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Guest Editor's Introduction to Parts I and II

The School of the Dialogue of
Cultures Pedagogical Movement in
Ukraine and Russia

Individual educators have practiced dialogic pedagogy in the past
(e.g., Matusov et al., 2007; Paley, 1989, 1991, 1992; Shor, 1987).
There have also been individual educators who developed a theory
of dialogue and dialogic pedagogy (e.g., Bakhtin, 2004; Freire,
1986; Plato and Bluck, 1961). None of this is new in dialogic peda-
gogy. What is new, in my view, is that the School of the Dialogue of
Cultures (SDC) represents both a new vision of dialogic pedagogy
and a new phenomenon—a *pedagogical movement* in the field
of dialogic pedagogy. The SDC Ukrainian–Russian pedagogical
movement involves an unusual association of philosophers (e.g.,
Vladimir Bibler, Irina Berlyand, and Anatoly Akhutin, to name a
few) and schoolteachers (e.g., Igor Solomadin, Sergey Kurganov,

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Nina Kuznetsova, Marina Savinnykh, Vladimir Osetinsky, and Veniamin Litovsky, among others). What is interesting and unusual in this relationship between "theoreticians" and "practitioners" is that both groups have, using Bakhtin's terms (1999), "equality of consciousnesses." Theory usually commands practice: theory blames practice for its mistakes, and lectures it on how to do better. Although SDC philosophers have provided an initial impetus to the movement (see Berlyand's and Solomadin's accounts of these events in this and the following issue of the *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology*), both SDC philosophers and SDC teachers contribute to the development of the School of the Dialogue of Cultures concept and practice on equal grounds.

The School of the Dialogue of Cultures involves, at least, five "wonders" of pedagogy, in my view. The first SDC wonder is a unique, original, and very promising *vision of dialogic pedagogy* coming out of philosophical and pedagogical debates of the SDC with, and dialogic opposition to, Hegel and Bakhtin. I call this vision of dialogic pedagogy "epistemological"—a notion I will develop further in this introduction. The second SDC wonder is unique, original, and very promising *teacher scholarship*. The SDC teachers have developed their own methodology of scholarship to support and refine their dialogic instruction (pedagogy) and curriculum (epistemology) as an organic part of their own dialogic pedagogy (I wonder if this process dialogizes their pedagogy). In the School of the Dialogue of Cultures, curriculum and knowledge are understood as always problematized and subjectivized—in the Bakhtinian sense that for the teacher to form his or her instruction, the way students view the curriculum is extremely important—rather than ready-made and depersonalized (see Berlyand's introduction to Bibler's article in this issue; see also Matusov and Smith [2007] for a discussion of problematization and subjectivization). SDC guidance requires the teacher's deep understanding of students' thinking-out-loud contributions within both the historical and modern developments of academic scholarship in the field under classroom study (cf. Miyazaki, 2006, 2007). This compels SDC teachers to become academic scholars of encyclopedic scope. The

third SDC wonder is *a reproduction of the SDC pedagogical culture* as new teachers join the SDC movement. While I personally know very little about this process I can see this phenomenon occurring. It is interesting to explore how the SDC pedagogical movement maintains itself with incoming teachers. The fourth SDC wonder is the aforementioned *relationship between SDC theory and SDC practice,* a relationship between philosophy and pedagogy. SDC practice is not just the implementation of SDC theory but rather the performance of this theory within other material. The opposite trend—the pedagogization of SDC theory—seems to be true as well, when philosophizing becomes an unfolding of a learning dialogue. In the SDC, to theorize means to engage yourself (and your colleagues) in a learning dialogue, while to teach dialogically means to engage yourself (and your students) in a theoretical exploration. The fifth wonder is *the quality of the students' dialogue* organized by the SDC teachers in their classroom (see my discussion of this below).

