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Title: **Critical Listening and the Dialogic Aspect of Moral Education: Herbart's
Concept of the Teacher as Moral Guide**

Critical Listening and the Dialogic Aspect of Moral Education: Herbart's Concept of the Teacher as Moral Guide

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"May the teacher who has failed have the courage to see the positive results of his failure as well; may he have the courage to learn from this too! And so may the young boy, 'now that he is grown, hear the words of others!' May the procession of time carry him forth through deceptions and revelations, through troubles, through joys! Or may he intervene, to test and show his courage and strength!"

- Johann Friedrich Herbart, 1806.

In this paper, I argue that Herbart's educational theory radically calls into question the assumed linearity between listening and obedience to external authority, not only illuminating important distinctions between socialization and education, but also underscoring consequences for our understanding of the role of listening in educational relationships with reference to the moral notion of *intrapersonal* listening. In his central educational work, *The Science of Education [Allgemeine Pädagogik]*, Herbart does not explicitly develop a theory of listening, yet his concept of the teacher as a guide in the moral development of the learner gives valuable insight for a contemporary understanding of the moral dimension of listening within teacher-student interaction. This inquiry asks, can the listening of the teacher contribute to the development of the learner as a moral individual? On Herbart's model, the teacher's task as moral educator is not to impart a particular set of moral rules and laws, rather to create a relationship with the learner that supports the learner's ability to develop his own inner voice as a self-censor. Here, I analyze the dialogic aspects of Herbart's concept of moral education and develop the listening of the teacher in the following two interrelated ways: (1) as a critical mode of listening that aims at helping and (2) as a self-critical reflective mode of listening.

In everyday language, a familiar reference to a child who does not listen is easily grasped as referring to a child who does not do as he is told. Yet, we rarely reflect on this seemingly innocent connection between listening and obedience. In the German language, we can identify an explicit etymological connection between the verbs 'to

listen' [*hören* or *hören*] and 'to obey' [*gehörchen*]. Taken uncritically, this connection could imply an unquestioned power relation between the speaker and listener. From this perspective, we can begin to see the danger of connecting listening and obedience in intergenerational educational contexts, such as those between a teacher and learner.¹

Along these lines, we can observe a general devaluation of listening in modern Western society. As contemporary philosopher Christoph Wulf points out, with the rise of instrumental rationality and the corresponding dominance of subject-centered thinking, speaking has become a sign of the autonomous subject, while listening, due to its close connection to obedience, has become "disreputable". (Wulf, 1993, p. 14, translation AE). In the context of his analysis of this historical development, Wulf raises the following issue: "in the process of ever increasing subjectivity, hearing is being pushed to the background, and thereby speaking is in jeopardy of losing its inner guidance" (Wulf, 1993, p. 14). Wulf's analysis helps underscore a significant question for moral education: In abandoning our notion of *interpersonal* listening as blind obedience, are we forgetting the moral meaning of *intrapersonal* listening as guiding oneself?

As I will develop here, Herbart's educational theory radically calls into question the assumed linearity between listening and obedience to external authority, not only illuminating important distinctions between socialization and education, but also underscoring consequences for our understanding of the role of listening in educational relationships with reference the moral notion of *intrapersonal* listening. In his central educational work, *The Science of Education [Allgemeine Pädagogik]*, Herbart does not explicitly develop a theory of listening, yet his concept of the teacher as a guide in the

moral development of the learner gives valuable insight for a contemporary understanding of the moral dimension of listening within teacher-student interaction.² This inquiry asks, can the listening of the teacher contribute to the development of the learner as a moral individual? In answering this question, I analyze the role of listening in Herbart's conception of moral education. Specifically, I trace the role of listening in Herbart's concept of the teacher's role as a moral guide. I analyze the listening of the teacher in the following two interrelated ways: (1) as a critical mode of listening, and (2) as a self-critical reflective mode of listening. As I will show, the critical mode of listening pertains to how the teacher listens to the learner with regard to the learner's wishes and desires. The self-critical reflective mode of listening relates to how the teacher listens to himself with respect to how he is *heard* by the learner. Before turning to examine these two aspects of the teacher's listening that are vital in the development of the moral person, it is necessary to first inquire into Herbart's idea of what makes a person moral.

