

# Freire, Wittgenstein and Criticality Scholarship



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**Freire, Wittgenstein and Criticality Scholarship**

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## Declaration

This thesis results entirely from my own work and has not been offered previously for any other degree or diploma.

I declare that the word length of my thesis is 76228 words and that it does not exceed the permitted maximum word length.

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## Abstract

We are concerned with the educational concept of criticality. What do we mean by criticality? How do we use it? Criticality links education with social, political, cultural and economic existence. Yet for the connection to be significant, meaningful, we must be able to say what we mean by a critical citizenry.

We explore English educational policy underscoring the notion of criticality and offer a snapshot of some international models. We examine relevant considerations arising in the philosophy of education research literature. Criticality is an emerging and fluid concept and is informed by critical theory, critical pedagogy, critical thinking scholarship and the informal logic movement. We coin a new public space ‘criticality scholarship’ in which we develop our ideas.

We address a number of important questions: What is critical thinking? What is the function, the relevance, of criticality in education and in the broader society? What is the connection between skills, propensities and character traits that pertain to criticality? Who is and who is not a critical being? How should we deal with field dependency and the problem of transfer? What pedagogical strategies support the teaching of criticality? How do human beings think? Why does the rationalistic thematic and the Cartesian method assume such a privileged position? What other forms of knowledge and canons of rigour and validity are relevant to a critical education?

We delve into the works of Paulo Freire and Ludwig Wittgenstein and add to our evolving conception of criticality. We examine points of commonality and of difference in respect of their lived experiences as pedagogues. We consider Freire's idea of conscientização and Wittgenstein's stance on encouraging his students and readers to think for themselves and of the ways in which each of these relate to the critical being developing his or her own criticality. Within the new philosophical framework of criticality scholarship, we connect criticality with the promotion of democracy and social justice. We support this with Freire's notion of the critical being naming the world and the word and juxtapose Wittgenstein's aphorism that philosophy 'leaves everything as it is'. We make a case for aligning Wittgenstein's later philosophy with Karl Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach. Also we draw on Freirean aesthetic curiosity and Wittgenstein's deep respect for the mystical and, with it, questions touching upon aesthetics, questions of value, God and the meaning of life to envision new horizons, complimentary vistas, that criticality scholarship offers.

Reflection on theory and practice as it informs educational policy leads to some key findings and recommendations for policymakers to consider in relation to criticality. We sketch out how our conception of criticality can continue to gain purchase in the new domain of criticality scholarship. We erect signposts indicating possible paths that might be taken towards imagining and bringing about a more humane and just world.

*Keywords:* criticality, criticality scholarship, critical being, educational policy, educational philosophy, educational practice, democracy, social justice, Paulo Freire, Ludwig Wittgenstein.

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## Abbreviations

Following convention, standard abbreviations are used for the titles of Wittgenstein's major works and lectures and conversations the full details of which appear under his name in the list of references.

AWL	<i>Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge, 1932-1935</i>
BB	<i>The Blue and Brown Books</i>
BT	<i>The 'Big Typescript' (TS 213)</i>
CV	<i>Culture and Value</i>
GB	<i>Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough</i>
LC	<i>Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief</i>
LE	<i>Lecture on Ethics</i>
LPP	<i>Wittgenstein's Lectures on Philosophical Psychology, 1946-47</i>
LWL	<i>Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge, 1930-1932</i>
NB	<i>Notebooks 1914-1916</i>
OC	<i>On Certainty</i>
PG	<i>Philosophical Grammar</i>
PI	<i>Philosophical Investigations</i>
PO	<i>Philosophical Occasions 1912-1951</i>
PR	<i>Philosophical Remarks</i>
RFM	<i>Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics</i>
ROC	<i>Remarks on Colour</i>
RPPII	<i>Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology, Volume 2</i>
TLP	<i>Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus</i>
WV	<i>Preface to the Dictionary for Elementary Schools</i>
Z	<i>Zettel</i>

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# Chapter 1 Introduction

You can see that distinctive kind of Spartan wisdom in their pithy, memorable sayings, which they jointly dedicated as the first fruits of their wisdom to Apollo in his temple at Delphi, inscribing there the maxims now on everyone's lips: 'Know thyself' and 'Nothing in excess'.

(Plato 1997: 774)

## 1.1 Chapter overview

Our work concerns the educational concept of criticality. What do we mean by criticality? How do we use it? Also it posits a new philosophical space which I coin 'criticality scholarship' in which to conduct our inquiries. Here we can talk about criticality and think about some of the ways in which it might be applied to meet the demands of democracy and social justice. It is intended as a public space for theorists, teachers, students, activists, policymakers and other stakeholders to engage in genuine dialogue.

Our investigations look into the ordinary workings of criticality and underline the concept's significance in contemporary policy and scholarly debates. We take a snapshot of the governing policy with an emphasis on its administration in England. We survey the philosophy of education literature. We traverse the pedagogical roads walked by Paulo Freire and Ludwig Wittgenstein and search for connections between their respective ideas. And, within our original and innovative field of inquiry that is

criticality scholarship, we draw on our findings and signpost how we might imagine and bring about a more humane and just world.

We offer a conceptual piece of work. Focusing on policy and theoretical issues surrounding the idea of criticality, our journeys veer from traditional doctoral work in educational research in two respects. First, we are not limited by a single chapter presenting a literature review. Rather, the entire work may be viewed as a critical appraisal of educational policy and the educational philosophy literature as they relate to criticality interwoven with Freirean and Wittgensteinian themes. It is, to be precise, an exercise performed in the new philosophical framework of criticality scholarship. Second, our research does not embody empirical elements. In their place are threads that lead naturally to further theoretical and empirical research that will extend its scope and significance.

I interpret Socrates' laudation of the Delphic maxims, 'Know thyself' and 'Nothing in excess', in the opening quote from *Protagoras*, 343b, as a caveat addressed to the critical thinker, or critical being, 'Engage in a perpetual process of reflection'. Be aware of the limits of your epistemological and ontological positions. Be humble. And, at the same time, be not only critical of what you think you know and have experienced, but always remain open to new meanings and new experiences and keep them constantly under review.

This is also what, in my view, links Freire with Wittgenstein and what ties both thinkers to the concept of criticality. Freire wants his readers to be critically conscious persons who can read the world and the word critically and simultaneously and whose individual and collective duty it is to problematise their reality. Reflection, dialogue and transformative action are key components of both the pedagogical paths



Freire walks and what he challenges his readers to discover for themselves and vigorously pursue. This is what he means by an ‘authentic praxis’ in which the contradictions underpinning oppression can be unveiled and the oppressed, together with the oppressors, struggle to become liberated (Freire 2017: 25-26). Likewise, in the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein is at pains to stress that he should not like his writing ‘to spare other people the trouble of thinking’, rather, and most importantly, it should stimulate his readers to thoughts of their own (PI Preface x).

Both thinkers are concerned with self-knowledge and with better understanding the human condition. There are parallel connections to be made with the Delphic maxims, Freire’s notion of conscientização and Wittgenstein’s insistence that one must think for one’s self. Becoming independent critical thinkers and fostering our own criticality are, to be sure, what we want all critical beings to accomplish.

Finally, I make a brief comment on their respective styles. Freire and Wittgenstein approach philosophical problems from a pedagogical perspective. Both thinkers connect with criticality through their lived experiences as teachers. Section 6.2 of Chapter 6 speaks to this.

## 1.2 An invitation to the reader

This thesis is written as an invitation to the reader to partake in what is essentially a Socratic dialogue with the author to address the problem of criticality. What emerges in this chapter and continues in the chapters that follow is an in-depth analysis of the educational concept of criticality. I am asking the reader to engage personally with

the emerging narrative as we explore the idea of criticality within the genre of criticality scholarship.

The use of first person pronouns such as ‘we’, ‘us’ and ‘our’, as distinct from ‘I’, is therefore intentional. Also, with reference to my thought experiment in Section 3.1, the use of the second person pronoun (‘you’) is intended to provoke an even more direct engagement.

Along the way I will express my own views and the reader will of course have his or her own views. As we conclude our discussions I hope the reader will feel that we have become much better informed about what we understand by criticality and how we may continue to work with the concept in our continuing theoretical and practical endeavours.

### 1.3 Background to our investigations

National and transnational educational policy suggests we encourage the development of critical thinking and independent thought.<sup>1</sup> Secondary schools in England that follow the National Curriculum are, for example, required to incorporate six ‘key skills’ into their school curriculums; namely: communication, numeracy, information technology, group work, self-improvement, and problem solving (QCA 2004: 21). Five ‘thinking skills’ then complement the core skills and are designed for pupils ‘to

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<sup>1</sup> See BIS 2016: 5 and 43; DfE 2013: 176, 180, 188 and 196; DfE 2014: 15, 18, 69, 80-82, 88, 94 and 101; DfE 2021: 16; DfE 2022: 16; EC 2016: 5; EC 2018: 35, 42-43, 52 and 56-57; EU 2018: recitals 7 and 17 and the Annex; OECD 2005: 5 and 8-9; Ofsted 2010: 14, paragraph 21; P21 2019a: 4; QCA 1999: 11 and 20-22; QCA 2004: 11 and 20-23; QCA 2011: 1-2; REC 2013: 1; STA 2017: 25 and 59; UNESCO 2010: 48 and 50; UNESCO 2016: 16 and 44; and UNESCO-IICBA 2018.

focus on “knowing how” as well as “knowing what”—learning how to learn’ (*Id.* 22). These thinking skills are, in turn, information-processing skills, reasoning skills, enquiry skills, creative thinking skills and evaluation skills (*Id.* 22-23). The intent is that these general thinking skills are transferable across the curriculum.

Indeed the assumption that critical thinking skills are generic in nature and are transferable across different subject domains likewise underlies the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority’s publication in 2011 of *A framework of personal, learning and thinking skills*. It promotes six generic skills that, together with the functional skills of English, mathematics and information, communication and technology, are said to be ‘essential to success in learning, life and work’ (QCA 2011: 1). The ‘interconnected’ groups of generic skills are independent enquiries, creative thinkers, reflective learners, team workers, self-managers and effective participators (*Id.* 1-2).

This policy stance raises a number of fundamental questions. What do we understand by the manifold of critical thinking skills advanced today? Are these skills generic and transversal or knowledge and context dependent? Does the concept of critical thinking in fact extend beyond skills to dispositions and even virtues? What should count as critical thinking? What pedagogical strategies would best foster critical thinking and promote independent thinking?

These concerns certainly touch upon a part of the story of criticality. But how do they relate to broader concerns in education? Given an encroachment in the arts and humanities of the rationalistic thematic and the Cartesian method, how does this influence our way of approaching criticality? How do we reconcile the teaching of criticality and the development of the critical being with the politics of market forces?

All of these questions bring into sharp focus the interplay between criticality and the social and political context in which we perform our activities as educationalists. We acknowledge that our critical investigations take place in a post-truth society that is still unpacking what Friedrich Nietzsche problematises as ‘the *value* of truth’ (Nietzsche 1967: III: §24). Our interpretations are able to draw on a multitude of practices of critical reflection (Tully 2003: 41). The ‘diversity of the world is inexhaustible’, Boaventura de Sousa Santos reminds us, and is calling for an adequate epistemology (Santos 2007: 65; and Santos 2014: 15 and 108-111). The problem of truth, we might add, continues to strike at the heart of social, political and cultural discourses where our identities are shaped and reshaped (*Cf.* Bhabha 2004) and where our bodies and emotions now stand alongside reason in negotiating them (Freire 2016: 50).

Further, we question the privilege afforded to propositional, or content, knowledge. This is evident especially in the context of English state maintained primary and secondary schools and to which Sections 2.3.2 and 2.3.3 speak. Policy decisions concerning the inclusion (and thus exclusion) of subject content and related assessment processes are very important. Standardising (fixing the limits of) knowledge is problematic. And so is setting targets. We ask policymakers to work more closely with educationalists when it comes to curriculum design and assessment and to be informed by their specialist knowledge and concrete experiences of research and teaching. We challenge the legitimacy of rigid attainment targets and the traditional banking model of education. Moreover, we favour a Freirean transformative (or problem-posing) style of teaching (Freire 2017: 52-59). We want our pupils to ‘let-learn’ in critical ways, to challenge the confines of out-dated thinking practices and bring imagination into their lives. We underscore the intrinsic

value of research and of teaching and learning (Cf. Ashwin 2020: 23-24). We envisage, in other words, a critical education that helps young learners gain traction in the world.

Our journey will therefore take stock of what the community of educational philosophers, in particular, understands by the term criticality. Whom do they include and, significantly, whom do they exclude from being a critical thinker? How is criticality conceived as a conceptual phenomenon? In addition, what contributions can Freire and Wittgenstein add to the debate? Our desire is that the answers to these questions will influence scholars, educational policymakers, teachers and students in meaningful ways. Moreover, Freirean and Wittgensteinian approaches to the idea of criticality should serve as a heuristic for critical beings in their search for new horizons and new meanings as well as form an integral part of the philosophical edifice of criticality scholarship.

#### 1.4 Statement of the problem

The teaching of critical and independent thinking has been pushed to the fore by educational policymakers. The ideas underscoring these notions can have valuable roles to play in our schools and in vocational, adult and higher education. Yet what they mean and how they should be employed and assessed remains controversial. Clarity and coherence are brought into question.

Without seeking to identify precise definitions or exhaustive explanations, our analysis is concerned with surveying, primarily, the philosophy of education literature regarding the notion of criticality and gleaning important insights from Freire and

Wittgenstein with a view to advancing an enriched conception of criticality that informs policy and the research literature.

Our approach is an eclectic one. We acknowledge the tension inherent in bringing together seemingly different traditions ranging from the Frankfurt School of critical social theory, critical pedagogy (most notably, Freire), critical thinking, informal logic and thinkers as diverse as Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer and Wittgenstein. At times, there will appear to be some slippage between these traditions and thinkers, but our intention is to present each of them without changing the literature.

In my view, the epistemological benefits we gain from such an approach outweigh any objections based on the criss-crossing of traditional intellectual boundaries. We are open, in criticality scholarship, to recognising as equal all interpretations, forms of knowledge and canons of validity. Moving forward, dialogue, conversations, become key.

## 1.5 Purpose of our inquiries and reflections on my intellectual project

The purpose of our work is four-fold. First, to reflect on the idea of criticality as it arises in educational policy and in the educational philosophy research literature. Second, to locate the concept in ‘criticality scholarship’, a new and dynamic philosophical tradition. Third, to develop original ideas about criticality drawing on Freirean and Wittgensteinian thinking. And fourth, to make available to policymakers our key findings and recommendations concerning criticality in educational settings.

This aim is vital given the lack of clarity and coherence regarding criticality and to which our connections between theory, practice and policy endeavour to address.

I take this opportunity to reflect on my intellectual project. First, the critical exercises I am asking you to partake in (as the reader) are, in many ways, a reflection of my own thinking about criticality. Having plotted a number of landmarks in this rich and diverse landscape to navigate towards, I am completely open to where our discussions will eventually lead. I anticipate we might well erect signposts for conducting further theoretical and empirical research along the way.

Second, there will be quite a few occasions when I express my views on certain issues. I feel it is important to let you know what I am thinking and where I am standing. However, please accept them as being personal to me. Your experiences and perspectives are equally significant only that I don't have the ability to hear what you are saying or see what your position is.

Third, my layout includes a synthesis of the educational philosophy literature concerning criticality and serves to put a new gloss on its meaning and significance. Complementing this with Freire and Wittgenstein's work we plan to bring new ideas to the debate on criticality.

Fourth, creating a new philosophical space for criticality scholarship is important. The research literature is vast and crosses different philosophies and is not easily decompartmentalised. Of course I add to this complication by including the perspectives of other scholars as well. Also the educational concept of criticality is not susceptible to an exhaustive definition capable of being sensibly deployed in all fields. Criticality scholarship thus offers a domain to explore different philosophies and future movements where no one of them assumes a logical priority over any of the

others. It is a place to continue to talk about criticality, the critical being and how a critical education may resolve democratic and social justice issues.

Fifth, I have chosen to focus on Freire and Wittgenstein given their influential status as thinkers and because they shed light, in different ways, on the features (I have just mentioned) of criticality, the critical being and the interconnectedness between a critical education and democracy and social justice. Freire shows us how to teach well and he espouses an ethical imperative to try and improve our students' worlds. Wittgenstein offers insight into the teaching and learning process itself and his numerous examples of educational terms sharpens our understanding of criticality. Both share a style of doing philosophy that includes tackling problems from a pedagogical perspective. Yet there are notable differences in their thinking. They also have nuanced approaches to aesthetics, ethics and religious belief. For these reasons, I will deal with them separately in Chapters 6 and 7 when considering their contributions to the criticality debate and while highlighting points of commonality and disjunctions as they arise. This is in contrast to my approach in Section 7.2.2 where I will bring together Wittgenstein and Marx in our discussions and align Wittgenstein's later philosophy with Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach.

And finally, it should be clear that our dialogue, our emerging narrative, will relate to grasping the educational concept of criticality, discerning the makeup of the critical being and establishing the link between a critical education and the resolution of democratic and social justice issues. And while it will become apparent in Chapter 5 that I favour cross-disciplinary research and teaching (across the arts and humanities together with the formal, natural and social sciences) and that I also support a mixed approach to teaching criticality (drawing on both the domain-specific and the



generalist camps), I will not focus on how to support the development of the teaching of criticality. Such a vital task is well beyond our scope for it encompasses research in respect of curriculum design, pedagogy, assessment strategies, teacher training and cuts across educational policy, theory and practice as well as psychology and neuroscience. For this reason, in Section 5.2.2, I merely introduce a number of new and insightful pedagogical strategies and, then in Section 8.3.7, make the case that they warrant serious consideration under the auspices of further theoretical and empirical research. Section 8.3.7 will, however, seek to address the implications that my work holds for educators and learners.

## 1.6 Contribution to knowledge

Given this thesis is presented as an evolving dialogue into the problem of criticality how does it, the reader may ask, contribute to the field of knowledge? Our forthcoming discussions in criticality scholarship, I submit, shall contribute to knowledge in the following ways.

First, our review in Chapter 2 of national and international policy underscoring the educational concept of criticality and the problems there identified add to the philosophy of education research literature. Also our key findings and recommendations in Section 8.2 speak to this.

Second, our exhaustive literature review in Chapters 3 to 5 synthesising different ways of approaching criticality primarily from the standpoints of critical theory, critical pedagogy, critical thinking scholarship and the informal logic movement broadens our knowledge and understanding of the educational concept. The questions we address

in these chapters bring a notable degree of clarity and coherence to it and demonstrate what we mean by and how we use criticality in educational philosophy.

Third, in Chapters 6 and 7 we seek to find deep commonalities between Freire and Wittgenstein, show how their respective world views are mutually enriching and argue that the ideas and methods of these two thinkers can be used to inform educational philosophy about criticality. This work represents original research and contributes to our knowledge.

Fourth, we acknowledge disjunctions between Freire and Wittgenstein. In particular, in Section 7.22 we draw attention to Wittgenstein's aphorism that philosophy 'leaves everything as it is'<sup>2</sup> and seek to align his later philosophy with Karl Marx's eleventh thesis on Ludwig Feuerbach<sup>3</sup>. Clearly advancing such an unorthodox view adds to the research literature since we are presenting Wittgenstein's ideas in the context of promoting democracy and social justice.

Fifth, our review of policy, theory and practice in Chapters 2 to 5 (and complemented by the work done on Freire and Wittgenstein in Chapters 6 and 7) is itself an exercise of criticality scholarship that is original in educational philosophy.

Finally, in Section 8.3 we signpost opportunities for further empirical and theoretical research in criticality scholarship. The intention is to drive our research in educational philosophy even further.

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<sup>2</sup> PI §124.

<sup>3</sup> 'The philosophers,' Marx maintains, 'have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it' (Marx and Engels 2010: 5).

Having outlined my claims to original contributions to knowledge the thesis will now work to substantiate them. To sum up, we can say that the thesis will address the policy, theory and practice behind the educational concept of criticality from different perspectives. Also it will bring together two theorists, Freire and Wittgenstein, who seemingly stand worlds apart and make pertinent connections, in the form of similarities and disjunctions, all of which are designed to add to the philosophy of education debate on the question of criticality. The research, the emerging narrative, is significant because it synthesises existing materials on this concept (from critical theory, critical pedagogy, critical thinking and informal logic) as well as ideas from Freire and Wittgenstein. In the result, we look at criticality anew.

## 1.7 Research questions

The primary research question driving our inquiries is, What do we mean by the concept of criticality and how is it used in education?

A subsidiary research question that arises is, How may criticality scholarship promote further theoretical and empirical research into the conceptualisation and the usability of the notion of criticality? This second question relates to how we may continue our theoretical and practical inquiries into the problem of criticality.

## 1.8 Methodology

The framework is conceptual and supported by the philosophy of education literature. My overall approach, as a researcher, traverses the critical philosophical traditions including critical theory, critical pedagogy, critical thinking scholarship and the

informal logic movement. It is buttressed by the views of Freire and Wittgenstein as they bear on criticality.

Now there are at least two possible approaches to tackling the research questions at issue. An exploration more akin to traditional doctoral work in educational research encompassing theoretical and empirical components is an obvious candidate.

Alternatively, our inquiries could remain purely conceptual and provide a robust platform for further empirical research and scholarly debate.

I chose the latter approach. We focus on the policy, theoretical and practical issues underpinning the concept of criticality and its implementation in educational settings. Our work is itself a review and extension of the policy and research literature. It promotes the idea of criticality scholarship as a new philosophical arena in which theorists, policymakers, practitioners and students may continue to explore what we mean by criticality and how we actually use it. Our research design does not fall neatly within any traditional paradigm but shadows how the critical theorist, critical pedagogue and Wittgensteinian thinker might tackle the problem of criticality and link a critical education with democracy and social justice. Our conceptual framework respects the need to recognise the merits of different epistemes and their respective epistemological canons of validity. And it is consistent with Santos' thesis 'that there is no global social justice without global cognitive justice, that is to say, that there has to be equity between different ways of knowing and different kinds of knowledge' (Santos 2014: 237).

Our present inquiries are theoretical and are, in my view, the appropriate way to provide justice to the resolution of the research questions. Library-based and internet-based methods are used to obtain scholarly material and relevant policy concerning

criticality in the context of education. We present a comprehensive investigation into and a rigorous analysis of the philosophy of education literature concerning criticality as well as incorporate pertinent insights from Freire and Wittgenstein. All this is with a view to informing theorists, practitioners and policymakers of the diverse and intricate ways in which criticality is conceived and used in education.

As a criticality scholarship researcher, I draw on the research literature to explore (in the form of a Socratic dialogue) the idea of criticality and the ideal of the critical being as well as contemplate how we might link a critical education with democracy and social justice. In this way, criticality is firmly entrenched in criticality scholarship which itself is launched as a platform for emancipating oppressed and marginalised people, removing injustices, inequalities and all forms of domination and discrimination. Theories, conceptions and contexts are foregrounded. Intellectual rigour is ensured in virtue of the in-depth critical analysis of the policy, theoretical and practical considerations underpinning our project. Our research questions dictate that a conceptual analysis is the right way forward. They assume, in other words, a logical priority over the methodology to be employed (Punch and Oancea 2014: 28 and 78).

I am particularly interested in how theorists explore the educational concept of criticality through the meanings and uses they attribute to it. I agree with Colin Robson that by engaging with theory in our many and varied research designs we ‘may well be able to make some small contribution to the development of theory itself’ (Robson 2011: 65). Also Keith Punch and Alis Oancea are right, in my view, to insist that ‘forms of non-empirical inquiry in education’ are just as legitimate as any of the traditional paradigm-driven research methods in higher education (Punch and Oancea 2014: 20).

## 1.9 Significance of our conceptual analysis

Our work is significant for a number of reasons. First, we are better informed about what we mean by the educational concept of criticality and how to use it. We delve into the research literature and bring together policy, theoretical and practical considerations. Our enriched understanding assists us as policymakers, educational philosophers, teachers and students to make better use of our own criticality. In essence, we know what the concept entails for us as critical beings.

Second, our analysis of the theoretical landscape brings a noteworthy degree of clarity and coherence to the concept. This is an allied benefit. We offer help, in the sense that our epistemological base is broadened, and we offer a challenge to use our criticality rewardingly and productively. After all, if a concept is to be meaningful we have to be able to think through what it means to avoid the platitudes that are often associated with it.

Third, our key findings and recommendations are made available to educational policy reformers. There is a call for collaborative research efforts to produce empirical data and theoretical analyses focusing on the nature, purpose and teaching of criticality that, in turn, informs educational policy.

Fourth, we are able to signpost opportunities within the new domain of criticality scholarship for further empirical and theoretical research. We offer an unbounded and a neutral or open-minded space in which the diverse perspectives and views from theorists, practitioners and policymakers may advance the notion of criticality in education, reflect on the development of the critical being and promote democracy

and social justice through a critical education. The arena of criticality scholarship is, essentially, an invitation to interested parties to engage in genuine dialogue where the participants share a vision of emancipating oppressed and marginalised people, of eliminating injustices, inequalities and all forms of domination and discrimination, and of becoming more fully human. In short, we want to try and make a difference in our own lives, in those of our students and to the critical citizenry as a whole.

And finally, our ideas and suggestions are intended to make their way into the policy arena, educational philosophy literature, teacher training and, possibly, curriculum design.

I write from a Western tradition but, at the same time, challenge its normative status and its tacit presuppositions and pretensions. I am acutely aware of the need to engage with other philosophies and of the necessity of disentangling the many and varied webs of deception and domination that distance the thinking and lived experiences of peoples across the globe. The divisions we frame between the Global North and the Global South, Western and non-Western, colonial and Indigenous and between mainstream and the Other should be dismantled and the marginalisation and the pain and suffering they inflict should cease. Criticality in the 21<sup>st</sup> century should show itself in dialogue with a view to bringing equality to all our epistemes, beliefs and practices. Only then may it engender transformative action, socio-political change. Indeed without such a conversation it is very difficult to see how we can move forward.

## 1.10 Assumptions and limitations

We adopt a wide critical philosophical approach to exploring the concept of criticality. Therefore we operate on the premise that knowledge is socially and historically constructed (McLaren 2017: 58-59). We seek not to discover explanations or hidden definitions of the concept but have the humble aim to make plain everyday accounts of how it is used so that criticality can be meaningfully employed in educational settings. Our tools of trade include observations, examples and descriptions.

## 1.11 Overview of forthcoming chapters

Chapter 2 demonstrates the importance of criticality in educational settings but stresses the need for clarity and coherence. The major focus is on English educational policy but a snapshot of some other models is also taken.

Chapter 3 opens the question of how criticality is grounded in the field of criticality scholarship. It commences with an overview of the concept of criticality and how our understanding of it is informed, in particular, by critical theory, critical pedagogy, critical thinking scholarship and the informal logic movement. It focuses on criticality as an emerging and fluid concept, considers the potential dynamism of criticality scholarship and makes pertinent connections between them.

Chapter 4 provides a review of the unsettled nature of thinking in the education of philosophy literature and examines, in more detail, criticality and the critical being. It places criticality back under the microscope; assesses the relations between skills, dispositions and intellectual virtues; and asks, Who is and who is not a critical thinker?



Chapter 5 considers what a critical education might look like and reflects on different ways of knowing. It assesses the notion of field dependency and the problem of transfer, and highlights some contemporary views on how to approach the teaching of criticality. Also it speaks to the stronghold that the rationalistic conception of thinking and scientific methods of investigation wield in education. Then it raises criticisms of the primacy of reason and the scientific paradigm in the social sciences and the arts and humanities. Finally, it investigates the possibility of alternative accounts of rationality that the scholarly research offers.

Chapter 6 analyses Freire and Wittgenstein's views on the concept of criticality and compliments the groundwork we have made in earlier chapters in situating criticality within the field of criticality scholarship. We explore their lived experiences and, most significantly, underline how both thinkers approach philosophical problems from a pedagogical perspective. In addressing the ways in which we may develop a person's criticality we make connections with the Delphic maxims, 'Know thyself' and 'Nothing overmuch', Freire's notion of conscientização and Wittgenstein's position on encouraging others to think for themselves.

Chapter 7 continues our journey into the works of Freire and Wittgenstein. Within the philosophical framework of criticality scholarship, criticality is allied with democracy and social justice. Emphasis is placed on Freire's pedagogical and political perspectives on critical beings naming the world and the word. This is contrasted with Wittgenstein's dictum that philosophy leaves everything as it is. We align Wittgenstein's later philosophy with Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach. We explore some of Freire and Wittgenstein's concerns for aesthetic, ethical and religious

concepts with a view to amplifying and broadening our epistemic outlook and imagining different ways of knowing.

Chapter 8 is aimed at educational policymakers and educational philosophers. First, we make known to policymakers our key findings about the educational concept of criticality. We make a couple of recommendations. And second, we sketch out a road map showing how our enriched conception of criticality can continue to gain purchase in the new domain of criticality scholarship. We signpost possibilities for further empirical and theoretical research. It is a public space for democratic and social justice orientated conversations.

Chapter 9 incorporates our remarks in closing. Also it confirms our contribution to knowledge and our work's significance.

### 1.12 Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

I complied fully with the Code of Practice and Procedures of Lancaster University, the BERA (2011) guidelines and conducted my research within the parameters and accepted customs governing educational research (Cohen *et al* 2011: 170-172).

## Chapter 2 Criticality and educational policy

The essence of critical thinking is suspended judgment; and the essence of this suspense is inquiry to determine the nature of the problem before proceeding to attempts at its solution.

(Dewey 1997: 74)

### 2.1 Chapter overview

In this chapter we explore the policy underpinning the centrality of criticality in educational settings. Whilst our focus is on educational policy as it is administered in England, short comparisons are made with critical thinking models in the European Union, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation ('UNESCO'), the United States and Australia.

The primary inquiry driving our journey is whether criticality is a clear and coherent concept in educational policy. The expression 'criticality' is, to be fair, not one that is universally adopted in policy documentation. Nevertheless, the policy rhetoric supporting educational terms like critical thinking, creative thinking, reflective thinking and problem solving and the language surrounding generic and transferable skills fails to deliver on intelligibility and consistency. Our journey, in this and the chapters that follow, includes the exposition of policy, theory and practice relating to the educational concept of criticality. Our contribution to knowledge in this chapter consists in a review of national and international policy relating to this concept. Later chapters draw more on theoretical and practical considerations.

Critical thinking is, as John Dewey intimates in the opening passage, very much concerned with problematising phenomena. This might consist of a piece of literature or philosophy we are reading or listening to in a classroom, a work of art or a musical composition we are contemplating, an experiment we are performing in a laboratory, or, quite simply, an existential moment in our everyday lives that for whatever reason puzzles us. In *How We Think*, Dewey insists that, in these and similar cases, the process of reflection is troublesome because it ‘involves overcoming inertia that inclines one to accept suggestions at their face value’ and a ‘willingness to endure a condition of mental unrest and disturbance’ (Dewey 1997: 13).

This cognitive process of suspending judgement is, moreover, ‘likely to be somewhat painful’ (*Ibid.*). Thinking ‘is occasioned by an unsettlement and it aims at a disturbance’ (Dewey 2016: 226). The challenge posed by criticality is met by working on one’s temperament as much as sharpening one’s own intellect. What must be conquered for the critical thinker is the resistance of her will. As Ludwig Wittgenstein remarks:

Working in philosophy—like work in architecture in many respects—is really more a working on oneself. On one’s own interpretation. On one’s way of seeing things. (And what one expects of them.) (CV 16)

To write good philosophy and to think well means we have ‘the will to resist the temptation to misunderstand, the will to resist superficiality’; yet what often gets in our way, as Ray Monk explains, is not a lack of intelligence, but the edifice of our pride (Monk 1991: 366; and see CV 26).

A Wittgensteinian critical thinker is concerned with a systematic re-working of her own internal framework together with its accompaniment of underlying assumptions

and deeply held beliefs. This entails a fostering of her intellectual virtues which, as we shall see in Section 4.3, includes courage, open-mindedness and humility. But criticality also extends beyond self-critique to a consideration of the beliefs and values of others. This is what Richard Paul means by ‘strong sense’ critical thinking (Paul 1990: 110).

What becomes important for us as critical beings, then, is that we continually think, act and reflect upon ourselves, others and the world. Education has a pivotal role to play in nurturing this activity. This is mirrored in Dewey’s observation that knowledge ‘as an act is bringing some of our dispositions to consciousness with a view to straightening out a perplexity, by conceiving the connection between ourselves and the world in which we live’ (Dewey 2016: 238). And having acquired this knowledge, do we now have the courage to act on it?<sup>1</sup>

Also this ties in neatly with his view that the desired aims and values in education are themselves moral. In *Democracy and Education*, at page 247, Dewey argues, rightly in my view, that discipline, natural development, culture and social efficiency are all moral traits that make us worthy citizens of the world and which it is the business of education to further. Being good simply won’t suffice, one must be good for something! And what we get from living in society balances with what we give back to it and this, in turn, grounds in each of us a ‘widening and deepening of conscious life—a more intense, disciplined, and expanding realization of meanings’. Dewey continues:

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Higham 2018: 356; and Kotzee 2018: 361.

Discipline, social efficiency, personal refinement, improvement of character are but phases of the growth of capacity nobly to share in such a balanced experience. And education is not a mere means to such a life. Education is such a life. To maintain capacity for such education is the essence of morals. For conscious life is a continual beginning afresh. (*Id.* 247-248)

Suspending judgement is painful and risky. It disturbs what we have come to accept. But it breaks new ground by looking at a problem in a different light and paving the way for new attempts at its solution. Things are seen afresh. New meanings and new horizons come to the fore. This is the conscious life of the critical being—someone who puts her criticality into practice, someone who tries to improve her own life and the lives of others. These Deweyan insights are, I believe, important for our understanding of criticality since they strike at the very heart of what is at issue; namely: What is a proficient critical thinker?; and What pedagogical strategies and techniques can educationalists put in place to help us along that life-long journey? Later, in Section 4.4, we look at who a critical thinker is and is not; and, in Section 5.2.2, we address emerging pedagogical trends in teaching criticality. Again our signposts and transgressions to theory are intended to foreground our links between policy, theory and practice.

For present purposes, we begin our investigations into criticality as it is embedded in educational contexts. This is important for two reasons. First, it shows the settings in which criticality is lauded as a significant educational goal. Second, and more significantly, we begin to appreciate the lack of clarity and coherence surrounding the idea of criticality. This, in turn, justifies the work to be done in later chapters that are designed to shed light on its conceptualisation and usability.

## 2.2 The coherency of criticality in educational policy

To recap, then, our central examination is whether criticality is a clear and coherent concept in educational policy. We reiterate that the term ‘criticality’ is not frequently used in policy documents. Policymakers have chosen, instead, to adopt related expressions like ‘critical thinking’ and ‘critical thinking skills’. For the sake of clarity, the idea of criticality criss-crosses and relates to these educational terms. And as we make plain in Section 3.2, we regard these terms, along with criticalness, reflective thinking and creative thinking, as sharing similarities and relationships that exhibit ‘family resemblances’ in a Wittgensteinian sense (PI §§66-67). We argue that underscoring educational policy is a lack of certainty and coherence regarding the nature of criticality and its realisation. In many ways, though, this is not surprising. Chapters 3 and 4 speak to criticality as not being a mature concept but an emerging one (Raiskums 2008: 95). Criticality is a mutable concept and its paradigm markers are not fixed. The educational philosophy literature demonstrates just how difficult it is to come to grips with this concept. Nevertheless, given its significance globally, as we noted in Section 1.3, educational policymakers need to grasp the nettle of criticality.

Regrettably much of educational policy is caught up with a particular conception of critical thinking skills that is itself only a part of the much wider concept of criticality. Criticality is, to be sure, much broader than critical thinking (Davies and Barnett 2015: 17). Yet the rhetoric of transferable thinking skills infects all manner of educational settings. In Section 5.2.1, we deal with this in the context of field dependency and the problem of transfer. For the moment, we take Ronald Barnett’s

cue that rather than focusing on its nature, the transatlantic debate over critical thinking should have asked, what is it for? (Barnett 1997: 64-65). In education, we need to ask ourselves what is criticality for? We need to link this with the function that criticality serves when our students enter society as fully-fledged citizens. Finally, all of this connects with Nicholas Burbules' question, what are we actually trying to do when we are being critical? (Burbules 1998: 486).

### 2.3 English educational policy

Since much of the language surrounding criticality is expressed in terms of skills or abilities, we shall begin our expedition on that level. Geoff Hayward and Rosa Fernandez provide an insightful overview of the English development of 'core' and 'key' skills for the period 1975 to 2002 and an analysis of the key features underpinning their implementation in schools, colleges and universities (Hayward and Fernandez 2004: 127-134). Their review of the economic and educational literatures suggests that there remains a common perception that the public education and training system has systematically failed to produce sufficient graduates with generic skills to meet demands in the workplace (*Id.* 118); the results of data analyses indicate that policymakers should not simply assume that general skills, as distinct from workplace specific skills, are the most important skills to meet those demands (*Id.* 121); there is little evidence to suggest that generic skills are capable of being learnt independently of a working environment (*Id.* 126); and that successive policy developments to teach key skills have 'suffered implementation failure' (*Id.* 141). These are serious findings. Also they highlight the contradictions inherent in contemporary educational policy that seeks to promote the autonomy and well-being



of learners on the one hand, and serve market forces on the other, and not to mention the problems this poses for curriculum design.

William Hare reminds us that criticality is fundamental in all teaching environments since it serves to ‘thwart various forms of miseducation’ (Hare 1999: 95). He offers this salutary reminder to educators:

Teachers need to think through their aims in education to see how the ideas implicit in the general idea of critical thinking may capture important aspects of their overall objective. Most important of all, they need to ask what it would mean to teach in a critical way, and to find ways of expressing the ideal in classroom practice. (*Ibid.*)

I agree. In my view, the rhetoric of advancing critical thinking as an educational aim is empty if students fail to appreciate that it requires a specific context and a framework of knowledge and understanding.<sup>2</sup> Also Paul Ashwin is right to point out how easy it is to commit a category error by describing an event or practice in terms of a particular generic skill and mistaking that description for the demonstration of that skill (Ashwin 2020: 22). Describing how a student may use critical thinking or problem solving skills in, say, analysing a text or solving a problem is not evidence that the relevant skill was effectively employed (*Cf. Id.* 19). Policymakers would do well to actively assist educators with the teaching and learning of criticality by making explicit its epistemological and pedagogical foundations (aspects of which are explored in Chapters 3 to 5).

Our navigation of the English educational policy traverses the early years foundation stage, primary education, secondary education and, finally, the academy. In these

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<sup>2</sup> *Cf.* Andrews 2015: 60; Ashwin 2020: 22; Glevey 2008: 119; Jones 2015: 169; Larsson 2021: 315 and 320; McPeck 1981: 5; and Wellington 1987: 27-29.

troubled waters, I argue, first, that criticality is vital in education. National and transnational educational policy is evidence of this. Chapters 3 to 5 also speak to this.<sup>3</sup>

Second, I argue that English educational policy concerning the teaching of criticality does not speak sufficiently to coherence. There is, therefore, a genuine need to bring clarity and coherence to the educational concept of criticality. Chapters 3 to 5 address this concern. And in Section 2.4, we discover that in the international arena there is a willingness to engage in collaborative work to restore coherence—at least to the nature of critical thinking skills and competencies and to yield appropriate pedagogical strategies.

Third, I argue that the assumption that critical thinking skills are generic in nature and transferable across subject domains should be challenged and not simply taken for granted. This is considered in Section 5.2.1, where I argue that a mixed approach to

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<sup>3</sup> A question that could also be pursued, but is beyond the scope of our present enquiries, is to what extent criticality can be viewed as a social good (or common good or public good). I make some brief observations. It seems to me that properly nurtured within educational settings, criticality equips critical beings with an armoury of commensurate skills, dispositions and intellectual virtues that are practised by them as reflective, creative and purposeful citizens in public life. Indeed I would suggest that absent criticality, a human being cannot, in Rawlsian terms, obtain the primary goods necessary for pursuing a good life (or a ‘rational long-term plan of life’) (Rawls 1972: 62 and 92-93) and would be compelled to live an ‘unexamined life’, as denounced by Socrates in the *Apology*, 38a, (Plato 1997: 33). There are, of course, other standpoints from which this question may be approached. In any case, criticality serves to benefit both individuals and society. It defends subjectivity by serving to protect the relations an individual has with her environment and recognise her lived experiences and embodiment of feelings, emotions and desires all of which empower her to think and act. Also criticality adjusts her lens to see others and to listen to their viewpoints and perspectives. The critical being lives in a shared world where she negotiates and cooperates with others. We may even draw a parallel between viewing criticality as a social good and Jan McArthur’s idea of a moral university contributing to the social good by helping all citizens actualise good and fulfilling lives (McArthur 2019: 132-133). She uses the term ‘social good’ to transcend the public/private goods dichotomy and envisions the good life as not merely the sum of individual actions but as something mediated by Axel Honneth’s notion of cooperative self-actualisation. The interrelations and interdependence between one’s self and others, in this sense, affords an important layer of meaning to the life of the critical being. She is unique. Yes, but she is also a member of, and a meaningful participant in, a critical citizenry.

teaching criticality is the way forward since the generalists and specifists both have something to contribute to our understanding of criticality.

Finally, economic considerations and satisfying employer demands with the teaching of transferable ‘soft skills’, I argue, greatly influence educational policy. This has the potential to minimise or limit the significance and scope of criticality since its areas of operation span much further afield and are unique to each individual person who, as I argue in Section 4.4, is embodied with feelings, emotions, desires and lived experiences that affect how he or she thinks and chooses to act in the world.

### 2.3.1 The early years foundation stage: creating and thinking critically

The *Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework* sets standards that all schools, nurseries and childcare providers in England must meet in order that children from birth to the age of five ‘learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe’ (DfE 2021: 5). Teaching and learning are intended to produce a state of ‘school readiness’ and give ‘children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life’ (*Ibid.*). Implicit in these quite proper educational goals is the need, in all educational settings, for continuity and consistency in the development of each child’s knowledge base and skills set. To be sure, such an approach should not only aid in establishing a good grounding in knowledge and important life skills but also enable children to, later, contribute meaningfully as citizens in society.

So far so good. But how is this to be achieved especially given the differences in the backgrounds of children as they enter the early year’s environment. Well there are four guiding principles: every child is unique; positive relationships develop

children’s strength and independence; enabling environments (in which there are working relationships between early years practitioners and parents/carers) foster children’s learning and development; and an explicit recognition that children develop and learn at different rates—paying particular attention to children with special educational needs and disabilities (*Id.* 6 and 16). The areas of learning and development that shape educational programmes in the early years foundation stage (‘EYFS’) are, to be fair, quite comprehensive.<sup>4</sup>

Of particular relevance to criticality is the fourth guiding principle that children develop and learn at different rates. ‘In planning and guiding what children learn,’ paragraph 1.15 provides, ‘practitioners must reflect on the different rates at which children are developing and adjust their practice appropriately’ (*Id.* 16). There is thus a positive duty on early years practitioners to consider each child’s educational development and well-being, plan activities accordingly, and reflect on the success or shortcomings in learning and try and improve on them where necessary.

Paragraph 1.15 also incorporates, as a characteristic of effective teaching and learning, the notion of ‘creating and thinking critically’ whereby ‘children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things’. I make two comments. First, there is an assumption that there is a logical distinction as well as a link between creative thinking on the one hand, and critical thinking on the other. I think this is right, and would concede, in any event, that they share family resemblances (PI §§66-67). Further, thinking about what we are doing when we are

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<sup>4</sup> They include communication and language, physical development, personal social and emotional development, literacy, mathematics, understanding the world and expressive arts and design (*Id.* 8-10). The individual needs and interests and developmental stages of each child are to be monitored (*Id.* 15) and commensurate early learning goals (*Id.* 11-15) and assessment strategies (*Id.* 18-20) are set to ensure readiness for entry into year 1 in primary school.

being critical (Burbules 1998: 486) involves appraising critically an aspect of existing knowledge but, more importantly, thinking creatively and imaginatively to engage with new information and make new connections. This may even involve revising some of our beliefs and values. For this reason, the explanation in paragraph 1.15 of the statutory framework rings true to the extent that young learners (viewed as emerging critical beings) bring their own ideas, and their own worlds, into the classroom (Peterson 2017: 386), create new ideas, and new visions of the world, and make significant connections between them. They develop strategies for doing things which can include thinking about how to approach their own ideas and make connections with new ones, how to make choices to get things done, and being generally creative in the sense of, say, storytelling and making objects in the classroom. My concern is that children need the right help to develop these strategies and to bring about good habits of mind. This, of course, raises the question of what pedagogical strategies and techniques should be used, and how can we ensure that they are internalised by young learners (Cosgrove 2011: 355).