The concept of the School of the Dialogue of Cultures was introduced by Soviet philosopher Vladimir Bibler more than twenty years ago (see Berlyand's introduction in this issue and my interview with Solomadin in the next issue of this journal). As his student and colleague, the philosopher Irina Berlyand points out in her introduction that Bibler's concept of the SDC is a result of his dialogic opposition to Hegel and to Bakhtin. Although Bibler accepted Hegelian notions of the universality of logic, as one that claims its universality (i.e., a view of the world as it "really is"), and the historical spiral development of cultures, he rejected the Hegelian notion of "sublation" (in German, *Aufheben*; see Berlyand's introduction, note 7) and the singularity of universal logic. Borrowing Bakhtin's notion of dialogue, Bibler insists that the universal logics developed in different historical times are not sublated in new and historically more advanced forms of universal logic and do not disappear after further historical development, as Hegel argued, but instead coexist in a contemporary unresolved dialogue. Conversely, V.V. Davydov's pedagogical school in Russia, "Developmental Instruction" (Davydov, 2008) was developed on

Hegelian ideas (realized in Davydov's version of activity theory), and therefore the school of Developmental Instruction is one of the dialogic pedagogical opponents of the SDC (see the article by Osetinsky in the March–April 2009 [vol. 47, no. 2] issue of this journal). In Davydov's Developmental Instruction, the curriculum is designed in a form (and a sequence) of dialectical contradictions known by the teacher in advance of the instruction and, thus, the curriculum exists before the instruction as an endpoint toward which the instruction leads the students. As Sergei Kurganov and Vladimir Osetinsky point out (see the next issue of this journal), the endpoints of Developmental Instruction promote the emergence of a group of vanguard leaders in the classroom, who grasp quickly what the teacher wants the students to achieve, and the emergence of a group of "slow learners" who might "not get it" or even reject the teachers' preset endpoint. In contrast, in SDC classrooms all students' contributions are valued because they enrich and deepen the curricular subject through the promotion and testing of diverse ideas. There are no "vanguard leader" or "slow learner" groups in the School of the Dialogue of Cultures. The curriculum and (temporary) curricular endpoints emerge from within the SDC instruction and cannot be preset by the teacher before the lesson starts (cf. Lave's [1992] notion of "learning curriculum" in contrast to "teaching curriculum").

The SDC teacher's role in the classroom is to help the student problematize the curriculum, engage in "points of wonder," develop students' positions, promote a "dialogue–argument" and "dialogue–agreement" (Kurganov's terms, see the next issue) among the students, and, finally, to introduce historically developed positions by famous cultural leaders of the past about the targeted curricular subject that are different and similar to student dialogue positions (some of these positions could be spontaneously articulated by the students themselves). Following Bakhtin (and medieval religious philosopher Nicholas of Cusa [Nicholas, 1954]), the SDC has recognized that the content of education—the curriculum—is essentially dialogic, namely, problematic, not fully known, and uncertain. In the School of the Dialogue of Cultures, dialogue is viewed and valued noninstrumentally; not as a form of interactive instruction among other instructional forms (as is done in Davydov's Devel-

opmental Instruction, for example), but epistemologically: if there is no dialogue, there is no authentic learning for understanding. In the SDC, to understand means to dialogue.

In my preliminary judgment (which must be carefully tested by future scholarship on the SDC), the SDC *epistemological notion of dialogue,* developed initially by Bibler, exists in dialogic opposition to the following three notions of dialogue. The first dialogic approach, toward which the SDC is opposed, is based on an *instrumental notion of dialogue* presented in Russia by Davydov's Developmental Instruction school (e.g., Davydov, 2008; Matusov, 1997; Zuckerman, 1999) and in the West by many educational scholars (e.g., Adler, 1982; Burbules, 1993; Macmillan and Garrison, 1988). The second dialogical approach that the SDC opposes involves a *conversational notion of dialogue*, equalizing dialogue with any naturally occurring conversation (e.g., Linell, 1998) in contrast to the contrived interaction of "the triadic exchange" (Mehan, 1979; Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975) common to conventional monologic schools. Finally, the third dialogical approach that the SDC opposes involves an *ontological notion of dialogue* recently developed in the West within the Bakhtinian framework (e.g., Lensmire, 1994; Matusov, 2009; Sidorkin, 1999; Wegerif, 2007). Strictly speaking, ontological dialogic pedagogy was not known to the SDC up to now but some of their criticisms of Bakhtin can also be applied to this approach. A detailed systematic comparison of these four major dialogic pedagogical approaches is outside of the scope of this introduction. My primary focus here is on the SDC.