THE MORAL INDIVIDUAL AND THE EDUCATIONAL PARADOX

In his influential early work "The Aesthetic Revelation of the World", Herbart defines his notion of the moral individual most concretely when he writes "The moral man commands himself".(Herbart, 1804/1902, p. 62). He sees this idea represented in Kant's "categorical imperative". It is the intersubjective relationship formulated therein that Herbart seeks to highlight. Thus we can say that of the several formulations of the categorical imperative, the one most meaningful in this context is the second formulation which highlights the intersubjective relation between the self and the other: "Act as to

treat humanity whether in your own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end and never merely as a means to an end" (Kant, 1785/1988, p. 58, translation modified AE). Herbart believed that while we should not do away with the categorical imperative for our understanding of morality, the concept of the moral person as one who is self-determined sets up a problem for educators that Kant did not adequately address. This problem lies in the fact that to cultivate the learner's ability to judge for himself what is the good or right thing to do in a particular situation, educators must be able to influence learners' choices *without* choosing for them and without manipulating them.³ Herbart's concern underscores the paradox of education that lies in the fact that education towards autonomy is achieved through heteronomy, or put another way, an individual's ability to mediate thought and action with reason and judgment is made possible by intergenerational and intersubjective educational relationships.

In order to adequately address this concern, Herbart deems it significant and indispensable for educators to understand what happens in the moment in which an individual chooses *not* to follow his own inclinations or self-interested desire, rather to act with a certain recognition of and respect for the other. On Herbart's account, it is not transcendental freedom, but concrete "freedom of choice" that educators must understand in order to understand moral education, for that is the only type of freedom upon which they have an influence. (Herbart, 1804/1902). Thus, it is only by examining generally how choice is made that educators can understand and influence that which makes it possible for the learner to "command himself" to act according to his critical judgment of right and good.

Herbart takes a phenomenological approach to analyzing how human beings make choices, specifically asking, what is involved in an individual's choice of the good in a moral dilemma. On his account, in this moment of moral crisis, the individual experiences a break with himself, distancing from himself by means of which he becomes able to use reason to judge his own inclinations. When an individual is faced with a choice, for example, whether to lie or not to lie in a given situation, we can imagine that the "voice of the moral imperative" comes forth within the individual distinguishing the "worthy and good" on one side and the "common and bad" on the other (Herbart, 1804/1902, p. 63). This voice arises within the space of self-observation, in which a person finds himself when he is faced with a moral dilemma and entangled in a situation unable to decide the best way forward. The moral aspect of this commanding voice that we hear inside ourselves is that it is heard as "self-criticism" of our self-serving interests and desires (Herbart, 1804/1902, 63).

Implicit in Herbart's analysis of the moral individual is the idea that to be moral one must listen to oneself in a particular way, namely one must listen to an inner voice that comes forth as a *self-censor* in the context of moral dilemmas. The moral import of this notion of listening to the self can be drawn out with reference to Plato's *Apology* when Socrates speaks of a *daemon* that comes to him as a voice telling him what not to do. On Herbart's view, we can consider a person moral because he *listens* to his judgment of what not to do and *transforms* his judgment 'not to lie' into a 'command' by acting on it (compare Herbart, 1804/1906, p. 63, translation modified AE). In this way, the moral person commands himself to go against his inclinations and self-interested will, and act

with respect and recognition of the other. This idea of a person listening to an inner voice, as I will develop it here, connects to the idea of the human being as a self-questioning being who can question one's own motives and call into doubt one's plans for action. This inner voice that can arise within ourselves at any moment, can potentially stop us in our tracks, stopping our action and forcing us to 'listen' and take note of what is being said.