Second, how is the notion of ‘creating and thinking critically’ to be deployed in or across subject domains (or meeting the early learning goals). If, for instance, they are conceived of as skills, are they context dependent or transversal. English educational policy, as we shall witness in the context of maintained primary and secondary schooling, rather assumes that skills like these are generic in nature and therefore transferable. For now, though, the question does have practical considerations in virtue of the assessment and reporting requirements in the final term of the year in which each child reaches the age of five (DfE 2021: 19-20). An EYFS profile report is constructed. It assesses, *inter alia*, the level of each child’s development against the early learning goals and is given to year 1 teachers and may be accompanied by ‘a

short commentary on each child’s skills and abilities in relation to the three key characteristics of effective teaching and learning’ (which include creating and thinking critically) (*Id.* 20).<sup>5</sup> On the face of it, then, it would appear that there exist general critical thinking skills but the policy documentation simply fails to offer any justification for this.

The Department for Education recently published the *Early Years Foundation Stage profile: 2023 Handbook* to ‘help teachers and early years practitioners make accurate judgements about each child’s level of development’ at the end of the EYFS (DfE 2022: 3). Unfortunately, it is no longer a requirement that each child’s EYFS profile include a ‘short commentary’ describing his or her ‘3 characteristics of effective learning’ (*Id.* 8 and 17).<sup>6</sup> No reason is given for this change in policy nor for omitting guidance that formerly helped practitioners assess those three characteristics (STA 2017: 18-26).<sup>7</sup>

Included in the earlier guidance was a section entitled ‘Creating and thinking critically’.<sup>8</sup> It links creativity with criticality. In a Deweyan light, learners are

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<sup>5</sup> The former EYFS framework required the report writer to include a short commentary on each child’s skills and abilities concerning the three key characteristics of effective learning (DfE 2017: 14). The framework was supplemented by EYFS profile exemplification materials which deal specifically with the 17 early year goals (STA 2014).

<sup>6</sup> *Contra.* DfE 2017: 14; and STA 2017: 6 and 22.

<sup>7</sup> The 2018 Handbook also included example lines of enquiry for each of the three characteristics of effective learning (STA 2017: 57-59).

<sup>8</sup> In terms of assessing each child’s performance in relation to the said characteristics of effective learning, practitioners were encouraged to use the following possible lines of enquiry; namely:

**Creating and thinking critically**

‘Having their own ideas’ covers the critical area of creativity—generating new ideas and approaches in all areas of endeavour. Being inventive allows children to find new problems as they seek challenge, and to explore ways of solving these.

‘Using what they already know to learn new things’ refers to the way children use narrative and scientific modes of thought to:

encouraged to seek out new problems and new ways of solving them. A pertinent distinction is also made between narrative and scientific modes of thought. In Section 5.3, we critique rationalistic conceptions of thinking and the scientific paradigm as well as emphasise the importance of other ways of thinking.

What is lacking, and this is not a criticism, is that young learners give the appearance that they don't yet have the maturity to master these ways of thinking. And this is precisely the point, young learners should learn critical thinking skills in context and within subject domains where relevancy is more easily established. They should use these skills (some of which will later traverse subject areas), question what is often taken for granted, be encouraged to develop an inclination or desire to look at things afresh and thus develop good habits of mind, or critical dispositions if you will. Add to the mix, ethical considerations and we are equipping young learners with a future critical voice. And in due course, maturity and wisdom should follow to complete this key learning process.

### 2.3.2 Primary education: thinking skills

Two initial questions now concern us: does the early years foundation stage groundwork on 'creating and thinking critically' transfer into primary education in

- 
- develop and link concepts
  - find meaning in sequence, cause and effect
  - find meaning in the intentions of others
- 'Choosing ways to do things and finding new ways' involves children in:
- approaching goal-directed activity in organised ways
  - making choices and decisions about how to approach tasks
  - planning and monitoring what to do and being able to change strategies (STA 2017: 25)

maintained schools?; and does the National Curriculum guarantee the progression in, and monitoring of, children's criticality and independent thought?

*The National Curriculum in England: Key stages 1 and 2 framework document*

requires all state-funded schools to offer a balanced and broadly-based curriculum which 'promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society' and 'prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life' (DfE 2013: 5). The aims of the National Curriculum are to give pupils an introduction to the essential knowledge they will need to be 'educated citizens' and to provide teachers with an outline of core knowledge from which to formulate lessons that 'promote the development of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills as part of the wider school curriculum' (*Id.* 6).

Although creativity as a general, practical skill, does underlie the core and non-core foundation subjects, its direct connection to thinking critically has been lost. But what then of criticality and independent thought? There is an important expectation that, as pupils progress through their respective subjects, they will develop the ability to think critically (or develop a critical understanding of, or be able to engage critically with, phenomena) as well as obtain a more thorough understanding of each academic discipline (*Id.* 176, 180, 188 and 196). Not surprisingly, the related concepts of reasoning and problem solving in mathematics and the importance of weighing evidence and argumentation in history are made explicit (*Id.* 99 and 188). There are, however, no direct references to independent thought.

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority published a handbook for primary teachers in England to help them implement the National Curriculum (QCA 1999).



Here the link between creativity and thinking critically is restored. Notably, one express aim of the National Curriculum concerns each school's curriculum providing opportunities for its pupils to learn and achieve. It includes the following pedagogical objective:

By providing rich and varied contexts for pupils to acquire, develop and apply a broad range of knowledge, understanding and skills, the curriculum should enable pupils to think creatively and critically, to solve problems and to make a difference for the better. It should give them the opportunity to become creative, innovative, enterprising and capable of leadership to equip them for their future lives as workers and citizens. (*Id.* 11)

There is a manifold of brief connections to criticality, creativity, imagination and independence across academic disciplines.<sup>9</sup> What is of importance is the appearance of the 'thinking skills' that underpin the six key skills (all of which we saw in Section 1.3). Now there is an admission as to their transversal nature:

Some skills are universal, for example the skills of communication, improving own learning and performance, and creative thinking. These skills are also embedded in the subjects of the National Curriculum and are essential to effective learning. (*Id.* 20)

Again problem solving is a 'key skill' embedded in the National Curriculum since it develops skills and strategies to help pupils deal with problems in real life (*Id.* 20-21).

Drafted in a Deweyan-like manner:

Problem solving includes the skills of identifying and understanding a problem, planning ways to solve a problem, monitoring progress in tackling a problem and

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<sup>9</sup> QCA 1999: 20-22, 27, 29, 39, 43, 53, 76-77, 96, 116, 118, 120, 122, 124, 126, 129, 132, 136 and 139.

reviewing solutions to problems. All subjects provide pupils with opportunities to respond to the challenge of problems and to plan, test, modify and review the progress needed to achieve particular outcomes. (*Id.* 21)

Evidently, then, criticality in primary education is firmly located in the field of generic and transferable skills. The explicit justification for this is, however, still lacking. No reasons are offered, to be precise, that challenge John McPeck's original claim that we cannot teach generalisable critical thinking skills that are divorced from a specific context (an identifiable activity or academic discipline) (McPeck 1981: 4-5, 7, 155 and 158-159). He adamantly denies that criticality can be universalised since 'thinking is always *about* something' (*Id.* 3). Yet, as we shall see in Section 5.2.1, there is a growing consensus for a mixed approach to teaching criticality that makes room for generalisable critical thinking abilities, propensities and character traits that can be applied across the curriculum.<sup>10</sup> But policymakers do not make this kind of analysis readily available to educators and certainly not in any great depth.

Nevertheless, general advice is offered to teachers in relation to five thinking skills comprising information-processing skills, reasoning skills, enquiry skills, creative thinking skills and evaluation skills and we are reminded that using them helps 'pupils focus on "knowing how" as well as "knowing what"—learning how to learn' (QCA 1999: 22). Doubtless, focusing on 'knowing how' to use thinking skills takes up Gilbert Ryle's point about the importance of grasping non-propositional or experiential knowledge (as distinct from propositional knowledge or 'knowing that').<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See Ennis 2015: 32-44; Ennis 2018; Jones 2015: 179; Paul 1990: 419-420; Siegel 1988: 34-35; and Siegel 1989: 130.

<sup>11</sup> See Ellerton 2015: 415-416; and McPeck 1981: 11.

Addressing our first question, whether the EYFS groundwork on ‘creating and thinking critically’ transfers into maintained primary schools, we can answer it in the affirmative. It does. However, the guidance given falls far short of helping educators actually teach critical thinking to pupils. Without suggesting that definitions and full explanations be given, it would be highly beneficial if descriptions and worked examples were given. Educators need to know how to apply the appropriate pedagogical strategies and how to monitor progress.

The second question, concerning the National Curriculum guaranteeing the progression in, and monitoring of, children’s criticality and independent thought, is a more difficult one to answer. The handbooks for each subject (QCA 1999: 42-133 and 136-149) and the attainment targets (*Id.* 153-190) though quite detailed do not address expressly how to teach critical thinking or how to monitor success. Now while I recognise the complexities inherent in the concept of criticality, I believe that teachers need to be able to tell pupils what is expected of them and why criticality is important for them. From a pedagogical perspective, this does not mean producing a ‘shopping list’ or a rigid set of instructions for teachers but rather an outline of strategies, suggested techniques and worked examples which themselves remain subject to review. Criticality includes independence, and learners need to be able to start evaluating their own progress and this includes reflecting on themselves as critical beings from an early stage in their schooling lives. Metacognition, as we shall see in Section 5.2.2, assumes a significant place in the teaching of criticality.<sup>12</sup>

Subject associations and educational providers do, however, offer bespoke materials to assist with the teaching of criticality in primary schools (and in other educational

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<sup>12</sup> See Ellerton 2015; Green 2015; and Lau 2015.

and vocational institutions). A prime example is the Society for the Advancement of Philosophical Enquiry and Reflection in Education, a national charity responsible for training teachers to teach philosophy for children ('P4C') in the United Kingdom, which has been working to improve children's creativity and critical thinking for over 25 years.

Publications, such as Mal Leicester and Denise Taylor's *Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum*, offer helpful illustrations to teachers (Leicester and Taylor 2010). The authors provide chapter by chapter explanations of critical thinking skills together with appropriate teaching resources. They are careful to acknowledge that while critical thinking skills 'cross the entire curriculum', they take different forms in different subject domains so that, for instance, in developing a 'questioning habit' children need to appreciate that what counts as a good question in one domain may well be different in others and they need to grasp these differences (*Id.* 2). This must be right since disciplines have their own epistemologies, their own criteria and methods for decision making.

Moreover, books can be used to allow pupils to explore new meanings by drawing on their own personal experience as Karin Murriss demonstrates with her use of David McKee's picture book *Not now, Bernard* with nine-year-old pupils who 'were making sense of the text philosophically by reading their world' (Murriss 2013: 95). She argues that books suitable for genuine dialogue, or a 'philosophical space' as Murriss calls it, are 'those that hold up a "mirror" for the adult and encourage a self-critical stance' (*Id.* 96).

One final observation. Economic considerations are not exempt from the ambit of the National Curriculum. It envisions, as we noted above, equipping pupils with the

knowledge, understanding, skills and opportunities ‘for their future lives as workers and citizens’ (QCA 1999: 11). Of course this must be right. However, in the context of higher education, the language of educational policy shifts specifically towards meeting employer demands. Satisfying the market economy, to be sure, means developing in students ‘soft skills’ including critical thinking (BIS 2016: 5 and 43).

### 2.3.3 Secondary education: the rhetoric of thinking skills continues

It should come as no surprise that *The National Curriculum in England: Key stages 3 and 4 framework document* is, in so far as the implementation of criticality is concerned, in substantially the same terms as that for key stages 1 and 2.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, the handbook for secondary teachers follows a similar pattern.<sup>14</sup> Thus, both primary and secondary teachers are to teach the same ‘thinking skills’—and, in particular, the same ‘creative thinking skills’.<sup>15</sup>

Other policy documents include the *Leading in Learning: developing thinking skills at Key Stage 3* handbook for school leaders. Designed to improve ‘pupils’ thinking skills in curriculum subjects’, the three-lesson cycles focus on teaching an agreed thinking skill across three subjects using a common strategy (DfES 2005a: 5 and 10-15). The handbook does provide some examples of how to teach thinking skills and with an emphasis on what, why and how questions.<sup>16</sup> Also it offers a concise history

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<sup>13</sup> DfE 2014: 15, 18, 42-43, 49, 69, 80-83, 88, 94 and 101.

<sup>14</sup> QCA 2004: 11, 21-23, 43, 47, 56, 67, 70, 112, 138, 143, 173, 182, 195, 201, 204-205 and 207.

<sup>15</sup> QCA 2004: 22-23.

<sup>16</sup> DfES 2005a: 16-20, 35-40, 43-46, 49-53, 56-61, 64-70, 73-79, 82-88, 90-96 and 99-104.

of the evolution of teaching thinking skills (*Id.* 121-126). The handbook is supported by a guide.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, the programme extends to key stage 4.<sup>18</sup>

Kwame Glevey's critique of the programme highlights the following difficulties: how do each of the three departments agree on a transferable skill?; how can the subtle differences in their respective approaches be taken into account when collaborating across subjects?; and how can a pupil's awareness of the chosen thinking skill be properly assessed? (Glevey 2008: 117-118). Given that good evidence for transfers of general thinking skills remains unsubstantiated, he suggests the need for further research to ground a suitable foundation for teaching such skills (*Id.* 122-123).

Nevertheless, as I argue in Section 5.2.1, cross-curricular teaching offers opportunities for developing a greater depth of criticality in our students. They are encouraged to reconcile competing criteria and methods from different disciplines and to respect the limitations of their respective epistemologies. This is especially the case where areas of inquiry are taken from the formal, natural and social sciences and linked with the arts and humanities and important connections are made.

Finally, *A framework of personal, learning and thinking skills* (which we visited in Section 1.3) ensures that all learners apply the generic skills from all six groups of skills 'in a wide range of learning contexts' (QCA 2011: 1). This applies equally in post-16 educational settings.

In the result, criticality is still presumed to reside in skills that are generic in nature and transferable across the curriculum without a satisfactory theoretical justification

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<sup>17</sup> DfES 2005b.

<sup>18</sup> DfES 2006a and DfES 2006b.

being provided. Though I acknowledge, for example, the historical synopsis of their evolution presented in the handbook that is not sufficient.<sup>19</sup> Also policymakers need to provide more guidance, akin to the handbook, on how to teach criticality within as well as across the disciplines. The handbook is certainly a step in the right direction. Strategies and progress monitoring, in my view, remain key.

All that we have surveyed so far depicts an educational policy that is wanting in clarity and coherence in the context of teaching criticality. At the very least, it stands in need of improvement on epistemological and pedagogical grounds. That said, it is only right to point out, again, that subject associations do seek to address the lacuna in educational policy concerning the teaching and application of criticality by offering training and support for teachers in their respective subjects. They include the Geographical Association, the Religious Education Council of England and Wales, the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education, and the Schools, Students and Teachers Network. We need policymakers to liaise with subject associations and incorporate into the National Curriculum the successful pedagogical strategies and techniques used by these associations to teach criticality.

#### 2.3.4 Higher education: soft skills

State sanctioned educational policy does not interfere directly with university syllabuses. However, professional bodies, medical, legal, accounting, engineering, scientific and others, do exert influence on curricula. Also there is official recognition that universities provide students with life-long skills—including ‘the ability to think

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<sup>19</sup> DfES 2005a: 121-126.

critically and to assess and present evidence’—that benefit the market economy (BIS 2016: 5). Moreover, there is an expectation that higher education will develop the ‘soft skills’ that employers want including a ‘capacity for critical thinking, analysis and teamwork’ (*Id.* 43).

Ashwin rightly complains that understanding educational purposes solely in economic terms, especially in the context of higher education, only perpetuates the pernicious myths of graduate premiums and generic skills (Ashwin 2020: 16-23). Being dominated by economic arguments, we eventually lose sight of what the primary educational purpose is. We fail to appreciate the intrinsic worth of the educational process itself and fail to value sufficiently the knowledge and understanding that students gain from studying (*Id.* 23-24). He writes:

the purposes of undergraduate higher education should be understood as being to help students to gain an understanding of knowledge that can change their sense of who they are, what the world is and what they can do in the world. (*Id.* 26)

The transition of teaching criticality from the early years foundation stage to higher education would be a rather tainted process, in my view, if it were underwritten primarily by economic and commercial considerations, if it were skewered by the rival political aim of employability. Fortunately, it is not. Teaching criticality in the academy extends to the development of each student’s autonomy and critical citizenship (Davies and Barnett 2015: 9). But a tension nevertheless arises. Market forces serve to hinder the teaching of criticality in virtue of educators having to deal with the marketisation of their working environment, performance indicators and accountability assessments as well as the consumerisation of students as future ‘human capital’ (Williamson 2019: 2802-2804).



The UK Quality Code for Higher Education, overseen by the Quality Assurance Agency, provides a general framework within which the academy operates. The *Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies* does not expressly refer to critical thinking *per se*, but the respective qualification descriptors for foundation degrees, bachelor's degrees with masters and Master's degrees do require students to have demonstrated an ability to 'evaluate critically the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems in the field of study'; 'critically evaluate arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts and data (that may be incomplete), to make judgements, and to frame appropriate questions to achieve a solution—or a range of solutions—to a problem'; and 'evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline' (QAA 2014: 23, 26 and 28).

Doctoral students, moreover, are expected to possess the 'qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent environments' (*Id.* 30). Also the qualification descriptors envisage that students have the 'ability to make judgments through critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas' (*Id.* 42).

Nevertheless, as Martin Davies and Ronald Barnett make plain, the challenge remains to try and find a 'theoretical and conceptual grounding' for criticality in higher education (Davies and Barnett 2015: 5). And as I have argued, an educational policy advocating the promotion of students' 'soft skills' solely to satisfy employers' demands is nothing short of exploitation. It leaves little or no room for the critical

being who wants to live an examined life—fulfilling Socrates’ edict<sup>20</sup>—and be a meaningful participant in society. It certainly does not foster the conditions for this to take place.

Our critical lens examines phenomena, Max Horkheimer reminds us, in the ‘context of human social life’ where we foreground ‘the entire material and intellectual culture of humanity’ (Horkheimer 1993: 1). Our institutions of higher education should engage in thinking critically, resist economic and political pressures to maintain the established order and take seriously their potential to be radical agents for change (McArthur 2020: 32; and Wyatt 1990: 70). Policymakers should also embrace Horkheimer’s original vision for the Institute for Social Research:

May the guiding impulse in this Institute be the indomitable will unswervingly to serve the truth! (Horkheimer 1993: 14)

We have different positions on what we mean by truth and appreciate there are ‘no generally valid truths that are woven into broad and variegated investigations’ (*Id.* 8). Truth is indeed ‘complicated, nuanced and elusive’ (McArthur 2019: 149) but our institutional service to it remains ‘passionately and relentlessly, a service of clarification’ (Wyatt 1990: 72).

## 2.4 Criticality and international models

Since English educational policy regarding the teaching of criticality does not speak sufficiently to coherence, we now turn to consider, briefly, what ideas the

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<sup>20</sup> In Plato’s *Apology*, 38a, Socrates was insistent that ‘the unexamined life is not worth living’ (Plato 1997: 33).

international models have to offer us. In particular, what information may our policymakers glean from their experiences or, better still, what proposals might they consider taking up. We navigate the European Union, UNESCO, the United States and Australia. In charting these waters, I suggest, first, that English policymakers should follow their international counterparts and recognise the need to provide educators with pedagogical strategies and methods for teaching criticality. And second, I recommend that given the lack of clarity and coherence surrounding criticality, national and international educational stakeholders should continue to adopt collaborative research into its nature, purpose and implementation. Also I argue that there still remains a focus at the policy level on producing ‘soft skills’ to meet the demands of employers without a necessary understanding of the wider implications that criticality holds for critical beings who choose to live an examined life and participate meaningfully in society. A workable compromise between these objectives needs to be found.

#### 2.4.1 The European Union

The European Commission’s New Skills Agenda for Europe views the right skills as a ‘pathway to employability and prosperity’ equipping Europeans for ‘good-quality jobs’ and allowing them to ‘fulfil their potential as confident, active citizens’ (EC 2016: 2). Included in the transversal skills and key competences are critical thinking and problem solving or learning to learn (*Id.* 5). Higher education and teacher training are encouraged to aid in the development of their students’ skills and attitudes for life and future work (*Id.* 12 and 15-16).

The Commission's proposal for a Council Recommendation on Key Competences for LifeLong Learning recognises the significance of thinking and acting critically (EC 2018: 35, 42-43, 52 and 56-57) and are taken up by the European Council in its Recommendation (EU 2018: recitals 7 and 17 and the Annex). The European Reference Framework, which acts as a reference tool for policymakers, educators, employers, public services and learners, sets out key competences in (1) literacy, (2) languages, (3) mathematics and science, technology and engineering, (4) digital technology, (5) personal, social and developing one's own learning, (6) citizenship, (7) entrepreneurship and (8) cultural awareness and expression (*Id.* C189/7-C189/12).

I make three observations. First, the Council, as is the case in England, stresses the value of skills and dispositions. Competences are 'defined as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes' where:

knowledge is composed of the facts and figures, concepts, ideas and theories which are already established and support the understanding of a certain area or subject;

skills are defined as the ability and capacity to carry out processes and use the existing knowledge to achieve results;

attitudes describe the disposition and mind-sets to act or react to ideas, persons or situations. (*Id.* C189/7)

Second, skills including critical thinking, problem solving, analysis and creativity are 'embedded through out the key competences' (*Ibid.*). This underscores the importance of criticality in all aspects of learning.

Third, the Council has provided a pedagogical impetus for showing educators how to teach criticality (along with the other skills and competences):

Guidance could be provided for educational staff, access to centres of expertise, appropriate tools and materials can enhance the quality of teaching and learning methods and practice. (*Id.* C189/13)

#### 2.4.2 UNESCO

With reference to the variety of work undertaken by UNESCO on the importance of education, a good entry point is the Conference Communiqué for the 2009 World Conference on Higher Education which stresses that higher education institutions ‘should increase their interdisciplinary focus and promote critical thinking and active citizenship’ (UNESCO 2010: 48). Tertiary educators should cultivate ‘in students critical and independent thought and the capacity of learning throughout life’ and be supported with appropriate training (*Id.* 50). In primary and secondary education, critical thinking, creativity and problem solving remain skills and competences aimed at satisfying employer demands (UNESCO 2016: 16 and 44).

What is comforting, though, at least in the context of teacher training in Africa, is a move away from the banking model of education to a Freirean transformative style of teaching in which learners are ‘critical and independent thinkers’:

This approach is learner-centered and is driven by active learning and combines critical thinking, reflection, self-awareness, ethics and meaningful action. Rather than the filling of an empty pot, in this approach, teaching is seen as enabling flowers to grow. (UNESCO-IICBA 2018: 3-4)

Finally, Esther Care and Rebekah Luo’s report commissioned for UNESCO’s Global Education Monitoring Report 2016 provides a detailed survey of transversal competencies across the education sector in the Asia-Pacific region including those

that fall within the scope of ‘critical and innovative thinking’ (Care and Luo 2016). It identifies a lack of knowledge about what they are and how they may be taught and monitored (*Id.* v). The findings of the report confirm that collaborative work needs to be done to discern the nature of these skills and competencies so that they can be properly understood and implemented consistently and that teachers need to be given pedagogical strategies in order to teach and assess them (*Id.* 42-44). It recommends that over-arching reform information teams and research institutions undertake this research and filter the results into initial teacher and in-school training together with the creation of teaching materials such as activity, task and assessment templates (*Id.* 45-47).

### 2.4.3 The United States

In the United States, the Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning is breaking ground in advancing transversal skills and dispositions designed to prepare students for later life in employment and citizenship (P21 2019b: 2). Learning and innovations skills—the 4C’s (critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity)—lie at the heart of its project (P21 2017a: 4-9; and P21 2019a: 4-5).

The Partnership’s *Early Childhood Framework* is designed to encourage educators, service providers, administrators and policymakers to ‘develop strategies for full integration of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills into their learning programs’ for all children between the ages of 18 months and 6 years (P21 2017a: 2). The framework is supported by a guide but its direction does not extend specifically to criticality (P21 2017b: 2 and 6).

In the formal schooling context, the *Framework for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Definitions* operates on the basis that the 4C’s together with life and career skills and information,

media and technology skills buttress the teaching and learning process. The language pertaining to criticality has clearly been influenced by critical thinking scholarship and the informal logic movement (Cf. Ennis 2011a: 7-8). Critical thinking, in particular, focuses on each student's capacity to reason effectively which includes using inductive and deductive reasoning; making judgements and decisions; and analysing and evaluating evidence, arguments, claims and beliefs (P21 2019a: 4).

#### 2.4.4 Australia

Lastly, the Australian experience is similarly biased as far as satisfying the demands of employers is concerned. 'In educational settings,' so concludes the National Centre for Vocational Education Research in its report to the Australian National Training Authority, 'the focus is on helping students to become "work ready" in terms of their generic skills development' (NCVER 2003: 11). The Australian Curriculum does, however, incorporate the connected concepts of critical and creative thinking in terms that promote student autonomy and intellectual and personal development. In *Critical and Creative Thinking*, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority views critical thinking as lying:

at the core of most intellectual activity that involves students learning to recognise or develop an argument, use evidence in support of that argument, draw reasoned conclusions, and use information to solve problems. Examples of critical thinking skills are interpreting, analysing, evaluating, explaining, sequencing, reasoning, comparing, questioning, inferring, hypothesising, appraising, testing and generalising. (ACARA 2019: 1)

While defining criticality in terms of skills, the Authority does speak to dispositions such as inquisitiveness, open mindedness and a readiness to try new ways of approaching tasks and consider alternatives all of which are enhanced by critical and creative thinking (*Ibid.*).

## 2.5 Summary and conclusion

The policy analysis of criticality in England and abroad shows that there is indeed consistency regarding its significance in educational settings and in the workplace. Yet economic considerations and market forces plainly influence educational policy (Cf. Ashwin 2020: 16-23; and Davies and Barnett 2015: 1-2 and 4) and they need to be balanced with the equally important pedagogical aims of developing students' autonomy and intellectual, moral and social development. Our major inquiry in this chapter was to consider whether criticality is a clear and coherent concept in educational policy. I argued that it lacks clarity and coherence. Attempts to address this are taken up in the remaining chapters.

In Section 2.3, we explored English educational policy as it relates to criticality. I argued, first, that criticality is a major educational aim which, as we noted in Section 1.3, is underscored by English, UK and international policy. Even though criticality is wider than critical thinking, much of the policy language is confined to the use of skills or abilities. This is the case in maintained schools and in the academy.

Second, I argued that the policy governing the teaching of criticality in England does not speak to coherence. The language of skills, and of the learning goals to which they are to be put, is similar in maintained primary and secondary schools. However,



absent from the educational continuum—that is, from the early years foundation stage to vocational and higher education—is a broader spanning epistemological and pedagogical system for mapping out the development of criticality, or, adopting the language of the policymakers, for advancing critical thinking and independent thought. My own view is that if we are able to bring clarity and coherence to the concept of criticality this will strengthen those foundations. This will help educators better understand why they are teaching criticality, know what strategies and techniques to employ, be able to inform students as to what is expected of them, and be able to measure progress. This will also help students better appreciate the value of criticality, internalise what they learn, and grow as critical beings.

Third, I argued that educational policy in England tacitly assumes the existence of critical thinking skills and abilities that are generic in nature and transferable across different domains. I argued this should be challenged. It is not as if there is a dearth of educational philosophy literature explicating the nitty-gritty of abilities, propensities and character traits, the general nature or wider function of criticality, and how it might be taught. Chapters 4 and 5 speak to this. Also I advocated the merits of teaching across the curricula—from the formal, natural and social sciences to the arts and humanities—to develop a depth of criticality in our students.

Finally, I argued that there is an understandable, though heavy, policy reliance on economic arguments and an emphasis on providing ‘soft skills’ for future employers. I raised the concern that the benefits and rewards that the teaching of criticality can bring to individual students are not measurable solely in fiscal or employability terms. Criticality is, to be sure, concerned with each person’s unique set of emotions, dreams, ambitions and lived experiences as well as his or her membership and participation in

human social life. All of these factors affect how the critical being thinks and acts in the world. The politics of market forces should not, in other words, be the dominant driving force in education.

In Section 2.4, we surveyed international models of criticality. We found that recognition exists for providing educators with pedagogical strategies and methods designed specifically for teaching criticality. We suggested English policymakers follow this lead and continue, if not already, to compile, update and distribute appropriate teaching resources. Furthermore, following the suggestion in the Care and Luo report (Care and Luo 2016) that collaborative work be undertaken to discern the nature of transversal competencies, including those pertaining to criticality, we encouraged further collaborative theoretical and empirical research into the nature, purpose and teaching of criticality.

Finally, I reiterate my earlier argument that there is a global focus on producing ‘soft skills’ to meet employer demands. This is evident in the educational policy language used in Europe, the United Nations, the United States and Australia as well as in England. Really there is so much more to grasping the nettle of criticality than worrying about whether students are ‘work ready’ or not! Though I agree with the overwhelming international consensus that an education should prepare students for life and future work, I fear those ideals are at high risk of being conflated.

This chapter contributes to our knowledge by providing a detailed review of national and international policy that underlines the educational concept of criticality. We have raised several concerns. In Section 8.2 we compliment this review by listing our key findings and offering two recommendations to policymakers.

Our dialogue on criticality now shifts in the intervening chapters to educational theory and practice. Chapter 3 starts our analysis of different movements, philosophies, that inform the educational concept of criticality. They are critical theory, critical pedagogy, critical thinking and informal logic. At times we may trespass between critical theory and critical pedagogy but shall be respectful of their differences. The developing literature review serves to broaden our knowledge base and sharpen the educational concept at issue. Chapters 6 and 7 will incorporate ideas from Freire and Wittgenstein. Chapter 8 will also signpost opportunities for further empirical and theoretical research.

## Chapter 3 Criticality and criticality scholarship

A philosophy of praxis cannot but present itself at the outset in a polemical and critical guise, as superseding the existing mode of thinking and existing concrete thought (the existing cultural world). First of all, therefore, it must be a criticism of ‘common sense’, basing itself initially, however, on common sense in order to demonstrate that ‘everyone’ is a philosopher and that it is not a question of introducing from scratch a scientific form of thought into everyone’s individual life, but of renovating and making ‘critical’ an already existing activity.

(Gramsci 1971: 330-331)

### 3.1 Chapter overview

Our dialogue concerning the idea of criticality now moves from policy to theoretical and practical considerations. We build up an extensive literature review in this and the next two chapters by presenting interwoven phases of research in which we amalgamate different ways of approaching criticality from the standpoints of critical theory, critical pedagogy, critical thinking and informal logic. We add to the philosophy of education scholarly literature by extending our knowledge and understanding of the educational concept. Our contribution to knowledge, in this chapter, comprises theoretical inquiries. We start by my coining ‘criticality scholarship’ as a new, open and dynamic philosophical space in which to examine what we mean by criticality and how we use it. We then draw on ideas from the four

traditions and seek to ground the notion of criticality in the field of criticality scholarship.

We are all intellectuals, Antonio Gramsci professes in the opening passage, but not all of us have ‘the function of intellectuals’ in society (Gramsci 1971: 9). As critical beings, in other words, we all perform intellectual activities—as a philosopher, an artist, a person of taste—in all our human endeavours and we can ‘bring into being new modes of thought’ that modify or revise our conceptions of the world (*Ibid.*). All that separates so-called intellectuals from other members of society is the former’s professional status. It follows, therefore, that a philosophy of praxis must, secondly, ‘be a criticism of the philosophy of the intellectuals’ (*Id.* 331).

Gramsci’s understanding of the human condition in so far as it denies that intellectual participation can be excluded from any human activity (*Id.* 9) offers a broad scope for the operation of criticality since all our activities can be critiqued and renovated. Our unique ways of knowing and our diverse methods for conducting inquiries, to be sure, allow us to view the world differently and, at least potentially, find ways of changing it for the better.

Since our driving focus is to consider the ways in which we conceptualise and use the notion of criticality, I propose the following thought experiment:

Imagine you are all alone out in the wilderness. The campsite fire is lit, tenaciously crackling and burning away. The evening sky, complete with its full accompaniment of stars and hidden constellations, has caught and transfixed your gaze. The narcosis suspends you. Suddenly, and without warning, a daemon appears before you. It invites you to witness the lived experiences of both oppressed and privileged people from former times. You are intoxicated by the unfolding of this existential event. And yet,

you wait with bated breath for the daemon to ‘unconceal’ its truths and for the apparitions to appear and recount their stories. You are warned that some will be painful. You hear from an Australian Aborigine whose children were killed by white invaders and who, herself, was violated and left abandoned on the bloody frontier. A Ronin tells you of his aimless wanderings and long bouts of drunkenness following his loss of honour and status as a Samurai. The passing of his master was his only crime. A displaced African slave recalls his woes of working in coffee plantations in a foreign land. The shame, the depravity, the inhumanity. A young woman, wrongly accused of being a witch, recalls her wretched trial by ordeal. God had failed to provide her with a miracle despite her youth and her innocence. Then there are the lucky ones. A Buddhist monk who finds the path to enlightenment. An entrepreneur who reaps his profits and exploits his societal gains. A Queen whose husband procures a long, stable and prosperous reign. And finally, an explorer who discovers new lands and acquires new dominions. You find the asymmetry and inequality overwhelming, sickening. But then you are presented with the witches’ brew. The daemon flicks a coin high up into the air and demands you call ‘heads’ or ‘tails’! He tells you that if you call it correctly, you will have a choice. You can be freed from this frenzied state and remain completely unperturbed by the daemon’s rude awakenings. Alternatively, you can have the veil of maya lifted but return to your meagre existence now acutely aware of the contradictions inherent in the world. Should, however, you fail to win the toss, then your lot will be a willing acceptance of living out any one of the lived experiences foretold by the apparitions selected randomly by the daemon. So, would you call ‘heads’ or ‘tails’? And, if you are lucky enough to call the toss of the coin correctly, would you have the courage to ask for the veil of maya to be lifted? This thought experiment invites us to consider criticality from the perspective of criticality scholarship. What critical action, to be precise, would we, could we, take in these circumstances? Circumstances, I might add, that lie at the intersections of privilege,

status, wealth, power, self-respect, discrimination, oppression, exploitation, poverty, deprivation and human suffering.

Thus, one of our purposes in this chapter is, as I have mentioned, to lay the groundwork for situating criticality in the domain of criticality scholarship. This exercise is vital given the criss-crossing and overlapping of related expressions, conceptions and philosophical traditions such as critical thinking, reflective thinking, creative thinking, critical awareness, critical consciousness, critical theory, critical pedagogy, critical thinking scholarship and the informal logic movement all of which only serve to make the concept of criticality difficult to discern and render workable if it is left unlocated and unrelated. That is not to say, however, that criticality is not a fluid concept or that criticality scholarship is not a dynamic and adaptable enterprise. On the contrary, criticality viewed from the perspective of criticality scholarship allows for not only critique and self-reflection (in the classical sense) but, more importantly, the possibility of bringing about social and political change.

Also we are keen to understand how theorists and practitioners conceptualise and use the educational concept of criticality. This chapter, then, together with the chapters that follow, is designed to bring criticality a degree of clarity and coherence. Our journey continues, in Section 3.3, with an introduction to the notion of criticality as it is perceived in the philosophy of education literature. In Section 3.4, we consider how criticality and criticality scholarship are informed by critical theory, critical pedagogy, critical thinking scholarship and the informal logic movement. What we discover is that criticality is an evolving and mutable concept and that it can sit comfortably in our proposed new field of criticality scholarship. We find, further, that criticality scholarship transcends the limits of its would-be forebears by pushing criticality outwardly into the world in the form of critical or transformative action.

### 3.2 Grounding criticality in the field of criticality scholarship

Our style is eclectic. We do not impose any rigid dividing lines between philosophies and thinkers. That is why we formally acknowledge the tension inherent in aligning the different traditions of the Frankfurt School of critical social theory, critical pedagogy, critical thinking and informal logic and between thinkers as diverse as Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer and Ludwig Wittgenstein. There will be slippage between these traditions and thinkers, but our intention remains to present each of them without changing the literature. Slippage implies connectivity. This is especially true in the context of critical theory and critical pedagogy in which we coalesce philosophical and socio-political considerations with the pedagogic.

The epistemological benefits we gain from taking this approach, we contend, outweigh any objections posed by the criss-crossing of traditional intellectual boundaries. In criticality scholarship, we recognise as equal all our interpretations, forms of knowledge and canons of validity.

Our present endeavour thus consists in traversing the traditional confines of critical theory, critical pedagogy, critical thinking and the informal logic movement and in exposing the fluidity and promise of criticality. In much the same way that the term ‘criticality’ is not of popular use in educational policy, its common features, at least in the philosophy of education literature, tend to be subsumed within criticalness, critical thinking, critical thought, reflective thinking and creative thinking—all of which share similarities and relationships and exhibit ‘family resemblances’ in a Wittgensteinian sense (PI §§66-67). Nevertheless, these expressions embody the underlying characteristics of criticality. And as this chapter unfolds, it will become apparent that



criticality once situated in our new domain of criticality scholarship breaks new ground in virtue of its potential to forge, to transform, the world.

This chapter is comprised of five principal arguments or motifs. First, in Section 3.4, I argue that we can ground the idea of criticality in the field of criticality scholarship. Second, in Sections 3.3 and 3.4, I argue that theory informs practice and reflection on practice informs theory and that reflecting on these relations empowers criticality to transcend from mere critique and self-reflection into the realm of action. Third, in Section 3.4, I argue that the concept of criticality and the genre of criticality scholarship both share a deep respect for the social justice themes of human emancipation and freedom from inequalities and injustices. Fourth, in Section 3.4, I argue that a critical education, advanced within this philosophical framework, can further the societal purpose of improving justice for everyone by transforming emancipatory spirit into transformative action. Finally, I argue, in Sections 3.3 and 3.4, that criticality offers the critical being the opportunity to live an examined life, to be a meaningful participant in society and to act in the world as a socially transforming agent.

### 3.3 The mutability of criticality

In addition to the five motifs, I have five subsidiary arguments in Section 3.3. First, I argue, as indicated above, that criticality is a Wittgensteinian ‘family resemblance’ concept. It shares features in common with reflective thinking, independent thought, critical awareness and related educational terms. Similarities and dissimilarities will manifest themselves. And as I mention later in Section 4.2, we will continue to produce different conceptions of criticality all of which will, to some extent, shed light

on the concept of criticality. Yet it is important to make plain that we are not aiming for what Wittgenstein would call crystalline purity; nor are we in the business of making fine distinctions or providing exact definitions and exhaustive explanations (PI §§107-109; and II: xi, 171). On the contrary, we rest content with workable conceptions, meaningful descriptions and insightful illustrations since they are what give fluidity and plasticity to the concept of criticality.

The sentiment of this approach is echoed in Jan McArthur's analysis of the value of clarity in educational research (McArthur 2012). She advocates that 'clarity should be *wicked*' and strives for expansiveness, vibrancy and uncertainty (*Id.* 420). McArthur explains how Theodor Adorno's notions of non-identity and negative dialectics mean we should overcome our impulses to 'tie objects into tidy definitions and identities', accept that dialectics move towards negation rather than synthesis, and take stock of different ideas and conceptions and not silence them (*Id.* 421-423 and 428). Whether or not Adorno's thinking necessarily dispels the guarantee of a 'happy ending' in our intellectual endeavours (*Id.* 422-423 and 429), I agree that educational research is a 'site of struggle' and should advance the 'critical goals of furthering social justice within and through education' (*Id.* 419; and see 420 and 428-429).

Second, I argue that criticality is not a mature concept, but an emerging one.

Third, I argue that, as a developing concept, criticality's boundaries, its paradigm markers, are not fixed, but evolving.

Fourth, I argue that criticality's dynamism includes a disposition for action as well as purposeful thought. This argument's theme continues in Section 4.2 where we note how some educational theorists approach the concept of criticality from positions that effectively limit a critical being's potential to take transformative action. Their focus

is invariably on critique and reflection. But, as Martin Davies and Ronald Barnett rightly point out, definitions of criticality are often remiss by not including in their ‘scope any sense of actual or potential *action*’ (Davies and Barnett 2015: 14). Barnett’s earlier pronouncement on critical action highlights its ‘emancipatory potential and promise’ (Barnett 1997: 82; and see 77-89). ‘Critical action,’ he contends, ‘demands that persons fully inhabit their actions; that they are brave enough to live out their understandings in the world’ (*Id.* 107).

And finally, I argue that epistemological and metacognitive considerations are integral to our understanding of criticality. Section 5.2.2 speaks to the importance of metacognition in teaching criticality.

### 3.3.1 What is criticality?

In Section 2.2, I argued that educational policymakers fail to ascribe clarity and coherence to the nature and realisation of criticality. In her comprehensive review of the scholarly literature of critical thinking, Jenny Moon finds that the ‘critical’ component in critical thinking is problematic since it ‘suggests that critical thinking is more than simply the process of thinking’ and is often associated ‘with the everyday sense of making a negative comment about something’ (Moon 2005: 5). I would prefer not to disassociate thinking critically from thinking. Moreover, the process of thinking will occasion the delivery of critiques about phenomena (which may sometimes be negatively perceived) but this is only a part of what the critical thinker does. Her toolbox, her armoury, furnishes her with the capacity to present new ways of addressing problems, to listen to what others have to say, to procure new meanings

and horizons, and move beyond critique and self-reflection towards transformative action.

There remains a perception that criticality is vague, ambiguous and lacking a consensus among definitions (Raiskums 2008: 4, 90, 97 and 130-131). And despite its being part of the normative landscape of education, criticality is found to be ‘lacking its own conceptual articulation’ (Fisherman 2017: 3). Daniel Fisherman believes this is explicable due to the word ‘critical’ having divergent meanings in educational and academic contexts, being intermingled with educational concepts such as critical thinking, critical pedagogy and critical being, and the fact that its connection with everyday usage as an adjective may have been lost (*Id.* 3-4). The point to keep in mind is, of course, that criticality is a family resemblance concept and it will share similarities and dissimilarities with a host of related expressions. Moreover, there will be variations in their meanings. We need to look, Wittgenstein reminds us, at the contexts in which they are actually used, at the language-games which are their original homes (BB 56; and PI §116).

Moon, also, finds a ‘lack of one clear definition of critical thinking reflected in the literature’ (Moon 2005: 5). This is hardly surprising given the multiplicity of ways in which we think. And we should not forget that there may well be occasions when what we think we think may differ from what we actually think (Williams, B 2008: 7 and 91).

This brings us to my argument that criticality is not a mature concept but an emerging one. This is a finding to which Bernadine Raiskums duly attests in her data analysis (Raiskums 2008: 95). She argues, in the adult education literature, that the concept of criticality that emerges:

is understood to be a disposition for purposeful thinking and acting guided by criteria that are considered to be contextually appropriate and that are expected to result in positive outcomes. (*Id.* 99)

I agree that the idea of criticality is an evolving one and that its fluidity includes a disposition for action as well as purposeful thought. Given this concept is a maturing, developing one, it follows, in my view, that its conceptual markers are similarly flexible and growing. Indeed, this view of criticality lends itself to being located in the new and dynamic philosophical framework of criticality scholarship which we will explore in Section 3.4.

Jacqueline Reid adopts the following definition of criticality, taken from Stewart and Hopping (2012):

the motivation to persuade, engage, and act on the world through the operation of critical understanding of a body of relevant knowledge, mediated by assimilated experience of how the social and physical environment is structured, and combined with the willingness to question and problematize shared perceptions of relevance and experience. (Reid 2012: 347)

The intricacies of criticality and the tensions surrounding the nature of thinking will be dealt with in detail in Chapters 4 and 5 but, for the moment, we underline the advancement of criticality in so far as it arms critical beings with the tools necessary to engage in emancipatory or transformative action. Fisherman, in a similar fashion, settles for a conception that equates criticality with a disposition to question assertions since this is essential to all good thinking whether it takes place in, for instance, scientific research, workplace decision making or the navigation of everyday life (Fisherman 2017: 1 and 4).