In contrast and in opposition to Bakhtin, Bibler viewed dialogue, first and foremost, as a discursive collision of universal irreconcilable content logics (he even coined a term *dialogics*, see this issue). The logic transcends any individual being, including Bakhtin's (1999) person–idea, and forcefully claims to be the universal view on a particular subject. Of course, a particular subject of dialogue is elevated to an eternal unresolved dilemma in this process (cf. Bakhtin's [1999] notion of "eternal damned questons"). In the SDC, logic is defined historically (e.g., Newton's logic on physics vs. Einstein's logic on physics), by practice (e.g., algebraic logic on math vs. geometric logic on math, Poet's logic versus Scholar's

logic, see Osetinsky, next issue), and by position (e.g., Bohr's logic on the atom vs. Einstein's logic on the atom). I characterize Bibler's SDC notion of dialogue (and dialogics) as *epistemological* because it purifies, distills, and refines dialogue from its ontologically[1] personal aspects. Ontologically personal aspects are put behind the transpersonal logical brackets of epistemology. As Imre Lakotos, whose book was the apparent model for the form of Berlyand's *Puzzles of the Number*, wrote in the introduction to his book about the form of the book, "The dialogue form should reflect the dialectic of the story [i.e., history of the discoveries and developments of math ideas]; it is meant to contain a sort of *rationally reconstructed or 'distilled' history*" (Lakatos, 1981, p. 5). Lakatos's dialectics is not necessarily a part of Bibler's and Berlyand's dialogics (their dialogues are different). But in my view, Lakatos models the SDC in disregard of the ontology of the participants and the event. The SDC epistemological dialogue leaves aside important ontological pedagogical questions such as, "Why should we, the participants, discuss this particular topic here and now rather than do something else (i.e., ecology of dialogue)?"; "How does my participation in this dialogue affect my life (e.g., personal reputation, social relations, personal responsibility) outside of this dialogue?"; "Who outside of the immediate settings of this dialogue, supports and/or opposes this dialogue and why? (e.g., institutional, economic, and political struggle behind the dialogue)." Despite my numerous efforts to engage the SDC authors in a discussion of how their students are involved and sustained within the problem under dialogue, and despite my efforts to uncover the SDC ecology and chronotope (i.e., whether a traditional notion of "classroom management" is practiced, how the learning community is built and maintained, and whether, why, and how "pedagogical violence" [my term, see Matusov, 2009] is employed by the SDC teacher), I could not get an answer or find any existing SDC text on this issue (this should definitely be the subject of future investigation on SDC pedagogical practices).

I argue that the SDC epistemological dialogue is monotopical in the sense that it has to be focused on the curricular issue and does not allow any deviation from it (all deviations are bracketed or,

probably, suppressed?). Like Lakatos's imaginary dialogue, which begins, "The class gets interested in a *PROBLEM*: . . ." (Lakatos, 1981, p. 6), an SDC dialogue starts and continues with the class being interesting in a PROBLEM (e.g., What is world culture? [for more on this, see Solomadin and Kurganov's article in the next issue of this journal]). When, like many six-year-old children in Kurganov's classrooms, an SDC class is not interested in a problem, the children are declared developmentally incapable of an SDC learning dialogue (see Berlyand's discussion in this issue, pp. 61–95). According to Berlyand and Kurganov, who refer to Vygotsky and Piaget, six-year-old and younger children cannot make their awareness of the world the object of their own thoughts—and that is why young children ignore contradictions between their own ideas and those of their classmates, and even their own experiences contradict their views. The SDC scholars and teachers do not seem aware of the work of Vivien Paley (1986, 1991, 1992) or Margaret Donaldson (1978), who both documented and convincingly demonstrated superb cognitive and dialogic functions in very young children when the children become *ontologically engaged in a problem.*[2] I wonder why, when learning dialogue is not successful for younger children, the SDC teachers do not consider that the problem lies in their own instruction and learning ecology rather than in the children's developmental deficits. However, I have to admit that I found Berlyand's discussion of the difference between children's awareness and children's understanding of a curricular subject, and her discussion of the conditions for learning dialogue, along with her discussion of the three types of resistance of material to be extremely interesting and thought provoking.