On Herbart's account, morality does not only involve knowing the good or right in a given situation, but acting on that judgment. Thus, Herbart's central question for education is, What compels an individual to *obey* the moral command he hears inside himself? To answer this question, Herbart examines how an individual appears to himself when he makes a decision to act on his critical judgments of the good. Herbart points out that for this act to be moral, we must contend that it would not make sense if the inner voice were heard as a judge rendering a "decisive sentence", or as a "lord and master" commanding a slave (Herbart, 1904/1902, 63f.). In either of these cases, we would feel that we had no choice in the matter, that is, as if we were forced to act a certain way. For Herbart, any action that does not involve the individual actor's free choice cannot be considered moral. On this account, in order for the act to be moral, it must arise out of the individual's genuine choice to do 'a' rather than 'b' or 'c', such that it follows from the genuine *freedom* to obey *or* not to obey one's own judgment of the good. Thus, Herbart underscores that when we choose to follow the moral imperative we must appear to ourselves as finding a pre-existing necessity and furthermore that the prescriptive quality of the necessity is felt as an "ought" not a "must" (Herbart, 1804/1902, 63f.). On this

point he introduces a further philosophical nuance that the "ought" cannot be a moral necessity, for this would be tautological. In this way, Herbart is creating an opposition to normative models of moral education that view moral education as simply uncritically passing on accepted values, norms and rules of a society to the next generation. He contends rather that what compels us to act according to our judgment of the good is an aesthetic necessity that is formed by one's understanding and experience of the connections of things within the world, including the connections between human beings.

In examining Herbart's analysis of choice in moral dilemmas, we can see that his account takes into consideration that morality involves an individual's free choice in two central ways. For one, the individual *chooses* to transform his judgment about the good into a command, such that his judgment that 'it would not be honorable to lie' becomes the command to himself 'do not lie'. Additionally, the individual *chooses* to obey his own command by acting on it in the world, namely by not lying. This freedom to act on our own reasoned insight is what Herbart calls "inner freedom", an idea that he develops in his practical philosophy as the basic form of aesthetic judgment inherent in all moral decisions. The idea of 'inner freedom' delimits the relation of oneself to oneself, specifically the relation between a person's will and that person's critical judgment upon his own will.⁴ This idea highlights the human capacity for self-reflection that separates human beings from other animals, that is our ability to make ourselves *inwardly free* from our inclinations, by restraining ourselves from action, turning inward onto ourselves, thinking critically and judging our inclinations with approval or disapproval. Inner freedom is not to be equated with mere self-expression. It provides the basis for our

ability to learn in the realm of morality and thereby connects to what Herbart calls *Bildsamkeit*, or perfectibility, that is the ability to learn in all realms of life. When we use these judgments to guide us into action, then, as Herbart asserts, inner freedom becomes "practical" (Herbart, 1808/1851, 33f.).

Herbart's account problematizes the idea that moral education amounts to passing on a set of moral teachings as prescribed rules and norms for the learner to blindly obey. Furthermore he rejects child-centered notions of education that leave all judgment in the learner's hands without guidance. Rather, for Herbart there are two central, yet seemingly opposing, ideas at the heart of moral education: first, that educators have a responsibility not to leave it up to chance whether learners choose self-interested action or action that recognizes the other and; second, that educators must allow learners to decide for themselves how to act, be it self-interested or moral. This forces us to ask, What form of education would allow teachers to guide learners into moral self-relations without making them dependent upon the judgments of others? Herbart's answer is two-fold. He argues that education involves both instruction and moral guidance. Accordingly, instruction is grounded in aesthetic experiences that expand the learner's thought and experience beyond the immediacy of his observed world so that he comes to see what choices he *could* make in the world. Moral guidance is grounded in dialogue that supports the learner's critical thought about the choices he *should* make in the world. While these two realms of education are intimately intertwined in the teacher's practice, my focus here will be on how Herbart envisions the dialogic aspect of the teacher-learner relation in education as moral guidance.