More importantly, from Fisherman’s analysis of the scholarly literature (and of the ‘critical’ family of concepts, in particular), there emerges ‘a common emphasis on the need to interrogate’ and, importantly, ‘this questioning, this fundamental subjecting to enquiry, lies at the core of our intuitive understanding of critical activity’ (*Id.* 29). And, as Fisherman puts it, the ‘various concepts of the “critical family” might specify different epistemic criteria for evaluation but the act of evaluation itself entails a preliminary interrogative act’ (*Ibid.*). Of course, the question then becomes how far do we go in challenging our epistemic criteria? And now we start engaging in, quite properly, a ‘critique of critical thinking from within’ (*Id.* 35)—though I share Wittgenstein’s acknowledgement that even here there are ‘hinges’ that serve as epistemic limits, bedrock-style beliefs that stand fast for us and are difficult to nudge (OC §§341 and 655).

### 3.3.2 Critical being and transformative action

Moving from the act of thinking back to the critical being herself, Fisherman states:

I employ ‘criticality’ to reference the critical character of an individual—that is, an individual’s disposition to engage critical modes of being (i.e. thinking, understanding, and acting). (Fisherman 2017: 36)

This is compatible with the approach taken by Davies and Barnett who rightly emphasise the importance of action in criticality and confirm that ‘criticality comprises—and is composed of—three things: *thinking*, *being*, and *acting*’ (Davies and Barnett 2015: 11 and 15). Such an appreciation of criticality demonstrates, as we witnessed in Section 2.3, the futility of educational policy and its rhetoric of generic and transferable thinking skills that are deployed without a necessary consideration of

context. Also it shows just how much further the concept of criticality actually extends.

Critical action is of paramount importance. Let us take one illustration. Consider Stuart Franklin's photograph of the lone student perilously placing himself in front of the line of tanks in Tiananmen Square, Beijing during the June Fourth Incident (see Barnett 1997: i). Here, Barnett contends, the student has undergone a process of self-reflection, entered a state of critical being and demonstrated great courage and genuine authenticity. He has taken this critical action, to be sure, as a fully-fledged critical person (*Id.* 1).

Barnett, in *Higher Education: A Critical Business*, views criticality as a necessary means to fostering independent thought and action. His thesis is that the concept of critical thinking should be replaced with that of critical being (Barnett 1997: 7-8). And in devising a university curriculum for critical being, he argues that criticality can be assessed through two axes: first, on the vertical axis, its levels of criticality (progressing from critical skills, reflexivity, and refashioning of traditions through to transformatory critique); and, second, on the horizontal axis, its scope, consisting of three domains of critical thinking (knowledge, the self and the world); as well as through forms of criticality (critical reason, critical self-reflection and critical action).<sup>1</sup> Accepting that criticality needs to have an object, Barnett suggests, in respect of his three domains, that we can be critical of, first, systemic knowledge by challenging propositions, ideas and theories; second, of the self through self-reflection; and third, of the world by taking critical action (*Id.* 65).

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<sup>1</sup> Barnett 1997: 7-8 and 102-103; and see 42-43, 65-66, 69-75, 90-91 and 94-99. See also Barnett 2015.

Criticality scholarship is concerned with criticality in a wide sense. I argue that it empowers the critical being to make the transition from critique (consistent with a disposition to engage in the iterative questioning of assertions, as Fisherman would have it) to critical or transformative action (following Barnett and Davies). Just as theory informs practice and reflection on practice informs theory, criticality should extend beyond critique and self-reflection and involve the critical being taking a stand and changing the world where and when it is appropriate and possible to do so. Perceiving the internal and necessary relations between theory and practice, and knowledge and action are, in other words, fundamental to our understanding of criticality.

In the context of criticality, challenging the established order and bringing about emancipatory change, and the importance of connecting theory and practice are, of course, key features of Adorno's philosophy. He writes:

Critical thought alone, not thought's complacent agreement with itself, may bring about change. (Adorno 2005: 122)

In his essay entitled 'Marginalia to Theory and Praxis', he says that 'Thinking is a doing,' and 'theory a form of praxis' (*Id.* 261). Theory, practice and reflection are interlinked. Praxis, Adorno says, must not serve our social ends without reflection and if it is not informed by theory it remains conformist and accepting of the status quo (*Id.* 268-269). Neither praxis nor theory proceeds independently of one another (*Id.* 276). 'They stand in a polar relationship' but it is one of 'qualitative reversal', not transition or subordination (*Id.* 277). This is precisely why he insists:

A consciousness of theory and praxis must be produced that neither divides the two such that theory becomes powerless and praxis becomes arbitrary, nor refracts theory



through the archbourgeois primacy of practical reason proclaimed by Kant and Fichte.  
(*Id.* 261)

This terse introduction to criticality makes it apparent that the notion is open to a variety of interpretations depending on which philosophical tradition we belong to. What is significant is that criticality is an emerging concept and its boundaries or paradigm markers are not fixed. It is, after all, a family resemblance concept. Also given the importance of critical thinking and independent thought as educational goals, criticality will continue to be the subject of theoretical and empirical research for years to come.

### 3.3.3 Bloom's taxonomy

Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives appears throughout the research literature. In so far as criticality is concerned, it involves the cognitive senses at the higher levels of the taxonomy.<sup>2</sup> Criticality, to be precise, functions in the categories of analysis, synthesis and evaluation (Bloom *et al.* 1956: 39, 41-42, 144-200 and 205-207). In the revised cognitive domain taxonomy, critical thinking, like problem solving, is not designated in a single category since it calls for cognitive processes that cut across several categories on the process dimension (Anderson and Krathwohl 2001: 269-270). This must be right though I agree with Richard Paul that Bloom's categories are not hierarchical, unidirectional or independent but are interconnected and are all intricately involved in the process of rational learning (the manner in which we arrive at beliefs we judge to be credible) (Paul 1990: 423-428).

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Heiman 2014: 114; Lively 2015: 62-63; Raiskums 2008: 109; and *Cf.* Zapalska *et al.* 2018: 293-294.

Also Bloom's cognitive taxonomy should be read in conjunction with the affective domain taxonomy (Krathwohl *et al*, 1964) since our emotional states plainly influence our cognitive functions (Moon 2005: 12 and 33). Any critique of the ideal of the critical thinker, moreover, should encompass both these cognitive and affective aspects (*Cf.* McPeck 1981: 17). Still this is only part of the story about criticality and, again, I am mindful of Paul's criticism that the cognitive and affective domain taxonomies cannot be considered to be neutral in any material sense (Paul 1990: 424-425 and 428).

#### 3.3.4 Epistemic responsibility

James Heiman argues that focusing only on the higher-level cognitive goals in Bloom's taxonomy 'severely limits the full potential of a "transformative goal," which may include new attitudes and schemas for seeing the world and communicating with it' (Heiman 2014: 114-115). Besides the cognitive-based approach to critical thinking relying on external forces and facts relating to problems and their resolutions, we also need to consider the role that our own mind, our own thinking, plays in the overall thinking process (*Id.* 115). This internal framework, that undoubtedly influences how we receive the external problems to be investigated, focuses the spotlight on our 'assumptions, ideologies, values, biases, worldviews, schemas, and any other mindset that likely influences (and in some cases predetermines) how the thinker *construes* the situation' (*Id.* 117).

Moon likewise argues that we need to make the connection between epistemology and critical thinking (Moon 2005: 8-11) and underscore the metacognitive process in which the critical thinker takes a 'critical stance towards her actual process of critical

thinking' (*Id.* 12; and see Ennis 2015: 43). To develop our criticality, to be sure, we must each have an awareness of the stages of our epistemological development and this includes the influence of emotion on what we count as knowledge (or defend as justified true beliefs) and what we legitimise as appropriate action to take.

Heiman and Moon are on the right track. We can, Heiman continues, accommodate both the cognitive-based and transformative critical thinking paradigms and that, ultimately, what is 'transformed' is not simply the external problem at issue (by its resolution or new way of being understood) but the critical thinker herself by way of questioning the assumptions that shape her thinking—not to mention her audience who with open-minds may experience similar degrees of transformation (Heiman 2014: 115-117). Transformative critical thinkers, he rightly suggests, 'seek to understand *how* they came to [their] conclusions and *why* they believe as they do by taking inventory of their values and beliefs' (*Id.* 118). Paul reminds us that our scaffolding for thinking is an inescapable form of bias for which the critical mind must take responsibility:

A good critical thinker lives with bias as, to use another very different metaphor, a good Christian lives with sin, not with acceptance and complacency, but with realism and vigilance. (Paul 1990: 175)

Epistemological and metacognitive considerations are, I argue, highly relevant to our voyage into criticality. In focusing on reasons for justifying our beliefs and actions, Harvey Siegel argues, it 'is central to critical thinking education that students be given some understanding of the epistemology underlying critical thinking' (Siegel 1989: 127). Of course, as I argue in Section 5.2.1, students need to learn the criteria and methods governing each discipline and understand the limitations of their respective

underlying epistemologies. I therefore agree with Siegel that, without an ‘epistemological understanding of notions such as reason, rationality, knowledge, truth, evidence, warrant and justification’, the ‘critical thinking student has at best a superficial grasp of her subject’ (*Ibid.*).

And while I take issue with Siegel’s position on rejecting epistemological relativism and embracing an absolutist conception of truth (both of which are rejected by critical theorists, as we shall see in Section 3.4.2), I do agree that tackling epistemological questions is a fundamental part of teaching criticality (*Id.* 128) and that this requires the critical thinker to take particular stands on contentious issues (*Id.* 131). To be clear, adopting a position, assessing and reassessing the internal and external criteria believed to support it, and changing her position or at least being open-minded enough to allow for that possibility, requires courage and a working on her will.

Tracy Bowell makes the valid complaint that plaguing the pedagogy of critical thinking is the ‘difficulty of bringing students to a point where they are able, and motivated, critically to evaluate their own deeply held beliefs’ (Bowell 2018: 479). By being willing to ‘open up our deeply held beliefs up to scrutiny’, we are, adopting Paul’s terminology (Paul 1990: 110), engaging in critical thinking in the ‘strong sense’ (Bowell 2018: 479). Bowell makes a similar point to our earlier one that this won’t necessarily work in respect of our Wittgensteinian ‘hinge’ beliefs or commitments (*Id.* 483-484). That is not to say, however, that some of them can’t be changed. This is apposite when engaging with the competing views and perspectives of others. And this, Bowell properly advises, should be taken:

from a position of epistemic responsibility which requires seeking engagement with others without occlusion of difference, bearing in mind the importance of epistemic

humility, respecting conceptual diversity and avoiding the epistemic violence of superimposing the familiar (to us) on the strange (to us). (*Id.* 486-487)

Being epistemically responsible, we might say, is necessary for engaging in the process of thinking critically about ‘what “critical thinking” itself is’ (Loughead 2015: 57). Reflecting on how we use our concepts, how others use them, whose interests they serve and those they alienate and being cognisant of their continual redefinition are central aspects of criticality (*Id.* 57-58). The critical being keeps her epistemological and ontological limits constantly in-check. She remains open to new possibilities, new discoveries, new meanings and new transformations. Her notions of self, others and the world are caught up in a perpetual cycle of reflexive reassessment. This ‘self-understanding of the human condition’ reflects the spirit of Socrates’ dicta, in *Protagoras*, 343b (Plato 1997: 774), ‘Know thyself’ and ‘Nothing in excess’ (Foresman *et al.* 2017: 5).

Socrates’ insistence that ‘self-knowledge is basic to all knowledge’ is pivotal to all our critical inquiries (Noddings 2016: 6-7). And so is the courage to change our convictions in light of that evolving and unpredictable knowledge. After all, what we hold as justified true belief is not sacrosanct. The Delphic maxims cater for ‘critiques that reveal our limits, our weaknesses, our finitude, and our selves as we actually exist in the world’ (Foresman *et al.* 2017: 5).

The ideal of the critical thinker, seen through criticality scholarship’s lens, demands that—as a matter of the will as much as of the intellect—we try and be as open-minded to other perspectives, accommodating to change and as flexible in our thinking and acting as the fluidity of the concept of criticality itself shows us. And doubtless, turning subjectivity back on itself and unmasking unwarranted

assumptions, pretensions, biases, worldviews and positions will sometimes be very painful indeed.

In Section 3.3, I argued that criticality is a family resemblance concept; that it is not a mature but an emerging one; that its boundaries are not static but flexible; that it includes a disposition for taking critical or transformative action as well as purposeful thinking; and, finally, that epistemological and metacognitive considerations are key to grasping the nettle of criticality.

### 3.4 The dynamism of criticality scholarship

Three questions now arise for our consideration. What philosophical traditions inform criticality scholarship? How is criticality manifested in the classical forms of critical theory, critical pedagogy, critical thinking and informal logic? And how is criticality scholarship able to further enhance the conceptualisation and the usability of the notion of criticality?

Related to the five principal motifs, I make five subsidiary arguments in Section 3.4. First, I argue that we should recognise criticality scholarship as a new field and that lying in its foundations are the rich and varied traditions of critical pedagogy, critical theory, critical thinking and informal logic. Second, I argue that this new and emerging field is itself dynamic. Third, I argue that it is open to dealing with otherness. Fourth, I argue that it remains subject to its own internal critique. And fifth, the domain of criticality scholarship, I argue, moves beyond the classical traditions housing criticality by foregrounding emancipatory or transformative action.

Further, we should make transparent our use of the terms, field of inquiry, philosophical framework, domain, space, movement, arena and genre when referring to criticality scholarship. Our model aims to create a public space, which is as open and as neutral as possible, where theorists, teachers, students, activists, policymakers and other stakeholders can engage in dialogue to promote democracy and social justice. It is a place designed to listen to the unique views and perspectives of others, to validate voices that may have previously been occluded and to unearth and dismantle hidden contradictions and structural inequalities in society. We connect with the postcolonial literature in envisaging this public space to mirror, at least in part, Homi Bhabha's concept of a third space (Bhabha 2004: 54-56; and Bhabha 2009: ix-xiv) and John Hopkins's idea of a decolonising conversation (Hopkins 2018: 130-131 and 142).

#### 3.4.1 The traditions that inform criticality scholarship

What philosophical traditions, then, inform criticality scholarship? Dealing, first, with justifying the emergence of criticality scholarship as a distinct field of inquiry, it is not to be born from just one intellectual perspective. Rather, we imagine its roots in a variety of domains including critical theory, critical pedagogy, critical thinking and the informal logic movement (aspects of these play out in this and later chapters). The scholarly literature shows a manifold of relations between these traditions concerning goals and methods.<sup>3</sup> The boundaries between their respective positions can be

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<sup>3</sup> See Alexander 2018: 904-910; Apple 2011: 13-14; Burbules and Berk 1999: 46-56; Darder *et al.* 2017: 3-21; Douglas and Nganga 2017: 520-523; Foresman *et al.* 2017: 326-327; Giroux 2017a: 31-53; Jeyaraj and Harland 2019: 3-4; Kirylo 2011: 213-217 and 221-223; McArthur 2010: 494-495; Moore 2013: 507-508; and Ross 2017: 608.

difficult to detect. Yet there is merit, I believe, in the criss-crossing and over-lapping of their exponents' ideas and I make no apology for not sharply distinguishing between them.

What the evolving movement of criticality scholarship may epitomise, in the context of education, is the necessary connection between theory and practice. We have noted how Adorno speaks to the importance of this (Adorno 2005: 261, 268-269 and 276-278). We also observe Moacir Gadotti's remark that to 'act pedagogically is to put theory into practice *par excellence*' (Gadotti: 1996: 7). In this respect, then, education promises a new reality and projects individuals as points on that horizon (*Ibid.*). The journey is, however, unending.

In their introduction to *The Critical Pedagogy Reader*, Antonia Darder, Marta Baltodano and Rodolfo Torres provide an excellent account of the major influences on the formation of critical pedagogy (Darder *et al.* 2017: 3-9). These include members of the Frankfurt School, John Dewey, Paulo Freire, Gramsci and Michel Foucault. The threads we draw from these influences (and which we embody in criticality scholarship) are the notion of the progressive educator; the utopian vision of education as a emancipatory vehicle to promote new horizons, indeed, alter the word and the world; that criticality, in terms of an awakening and empowering individual and collective consciousness, belongs to all people regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual preference, ability, age, and economic and social status—for we are all philosophers in our own right; that governing, oppressing power relationships can be unearthed together with their dominant ideologies and regimes of truth; and that, perhaps most importantly, faith in humanity and hope in liberation still have a

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prominent place in contemporary discourses. And if the final theme of faith in humankind and transformative possibilities may appear incongruous with the pessimism usually associated with the Frankfurt School, I think John Wyatt correctly reads Max Horkheimer as advocating a doctrine of hope (Wyatt 1990: 65 and 71-72) and that McArthur is able to interpret Adorno's philosophy as being underpinned by a positive resolve for challenging the status quo and bringing about emancipatory change (McArthur 2020: 28 and 38).

One further legacy that criticality scholarship readily inherits from the traditional frameworks is the development of the critical spirit which means that, as progressive educators, we should encourage our students to critically assess critical thinking itself (Loughead 2015: 57; and Siegel 1989: 130). 'What are we trying to *do* when we are critical,' Nicholas Burbules poignantly asks, and 'What is criticality for?' (Burbules 1998: 486). Likewise, our epistemic responsibility includes reflecting on the meaning and re-meaning of our concepts and considering whose interests they protect and those they spurn (Loughead 2015: 57-58); on the justifications, the evidence and the reasons, we offer for our beliefs and actions all of which are open to challenge (Siegel 1989: 130-131); and on criticality's own 'underlying assumptions, pronouncements, clichés, and received wisdom' (Ross 2017: 608).

Connections and similarities are one thing, but there are also differences between these critical foundations. For example, as between critical pedagogy and critical thinking, both promote a critical education for increasing human freedom and enlarging the scope of human possibilities (Burbules and Berk 1999: 46). Yet while critical pedagogues, drawing largely on Freire's work, foster a critical awareness in disenfranchised persons and so act in concert with them to help resist their oppression,

many critical thinking authors would, Burbules and Rupert Berk contend, consider this as ‘subsidiary to the more inclusive problem of people basing their life choices on unsubstantiated truth claims’ (*Ibid.*). They also have different starting points for while critical pedagogy critiques specific belief claims as ‘parts of systems of belief and action that have aggregate effects within the power structures of society’, critical thinking theorists analyse such beliefs as ‘propositions to be assessed for their truth content’ (*Id.* 46-47).

In my view, criticality scholarship offers the advantage of accommodating these different, but not necessarily contradictory, approaches to dealing with human oppression, suffering and inequalities on the one hand and sharpening the rational bases upon which people choose to make life choices on the other. We can engage in dialogue in a public space on issues concerning democracy and social justice and plan transformative action. Individually, the critical being is informed by the philosophical, political and pedagogical teachings these movements offer and can make rational choices in everyday concrete situations.

Besides, the tools of critique offered by the critical traditions are, fortunately, many and varied. Focusing on who does and doesn’t benefit from our systems of belief and action, how the status quo may be altered and society made more just, together with an appreciation of the rules of formal and informal logic, concept analysis and epistemic reflection (*Ibid.*) all form part of the critical thinker’s toolbox which she can employ as a meaningful participant in society.

Moreover, these approaches and methods can be used in complimentary ways and what weight we attach to them will vary depending on what particular phenomenon is being examined under the critical thinker’s microscope. Burbules and Berk suggest

that neither critical thinking nor critical pedagogy is monolithic nor homogenous and that what we are really talking about here are ‘standards of epistemic adequacy’—argumentation, evidence, conceptual clarity as well as the manner in which the standards are used and interpreted in particular circumstances—since ‘they inevitably involve the very same considerations of who, where, when, and why that any other social belief claims raise’ (*Id.* 47-48).

Whilst there may be some antagonism concerning whether criticality should be restricted to teaching students how to think critically and not politically (*Id.* 54-56), we regard the issue as a superficial one. Certainly, from the perspectives of critical theory and critical pedagogy, abstraction and political neutrality are dismissed forthwith. We are political beings. We mediate the educational, political, institutional, economic, religious, cultural and historical dimensions of our age. We critique. We ask Who?, Where?, When? and Why?

Thus, as this chapter continues to unfold, we witness that criticality scholarship is an emerging and dynamic tradition with a wide remit. It is capable of inheriting a general concern for human emancipation. It genuinely respects the views and interests of others which have often been marginalised or silenced including Indigenous voices and of others yet-to-be-heard. And it bears an epistemic responsibility to engage in its own critique.

### 3.4.2 The classical forms of criticality

This brings us to our second question. How is criticality manifested in the classical forms of critical theory, critical pedagogy, critical thinking and informal logic? In this section the emphasis is more on critical theory and critical pedagogy. In-depth

analyses of the critical thinking and informal logic movements are taken up in Chapters 4 and 5. We also touch upon the related ideas of imagination and otherness.

#### 3.4.2.1 *Critical theory and critical pedagogy*

Critical theory informs critical pedagogy and is as much a process of critique as it is a school of thought (Giroux 2017a: 31; and Kirylo 2011: 222). The fact that no single formula or homogenous representation of the positions and ideas that constitute critical theory and critical pedagogy exists is, as Darder *et al* explain, precisely what supports their critical natures, revolutionary potential and transformative possibilities (Darder *et al.* 2017: 9). Nevertheless, common themes, some of which we touch upon in a moment, are discernible (see, further, Kirylo 2011: 214-217 and 222-223; and McLaren 2017: 56-76). Our present inquiry concerns the manner in which criticality functions within these intellectual frameworks and what ideas, conceptions and issues it draws upon. The classical forms of criticality are, I argue, grounded largely in critique and self-reflection. Taking action in the world, with the notable exception of Freire's transformative measures, is still very much in its formative, embryonic phase.

Critical theorists begin their critique, as Peter McLaren outlines, from the 'premise that *men and women are essentially unfree and inhabit a world rife with contradictions and asymmetries of power and privilege*' (McLaren 2017: 56). The critical theorist and critical educator alike engage in dialectical thinking by searching out these contradictions and proposing new resolutions. Instead of accepting social problems as isolated events of individuals or structural deficiencies, they recast them in the 'interactive context' between individuals and society so as to 'tease out the

histories and relations of accepted meanings and appearances, tracing interactions from the context to the part, from the system inward to the event' (*Ibid.*).

Critiques of these forms of domination and consideration of the extent to which social relations might be reconstructed to ameliorate some of their deleterious effects arise from a broad spectrum of critical social theories including classical Marxism, neo-Marxism, postmodernism and postcolonialism (Alexander 2018: 903). They share, however, a common desire to achieve social justice by removing all and any means of oppression within the governing social and political order. Indeed, the vision of human emancipation is central to critical theory, critical pedagogy and, adopting my suggestion, criticality scholarship. So, also, is the underlying belief that given the interconnectedness of education and society the 'fundamental purpose of education is the improvement of social justice for all' (McArthur 2010: 493; and *Cf.* McArthur 2012: 419-420 and 428-429).

Let me pause, briefly, and emphasise an important point about the unifying theme of human emancipation. It is, as Gert Biesta correctly reminds us, a general criterion that is operating 'dogmatically' (Biesta 1998: 476). In addressing the question of what 'gives educational philosophy the *right* to be critical?', and in describing one style of critique as critical dogmatism, Biesta notes that 'emancipation' operates as a 'general criterion for the evaluation of educational theory and practice' and that this is unobjectionable provided we recognise and accept its dogmatic character (*Ibid.*)

Therefore, in the game of criticality we accept, as one of its limits, the paradoxical role that emancipation (or, more formally, social justice), as the criterion being applied, plays in our investigations—namely, that it is 'itself beyond critique' (*Id.* 477). We could choose to apply, in other words, a different criterion for grounding

criticality but its truth or validity is, as it were, beyond critique; it escapes evaluation. In criticality scholarship, moreover, this means that our theoretical framework is grounded in overcoming human suffering, exposing and eradicating hidden contradictions and hegemonies, and removing prejudice and inequalities. The latter's empirical reference points also include making sovereign the concrete needs and sincere desires of others who are enduring hardship, discrimination and oppression and for their voices to be listened to, acknowledged and acted upon. We seek 'epistemic friction' among 'significantly different perspectives'; and we are trying to make 'others *our eminently relevant significant others*' (Medina 2013: 18 and 157).

Noting this, criticality means more than simply evaluating a criterion such as social justice. And, as Burbules explains, 'critical philosophy' in the Kantian tradition was 'also critical in the sense that it was reflexive, self-critical, about its own nature and limits' (Burbules 1998: 485) and this applies no matter what criterion is affixed to educational theory. Criticality is concerned with presenting arguments designed to persuade an audience to 'change their patterns of action' (*Id.* 486).

Returning to critical theory, its advocates also claim that knowledge is socially constructed and 'deeply rooted in a nexus of power relations' (McLaren 2017: 58). 'We do not stand before the social world;' McLaren insists, 'we live *in the midst* of it' (*Ibid.*) Critical pedagogues, accepting that there are no ideal or indigenous social constructions to which we must conform, are free to explore the social functions of knowledge in the teaching and learning environment and challenge why 'some forms of knowledge have more power and legitimacy than others' (*Id.* 58-59). I agree with McLaren that this is a necessary step towards achieving Habermasian emancipatory knowledge and creating a 'foundation for social justice, equality, and empowerment'

(*Id.* 59). I also accept that McLaren is a critical pedagogue and, as an educational philosopher, is nonetheless aptly placed to make these connections between critical theory and pedagogy.

Henry Giroux explores the possibility of devising a critical theory of education using the work of Adorno, Horkheimer and Herbert Marcuse (Giroux 2017a). He gives a detailed account of insights from the Frankfurt School (*Id.* 31-49) and makes a case for a theory of radical pedagogy (*Id.* 49-53). His labour is important because it shows we are still only beginning to scratch the surface of what critical theory has to offer progressive educators. ‘The real issue,’ Giroux contends, ‘is to reformulate the central contributions of critical theory in terms of new historical conditions, without sacrificing the emancipatory spirit that generated them’ (*Id.* 54). The driving force for achieving social justice will soon vanish if we cannot arrive at coherent and complimentary theoretical positions and deliver supporting pedagogies that together have the potential to turn that emancipatory spirit into transformative action.

Indeed thinking about the necessity of liberating people from oppression, domination and marginalisation is an integral part of critical pedagogy’s approach to education (Darder *et al* 2017: 11; and Douglas and Nganga 2017: 520). Since it seeks to instil in students a critical consciousness (an awareness of the prevailing political struggles and transformations in society) critical pedagogy is highly contextual and cannot be reduced to a single method (Douglas and Nganga 2017: 521). This desire to help oppressed persons learn of the social, political and economic contradictions permeating their reality and, more importantly, contemplate taking action against them is precisely what Freire encapsulates in his expression, *conscientização* (Freire 2017: 9-10, 77-82, 92 and 132-133).

There is an important pedagogical connection to be made here between Freirean conscientização and what we explored, in Section 2.1, concerning Deweyan ‘unsettledness’. You may recall that, for Dewey, as reflective thinkers we must be willing to ‘endure a condition of mental unrest and disturbance’ (Dewey 1997: 13). And one good test of our resolve in that regard involves how we reflect and act on the question of otherness. The role of conscientização can, in other words, be meaningfully employed in educational settings by unsettling students through meeting otherness. Dialogue needs to be authentic which means students should be open to perceiving and receiving the different and differing viewpoints and perspectives of others and pay special attention to their own respective internal frameworks with the result that they may suspend their own judgements and potentially alter some of their own beliefs and philosophical positions.

In so far as a critical perspective in education is possible, Hanan Alexander offers what he calls a ‘pedagogy of difference’ according to which the critical thinker must be initiated into traditions of primary identity (which ‘must be sufficiently “thick” to encourage a robust sense of the self imbued with strong standards for evaluating fundamental life choices’) and be able to engage with alternative perspectives (that ‘entails a willingness to engage perspectives with which one might disagree and a responsibility to care for others different from one’s self’) (Alexander 2018: 904 and 913-914). Our traditions of primary identity remain open to reflection, in the critical perspective, but they are also open to challenge vis-à-vis the contributions made available by other traditions. Alexander’s reference to the ethic of care is significant and can buttress an openness to and an accommodation of otherness. We learn to critique not only according to the internal standards of the tradition to which we are



heir or with which we choose to affiliate but also according to the criteria of at least one or more alternatives (*Id.* 914).

‘Dialogue across difference,’ Alexander concludes, ‘generates the possibility of a genuine critical pedagogy’ (*Ibid.*). I agree. I also take Benjamin Hamby’s point, momentarily turning to the critical thinking movement, that we can go wild in and out of the classroom and help students reconnect with each other and the world through the otherness of alternative argumentation (Hamby 2011: 47). We won’t need to bring spiders into the classroom or eat flowers or hold hands but:

we can usefully go wild in other ways, unsettling through otherness, provoking through the unexpected, even in the teaching of argument, and even in the teaching of critical thinking, if we can help our students to experience the otherness of alternative argumentation. (*Id.* 48)

Again encouraging students to reflect on alternative positions might trigger them to question and evaluate their own beliefs, discover errors and correct their opinions to accommodate reasonable rejoinders as well as heighten their understanding of difference where resolution to disagreement is not forthcoming (*Id.* 51).

#### 3.4.2.1.1 Understanding the terms critical theory and critical pedagogy

In his essay entitled ‘Traditional and Critical Theory’ Horkheimer asks the question what is theory (Horkheimer 1982: 188)? He distinguishes it from scientific theories and social theories (*Id.* 189-194 and 224-227), rejects the autonomy of the Cartesian ego (*Id.* 210) and the notion of objectivity in knowledge and focuses on ‘real social

processes' (*Id.* 194). A critical theory of society is concerned with human life (*Id.* 197). It is 'dominated at every turn by a concern for reasonable conditions of life' (*Id.* 198-199). Critical theory awakens the critical attitude which is distrustful of the status quo (*Id.* 206-209), recognises the importance of historicity (*Id.* 210-213 and 234-239), links transformative activity with critical thinking (*Id.* 232) and aims for the 'abolition of social injustice' (*Id.* 242). Moreover, the critical being, no longer an abstraction, becomes a conscious subject who actively determines her own way of life (*Id.* 233).

Nancy Fraser believes that we are yet to improve on Karl Marx's description of critical theory as 'the self-clarification of the struggles and wishes of the age' (Fraser 1989: 113). She rightly describes Marx's political lens as directing our critical attention to the aims and activities of oppositional social movements and to identify with their struggles and wishes (*Ibid.*). Turning the spotlight on gender Fraser examines what is critical and what is not in Jürgen Habermas' social theory. Today, we witness a host of struggles, oppositional movements, that contemporary theory can engage with, identify causes and model appropriate responses. To what extent, we may ask, does theory serve the self-clarification of the struggles and wishes of subordinated women, Indigenous communities, dislocated refugees and so on?

What, then, do we mean by critical pedagogy? James Kirylo reminds us that the origin of words matters (Kirylo 2011: 213). The etymology of critical pedagogy is derived from the Greek roots 'kriticos' (to judge, discern or be critical) and 'paidagōgos' (to guide, mentor or teach). As a concept, critical pedagogy thus 'delves into the arena of living an examined life relative to the art and science of teaching, implying that growing as a critical pedagogue is one that must be cultivated' (*Ibid.*). Connections can certainly be made here to the recurring Socratic theme of the significance of self-knowledge.

Also it would seem that the case for the virtues of critique and self-reflection has been made out. Further, our interpretation is to be read in light of our use of the term critical theory above.

#### 3.4.2.1.2 Concerns and criticisms

Accepting the interconnectivity of these terms, and thinking about our practitioners who work under the dictates of market forces and are subject to the educational policies that serve them (as we saw in Chapter 2), how can opportunities to grow as progressive, critical educators arise, be seized and fully harvested. No longer concerned with teachers and learners pursuing critical, intellectual work, education now serves instrumental purposes such as meeting predetermined scholastic targets (through standardised forms of knowledge and related testing), pay-related performance indicators and procuring external research grants (*Cf.* Barnett 1997: 7, 44-45, 49 and 53-55; Giroux 2017b: 628-630; Kirylo 2011: 214; and Loughead 2015: 2-29). Educators in schools and the academy are plagued by contradictions, asymmetries of power and diminishing autonomy. Resolving these contradictions, overturning these inequalities and restoring autonomy are, no doubt, real challenges for educators in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. ‘Higher education,’ like the entire schooling system, really ‘is now a critical business’ (Barnett 1997: 178). And in this respect, Tanya Loughead’s plea for educators to ‘Fight against the *instrumentalization of education and living beings*’ (Loughead 2015: 85) gains purchase.

It is only fair to acknowledge that critical pedagogy, like critical thinking, is not without its adversaries and critics and that they come from all quarters (Burbules and Berk 1999: 56-59). As Darder *et al.* explain, the critiques of critical pedagogy include

the absence of the female voice and experience and the subordination of the body to reason (consistent, in relation to critical theory, with Fraser's critique of Habermas above (Fraser 1989)); elitism and inaccessibility to the intellectual discourses of those persons most affected by social inequalities; the dominance of whiteness; the failure to make central the issues of race, ethnicity, socio-economic status and class divisions; the alienation of human beings from the natural environment; along with internal critiques from within the field and, as an attack from the Right, that critical pedagogy does not have a role to play in making a genuinely democratic life (Darder *et al* 2017: 14-21).

Perhaps the most striking attack still stays with Elizabeth Ellsworth and, most directly, her critique of the unexamined use of 'rationalistic tools' by critical pedagogues (Ellsworth 1989: 313-314). I would like to think, however, that all of these legitimate criticisms are being taken on board by educational theorists and that what is needed is a 'greater intellectual openness and generosity of spirit' (Darder *et al* 2017: 21). This would allow all of the critical traditions to continue to be relevant and make important contributions to the struggles and wishes of our age. Also the contemporary challenge to meta-narratives should encourage members of each of these traditions to critique each other as well as themselves since this demonstrates both their respective values and limits (Burbules and Berk 1999: 58-59). This speaks to McArthur's observation that these points of contest can be reconciled and, to certain extents, bridged if only we can practise toleration and celebrate diversity and conflict (McArthur 2010: 498-499; and see McArthur 2012: 428).

### 3.4.2.2 *Critical thinking and informal logic*

Much of the terrain we have covered concerns critical theory and critical pedagogy. Critical thinking and informal logic, which we examine in detail in Chapters 4 and 5, are also important traditions informing the concept of criticality and are very much a part of the intellectual landscape in which criticality scholarship finds its home. And, as we shall see there, criticality is ‘a *wider* concept than critical thinking’ (Davies and Barnett 2015: 17). Allow me some brief comments.

The critical thinking movement is as wide and diverse as the traditions that are home to critical theorists and critical pedagogues (Alexander 2018: 907-910; Burbules and Berk 1999: 48-50; and Moore 2013: 507-508). And as a movement, or at least as a presence in higher education, it struggles to discern its parameters, workable definitions and a curricular space in which to ‘deploy its insights effectively’ (Andrews 2015: 51).

We mentioned that critical thinking is not without its adversaries and critics (Burbules and Berk 1999: 56-59). Here, too, we need to remove the primacy obtained through the ill-gotten gains of Eurocentrism, whiteness, maleness, class superiority and so on. What has been effectively designated and silenced as opposite, or the irrational other, needs to be recognised and appreciated.

In terms of critical thinking pedagogy, David Hayes accuses it of being ‘seriously misguided as an educational goal’ and suggests it ‘tends towards aggression’ (Hayes 2015: 318-319). As a ‘pedagogy of force’, moreover, he contends that its meaning lies more in its means than in its ends (*Id.* 319). I counter immediately with Darder’s notion of a pedagogy of love underscoring her insightful book, *Freire and Education*. It is, to be sure, the use of radical love as a dialectical force in the classroom that

matters (Darder 2015: 50 and 58) and not any perceived preoccupation with force or conflict (*contra*. Hayes 2015: 319-320).

Also I find Hayes' interpretation of the ethos of critical thinking as a lack of charity and involving the taking up of a position of disinterest (Hayes 2015: 322) somewhat harsh. *Contra* Hayes, the critical traditions (and with them criticality scholarship) are capable of fostering a spirit of charity in interpretation by finding 'sense in what others say' through genuine dialogue; and students are in fact encouraged to accept the challenge to 'draw closer' to the phenomena under the critical spotlight (be they texts, works of art, or the deeply held beliefs of others). Moreover, the design is to make our concepts thicker ones so that they gain purchase in our lives (*contra*. *Id.* 321-325). I do agree, however, with Hayes' reliance there on Bernard Williams' distinction, I mentioned earlier, between 'what we think' and 'what we merely think we think' (Williams, B 2008: 7; and see 91) and this is just as relevant in the classroom as it is in all our investigations.

#### 3.4.2.3 *Related ideas informing criticality scholarship*

The critical traditions trigger other ideas that inform criticality scholarship. For instance, we can utilise Maxine Greene's thesis that by mediating with creative and imaginative works such as literature, poetry, sculpture, theatre, film, music and dance, we empower our students to tear apart the 'cotton wool of daily life' (Greene 2018: 185) and imagine better worlds for themselves (Greene 2017: 494-495 and 500-501; and Greene 2018: 15, 163, 185-186 and 196); we invite them to engage with the 'imaginary mode of awareness' and 'break with the taken-for-granted, with the ordinary and the mundane' (Greene 2018: 181); and we encourage them to take

transformative action to ‘repair the lacks, to move through the openings, to try to pursue real possibilities’ (*Id.* 223). Greene writes:

Imagination, after all, allows people to think of things as if they could be otherwise; it is a capacity that allows a looking through the windows of the actual towards alternative realities. (Greene 2017: 494-495)

Returning to the question of otherness, I have argued that it is underscored by criticality scholarship. The latter serves to prevent minorities with their unique differences (together with their inequities or sufferings that may be quite subtle and difficult to discern) from being subsumed within a more obvious and distinct (and probably larger) category of marginalised persons.

Criticality scholarship is thus a public space earmarked for tackling oppressive conditions manifesting, for instance, racism, sexism, ableism, classism and ageism. It recognises that many voices have been side-lined and that many others have been silenced. Where voices have almost been forgotten, and I am thinking of Indigenous ones in particular, criticality scholarship hopes to empower them and to validate their philosophies and practices. The critical theory of the Frankfurt School may, for example, be guilty of a failure to ‘acknowledge and rectify its own lack of understanding of race, racism and colonialism’, but there is no reason why contemporary Western critical theorists can’t become ‘fellow travellers’ with Indigenous scholars (McArthur 2021: 2-3). Criticality scholarship necessitates the ‘engagement with others without occlusion of difference’ (Bowell 2018: 486-487) and seeks to make sovereign the voices of persons who have been outcast as ‘socially constructed irrational Others’ (Ellsworth 1989: 305).

Taking Henry Reynolds's cue, do we listen to the 'whispering in our hearts' about the injustices suffered by Indigenous peoples (Reynolds 2014: 334). Do we really? Are we open to Indigenous philosophies and practices? How many of their knowledge systems have been killed (Hall and Tandon 2017: 8)? How do we reconcile Indigenous voices, rituals and customs, and lived experiences with Western constructs of knowledge? Does the apparent lack of assimilability of these different voices indeed signal the 'limits of the category of "the Indigenous"' (Martin *et al.* 2020: 313)? How do we de-metaphorise decolonisation and enact Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang's ethic of incommensurability (Tuck and Yang 2012: 7, 21, 28-31 and 35-36)? And how do we cater for the fact that Indigenous minorities 'do not all share the same interests' (Smith 2019a: 49)? Indigeneity, as we have suggested, can be recognised for all its uniqueness and diversity under the umbrella of criticality scholarship. Here lies a platform for privileging and transmitting Indigenous ways of knowing; a wānanga for Indigenous and non-indigenous persons to address these issues in genuine dialogue.

One further lesson for criticality and criticality scholarship, that arises from our continuing discussion, is that, as a concept, criticality must be alive to the changing conditions in which it operates; and, as a movement, though we can plan for its vibrancy and wide reach, criticality scholarship will need to rely on a host of theorists and pedagogues (each of whom have their own philosophical positions) as well as supporting educational, social and political organisations. Authentic dialogue in a public space, adaptability and solidarity are key.

Furthermore, and borrowing from McLaren, given critical pedagogy's 'own presumed role as the metatruth of educational criticism', criticality scholarship (to the extent that



it is informed by critical pedagogy) must remain critical of itself by challenging its own premises, decidability and constructed identity (McLaren 2000: 184). Applying his analysis, criticality scholarship ‘will always be Other to itself, will always be at odds with itself’ (*Id.* 185).

Finally, I want to say that when we penetrate phenomena, we locate ourselves within the social and political web of power and knowledge. We can critique it. We can discover its contradictions and hegemonies. And most importantly, we can think about how best to tear apart some of its oppressive, fortifying threads. We can also say that the picture of the human condition, as it is presently unfolding, is important for criticality since the self is seen as a creator and re-creator of her social universe together with its undergirding power relations. There is, in other words, scope for transformative possibilities. The ideal of the critical being, on these classical approaches, critiques the historical, cultural, class and ideological conditions of her political and social environment and explores ways of transcending them. Confidence in taking action is, however, still not adequately present. The self has not yet been cultivated as an agent of social transformation. It is this commitment to critical or emancipatory action to which we now turn.

### 3.4.3 Criticality’s evolution from critique and self-reflection to critical/transformative action

Our final question concerns how criticality scholarship can further enhance the conceptualisation and the usability of the notion of criticality. Here we draw heavily on critical pedagogy.

Critical pedagogy is continually evolving, and, with E. Wayne Ross, I agree that progressive educators should be constantly engaged in ‘self-critique and pedagogical renovation’ (Ross 2017: 615). This means that we cannot talk about ‘transformational learning’ or ‘educational revolution’, as Ross puts it, without making connections to everyday life (*Ibid.*).

A critical education, to be sure, affirms that we are ‘beings in the process of *becoming*—as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality’ (Freire 2017: 57), and that we must problematise our realities both in and out of the classroom. This is what it means to be fully human and it is also the path to changing the world. This new and evolving approach is, I argue, a natural extension of the classical forms of criticality and, anchored in the new field of criticality scholarship, allows criticality to start moving outwardly. Having critiqued and reflected, and being informed by theory and practice, the critical being is now directed towards collective emancipatory action.

#### *3.4.3.1 The influence of critical pedagogy*

Well what then of the state of critical pedagogy? What are its modern restatements so that they may help shape criticality scholarship? Drawing on Kirylo’s relatively recent survey of the contribution made by a number of leading scholars in educational philosophy (Kirylo 2011: 215-216; and *Cf.* Darder *et al.* 2017: 10-14), we can say that critical pedagogy is very much a ‘state of becoming’ (Donaldo Macedo); it refuses the ‘official lies of power and the utterly reductive notion of being a method’ (Henry Giroux); it is not formulaic or stagnant or an *is*, rather ‘it is what isn’t’ (Shirley Steinberg); it is grounded on a concern for human suffering (Joe Kincheloe); it is

‘rooted in theories that recommend education as a form of countersocialization to promote democracy and social justice’ (William Stanley); it aims to ‘clarify the legitimacy of the ethical political dream of overcoming unjust reality’ (Paulo Freire); it ‘demands that people repeatedly question their roles in society as either agents of social and economic transformation, or as those who participate in the asymmetrical relations of power and privilege and the reproduction of neoliberal ideology’ (Matthew Smith and Peter McLaren); and it encourages students to attack the existing dominant ideology, power structure and civic culture and replace them with new and more just ones (Allan Ornstein and Francis Hunkins).

Kirylo is right to say that these descriptions demonstrate the intricate and diverse ways in which critical pedagogy is emerging and that it will continually grow and be reinvented by different interest groups and collective struggles across the globe (Kirylo 2011: 216). He offers his own explanation:

Critical pedagogy is an endeavour to call attention to a preferential option for the poor while simultaneously understanding that the process of schooling is an inclusionary, non-neutral enterprise, a political undertaking, and one that is developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive, celebrating differences while at the same time nurturing commonalities. (*Ibid.*)

I agree with Kirylo that what these explanations and descriptions show is a recognition that critical pedagogy is itself a transformational process, its own way of thinking and is continually developing (*Id.* 217). Indeed I argue that we may legitimately culminate this evolution in the birth of criticality scholarship. We may recognise the latter as a new intellectual endeavour the seeds of which germinate from

the rich and varied traditions of critical theory, critical pedagogy, critical thinking and informal logic.