According to Bibler, the universal irreconcilable logics on a particular curricular subject (e.g., number, word, nature) are clustered within a particular historical-cultural epoch such as Antiquity, the Middle Ages, New Time, and the contemporary Dialogue of Cultures epoch (see Berlyand's article in this issue, pp. 20–33). He called these clusters "the foundations of reason." Each historic epoch generates its own foundation of reason in consideration of particular objects of art or science. For example, Antiquity comprehends any subject as a form of cosmos (ibid.). The contemporary

epoch of Dialogue of Cultures involves realization of the dialogic nature of any foundation of reason. The modern foundation of reason (and, thus, the SDC) makes the goal of education the development of "a person of culture" who can carry the inner dialogue of cultures (i.e., the dialogue of historical universal irreconcilable logics). According to Bibler, a full-blown dialogue of cultures involves dialogue between the cultural and historical foundations of reasons. The pedagogical goal of SDC is to promote an inner dialogue of cultures in each SDC student. Since universal logic and culture have a transpersonal nature, interest in other people as carriers of different, alternative logics and cultures is apparently temporary for the individual until he or she appropriates all of these diverse logics and cultures in his or her inner dialogue. I wonder whether this vision of inner dialogue as the acme of modern education is a philosophical professional bias of Bibler (and thus of the entire SDC pedagogical movement). I envision this epitome of the educated subject (cf. Fendler, 1998), "a person of culture," as a lonely philosopher who sequesters himself in his room to discuss philosophical issues within his own inner dialogue.

In essence, the SDC curriculum involves teaching the Western canon in all academic subjects as constituting the modern foundation of reason. Not only is the SDC curriculum limited to a particular historical (mainstream) trend (excluding, for example, the cultures of China or the African continent), but it is also limited to teaching high cultures (see the discussion between Irina Berlyand and me in the comments to Bibler's article in this issue). That is, the SDC curriculum is limited by its focus on studying historically and axiologically "vertical" cultures. It does not involve "horizontal" low contemporary cultures (e.g., peer cultures, pop cultures, relational issues, nationalism, sexuality) (Matusov, 2009)—the SDC seems to accept "low, horizontal" cultures when they have been worked out by "high, vertical" cultures (when, for example, Picasso transformed "primitive" art or the avant-gardists worked with advertising). This is no accident as it is based on the popular speculation among developmental psychologists of Hegelian orientation at the beginning of the twentieth century (e.g., Stanley Hall, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, Aleksei Leontiev) that "ontogeny