LISTENING TO THE LEARNER, CULTIVATING THE INNER SELF-CRITICAL VOICE

In the context of his discussion of education, Herbart points to a central dilemma in educational practice, namely that the teacher can only see the child's choice — good or bad — *after* the child has acted on his choice. For the teacher, the child's morality is an event in the world, 'a happening' [*ein Ereignis*] to use Herbart's term (Herbart, 1804/1902, 61). Yet, to influence the formation of the learner's moral character and development, the educator must be able to have influence on the learner *before* the learner has made concrete choices in the world. Herbart explicates that the only way around this dilemma is to conceive of moral education as a form of moral guidance that creates the possibility for the child to "see *himself* choosing the good and rejecting the bad" (Herbart, 1804/1902, p.61). In this way, Herbart underscores that moral education involves cultivating the self-reflective and self-critical individual. On this model, the teacher is someone who speaks to and listens critically to the learner in order to get the learner to listen to his self-critical inner voice and become his own judge.

In his "Introductory Lecture to Students in Pedagogy" from 1802, Herbart outlines an image of the teacher that gives insight into his conception of the teacher's task in his expanded theory of moral education. Herbart writes that the teacher must act as a "wise guide from afar, who, by profoundly penetrating words and strength of conduct" knows when to protect the learner and when to leave him to his own devices (Herbart,

1802/1896, p. 23). In this context, Herbart was explicitly critical of Jean Jacques Rousseau's vision of the educator as Emile's "companion at every step", which kept the educator a "slave chained to the boy" in a way that hinders the freedom of both teacher and learner (Herbart, 1802/1896, p. 128).⁵ In opposition to Rousseau's model, Herbart believed that the teacher required a certain amount of distance from the learner to critically observe and guide the learner's choices. On this account, it is only through distance that the teacher can understand how the child is influenced by the immediately observed world with all of its limits and thereby recognize where the child's thought and interactions with the world need expansion or modification. Moral action involves, as Herbart writes, "not only what meets the eye", but also the "inner performance" (Herbart, 1806/1902, p. 240, translation modified AE). Accordingly, the teacher's task in moral education involves not simply assessing the "results of [the child's] actions", rather, also understanding the child's "unexecuted intentions" (Herbart, 1806/1902, p. 233). On the basis of this distinction, Herbart differentiates discipline from moral education. Whereas discipline [*Regierung*] focuses on the results of the learner's actions with the aims to prevent the learner from immediately harming himself or others, moral education focuses on understanding the thought behind the learner's action, a task we can refer to as moral guidance [*Zucht*] (Herbart 1806/1902, p. 233).⁶

Through dialogue the teacher, as moral guide, seeks to determine the connection between the child's inner and outer world. This involves finding out what is informing the learner's views and decisions and to bring the learner to transform his views and see beyond the scope of his given perspectives. For one, this involves listening to find out

where the child is at. Herbart writes, the teacher must listen in particular to the "opinions and views" of the learner without "prematurely [seeking] to correct them" (Herbart, 1806/1902, p. 243). But the educator must also actively seek to understand how the learner thinks and what is informing his choices by engaging in dialogue. To uncover the dialogic aspect of Herbart's notion of moral guidance it is necessary to analyze more closely what he means by the term. On Herbart's model the teacher as moral guide engages in dialogue with the learner to intercept the learner's attempts to act too quickly on initial ideas without careful consideration of the situation at hand. In this way, the teacher speaks to and questions that seek to mediate between the learner's thought and action, so that the learner begins to come outside himself, distance from his initial intentions, and form judgments about his intentions. In his more detailed explanation of what is involved in moral guidance, Herbart develops four forms of dialogic interaction inherent to moral guidance that give vital insight into how teachers can use dialogue to cultivate moral learning. These four forms of interaction can be described as moral guidance that (1) 'holds' [*anhalten*] the learner to remember and be consistent with his past decisions and not simply act on whim, (2) helps the learner 'determine' [*bestimmen*] the basis upon which he is deciding to act, (3) require that the learner 'create rules' [*regeln*] for future action on the basis of his decision, and (4) 'supports' [*unterstützen*] the learner's 'inner struggle' [*Kampf*] to follow through with what he himself decides is the right thing to do in the given situation, even if it opposes his initial self-serving interests (compare, Herbart, 1806/1902, 242-250, translation modified AE).