Criticality scholarship, moreover, inherits from critical pedagogy both a dialectical view of knowledge and the notion of critical praxis. Dialectical theory functions to unmask the connections between objective knowledge and our cultural and societal norms, values and standards (Darder *et al.* 2017: 11) and expose hidden contradictions and asymmetrical relations of power and privilege (McLaren 2017: 56). Traditional dichotomies of the individual and society, objectivity and subjectivity, and theory and practice lose traction and, instead, their interconnectedness and coexistence are foregrounded (Darder *et al.* 2017: 11). Dialectical thinking, as Ross explains, is an effort to better understand the world in terms of ‘interconnections’ which are the ‘ties among things as they are right now, their own preconditions, and future possibilities’ (Ross 2017: 611).

Critical praxis, on the other hand, opens up the possibilities for change and for shaping a better world by underscoring all human activities as the products of the unending interactions of reflection, dialogue and action (Darder *et al.* 2017: 13). It is a ‘self-creating and self-generating free human activity in the interest of justice’ (*Ibid.*). No doubt the Freirean concepts of conscientização and dialogue (Freire 2017: 9 and 60), and which we will visit in Chapter 6, will heavily influence our vision of criticality scholarship and its ideal of taking critical action.

Yet the transition from critique to action is no easy affair. The conditions for change must exist and so must solidarity among all parties. Given the belief that education can bring about a more just world, critical pedagogy, as McArthur makes plain, involves a ‘strong agenda for change’ within and through education and in society

(McArthur 2010: 493). But, as she also points out, its proponents have struggled to implement change and resorted to critique alone (*Ibid.*). Some of this may be put down to differences and disagreements. Nevertheless, engagement in genuine dialogue at all levels, as McArthur rightly suggests, building alliances among diverse interest holders and their respective disparate and unique ideas, and harnessing what these perspectives of otherness have to offer can all serve to drive emancipatory change (*Id.* 494 and 496-499). Criticality scholarship advocates would do well, I would suggest, to develop strategies for engaging in authentic dialogue with diverse and conflicting interest holders. In this way, whether they are academics, students, activists, policymakers or members of the wider social and political communities, opportunities may arise for all of them to work together to bring about changes in education and society.

#### *3.4.3.2 Taking up Marx's gauntlet*

Earlier we mentioned Burbules' remark that criticality is very much concerned with persuading others to 'change their patterns of action' (Burbules 1998: 486). Of course it also involves changing our own beliefs and actions by listening to the views of others. When seen as a 'stimulus to change' and not merely as a 'diagnosis and critique', criticality becomes the means through which we create the possibilities for change (*Ibid.*). And relating this back to our theme of human emancipation, the critical being is one who is empowered to seek social justice, to seek human emancipation, a person who recognises inequalities and injustices and is moved to change them (Burbules and Berk 1999: 50-51).

In this very important respect, then, the critical being takes up the gauntlet thrown down by Marx in his eleventh thesis on Feuerbach and is moved to create possibilities for change and secure collective action to achieve them (*Id.* 51). Marx, you will recall, criticised theorists for failing to take action, ‘The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it’ (Marx and Engels 2010: 5). Here we again underline the importance of the interconnectivity of theory and praxis (Gadotti 1996: 83) and of ensuring that we cut our teeth on the struggles and wishes of our age (Fraser 1989: 113).

Changing the world involves, at least initially, stepping outside of our comfort zones and challenging what is familiar to us. Only then can we begin to appreciate the tensions inherent in meeting and incorporating other perspectives and alternative viewpoints. In this sense, Burbules and Berk’s suggestion of viewing criticality as a practice and one in which we ‘foster *thinking in new ways*’ is an important step towards making that transition from critique and self-reflection to action (Burbules and Berk 1999: 59). Part of invoking new ways of thought, is to allow difference to become a ‘condition of criticality’ so that we can engage authentically with ‘deeply challenging alternatives’ (*Id.* 60). And as a practice, criticality is a ‘mark of what we do, of who we are, and not only how we think’ (*Id.* 62). The critical being is thus one who accepts *who* she is: that she is open to see otherness for what it is and reconcile points of conflict; and of *what* she does: that she can change her position in light of new ways of thinking, co-construct new forms of knowledge and be moved to action when social justice calls for it.

Taking action in the world—as distinct from, and in addition to, taking steps to improve one’s self—is now coming to the fore in critical education. As Raz Shpeizer

explains, only recently have real efforts been made to bridge the gap between critical thinking on the one hand, and real life, education for all and the infrastructure of human character on the other (Shpeizer 2018: 35-37). He writes:

Criticality, with its special emphasis on action in the world, is a natural step in this maturation process, which advances the fulfilment of the ethical potential that is rooted in the critical thinking movement by broadening and crystallizing the pedagogical ideal of critical thinking so as to refer to a being who has the skills and dispositions to analyse, evaluate, and judge beliefs and stances in various fields, as well as to decipher the complexity of real-life situations, while aspiring to improve both the self and the world. (*Id.* 37)

#### *3.4.3.3 Becoming a Gramscian organic intellectual*

I agree that an emphasis on taking action in the world is a natural progression for the concept of criticality. It is also integral to the criticality scholarship movement itself. Seen in this light, theory and praxis can meaningfully come together and work to implement democratic and social justice ends. Gramsci's metaphor of the 'organic' intellectual is also helpful here (Gramsci 1971: 6). As Michael Apple rightly makes the point, critical education encourages critical educators to become Gramscian organic intellectuals so as to be able to 'act in concert with progressive social movements' and learn from their struggles (Apple 2011: 16-17). There simply is no place, if I may borrow György Lukács' imagery of the Grand Hotel Abyss, for educators to join its glamorous guests on the terrace and, from the safety and comfort of their reclining deck chairs, watch the spectacle unfold in the world below where the connection between theory and praxis is being abandoned (Jeffries 2016: 1-2).

Finally, this leads me to Giroux's suggestion that we should restructure the genesis of teacher work and view teachers as 'public intellectuals' (Giroux 2107b: 630-634). He is right that this would provide a theoretical justification for examining their work as 'intellectual labour' and not merely 'defining it in instrumental or technical terms' (*Id.* 630). This would help to add value back to the traditional pursuit of intellectual endeavours and ring-fence, in a pedagogical sense, the teaching and learning of criticality.

Giroux is also anxious to make the 'pedagogical more political' so that we insert 'schooling directly into the political sphere by arguing that schooling represents both a struggle to define meaning and a struggle over agency and power relations' (*Id.* 632). In this way, he argues, students are afforded opportunities for critical reflection and action in the midst of unjust contradictions and hegemonies (*Ibid.*). And in making the 'political more pedagogical', we treat students as critical agents, we make knowledge problematic, engage in authentic dialogue and make the case for a better world (*Ibid.*).

#### 3.4.4 Our initial case for criticality scholarship is made out

In Section 3.4, I argued that criticality scholarship is a new field of inquiry and that the rich and varied traditions of critical theory, critical pedagogy, critical thinking and informal logic form part of its foundations; it is itself dynamic; it can accommodate what the perspectives of otherness have to offer; it is subject to its own internal critique; and transcends the classical traditions by taking the concept of criticality from critique and reflection into the realm of action.



Our journey into the domain of criticality scholarship commenced with three questions. They concerned, first, imagining the origins or roots of criticality scholarship; second, the manifestation of criticality within the classical forms of critical theory, critical pedagogy, critical thinking and informal logic; and third, the extent to which criticality scholarship is capable of extending or developing the notion of criticality beyond the borders of its would-be ancestral traditions.

In relation to the first question, we have shown that criticality scholarship draws upon a number of philosophical frameworks which themselves share commonalities but still occasion differences. Its aims and methods draw on those found in critical theory, critical pedagogy, critical thinking and the informal logic movement. We also allow criticality scholarship to inherit utopian visions of human emancipation and freedom from inequalities and injustices. And in the context of education, criticality scholarship will underscore the significance of the connection between theory and practice. Finally, and most importantly, I argued that it will also be sensitive to the tensions underlying its would-be ancestral roots and can accommodate them as well as harness complimentary perspectives.

Answering the second question involved an exploration into the discourses surrounding critical theory, critical pedagogy, critical thinking and the informal logic movement with a view to discovering how criticality has been traditionally conceived. I argued that, in its classical pronouncements, criticality is more concerned with critique of phenomena and inward self-reflection. Also I argued that despite a well-intended and unifying theme to achieve social justice, and with the exception of Freire's work, the ideal of the critical being had not yet walked along that path

towards human emancipation. She was not yet cultivated sufficiently, I argued, to be a socially transforming agent.

The third question I answered in the affirmative. The new field of criticality scholarship has, I argued, transcended the limits of its would-be forebears and tied critical or transformative action in neatly with the concept of criticality. Criticality scholarship thus offers possibilities for further enhancing the conceptualisation and the usability of the notion of criticality. I argued that criticality scholarship inherits a dialectical view of knowledge and the notion of critical praxis and that the potential for human emancipation will be harnessed by this new and dynamic movement. Conditions for change must exist. Alliances must be made, and bridges built. That much is certain. A public space for conversations to take place, adaptability and solidarity, I argued, are key. We took the view that the critical being, informed by criticality scholarship, is able to take up Marx's gauntlet and not only interpret the world, but *change* it. She is, to be sure, able to identify with the struggles and wishes of her age.

### 3.5 Summary and conclusion

Our survey of the educational philosophy literature was intended to strengthen our understanding of how we conceptualise and use the idea of criticality. Also it was designed to discover how criticality might be grounded in a new field, that of criticality scholarship, and to bring the concept a degree of clarity and coherence.

I argued, first, that criticality may indeed be located in criticality scholarship. Second, I argued that theory informs practice and reflection on practice informs theory and that

being informed by the internal and necessary relations between them empowers the critical being to move towards critical or transformative action. Third, the concept of criticality and the domain of criticality scholarship both advance, I argued, the social justice themes of human emancipation and freedom from inequalities and injustices. Fourth, I argued that by occupying a central space within this new philosophical framework, a critical education may serve to improve justice for everyone by converting emancipatory spirit into transformative action. And finally, I argued that criticality offers the critical being the opportunity to live an examined life; to be a meaningful participant in our critical citizenry; and to act as a socially transforming agent and bring about a more just world.

The contribution to knowledge in this chapter is reflected in the theoretical work we have undertaken. We have broadened our knowledge and understanding of criticality. Our dialogue continues. Our reflection of the theoretical and practical issues concerning criticality and our growing literature review progress further in Chapters 4 and 5. Those chapters, and indeed the insights we draw later from Freire and Wittgenstein, will strengthen our resolve to continue to work within criticality scholarship and conduct further empirical and theoretical research into the educational concept of criticality.

## Chapter 4 Criticality and the critical thinker

The attitude of childhood is naïve, wondering, experimental; the world of man [and woman] and nature is new. Right methods of education preserve and perfect this attitude, and thereby short-circuit for the individual the slow progress of the race, eliminating the waste that comes from inert routine.

(Dewey 1997: 156)

### 4.1 Chapter overview

Criticality, or reflective thinking as John Dewey would call it, is concerned with harnessing the power, creativity and imagination of the young mind and with directing its growth in a manifold of challenging and rewarding ways. In the context of teaching and learning, what the young mind requires is the requisite degree of ‘free play’ in which ‘intellectual curiosity and flexibility’ are present, while ‘dogmatism and prejudice’ are absent (Dewey 1997: 218). Thus what becomes foregrounded as intellectual virtues, as Dewey properly insists, are ‘open-mindedness’ and ‘faith in the power of thought to preserve its own integrity without external supports and arbitrary restrictions’ (*Id.* 219). This unbiased and unrestricted love of learning for learning’s sake is certainly something to be nurtured. In a critical education, of course, some of that learning will include attention to democracy and social justice.

Dewey’s concerns about the stagnation and curtailment of criticality are still ringing loudly in the ears of present-day educational philosophers. Our review of the research literature concerning criticality, in Section 3.3, speaks to the ideal of the critical

thinker who takes a ‘critical stance towards her actual process of critical thinking’ (Moon 2005: 12); evaluates her ‘own deeply held beliefs’ (Bowell 2018: 479); examines her own internal framework and bares naked her ‘assumptions, ideologies, values, biases, worldviews, schemas, and any other mindset that likely influences (and in some cases predetermines) how [she] *construes* the situation’ at issue (Heiman 2014: 117); and who displays the courage to take particular stands on contentious issues (Siegel 1989: 131). In the classroom this means allowing students to have the freedom to experience the ‘unfolding’ of a particular subject (or problem) ‘on its own account’ and ‘apart from its subservience to a preconceived belief or habitual aim’ (Dewey 1997: 219). Our present concern, therefore, is with how we should best go about preserving and perfecting this critical attitude.

This attitude—or process of *becoming* —is one in which the critical thinker keeps her epistemological and ontological limits constantly under review. She is aware that she is an unfinished and uncompleted being (Freire 2017: 57). Nevertheless, she heeds Socrates’ advice, recorded in Plato’s *Apology*, 38a, that ‘the unexamined life is not worth living’ (Plato 1997: 33) and so tries to pursue a meaningful one. Further, criticality, in Deweyan terms, involves the critical thinker ‘overcoming the inertia’ that might otherwise incline her to ‘accept suggestions at their face value’ and, also, she must be willing to endure the painful ‘condition of mental unrest and disturbance’ that suspending judgement entails (Dewey 1997: 13).

In this chapter we present the next phase of our literature review by delving into the unsettled nature of thinking. We draw on the views of philosophers, educational theorists and exponents from critical thinking and the informal logic movement. The disturbance, we unearth, shows just how vexed the notion of criticality is. We

question the extent to which critical thinking is discernible in terms of skills alone or whether it extends to dispositions and virtues. We take the view that what frees (as distinct from shackles) the critical thinker is her willingness to overcome her will, to have the courage to change the way she sees things, and that this entails a fostering of her intellectual virtues as much as anything else. Also we think about the inclusionary and exclusionary aspects of criticality. What continues to transpire, in the scholarly literature, is that criticality is a difficult notion to come to grips with and that, therefore, there is a legitimate need for a fresh, new way of looking at criticality. Criticality scholarship offers just such a space for this perspective.

We are, of course, interested to learn more about what we mean by the educational concept of criticality and how we use it. In this chapter we note how theorists approach the nature of thinking in different ways and from a range of perspectives. A variety of conceptions come to the fore. Also we are concerned with how criticality scholarship may promote further theoretical and empirical research into the conceptualisation and the usability of criticality. To these ends, then, we pursue the following inquiries in this chapter. First, we plunge back into the concept of criticality only this time we draw more heavily on the critical thinking and informal logic movements. Second, we examine the relations between critical thinking skills, dispositions and virtues. And third, we ask, Who is and who is not a critical thinker? Our evolving dialogue, again having moved from policy to theoretical and practical considerations, continues to add to our knowledge and understanding of criticality. It is, to be sure, an exercise in criticality scholarship.

In Section 4.2, I argue that there is a legitimate need to provide clarity and coherence to the idea of criticality but that our aim is not to produce a final definition. Rather,

given the concept's potential for further growth and its apparent mutability, educational theorists should remain open to working with different conceptions of criticality that will nevertheless shed light on our intricate ways of knowing. Moreover, coming to grips with thinking calls for an appreciation and reconciliation of events that are present and yet-to-arrive in conjunction with their implications for democratic and social justice decision making.

Also in Section 4.2, we focus on conceptions of criticality posed by Robert Ennis, John McPeck, Richard Paul and Harvey Siegel all of whom are educational philosophers and connected in various ways with critical thinking and informal logic. I argue that they can be criticised for exhibiting some of the following tendencies: first, to crave for generality at the possible expense of catering for alternative conceptions; and second, by focusing more on the logical aspects of criticality and less on the social, political and cultural environment in which critical beings think, the latter's capacity to engage in transformative action is unduly hampered. I also add to the mix, a third argument, in virtue of which there is an attraction to rationalism which generates rationalistic conceptions of criticality none of which necessarily do justice, as Emma Williams puts it, to how the human being thinks (Williams, E 2016: 3).

Section 4.2 ends with other theorists' views concerning the concept of criticality.

In Section 4.3, I argue, first, that the notion of criticality includes sets of abilities (or skills), dispositions (or propensities) and virtues (or character traits); second, that they are interrelated and not separated by sharp boundaries; and third, that the critical being needs an assortment of abilities and related dispositions together with a full complement of intellectual virtues.

Finally, in Section 4.4, I argue that however we decide upon the makeup of the critical thinker, we cannot in this process forget about those persons we have excluded or silenced. Actual critical thinkers are, to be clear, living embodied persons. They are not rational automatons divorced from their emotions and personhood. They are not to be stripped of their social, economic, cultural, gender, sexual, race, ethnic and other personal attributes. What is at stake here is the restoration of subjectivity.

## 4.2 Criticality back under the microscope

We have suggested that a major focus should be with the manner in which we can preserve and perfect a critical attitude. In Deweyan terms, this means fostering and developing our natural, child-like but trainable, intellectual character traits of ‘humility, curiosity and open-mindedness’ (Dewey 1997: 177). This crucial and life-long endeavour, to be sure, involves the formation of good habits of mind including the development of a ‘lively, sincere, and open-minded preference for conclusions that are properly grounded’ (*Id.* 28).

Ben Kotzee equates Dewey’s view of open-mindedness, in *How We Think*, with curiosity and an ‘inclination to explore the world in an evidence-based fashion driven by a sense of wonder’ (Kotzee 2018: 369). The intellectual virtue of open-mindedness, Kotzee also argues, is of major importance to contemporary virtue epistemologists who are now turning ‘from studying knowledge to studying knowers’; who, instead of merely considering the nature of ‘true belief, justification or warrant’, are now studying what makes individual thinkers ‘*good thinkers*’ (*Id.* 366). I believe this move to assess what makes human beings good thinkers is pertinent in the context of criticality. Also I accept the connection Kotzee finds in Dewey’s work between



dealing with problems in the world by weighing up the available evidence and pursuing them with a sense of awe or wonder at the world and, to me at least, the latter is reminiscent of what Rudolf Otto calls the ‘numinous’—his conception of ‘mysterium tremendum’ (Otto 1950: 7 and 12-24).

In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey expands this notion of open-mindedness to encompass the assessment of all considerations that may throw light on the problems to be resolved and ‘that will help determine the consequences of acting this way or that’ (Dewey 2016: 122). For the critical thinker, this means moving beyond mere critique and inward reflection to thinking about what position she will adopt and what action she will take in the world. As distinct from the stubbornness of the closed-mind (surrounded by prejudice and arrested development and being shut off from ‘new stimuli’), being open-minded means ‘retention of the childlike attitude’, ‘an active disposition to welcome points of view hitherto alien’ and ‘an active desire to entertain considerations which modify existing purposes’ (*Ibid.*).

This respect for entertaining new stimuli and hitherto alien viewpoints and for modifying one’s beliefs and values shows just how revolutionary Dewey’s thinking is. We can even connect his remarks with our own observations in Section 3.4 concerning the importance of engaging with ‘others without occlusion of difference’ (Bowell 2018: 486-487) and with reuniting and making sovereign ‘socially constructed irrational Others’ (Ellsworth 1989: 305).

Intellectual growth, for Dewey, means ‘constant expansion of horizons and consequent formation of new purposes and new responses’ (Dewey 2016: 122). The search for new vistas, new meanings, and for new ways of tackling our problems in the world is reflective of the paradigmatic critical thinker we portrayed in Chapter 3.

It also sits nicely with Maxine Greene’s educational notion of ‘looking at things as if they could be otherwise’—where students break with the ordinary and the mundane and engage with their worlds not just as they are but imagine and name what they could otherwise be.<sup>1</sup>

William Hare makes claims consistent with Dewey’s remarks when he addresses the philosophical and educational ideal of critical thinking (Hare 1999). He argues, in effect, that open-mindedness suggests a willingness to assess the evidence and arguments used to form our beliefs and values together with any opposing grounds that may cause us to alter or reject them (*Id.* 91). Importantly, the critical thinker needs to possess the relevant abilities and understanding as well as the dispositions to review one’s beliefs and values and that ‘the attitude of open-mindedness captures this vital point’ (*Ibid.*). Hare also makes the valid observation that our internal framework of critique is itself problematic and that ‘open-mindedness helps to keep this insight alive’ (*Id.* 91-92).

As this chapter unfolds, it should become apparent that, first, at a conceptual level, criticality is much broader than critical thinking (Davies and Barnett 2015: 17). Second, taken as a normative ideal, criticality incorporates a collection of epistemic attitudes and practices that we should all aspire to in our own thinking (Maynes 2017: 114). And third, that the iterability of the concept allows for, indeed demands, an openness to new interpretations and new applications and so envisages events that are absent or are yet-to-arrive.

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<sup>1</sup> See Greene 1995: 16, 19, 22 and 34; Greene 2017: 494-495 and 500-501; and Greene 2018: 15, 163, 181, 185-186, 196 and 223.

#### 4.2.1 Concept and conceptions of criticality

We should be mindful of the generative capacity of our conceptual resources.

Miranda Fricker's observation that the resources we employ for moral judgement and moral thinking are 'not like a set of building bricks with which one can build a finite number of different structures' (Fricker 2007: 104). Indeed I would say the same is true of all our conceptual resources irrespective of the discourses from which they spring since none of them represent static or closed systems. Fricker writes:

Conceptual resources are resources for generating indefinitely many *new* meanings, whether as new applications of old concepts or coinings of new concepts. Such resources for meaning are generative and dynamic, never exhausted by the set of meanings actually realized in practical use at any given historical moment. (*Ibid.*)

In Section 3.2, I argued that criticality is a 'family resemblance' concept (PI §§66-67). It shares features in common with, for example, criticalness, critical thinking, critical thought, reflective thinking and creative thinking. It is right to say that we can and will produce different conceptions of criticality. We are not aiming for crystalline purity or in the business of making fine distinctions or providing exact definitions and exhaustive explanations (PI §§107-109; and II: xi, 171). Turning our examination round, we rest content with workable conceptions, meaningful descriptions and insightful illustrations. This is what gives the concept of criticality its fluidity and mutability.

Indeed since we work in different philosophical frameworks, different conceptions of criticality will continue to emerge, and, as John Rawls says, the roles to which these conceptions play and the sets of principles they have in common will together shed light on the concept itself (Rawls 1972: 5-6). In *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls'

exploration into the concept of justice results in ‘justice as fairness’ as the most workable conception of justice for him (*Id.* 11-17). He makes the point that just because we have different conceptions of justice does not mean we cannot agree, hypothetically, that ‘institutions are just when no arbitrary distinctions are made between persons in the assigning of basic rights and duties and when the rules determine a proper balance between competing claims to the advantages of social life’ (*Id.* 5). Rawls is drawing on H. L. A. Hart’s analysis of justice.

In *The Concept of Law*, Hart shows how different conceptions of justice, different principles of justice, elucidate the idea of justice. Justice is, he says, ‘traditionally thought of as maintaining or restoring a *balance* or *proportion*’ (Hart 1961: 155). From this we draw a further conception, a precept, that we ‘Treat like cases alike and different cases differently’, but this leaves open the question of how we decide what resemblances and differences between human beings are relevant for these purposes (*Id.* 155-156). The law itself cannot settle what resemblances and differences between individuals count as relevant (*Id.* 157). Other conceptions include compensation for injury as well as restoration of the moral status quo (*Id.* 160-161). Yet the demands of these conceptions of justice ‘may conflict with other values’ (*Id.* 161). He offers the example of a sentencing judge who, on the basis of general deterrence, imposes a harsher sentence than would ordinarily be given in similar cases. Sometimes ‘other values’ are cloaked under the notion of ‘public good’ or ‘common good’ which, as Hart rightly criticises, entail degrees of ambiguity and arbitrariness unless the interests of all the margins of society have first been considered (*Id.* 162-163).

The purpose of our detour into the concept of justice vis-à-vis Rawls and Hart is to show how different conceptions of justice, many of which share complimentary

features, help explain what we mean by justice. More importantly, the conflicts between these conceptions and other values, the common good for instance, enable us to see justice in practice and offer meaningful opportunities in which to address situations of oppression, discrimination, suffering and other forms of injustice. Criticality as a concept, it seems to me, is exploratory in analogous ways.

One important reason why we can justify providing new and different ways of interpreting the idea of criticality is that it is such a difficult one to tackle in the first place. In part, this is because criticality is not a mature concept with fixed boundaries (Raiskums 2008: 95). Criticality criss-crosses different fields of knowledge and engenders different and potentially competing conceptions. Also much of the educational policy driving it, as we saw in Chapter 2, is not well supported by theoretical or practical concerns. There is, therefore, a genuine need to bring clarity and coherence to the educational concept of criticality.

#### 4.2.2 The pathology of criticality: provisionality and iterability

Our aim, to be clear, is not to produce an all-inclusive definition of criticality. That would be impossible and utterly pointless since we encourage the concept's growth and flexibility, its distinct though related uses in theory and in practice. Its conceptions and re-conceptions will always operate in contest since they remain open to their own critique and re-assessment. They serve as bridges and are waiting to be built, knocked down and rebuilt, for they connect our ways of knowing with the paths we choose to walk along in the world. Our meanings of criticality are at best temporary and remain open to reinterpretation.

Theodor Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* demonstrates how our meanings of concepts are only provisional and unable to capture the entirety of the objects they seek to identify. 'Negative dialectics is a phrase,' he says, 'that flouts tradition' (Adorno 1973: xix). 'Objects,' he continues, 'do not go into their concepts without leaving a remainder' (*Id.* 5). His notion of non-identity, which we raised in Section 3.3, makes plain that concepts do not exhaust the things conceived, the objects to which they refer.

Also concepts refer to non-conceptualities such that every concept is intertwined with a non-conceptual whole (*Id.* 11-12). Turning our philosophical compass towards non-identity, Adorno insists, 'is the hinge of negative dialectics' (*Id.* 12). In this sense, then, dialectics becomes 'suspicious of all identity' (*Id.* 145). Even the concept of freedom when posed positively is a fiction. 'Freedom can be defined in negation only, corresponding to the concrete form of a specific unfreedom' (*Id.* 231). Subordinated women, marginalised Indigenous persons and dislocated refugees, as we referred to in Section 3.4, are oppositional social movements in the process of negating their conditions of unfreedom. Adorno writes:

But freedom itself and unfreedom are so entangled that unfreedom is not just an impediment to freedom but a premise of its concept. (*Id.* 265)

Adorno's point is that we do not need to strive for unity (*Id.* 5). Our concepts are no less adequate for any perceived failure to lock them into tight definitions or dress them up with fancy labels. And this is why the concept of criticality need not be formally shoved into any special category or taxonomy. Nor can we unseal a concept contained within a well-guarded safe-deposit box by the turning of only a single key or entering only a single number (*Id.* 163). Drawing on Walter Benjamin's idea of

constellations (which we will see in a moment), there are, on the contrary, different keys and numerous combinations of numbers that unlock a concept. Becoming aware of the constellation surrounding a concept means we are able to relate the concept to other concepts, an object to other objects and one experience to other experiences.

Viewing the constellation as a whole allows us to see the concept's meaning.

Adorno's reasoning applies equally when we ask what is thinking or what do we mean by critical thinking.

'What is called thinking?,' Martin Heidegger rightly says in his lectures, 'can never be answered by proposing a definition of the concept *thinking*, and then diligently explaining what is contained in that definition' (Heidegger 1968: 21). Ludwig Wittgenstein stands as authority on the same point (PI §§107-109; and II: xi, 171).

Not surprisingly, when we address the concept of critical thinking, as I intimated in the opening chapter, educational theorists—some of whom crave for such generality (Kim 2019: 211)—are divided on its nature and meaning especially when they concentrate on areas of disagreement rather than agreement (Cosgrove 2011: 345).

Some point to the concept's vagueness (McPeck 1981: 1-2; Moore 2013: 506-507; and Tahirsylaj and Wahlström 2019: 485); its general contested nature (Kim 2019: 211; Pithers and Soden 2000: 238; and Winch 2009: xi); or simply assert that in higher education 'we have no proper account of it' (Barnett 1997: 2) or that criticality 'lacks a theoretical and conceptual grounding' (Davies and Barnett 2015: 5).

To reiterate, then, we are not 'craving for generality' (BB 17-19). We are not looking for something in common to all our conceptions of criticality. We are not trying to unveil the concept's hidden essence. Nor are we attempting to reduce the phenomena of criticality into a unifying set that would have a general applicability in solving all

problems and have a consistent reach across all subject domains. Criticality is, on the contrary, a family resemblance concept and there are family likenesses among its diverse conceptions. But there are also dissimilarities. We also take Adorno's cue that the objects we are perceiving will more than likely go into their respective concepts whilst leaving remainders (Adorno 1973: 5).

Now we turn to Benjamin's analogy of constellations. 'Ideas are to objects,' Benjamin writes, 'as constellations are to stars' (Benjamin 1998: 34). In order to apprehend criticality, justice or beauty, let us say, we need to discern the relationships between their conceptual elements which we can mark 'as points in such constellations' and which are most evident at the extremes (*Id.* 35). The depth in our understanding comes from viewing the constellation as a whole including any encroaching asterisms. The patterns we are able to perceive inform our subsequent discourses. Benjamin continues:

Just as a mother is seen to begin to live in the fullness of her power only when the circle of her children, inspired by the feeling of her proximity, closes around her, so do ideas come to life only when extremes are assembled around them. (*Ibid.*)

Our interest is, again, to develop an interpretation of criticality that fertilises its potential for growth and mutability within criticality scholarship. Thus we are open to alternative conceptions of criticality and different ways of knowing. Here I am acknowledging the currency of Williams' perception that 'our thinking begins, inescapably, in *responsibility*—in a response that is at the same time an infinite openness to what is still to come' (Williams, E 2018: 102). The importance of thinking that calls for an understanding and reconciling of events that are present and



those that are yet-to-arrive and its implications for democratic and social justice decision making cannot, in my view, be overstated.

#### 4.2.3 The influence of critical thinking and informal logic

What follows is an overview of the ways in which theorists operating in the fields of critical thinking and informal logic conceptualise the idea of criticality. My criticism of what some of them have to offer is twofold. First, there is a tendency to search for a definition at the expense of an openness to working with other conceptions of criticality. Such a craving for generality needs to be tempered to cater for alternative conceptions. And second, some theorists approach the concept of criticality from perspectives that limit a critical being's capacity to take transformative action. Martin Davies and Ronald Barnett rightly point out that definitions of criticality are often remiss by not including in their 'scope any sense of actual or potential *action*' (Davies and Barnett 2015: 14). After all, there is much more to criticality, as I argued in Chapter 3, than critique and reflection though both aspects are of fundamental importance in their own right.

By way of background illustrations of the history and the cross-over between the critical thinking and the informal logic movements are provided by Ennis and Siegel (Ennis 2011a: 5-8; and Siegel 1988: 5-31). For present purposes, our lens turns on Ennis, McPeck, Paul and Siegel. In the next section we highlight other pertinent views on the concept of criticality.

#### 4.2.3.1 Robert Ennis

Ennis published his original conception of critical thinking in 1962 defining it as the ‘correct assessing of statements’ (Ennis 2011a: 9). Influenced by the later Wittgenstein, he brought out its approbative feature as well as the importance of detailed criteria for making decisions, the need for good judgement in applying such criteria, and attention to the credibility of sources (*Id.* 9-10).

Ennis was later to revise his definition, ‘Critical thinking is reasonable reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do’ (*Id.* 10).<sup>2</sup> He offers this as a ‘defensible positional definition’—by which he means a ‘definition that takes a position on some issue for which rational arguments can be offered’ (*Ibid.*). He supplements this conception with explicitly detailing critical thinking dispositions and abilities; qualifying deductive reasoning; considering how we ascribe assumptions; the expansion of inference-to-best-explanation in working with hypotheses; equivocation and ‘impact equivocation’ in particular; and value judgements (*Id.* 10-12; and see the Appendix at 15-17).

Ennis has since streamlined his conception of general critical thinking which incorporates interdependent and overlapping sets of 12 critical thinking dispositions and 18 critical thinking abilities (Ennis 2015: 32-44) and he presents a vision of how these general critical thinking dispositions and abilities can be included in higher education programmes aimed at teaching criticality across the curriculum (Ennis 2018).

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<sup>2</sup> See also Ennis 2011b: 5; Ennis 2015: 32; and Ennis 2018: 166.

We examine some of Ennis' general critical thinking dispositions and abilities later in this chapter but at this juncture raise some preliminary issues with his overall approach to criticality. First, his conception of critical thinking displays a desire to reduce aspects of criticality into unifying sets that have a general application across the curriculum. Ennis plainly craves for generality. He is, at the same time, searching for a universal definition (Kim 2019: 211) and seeking to buttress it with a rationalistic basis (Moore 2013: 507). In fairness, though, he acknowledges that the traditional dispute as to 'whether critical thinking should be taught in a separate course or infused in existing subject-matter courses . . . neglects the possibility of the combination of both in co-ordinated ways that complement each other' (Ennis 2015: 44). Also he admits that while he conceives of his 'general critical thinking abilities and dispositions' as not being subject-specific, there do exist 'subject-specific critical thinking abilities and dispositions' (Ennis 2018: 169).

Second, Ennis' conception of criticality being reasonable reflective thinking focusing on what we should believe or do does not take the critical thinker that one important step further and commit her to action that might be called for in the circumstances (*Cf.* Davies and Barnett 2015: 11). His focus is, to be sure, on the individual rather than the social context in which critical thinkers live (*Cf.* Burbules and Berk 1999: 49). Ennis rightly refers to dispositions such as being alert to alternatives, being open-minded, taking a position and changing it when the evidence and reasons are sufficient, trying to 'get it right' and employing one's critical thinking abilities (Ennis 2015: 32) but in my view this does not go far enough. The link between theory and practice in respect of what matters in the real world is still not being made. Even taking a position and changing it (*Id.* 36-37) will not, by itself, make that transition complete. Intellectual virtues such as courage, open-mindedness and a willingness to

take risks and to try and change things for the better are also required. As I hinted in Section 2.1, the critical thinker needs to practise working on herself (CV 16).

Third, some of Ennis' examples appear to over-complicate matters. For instance, in explaining what he means by his 11<sup>th</sup> critical thinking ability to 'define terms, and judge definitions', he offers to his fellow jurors the following definition of the standard of proof required in an involuntary manslaughter trial, 'To prove a proposition beyond a reasonable doubt is to offer enough evidence in its support that it would not make good sense to deny that proposition' (Ennis 2015: 41). There, he suggests, it gave jurors the comfort they needed to continue with their deliberations. All he needed to say, and for that matter all that the trial judge would now make explicit to the jury in his or her summing up, is: 'Are you sure of the defendant's guilt?'

Finally, and this connects with Section 5.3, Ennis' approach is consistent with a rationalistic conception of thinking (Williams, E 2016: 12-15). The orientation, as Williams explains, is driven by rational, logical procedures that form the edifice for correctly assessing statements and reasonable reflective thinking (*Id.* 12). This attraction to rationalism (which ranges from purely deductive, *a priori* reasoning through to the principles of informal logic) seduces theorists including Siegel (*Cf.* Moore 2013: 507; and Williams, E 2016: 12-14).

#### 4.2.3.2 *John McPeck*

McPeck, in sharp contradistinction, flatly denies that criticality can be universalised. He argues that 'thinking is always *about* something' (McPeck 1981: 3). There is a logical and grammatical connection between the act of thinking and the concrete

particular that is being thought about and, therefore, to suggest that one could teach generalisable critical thinking skills divorced from specific content is misconceived and incoherent (*Id.* 4-5 and 158-159). ‘Critical thinking,’ McPeck continues, ‘always manifests itself in connection with some identifiable activity or subject area and never in isolation’ (*Id.* 5). It is, in other words, context dependent. It requires ‘knowing something about the field in question’ (*Id.* 7) and, in particular, ‘knowledge of the epistemic foundations of that field’ (*Id.* 155).

This raises an important connection between criticality, knowledge and information. Criticality is more closely related to the concept of knowledge than that of information—a distinction we take from John Seely Brown and Paul Duguid’s *The Social Life of Information*. In much the same way that knowledge catches something that information does not (Brown and Duguid 2000: 119), so too does criticality. Criticality, like knowledge, ‘entails a knower’ (*Ibid.*). The critical thinker’s knowledge (of particular disciplines and their epistemic foundations) is ‘hard to pick up and hard to transfer’ (*Id.* 120). It must be digested, and not merely held; and it demands one’s ‘understanding and some degree of commitment’ (*Ibid.*)

For McPeck, then, criticality is ‘the appropriate use of reflective scepticism within the problem area under consideration’ (McPeck 1981: 7). His notion of reflective scepticism ‘tempered by experience’ (*Ibid.*)—where the critical thinker has ‘both the disposition (or propensity) and the relevant knowledge and skills to engage in an activity with reflective scepticism’ (McPeck 1990: 21)—is a helpful insight into thinking. However his method is still tailored towards a rationalistic conception of criticality as is evident in his suggestion to express the concept ‘formally’ as:

‘Let X stand for any problem or activity requiring some mental effort.

Let E stand for the available evidence from the pertinent field or problem area.

Let P stand for some proposition or action within X.

Then we can say of a given student (S) that he [or she] is a critical thinker in area X if S has the disposition and skill to do X in such a way that E, or some subset of E, is suspended as being sufficient to establish the truth or viability of P. (McPeck 1981: 9)

Criticality is ‘compatible with rationality, and with reasoning generally’; it is a dimension of rationality, he says, but not coextensive with it (*Id.* 12-13). Now, as Williams rightly maintains, our purpose is not to ‘argue against *rationality*’, as if one could; rather, we are properly concerned with articulating conceptions of thinking that do ‘*justice to the ways human thinking actually works*’ (Williams, E 2016: 3). Even rationality itself is, likewise, a family resemblance concept and no less susceptible to rival interpretations.

To me, at least, there is considerably more scope to criticality than the rigidity implied by McPeck’s conception. He summarises:

The phrase, ‘reflective scepticism’ captures the essence of the concept, but a more complete description would be something like ‘the disposition and skill to do X in such a way that E (the available evidence from a field) is suspended (or temporarily suspended) as sufficient to establish the truth or viability of P (some proposition or action within X).’ (McPeck 1981: 13)

In his defence, McPeck stresses that formal and informal logic is not sufficient for thinking critically; that the teaching of criticality does not guarantee success; and that even where student (S) is a critical thinker in area X, he or she may not be in areas Y or Z (*Id.* 9-10 and 13). His definition in terms of ‘the propensity and skill to engage in an activity with reflective scepticism’ (*Id.* 152) still does not take stock of the critical

being who is moved to change the world. We make reference back to Section 3.4 in which we spoke of the critical being taking up the gauntlet thrown down by Karl Marx in his eleventh thesis on Feuerbach (Marx and Engels 2010: 5), the importance of connecting theory and praxis (Gadotti 1996: 83) and of the need to cut our teeth on the struggles and wishes of our age (Fraser 1989: 113).

McPeck's restatement of his view of critical thinking<sup>3</sup> still remains limited by his concern for the critical thinker knowing 'what and when it might be reasonable to question something'—an understandable preoccupation with critique and, possibly, internal reflection, but no more (McPeck 1990: 28). Remarkably, he concludes his earlier work with the admission that he has 'said virtually nothing about the dispositional aspects of critical thinking' since, in his view, there was 'sufficient confusion over the meaning of critical thinking, and particularly over the nature of the skills involved, to warrant special treatment of this topic' and that it was essentially an empirical matter (McPeck 1981: 161-162). *Contra* McPeck, our concern is not so much with 'what makes people want to use the skill once they have it' (*Id.* 162). Rather, once the critical being has directed herself towards collective emancipatory action, how might criticality cultivate such action being taken. The whole critical process concerns what questions she should frame, what models she should design, what steps she should take to cooperate with stakeholders, and so on.

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<sup>3</sup> McPeck's reformulation proceeds as follows:

The intimate connection between *kinds of knowledge* and their corresponding *kinds of skills* helps to clarify my view of critical thinking . . . First, it includes a *knowledge component*, that is, knowledge-based skills whose general range of applicability is limited by the form of thought or kind of knowledge being called upon. The second component . . . the specifically *critical component*, consists of the ability to reflect upon, to question effectively, and to suspend judgement or belief about the required knowledge composing the problem at hand . . . [and] is parasitic upon the knowledge component since the epistemic status (i.e. its certainty and its vulnerability) of the different kinds of knowledge varies considerably. (McPeck 1990: 28)

#### 4.2.3.3 *Richard Paul*

In Section 3.3, we noted how a critical thinker who challenges her deeply held beliefs is engaging in what Paul calls ‘strong sense’ critical thinking (Paul 1990: 110). Paul links this conception of critical thought, internalised by the critical being in her personal and social life, with Socrates’ edict that the unexamined life is not worth living (*Id.* 113). He is right to remove ‘sophistic’ or ‘weak sense’ critical thinkers from the centre stage since they are egocentric or socio-centric (serving the interests of particular persons or closed-groups to the exclusion of others), who may have acquired a mastery of rhetorical skills but are nevertheless ill-equipped to move beyond their own frameworks of thought and engage sympathetically with the competing views of others (*Id.* 33, 51, 87-88, 109-110 and 570). Indeed developing ‘emancipatory reason’ (and critiquing one’s own cognitive and affective processes) and employing the strong sense skills and abilities to work with otherness (the interests of diverse persons or groups) is what marks out the discipline of the strong sense critical thinker (*Id.* 32-33, 51, 88, 110 and 568-569). She has developed the intellectual virtues of humility, courage, perseverance and integrity and ‘confidence in reason’ (*Id.* 33). Strong sense critical thinking is, Paul writes:

- a) an ability to question deeply one’s own framework of thought,
- b) an ability to reconstruct sympathetically and imaginatively the strongest versions of points of view and frameworks of thought opposed to one’s own, and
- c) an ability to reason dialectically (multilogically) to determine when one’s own point of view is weakest and when an opposing point of view is strongest. (*Id.* 110)



Paul takes us quite some way in providing a workable conception of criticality consistent with the would-be emancipatory aims of criticality scholarship. However, his ideal of the fair-minded, strong sense critical thinker still falls far short of any commitment to action. Also Paul's emphasis on the role of reason in critical thinking displays the continuing prominence of rationalistic ways of thinking. On his account, the critical being's toolbox would not necessarily use works of music, art, poetry or literature, for instance, in proposing alternative ways of addressing problems in our 'messy "real world" of everyday life' (*Id.* 88). Indeed while aesthetic experience and aesthetic ways of knowing are yet to be fully developed in the overall critical thinking debate, some theorists are certainly exploring it (Eisner 2005: 100-104; and Williams, E 2016). In Section 5.3.3, we will consider how such approaches serve to advance our understanding of how the human being thinks.

#### 4.2.3.4 *Harvey Siegel*

In *Educating Reason*, Siegel presents his 'reasons conception'. The 'critical thinker is one who is *appropriately moved by reasons*' (Siegel 1988: 2; and see Chapter 2 and 127). She is someone who accepts the force of 'good' reasons (*Id.* 33 and note 5 therein; and see Siegel 1989: 129) and this means she appreciates the 'connection between reasons, principles and consistency' (Siegel 1988: 34). He offers yet another formal explanation:

In general,  $p$  is a reason for  $q$  only if some principle  $r$  renders  $p$  a reason for  $q$ , and would equally render  $p'$  a reason for  $q'$  if  $p$  and  $p'$ , and  $q$  and  $q'$ , are relevantly similar. (*Ibid.*)

Siegel effectively provides an account of criticality that rests firmly on logic and epistemology (which, as we saw in Section 3.3, includes an understanding of the probative force of reasons and evidence) (*Id.* 26-27 and 35-38). Siegel has more recently clarified that his conception of criticality comprises both a reason assessment and a critical spirit component (Siegel 2017: 90). The former requires the critical thinker to justify her reasons in virtue of ‘relevant epistemic criteria, properly understood and applied’ and this ‘epistemic or evidential relation between the reason and the target’ shows the relative strengths or weaknesses of the reasons or evidence provided in support of the target. This is independent of the critical thinker’s ‘attitudes, dispositions, habits of mind, and traits of character’ (Siegel 1988: 39) which we will discuss in Section 4.3.

