 'I-It' references, the more one changes one's form of existence and is transformed as a person. He becomes the 'I' of 'It', and abandons the 'I' of the being that knows how to turn to his/her 'Thou'. S/He increasingly shapes her/himself as a partial human who increasingly turns to more and more objects in his/her life, and knows less and less how to meet the other in a dialogical encounter. This is how the 'I-It' relation increasingly seeps into extensive areas of thinking and relating.

In addition to the movement of seeping in and expanding the world of technological uses, Lederman-Daniely (2013) argues that Buber describes an effect of immersion in relational subjugation that takes place beneath the technical trends. This subjugation is manifested in a decrease in the ability to choose, and a difficulty in releasing oneself from the 'I-It' world in one's ways of thinking, relating, and turning towards the other. This tendency to technicisation creates a perception of life, which is limited to formulas, dogmas and regulated systems, and which diminishes freedom and creates subjugation to the life of 'I-It', life that revolves around the constant effort to regulate, structure, fix and create a solid certainty. This tendency comes at the expense of the 'I-Thou' world, i.e., at the expense of an encounter of presence, spontaneity and directness. This subjugation grounds the 'complete ontological circle', there is no 'purifying' untying of the one who is bound, there is no liberation from the 'It' to the world of the 'Thou', as has previously been described, and man draws further and further away from real and living contact with the other.

Atzmon (2008) argues that this tendency can be seen in the area of educational research, which becomes increasingly focused on production, achievements, strategies and techniques, and less on the spirit, dialogue and inspiration of education. Lederman-Daniely (2013) suggests that the inability of education researchers to notice that the techno-instrumental tendency has gained control over their research stems from the socio-cultural subjugation of all of us to thinking and relating in an 'I-It' manner in the technological era. This subjugation is expressed in the ever increasing technical bias in the educational field, in which the teacher becomes a technician rather than a person who meets and nurtures the wholeness of the student. Teacher training is predominantly technical and instrumental, and lacks training for a relation that develops and nurtures presence, complete relation and turning to the other in a mutual manner.