Herbart's goal is not to suggest a concrete prescription for the educator's action.

Rather, he seeks to inquire into the nature of the relationship between teacher and learner that maintains necessary guidance over the learner, without interfering with the learner's freedom. He gives one example of how the teacher as a moral guide can interact with the learner in the learning of the moral idea of 'rectitude', one of the three central ethical ideas that inform the teacher's evaluation of the learner's judgment.⁷ He writes:

[C]hildren associate with each other and exchange things and services at prices more or less fixed. The interference of adults, and the anticipation of this possible interference alone, makes justice among children uncertain and deprives it of their respect [...] [W]e may lay down as a principle never to disturb what exists among children without good reasons, nor change their interactions into forced politeness. When disputes arise, we must first ascertain what has been settled and agreed upon amongst the children themselves, and we must take the side of the child who has in any way been deprived of his fair share. Then we must try to help each child to what he deserves, so far as this is possible without violent injury to justice. And finally we must point beyond all this to what is best for the common good... and which will be the chief measure for future agreements. ... The pupil [must never be allowed] to form a habit of making *his* right the determining ground of his actions; the right of others alone must be for him a strict law.⁸

In this example, the teacher engages in dialogue with the learner to help the learner understand what it means to hold oneself to an agreement, even when this is difficult and may conflict with self-serving interests. The teacher brings forth not only the agreements that were made amongst the children, but also further ideas that, as Herbart states, point to the "common good". The learner is being faced with a challenge here of whether to follow his own desires or to look beyond these and ask what might it mean to recognize the other. This marks the moment in which the learner finds himself in a "struggle" [*Kampf*]. The idea of the struggle is particularly important as it represents the moment in the learner's experience when he is caught between conflicting principles. In moral dilemmas the conflict in principles could involve a conflict between self-serving rules for

conduct and principles that recognize the other, or it could involve a conflict between multiple contradictory principles that each seem to address a respect and concern for the other. In either case, the experience of a conflict of principles forces the learner to question his assumptions and motives for action.

Central to the teacher's task in moral guidance on Herbart's view is that the teacher must *support* the learner's struggle. This idea sharply counters ideas authoritative notions of moral education that rely on the teacher's authoritative judgment of what is right in way that releases the learner from inner conflict. It also counteracts child-centered models, in which the learner can arbitrarily overlook conflicts of principles and never decide to engage in the discomfort of inner-conflict about questions of the good. Opposing these views, Herbart underscores that this experience of struggle and inner-conflict is a constitutive part of moral learning for Herbart. This moment of inner struggle is an existential moment that we experience so forcefully that it can threaten "mental" and "bodily health" (Herbart, 1806/1902, p. 204). It describes a moment in the human experience when we are faced with a difficult decision of whether to follow our habits or familiar modes of thinking and acting in the world, or to experiment and try new and unknown ways of being in the world. Yet only by being interrupted and experiencing this moment of conflict with ourselves do we become *open* to the other and begin to create space for the other within ourselves. With the concept of 'struggle' in his moral theory, Herbart is pointing to a form of 'negative experience' that is at the heart of all learning, including learning in the realm of morality.⁹