Moreover, the reason assessment component is concerned with someone who has a good understanding of, and ability to use, the principles governing how we assess reasons; namely: ‘subject-specific’ principles that determine how we judge specific reasons in particular contexts; and ‘subject-neutral’ (or logical) principles that apply across subject fields including those relating to deduction, induction and fallacious reasoning (*Id.* 34-35). Importantly, Siegel rightly suggests that there is ‘no *a priori* reason’ for giving priority to either set of principles since the context will determine the degree to which they are relevant in justifying our beliefs and actions (*Id.* 35).

Now, whereas McPeck argues that criticality is a dimension of rationality, though not coextensive with it (McPeck 1981:12-13), Siegel, employing a different conception of rationality, elevates criticality as ‘its equivalent or educational cognate’ (Siegel 1988: 30). ‘Being a critical thinker,’ he elsewhere contends, ‘requires basing one’s beliefs and actions on reasons; it involves committing oneself to the dictates of rationality’

(Siegel 1989: 127). His approach to the concept of thinking is nevertheless a rationalistic one (Williams E, 2016: 15). And though I agree with Siegel's concern that the critical thinker should be 'critical about being critical', I am not comforted by his reliance on good (meta-) reasons or that it explains how *she* thinks:

There may be meta-reasons for ignoring reasons which are otherwise relevant to my beliefs and actions. Thus reason may rule the roost—we should be rational—without our becoming “rational automata”, moved solely and slavishly by devotion to reasons, with no critical insight into our relationship to reasons at various levels. Such insight is not only possible and desirable; we should strive to make it a part of the equipment of the critical thinker/rational person. (Siegel 1988:133)

Paul, on a related note, observes how Ennis, like Siegel, assumes the critical thinker has a 'clear concept of rationality and of the conditions under which a decision can be said to be “reflective”' (Paul 1990: 31). Yet there is a risk that as the standards of criticality are internalised, their application 'to action becomes more automatic, less a matter of conscious effort, hence less a matter of “overt” reflection' (*Ibid.*). My response is that we need conceptions of criticality that are alive to these difficulties and that speak to the critical being's willingness to overcome her will, to have the courage and conviction to alter the way she sees things. She needs, in effect, help to evolve into an effective reflective agent of social transformation.

#### 4.2.4 Other conceptions of criticality

In Section 3.4, I argued that issues concerning the critical being's ability to take action are gaining importance in critical education and that social justice is reliant on theorists arriving at coherent and complimentary philosophical positions and

delivering pedagogical strategies that can help turn emancipatory spirit into transformative action. Barnett develops the notion of critical action in his curriculum for a critical being (Barnett 1997: 7-8 and 102-103; and see Barnett 2015). He highlights its ‘emancipatory potential and promise’ (Barnett 1997: 82; and see 77-89). ‘Critical action,’ to be sure, ‘demands that persons fully inhabit their actions; that they are brave enough to live out their understandings in the world’ (*Id.* 107). You may recall Barnett’s comment that the student in front of the tanks in Tiananmen Square had taken this critical action as a fully-fledged critical person (*Id.* 1).

Davies and Barnett emphasise the importance of action in criticality (Davies and Barnett 2015: 11). They confirm that ‘criticality comprises—and is composed of—three things: *thinking, being, and acting*’ (*Id.* 15). Borrowing from Kant, they make the point that ‘criticality without critical thinking skills is empty; critical thinking without action is myopic’ (*Id.* 16). Indeed, the significance of criticality to enhance one’s thinking, being and capacity to take action in the world is, as we say, now being advocated by a number of scholars.<sup>4</sup>

There are, of course, variations on the themes of criticality we have explored in this chapter. Here is just a selection. Ken Brown provides an early review of the educational philosophy literature governing critical thinking (Brown 1998). He offers the insight that critical thinking and its alternatives are better understood when comprehended with ‘reference to historical and cultural environments’ (*Id.* 7). Whilst appreciating the connections between the informal logic and the critical thinking movements, Trudy Govier rightly argues that criticality is much broader than, and

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<sup>4</sup> See Burbules and Berk 1999: 50-51; Eisner 2005: 103; Giroux 2107b: 632; McArthur 2010: 494 and 496-499; and Shpeizer 2018: 37.

should not be reduced to, the ‘analysis and criticism of argument’ (Govier 1989: 117). Ira Shor views critical thinking in the classroom as a ‘literate social performance enabled in an experientially and linguistically meaningful context’ in which students are empowered to challenge underlying social, political and cultural assumptions and ‘imagine alternatives to the status quo’ (Shor 1996: 40). His Deweyan-Freirean model places critical reflection squarely with solving social justice problems (*Id.* 162-163). Christopher Winch looks at the relationship between autonomy and critical thinking in educational settings (Winch 2009). His conception of critical rationality denotes the ‘ability to employ one’s rationality in a critical way’ (*Id.* 4) whereby individuals acquire critical thinking skills, dispositions and virtues (*Id.* 33). Richard Andrews considers the importance of argumentation in higher education (Andrews 2015). ‘To think clearly,’ he says, ‘is to be critical’ and that the epithet ‘critical’ is simply redundant (*Id.* 50). Also Andrews argues that a balance must be struck between discipline-specific argumentation and generic argumentation skills (*Id.* 53 and 60-61). Peter Ellerton offers what he calls a metacognitively evaluative model of critical thinking (Ellerton 2015). It is designed to accommodate different conceptions of criticality including a ‘focus on skills, metacognition and habitual critical thinking’ (*Id.* 425).

### 4.3 Critical thinking skills, dispositions and virtues

My argument is that the notion of criticality includes groups of abilities (or skills), dispositions (or propensities) and virtues (or character traits) and that there are no sharp boundaries between them. Theorists relate to these three categories in different ways yet there is a growing consensus supporting the view that while the critical being

needs her armoury of skill sets and accompanying propensities, she also needs to foster intellectual virtues. Siegel's remarks, which includes his survey of the research literature and which follow, also speak to this. Our discussion of how these critical tools are nourished and meaningfully employed is deferred to Section 4.4.

In Ennis' streamlined conception of 'general' critical thinking, there are interdependent and overlapping sets of 12 critical thinking dispositions and 18 critical thinking abilities that are said to pertain to the ideal critical thinker (Ennis 2015: 32-44).<sup>5</sup> The abilities include argument analysis; deductive and inductive reasoning; avoiding fallacies; judging sources, values, definitions and unstated assumptions; and metacognition (*Id.* 32-33). Dispositions include taking into account the total situation; considering alternatives; being open-minded in the sense of seriously considering other points of view and in the sense of suspending judgement or changing one's position when the reasons and evidence are insufficient; trying 'to get it right'; and employing the critical thinking abilities (*Id.* 32). We have already made the criticism that such an analysis is more attentive to the individual than the wider societal and cultural context and that it ignores any call for a commitment to action on the part of the critical being.

Critical thinking skills and abilities in educational settings formed the focus of much of our discussion in Chapter 2. We saw that they proceed on the assumption that they are generic in nature and transferable across the curriculum (and this is considered further in Section 5.2.1). Our interest here is more to do with dispositions and virtues. Quite a number of theorists deal with skills, dispositions and intellectual virtues in the

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<sup>5</sup> See also Ennis 2011a: 15-18, Appendix; Ennis 2011b: 6, Table 2; and Ennis 2018: 167, Table 1, and 169.

context of criticality.<sup>6</sup> For the sake of brevity, we shall confine our analysis to Siegel's work since it touches upon many of the issues that arise in the scholarly materials.

In *Educating Reason*, Siegel's critical spirit component encompasses attitudes, dispositions, habits of mind and character traits (Siegel 1988: 39-42). 'Most fundamentally, the critical attitude involves a deep commitment to and respect for reasons' upon which we base our beliefs and actions and this, he contends, is the 'heart of the critical attitude' (*Id.* 39). Now we discuss briefly what Siegel says, in *Education's Epistemology*, about what constitutes good thinking dispositions and the relation between criticality and intellectual virtues.

Siegel offers a 'realistic' account of 'thinking' dispositions in virtue of which they are certain 'properties' that belong to thinkers; namely 'general *tendencies, propensities, or inclinations* to think in the ways attributed to them' (Siegel 2017: 50). He offers an example of Mary who is inclined, to subject to measured assessment, the veracity of things she hears or is told. Moving to 'general' dispositions, we witness a 'tendency, propensity, or inclination to behave or act in certain ways under certain circumstances' (*Ibid.*). Siegel illustrates this with sugar that has a tendency to dissolve once placed in liquid at an appropriate temperature. However, the sugar in Joe's sugar bowl, though it may have the disposition to dissolve, will not dissolve so long as he doesn't use it in his cups of coffee. That is to say, having the disposition is independent of the behaviour actually manifested (*Id.* 50-51).

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<sup>6</sup> See Andrews 2015: 57-61; Barnett 1997: 111-112; Bowell and Kingsbury 2015: 234-240; Glevey 2008: 118-122; Hamby 2015: 77-83; Hare 1999: 89-92; Maynes 2017: 116-120; Paul 1990: 160-161 and 193-203; Shpeizer 2018: 33-37 and Winch 2009: 33-36, 42-44 and 60-53.

Siegel rightly takes the view that dispositions do not need to conform to sets of formal rules or specific criteria, nor are they behaviours as such; they are simply ‘*tendencies to engage* in particular sorts of behaviors’ that can also have explanatory force (*Id.* 53). Moreover, since our dispositions can be displayed in a variety of ways, they cannot predetermine any precise form in which they manifest themselves (*Id.* 54). For example, on certain occasions Mary may simply choose to ignore what she is told and not challenge authority.

Siegel’s conclusion that thinking dispositions are not reducible to formal rules of thought or patterns of behaviour carries the significant pedagogical consequence that educators should ‘focus on student *sensitivity* to occasions in which such dispositions are appropriately exercised’ and to ‘creating conditions in educational settings favorable to their development and exercise’ all of which lend themselves to further educational research (*Id.* 55). To the question, ‘What good are thinking dispositions?’, Siegel answers, they are ‘good to the extent that they cause or bring about good thinking’ and they ‘do their job when they constitute the “animating force” that causes thinkers to think well’ (*Id.* 61). There seems to be some circularity in his argument but, for my part, I would argue that aesthetic experience, for instance, can also lend a helping hand to this animating force.

To what extent, then, is criticality comprised of intellectual virtues? For Siegel, both the reason assessment and the critical spirit components, in his conception, are jointly sufficient conditions for the critical thinker (*Id.* 91). For him, the critical spirit involves ‘*caring* about reasons and their quality, reasoning, and living a life in which they play a fundamental role’ (*Ibid.*). Yet Siegel does not commit himself to the view that the constituents of the critical spirit—many of which have arisen in this chapter



including open-mindedness, courage, inquisitiveness, perseverance, humility and charity—are intellectual virtues (*Id.* 91-92). From an educational perspective, I see no harm in accepting them as intellectual virtues. And in that regard, I agree with Tracy Howell and Justine Kingsbury's argument that intellectual virtues embody normative elements such that not exercising them in appropriate circumstances—which includes in social justice settings—constitutes a 'failing' (Howell and Kingsbury 2015: 236).

In respect of the relation between skills, dispositions and virtues, Siegel surveys the literature and makes several useful points. First, disposition and intellectual virtue should not be conflated since a person may have a disposition without the accompanying abilities and, further, he or she cannot possess the related intellectual virtue without the abilities (Siegel 2017: 96).

Second, the notion of intellectual virtues is more complex than that of dispositions. For example, is a virtuous person one who, in an Aristotelian sense, must take pleasure in the exercise of the right dispositions or, following Kant, is she allowed to exercise them merely out of a sense of duty (*Id.* 97)?

Third, Siegel claims that a person can have a 'critical-spirit-constitutive disposition even though she lacks the relevant ability'; she might be disposed to seek reasons, evaluate evidence and comply with relevant criteria but be 'very bad at these things' (*Ibid.*). I would have thought that if she is this poor in her epistemology, that the probative force of her reasons and evidence is weak, then she fails Siegel's 'reason assessment' component in any case.

The fourth point relates to one debate in virtue epistemology concerning reliabilist virtues and responsibilist virtues and Siegel sides, quite rightly, with the responsibilist camp (*Id.* 98-100). The former concern our organic abilities of cognition and

perception (for example, memory, introspection, observation and reasoning skills) to produce true beliefs; while the latter are more akin to excellences or perfections and centre upon the responsibility of a person for exercising or failing to exercise them (*Id.* 98; and see *Bowell and Kingsbury 2015: 234-235*). I think *Bowell and Kingsbury* are also right to distinguish between reliabilist and responsibilist virtues on the basis of the role they play in our inquiries (*Bowell and Kingsbury 2015: 235*) and, specifically, what function they might serve in assisting the critical being taking responsibility for emancipatory action. Democracy and social justice, rather than truth or objectivity, are the better mark for her arrow.

This brings us to *Siegel's* final question, Is the intellectually virtuous person, in virtue of her virtuousness, rational (*Siegel 2017: 101*)? Given his two-fold conception of criticality it is perhaps no surprise to learn that 'being intellectually virtuous does not entail or guarantee being rational' (*Id.* 102). Such a person must also meet the 'adequate threshold of competence with respect to the abilities captured by the reason assessment component' (*Id.* 101). On this account, the educator's role is to foster abilities supporting both reason and virtue (*Id.* 104).

#### 4.4 Who is and who is not a critical thinker?

My argument, here, is intended as a straightforward moral one, but I suspect in practice it will be extremely difficult to satisfy. Thinking about who constitutes the critical thinker should entail thinking about otherness; that is to say, worrying about whom, in our deliberations, we might inadvertently exclude and effectively silence. Indeed should we dig a little deeper and try and remember those voices, including Indigenous ones, that we may have forgotten? This is a formidable challenge since

we want to respect the critical thinker as a living embodied person. We do not want to strip away her social, economic, cultural, gender, sexual, race, ethnic and other personal attributes. Nor do we want to deprive her of her emotions, feelings, aspirations and lived experiences. Subjectivity counts. If we are serious about helping people to become critical thinkers and good citizens, then we need to allow them to be recognised for who they are (as well as encourage them to recognise and protect the interests of others).

Moreover, I agree with Emily Danvers that we should 'focus less on what critical thinking is and more on what makes it possible and excludes' (Danvers 2018: 549) since considering concrete exclusions must be a necessary step towards achieving inclusion. She also makes the valid point that we are trying to avoid the presence, indeed dominance, of a 'decontextualised critical "subject"' who is caught up in the guise of truth seeking through rational and cognitive processes (*Ibid.*). Rather, if our concern is with being critical, doing critical and having a critical voice then we must first acknowledge that 'critical bodies' are 'located in the particularities of their social characteristics and differences and the multiple intersecting impacts of these upon their own experiences' (*Id.* 558).

Critical beings are not automatons or rational abstractions but individual persons embodied with emotions and lived experiences that bear upon how they think and act. The social and historical contingency of human nature demonstrates just how much more there is to criticality (and being a critical thinker) than a rationalistic conception of thinking. Paulo Freire writes:

“*Consciousness of*, an intentionality of consciousness does not end with rationality.

Consciousness about the world, which implies consciousness about myself in the world,

with it and with others, which also implies our ability to realize the world, to understand it, is not limited to a rationalistic experience. This consciousness is a totality— reason, feelings, emotions, desires; my body, conscious of the world and myself, seizes the world toward which it has an intention.’ (Freire 2016: 50)

Enlightenment-inspired conceptions of rationality, in so far as they remain hidden behind the grandeur of neutrality and autonomy, only serve to delude us from the realities of occlusion and silencing which feminisms and critical race theories readily make apparent. Rationality unchecked, like any dressed-up theory or philosophy, may only serve to preserve the status quo (*Cf.* Loughhead 2015: 59-60). In this respect, then, critical thinking is also a Derridean ‘uncovering’ of the power relations that rationality serves (*Id.* 60-61).

When reason is coupled with my lived experiences, my feelings, emotions, passions, and dreams, I am empowered as a critical being to problematise the world and challenge oppression, domination, suffering and inequality. This critical process of linking rationalistic experience with my lived experience is key to bringing otherness to the fore and achieving inclusiveness. It allows me to build bridges with the lived experiences, fears, pain and, most importantly, hope of others. It engenders the conditions for change. It opens windows to new vistas, alternative realities. These are all features which form part of the criticality scholarship landscape.

Yet, with the exception of Paul, the scholarly literature does not speak directly to the question of otherness in negotiating or mapping out what an embodied critical thinker might look like. Now we are thinking about how she might use her relevant skills, dispositions and virtues. Barnett’s ‘critical beings’, Danvers retorts, are ‘neutral, undifferentiated bodies’; indeed, his influential work (Barnett 1997) ‘fails to interrogate

who the critical thinker is (and is not) in relation to access to power, privilege, and opportunity structures' (Danvers 2018: 549). Barnett certainly does not tackle the inclusionary/exclusionary question, but he does consider students as actors in the world, and not merely as thinkers (Barnett 1997: 103); and, writing with Davies, they rightly suggest that theorists should be cognisant of 'actual or potential *action*' (Davies and Barnett 2015: 14). Calling on critical beings to take collective emancipatory action on behalf of marginalised persons would, in my view, be putting into practice, in the form of direct action, precisely what the inclusionary/exclusionary question raises and indirectly make the critical being less neutral, more differentiated and inclusive in her thinking and behaviour. But I agree with Danvers, nonetheless, that we should seize the opportunity to properly interrogate who is and who is not a critical thinker.

Paul's 'strong sense' critical thinker, as we have seen in this and the previous chapter, possesses the 'basic drives and abilities' of his strong sense critical thinking skills (Paul 1990: 110). He writes:

Strong sense critical thinkers are not routinely blinded by their own points of view. They know that they *have* a point of view and therefore recognize on what framework of assumptions and ideas their own thinking rests. They realize they must put their own assumptions and ideas to the test of the strongest objections that can be leveled against them. (*Ibid.*)

I have suggested that Paul was right to demarcate 'sophistic' or 'weak sense' critical thinkers as persons who are self-interested and work to exclude others but that his conception of the fair-minded, strong sense critical thinker still does not envisage a commitment to action.

Finally, and consistent with my criticism of much of the literature that attends to the individual and not the wider societal and cultural context, the question of who a critical thinker is/is not assumes an almost neutral, rational thinking creature and not individual human beings with their own histories and personalities all of which emanate from the socio-cultural environment. We have seen that critical thinking for Ennis, for instance, consists of reasonable reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or what to do (Ennis 2015: 32). The ideal critical thinker possesses the manifold of critical thinking dispositions and abilities outlined in his streamlined conception (*Id.* 32-44).

McPeck views critical thinking as an ‘activity with reflective scepticism’ (McPeck 1981: 152). The critical thinker is one who has the requisite propensity and skill to engage in critical thinking together with an understanding of the subject area in which she is being critical (*Id.* 17 and 156). Further, she knows ‘what and when it might be reasonable to question something’ (McPeck 1990: 28).

For Siegel, the critical thinker is ‘appropriately moved by reasons’ (Siegel 1988: 127). She is someone who believes and acts on the basis of reasons which she evaluates, in accordance with subject-neutral (logical) and subject-specific principles, as best as she can (Siegel 1988: 34-35; and Siegel 1989: 130).

Andrews speaks to the disposition to be critical as ‘drawing on the largely European tradition of *critique*’ and includes being driven to suspicion and scepticism rather than deference to presented truths, weighing up validity claims and adopting a critical position (Andrews 2015: 58). We should say, in this context, that we accept Ifran Ahmad’s thesis that the genealogy of critique extends beyond Kant to include earlier traditions of critique in Islamic culture (Ahmad 2017).

A ‘truly critical thinker’, for *Bowell and Kingsbury*, is someone who is ‘more than simply being good at evaluating arguments and weighing evidence’ since she ‘might have those abilities and fail to deploy them in a situation in which they would be appropriate’ (*Bowell and Kingsbury 2015: 238*). They rightly contend that on a normative level this would constitute a ‘failing’ (*Id. 236*).

For *Benjamin Hamby*, an ‘excellent critical thinker’ is one who ‘not only possesses relevant skills, but also relevant personal characteristics that make her the kind of person who employs those skills appropriately in critical inquiry’ (*Hamby 2015: 80-81*). Over and above the intellectual virtues of open-mindedness, charity, and valuing fallacious-free reasoning’ (*Id. 86*), she possesses the ‘necessary and central virtue’ of a ‘willingness to inquire: an internal motivation to employ such skills appropriately, aiming toward reasoned judgment’ (*Id. 82*). Excluded from *Hamby’s* conception of the critical thinker is anyone who is not successful in cultivating the requisite abilities to arrive at reasoned judgments (*Id. 78*).

*Ellerton’s* metacognitively evaluative model of critical thinking heads in the right direction in that taking a ‘deliberate and explicit adoption of the intentional stance toward oneself’ includes evaluating ‘our own drives, desires, thoughts, and processes’ such that ‘we become the object’ for planning future events (*Ellerton 2015: 412*). Perhaps his model may cater for developing ‘effective heuristics’ (*Id. 424*) that can accommodate the interests of others in such planning.

Our conceptions of the paradigmatic critical thinker will not have solid and fixed borders. Those whom we exclude and silence, most especially inadvertently, are just as important as those we choose to include. Think, also, about those we may have forgotten. Democracy and social justice dictate nothing less. And, accepting our

premise of depositing the concept of criticality in the genre of criticality scholarship, otherness will always form an integral part of our continuing deliberations and personal reflections since the interests and perspectives of others better inform us of our own embodiment in a shared environment.

#### 4.5 Summary and conclusion

We have gazed at the nature of thinking and shown just how turbulent the idea of criticality is in educational philosophy. Yet criticality is an evolving concept. Devising fresh ways of viewing it should provide criticality with a little more clarity and make it more coherent. As for the critical being, her critical attitude is always in a process of becoming. Our concern is, quite properly, with thinking about how we can preserve and perfect this attitude. We need to think about each critical being's unique embodiment of emotions, feelings, desires, hopes and lived experiences. Also, as critical beings, we need to explore ways in which we can encourage inclusiveness in our perception of who we are and what we want to become.

In exploring our first inquiry and placing criticality under the radar primarily of educational theorists working in the traditions of critical thinking and informal logic, we found that there is a tendency on the part of some of them to search for general definitions without necessarily expressing a willingness to work with other conceptions of criticality. With the exception of McPeck, there is also an expectation that criticality can be generalised and applied across the curriculum (and we will consider this in more detail in Section 5.2.1). Also many of the conceptions offered do not speak directly to a critical thinker's capacity to undertake emancipatory or transformative action.



In Section 4.2, I argued that there is a legitimate need to provide stability and certainty to the concept of criticality but without seeking out a final, exhaustive definition.

Rather, we should respect its potential for growth and its flexibility and be open to receiving different conceptions of criticality that—like looking at the interconnectivity of the stars in Benjamin’s constellations—shed light on our intricate ways of knowing.

In the context of critical thinking and informal logic, I argued, first, that some theorists clearly manifest a craving for generality at the expense of catering for alternative perspectives; second, their focus appears more on the logical or formal aspects of criticality and less on the social, political and cultural environment in virtue of which critical beings think and act; and third, taking Williams’ cue, many succumb to the allure of rationalism and generate rationalistic conceptions of criticality that do not do justice to how the human being thinks.

Our second inquiry, in Section 4.3, concerned the relations between critical thinking skills, dispositions and virtues. Conceptions of these relations vary. Analyses tended to be more attentive to the individual often forgetting the social and cultural setting in which these abilities, propensities and character traits are deployed and, not to mention, circumstances arising that call for action in the world.

Bowell and Kingsbury offered important insights we can apply to democratic and social justice settings. First, intellectual virtues carry normative implications such that a ‘failing’ occurs whenever a critical being does not exercise them in appropriate circumstances. And second, in the reliabilist/responsibilist virtues debate, we should consider the role intellectual virtues play in our inquiries and that, perhaps, democracy and social justice rather than truth or objectivity are the more appropriate mark for the critical being’s arrow.

I argued, first, that the concept of criticality includes sets of abilities (or skills), dispositions (or propensities) and virtues (or character traits); second, that they are interrelated and not separated by sharp boundaries; and third, that while the critical being needs her armoury of skill sets and accompanying propensities, she also needs to foster intellectual virtues.

Finally in Section 4.4, in discussing the question, Who is and who is not a critical thinker?, we decided that the scholarly literature generally does not speak directly to the question of otherness. Further, the question of who is (and who is not) a critical thinker visualises a neutral, rational thinking creature devoid of any history, personality or lived experience.

I argued that however we decide upon the makeup of the critical thinker, we cannot in this process forget about people we may have excluded, silenced or forgotten. Critical thinkers are living embodied persons armed with a full complement of economic, cultural, gender, sexual, race, ethnic and other personal attributes. They are not automatons or rational abstractions.

Just like criticality has no solid conceptual markers, our conceptions of the paradigmatic critical thinker will remain open and continue to develop. Democracy and social justice demand that persons we inadvertently exclude are no less important than those we include as critical thinkers. Otherness, positioned within criticality scholarship, remains a focal point in our discussions and inward critiques since the interests and perspectives of others better inform us of our own embodiment in a shared environment. Negotiating these different viewpoints and validating them, moreover, helps to drive emancipatory change, a point we pushed earlier in Chapter 3.

This second phase of our review of the scholarly literature concerning the theory and practice underscoring criticality has continued to increase our knowledge and understanding of that concept. Our exercises in criticality scholarship, in the next chapter, focus on the idea of a critical education and of different ways of knowing. We continue to explore the question of criticality from various perspectives.

## Chapter 5      Critical education and ways of knowing

[I]n seeking the true Method of arriving at a knowledge of all things of which my mind was capable . . . I believed that I should find the four [Rules] which I shall state quite sufficient, provided that I adhered to a firm and constant resolve never on any single occasion to fail in their observance.

(Descartes 1983: 117-118)

### 5.1      Chapter overview

In Part II of his *Discourse on the Method*, René Descartes devises a philosophical method for his system of knowledge based on mathematical, geometrical and algebraic reasoning. His reliance on self-evident matters, analysis, synthesis and completeness to overcome scepticism <sup>1</sup>, which we hinted at in Section 4.2, still infects

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<sup>1</sup> René Descartes' 'true Method of arriving at a knowledge of all things' rests on a strict observance of the following four rules:

The first of these was to accept nothing as true which I did not clearly recognise to be so: that is to say, carefully to avoid precipitation and prejudice in judgments, and to accept in them nothing more than what was presented to my mind so clearly and distinctly that I could have no occasion to doubt it.

The second was to divide up each of the difficulties which I examined into as many parts as possible, and as seemed requisite in order that it might be resolved in the best possible manner.

The third was to carry on my reflection in due order, commencing with objects that were the most simple and easy to understand, in order to rise little by little, or degrees, to knowledge of the most complex, assuming an order, even if a fictitious one, among those which do not follow a natural sequence relatively to one another.

The last was in all cases to make enumerations so complete and reviews so general that I should be certain of having omitted nothing. (Descartes 1983: 117-118)

conceptions of criticality in educational philosophy. Moreover, the scientific paradigm and the desire for replicability may have gained a stronghold but they should not exclude other ways of knowing and other means of inquiry from a critical education.

In this chapter we continue our exploration into the vexed notion of thinking and present the third phase of our literature review. We take stock of the views of exponents from the critical thinking and the informal logic movements relating to field dependency and the transfer problem. We consider the views of theorists concerning the nature of teaching criticality. We continue to reflect on the diversity of ways in which human beings think and what this holds for educators. We remain guided by our inquiries into what we mean by criticality and how we use it. And we envision how the new field of criticality scholarship augments the notion's conceptualisation and usability. Indeed continuing to position ourselves in this public space our purpose now becomes two-fold.

First, we consider criticality in the context of teaching and learning. Given the prominence that the transfer problem assumes in the research literature, we confront, in Section 5.2.1, the differing positions of the generalists and the specifists (whilst acknowledging some common ground between them). Our initial question is whether the features of critical thinking (however they might be conceived and re-conceived) are generic and transversal or knowledge and context dependent. Then, in Section 5.2.2., we move on to other issues that arise in relation to how we should approach, more generally, the teaching of criticality.

Second, we consider the purchase that reason and scientific methods have in education. This raises three questions. First, why does tradition afford reason and Descartes' method such a privileged status in thinking? Second, what objections are there to the supremacy of science and the rationalistic conceptions of human thought? And third, are there any other accounts of rationality on offer? We address these \*issues in Sections 5.3.1, 5.3.2 and 5.3.3, respectively. Our approach continues to be rather eclectic. We are informed by different thinkers.

As we outlined in Chapters 3 and 4, the educational philosophy research literature confirms that criticality is a difficult concept to come to grips with. We concluded that we are warranted in exploring fresh, different ways of looking at the concept. Indeed, our discussion here of multiple ways of knowing and, with it, the expansion of our epistemological base links directly to Chapters 6 and 7 (where we draw inspiration from Paulo Freire and Ludwig Wittgenstein on the idea of criticality) and to Chapter 8 (where we signpost opportunities for further theoretical and empirical research in criticality scholarship). Our contribution to knowledge in this chapter is evidenced by what is essentially the third phase of our extensive review of the scholarly literature in which we tackle the problem of criticality from multiple perspectives.

## 5.2 Teaching criticality

Let us take the opportunity to revisit parts of our dialogue concerning the educational policy regarding criticality. In Section 1.3, we saw that national and transnational educational policy advocates the development of critical thinking and independent thought. In addition, the English National Curriculum operates on the assumption that there are sets of critical thinking skills that are generic in nature and transferable

across subject domains. This was apparent in Section 2.3.2, for example, where, in the words of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority:

Some skills are universal, for example the skills of communication, improving own learning and performance, and creative thinking. These skills are also embedded in the subjects of the National Curriculum and are essential to effective learning. (QCA 1999: 20)

You may recall that the five sets of ‘thinking skills’ (information-processing skills, reasoning skills, enquiry skills, creative thinking skills and evaluation skills) that together underpin the six cores skills are intended to help students ‘focus on “knowing how” as well as “knowing that” —learning how to learn’ (*Id.* 22). We assume the comparison is meant to distinguish, following Gilbert Ryle, experiential or non-propositional knowledge (knowing *how* to use skills) from propositional knowledge (knowing *that*) (Ellerton 2015: 415-416; and McPeck 1981: 11). Moreover, this rationale of teaching transferable general thinking skills in English primary schools is, of course, reinforced at the secondary level (QCA 2004: 21-23). Similarly, in the context of higher education, we witnessed, in Section 2.3.4, the policy of teaching transferable ‘soft skills’ for the benefit of employers which includes an ability on the part of students to think critically (BIS 2016: 5 and 43). It is also an emerging theme that economic considerations greatly influence educational policy and have the potential to minimise or limit the significance and scope of criticality.

Now in relation to the transfer problem, I argue, first, that a mixed approach to teaching criticality is the way forward. We appreciate the pedagogical ramifications of this will vary depending on the educational setting at issue (that is, whether we are talking about teaching criticality in primary, secondary, tertiary, vocational or adult

education). We also accept that cross-curricular teaching is instrumental in developing critical thought since students are forced to reconcile what may be competing criteria and methods from different disciplines and this, in turn, informs them of the limitations of their respective epistemologies. Second, I argue that context is fundamental in our thinking process. In other words, to be able to deal with real life issues critical thinkers need knowledge of the areas that relate to them and an understanding of the underlying epistemological considerations including the relevant criteria (existing and new) upon which to base their decision making. We concede the existence of general criteria of intelligibility that allow for new criteria to be developed in light of changing circumstances even if we cannot articulate the former and simply have to accept them as part of our intellectual framework. Third, I argue that experience is vital—and all the more, the better. Critical thinkers need to practise using their skills and dispositions and harness their intellectual virtues in order to become proficient. And in this last respect, as we indicated in Chapter 4, the fostering of one's intellectual virtues is of paramount importance.

In Section 5.2.2, we draw on the research literature and sketch out, very briefly, some interesting approaches to teaching criticality. They raise pedagogical methods that will, no doubt, form the subject of further theoretical and empirical research but are beyond the scope of our present inquiries.

### 5.2.1 Field dependency and the problem of transfer

The scholarly literature, as we shall see, shows an emerging consensus that a mixed approach to teaching critical thinking is the more appropriate one to adopt. I agree. There is considerable merit in combining the strengths of what both the generalists



and specificists have to offer. I say this in the hope that educators have a genuine interest in teaching criticality and are able to bring their own knowledge and expertise into the classroom.

#### 5.2.1.1 *General observations*

In *Education, Culture and Critical Thinking*, Ken Brown provides a detailed review of the general thinking skills controversy and the positions of the generalists and the domain-theorists together with a range of objections for the period up to the late 1990's (Brown 1998: 27-65). Critical thinkers are integrated within the critical traditions to which they belong and make 'creative use of a range of the powerful modes of thought and repertoires of imagery which they embody' (*Id.* 25). These abilities, Brown continues, cannot be subsumed under a set of generic skills or by the logic or methodology of each discipline (*Id.* 25-26). He therefore contends that 'the polar opposition between exponents of *general skills of critical thinking* and upholders of the *domain specificity of critical thinking* is an exaggerated antithesis' and that the concept of critical thought should be 'viewed as the characterising tradition of democratic, liberal cultures' (*Id.* 26). Further, the critical tradition, Brown argues, was invented by the Greeks (*Id.* 149-150).

Brown's work is insightful but limited in the sense that it focuses on theorists we place in the critical thinking and informal logic movements. Our investigations of the critical traditions take a wider remit. We aim to demonstrate the additional influences of the Frankfurt School of critical social theory and critical pedagogy. We also discuss the views of philosophers who stand outside these philosophies or movements. Moreover, we suggest that criticality scholarship proceeds on the basis that our

conceptions of criticality should be understood from standpoints that reflect on our historicity as well as our present-day social, political and cultural environments and which would expose modes of oppression, domination and marginalisation.

Returning to Brown's analysis, we accept that both the generalist and the domain-specific camps have something to contribute to our understanding of criticality. One further insight he gives, and which he says are 'seriously underemphasised' by both camps, is the notion that genuine critical thought allows us to create novel ways of explaining things that are already familiar to us and, also, to consider what kind of things might count as evidence in our thought experiments (*Id.* 38).

This element of creativity is, as I argued in Chapters 3 and 4, important for the critical being. This is what allows her to see things afresh, formulate new ways of tackling problems in the world, procure new meanings and new horizons, live an examined life and be a meaningful participant in society. Also thinking about what else might count as evidence frees her from the generalist's skills set and the existing criteria and methods governing each discipline. This brings context to the fore and, to be sure, opens the door to other ways of knowing in education including the aesthetic, moral, hermeneutic as well as the critical.

In the context of criticality scholarship, we continue to ask ourselves, What do we mean by criticality? How do we use it? What is its specific function in education? And what is its continuing role for citizens in society? We are mindful to keep the connections very much alive between theory and practice and to reflect upon them so as to inform policy. We also consider these questions in the context of promoting democracy and social justice.

Nicholas Burbules, we noted in Section 3.4.1, also challenges us to reflect on what we are trying to do when we are being critical (Burbules 1998: 486). Focusing on these questions, in my view, should help us find some common ground between educational theorists irrespective of which side of the line they choose to place themselves.

Ronald Barnett is critical of what he calls the transatlantic debate over critical thinking suggesting that it should have started by asking, What is it for?, and not by casting it narrowly in terms that seek to discover its nature (Barnett 1997: 64-65).

The reality is, however, and as Chapter 2 makes evident, educational policy is fascinated with the rhetoric of generic skills (including transferable thinking skills) and we need to address them. Paul Ashwin, whom we referred to in that chapter, makes a compelling attack on what he calls the myth of generic skills. He writes:

being able to describe an event in terms of a particular skill is not evidence that the skill was demonstrated in that event. After all, we can describe any social interaction in terms of as many generic skills as we have the imagination to construct. (Ashwin 2020: 19)

Anyone can formulate generic skills: thinking critically, problem solving, self-awareness, communicating effectively, and so on. We can even create a checklist and tick-off how we have applied them (or think we have applied them) in specific contexts. Ashwin offers the example of someone creating a skills checklist for use in writing up the weekly shopping (and thinking about what foodstuffs are needed, the choice of available products, any potential impact on the environment, etc) (*Id.* 20-21). But it does not follow from completing the shopping list (and, for instance, writing down how each generic skill has been used) that this written exercise demonstrates these generic skills. Ashwin rightly observes the ease with which a

category error can be committed. Our mistake is to accept a generic description of a practice for the actual demonstration of a generic skill (*Id.* 22).

#### 5.2.1.2 *Revisiting the interplay between Robert Ennis, John McPeck, Richard Paul and Harvey Siegel*

Reflecting on our discussion, in Sections 4.2 and 4.3, of some of the views expressed in the critical thinking and informal logic movements, we notice how Robert Ennis, as a generalist, is progressively altering his position. His streamlined conception of general critical thinking dispositions and abilities (Ennis 2015: 32-44) are designed to be taught across the curriculum (Ennis 2018). He rightly concedes that though they are not subject-specific, there do exist ‘subject-specific critical thinking abilities and dispositions’ (*Id.* 169). Also he acknowledges that the dispute between teaching criticality in specific courses or within existing subject-matter courses ‘neglects the possibility of the combination of both in co-ordinated ways that complement each other’ (Ennis 2015: 44).

Ennis gives some ground to John McPeck by allowing for ‘subject-specific critical thinking abilities and dispositions’ (Ennis 2018: 169). How could he not. For instance, critiquing the *ratio decidendi* (the reason or rationale for the decision) in an important legal case against the backdrop of the wider societal, cultural and political considerations pervading the *obiter dicta* (the non-binding but potentially persuasive remarks made in the course of a judgment) requires a deep level of jurisprudential thinking. But, even here, the depth of knowledge and understanding to furnish alternatives, to predict how the ratio should evolve for use in future cases, extends into

a mastery of other related disciplines (history, anthropology, politics and economics, to name but a few).

McPeck, as outlined in Section 4.2, refuses to accept that critical thinking can be universalised since ‘thinking is always *about* something’ (McPeck 1981: 3). It requires a specific context—‘knowing something about the field in question’ (*Id.* 7) and, in particular, ‘knowledge of the epistemic foundations of that field’ (*Id.* 155).

McPeck, to be sure, underscores the knowledge a person has about the object to be critically thought about. For him, such knowledge is, as Kristoffer Larsson explains, ‘the vehicle for, and the only real explanatory factor for, critical thinking’ (Larsson 2021: 320). I think most educational philosophers would now agree that if we limit the issue to the level of skills, then, without a particular context and framework of knowledge and understanding, they would simply be ‘empty’.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, Richard Paul takes issue with the ‘plausibility of placing any line of thought into a “category”, “domain”, “subject area”, or “field”, which placement provides, implicitly or explicitly, criteria for judging that line of thought’ (Paul 1990: 417). What room is left, he asks, for our notion of the ‘liberally educated person’ (*Ibid.*)? Further, just how much knowledge of a particular domain is sufficient to solve a problem in any case? These are legitimate questions.

In relation to McPeck’s formal definition (McPeck 1981: 13), I agree that general courses on formal and informal logic are not by themselves sufficient for teaching criticality. I also accept that certain skills and dispositions are developed in specific subject areas but I do not think this commits us to the view that criticality is domain-

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<sup>2</sup> See Wellington 1987: 27-29; and *Cf.* Andrews 2015: 60; Glevey 2008: 119; Jones 2015: 169; and McPeck 1981: 5.

specific and that there are no relevant abilities and propensities that are not transferable at least to some degree. Though, in fairness, McPeck does accept that in relation to multiple-problem areas ‘some kinds of specific knowledge and information will have far more transfer capacity than other kinds’ (McPeck 1990: 15-16). For him, the question becomes ‘what knowledge and information will have the most transfer’ value (*Id.* 16). I wonder how far this takes him towards criticality as it relates to our everyday problems—where, in fact, we rely on our knowledge and understanding that is often drawn from more than one domain.

Even if there can be no Renaissance men and women in our information and technological age (McPeck 1981: 7), this should not deter us from encouraging our students, as life-long critical thinkers, to acquire a knowledge and understanding of as many subject areas as they can (or at least aspects of them that are of personal interest). And, even granting McPeck’s point that the canons of validity and styles of reasoning differ from one area to another and that scientific or mathematical thinking is different from moral or literary thinking (McPeck 1990: 26 and 46-47), this does not mean that a scientist or mathematician, having gained sufficient degrees of knowledge and understanding, cannot build conceptual bridges with her ethical concerns or, say, love of poesy. Yet we need to remind ourselves that the scientist or mathematician’s internal framework will be equipped with assumptions, biases, beliefs, values, worldviews that not only influence her thinking but could always be otherwise than they are. Her knowledge and understanding are, after all, a product of her social and historical conditioning. So too are the ways in which she perceives constellations and asterisms (Benjamin 1998: 34-35).

Ennis is, it seems to me, on the right track by suggesting a mixed approach to teaching criticality whilst recognising that there exists a ‘rough continuum’ with clear examples of general and subject-specific abilities and dispositions at either end (Ennis 2018: 169). There seems no reason in principle why we cannot ‘infuse general critical thinking in subject-specific courses’, ‘promote subject-specific critical thinking dispositions and abilities’ (Ennis 2015: 44) and, I add, take advantage of cross-curricular teaching to encourage a greater depth of criticality in our students. Bringing into our teaching of the disciplines related aspects from the arts and humanities and the formal, natural and social sciences would, moreover, serve to foster, in my view, a sense of ‘critical interdisciplinarity’ (Rowland 2006: 79-80) and build a stronger foundation for metacritique (Jones 2015: 181).

In preference to the ‘domain-bound individual with subject-specific skills’, Paul favours the ‘disciplined generalist’ who has the ability to deal with ‘multiple competing view-points and theories’ (Paul 1990: 419-420). I do not think this commits him to any form of relativism since, as I have argued in Chapters 3 and 4, the critical thinker needs to be able to critique her own internal framework and be open to the competing views and perspectives of others (and of the forms of knowledge and canons of validity underpinning them). Paul is concerned with McPeck’s notion of content (within domains) if it ‘restricts us to thinking *within* as against *across* and *between* and *beyond* categories’ (*Id.* 420). For my part, how the human being thinks will, with varying degrees of emphasis, involve thinking *within* as well as *with all* the categories.

It seems to me that a mixed approach can take advantage of viewing criticality from both sides of the debate and, borrowing Barnett’s terminology (Barnett 1997: 63),

consider to what extent it is a species of thinking *sui generis* and as a form of thinking unique to each cognitive framework. Thus I share an affinity with Harvey Siegel's overall approach to dealing with the context-independent versus context-dependent debate. From an educational perspective, he writes:

the important question is not, 'Is there a generalized skill (or set of skills) of critical thinking?' but rather, 'How does critical thinking manifest itself?' The answer to this latter question is: 'In both subject-specific and subject-neutral ways, for reasons, and the principles relevant to their assessment, are both subject-specific and subject-neutral.' (Siegel 1988: 35)

Siegel's critical thinker, we noted in Section 4.4, believes and acts on the basis of reasons which she evaluates, in accordance with subject-neutral (logical) and subject-specific principles, as best as she can (*Id.* 34-35; and Siegel 1989: 130).

Nevertheless, as Anna Jones reminds us, criticality is 'disciplined in both its subject specificity and its orderliness' (Jones 2015: 169). When we learn to think critically we are operating within particular intellectual traditions which provide content and structure; only later can we contemplate critiquing them or transcending their boundaries (*Ibid.*). Criticality is thus a disciplined set of acts since it requires 'an orderliness of thinking' and 'because this order is contextual' (*Id.* 178). Further, generic critical thinking skills have their limitations. They are 'useful for generalizable contexts but only where highly specialized knowledge is not required' (*Id.* 179). Therefore both forms of critical thinking, disciplinary and generic, have their uses (*Ibid.*). I agree.

Also Jones cautions us that in terms of metacritique, the critical thinker needs a 'specialist's understanding of the disciplinary context' and an ability to 'critically



examine its assumptions and look beyond them' (*Id.* 180). Enter the mature and proficient critical being, we say.