recapitulates phylogeny," meaning that child cognitive development follows the historical development of societies and that the development of the child's foundation of reason recapitulates the foundation of reason in the historical past (this idea still seems very popular among pedagogical psychologists in the former Soviet Union). That is why the SDC insists on the historical unfolding of the school curriculum (study of Antiquity Culture for elementary school, the Middle Ages for middle school students, and New Time and the modern Dialogue of Cultures epoch for high school students). Although, the SDC has definitely developed an interesting and dialogically deep way of teaching the Western canon (see, for example, sixth-graders' breathtaking discussion of Mikhail Bakhtin and Oswald Spengler's notions of culture in the SDC classroom [Solomadin and Kurganov, in the next issue]), it seems to me rather limited in defining the school curriculum. The SDC seems to prefer to study the Trojan War in the ancient world, the object of numerous inspirations and commentaries by high cultures, rather than the Chechen war in modern-day Russia,[3] a messy and, potentially, unsafe contemporary subject (see response to this point by Irina Berlyand in the Appendix following this introduction). Although teaching high culture is very important in a modern school, limiting the school curriculum to high culture seems slightly snobbish, and, thus, nondialogic (although probably attractive to some parents who might want to provide their children with a classical "aristocratic" education). Of course, my observations and judgments are based on the SDC texts that I have read (including those that are published in this and the next issue of this journal), not on direct observation of and participation in SCD pedagogical practices—I may not know the full extent of the SDC curriculum. However, even if the other, what I call "horizontal," SDC curriculum exists—it is very difficult for me to imagine that it does not exist even in some hidden or peripheral form (as it exists in any school)—I wonder why it does not become a part of the SDC conceptualization in the work of the SDC teachers and philosophers.

Reading transcripts of the classroom conversations in Solomadin, Kurganov, and Osetinsky's classrooms, I was amazed by the complexity and depth of the students' contributions (especially

in the lower grades). It is clear to me that SDC teachers manage to establish the reign of what Bakhtin (1991) called "internally persuasive discourse" in their classrooms. According to Bakhtin, the internally persuasive discourse is one in which persuasion is internal to the discourse itself. The SDC students and the teachers try to persuade each other and themselves not through reference to the authority of the textbook or the teacher's say-so or through an external figure or powerful tradition, but through testing their ideas and the ideas of scholars that the teachers introduce to the students. The SDC teachers treat the students' contributions—articulated in the students' words or pictures—seriously, equal to their own consciousness and the consciousness of famous scholars whose ideas the SDC teachers bring to the classroom. As a reader of the classroom discussions in the SDC, I want to join such learning dialogues as an equal and eager participant.

Of course, my goal here is not to provide an exhaustive analysis of the SDC pedagogical movement and the SDC conception but rather to introduce it to Western readers—meaning to engage readers in a dialogue with the SDC approach and its participants. I personally have found an enormous richness of conceptual and pedagogical ideas in the SDC, which I hope to explore in my future work. I hope that readers of the *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology* will find their own wonders and golden nuggets in the SDC texts offered here.

Although, there have been some publications about the School of the Dialogue of Cultures in English in the past (e.g., Akhutin and Bibler, 1993; Emerson, 1997; Koshmanova, 2006), undoubtedly, this publication of seven SDC texts in two consecutive issues of this journal offers to Western English-speaking readers the first detailed perspective on the SDC pedagogical movement and its conception.

This issue of the *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology* presents the mainly philosophical SDC texts by Berlyand and Bibler. The second issue of this journal dedicated to the SDC presents work by SDC teachers Solomadin, Kurganov, and Osetinsky, and ends with my interview of Igor Solomadin about the history and current state of the SDC pedagogical movement.

I invite readers to investigate how the SDC philosophy expressed in Bibler's and Berlyand's texts interacts with the SDC pedagogical practices articulated by the SDC teachers as well as to identify important tensions or disagreements as well as agreements. In addition, I wonder whether any interesting differences among the SDC teachers are evident in their texts about their pedagogical practices and conceptualization.

The work on preparing this publication was exciting but also dramatic and difficult. We were confronted not only with problems of linguistic and cultural translations but also with differences between two academic cultural traditions (i.e., the groundedness of Soviet Russian–Ukrainian academia in philosophy versus the primacy in Western academia of empirical research, which both have their own strengths and weaknesses) (for further discussion of this phenomenon, see Kent, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c). In addition, the SDC's unit of analysis is often the entire school curriculum from elementary school to high school. Because of that, the genre of the SDC texts has often been a book or a seventy- to eighty-page article. All of the texts published here were initially written in such formats in Russian for completely different reasons and occasions. I have had to work closely with the SDC authors to make drastic cuts in the Russian texts, while asking for explanations and elaborations and raising questions and issues. Some of my challenges to the SDC authors and their follow-up responses became part of the published commentaries. We had to do five to seven versions in Russian before, in my view, the texts were ready for translation, and we also did several versions after their English translation.