The aim of the teacher's listening in such contexts in which the learner is in a struggle to see outside his own desires and wants, is "to show the pupil his better self" such that the learner learns "to feel" and to listen to his own "inward reproach" towards a "warmth for the good" (Herbart, 1806/1902, p. 235). Through the process of moral education as Herbart envisions it, the learner "finds himself thrown under his own censorship" (Herbart, 1806/902, p. 246). In this way, the learner becomes *other* to himself, and begins to understand himself as his own moral authority. In other words, he begins to understand that he is responsible for his actions. This moment of inward reproach that the learner begins to feel marks a definitive moment in the learner's educational process; it marks "the natural beginning of moral education, which is weak and uncertain in itself" (ibid). This point is the point at which the learner begins to *listen to* and *care* about the self-censor that interrupts his action and tells him to stop and think critically about the assumptions and intentions pushing him forward. The learner finds himself stuck in his experience between right and wrong, lost in unknown territory and entangled in a situation that may in fact have many morally right and wrong ways out. In this way, the learner's transition from *interpersonal* listening within teacher-learner dialogue to *intrapersonal* listening begins. These transitions mark the beginnings of the learner's moral transformation: the learner begins to understand the limits of his view of the world, ask questions, and hear the *complexity* of his own voice, take account of its complexity and take responsibility for his actions.

The idea of the struggle as an indispensable part of the learner's experience presents a difficulty for both teacher and learner. Whereas the learner may seek not to avoid inner-

conflict and follow habit, the teacher has the difficult task of cultivating inner-conflict in the learner by bringing in different viewpoints and ideas that contradict the learner's viewpoints. Only in this way can learners begin to experience the power of *inner freedom* that they experience when they see that they can distance themselves from their initial inclinations and choose not to follow these. For Herbart, this type of moral experience is not possible without a form of instruction that provides a strong basis in varied and pluralist views of the world, views that expand the child's thought beyond his immediate community and show him he has a multitude of choices. This stance forms the basis of Herbart's argument that instruction and moral education must reciprocally support one another.

For Herbart, the goal of moral education is to allow the child to judge himself by learning to compare his good choices with his bad ones. In this aim, Herbart sees education also as self-education. The teacher must listen critically to the child, in order to find ways to use dialogue to initiate a certain disharmony within the child in regards to his potential choices, such that the child is set "at variance with himself, for he must educate himself."¹⁰ With his reference to self-education, Herbart is not praising autodidacticism, rather he is putting into focus a form of self-education that arises through the process of intersubjective educational relationships. On this model, self-education begins concretely when the learner starts to recognize that he can and must evaluate his own actions according to ethical ideas, make connections between past and present circumstances and choices, and know when he needs more guidance and continued learning.

LISTENING, SELF-CRITIQUE AND TEACHING

The point at which the learner gains the ability to mediate his thought and action with judgment marks a distinctive limit for the teacher's actions and points the teacher towards the end of the task of moral guidance. Herbart emphasizes that teachers must actively and gradually seek an end to their role as moral guides, so as not to make the learner dependent (Herbart, 1806/1902, p. 234). Herbart's theory demonstrates that finding this end requires a teacher who listens closely to his own inner self-critical voice. By listening to oneself as a teacher, the teacher seeks to determine if the learner has learned to endure the struggle and recalcitrance of negative experiences constitutive of moral decision making processes and act in recognition of the other. Through listening, the teacher begins to experience the *otherness* of himself and question his own judgments in a way that shows that by listening to the learner, the teacher, as a moral guide, is also guided by the learner.

On Herbart's account, the teacher must be concerned simultaneously with how he is heard *by the learner*, and with how he is heard *within himself*. The teacher seeks to be heard as having concern for the learner's education and growth [*Bildung*],¹¹ and not as simply having interest in correcting the learner's errors or giving him isolated praise and reproof (Herbart, 1806/1902, p. 86 and 241). Herbart argues that while both praise and reproof are necessary and valid in certain educational contexts, the teacher's reproach of the learner's actions or intentions will only fall on "receptive ears" when the learner feels

that he may lose the “self-respect” he has previously gained (Herbart, 1806/1902, p. 235f). In order to find these moments in which the learner will be receptive to the teacher’s words, the teacher must practice listening to himself "just as a singer practices to discover the finest gradations of his voice" (Herbart, 1806/1902, p. 237). In this way, Herbart writes, the teacher, must engage in “sharp self-criticism” of every “dissonant” note (Herbart, 1806/1902, p. 237).