We have taken the view that a mixed approach to teaching criticality is the better option. It will play out differently in different teaching and learning environments and, perhaps, neuroscience and psychology can speak directly to this. We may find that we should have different expectations regarding students' levels and appreciation of criticality depending on where they exist in the educational spectrum. Structural bodies of knowledge may well prove to be more significant when we move to vocational learning, adult education and higher education. Our concern is for transparency, consistency and forward planning in terms of criticality. The position we want to avoid, in terms of putting educational policy into practice, is having to teach students to unlearn mistakes as they progress through their education. It seems utterly pointless, in other words, to benchmark critical thinking and independent thought as key educational goals in, for example, primary and secondary school if we have to completely change tack when it comes to teaching criticality in higher education.

### 5.2.2 Pedagogical strategies supporting the teaching of criticality

In Chapter 2, I argued that the coherence of criticality as an educational concept has not been established by English policymakers. Chapters 3 and 4 were designed to bring it a degree of clarity and coherence. In the previous section, I argued that a mixed approach to teaching criticality is a sensible way forward. Both generalists and specifists, in other words, have something to offer and there is merit in continuing theoretical and empirical research into the possibility of combining some of their

respective ideas on how to teach criticality. The search for some common ground is important. However, the research literature is rife with ideas on teaching criticality. What follows is an indication of some of the emerging pedagogical methods.

First, as critical pedagogues, and heeding the advice of Freire and Wittgenstein, we must develop ways of teaching criticality that actually encourage students to want to think for themselves (Quinn 2000: 28-29). After all, they are not mere vessels into which information might simply be banked.

Second, critical thinking principles and strategies for teaching them must be made explicit to students so that they can have a chance to internalise them (Cosgrove 2011: 355; Ennis 2018: 172; and Green 2015: 119). There must be ample opportunities for developing their proficiency and a continuing narrative for guidance and reinforcement.

Third, where use is to be made of debating in the context of a topic, issue or discipline, we can infuse a model of 'thick' critical thinking (based on the work of anthropologist, Clifford Geertz) which can be applied in the classroom and across the disciplines (Wendland *et al*: 2015). Students learn to push past traditional binary thinking to appreciate the diversity of the intricate conceptual structures that intersect in all of our deliberations. Complexity and otherness are thereby valued.

Fourth, there is still a consensus, *contra* McPeck (McPeck 1981:159; and McPeck 1990: 5-10 and 32; and see Winch 2009: 161), that instruction in informal logic provides an effective means of teaching critical thinking skills and attitudes. Richard Andrews puts forth a case for argumentation in higher education (Andrews 2015). There should be a balance, however, between discipline-specific argumentation and generic argumentation skills. As a pedagogical strategy, Jon Avery recommends the

use of model argumentative essays on the practical application of informal logic (Avery 1994). He draws on ancient rhetoric and philosophy in Greece and Rome and makes the point that good writing and critical thinking employ abilities to organise, synthesise, analyse and evaluate phenomena and, therefore, writing styles and reasoning skills should be taught together. Sharon Bailin and Mark Battersby argue for an approach based on ‘inquiry’ that encompasses critical thinking in everyday contexts and within the disciplines (Bailin and Battersby 2015). An inquiry approach is dialectical and contextual. It is aimed at making reasoned judgements in the setting of competing arguments. It focuses on aspects common to inquiry across areas and aspects and modes of argumentation specific to any one area. Jeffrey Maynes rightly adds that we also need to teach ecologically rational heuristics (shortcuts that guide us in everyday life) so that students know how to use the tools of informal and formal logic in the right conditions (Maynes 2017).

Fifth, there is also a consensus that there should be an emphasis on metacognition in teaching criticality. Students need to assess their own learning. Peter Ellerton presents a metacognitively evaluative model of critical thinking (Ellerton 2015). It is intended to accommodate different understandings of criticality including metacognition, habitual critical thinking and a focus on skills. Paul Green argues that critical thinking courses need to respect students as life-long learners who are self-motivated (they want to learn) and are metacognitive (know how to self-monitor and develop strategies for their learning) (Green 2015). Intrinsic motivation and becoming metacognitively proficient are key. Joe Lau argues that teaching criticality should be viewed within the larger framework of metacognitive competence (Lau 2015).

General knowledge about cognition (the psychology of learning, reasoning and problem solving), meta self-knowledge (an accurate understanding of one’s critical

thinking skills and dispositions) and self-regulation (being able to monitor and control cognitive processes and develop cognitive dispositions and personality traits) are crucial.

Finally, I close this section with Tracy Bowell and Justine Kingsbury's insight to recast the criticality pedagogue as a coach (Bowell and Kingsbury 2015). They write:

Becoming an excellent critical thinker takes hard work, and hard work needs motivation. The job of the critical thinking teacher might usefully be seen as similar to the job of the coach. Perhaps the most important part of the job is to motivate the student to practice, by keeping both the value of critical thinking and the fact that it requires practice at the forefront of the student's mind. (*Id.* 244)

### 5.3 Ways of knowing

In educational research, the rationalistic thematic and the Cartesian method have assumed a privileged position. Chapters 3 and 4 speak to constructing the philosophical edifice to house criticality in criticality scholarship and for a need to devise new ways of (re-)looking at the concept. And while accepting that reason and the scientific model have a significant role to play in education, their dominance must be critiqued and other potential accounts of rationality explored.

In Section 5.3.1, I argue, first, that the rationalistic conception of thinking and scientific methods of investigation heavily influence educational research and teaching and learning but that there is certainly no good reason to apply them unwittingly across all the academic disciplines. Second, where paradigms cross, I argue that theorists should be open to receiving the equally valid findings of others.

These findings are based on standards and methods determined by their own fields of expertise. I encourage cross-disciplinary research and teaching across the arts and humanities and the formal, natural and social sciences.

In Section 5.3.2, I argue that objections to the supremacy of science and rationalistic conceptions of human thought need to be taken seriously. This is especially the case where, for example, positivistic social science, in modelling itself on the natural sciences, threatens to undermine the subjectivity of individuals by denying the unique experiences of which we are conscious, our belief systems and our capacity to act in the world. Academic research and teaching concerning criticality should be informed by the lived experiences of persons all of whom, as I argued in Section 4.4, are embodied with feelings, emotions and desires that affect how they think and act in the world. A human being is not an automaton or rational abstraction. She is not merely an opaque phenomenon standing in need of quantification. Nor does she wish to be (further) dehumanised.

In Section 5.3.3, I argue that a critical education measures epistemic gain not simply through the sciences alone but by incorporating all our forms of knowledge and ways of knowing. We touch upon aesthetic ways of knowing. Aesthetic experience, art, music, poetry, literature, mysticism and religion serve to enhance our understanding of how human beings think and act. Moral, hermeneutic, critical and creative discourses also inform our epistemic base. We have a rich manifold of epistemologies, different opinions about what we count as knowledge and diverse criteria to substantiate it. In the public space of criticality scholarship, we make sovereign all our epistemic beliefs and practices. All our ways of knowing are treated equally.

### 5.3.1 The stronghold of reason and the scientific paradigm in education

Why is the rationalistic thematic and the Cartesian method so predominant in education? The short answer is that they are part of the tradition of Western philosophical thinking and are grounded in our concept of a liberal education. Isaiah Berlin quaintly sums up the scientific paradigm as one that dates back as far as Plato and which rests on three assumptions. For every genuine question there is only one true answer. Rational methods must be employed to arrive at correct solutions for genuine problems. And these solutions, whether we discover them or not, are true universally (Berlin 2013: 326-327).

The important point to remember is, however, that both the tradition and the concept are not static and are open to challenge by new ideas and different approaches. The opening passage, taken from Descartes' *Discourse on the Method*, is intended to show, first, just how captivating the power of reason is—especially when its precision is measured in the fields of mathematics, geometry and algebra; and second, that we manifest a tendency to rely on self-evident propositions, analysis, synthesis and completeness when investigating phenomena.<sup>3</sup>

In Section 4.2, I argued that in assessing the concept of criticality many educational theorists are seduced into rationalistic ways of thinking. They contrive conceptions that may draw on purely deductive, *a priori* reasoning or, more generally, the principles of informal logic. Their rationalistic accounts of thinking, as Emma Williams rightly argues, do not necessarily do justice to the ways in which we actually think (Williams, E 2016: 3 and 12-15). To be sure, a critical education can

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<sup>3</sup> See Descartes' four rules (set out in Chapter 5, Footnote 1).

accommodate, as we have suggested, other ways of knowing and alternative methods for conducting our inquiries. Rationalistic conceptions, in other words, only present pieces, albeit important pieces, of the jigsaw puzzle of how human beings think.

For Descartes, the path that alleviates the birth pangs of scepticism and leads towards knowledge is reason exercised within the confines of his method. To what extent this has been employed, as envisaged in Part VI of his *Discourse on the Method*, so as to ‘render ourselves the masters and possessors of nature’ (Descartes 1983: 142) is quite another issue. In any event, in education the allure of reason and the scientific method of inquiry as the leading exemplar still have a very weighty purchase.<sup>4</sup> Of course how we reason and what scientific (and other) methods we employ to conduct our inquiries will vary considerably depending on whether we are working in mathematics (the ‘queen of the sciences’), one of the natural sciences or, more particularly, one of the social sciences.

‘The game of science,’ Karl Popper rightly remarks, ‘is, in principle, without end’ (Popper 2002: 32). On his analysis, an empirical hypothesis that ‘has proved its mettle’ will not drop out unless and until either it is replaced with a better, more testable one or else one of its consequences is falsified (*Id.* 32 and 65-66). Our present array of scientific knowledge is never settled. Its undergirding theories and hypotheses are always subject to refinement and refutation. In the social sciences, Popper continues, we are like piecemeal social engineers who tackle the practical problems of our time by applying the ‘theoretical methods which are fundamentally the same in *all* the sciences’—the methods of trial and error; inventing hypotheses

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<sup>4</sup> See Cohen *et al.* 2011: 12-13; Eisner 2005: 37-38, 48, 96 and 100-102; Hall and Tandon 2017: 12; Jeffries 2016: 331-333; Noddings 2016: 108, 134-140, 172 and 220-224; Robson 2011: 20-21 and 30-31; Williams, E 2016: 12-15 and 28-30; and Winch 2009: 49.

capable of being practically tested; and submitting them to such tests (Popper 2011: 428).

Moreover, in the social sciences it is only recently that the controversy plaguing qualitative data analysis has started to abate and the sands shift towards using mixed methods for conducting empirical research.<sup>5</sup> In this realm, we are confronted with real life problems as they relate to lived experiences. And, the scientific paradigm is, I would suggest, starting to lose some of its footing. As Berlin retorts:

[W]hat in ordinary life we call explanations often rest not on specific pieces of scientific reasoning, but on our experience in general, on our capacity for understanding the habits of thought and action that are embodied in human attitudes and behaviour, on what is called knowledge of life, sense of reality. (Berlin 2013: 43)

Depending on the philosophical framework in which we locate ourselves, we may even find that there is an excess of scientism from which we need rescuing (Davis 2018). Budd Hall and Rajesh Tandon are right to insist, in my view, that there exist ‘other epistemologies and other ways of representing knowledge’ and that they should no longer be excluded or silenced (Hall and Tandon 2017: 7). Science, they continue, should not exercise a monopoly over what counts as truth and as falsehood to the detriment of other forms of knowledge—‘Popular, lay, plebeian, peasant, indigenous knowledge and the knowledge of the disabled’, for instance (*Id.* 12). Otherwise we are still practising what Boaventura de Sousa Santos condemns as ‘abyssal thinking’ (Santos 2007: 45-47; and Santos 2014: 118-120). Where we, effectively, divide social reality into two realms by drawing an ‘abyssal line’ and legitimising science,

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<sup>5</sup> See Cohen *et al.* 2011: 21-26; Flick 2014: 25-36; Noddings 2016: 134-140; Punch and Oancea 2014: 338-342; and Robson 2011: 17-20, 25-29 and 162-164.



philosophy and religion on ‘this side of the line’ but banish other epistemologies to ‘the other side of the line’ allowing them to vanish, become non-existent. From a democratic and social justice perspective any such dividing line between acceptable knowledge on this side of the line and no real knowledge on the other side is without merit and should be erased.

Now we raise two preliminary issues. First, science. What is science? Why? What counts as scientific knowledge? What assumptions and biases govern not only our answers to these questions but how we go about settling them? And what about the manner in which we have asked these questions in the first place?

Second, indigeneity. How can Western constructs of knowledge cater for the variety of Indigenous forms of knowledge on offer? Are there not limits of the category of science just as there are ‘limits of the category of “the Indigenous”’ (Martin *et al.* 2020: 313)? In Section 3.4 we suggested how criticality scholarship is open to privileging Indigenous philosophies and practices.

And while the scientific tradition has made significant contributions in education, as ‘an exclusive mode of inquiry,’ Elliot Eisner explains, ‘it possesses limits’ and we need to broaden the base from which our educational investigations can move forward (Eisner 2005: 46). Similarly, Nel Noddings counsels that ‘*scientific* research is just one form of educational research’ (Noddings 2016: 140). She suggests that provided a piece of research conforms to the highest standards governing its form and the appropriate method has been employed then it should count as being ‘scientific’ (*Ibid.*). I would alter her nomenclature and consider them equally valid or justified rather than scientific.

Viewed in this way, all forms of educational research—and, for that matter, all areas of teaching and learning—can accommodate, for example, aesthetic, moral, critical and creative ways of knowing and commensurate methods of inquiry. There simply is no need to rely slavishly on traditional rationalistic approaches and scientific methods in all our intellectual pursuits—and much less so, I would argue, in the arts, humanities and social sciences. Put another way, there needs to be a workable symmetry between our respective ways of engaging with and reporting on phenomena.

And although, for instance, aesthetic and scientific paradigms may compete, they do not reach the level of ‘incommensurability’ that could trigger a ‘paradigm shift’ (Kuhn 2012: 149). Where, however, these paradigms cross paths, as they invariably will, theorists will have to display a degree of openness to respect the progress made in such cross-paradigmatic settings as well as in the respective fields they traditionally call home. Joint research projects and cross-disciplinary teaching (across all the sciences and the arts and humanities) would certainly speak to this.

Further, such an open and genuine approach to knowledge participation and sharing is consistent with Hall and Tandon’s notion of ‘knowledge democracy’. They argue that knowledge democracy ‘acknowledges the importance of the existence of multiple epistemologies, or ways of knowing’; ‘affirms that knowledge is both created and presented in multiple forms’ including poetry, drama, music, ritual and story; that all forms of knowledge can lead to emancipatory action; and that ‘everyone who needs knowledge will have access to it’ (Hall and Tandon 2017: 13).

Finally, and by way of reiteration, scientific methods, Hans-Georg Gadamer reminds us, may well have their place, but they are not the sole guarantors of truth:

Throughout our investigation it has emerged that the certainty achieved by using scientific methods does not suffice to guarantee truth. This especially applies to the human sciences, but it does not mean that they are less scientific; on the contrary, it justifies the claim to special humane significance that they have always made. The fact that in such knowledge the knower's own being comes into play certainly shows the limits of method, but not of science. Rather, what the tool of method does not achieve must—and really can—be achieved by a discipline of questioning and inquiring, a discipline that guarantees truth. (Gadamer 2013: 506; and see 576)

### 5.3.2 Objections to the rationalistic conceptions of human thought and the scientific paradigm

Before turning to consider some of the objections to the supremacy of science and the rationalistic conceptions of human thought, we acknowledge the fundamental importance of all the formal, natural, social and applied sciences as they contribute, in meaningful though quite different ways, to our understanding of the human condition. Mathematics and logic, armed with their abstract concepts and distinct methods, have a purchase. Empirical studies in the natural sciences and the social sciences (subject to our caveat on the necessity of preserving subjectivity) have significant roles to play.

For example, during the recent Covid-19 pandemic medical research was (and continues to be) involved in ongoing diagnosis of the disease and its variants, continuing drug-trials for vaccines and the administration of vaccines and boosters. Engineering in research and development is continuing to manufacture personal protective equipment for health and care workers on the frontline and suitable testing apparatus (lateral flow tests, polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests and the like) for use in hospitals, care homes and out in the general community. National and

international concerns for the mental health and general well-being of critical workers on the frontline and of all non-essential workers and their families living through varying degrees of government sanctioned lockdown measures across the globe only serve to reinforce our appreciation not just for psychology but all forms of knowledge including aesthetics, hermeneutics and morals.

Friedrich Nietzsche's genealogical method is a striking assault on the grandeur of reason and science since it attests, in his view, to their capacity, together with Christianity, to impoverish human life (Nietzsche 1967: I: §13 and III: §§23-25). For example, in *Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche points out that 'there is no such thing as science "without any presuppositions"' and that whoever tries 'to place philosophy "on a strictly scientific basis", first needs to stand not only philosophy but truth itself *on its head*' (*Id.* III: §24). The convictions of science, as Nietzsche sees it, do not have an automatic 'right to citizenship', but must 'remain under police supervision, under the police of mistrust' (Nietzsche 2001: §344). Science must, in other words, always rest on a 'faith' (Nietzsche 1967: III: §24; and Nietzsche 2001: §344); its functionality is dependent on serving an external 'value-creating power' (Nietzsche 1967: III: §25). And if God is no longer the 'highest court of appeal', Nietzsche asks, a new problem arises, what is 'the *value* of truth' (*Id.* III: §24).

'To turn *philosophy* purely into a science,' Nietzsche finally warns, 'means to throw in the towel' (Nietzsche 1979: §55). Similarly, the later Wittgenstein shares a passionate hatred of the thought that philosophy might ever become the handmaiden of science. One main source for our craving for generality, which surfaced in Section 4.2, is 'our preoccupation with the method of science' (BB 18). 'Philosophers constantly see the method of science before their eyes,' he says, 'and are irresistibly

tempted to ask and answer questions in the way science does' (*Ibid.*). For his own part, Wittgenstein confesses:

I may find scientific questions interesting, but they never really grip me. Only *conceptual* and *aesthetic* questions do that. At bottom I am indifferent to the resolution of scientific problems; but not the other sort. (CV 79)

Freire also has an affinity with aesthetic curiosity and is very much conscious of the limits of science and, as we saw in Section 4.4, of rationality. In *Pedagogy of the Heart*, he returns to his origins and takes refuge under the shade of a mango tree—a powerful symbol of his existence in the world and the necessity of being in communion with other human beings (Freire: 2016: 1, 5 and 7). It is here that he contemplates his recurring utopian dream of a democratic world free of oppression, domination and inequalities. Freire's encounter with the mango tree is not just an existential experience but an aesthetic one producing pleasure, the feelings of being totally subsumed, and the intoxication of colours, smells and bird songs (*Id.* 1 and 7). Stopping and gazing upon the sunset and watching the speed and elegance of the clouds as they traverse the skies are just as touching, to him, as the beauty unfolding in a work of art and are all instances of the marriage of aesthetic and epistemological curiosity (*Id.* 51).

Given Freire rightly perceives himself to be a totality—that is to say, someone who knows with his entire body, feelings, passions as well as with reason (*Id.* 2; and see 50), it is no surprise that he takes umbrage at 'any type of scientific criticism that insinuates' a lack of rigour in the way he thinks and problematises the world (*Id.* 2). Moreover, it is precisely this lack of a dichotomy between a rational abstraction on the one hand and a person with emotions and lived experiences on the other, that allows

for the progressive educator to ‘challenge the learner’s naive curiosity in order that they can both share criticalness’ and, among other things, unveil ‘hidden truths’ (*Id.* 52).

Naïve curiosity, aesthetic curiosity and epistemological curiosity are interlinked.

Moulded in a dialogic experience, in appropriate pedagogical conditions, they nurture the critical being. This is why Freire fears that epistemological curiosity ‘achieved by an educational practice reduced to pure technique may be an anesthetized curiosity, one that does not go past a *scientific* position before the world’ (*Id.* 54). There is force in his objection that focusing primarily on scientific methods or techniques will put our students into a permanent slumber. Such an educational approach would have no room for a ‘utopia of solidarity’ or even a ‘critical posture’ (*Ibid.*). Worse still, their technical training would be ‘directed toward survival in a world without dreams’; a world without protest, agitation or challenges to conceptions of the truth; a world of silence (*Id.* 54-55).

Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics is ‘concerned with the “scientific” integrity of acknowledging the commitment involved in all understanding’ (Gadamer 2013: xxv). Our ways of knowing are, to be sure, dependent upon aesthetic and linguistic, and not only scientific, conceptions of truth. And, the ‘aesthetic experience’, in particular, ‘regards what it experiences as genuine truth’ (*Id.* 76). The aesthetic mode of being is not to be understood as merely an experience of reality or modification of it; it is not an imitation, illusion or dream of an independent reality that somehow loses its truth ‘on waking’ (*Ibid.*). On the contrary, it has its own reality, its own truth. Gadamer blames the ‘domination of the scientific model of epistemology’ for ‘discrediting all the possibilities of knowing that lie outside’ its methodology (*Ibid.*). What remains

important for the human sciences, as we noted above, is the ‘discipline of questioning and inquiring’ (*Id.* 506).

*Truth and Method* represents Gadamer’s hermeneutical reflection on our different ways of knowing, on what we mean by scientific experience and aesthetic experience. It is an attempt to transcend ‘the restricted horizon of scientific theory and its methodology’ (*Id.* 577). In order to gain a fuller understanding of the human condition we must, therefore, engage in different experiences and explore new horizons while accepting the conditions and limits of each. Gadamer writes:

In a time when science penetrates further and further into social practice, science can fulfil its social function only when it acknowledges its own limits and the conditions placed on its freedom to maneuver. (*Ibid.*)

In my view, Gadamer properly objects that science and its methods can ‘guarantee truth’ (*Id.* 506) and that it should have unrestricted access to resolving ‘the whole of human life’ (*Id.* 577). He wants to keep scientific theory and methodology constantly in check, ‘under the police of mistrust’, as Nietzsche would say (Nietzsche 2001: §344). We are ‘credulous,’ Gadamer warns, ‘about science to the point of superstition’ and precisely on this ‘depends the fact that the tension between truth and method has an inescapable currency’ (Gadamer 2013: 577). Similarly, Wittgenstein cautions theorists about being transfixed by the ‘method of science’ and thereby ‘irresistibly tempted to ask and answer questions in the way science does’ (BB 18). And finally, Gadamer would no doubt empathise with Freire’s pressing concern that our epistemological curiosity, not to mention aesthetic curiosity, is not anaesthetised by following only pure scientific techniques in our intellectual inquiries (Freire 2016: 54).

Writing about research methods in education, Louis Cohen, Lawrence Manion and Keith Morrison conveniently collect, from their perspectives, a number of criticisms concerning positivism and the scientific method (Cohen *et al.* 2011: 14-15). The following grounds are attributed: the rise of reason and progress in science and technology dehumanise the individual and reduce his or her capacity for subjectivity (Søren Kierkegaard); quantification, computation and statistical theory become ends in themselves and ignore the realities of the human condition (Edmund Ions); elevating the status of science to an almost religious level, scientism, and promoting it as the only epistemology of the West has the unfortunate consequence that all knowledge is equated with scientific knowledge and thus destroys moral, aesthetic, hermeneutic, critical, creative and other forms of knowledge (Jürgen Habermas); scientism reduces behaviour to technicism and silences its humanistic aspects (Habermas and Max Horkheimer); and positivistic social science discounts the meanings subjects hold as part of their world-constructions forgetting that social science stands in a subject-subject relation to its field of study while natural science assumes a subject-object relation (Anthony Giddens). Ultimately, the ‘findings of positivistic social science’, the authors conclude, are so ‘banal and trivial’ that they are of little use to teachers, social workers, managers and others for whom they are intended (*Id.* 15).

With all these criticisms in mind, it would appear that Popper’s vision of the ‘game of science’ may not have an end as such (Popper 2002: 32) but it certainly has its limits. Popperean social engineering (Popper 2011: 428) with its principle of falsifiability and the plethora of random control trials cannot, with respect, present the full picture of the human condition. On the contrary, we are more like artists preparing a collage, who painstakingly and meticulously collect and paste aspects of our subjectivity and



the narratives of our lived experiences in the hope that the totality of the essences depicted serve to tell a well-informed story of human life.

Our leitmotif expresses all the tones of knowledge. But some of them are very difficult to hear given how deeply the bass tone of science rings. And in educational research, removing the shackles of science is no easy feat. ‘An ounce of data,’ as Eisner remarks, ‘has been worth a pound of insight’ (Eisner 2005: 55). He laments:

To do research in education has meant to do scientific work. To have evidence regarding educational practice has meant to have scientific evidence. Those interests and aptitudes for studying educational phenomena veered toward the humanistic or artistic modes of conception and expression have, unfortunately, too often been thought of as woolly headed, impressionistic romantics. (*Ibid.*)

Yet things are starting to change. Albeit slowly. Eisner and Tom Barone have shown this with their work on arts based research (Barone and Eisner 2012). Maxine Greene continues to offer her insight into utilising literature, poetry, sculpture, dance and other creative and imaginative works to envision new vistas, of ‘looking at things as if they could be otherwise’ (Greene 1995; Greene 2011; Greene 2017; and Greene 2018). Also, most welcomed, in the context of cross-disciplinary teaching and collaborative research, is Stephen Rowland’s conception of critical interdisciplinarity which brings the different disciplines into a critical relationship with each other, challenges its exponents to sharpen their respective identities, and posits that not all problems are clearly divisible but depend on different theoretical positions and underpinning assumptions all of which need to be confronted and negotiated (Rowland 2006: 71, 78-81 and 92).

### 5.3.3 Possible alternative accounts of rationality

Thinking about the significance of our different ways of knowing will always pervade the education of philosophy literature. Limits are just that. Limits. And we will always be challenged to push them. The entire history of Western philosophy attests to shifting epistemological paradigms. Our attention now is focussed on the possibility of deriving alternative accounts of rationality. We have hinted, in this and the previous chapter, that we are interested in accommodating different ways of knowing since they unlock new conceptions of criticality. Here we rely on the aesthetic as one prime example. We also explore this motive further in Chapter 7 when we consider the importance of aesthetics, ethics and religious belief in Freire and Wittgenstein's thinking. We repeat that criticality scholarship aims to make sovereign and equally valid all our epistemic beliefs and practices. Also we take Santos' cue to move beyond abyssal thinking and welcome the diversity of the world and our ecology of knowledges. We endorse, as we did in Section 1.8, his principal argument:

that there is no global social justice without global cognitive justice, that is to say, that there has to be equity between different ways of knowing and different kinds of knowledge. (Santos 2014: 237)

Educational policy, practice and theory, Williams insists, are based on two unfounded assumptions, stemming back from at least Descartes: first, thinking is a matter of representation, or correspondence between mind and the world; and second, the human being is the thinking subject disengaged from the world which he or she is free to assess rationally and from a distance—both of which she rightly challenges (Williams, E 2016: 34; and see 28-34). Her aim is to offer a re-conceptualisation of

criticality that ‘gets us beyond the straits of rationalism and opens up new possibilities for thinking in education’ (*Id.* 3). Her fresh account of the human being who thinks is informed by the works of Gilbert Ryle, Martin Heidegger, John Austin and Jacques Derrida. I certainly agree with Williams that, as educational philosophers, we remain open to alternative conceptions of criticality and different ways of knowing.

Lynn Fendler challenges how we use the concept of theory in education and posits alternative ways in which it could be used (Fendler 2012). The etymology of education, she emphasises, has ‘educere’ as its root (to lead out, to draw out) as distinct from instruction (which builds) (*Id.* 322). I agree that a critical education should focus on this sense of ‘drawing out’. It is a means of transcending limits and reaching new horizons.

Two aspects of Fendler’s analysis bear this out. First, the language of ‘exceeding’ allows us to push ‘beyond current limitations, beyond what is known and imaginable, and toward the realm of not-yet’ (*Ibid.*). Exceeding enables us to challenge what counts as theory and reach towards new horizons of thought; to be creative and imaginative beyond the reproduction of knowledge within existing boundaries (*Id.* 322-323 and 326). Second, by using the language of ‘generating’, we can reframe the role of theory and interpret educational theory as generative; no longer bound by authoritarian versions of knowledge production, generating ‘opens up possibilities for more distributed, democratic creations of knowledge’ (*Id.* 324 and 326). Generative texts, like art and poetry, are designed to generate emotive responses and ‘evoke and inspire ways of thinking’ (*Id.* 324). When I read a novel, for instance, I make connections with myself, my experiences, and my projections in the future.

Generative texts do not bank knowledge from the top down, as it were; rather, they ‘educate in an open and distributed way’ (*Id.* 326).

Educational theory that incorporates the language of ‘exceeding’ and ‘generating’, to be sure, creates environments in which we can push beyond the confines of rationalism and claim, as valid, other ways of thinking. Here it is tempting, indeed vital, to connect generative texts with aesthetic ways of knowing. In my view, the aesthetic experience and all discursive and non-discursive forms of aesthetic knowledge inform our understanding of the human condition.

Eisner argues that theory in education, as in art, can help us see more, for it ‘provides some of the windows through which intelligence can look at the world’ (Eisner 2005: 40; and see Barone and Eisner 2012). By widening our epistemological base, we appreciate that the forms of knowledge we create, including the forms of art and science, offer ‘unique opportunities for conceptualization and expression’ (Eisner 2005: 46-47). Music, ritual, drama, dance, cinema, paintings, sculptures and other non-discursive forms of knowledge, in particular, all contribute to our overall understanding of what it means to be a human being—to think, to feel and to live.

Eisner’s alternative approach starts from the artistic paradigm and not the scientific one (*Id.* 48). He debunks the assumption that education should be based on discovering scientific methods to be applied universally in all classrooms, and focuses on notions of ‘educational connoisseurship’ and ‘educational criticism’ (*Id.* 40-41 and 48-51). That aesthetic ways of knowing have not been taken seriously is something Eisner attributes to the theory of Forms and Plato’s reliance on rationality and distrust of the passions (*Id.* 100-101). We have inherited a contradiction between the expressions knowing and aesthetic, and viewed science as the primary route to

knowledge while the ‘aesthetic aspects of human experience are considered luxuries’ (*Id.* 100 and 102).

*Contra* Plato’s simile of the Ship of State in the *Republic*, 488a-489d (Plato 1997: 1111-1112), the ‘true captain’ is able to navigate the ship and hearten harmony among the sailors precisely because of a depth of knowledge and understanding that spans not only reason, scientific methods and navigational and management skills but also our full embodiment of emotions, feelings, hopes and dreams and lived experiences.

I juxtapose Plato’s philosopher king with Freire’s humanist who knows with his or her own entire body, feelings, passion and also reason (Freire 2016: 2 and 50). The link between epistēmē and the passions need never have been so forcefully broken. As Freire reminds us, epistemological curiosity ‘does not refuse to consider the aesthetic. On the contrary, it avails itself of it’ (*Id.* 51).

Furthermore, aesthetic ways of knowing are just as complex and multi-layered as rationalistic ones. In Section 4.2, we referred to Rudolf Otto’s concept of the numinous. His conception of ‘mysterium tremendum’ (Otto 1950: 7, 12-24) represents an aesthetic way of thinking that can be applied to a manifold of phenomena. Consider, by way of illustration, Ishmael’s vivid depiction of the ‘whiteness of the whale’ in Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick* (Melville 1953: 169 and 175-176). There we experience what is both miraculous and horrific about the Albino whale and its sublimity. *Moby Dick* is the symbol of the mysterium tremendum.

Ishmael reflects:

Is it that by its indefiniteness it shadows forth the heartless voids and immensities of the universe, and thus stabs us from behind with the thought of annihilation, when beholding the white depths of the milky way? Or is it, that as in essence whiteness is

not so much a colour as the visible absence of colour, and at the same time the concrete of all colours; is it for these reasons that there is a dumb blankness, full of meaning, in a wide landscape of snows—a colourless, all-colour of atheism from which we shrink? (*Id.* 175-176)

Within the undergrowth of the unfolding epistemological landscape lie the seeds of the aesthetic waiting to germinate. Reflecting on the ways in which ‘*human thinking actually works*’ (Williams, E 2016: 3) demonstrates how rationalistic accounts of thinking are limited. Rationality also allows for aesthetic ways of knowing. Indeed, we could say that aesthetic conceptions are just as integral to the jigsaw puzzle of human thinking as the traditional rationalistic ones. In addition, our forms of knowledge extend beyond the discursive into the non-discursive—that is to say, from poesy and literature to music, ritual and art, for instance.

Both discursive and non-discursive forms depicting the aesthetic experience have the power to ‘bring the world into the classroom’ (*Cf.* Peterson 2017: 386). This is extremely important if we are serious about wanting our pupils to become critical beings. Mediating the aesthetic in the theoretical construct of the classroom, as Freire contends, demands that epistemological curiosity avail itself of the aesthetic (Freire 2016: 51). It is here that the lived experiences of teachers and students alike serve to co-create meanings and envision realities free of oppression and inequality.

Photographs and YouTube videos are readily accessible tools for engaging in dialectical thinking. In Section 3.3, we made reference to Stuart Franklin’s photograph of the lone student protesting defiantly in front of the tanks in Tiananmen Square (Barnett 1997: i). The student, on Barnett’s interpretation, takes this critical action as a fully-fledged critical person (*Id.* 1). I agree. His non-violent resistance

stands in stark contrast to the bloody events that had just unfolded in Beijing. Waiting to be elevated to great heights by the media were this man's strength of character and his sheer rebelliousness.

Yet the photograph 'unconceals' an aesthetic experience. It reveals a harsh truth of humanity. Underlying social existence are a multitude of tensions, contradictions, oppressions, suppressions, occlusions and silences. Here a lone, and unarmed, civilian dares to challenge a mighty state power. Standing defiantly before a modern-day Leviathan this critical being is armed with only his shopping bags. He even manages to mount a tank and engage with one of its crew before fleeing into the ostensible safety of the crowd—an illusion that had been severely shattered only the previous day when the authorities had violently cracked down on the protesting crowds. In Tiananmen, the student-led pro-democracy revellers had been no match for the tanks and their cannons. The very high death toll speaks to that. Long may the spirit of the 'tank man' live within the Gate of Heavenly Peace! The existential happening caught in Franklin's still image, as Nigel Warburton rightly argues, takes on a wide 'symbolic significance' (Warburton 2003: 131). It is reminiscent of many of the horrors of war, including the conflict in Ukraine, to which we bear witness.

But let us change tact and reflect on a more familiar though just as real and significant story. It could be the life story of any one of us. We refer to Vincent van Gogh's *A Pair of Shoes* and specifically to Heidegger's interpretation of it. There are a number of such paintings (Wartenberg 2005: 151) but for ease of reference we use the one shown in figure 5-1.

Figure 5-1 Vincent van Gogh (1886) *A Pair of Shoes*



©Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

What aesthetic experience springs forth in van Gogh's artwork? The peasant's shoes are painted on an abstract background with little more presented by the artist. On the face of it, a simple visual presentation. Or is it? This is what Heidegger has to say on the matter:

From out of the dark opening of the well-worn insides of the shoes the toil of the worker's tread stares forth. In the crudely solid heaviness of the shoes accumulates the tenacity of the slow trudge through the far-stretching and ever-uniform furrows of the field swept by a raw wind. On the leather lies the dampness and richness of the soil. Under the soles slides the loneliness of the field-path as evening falls. The shoes vibrate with the silent call of the earth, its silent gift of the ripening grain, its unexplained self-refusal in the wintry field. This equipment is pervaded by uncomplaining worry as to the certainty of bread, wordless joy at having once more withstood want, trembling before the impending birth, and shivering at the surrounding



menace of death. This equipment belongs *to the earth* and finds protection in the *world* of the peasant woman. From out of this protected belonging the equipment itself rises to its resting-within-itself. (Heidegger 2002: 14)

To discover the ‘equipmental being of equipment’, means ‘bringing ourselves before the van Gogh painting’ (*Id.* 15). Without introducing a preconceived framework that would otherwise obstruct our view, the painting discloses, it unconceals, ‘what the equipment, a pair of peasant shoes, in truth *is*’ (*Id.* 16). This is the *aletheia*, or the ‘unconcealment of beings’, such that ‘when there is a disclosure of the being as what and how it is, there is a happening of truth at work’ (*Ibid.*). We allow van Gogh’s painting to ‘tell us what equipment is’ (*Id.* 18). The truth of the being sets itself to work and a being, a peasant’s pair of shoes, ‘comes to stand in the light of its being’ (*Id.* 16). In this way, Heidegger argues, art is the ‘setting-itself-to-work of truth’ (*Id.* 19).

Moreover, the ‘social practice of art,’ as Thomas Wartenberg explains, ‘involves the creation of work—that which is *set up*—that reveals the truth about human life’ (Wartenberg 2005: 155). By being intimately and uncomfortably proximate to the painting, we allow it to speak to us and unconceal its truth, disclose what is real within it (Heidegger 2002: 15 and 19). Only then can we see the equipment that connects with the earth—not to mention the peasant’s world (our world) in eternal strife with the earth (*Cf.* Wartenberg 2005: 153-155). Only then can we imagine the life of the peasant woman who *lives in* these shoes. Only then can we reflect on our own lives and give them meaning. Perhaps some of us can even be grateful that we don’t have to wear her shoes. Maybe?

We also appreciate Gadamer's conception of aesthetic experience given that, in his view, it can be 'preserved and dissolved'. Aesthetic experience, he writes, can be 'taken out of the continuity of life and at the same time related to the whole of one's life' and that since 'it is itself within the whole of life, the whole of life is present in it too' (Gadamer 2013: 63). He continues:

Aesthetic experience is not just one kind of experience among others, but represents the essence of experience per se. As the work of art as such is a world for itself, so also what is experienced aesthetically is, as an *Erlebnis* [experience], removed from all connections with actuality. The work of art would seem almost by definition to be an aesthetic experience: that means, however, that the power of the work of art suddenly tears the person experiencing it out of the context of his life, and yet relates him back to the whole of his existence. (*Id.* 63-64)

For Gadamer, then, the significance of aesthetic *Erlebnis* is infinite—it has no need to 'combine with other experiences to make one experiential flow' since it always represents and contains the 'experience of an infinite whole' (*Id.* 64). Clearly, there is much more to unpack in the thinking of Otto, Heidegger and Gadamer. Williams extends us that courtesy in relation to Heidegger but also weaves together Derrida, Austin and Ryle (Williams, E 2016). She succeeds in opening our eyes to other ways of thinking in education.

Let us conclude this section by citing Theodor Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*. He provides a critical perspective on the aesthetic and examines the relations between artworks and the socio-historical contexts in which they arise. His aesthetic reflections are significant for criticality scholarship since, in his view, artworks challenge the status quo, expose hidden contradictions and envision transformative change.

‘The concept of art,’ he rightly says, ‘is located in a historically changing constellation of elements’ and therefore ‘refuses definition’ (Adorno 2020: 2). This is reminiscent of our discussion, in Section 4.2, of how Adorno builds on Walter Benjamin’s analogy of constellations (Benjamin 1998: 34-35). Indeed, ‘art mocks verbal definition’ (Adorno 2002: 176). ‘Art,’ Adorno insists, ‘is the social antithesis of society’ (*Id.* 8). He writes:

The definition of art is not fully encompassed by aesthetic semblance. Art has truth as the semblance of the illusionless. The experience of artworks has as its vanishing point the recognition that its truth content is not null; every artwork, and most of all works of absolute negativity, mutely say: *non confundar.* (*Id.* 132)

‘Artworks, even the affirmative,’ Adorno continues, ‘are a priori polemical’ (*Id.* 177).

He foretells that:

By emphatically separating themselves from the empirical world, their other, they bear witness that that world itself should be other than it is. They are the unconscious schemata of that world’s transformation (*Ibid.*)

Our present concern was to discover possibilities within the research literature for devising alternative accounts of rationality and for rectifying the asymmetry of science and the other academic disciplines. We definitely found some. This chapter speaks to making considerable epistemic gains if only we attribute value to all our different forms of knowledge and their respective canons of rigour and legitimacy. We foregrounded aesthetic ways of knowing and the vitality of aesthetic experience. In this spirit we continue our hunt for new horizons. And, in Chapters 6 and 7, we resume our trek in search of alternative interpretations of criticality.

## 5.4 Summary and conclusion

We have contemplated what a critical education might look like and reflected on different ways of knowing. In Section 5.2.1, we addressed the notion of field dependency and the problem of transfer from the perspectives of the generalists and the specificists. We asked whether aspects of critical thinking are generic and transversal or knowledge and context dependent. I argued, first, that we should adopt a mixed approach to teaching criticality. We noted the importance of cross-curricular teaching in so far as it encourages students to reconcile competing criteria and methods from different disciplines as well as respect the limitations of each of their epistemologies. Second, I argued that context is critical in our thinking process. To make decisions concerning real life issues means being informed by different areas of knowledge and underlying epistemological considerations. We conceded that our intellectual framework employs general criteria of intelligibility which allows us to adapt existing criteria, and create new ones, upon which to base our decision making. Third, I argued that experience, putting into continual practice what we learn as critical thinkers, is vital. And this means practising skills and dispositions and fostering intellectual virtues.

We found there is a growing consensus among educational philosophers in favour of using a mixed approach to teaching criticality. There is considerable merit, I contended, in combining the strengths of what both the generalist and the domain-specific camps have to offer.

Section 5.2.2 surveyed the philosophy of education research literature to unearth ways in which criticality might be fruitfully taught. We noted how the pedagogical methods and strategies identified would most likely form the subject of further theoretical and

empirical research. We focused on six approaches that would complement our work in Chapters 3 and 4 (which sought to bring clarity and coherence to the educational concept of criticality). My own view is that critical pedagogues are akin to mentors who encourage students to desire to think for themselves, choose to be cognisant of developing their own critical framework and value the enduring importance of criticality in their own lives.

Turning, next, to the question of how human beings actually think—indeed given our findings in Chapters 3 and 4 that there is a need to explore fresh, new ways of looking at criticality—our journey navigated the significant, though assertive, role that reason and the scientific paradigm play in education; several critiques of that dominance; and, finally, other potential conceptions of rationality.

In Section 5.3.1 we asked why the rationalistic thematic and the Cartesian method is so predominant in education. Our immediate response was that they are part of the tradition of Western philosophical thinking and are grounded in our concept of a liberal education. This was vindicated by the research literature. I argued, first, that even though the rationalistic conception of thinking and scientific methods of investigation have gained a stronghold, their influence should be questioned in the social sciences and, particularly, in the arts and humanities. Second, I argued that there needs to be intellectual solidarity and openness where paradigms cross since all findings are potentially equally valid ones. Again we welcomed cross-disciplinary research and teaching across the arts and humanities and the formal, natural, social and applied sciences.

Section 5.3.2 considered several objections to the supremacy of science and rationalistic conceptions of human thought. At the outset, we conceded the important

contribution all the sciences make to our understanding of the human condition. I argued, first, that the objections arising in the research literature merit serious consideration. This is certainly the case, we contended, where subjectivity is under threat. All disciplines are better informed by the lived experiences of all persons who are inescapably embodied with feelings, emotions and desires that affect how they think and act in the world. Our leitmotif, I argued, expresses all the tones of knowledge—including the critical, aesthetic, hermeneutic, moral and creative—notwithstanding some of them are very difficult to hear over the depth of the bass tone of science.

Objections, in various forms, pervade the literature. We glimpsed some from Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Freire and Gadamer together with a summary of other positions given by Cohen *et al* (2011). We concluded that Popper's 'game of science' has necessary limits.

Next, we considered the possibility of alternative accounts of rationality in Section 5.3.3. I argued that a critical education measures epistemic gain not simply through the sciences alone but by incorporating all our forms of knowledge including the aesthetic, moral, hermeneutic, critical and creative. We took the aesthetic as an illustration of this but made the point that all are sovereign, all are equally valid.

We broadened our epistemological base. Indeed, we encountered alternative approaches and conceptions offered by Williams, Fendler, Eisner, Otto, Heidegger, Gadamer and Adorno. The research literature offers numerous possibilities for deriving new accounts of rationality and for restoring the symmetry between the sciences and the other disciplines.

Finally, I argued that buried within the undergrowth of the unfolding epistemological landscape are the seeds of the aesthetic waiting to germinate and that rationality reserves a special place for it to prosper only given the chance. We maintained that aesthetic conceptions are just as integral to the jigsaw puzzle of human thinking as rationalistic ones and that our forms of knowledge extend beyond the discursive into the non-discursive.