I am grateful to all of the SDC authors for their patience with my editing and their desire to prepare their texts for Western readers. I am also grateful to the translator of these two issues of this journal, Nora Seligman Favorov, with whom I worked closely, for her conscientious and professional approach to this difficult translation. We, the SDC authors and I, also thank Anatoly Akhutin, Anatoly Volynets, Katherine von Duyke, Ana Marjanovic-Shane, and Mark Smith for helping with the English editing and feedback (including this introduction). In addition, I highly appreciate the hard work of Irina Berlyand in helping with Bibler's text and set-

ting high professional standards of our work. I thank the editor of the *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology,* Pentti Hakkarainen, for his support of the project. I am grateful to Olga Dysthe, who directed my attention to the phenomenon of the School of the Dialogue of Cultures. Finally, I thank my coeditor and long-time friend Igor Solomadin, without whom this project would have been impossible.

If there is a strong reader response to these two issues dedicated to the SDC movement, we will ask the journal's editor to develop another issue with the responses of Western English-speaking scholars to the SDC texts. We would ask the SDC authors in turn to publish their responses in this potential third issue on the subject. If you are interested in participating in this new project, please send your comments to me at ematusov@udel.edu.

Notes

1. As Irina Berlyand correctly pointed out to me, I do not use the notion of "ontology" in the same philosophical sense as, for example, Kant—as "metaphysics" (cf. his "ontological proof of the existence of God"). Rather my use (Matusov, 2009) emerges from another tradition: situated cognition (e.g., Lave, 1992) and relational pedagogy (e.g., Sidorkin, 1999). Thus, Sidorkin wrote, "this whole chapter presents an attempt to establish the notion of dialogue as a central fact of human existence, as an ontological concept. The word *ontological* does not refer to just any kind of being, neither does it deal with the existence of dialogue; it refers specifically to human existence. This may not be the most conventional use of the term, but from my point of view, it is the most accurate one. The ontological concept of dialogue explores the place of dialogue in the human way of being. One of the reasons for using the adjective *ontological* is a need to distinguish between what I propose and a number of nonontological concepts of dialogue. In the context of this book, the very existence of a human being in his or her human quality is a result of dialogue. In the nonontological conception of dialogue, this relation between dialogue and human existence are reversed: dialogue is treated as secondary to human existence, mainly as a form of communication" (Sidorkin, 1999, p. 7). Vygotsky used this term in a similar way (as applied to thinking, not to dialogue as Sidorkin does), for example, "[In Piaget's] view, there is not only a logical egocentrism, but an ontological egocentrism. In the child, the logical and ontological categories evolve in parallel" (Vygotsky, Rieber, and Carton, 1987, p. 87).

2. I found a similar idea even in Vygotsky's book *Thinking and Speech* when he criticized Piaget, "When the [preschool] child is asked why the sun does not fall, he naturally gives a syncretic answer. Clearly, these answers are important

symptoms of the tendencies that guide the child's thought in situations that have no links to his experience. However, if we ask the child about things that are accessible to his experience (the specific content of this class of things being determined of course by the education and upbringing of the particular child), we will probably not receive a syncretic answer. If a child is asked why he fell when he has stumbled on a rock and fallen, not even the youngest child will answer in the way that Piaget's children answered when they were asked why the moon doesn't fall to the earth" (Vygotsky, Rieber, and Carton, 1987, p. 89). Compare Vygotsky's criticism of Piaget with Berlyand's reference to Piaget and to Russian children's writer Kornei Chukovsky about the inability of preschoolers to engage in learning dialogue in her article "Puzzles of the Number" (pp. 61–95 in this issue). Although, it is true that one can find in Vygotsky's same book many quotes supporting Berlyand's position, in my view, Vygotsky contradicted himself about the conditional, ontological cognitive mastery and the absolute cognitive deficits of young children.