Herbart's view of the teacher as one who is reflective and self-critical takes into account that the teacher must be assessing how to gauge each learner as an unique individual and change practice according to the needs of that individual. Herbart gives one example that highlights the difficulty of this task. He explains that a teacher must take a different tone with a child who tells a “self-interested lie” for the *first* time and with a child who has become a “deliberate liar” (Herbart, 1806/1902, p. 240). In the first case, the teacher must correct the learner harshly so the learner recognizes the gravity and consequences of his act and wants to correct himself and not to risk losing his self-respect. In the case of the deliberate liar, as Herbart notes, the teacher’s harsh words could make the learner more deceitful, such that the teacher must take a different approach. In this case the teacher must help the learner discover the respect he could gain if he stopped lying and must create situations in which the learner sees the value of such respect (Herbart, 1806/1902, p. 240f). The complexity of the teacher’s task as a moral guide is only hinted at with this example, but it points to the reciprocal relation between the teacher and the learner: as the teacher guides the learner to listen to his self-censor, the learner’s words and actions are also guiding the teacher to know when and to what

extent to turn inwards and listen to his own self-critical voice.

CONCLUSIONS: LISTENING, MORALITY, DEMOCRACY AND THE CLASSROOM

A teacher's listening is unique and different from the learner's in so far as the teacher must always be self-reflective and self-critical with a view of the *other*, who is at the same time a *learner*. Herbart gives key insights that point to the underlying idea that the dialogic and dialectic interaction between teacher and learner initiates forms of self-critical reflective listening in both teacher and learner. Thus, Herbart's insights reveal the transformative moral dimensions of listening in teaching: the teacher must critically listen to himself in order to find ways to cultivate the learner's inner voice as a self-censor. Thereby, the learner learns not to simply listen to others out of submission to their authority, but rather, to listen to others out of the desire to learn from them.

In classrooms today, moral education is in danger of being subsumed under terms such as classroom management and teachers are in danger of losing sight of the educative affect that they can have on learner's moral understandings and experiences. In closing, I would like to point to the work of two contemporary theorists that can bring us further in this discussion. Fritz Oser's work has demonstrated that individuals learn what is morally right or good from their experience of what is morally wrong. He thus argues that in the basis of these experiences individual acquire "negative moral knowledge", or, knowledge of what not to do, that is essential for their ability to understand and act upon positive

moral knowledge of the right and good.¹² In related work, Georg Lind (2006) has designed a format for classroom dialogue surrounding moral dilemmas and shows that individuals of all ages learn through the different perspectives on these dilemmas that they encounter in discussion with teachers and peers. These theories demonstrate that it is essential in democratic society to help learners understand choice in the context of morality. To cultivate moral understandings and experiences in democratic society, learners must be introduced to various perspectives and conflicting value systems, so that they can understand the difference between the good, the bad and the gray areas, and they can actively engage in experimenting with varied understandings of the good.

Ultimately, the task of the teacher is to find a way to speak to and listen to the learner in a way that *breaks* the learner's immediate connection between listening and obeying external authority. Teaching and moral education that is predicated on the learner's blind obedience to authority works against cultivating the learner's choice and therefore contradicts the central criteria of Herbart's notion of moral education. Whereas such authoritative models of moral education serve only as a means of *silencing* the learner's critical inner voice, I propose that Herbart's insights form the basis for extending critical-reflective models of moral education that aims to transform the learner's voice so that it is critically heard within himself.

Bernhard Waldenfels (1996) underscores that the inner voice of the human being is always at once one's *own* and *other*. If we take seriously the fact that education has the ability to affect and cultivate an individual's 'inner voice', then we can begin to realize

that the 'inner voice' of every person is created intersubjectively; it represents a historical, social, learning being that can and must see the *other* in *oneself*.