Having changed tact and steered away from policy in Chapter 2 towards theory and practice in Chapters 3 to 5, our evolving dialogue has added substantially to the philosophy of education literature. Our deliberations, our exercises in criticality scholarship, have been highly beneficial given our knowledge and understanding of criticality has increased substantially. To reiterate, this chapter has contributed to knowledge by addressing the question of criticality from multiple perspectives and so added a third important phase to our extensive literature review. Our discussion now progresses, in Chapters 6 and 7, towards complimentary ideas offered by Freire and Wittgenstein. Thereafter, in Chapter 8, we will bring together our discussions concerning policy, theory and practice and speak to policymakers, educational theorists and other stakeholders interested in developing and promoting the educational notion of criticality.

## Chapter 6 Freire, Wittgenstein and Criticality

While a practice of learning and teaching, educational practice is gnoseologic by nature. The role of the progressive educator is to challenge the learner's naive curiosity in order that they can both share criticalness. That is how an educational practice can affirm itself as the unveiling of hidden truths.

(Freire 2016: 52)

I should not like my writing to spare other people the trouble of thinking. But, if possible, to stimulate someone to thoughts of his own.

(PI Preface x)

Anything your reader can do for himself leave to him.

(CV 77)

### 6.1 Chapter overview

The opening passages from Paulo Freire and Ludwig Wittgenstein underscore, rightly in my view, the importance of students and readers learning to think for themselves and for taking personal responsibility for developing their own criticality. Freire is a leading pedagogue in his own right and provides ample illustrations of how to teach well. Wittgenstein's remarks demonstrate more how teaching and learning actually work. Taken together both have much to offer all stakeholders involved in planning, delivering and reflecting upon a critical education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



In Chapter 2 we examined the educational policy concerning the centrality of criticality. Despite it being a significant educational aim, we found that criticality suffers from a lack of clarity and coherence. In Chapters 3 to 5 we considered what educational theorists and practitioners mean by criticality and how they use it. The three phases of our exhaustive literature review synthesised different ways of approaching the concept and broadened our knowledge and understanding of it. Now in this chapter and the next, our dialogue extends to Freire and Wittgenstein and we seek to complement our review of policy, theory and practice with their mutually enriching ideas and methods. This work represents original research.

Our thought experiment, in Section 3.1, is designed to provoke the reader, as a critical being, to imagine what critical action he or she might take in those uncanny circumstances—to unearth the manifold of contradictions plaguing existence and consider ways of dealing with them from the perspective of criticality scholarship. With this in mind, our purpose in this chapter is two-fold.

First, we seek to witness, from a pedagogical standpoint, the lived experiences of Freire and Wittgenstein on the basis that this will contribute to our understanding of criticality. We see Freire as a humanist, radical educator ambitious to liberate oppressed, dominated and marginalised people. Next, we reflect on Wittgenstein's life as an Austrian schoolteacher and Cambridge professor and his use of examples taken from teaching and learning. What transpires is that both thinkers approach philosophical problems from a pedagogical perspective.

Second, building on our observations in educational philosophy of who the critical being is, we consider the ways in which Freire and Wittgenstein address how best to develop such a person's criticality. Connections are made with the Delphic maxims,

‘Know thyself’ and ‘Nothing overmuch’, Freire’s notion of conscientização and Wittgenstein’s position on encouraging others to think for themselves.

The insights we gain from pedagogic readings of Freire and Wittgenstein lead us, in the next chapter, to amplify our epistemic outlook and imagine other ways of knowing which, as we saw in Chapter 5, include the critical, aesthetic, hermeneutic, Indigenous, moral and creative. Indeed, Chapter 7 includes a discussion of the importance of aesthetics, ethics and religious belief for both thinkers.

## 6.2 Looking at Freire and Wittgenstein’s lived experiences through pedagogic windows

In this section we explore the pedagogic experiences of Freire and Wittgenstein and reflect on how they influence their lives as critical beings and the way they approach philosophical problems—many of which fall within the sphere of educational philosophy. The success of his literacy programmes in Brazil and Chile greatly reflects Freire’s philosophy and concern for human emancipation. His empathy for marginalised persons results in students learning to read the world and the word and imagine alternative realities free from oppression and domination. Wittgenstein’s way of doing philosophy and his sincere concern for conceptual and aesthetic questions are connected with his life as a teacher in Austria and Cambridge. He is driven to show his students and readers how they can enhance their own criticality.

In Section 6.2.1, I argue, first, that Freire is determined to find ways to help liberate marginalised people. His initial concerns are directed towards illiterate adults in Brazil and economically deprived peasants in Chile but he advocates a utopian dream

of a democratic world free of oppression, domination and inequalities. Second, I argue that Freire supports his mission for collective emancipatory action with a critical pedagogy that empowers students to read the world and the word. Through genuine dialogue, conscientização, praxis and love, notions we introduced in Chapter 3, Freire teaches students to problematise their worlds and tear apart the existential conditions that form their bonds of subjugation. He is approaching their problems of oppression, domination and marginalisation from a pedagogical perspective. This is his style of engaging with philosophy. Third, I argue that Freire, as a progressive educator, deplores the traditional banking model of education and promotes problem-posing theory and practice. And finally, I argue that Freirean critical pedagogy should not be viewed as a mere method. Nor should it be at risk of being domesticated or employed solely in the classroom. Rather, a critical education demonstrates a variety of methods and is connected with ways of living. It intertwines educational theory and practice empowering students to think for themselves, reinvent themselves, and serves as a praxis where critical or emancipatory action can be taken.

In Section 6.2.2, I argue that Wittgenstein's work should be given a pedagogic reading since he addresses philosophical problems from a pedagogical perspective. The numerous illustrations drawn from his life as a teacher concerning literacy, poetry, numeracy, mathematics, mechanics, geography and music all speak to this. Also, I argue briefly, that a pedagogic interpretation is consistent with Wittgenstein's contention that philosophy is therapeutic and with his desire to help us obtain an *Übersicht* of language.

### 6.2.1 Freire: the humanist, radical educator

Carlos Torres surmises that ‘there are good reasons why, in pedagogy today, we can stay with Freire or against Freire, but not without Freire’ (Torres 1993: 140). Cornel West describes Freire as the ‘exemplary organic intellectual’ of our time and who adds new meaning to Karl Marx’s eleventh thesis on Feuerbach by refocusing philosophical reflection among subalterns in their everyday lives and of ‘reconceiving change as the creation of collective identities and social possibilities in history over against vicious forces of dehumanization’ (West 1993: xiii-xiv). Freire, West continues:

dares to tread where even Marx refused to walk—on the terrain where the revolutionary *love* of struggling human beings sustains their faith in each other and keeps hope alive within themselves and in history. (*Id.* xiv)

Freire is, to be sure, a radical, critical educator. His humanist philosophy is devoted to answering the central problem he poses in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*; namely, ‘How can the oppressed, as divided, unauthentic beings, participate in developing the pedagogy of their liberation?’ (Freire 2017: 22). The experiences of oppression, marginalisation and domination concern contradictions and asymmetries of power and meet head-on the borders of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual preference, ableness, age, and class. Such emancipatory pedagogy is driven, Freire confesses, by ‘my trust in the people, and my faith in men and women, and in the creation of a world in which it will be easier to love’ (*Id.* 14).

‘We need critical hope,’ Freire insists, no less than ‘the way a fish needs unpolluted water’ (Freire 2014: 2). Thus the ethical struggle for the annunciation of a freer and more inclusive, democratic society is underpinned by hope—an ontological need, he

says, that is anchored in practice (*Ibid.*). And progressive educators are duly tasked ‘to unveil opportunities for hope, no matter what the obstacles may be’ (*Id.* 3). Our struggle for hope is, he contends, permanent and which intensifies the moment we realise it is not a solitary endeavour (Freire 2016: 59).

Integral to Freire’s teaching style is his use, in culture circles, of concrete existential situations to create generative words, illustrative discovery cards and themes intended to provoke students’ modes of criticality. Examples are provided in *Education for Critical Consciousness* (at pages 55 to 78). Relating to these situations in a critical way, students reflect on their own lived experiences and their power to transform the world (Freire 2005a: 75). They reconstruct their praxis (Freire 2000: 25; and Freire 2017: 79). Learning to read and write requires them to reflect on the world they are in and with, take ownership of it, and accept that their work is a way of loving and of helping make the world a better place (Freire 2005a: 76). As Freire later explains:

Literacy, in this sense, is grounded in a critical reflection on the cultural capital of the oppressed. It becomes a vehicle by which the oppressed are equipped with the necessary tools to reappropriate their history, culture, and language practices. It is, thus, a way to enable the oppressed to reclaim ‘those historical and existential experiences that are devalued in everyday life by the dominant culture in order to be both validated and critically understood.’ (Freire and Macedo 1987: 109)

The adult literacy (or critical literacy) process as ‘cultural action for freedom’ is, for Freire, an act of knowing in which the student assumes the ‘role of a knowing subject’ in authentic dialogue with the teacher (Freire 2000: 20) and problematises the hegemonic constraints of his or her world, unveiling its hidden ‘limit situations’ (Freire 2014: 24 and 96; and Freire 2017: 72-73, 77, 82 and 141). ‘Everything,’ he assures us, ‘can be presented problematically’ (Freire 2005a: 112). Moreover, this

continually evolving process, this transformative action, involves a denunciation of the dehumanising, oppressive and unjust structures of reality and an annunciation of a more tolerable future in which our dreams can be forged (Freire 2014: 81-82).<sup>1</sup>

Conscientização is thus ‘an unfolding process that awakens critical awareness’, the critical being’s criticality, and a requirement in becoming more fully human (Kirylo 2011: 149; Cf. Apple *et al.* 2001: 130). We view ourselves as ‘beings in the process of *becoming*—as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality’ (Freire 2017: 57). We are, Freire reminds us, ‘in a permanent process of searching’ (Horton and Freire 1990: 11) and our utopian thinking remains provisional, not categorical since we are always seeking out alternative visions of reality (McLaren and da Silva 1993: 68-69). Indeed it is precisely this Freirean notion of human consciousness, as unfinished, that ‘beckons us toward emancipatory futures’ (Darder 2015: 81; Cf. Kirylo 2011: 120 and 144).

Freire’s emancipatory philosophy is, we might say, applicable to all forms of domination and oppression and occupies a space in all historical, social, cultural and political contexts. In contemporary settings, for example, his thinking is used as a basis for reinventing non-formal adult education in Nordic countries including Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden (Suoranta *et al* 2021). Freire’s critical pedagogy is likewise continuing to attract attention in East Asia, most notably in China, Japan, Korea and Taiwan (Ho and Tseng 2022).

We are glimpsing at Freire’s utopian thinking and gently gaining an appreciation of the critical pedagogy that supports the possibilities of its realisation. We see that he is

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<sup>1</sup> See also see Freire 2000: 59; Freire 2017: 11 and 60; Horton and Freire 1990: 190-191; and Kirylo 2011: 141-142.

approaching problems from a pedagogical perspective. This is why he suggests it is imperative that a biology teacher connect the teaching of biology with our historical, social, cultural and political framework (Freire 2014: 68; and Horton and Freire 1990: 104). The same reflection applies to teaching literacy since:

the reading and writing of words comes by way of the reading of the world. Reading the world is an antecedent act vis-à-vis the reading of the word. The teaching of the reading and writing of the word to a person missing the critical exercise of reading and rereading the world is, scientifically, politically, and pedagogically crippled. (Freire 2014: 68)

I agree. Also education, according to Freire, can never be neutral. Neutrality is a ‘code word for the existing system’—which is often oppressive; it ‘*is just following the crowd*’ (Horton and Freire 1990: 102).<sup>2</sup> He appreciates the political landscape in which education operates and sees himself as both an ‘educator’ and a ‘political agent’ desirous of improving our democracy (Freire 2005b: 75). Teachers, in philosophy, theology, mathematics and in all disciplines, should therefore not only be competent in their subject knowledge but develop the political clarity to expose underlying contradictions and inequalities and tease out different emotions and perspectives concerning their reality and possible transformation (Horton and Freire 1990: 104). Progressive educators must take sides and justify their choices. For Freire, then, the activity of teaching is political (Apple *et al.* 2001: 129; and Shor 1993: 27) and the practice of reading and writing becomes, in any subject domain, ‘an inherent part of reading and writing the world itself’ (Lankshear 1993: 115).

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<sup>2</sup> See also Freire 2005a: 132; Freire 2014: 69; and Horton and Freire 1990: 64 and 102-104.

Dealing, swiftly, with my third argument, Freire is a progressive educator who deplores the traditional banking model of education and promotes a problem-posing pedagogy in the manner we are recounting. This feature of his work is well documented in the scholarly literature and I will not rehearse all that the commentators say.<sup>3</sup>

Banking pedagogy preserves the status quo and involves the bank-clerk educator depositing static pieces of knowledge into the hands of docile learner-recipient-objects—as if their minds were *tabula rasae* (Locke 1996: II.i.2)—who are estopped from reflection or action; and it maintains a dehumanising dichotomy between humans and the world in which individuals are mere spectators and not recreators of knowledge but are themselves filed away aimlessly (Freire 2017: 45-52). Freirean critical pedagogy, on the other hand, seeks to deconstruct the teacher-student contradiction by making them critical co-learners and co-creators of knowledge; they become subjects in and with the world and with others; and they develop a critical consciousness with which to challenge existing hegemonies and, in solidarity, transform the world (*Id.* 53-59). Education in the traditional system is oppressive but in a problem-posing pedagogy it is a ‘humanist and liberating praxis’ (*Id.* 59) directed towards individuals becoming finished and authentic beings and creating a more humane world. The crucial point is, as Freire rightly makes later, a critical education is only possible ‘when the educator’s thinking, critical and concerned though it may be, nevertheless refuses to “apply the brakes” to the educand’s ability to think’ (Freire 2014: 108).

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Apple *et al.* 2001: 130-132; Bartlett 2005: 345-348; Bellett 1988: 134-135; Chambers 2019: 24-26; Darder 2015: 94-96 and 100-103; Gill 1993: 26-28; Kirylo 2011: 155-157; and Peterson 2017: 383 and 389-390.



This leads us to my final argument that Freire's critical pedagogy, his way of philosophising, cannot be reduced to a mere method or limited to use in the classroom but is more akin to a dialogical and critical process intimately connected with our ways of thinking, our concrete experiences, our emotions and our emancipatory dreams that each of us may pursue with the world and with others.<sup>4</sup> And, in relation to criticality scholarship's ambition to accommodate otherness, Freire's conception of 'unity within diversity', and the virtues of tolerance and respect, opens our hearts and minds to the perspectives and interests of others and invokes a common desire to drive transformative action.<sup>5</sup>

Engrained in Freirean educational theory and practice is the firm belief that unity is always possible even though it may be difficult to work in unity given differences between individuals, groups and ethnicities (Freire 2016: 43). 'Equality of and in objectives,' Freire argues, 'may make unity possible within difference' (*Ibid.*). Discriminatory and dehumanising ideology, and not human nature *per se*, is what is at issue (*Id.* 44). No matter what category of difference is being discriminated against, black, gay, female, working class, Jewish or Indigenous, we have an ethical imperative to fight, he insists, against all forms of discrimination and against the 'negation of our being' (*Id.* 45). I agree. Also it is important to reject any essentialist claim to a 'unitary experience of oppression' since there are multiple forms of discrimination, oppression and marginalisation and to remember that human suffering is not a 'seamless web always cut from the same cloth' (Freire 1993: x).

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Aronowitz 1993: 8-9 and 19; Darder 2015: 115; Giroux 1993: 177-178; Kirylo 2011: 120-121; Loughhead 2015: 69-71; McLaren and Leonard 1993: 3; and McLaren and da Silva 1993: 51 and 84-85.

<sup>5</sup> Freire 2016: 43-45 and 57; and Freire 2005b: 76-78 and 116-117.

Feminist critiques of his work<sup>6</sup>—and not forgetting Elizabeth Ellsworth’s powerful attack on critical pedagogues (including Freire)<sup>7</sup>—and Freire’s rejoinders<sup>8</sup> do not, in my view, undermine the significance that unity within diversity holds for criticality scholarship and for enhancing one’s own criticality. In Section 3.4 we referred to Nancy Fraser’s critique of Jürgen Habermas’ social theory in relation to the struggles and wishes of contemporary women. ‘Habermas says virtually nothing about gender in *The Theory of Communicative Action*,’ she notes, and yet she is willing to read that work from the ‘standpoint of an absence’, extrapolate from things he does say to things he does not and ‘reconstruct how various matters of concern to feminists would appear from his perspective had those matters been thematized’ (Fraser 1989: 114).

Similarly, bell hooks is able to read Freire from the standpoint of an absence. The ‘phallogocentric paradigm of liberation’, evident in his early work, is charitably described by her as a ‘blind spot’ in the vision of a man who has a profound insight but which, nevertheless, ought not to overshadow anyone’s capacity to learn from that insight (hooks 1993: 148). With its promotion of human liberation, Freire’s work is, she argues, a powerful gift and though it may be flawed by sexist language, it can be cleansed and sustain us in much the same way that dirty water once purified, nourishes us (*Id.* 149). ‘Paulo’s work,’ hooks confesses, ‘has been a living water for me’ (*Ibid.*). Whatever shortcomings may befall his work, Freire is a ‘foundational education thinker’ (McLaren 2000: 168).

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, hooks 1993: 148-153; and McLaren 2000: 165-166.

<sup>7</sup> Ellsworth 1989: 312-313.

<sup>8</sup> Freire 1993: x; Freire 2014: 55-58; and Freire and Macedo 1993: 172-173 and 176.

## 6.2.2 Wittgenstein: the Austrian schoolteacher and Cambridge professor

Wittgenstein was neither a successful school teacher nor a good university lecturer. Ray Monk documents how Wittgenstein, shortly after his arrival in Trattenbach, became the ‘subject of rumour and scandal’ (Monk 1991: 193-194). He discriminated amongst his pupils by favouring the more gifted boys and was perceived by others as a ‘tyrant’ (*Id.* 195). He pulled at the hair of some children, boxed others around the ears, and simply ostracised parents and colleagues alike (*Id.* 212 and 228). The final incident with Josef Haidbauer led to his inevitable resignation.<sup>9</sup> Wittgenstein’s teaching practice was not well received in Cambridge either and his provocative performances at the Moral Science Club were frowned upon by other philosophers and visiting lecturers—the most notorious of which was the poker incident with Karl Popper.<sup>10</sup> Iris Murdoch reflects on Wittgenstein’s ‘extraordinary directness of approach’ and confrontational manner and describes how she ‘always thought of him, as a person, with awe and alarm’ (*Id.* 498). One exception to the rule was of course Wittgenstein’s ‘honorary male’, Elizabeth Anscombe (*Ibid.*)

Putting these negative observations to one side (and while not excusing them) we can say that Wittgenstein nevertheless tells us a great deal about the teaching and learning process. Anscombe considers that her former professor is, like Plato, a ‘philosopher’s philosopher’—that is to say, someone ‘who sees problems, interest in which is the mark of a philosopher, and whose principal thoughts can be derived from his

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<sup>9</sup> Monk explains how in a state of sheer frustration Wittgenstein struck the sickly 11-year-old boy on the head several times causing him to collapse. Wittgenstein resigned forthwith and was later cleared of misconduct. See Monk 1991: 232-233.

<sup>10</sup> The infamous ‘Wittgenstein’s Poker!’ is a suitable illustration of the anxiety and tension often attributed to Wittgenstein (Monk 1991: 494-495). For a detailed account of the alleged incident see Edmonds and Eidinow 2001.

discussion of those problems' (Anscombe 1991: 1-2). Understanding, thinking and meaning are apt topics for philosophy but Wittgenstein's choice of reading demonstrates his clear 'philosophic bent' (*Id.* 4 and 8). How we use our words is certainly part of the story about meaning. For a large class of cases dealing with meaning, we can say that the 'meaning of a word is its use in the language' (PI §43). And although I may grasp the meaning of a word in a flash, I cannot see its whole use in that instant (PI §§138-139, 191 and 197). By inviting the reader to investigate the educational notion of reading (PI §§156-171), Wittgenstein sharpens our appreciation of the related concept of understanding. We discuss the possibility of psychological inner experiences, the practice of rule following and certain circumstances which justify my saying 'I can go on' or 'I understand the principle'. Moreover, we associate a variety of experiences with reading and yet 'reading' is not one of them. Nor is 'understanding' a name, Anscombe continues, that we can attribute to any of the experiences accompanying understanding (Anscombe 1991: 7).<sup>11</sup> Wittgenstein, as we shall see, has not only a philosophical bent but an intimately connected pedagogical outlook as well.

My principal argument, here, is that Wittgenstein's life and works should be given a pedagogic reading. Like Freire, Wittgenstein approaches the problems that concern him from a pedagogical perspective. This feature is manifest in both thinkers' styles of performing philosophy. Wittgenstein genuinely believes that a critical educator does not select food for a pupil to flatter his or her taste, but with the edifying aim of 'changing it' (CV 17). Being successful in raising the criticality of his students (and readers) is evidently something that troubles him throughout his teaching life:

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<sup>11</sup> On Wittgenstein's choice of reading see also Stickney 2008: 690-691.

A teacher may get good, even astounding, results from his pupils while he is teaching them and yet not be a good teacher; because it may be that, while his pupils are directly under his influence, he raises them to a height which is not natural to them, without fostering their own capacities for work at this level, so that they immediately decline again as soon as the teacher leaves the classroom. Perhaps this is how it is with me.

(CV 38)

It is no surprise, then, that his lectures, conversations and manuscripts are filled with an extensive array of educational ideas all of which connect with his lived experiences as an elementary schoolteacher in the Austrian countryside and as a Cambridge don. Wittgenstein's pedagogical methods for tackling philosophical questions generally employ educational terms and may involve a discussion of games, rule following, language acquisition, the roles played by pupils and teachers in the context of teaching and learning, and instruction in literacy, poetry, geography, music, numeracy, mathematics and mechanics.<sup>12</sup> Also they help to show us how we may comprehend his conception of criticality.

Wittgenstein's investigations are grammatical in the sense that they are designed to shed light on our philosophical problems 'by clearing misunderstandings away' (PI §90). But, as Gordon Baker and Peter Hacker rightly point out, the 'subject matter of philosophy,' for Wittgenstein, 'is philosophical questions' (Baker and Hacker 1985: 52; and see Glock 1996: 295). Some philosophical problems will survive from one generation to the next while others will be replaced with new ones (CV 25). Further, Wittgenstein wants to teach us a certain way of thinking about philosophical questions

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<sup>12</sup> Examples abound in *The Big Typescript TS 213*, the Preface to the *Dictionary for Elementary Schools*, *Philosophical Remarks*, *Philosophical Grammar*, *Wittgenstein's Lectures Cambridge 1930-1932*, *Lectures on Aesthetics*, *Remarks on Frazer's 'Golden Bough'*, *The Blue Book*, *The Brown Book*, *Philosophical Investigations*, *Zettel*, *Culture and Value* and *On Certainty*.

and to unlearn any ‘bad philosophical habits’ we may have picked up (Burbules and Peters 2001: 16).

A clear portrayal of his pedagogical style is provided in the opening sections of the *Philosophical Investigations* in which he approaches the nature of language and the question of meaning by discussing how a child learns a language. Wittgenstein challenges some aspects of the Augustinian picture of language<sup>13</sup> and reveals how it generates philosophical confusion<sup>14</sup>.

The picture of language in Saint Augustine’s *Confessions* represents, for Wittgenstein, an oversimplification of how language works. He attributes to Augustine, among other things, too heavy a reliance on ostensive definition. Many words do name objects and sentences do include combinations of such words. But this is only a part of the story. Think about the meaning of the word ‘five’ in the request, ‘May I have five red apples?’ We can correlate the meaning of the word ‘apple’ with the object apple. An apple stands for that naming word. Colour words, though, play different roles. We can look up the colour word ‘Red’ by looking up a colour chart, if necessary, but presumably we have undergone some training in learning how to use colour words. But the word ‘five’ cannot be taught ostensively. Nor, for that matter, can the words ‘there’ or ‘that’. To understand the meaning of a number word, such as ‘five’, we need to look at the language-games in which it is used. Pointing or

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<sup>13</sup> In his *Confessions* (Augustine 1992: I.vi; and I.viii), Saint Augustine reflects on how he learnt to talk and his account of language purports to demonstrate, according to Wittgenstein, how individual words name objects and sentences are combinations of words. From this picture we get the idea that every word has a meaning; the meaning is correlated with the word; and that the meaning is the object for which the word stands. Wittgenstein is also quick to attack the connected idea that the mind or ‘private sphere’ houses thoughts and wishes yet to be fully articulated in language.

<sup>14</sup> For a textual analysis see Baker and Hacker 1983: 21-81; and McGinn 1997: 36-62.

gesturing may be involved in showing how we use number words but training is paramount. We need to know how to follow rules implicit in our language-games and be able to demonstrate a mastery of the use of words.

Connected with the Augustinian picture of language, we appear concerned to communicate the thoughts and wishes housed in our ‘private sphere’ and are perplexed by the relations between words and objects, different kinds of words, words and sentences, explanations and descriptions and between meaning and criteria. Moreover, Wittgenstein introduces his notions of imagination, use as meaning, language-games, training, the function of words (like tools in a tool-box), forms of life and our natural history all for the purpose of helping the reader on her quest for an *Übersicht* of language (PI §§1-27).

Similarly, in relation to the problem of doubt, Wittgenstein teaches us to approach it from a pedagogical standpoint. In *On Certainty*, he invites us to imagine how a pupil learns to play the game of doubt. He gives examples of pupils whose doubts are rebuked harshly by a teacher:

The pupil will not let anything be explained to him, for he continually interrupts with doubts, for instance as to existence of things, the meaning of words, etc. The teacher says ‘Stop interrupting me and do as I tell you. So far your doubts don’t make sense at all’.

Or imagine that the boy questioned the truth of history (and everything that connects up with that)—and even whether the earth had existed at all a hundred years before.

Here it strikes me as if this doubt were hollow. But in that case— isn’t *belief* in history hollow too? No; there is so much that this connects up with. (OC §§310-312)

If a pupil is sceptical of a table remaining in the classroom when he or she turns around or persistently raises doubts about the uniformity of nature or the earth's existence, we can say that this pupil 'has not learned how to ask questions' and 'has not learned *the game*' we are teaching (OC §§314-315).<sup>15</sup> And, further, 'if the pupil refused to believe that this mountain had been there beyond human memory,' Wittgenstein retorts, 'We would say that the pupil had no *grounds* for this suspicion' (OC§322). Wittgenstein is challenging us to think about how we learn to doubt and to acknowledge that this process presupposes a degree of certainty. The pupils, in Wittgenstein's examples, lack this prior commitment. They are simply ill-equipped to grasp the skills the teacher is trying to teach them.

A review of the educational philosophy literature reveals an emerging consensus for giving Wittgenstein's work a pedagogic reading and accepting his philosophical style as a form of pedagogy in which he invites the audience to practise approaching philosophical problems from a pedagogical perspective.<sup>16</sup>

Désirée Weber makes a strong case for giving a pedagogic reading of Wittgenstein's life and later works relying on his frequent references to teaching and learning (Weber 2019: 688-689 and 695-698). Monk reminds us how Wittgenstein impresses on students the 'value of intellectual attainment for its own sake', encouraging each one 'to think through problems for itself' and that the *Philosophical Investigations* 'makes

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<sup>15</sup> Wittgenstein remarks:

It would be as if someone were looking for some object in a room; he opens a drawer and doesn't see it there; then he closes it again, waits, and opens it once more to see if perhaps it isn't there now, and keeps on like that. He has not learned to look for things. (OC§315)

<sup>16</sup> See, generally, Bakhurst 2017: xi-xii; Bearn 2019: 711-713; Burbules and Peters 2001: 16 and 19-21; Gasking and Jackson 1967: 49-55; Peters 2017b: 212-213; Peters and Marshall 1999: 174-175 and 186-189; Savickey 2017: 68-69 and 75-77; Stickney 2017: 44 and 53-54; and Yu 2013: 374-376.



demands, not just on the reader's intelligence but on his *involvement*' (Monk 1991: 192, 195 and 366, respectively). Indeed, referring to his '*dialogic style*' in the latter work, 'the closed questions, the play of different voices,' Georgina Edwards argues, 'means the reader has a personal responsibility to engage with the text' (Edwards 2019: 674-676). His pedagogical intent means the 'reader must work through the assigned exercises', Emma McClure contends, for Wittgenstein 'has left behind a textbook that enables us to teach ourselves' (McClure 2017: 158). 'Like children in Wittgenstein's classroom,' she says, 'we must do our own work' (*Id.* 154).

Wittgenstein's lesson is that we learn by 'doing' (Bowell 2017: 652). Even his metaphors 'often have a pedagogical component, they ask us to reflect on how we learn something, or learn to do something' (Burbules 2017: 128). Wittgenstein 'approaches philosophical questions,' Michael Peters rightly concludes, 'from a pedagogical point of view' (Peters 2017a: 38). He writes:

Perhaps most importantly, his styles are *essentially pedagogical*: he provides a variety of rhetorical strategies as a means to shift our thinking, to help us escape the picture that holds us captive. (*Ibid.*)

We can also say that Wittgenstein's pedagogical way of 'doing philosophy' is not only aporetic and dialogical but that it breaks with the confines of traditional philosophical thinking (Burbules and Peters 2001: 19).<sup>17</sup> What is more, by conceiving philosophy as pedagogy he is asking his students and readers to engage critically with his investigations and alter their ways of thinking. Wittgenstein's investigations, his 'mode of inquiry forces one to think *pedagogically*' (Yu 2013:374).

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<sup>17</sup> And see Monk 1991: 337-338; Peters 2017a: 38; and Peters and Marshall 1999: 168-169 and 184-186.

Naturally there are criticisms that pertain to Wittgenstein's way of engaging with philosophy especially since he purports to reject many of its tenets and methods of inquiry (including some of those inscribed in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* where, in the traditional spirit of pursuing truth, the final solution to the problems of philosophy are cast in stone). Renford Bambrough, for instance, challenges the later Wittgenstein's claim not to be doing traditional philosophy—searching for the foundations of knowledge and advancing theses and opinions—as distinct from settling for clarity and showing us the way out of the fly-bottle (Bambrough 1974: 119-129). *Contra* Bambrough, Wittgenstein is very much concerned with 'traditional questions or doctrines' (*Id.* 120-121) but his mode of engagement differs variably and greatly. Bambrough does concede, however, that Wittgenstein 'never claims that his studies of methods of exorcism had made him immune from the bewitchment of his own intelligence by means of language' (*Id.*131). Quite right. Wittgenstein's pedagogical approach and strategies demand that the critical being continues to see philosophical problems afresh and devise new ways of dealing with their resolution or extinguishment.

A Wittgensteinian *Übersicht* of language, with its multiplicity of language-games and countless forms of life, is the antithesis of a formal, unifying theory of language. And though I agree with Anthony Grayling that a systematic account of language is nonetheless logically possible (Grayling 1998: 98-99), that is not our endeavour. Grayling does suggest, however, that 'Wittgenstein's later philosophy is not as it stands persuasive' (*Id.* 111).

I am more inclined to argue that his life and work are relevant to educational philosophy. Indeed we can say that Wittgenstein's legacy and his philosophical

pedagogy are having a significant impact.<sup>18</sup> After all Wittgenstein's work bears directly on, first, educational concepts and teaching methods especially in the context of scientism and evidence-based teaching practices and learning outcomes; second, on the personal engagement by teachers and learners in developing their criticality; third, on how we may expose and overcome the linguistic confusions that cloak our philosophical questions; and, fourth, on how we may survive, indeed prosper, without any theories of education to (mis-)guide us. Giving up on trying to discover the hidden nature of 'educatedness' means we are free to focus on the family of language-games that are home to educational and related terms. His conception of criticality challenges the traditional storehouses of knowledge and modes of inquiry and, as David Bakhurst remarks, reading Wittgenstein properly is itself an education in thinking (Bakhurst 2017: vi-xii).

We are immersed in an 'immense landscape' and Wittgenstein's philosophy as pedagogy shows us the way to think through fundamental problems for ourselves (CV 56). Also Wittgenstein aspires to be the poet or musician whose philosophical compositions place the human condition at the centre of teaching and learning (CV 24 and 39).

My second argument is that a pedagogic reading of Wittgenstein's work is reconcilable with his notion of philosophy as therapy. There is some support for this in the research literature. Jeff Stickney maintains that it is sage advice 'not to look for educational theory in Wittgenstein's writing but to see his later philosophy as pedagogical or as therapeutic' (Stickney 2017: 44). Weber argues that while both a

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<sup>18</sup> See Bakhurst 2017: vi-xii; Gasking and Jackson 1967: 49; Green 1977: 10-17; Standish 2018: 224-230; and Thompkins 1992: 60-61 and 66-67.

therapeutic reading and a pedagogic reading align on certain points, the former interpretation is dependent on psychological frameworks which can lead scholars to make connections to Freud and psychoanalysis (Weber 2019: 695). Her preference is for a pedagogic reading in which the reader performs Wittgenstein's method of investigating language and meaning 'precisely by taking up the position of a pupil learning new (or unlearning old) meanings and concepts without recourse to certainty or ultimate foundations at each step' and that this avoids treating the reader as a patient ready for psychoanalysis and having to shake off suppositions about the subconscious and the interiority of meaning (*Id.* 696). Her objection to psychoanalysis is well made given the baggage it carries. If pushed, I would be content to limit Wittgenstein's medical similes to patients with more outwardly physical ailments like his discussion, in *The Blue Book*, of doctors presented with a case of an angina (BB 25). The reality is, however, that philosophy as therapy is important for Wittgenstein hence trying to reconcile it with philosophy as pedagogy.

Aiming for '*complete* clarity', Wittgenstein's methodology employs examples to solve problems and eliminate difficulties but there 'is not a philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies' (PI §133). We are battling 'against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of our language' (PI §109). Yet our diseases of thought, our conceptual confusions and puzzles, our failures to grasp the ordinary workings of language, must run their 'natural course, and *slow* cure,' Wittgenstein insists, 'is all important' (Z §382). As philosophers, we have to cure ourselves of 'many sicknesses of the understanding' (RFM IV: §53) and 'many intellectual diseases' (CV 44).

‘The philosopher’s treatment of a question,’ Wittgenstein continues, ‘is like the treatment of an illness’ (PI §255). And while success in treating an illness lies in making it disappear and the patient being restored to good health, achievement in philosophical therapy lies in making problems disappear and the philosopher obtaining ‘an understanding of grammatical articulations which will prevent those problems from arising’ (Hacker 1990: 90).

Philosophy as therapy enables us to untie the ‘knots in our thinking’ (Z §452). This leads us to my third argument that a pedagogic interpretation is consistent with Wittgenstein’s intention to help provide us with a survey, a special kind of understanding—an *Übersicht*—of our existing network of conceptual relations. In Chapters 3, 4 and 5 we discussed the importance of resisting the craving for generality or contempt for the particular case, resting content with family resemblance concepts including criticality, seeing connections, finding and inventing intermediate cases and escaping (or not getting trapped in) the fly-bottle of philosophical bafflement. A pedagogic reading of Wittgenstein’s work lends itself towards the reader ascertaining a ‘perspicuous representation’ of language in use by surveying the multitude of our non-static, discursive and interconnecting conceptual relations, cultural practices and contextual backgrounds (PI §122).

Wittgenstein, like Friedrich Nietzsche before him, sees how the philosopher is caught in the net of language (Heller 1967: 100-101). And like Nietzsche, Wittgenstein laments that an ‘entire mythology is stored within our language’ (GB 133; *Cf.* Nietzsche 2008: II: *The Wanderer and his Shadow* §11). This mythology lies in our forms of representation including the mind as entity, the body we possess, knowledge we acquire, memory as a storehouse and understanding as activity (Hacker 2010:

233). Such powerful mythologies, left unchecked, ‘obscure conceptual connections’ (Glock 1996: 280). Hence Wittgenstein’s insistence on obtaining a perspicuous view of the grammatical edifice when we investigate philosophical problems (PI §122).

### 6.2.3 Points of commonality and difference

Having opened our pedagogic windows and peered into the lived experiences of Freire and Wittgenstein what lessons can we draw? Clearly they share some features in common but there are also notable disjunctions.

The first point to make is that our enriched conception of criticality is underscored by a call to approach philosophical problems from a pedagogical perspective. Freire and Wittgenstein are at pains to show students and readers the importance of thinking for themselves and for assuming individual responsibility for developing their own criticality. For Freire, critical awareness is rooted in problematising the bonds of subjugation and finding ways to be free of them. While, for Wittgenstein, criticality involves removing linguistic confusions that hamper traditional ways of philosophical thinking and nurturing critical modes of inquiry. Wittgenstein also expresses a preference for framing conceptual and aesthetic questions (CV 79) and underscores the importance of being true to one’s self<sup>19</sup>.

Second, Freire’s critical pedagogy is a dialogical and critical process through which critical beings read the world and the word. It is not a mere method or limited to use

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<sup>19</sup> Ray Monk argues that ‘political questions’ are, for Wittgenstein, ‘secondary to questions of personal integrity’: being true to one’s self is the paramount duty (Monk 1991: 18). This is why, when questioned about improving the world, Wittgenstein retorts, ‘Just improve yourself; that is the only thing you *can* do to better the world’ (*Id.* 17-18 and 213).

in the classroom. Similarly, the later Wittgenstein's way of engaging with philosophy is aporetic and dialogical and cannot be reduced to a single method. Rather, it is reminiscent of a variety of methods, like different therapies, which the critical being adapts for resolving or eliminating philosophical problems. And even though, as a point of contradistinction, Wittgenstein does not share Freire's wider social concerns to liberate oppressed, dominated and marginalised people there is no logical reason why the critical being should not employ his ideas and methods for democratic and social justice purposes. As I have argued elsewhere, we can read Wittgenstein through a Marxist lens and make a strong case for bringing about social and political change.<sup>20</sup> We take this up in Section 7.2.2.

Third, the feminist critiques of Freire's work do not detract from the overall significance it holds for educational philosophy. Similar attacks may be directed at Wittgenstein's use of language though they would not, in my view, reduce the impact of his ideas on a critical education. We can take Fraser's cue and read the works of both thinkers from the standpoint of an absence.<sup>21</sup>

Fourth, having made the connection between Freire's conception of 'unity within diversity' and criticality scholarship's desire to accommodate otherness, we must admit that the idea of difference does not sit easily within Wittgenstein's grammatical landscape.

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<sup>20</sup> See Deegan 2023.

<sup>21</sup> Wittgenstein's philosophy is also criticised for failing to take account of relevant historical and social circumstances (Rossi-Landi 2002). I have argued elsewhere that, by taking Nancy Fraser's cue, we can extrapolate from things Wittgenstein does say to things he does not and reformulate his conception of 'praxis in the meaning processes of language' (De Iaco 2021: 26) as if he had considered an historical point of view (Deegan 2023: 8).

Fifth, we have approached both thinkers from different perspectives. We may criticise aspects of Freire's work but his teaching style and dedication to advancing the social and political causes of his pupils remains admirable. We see Wittgenstein in a very different light and yet his contributions about how teaching and learning work are invaluable.

Finally, in addressing their respective world views, both philosophers are open to different ways of knowing. They are concerned with what Budd Hall and Rajesh Tandon call 'knowledge democracy' (Hall and Tandon 2017: 13). The critical, aesthetic and moral are important for Freire and Wittgenstein. Both are willing to leave reason and the Cartesian method in abeyance. We develop these matters in Section 7.3.

### 6.3 Developing the critical being's criticality

Working within the field of criticality scholarship, how may a person develop his or her own criticality? This is our present concern. Questions concerning self-knowledge, understanding the human condition, moreover, link Freire and Wittgenstein to the idea of criticality. Freire wants his audience to harness their own criticality and seek out vistas for social transformation. Wittgenstein is alive to his students and readers establishing their own independence as critical thinkers. In Section 1.1, we also foreshadowed this important connection. These characteristics of criticality are, to be sure, what we now attribute to the critical being.

In Section 6.3.1, I argue that an appreciation of the Freirean notion of conscientização is key to the critical being developing his or her own criticality. In Section 6.3.2, I



argue, further, that the Wittgensteinian conception of thinking for one's self is of fundamental significance in this context.

### 6.3.1 Freire: conscientização

Freire insists that the progressive educator should challenge the learner's naïve curiosity so that they may both share criticalness (Freire 2016: 52). This is reminiscent of John Dewey's concern to cultivate the 'naïve, wondering, experimental' attitude of children which we witnessed in the beginning of Chapter 4 (Dewey 1997: 156; *Cf.* Freire 2005b: 57). We are giving naivety a positive spin. We admire the vitality and natural curiosity of the young engaging mind that is open to exploring new possibilities and is not clouded by prejudice, pretension or ideology.

Set in the right pedagogical conditions, dialogic experiences teach the critical being to nurture her naïve, aesthetic and epistemological curiosity (Freire 2016: 35-36 and 51-54; and Freire 2005b: 54 and 57). Problematising hegemonic constraints, 'unconcealing' limit situations, asking 'the "why" of things and facts' (Freire 2014: 24 and 96; and Freire 2017: 72-73, 77, 82 and 141) awakens her critical consciousness and steers her towards emancipatory transformations. Conscientisation therefore changes, evolves, develops, by 'action *and* reflection' (Freire 1984: 527).

Freire's pursuit of the truth is a 'search for social justice for the poor and those who are marginalised in society' (Quinn 2000: 34). His critical pedagogy allows for the evolution of students' critical consciousness and for their organic participation in the alteration of their lives, as individual and collective beings (Darder 2015: 88). 'This is a path toward greater consciousness,' Antonia Darder writes, 'where students are actively involved in the task of codifying their reality as they know it and moving

beyond the known to the unknown, toward becoming creators of knowledge and participants in making of the world' (*Ibid.*)

Freire popularised the Portuguese term 'conscientização' and it is important to appreciate its core meanings: 'consciencia' (awareness, consciousness) and 'ação' (action) (Kirylo 2011: 149-150). James Kirylo emphasises that conscientização transcends the ideas of awareness and consciousness and 'includes a permanent process of a critical reading of the world, moving one from object to subject of history in an effort to intentionally transform the world' (*Id.* 150). We should, accordingly, underline the significance of action in Freire's notion of conscientisation.

The *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is a critical investigation during the course of which the oppressed and their oppressors discover that they are both 'manifestations of dehumanisation' (Freire 2017: 22). Their liberation is a painful childbirth (*Id.* 23)—where they 'experience their own Easter', as Freire later narrates (Freire 1984: 525). The 'oppressor-oppressed contradiction is superseded by the humanization of all people' (Freire 2017: 23). The chains of subjugation are broken and the limit situations transformed. Consciencia and ação enable the critical being to find her road to freedom. Conscientização strives for the emergence of critical consciousness and critical intervention in the world (*Id.* 54). And a critical education equips the critical being to develop her powers to perceive critically the way she exists in the world with which and in which she finds herself, to see the world as a 'reality in process, in transformation' (*Id.* 56); and to see herself and others as 'beings in the process of becoming' (*Id.* 57) in search of completeness and authenticity. She is, to be sure, engaged in her own authentic praxis—unveiling and critically reflecting on her limit situations and critically acting upon them (*Id.* 73-74, 82 and 142).

Conscientisation is thus key to the healthy growth of a person's criticality. Freire sees criticality as a process which unveils human 'relationships with the historical-cultural world *in* and *with* which they exist' (Freire 2000: 25). It is a basic condition for such an awareness that we are taken to be subjects, conscious beings—and not mere objects—and that we see ourselves not only in the world, but with the world and with others (*Id.* 39). As critical beings, we objectify and act upon the world (*Id.* 41). Through imagination we are able to transform the world, to humanise it. Further, conscientisation empowers us to 'modify the world in order *to be more*' (*Id.* 42)—that is to say, to become more fully human. And this raising of people's critical consciousness, horizontally and vertically (*Id.* 60-61), the denunciation of unjust political, social and economic structures (*Id.* 59) and with it the annunciation of a more humane world are, Freire reminds us, 'not brought about through an intellectual effort alone, but through praxis—through the authentic union of action and reflection' (*Id.* 61).