3. In the U.S. reality, possible recent examples of messy and politically unsafe issues are the Iraq war, use of torture, patriotism and the antiwar movement, unilateral U.S. violations of international treaties, and so on.

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Rejoinder by Irina Berlyand

Remarks concerning the sentence "The SDC seems to prefer to study the Trojan War in the ancient world, the object of numerous inspirations and commentaries by high cultures, rather than the Chechen war in modern-day Russia, a messy and, potentially, unsafe contemporary subject":

This phrase sounds very offensive and provocative to me—for at least a few reasons. Discussion of this issue could have been very long (and I suspect very heated). But I feel I must reply even briefly, here and now, despite the fact that this issue is very important and sensitive and does not have a direct connection to the SDC (although it relates to schooling in general). I am thankful to Eugene Matusov for offering space here for my reply.

These are the issues that I see:

(a) This problem can be defined as the relationship between "school and life." I understand Eugene Matusov's challenge in the following way: school should be closer to life, it should teach something that is immediately necessary for life and directly touches children.

Imagine the following example of a war. In order to address the life of an eight-year-old boy, adult men teach him how to use an automatic rifle because exactly this mastery of the weapon has the most relevance to what is going on in the boy's immediate life and it is more necessary than studying grammar and arithmetic. However, other adult men (but mostly adult women) may try to

extract the boy from this life, bring him to school, and teach him how to read, write, and count, and even introduce him to the *Iliad*. It seems to me the second approach is more adequate and this is why: Humankind has invented the institution of school for a special purpose. This institution is aimed at extracting a child from his or her life—the child is liberated from life commitments and demands (for example, from the primary needs to be fed and to protect him or herself—this duty is assigned to the family and the state). This is done so that the child can do something else that the society considers necessary for the child in a different way. Both in Russian and in English, the word "school" originates from the Greek word σχολγή—which means "idleness," "leisure," "free time"—free from what? It means free from the immediate demands and requirements of life. It seems to me that by rejecting such an essential characteristic of the institution of school (i.e., some alienation from life), we would be making a fatal mistake.

(b) This is an issue of curricular taboos in school in general and political taboos in particular. Should school limit itself by teaching only "academic" curricular subjects, leaving the moral, political, and ideological formation of a child to his or her family, the street, the media, and so on? This is a complex question. My experience of Soviet school warns me against the immediate answer, "No, of course, it should not limit itself! The school must assume responsibility for the holistic upbringing [*vospitanie*] of the child to form a good person and a good citizen." In the Soviet school, this pedagogical goal was prioritized over all other goals—lessons on math, chemistry, literature, and so on were easily canceled and replaced by "polit-information" because of some official political event of the day. This quickly became brainwashing because free discussions were not allowed—only the official point of view was allowed to be expressed and enforced on the students.

I do not think that school should avoid discussions of political and moral issues and conflicts, including heated controversies, but they should be considered from a certain perspective—from the perspective of culture. However, I think that even when the teacher does not suppress the students' diverse positions but rather supports free discussions of actual political "life" issues with the students,

these discussions will deteriorate into the students' ideologizations and moralizations—although it will be free from any external suppression, it will remain to be defined by certain preexisting morals and ideology of the participants. Perhaps, such discussions should be allowed to take place in high school, when students are older.

(c) In the SDC, in general in the third–fourth grades (in Ochag's slightly modified curricular program, in seventh grade), the children discuss Homer's epos, epic poetry, and epic genre along with tragedy and lyrics in the framework of the curricular subject called "poetic discourse in the Antique culture." They engage in discussion of neither the "high, pure, and inspiring" Trojan war nor the "low, messy, and potentially unsafe" Chechen war (I am not sure that there is such thing as high and safe wars!) as some kind of political events. In addition, the students can read Herodotus, but again the curricular subject is not the Greek–Persian war but rather the historical self-consciousness of this epoch. Similarly, while teaching a child mathematics, we focus on the theoretical concept of the number (including in Antiquity), rather than focusing on the practical skills of counting (see point [a] above).