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NOTES

¹ Although listening has largely been ignored in educational philosophy, recent literature has highlighted the productive meaning of listening in education, see e.g. Burbules, 1993; Garrison, 1996, Schultz, 2003; Haroutunian-Gordon, 2003 and 2009; Waks 2007, and other works of the authors in this volume. Also, an earlier essay on the importance of listening in education can be found by Hare, 1975; Emmanuel Levinas' work and its connection to our understanding of listening is also being taken up in educational contexts, see Todd, 2003.

² Johann Friedrich Herbart, *Allgemeine Pädagogik*, first published in 1806 will be cited here using the English translation, *The Science of Education (1806/1902)*. Modifications to the translation will be noted in the following as 'translation modified AE'.

³ For Herbart's discussion of Kant see Herbart, 1806/1902 and 1804/1902; For a critique of Herbart's view of Kant see Benner/ Schmied-Kowarzik, 1967)

⁴ See in particular pages 33-36 in Herbart, 1808/1850; see also Herbart, 1806/1902, 263ff). For a further discussion of this idea see also Benner, 2008.

⁵ In a later essay, Herbart (1810/1964) adds that while Rousseau's image of the educator is too centered on the education of one child, Emile, teachers who would rather teach in institutions and are more concerned with having *many* students around them, than with educating these students, miss the finer nuance of the educational relationship. Herbart's views are part of his larger critique of schools. He believed schools were straining the educative relationships that can be formed between teachers and learners and warned that if teachers are not given the proper time and opportunity to form these relationships, they will in turn lose the desire to cultivate such relationships. Such a remark still has bearing on the school situation of today.

⁶ It is important to note that I am making a significant change to the standard translation in this context. Herbart refers to forms of pedagogical action that prevent a child from physically harming himself or others as *Regierung*, which is translated in the standard translation as "government", but on my view is more appropriately translated as "discipline". Herbart sees discipline [*Regierung*] as an indispensable pre-condition for formative education, however he notes that it is not part of true education because it only

works negatively to prevent harm, and should not have an intentional formative influence. Herbart refers to the teacher's task in the development of moral character as *Zucht*. I have translated Herbart's term *Zucht* as "moral guidance", instead of using the standard translation of *Zucht* as "discipline". The term *Zucht* comes from the German verb *ziehen*, meaning to draw out. This idea of educational practice as *Zucht* describes a form of educating that has a formative affect on the learner's development of moral character, which is why I contend that the concept is better addressed in English as "moral guidance". In the course of this paper I will continue to maintain the translation in the way indicated here.

⁷ Herbart explicates the ethical ideas in his practical philosophy, but mentions in his theory of education three which are particularly important for the educator. Herbart terms these 'inner freedom' [*Innere Freiheit*], 'rectitude' [*Rechtlichkeit*], which combines the ideas of right and equity, and 'goodness' [*Güte*]. In his practical philosophy he explains that the ideas represent the ethical relations of a person to himself as well as to others. For more on these notions see Herbart, *The Science of Education*, 210f. and 259; see also Herbart, *Allgemeine Praktische Philosophie*, and Benner, "Negative Moralisierung und experimentelle Ethik als zeitgemässe Formen der Moralerziehung".

⁸ Herbart, 1806/1902, p. 261, translation modified AE.

⁹ Further discussion of this concept can be found in Gadamer, 1975; Buck, 1969; Benner, 2003; Benner/English, 2004; and, Oser 1998. See also my work (2007) on this concept of negative experience in Herbart's educational theory.

¹⁰ From Herbart's *Aphorismen zur Pädagogik* [Aphorisms on Pedagogy] cited in Herbart, 1806/1902, p. 236f, translators footnote 1.

¹¹ Herbart, 1804/1906, p. 229 ; see also 243.

¹² See e.g., Oser, 1998 and 2005.

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