We come to 'understand dialectically the different forms in which human beings *know* their relations with the world' (Freire 2005a: 92). Confronting the world critically, as knowing subjects, we are in a constant search for possible transformations and we create new meanings and re-inventions of the world (*Id.* 93). Our critical awareness, in which we insert ourselves in the reality that is being unveiled, is not individual but social (*Id.* 132). Freire writes:

It is sufficient to know that conscientization does not take place in abstract beings in the air but in real men and women and in social structures, to understand that it cannot remain on the level of the individual. It would only be superfluous to repeat that conscientization, which can only be manifested in the concrete praxis (which can never

be limited to the mere activity of the consciousness) is never neutral; in the same way, education can never be neutral. (*Ibid.*)

When we think about the critical being we tend to concentrate on criticality as being peculiar to the individual and with assigning each person sole responsibility for its development. What Freire's notion of conscientização brings to our equation is the interrelatedness and interdependence of critical consciousness and action. His interlinking of the individual with the social highlights our responsibility to others and the significance of transformative action. We could depict this as: Subject-Subject-World-Word. Criticality, so moulded, also fits with Freire's belief in 'the responsibility of citizenship' (Freire 2005b: 19-20). Chapter 3 speaks to how criticality scholarship is able to broaden our understanding of the concept of criticality and extend it beyond critique and self-reflection to critical or transformative action. Freire's work sheds a very bright light on this dynamic and creative process.

Freire, like Wittgenstein, and which we shall see in a moment, is adamant that critical beings maintain their independence as thinkers and carve out their own roads through the rugged and altering terrains of criticality. Freire expects his students and readers to use his ideas, examples and demonstrations to investigate their own concrete situations and reinvent themselves. He wants to help them enhance their own critical consciousness and 'develop their capacity to think for themselves' (Mejía 2004: 63-64). In following Freire, it is essential not to follow him, but make our own distinct paths (Kirylo 2011: 120-121).

For Freire, then, reality is living in a dehumanised world. His idealistic vision of what human life could be like (Quinn 2000: 27), his utopian dream of a freer and more inclusive democratic society (Freire 2014: 2), places an onus on progressive educators

‘to unveil opportunities for hope, no matter what the obstacles may be’ (*Id.* 3).

Resisting the temptation to simply transmit information, critical pedagogues aim ‘on creating a more flexible environment in which students can learn to think for themselves’ (Quinn 2000: 27). ‘Freire’s teacher,’ Patrick Quinn contends:

is thus a political activist, a cultural worker for social justice whose task it is to stimulate a form of critical consciousness that will lead to transforming political action on the part of those whose educational needs mirror their social and economic deprivation. (*Id.* 35)

However, what should we do when our students resist inquiring into structural inequalities or modes of domination? What if they should reject the notion of emancipation? Andrés Mejía assesses these issues along with other forms of would-be knowledge imposition (including male, white, Western) and notes how Freire, though aware of this tension, was not able to overcome it (Mejía 2004: 71 and 80). Mejía toys with the question whether we can produce critical knowledge that is independent from particular readings of reality (*Id.* 71-72) and concludes that the door is left ‘open for imposition to creep in or pass undetected and be maintained (*Id.* 80).

We accept there is an incongruity between advancing a liberating, emancipatory education and not imposing ideas on students. We are presenting a form of reality (one plagued by contradictions and hegemonies) but want to respect the freedom, the capacity, of students to think for themselves (which may, however unsatisfactory to the educator, mean closing one’s eyes to the world). The puzzlement is dissolved to the extent that we accept, as we did in Section 3.4, that emancipation is operating as a general criterion for our critical investigations. Taking Gert Biesta’s cue, we

acknowledge its dogmatic character, at least at the surface, and rest content not to question its truth or validity (Biesta 1998: 476-477).

We also recall that the theoretical framework of criticality scholarship is grounded in overcoming human suffering, exposing and eradicating hidden contradictions and hegemonies, and removing prejudice and inequalities and that these empirical reference points extend to making sovereign the concrete needs and sincere desires of others who are enduring hardship, discrimination and oppression and for their voices to be listened to, acknowledged and acted upon. All of this, we say, is buttressed by Freire's views.

### 6.3.2 Wittgenstein: think for yourself

How does Wittgenstein's philosophy as pedagogy add to our discussion about how the critical being may develop her own criticality? From the opening quotes we can see that he certainly does not want to spare his audience 'the trouble of thinking' but, rather, to 'stimulate' them to thoughts of their own (PI Preface x). And anything the critical being can do for herself, leave it to her (CV 77). She bears responsibility for being creative and critical and for thinking outside the box. Wittgenstein challenges the critical being to ask those hard, penetrating and uncomfortable questions, to move beyond existing modes of learning (Edwards 2019: 670) and to change the way she thinks (Stickney 2017: 53). And, like Freire, Wittgenstein does not want to be imitated. He remarks:

Am *I* the only one who cannot found a school or can a philosopher never do this? I cannot found a school because I do not really want to be imitated. Not at any rate by those who publish articles in philosophical journals. (CV 61)

The importance of thinking for ourselves and developing our independence as critical thinkers are, I argue, foregrounded by Wittgenstein. There is growing support for this contention in the research literature. Consensus among educational philosophers takes various forms. Discerning Wittgenstein's intention in the *Philosophical Investigations* as showing the fly the way out of the fly-bottle, the 'aim of the great educator is,' Peters and James Marshall conclude, 'to teach us to think for ourselves' (Peters and Marshall 1999: 189). Functioning as an 'exemplary pedagogical text', Wittgenstein's readers are meant to think through its problems for themselves (Burbules and Peters 2001: 20); and 'are invited not just to learn, but to develop' (Quigley 1988: 218). The series of mental exercises, the way the reader is prompted to personally engage with the interlocutor, necessitates that 'we answer the questions for ourselves' rather than look to Wittgenstein for answers; his focus is 'on developing the thinking of his students' and teaching them to learn how to ask the right questions (Edwards 2019: 670 and 676). The *Philosophical Investigations* makes demands on our personal involvement and not simply our intelligence yet it will be of little interest if its confessions are not ours (Monk 1991: 366), if we are not drawn into the 'very state of puzzlement' Wittgenstein is feeling (Peters 2017a: 38).

Further, our critical journeys are our own. And we must learn to make our own roads. That is why Wittgenstein reminds us that in exploring a city there will come a point where we must leave the tour guide behind and learn 'how to go on' by ourselves (Burbules 2017: 130-131). As a philosophical guide, he demonstrates 'learning by doing' and calls on his students and readers to employ the 'principles of self-activity and integrated instruction' (Savickey 2017: 76). Even though his mode of delivery is unorthodox, and his attitude towards philosophy and philosophical books may run against the grain for some of us, what is clear is that Wittgenstein wants his students

to think about philosophical problems for themselves (Schroeder 2006: 119).

Stimulating his audience to thoughts of their own represents his 'mature understanding of teaching' and is, Quinn notes, reminiscent of Wittgenstein's last words to his former student, Maurice Drury, 'Drury, whatever becomes of you, don't stop thinking' (Quinn 2000: 29).

Well, what do we mean by thought? Martin Heidegger instructs his students, as we noted in Section 4.2, that the question, What is thinking?, cannot be answered by proposing a definition of the concept of thinking and then explaining all of its contents (Heidegger 1968: 21). We also saw, there, how Wittgenstein wants to rid us of our craving for generality and of any suggestion of imposing a requirement of crystalline purity in our critical investigations.

Wittgenstein is, to be sure, deeply interested in thinking and the related concepts of meaning, understanding and speaking a language together with the human customs and institutions in which they are intricately embedded. He wants to remove the many pictures that hold us captive including, for example, our visualisation of the mind as a gaseous medium and the idea that thought is a mental activity or inner process. When it comes to the problem of thinking, rather than advancing hypotheses and theory making which cloud our understanding, we need to learn to look into the ordinary workings of language, allow description to replace explanation and see that the nature of our inquiries is grammatical and not empirical (PI §109).

Wittgenstein approaches the phenomenon, What is thinking?, from a pedagogical perspective. He teaches us to distinguish between concepts and the use of words on the one hand, and phenomena and experience on the other. He shows us the importance of depth grammar and of not being confused by the similarities between



the surface grammar of thought and related terms. We are taught to separate the concept of thinking and the psychological verb 'to think' from the phenomenon of thought and the noun 'thought'. Wittgenstein answers the question, What is thinking?, by supplying descriptions of the use of that word. He pays particular attention to deviant cases and to differences in its depth grammar whenever it is straddled with related words. Unconcealing the mythology of our language and obtaining a synoptic view of the grammatical network is how we cease to labour under a bewitched intelligence.

The process of scrutinising how we use words like 'thinking', 'meaning' and 'wishing' 'rids us of the temptation to look for a peculiar act of thinking, independent of the act of expressing our thoughts, and stowed away in some peculiar medium' (BB 43). Our grammatical, conceptual, investigations allow us to see the facts with 'unbiased eyes' and remove the prejudice that would otherwise force us to think that they must conform to the many pictures, forms of expression, mythologies, buried in our language (*Ibid.*).

Thinking is not an incorporeal process that must necessarily accompany an utterance (Z §101; LPP 8, 126 and 243; and PI §§330, 332 and 339). This is a misleading picture. Thinking is an activity but it may be as trivial as testing the point of my pen by drawing a face in the midst of writing a letter and it need not be something that accompanies, for example, my saying, 'This pen is blunt, but it will do' (*Cf.* Anscombe 1991: 8-9; and Hacker 1990: 351). I may sing a tune with expression—and may be able to demonstrate this expression, if pressed later, by moving my body and changing my breathing, but my singing expressively is not something that accompanies the tune. Moreover, to distinguish between speaking with and without

thought means only that thought is not something that occurs without speech any more than the expression of a piece of music occurs without the music (Kenny 1973: 150); and this is a grammatical, not an ontological, remark (Hacker 1990: 354).

In the result, Wittgenstein teaches us that we are not analysing the phenomenon of thought but the concept of thinking and therefore the manifold of ways in which we use the psychological verb ‘to think’ (PI §383). We may ‘speak of an *experience* of thinking’ but ‘the concept “thinking” is not a concept of an experience’ (Z §110).

Given that the ‘*phenomena* of thinking are widely scattered’, thinking is itself a ‘widely ramified concept’ comprising ‘many manifestations of life’ (Z §110).

It is hardly surprising, then, that we are easily confused by psychological verbs like ‘to think’ (or ‘to mean’ or ‘to understand’) since their employment is anything but uniform or transparent (Z §§112 and 113). ‘I cannot enumerate the conditions under which the word “to think” is to be used,’ Wittgenstein confesses, ‘but if a circumstance makes the use doubtful, I can say so, and also say *how* the situation is deviant from the usual ones’ (Z §118). The use of the word ‘to think’ may well be ‘tangled’ but by looking at its use in our everyday language we learn what we mean by the concept ‘thinking’ and how to use it correctly (RPPII §20). And how strange it is, Wittgenstein observes, that:

Thought does not strike us as mysterious while we are thinking, but only when we say, as it were retrospectively: ‘How was that possible?’ How was it possible for thought to deal with the very object *itself*? We feel as if by means of it we had caught reality in our net. (PI §428).

We can trace the origins of Wittgenstein’s pedagogical approach to the problem of criticality—and, with it, the centrality of thinking for one’s self and developing one’s

independence as a critical being—back to his teacher training at the Lehrerbildungsanstalt in Vienna. He is clearly influenced by the then School Reform Movement and, in particular, the Arbeitsschule Methode (Monk 1991: 188-189 and 194-195; and Savickey 2017: 65-68). He inherits the pedagogy of letting students learn by doing tasks for themselves.

In the Preface to the *Dictionary for Elementary Schools*, Wittgenstein expresses the view that only a dictionary can make a student completely responsible for the spelling of her written work since it provides reliable measures for finding and correcting mistakes provided, of course, she has a mind to do so. It is absolutely necessary, Wittgenstein continues, that each student corrects her own composition and feels that she is the only author of her work and is alone responsible for it (WV 15). The dictionary he dictated to his students was one of the few successes in Wittgenstein's teaching career. He writes:

When, after several months of work, this little dictionary was finished it appeared that the work had been worthwhile: the improvement of spelling was astonishing. The orthographic conscience had been awakened! (WV19)

Wittgenstein's pupils (or at least some of them) are, at an early stage in their development as critical beings, learning how to self-correct and take responsibility for their own work. And as they grow into adults, as we saw in Section 2.1, enhancing their criticality is dependent as much on working on their own temperament as it is sharpening their intellects (CV 17). To be critical—to reinterpret what already lies in front of us, to work on one's self so as to be able to see things differently and to undergo a change in attitude (CV 16)—means dismantling our pride and 'that is terribly hard work' (CV 26). I may need to 'abandon a certain combination of words

as senseless' and experience a resignation of feeling, not of intellect, and all of this can be as difficult as trying to 'hold back tears' (BT §86). My aim is, as a critical being, to 'remove erroneous notions and prejudices' (LWL 63) but they are not 'stupid' notions or prejudices (PI §340).

Wittgenstein wants us to think through philosophical problems for ourselves in the hope that we experience a shift in our style of thinking, that we learn to see things differently and that we change our perspective on how we conceive and use concepts.<sup>22</sup> 'I ought to be no more than a mirror,' Wittgenstein pleads, in which you as my reader can see your own thinking with all its deformities so that, helped in this way, you can 'put it right' (CV 18). Hoping only for the 'most indirect of influence', he wishes that the effect of his work 'might provoke somebody to write something good' (CV 62). We have argued that the life and works of Wittgenstein are important for educational philosophy. They have an impact. His work is given a pedagogic reading and his ideas about teaching and learning are being considered.

### 6.3.3 Broadening our knowledge and understanding of criticality

In this chapter we have circumnavigated Freire's critical pedagogy and Wittgenstein's philosophy as pedagogy for the purpose of improving our understanding of the idea of criticality and its use in educational settings. And in this last section, our informed conception of criticality has considered the problem of how the critical being can develop her own criticality.

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Bearn 2019: 705-706; Burbules and Peters 2001: 20-21; Edwards 2019: 676; McGinn 1997: 27-31; Monk 1991: 366; and Skilbeck 2017: 205.

Our voyage has been meaningful in a number of significant ways. First, as a being in the process of becoming, and in engaging in her own authentic praxis, Freire shows how the critical being is able to unconceal her limit situations and overcome them. Now that her critical consciousness is awakened she may organically participate in life-altering transformations. We see how Freire's notion of conscientização' leads towards not only a freer and more inclusive democratic society but the critical being herself becoming more fully human, authentic and complete. And his critical pedagogy applies to all forms of oppression or subjugation, and has a space in all historical, social, cultural and political contexts.

Second, we appreciate the interconnection between consciencia and ação, the strengthening union of critical reflection and emancipatory action. Freire underscores action in his conception of criticality and the relations between individual and collective responsibility. Our appreciation of the human condition reveals subjects each of whom are uniquely embodied with reason, a body, emotions, dreams, feelings and an intentionality towards the world (Freire 2016: 50). It also exposes a social dimension in which subjects communicate and, as critical citizens, continually reflect upon and transform their world. Freire helps the critical being make the all-important transition from critique and self-reflection to critical or transformative action.

Third, Freire believes the critical being must enhance her own criticality and develop her own capacity to think for herself. Further, she must not follow him, but steer her own path through the high seas of criticality.

Fourth, the Wittgensteinian roads we make by walking as critical beings are very much personal and orientated towards our individual capacity for criticality, for self-improvement. We can even hear Wittgenstein protesting: Think for yourself. Ask

those difficult questions, demand clarification—especially of those that education represses without solving (PG 382). Learn by doing things for yourself. And, as he put to Drury, whatever you do, don't ever stop thinking! However, when we turn our attention to emancipatory or transformative action, he has much less to say. We deal with this, as I have suggested, in Section 7.2.2.

Fifth, Wittgenstein contends that thinking for one's self and developing our independence as critical thinkers are of fundamental importance. His views on criticality and his overall pedagogical approach to philosophical problems demonstrates how we can, as critical beings, get to the bottom of things.

Sixth, the manner in which Wittgenstein deals with the problem of thinking is most illuminating. His treatment of the question sharpens our viewpoint. By distinguishing the concept of thinking and the psychological verb 'to think' from the phenomenon of thought and the noun 'thought' and by looking at the myriad of ways in which we use the word 'to think', we arrive at a sound understanding of what thinking does and does not entail. Wittgenstein shows us just how bewitching the mythology stored in our language is and how captivating certain pictures are. And significantly, he teaches us how to remove some of our erroneous notions and prejudices and to obtain an *Übersicht* of our language. We need to think through problems for ourselves. If we are diligent in our critical inquiries, we will see things differently, we will alter our thinking and this will be reflected in how we reconceive and deploy our concepts including criticality, rationality, educationality and so on.

Finally, Wittgenstein counsels the critical being not to imitate him; he may show us the way on occasions but it is up to us as individuals to learn how to go on and chart our own courses. He seeks only an indirect influence. His work is meant to stimulate

us to thoughts of our own. As critical beings we must take responsibility for developing our own critical appetites and good habits of mind. This requires a working on ourselves, on our own interpretation, and overcoming difficulties of the will rather than the intellect. Then and only then will we see, in Wittgenstein's mirror, the deformities in our own thinking so that we can try and put them right.

#### 6.4 Summary and conclusion

This chapter has brought together two distinguished and very different thinkers to discuss the idea of criticality. Our travels, in Section 6.2, explored the lived experiences of Freire and Wittgenstein demonstrating that they approach philosophical problems from a pedagogical perspective. I argued, first, that Freire advocates a utopian dream of a democratic world free of oppression, domination and inequalities. Second, I argued this is underpinned by a critical pedagogy that empowers people to read the world and the word. Third, I argued Freire encourages progressive educators to abandon the traditional banking model of education and engage in problem-posing theory and practice. And finally, I argued that his critical pedagogy demands that we create methods that serve as a praxis for collective emancipatory action.

In relation to Wittgenstein, I argued, first, that his work should be given a pedagogic reading. Second, I argued that a pedagogic interpretation is reconcilable with his notion of philosophy as therapy. And finally, I argued that Wittgenstein's philosophy as pedagogy is consistent with our obtaining an *Übersicht*, a survey, of our existing network of conceptual relations.

Our exploration reveals points of commonality and of difference. In particular, our conception of criticality, fuelled by Freirean and Wittgensteinian thinking, approaches problems from a pedagogical standpoint. It also recognises that education is not neutral and therefore the tenets of the established order are always open to question. And while Wittgenstein does not explicitly share Freire's wider ethical concerns to bring about a better world, the critical being is not estopped from applying Wittgenstein's ideas and methods to democratic and social justice issues. We noted how criticality scholarship can utilise Freire's conception of 'unity within diversity' to accommodate otherness but we had to concede that the idea of difference is not recognised in Wittgenstein's thinking. Finally, we distinguished between Freire's teaching practices and Wittgenstein's remarks on the teaching and learning process itself.

In Section 6.3, we reflected on Freire's idea of conscientização and Wittgenstein's stance on encouraging his readers to think for themselves and of the ways in which they all relate to the critical being developing her own criticality. I argued that the Freirean notion of conscientização and the Wittgensteinian conception of independent thinking are of paramount importance.

Of particular note, we found that Freire's critical pedagogy is not restricted to liberating oppressed peoples in Latin America but has a space in all historical, social, cultural and political situations. We accepted that both thinkers do not wish to be followed. Freire and Wittgenstein desire the critical being to chart and follow her own course. Wittgenstein, we acknowledged, underlines the critical being's responsibility to develop her own criticality. Also we explored the problem of thinking and the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language.



Our discussion of Freire and Wittgenstein's ideas and methods has contributed to the educational philosophy literature. We have expanded our literature review on the educational concept of criticality even further. In the next chapter, our conversations, our evolving exercises in criticality scholarship, concern the alignment of criticality with democracy and social justice. They also invite us to consider other ways of knowing.

## Chapter 7 Freire, Wittgenstein and criticality

### scholarship

To exist, humanly, is to *name* the world, to change it.

(Freire 2017: 61)

[Philosophy] leaves everything as it is.

(PI §124)

There is another way to immerse ourselves pleasurably in a challenge. It is a matter of aesthetic curiosity. It is what makes me stop and gaze upon the sunset. It is what detains me, lost in my contemplation of the speed and elegance with which the clouds move across the blue depth of the sky. It is what touches me when faced with a work of art that centers me in beauty.

(Freire 2016: 51)

Man has to awaken to wonder—and so perhaps do peoples.

Science is a way of sending him to sleep again.

(CV 5)

### 7.1 Chapter overview

I juxtapose the first two remarks from Freire and Wittgenstein to indicate a tension implicit in their views on the potential business of theory, and of educational

philosophy in particular, to advance democracy and social justice. The second set serve to prompt our thinking about different ways of knowing including the scientific and the aesthetic. Now I ask the question what can criticality scholarship offer?

Criticality scholarship is, as we contended in Chapter 5, a public space open to multiple epistemologies, different activities and practices, other voices and lived experiences. Our respective canons of validity and styles of reasoning differ from one discipline to another. Yet criticality scholarship is a platform for appreciating and reconciling competing criteria and methods of investigation. It is a place for conversations. All our epistemic beliefs and practices are valid. All our ways of knowing are treated equally.

Further, the scientific model of epistemology should not discredit the ‘possibilities of knowing’ that lie outside its usual sphere (Gadamer 2013: 76). Nor should it continue to exercise a monopoly over what counts as truth and as falsehood (Hall and Tandon 2017: 12). On the contrary, many of our different forms of knowledge and modes of expression need to be re-discovered and openly engaged with. Underlying theoretical positions and assumptions need to be confronted and negotiated (Rowland 2006: 71, 78-81 and 92).

Criticality scholarship widens our epistemological base and accepts as legitimate all our different ways of knowing including the critical, creative, hermeneutic, aesthetic, moral, lay, Indigenous as well as the paradigmatic scientific way (*Cf.* Eisner 2005: 46-47). Also it foregrounds the importance in education of music, ritual, drama, dance, cinema, paintings, sculptures and other non-discursive forms of knowledge.

Criticality scholarship navigates these intersecting terrains and utilises the concept of criticality to advance, as a significant ethical goal, human emancipation and freedom

from inequalities and injustices. Again we accept Gert Biesta's point that where emancipation operates as a general criterion for evaluating educational theory and practice this is unobjectionable provided we acknowledge its dogmatic character (Biesta 1998: 476).

Now this chapter builds on our mature conception of criticality and focuses on its positioning within the public space that is criticality scholarship. We remain mindful of how this new philosophical domain explores the conceptualisation and the usability of the idea of criticality. Also we reflect on our thought experiment, in Section 3.1, ready to embrace those circumstances in which the critical being takes transformative action. Our discourse continues to build on the mutually edifying ideas and methods of Freire and Wittgenstein. We further our original research. In turn, we add to our earlier discussions on policy in Chapter 2 and to the three phases of our literature review presented in Chapters 3 to 5.

In this context, then, our present endeavours are two-fold. First, we propose, in Section 7.2, to link criticality with democracy and social justice. We recap on Freire's pedagogical and political perspectives on critical beings naming the world and the word drawing on our analysis in Chapter 6. Then we contrast this with Wittgenstein's aphorism that philosophy 'leaves everything as it is' (PI §124). We advance an unorthodox view and bring Wittgenstein's later philosophy into line with Karl Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach. This further adds to the research literature. Second, in Section 7.3, we explore some of Freire and Wittgenstein's concerns for aesthetic, ethical and religious concepts with a view to amplifying and broadening our epistemic outlook.

## 7.2 Criticality scholarship and the alignment of criticality with democracy and social justice

The concept of criticality was the central concern of our investigations in Chapter 6. Now, in this section, we focus on aligning criticality with democratic and social justice issues.

Our discussion in Section 3.4 included Max Horkheimer, Marx and Nancy Fraser. Critical theory, for Horkheimer, sharpens the critical attitude such that it becomes distrustful of the status quo (Horkheimer 1982: 206-209). It places social justice concerns squarely within its sights (*Id.* 242). Fraser avows Marx's description of critical theory as 'the self-clarification of the struggles and wishes of the age' (Fraser 1989: 113). This shifts our thinking. Are we cutting our teeth on the struggles and wishes of our age? Turning to Marx, 'The philosophers,' he insists, 'have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it' (Marx and Engels 2010: 5). We took the view that criticality scholarship invites the critical being to take up Marx's gauntlet and not only interpret the world but try and change it for the better.

Freire's contribution to how we link criticality with democracy and social justice is, I argue in Section 7.2.1, underlined by his notion of the critical being naming the world and the word. Wittgenstein's philosophy as pedagogy and his contribution to our understanding of criticality, now seated within criticality scholarship, must still be reconciled with his dictum that philosophy leaves everything as it is. In Section 7.2.2, I argue that Wittgenstein's later philosophy can be aligned with Marx's eleventh thesis.

### 7.2.1 Naming the world and the word

Reading the world always precedes reading the word. And reading the word implies we continually read the world. We rewrite and we transform by our critical work. In education this means the words we use ‘should be laden with the meaning of people’s existential experience’ rather than the teacher’s experience (Freire and Macedo 1987: 36). Our students need to engage in the ‘critical exercise of reading and rereading the world’ (Freire 2014: 68).

Freire’s critical pedagogy is directed towards emancipating human beings and liberating them from all forms of oppression, marginalisation and discrimination.<sup>1</sup> Section 3.4 and Chapter 6 speak to this in some detail. Through reflection, dialogue and action we create the possibilities for bringing about such transformations (Freire 2017: 60). As critical beings we ‘*are praxis*’ (*Id.* 73-74).

Conscientização is viable only because of our recognition that human consciousness is conditioned and not predetermined and, therefore, we are able to take emancipatory action to overcome the hidden contradictions and asymmetries of power and privilege that have shaped our cultural inheritance (Freire 2000: 41-42; and Freire 2005b: 126). We have the power, to be sure, to name and re-name the world and the word. Freire believes critical beings can co-create new meanings and new worlds. Yet it may be ‘that a particular form of action is impossible or inappropriate *at the present time*’ and should be ‘postponed or substituted’ (Freire 2017: 101). ‘Critical reflection is,’ in this important respect, ‘also action’ (*Ibid.*).

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<sup>1</sup> Freire 1984: 545; Freire 2016: 14 and 45; Freire 2017: 59; and Horton and Freire 1990: 218-219.

The essence of dialogue is the ‘word’. And a word can only be authentic, and so capable of transforming the world, where its two interwoven dimensions, reflection and action, work together in unison. ‘There is no true word,’ Freire maintains, ‘that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world’ (*Id.* 60). Moreover, to be truly human is to ‘*name* the world, to change it’ and, once named, the world in turn appears as a problem requiring a ‘*new naming*’; for critical beings are built not in silence, but in ‘word, in work, in action-reflection’ (*Id.* 61).

Dialogue is the encounter between critical beings who, mediated by the world, seek to name, transform and humanise the world. Freire believes this is how we achieve significance as human beings and why dialogue is an existential necessity (*Id.* 61-62). It is ‘an act of creation’ and designed to benefit everyone in the ‘conquest of the world for the liberation of humankind’ (*Id.* 62). As ‘beings of praxis’ this process of transforming the world leads to our humanisation (Freire 2000: 42). Indeed, by transcending the testable limit situations, we move from a ‘*state of non-being*’ to a ‘*state of being*, in search of *becoming more* fully human’ (Freire 2005a: 129).

As a human phenomenon, Freire is right to suggest that dialogue, at least in the context of social justice, has as its necessary conditions: *love for people and the*

*world*<sup>2</sup>, *humility*<sup>3</sup>, *faith in humanity*<sup>4</sup>, *hope*<sup>5</sup>, *dialogical solidarity*<sup>6</sup> and, of course, *criticality*<sup>7</sup>. His work shows us how to connect criticality with democracy and social justice. And Freire's frequent use of religious metaphors and imagery—faith, birth and rebirth, denunciation and annunciation, coming to be, transformation, the real Easter—also shed light on this. Jesus Christ is a powerful example of a radical pedagogue and social reformer.

'Christ was no conservative', Freire contends (Freire 1984: 544). Rather, he is 'an example of the Teacher' whose 'pedagogy was that of the witness to a Presence that contradicted, that both denounced and announced'; and whose word (in the Gospels) 'would always be *coming to be*' (Freire and Hunter 1984: 547). Christ as portrayed in the Gospels is seen by Freire as someone who 'worked for radical change' and 'calls for believers to work for change, revolution and liberation' (Elias 1976: 43).

Christ is, on this view, a radical critic of institutional oppression, a social reformer and 'the task of the Christian is not to save his soul but to work with God in saving the world by combating all forms of oppression' (*Id.* 43-44). Moreover, we can use

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<sup>2</sup> Freire 2005a: 40-41; Freire 2005b: 5 and 74-75; Freire 2017: 62-63; and Horton and Freire 1990: 247. See also Bartlett 2005: 347-348 and 361-362; Darder 2015: 47-79; Kirylo 2011: 148; and McLaren 2000: 171-172.

<sup>3</sup> Freire 2005a: 40-41; and Freire 2017: 63. See also Darder 2015: 114; Kirylo 2011: 148; and Shpeizer 2018: 43-44.

<sup>4</sup> Freire 2005a: 40-41; Freire 2016: 57-58; and Freire 2017: 14 and 63. See also Darder 2015: 114-115; and Kirylo 2011: 148.

<sup>5</sup> Freire 2005a: 40-41; Freire 2014: 2; Freire 2016: 59-60; and Freire 2017: 64-65. See also Darder 2015: 115; and McLaren 2000: 161-162.

<sup>6</sup> Freire 2014: 96; and Freire 2017: 65. See also Darder 2015: 100 and 110.

<sup>7</sup> Freire 2000: 21-22 and 25; Freire 2005a: 39-41; Freire 2005b: 5; Freire 2014: 68, 96 and 146; Freire 2016: 35-36, 52 and 54; Freire 2017: 46, 48, 56, 65-66, 77, 79 and 82; Freire and Macedo 1987: 109; and Horton and Freire 1990: 158, 172-173 and 246-247. See also Darder 2015: 82-84 and 121-125; and Kirylo 2011: 148.



Freire's image of Christ as 'a radical, not satisfied with the status quo, anxious to move on, willing to die in order to bring out a continuous rebirth' (*Id.* 48) to critique social justice problems, reconstruct meanings and provide new transformative worldviews.<sup>8</sup>

### 7.2.2 Philosophy leaves everything as it is

Wittgenstein remarks that philosophy 'leaves everything as it is'. We consider his aphorism in the context of the educational philosophy research literature following which we formulate a Marxist reading of Wittgenstein. Our intention is to align his later philosophy with Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach and make a Wittgensteinian case for social and political change. This unorthodoxy is significant since it challenges conventional interpretations according to which Section 124 of the *Philosophical Investigations* reverses the eleventh thesis.

Our approach is presented in the same spirit as Marxist scholars who seek to find deep commonalities between Wittgenstein and Marx, show how their respective world views are mutually enriching and who believe that the ideas and methods of these two thinkers can be used to inform social and political criticism.<sup>9</sup> Also we take Nigel Pleasants' cue that Wittgenstein's philosophical approach 'stimulates a critical attitude towards traditional philosophical issues and problems' that 'can be extended to

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Kirylo 2011: 124; Linden 2016: 233-234; and Sukarieth and Tannock 2015: 26-28.

<sup>9</sup> Kitching 2002: 1-3; Pleasants 2002: 160-161; and Vinten 2013: 10-11 and 22. For a recent collection of essays that bring out affinities between Wittgenstein and Marx see Sulpizio *et al.* 2021. The essays demonstrate different ways to address Wittgenstein and Marx(ism) from multiple perspectives starting from the critical attitude adopted by both thinkers.

reflecting upon, and questioning, aspects of social, political and moral life' (Pleasants 2002: 166).

In Section 109 of the *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein makes it plain that our considerations into the ordinary workings of language are not scientific ones and that there is no room to 'advance any kind of theory'. 'We must do away with all *explanation,*' he insists, 'and description alone must take its place.' Moreover, our philosophical problems are solved, not by discovering new experience, but by 'arranging what we have always known'. Wittgenstein's infamous maxim soon follows:

Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language; it can in the end only describe it.

For it cannot give it any foundation either.

It leaves everything as it is.

It also leaves mathematics as it is, and no mathematical discovery can advance it. A 'leading problem of mathematical logic' is for us a problem of mathematics like any other. (PI §124)<sup>10</sup>

How do Wittgenstein's remarks sit within the field of educational philosophy? In particular, how do they cater for social and political critique? The starting point is to read Section 124 in context (Smeyers 2017: 243) and appreciate that philosophy, or theory, does not leave everything as it is (Standish 2017: 263). Facts in the world may not change but our understanding of them changes along with their significance.

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<sup>10</sup> These ideas are mirrored in Section 89 of *The Big Typescript TS 213* (see BT 171-177). Further, Sections 125 to 133 of the *Philosophical Investigations* buttress Wittgenstein's position here.

Language evolves and concepts are continuously revised, perhaps ‘by finding and inventing *intermediate cases*’ (PI §122), and new terms are introduced (such as language-games and family resemblances) but none of this takes place, Wittgenstein rightly contends, by inventing a new or ideal language or constructing a new symbolism—our language of everyday is ‘completely in order, as long as we are clear about what it symbolizes’ (Waismann 1979: 45-46).

Paul Smeyers reminds us that Wittgenstein’s attack is primarily against theorists who, for instance, use theories that resemble those found in the scientific paradigm and which make causal, and not conceptual connections, operate as hypotheses waiting to be tested by experiment or experience in general, and which involve deductions and the drawing of conclusions rather than providing descriptions by means of examples (Smeyers 2017: 243-244). Wittgenstein is very much concerned with traditional philosophical problems (many of which traverse social, political and moral life) and does not want them to fall within the realm of science. Viewing his aphorism in this light, Paul Standish properly connects it with the then community of ‘scientific’ philosophers including the mind-set of the author of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (Standish 2017: 263).

Section 124 serves as a heuristic aimed at theorists—and educational philosophers no less—to think about the things we do in practice: the way we research, argue, draw conclusions, debate our theories and positions (in the senses Wittgenstein means) and publish our work. This has significant purchase given the interdisciplinary nature of research and teaching and, with it, the importance of recognising, as equally valid, different epistemologies, styles of reasoning and methods of inquiry. Indeed, our domains of knowledge, once subjected to Wittgenstein’s investigations, will not

remain the same (Hacker 1972: 125-126). Nevertheless, how does Wittgenstein's philosophy connect with the educational notion of transformative or emancipatory action? Here are some illustrations or clues.

Bringing Wittgenstein's language-games into the classroom allows us to change our perspective on how we use and define concepts and, in turn, reflect on their underlying premises (Edwards 2019: 676). As researchers, we come to look at the world differently and so we, too, change (Smeyers 2017: 247). As teachers, we can use works of art, for example, to trigger our students' imagination to see things in the right perspective—like when we are sitting in a theatre and watching an actor perform a mundane task, say, lighting a cigarette, 'observing a human being from outside in a way that ordinarily we can never observe ourselves'; where 'it would be like watching a chapter of biography with our own eyes'; something 'uncanny and wonderful at the same time' (CV 4)—and, as Adrian Skilbeck continues, our challenge is to 'create the conditions under which students feel willing and prepared to expose themselves to the risks involved in making claims through their art' (Skilbeck 2017: 202-204).

Jeff Stickney suggests we can take the lead from scholars in philosophical feminism, ethical philosophy and political philosophy to advance a social reading of Wittgenstein's later work in an effort to bring about political change and achieve social justice (Stickney 2020b: 8). Aligning Wittgenstein with Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach would certainly speak to this. Stickney foresees educational philosophers playing a role in delivering a decolonising education and that this will change our natural history by altering our language and forms of life (*Id.* 10). He writes:

Here I am possibly caught in a contradiction, as my use of Wittgenstein's philosophy does not 'leave everything as it is', but sides more with Marx in seeking not only to describe but to change the world. (*Ibid.*)

Claudia Schumann points out that we can distinguish between the limits and the 'possibilities of effecting change through theorizing'; and that, by advancing a positive critical analysis, we 'open up new ways of understanding' and are able to develop, among other things, the 'transformative potential of feminist political practice' (Schumann 2017: 381 and 385).

This discussion leads naturally to our unorthodox view that Wittgensteinian philosophy is an instrument for social and political change. Elsewhere I have also considered the political implications of Wittgenstein's aphorism that philosophy 'leaves everything as it is'.<sup>11</sup> There I find considerable support for my approach from political thought<sup>12</sup> and, most notably, from Alice Crary, Richard Eldridge, Allan Janik, Denis McManus, Hannah Pitkin, and James Tully<sup>13</sup>. For now, though, our attention focuses on demonstrating how a Marxist reading of Wittgenstein can further support both the alignment of his later philosophy with Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach and place Wittgenstein as an advocate for changing our forms of social existence.

In respect of my first task, then, Terrell Carver questions whether Marx's retort about what philosophers should do and what philosophy should be 'could be very close to Wittgenstein's parable of philosophers as flies in fly-bottles' or 'it could be something

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<sup>11</sup> See Deegan 2023. Indeed most of our conversation in this section is taken directly from this article.

<sup>12</sup> See my discussion of the important lessons we can take from political philosophy (Deegan 2023: 5-7).

<sup>13</sup> See Crary 2000; Eldridge 2003; Janik 2003; McManus 2003; Pitkin 1972; and Tully 2003.

very different and very confused'; and the answer depends on what readers bring to these remarks and what they intend to do with them (Carver 2002: 103-104). Here I agree with K.T. Fann that Wittgenstein's philosophy is a tool that is entirely useless if you are not a fly trapped in the fly-bottle or are otherwise quite content to stay there (Fann 2002: 285).<sup>14</sup>

In my view, Wittgenstein and Marx challenge what we mean when we say we are doing philosophy. They rupture what we take for granted. Carver rightly says that both philosophers do not approve of the practice of philosophy as it is performed by their contemporaries. As an activity, Wittgenstein and Marx are 'concerned with doing *something*—such that their contemporaries would be drawn up short and their self-understandings, and understandings of the world, disturbed' (Carver 2002: 104). Indeed a theory of revolutionary praxis may well have been in Wittgenstein's mind and life though, unlike Marx, it is not readily transparent in his works (*Id.* 107).

Moira De Iaco takes issue with reconciling Wittgenstein's philosophy with Marx's notion of transforming the world given that, for Wittgenstein, philosophy 'must limit itself to leaving everything as it is' (De Iaco 2021: 25). 'Wittgenstein's philosophy does not have,' in her view, 'the purpose of changing society through the thought and rethinking of language. It does not look at society' (*Id.* 26).<sup>15</sup> De Iaco accuses Wittgenstein of focusing on the 'role of praxis in the meaning processes of language'

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<sup>14</sup> 'What is your aim in philosophy?,' Wittgenstein writes, 'To shew the fly the way out of the fly-bottle' (PI §309). Wittgenstein is intent on teaching us the importance of thinking for ourselves.

<sup>15</sup> Wittgenstein's philosophy is, De Iaco continues, 'focused on the goal of changing the look of philosophers by converting towards everyday language use despite the metaphysical uses as well' (De Iaco 2021: 26). She takes the view that Wittgenstein does not conceive of the possibility of social transformation through language; and that a Wittgensteinian change in the way we look at our philosophical problems does not have practical-social consequences and for this reason 'the correction of the language that he made cannot be called a reform' (*Id.* 27).

without ‘considering these processes from an historical point of view’ (*Ibid.*).

Wittgenstein’s emphasis is on reforming metaphysically-inclined philosophers hell-bent on misusing language<sup>16</sup> rather than appreciating the wider role that ‘real historical circumstances’ play in determining thoughts, actions and events (*Id.* 28).

Even if De Iaco is correct in her reading of his work, can we not choose to read Wittgenstein from the point of view of an absence? If we take Fraser’s cue, as we did in Section 6.2.3, we can extrapolate from things Wittgenstein does say to things he does not and reformulate his conception of praxis as if he had considered the historical perspective. Nevertheless, De Iaco does attempt to close this gap by suggesting we can use Wittgenstein’s method for analysing linguistic usage in a manner which complements the way we use ‘Marxist conceptual tools’ to ‘investigate the social-historical processes that affect language and real life with which language is intertwined’ (*Id.* 26). Our tool-box for addressing ‘concrete linguistic uses’ is, in other words, strengthened by combining these complementary aspects of Marxist and Wittgensteinian philosophies (*Id.* 28-29).

Robert Vinten is right, in my view, to suggest that the underlying tensions between Wittgenstein and Marx dissolve once we appreciate the different ways in which both thinkers approach the nature of philosophy (Vinten 2013: 10). ‘Wittgenstein’s elucidatory philosophy,’ he argues, ‘does not obviously conflict with Marx’s emancipatory philosophy’ if we accept that Wittgenstein engages in different tasks from those performed by Marxists (*Id.* 13). There is no barrier, Vinten concludes, to

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<sup>16</sup> ‘What *we* do,’ Wittgenstein writes, ‘is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use’ (PI §116).

combining both philosophical approaches in our practical endeavours (*Id.* 22).<sup>17</sup> They are, to be sure, mutually enriching.

The question concerning the extent of the tension between the claims that philosophy leaves everything as it is and that philosophers ought to change the world, not merely interpret it is raised directly by Rupert Read. He is right to claim that ‘Unless language can take care of itself, there can be no taking care of it’; and, in this respect, philosophy ‘leaves language as it is’ (Read 2002: 256). Read finds points of convergence between Wittgenstein and Marx<sup>18</sup> and answers:

Marx’s approach, like Wittgenstein’s, has to be seen as essentially practical, getting one primarily not to think something one doesn’t think, but to do something one doesn’t want to do. And, more generally, that resources are available to us—within Marx, within our lives and experiences, our societies, within ‘common sense’—both to avoid ‘idea-ism’ *and* to embrace a vision and practice of changing the world (including importantly, as Wittgenstein would emphasise, oneself). Of course, to say this still does not in the slightest imply that it will be *easy* to do. (*Id.* 272)

Read seeks to fill the lacuna by suggesting that Marx could have endorsed Section 124 of the *Philosophical Investigations* and much of Wittgenstein’s philosophy and

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<sup>17</sup> Vinten sees merit in Marxists reading Wittgenstein’s work ‘to better understand the nature of *traditional* philosophical problems’ and to ‘produce better *Marxist/emancipatory* philosophy’ (Vinten 2013: 11, footnote 6). Also he concludes that ‘there is no particular reason why Wittgensteinians should not become involved in workers’ struggles with the aim of creating a classless society’ (*Id.* 22)—or, as I would put it, working together to create a freer and more inclusive, democratic society.

<sup>18</sup> Both Wittgenstein and Marx follow up on Ludwig Feuerbach’s insights by underscoring change in practice, aspect-seeing; and that what needs altering is not a belief or a doctrine but an attitude and a way of life (Read 2002: 260). Both thinkers adopt an unorthodox view of philosophy by replacing philosophical argument with a therapeutic orientation that re-grounds ‘us in the concretion of our actual lives and with (*actually, practically*) laying to rest the metaphysics that distorts those lives’ (*Id.* 271). Finally, Marx, like Wittgenstein, demands that we should not reify language but descend to our everyday lives, to our worlds as we ordinarily live and speak (*Id.* 273).



methods and that Wittgenstein, in turn, could have endorsed Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach and that he, Wittgenstein, was 'not against changing things (even by means of philosophy)' (*Id.* 274).<sup>19</sup> He concludes that there is a 'fit' between Wittgenstein and Marx and 'the point may indeed very much be still *to change the world*' (*Id.* 275). Wittgenstein's philosophy may appear more 'individualist' than Marx's, Reid writes, but Wittgenstein does not want us to work upon ourselves 'in a narrow and introspective way'; rather he hopes that the darkness of our time 'might be altered by people taking up his work and using it to think (and act) with' (*Id.* 277).

Despite the popular image of Wittgenstein as a 'deeply apolitical thinker', a closer inspection of the 'biographical and broader historical context of his life and thought,' Dimitris Gakis remarks, 'reveals a number of interesting connections to Marx(ism)' (Gakis 2021: 8). He reiterates our finding that they share a critical attitude that approaches philosophy as a 'matter of praxis and method' as distinct from a 'mystifying, metaphysical tradition' couched in 'doctrine or dogma' (*Id.* 11). It is here, Gakis continues, that their outlooks 'converge on the potentially transformational and emancipatory character of philosophy' (*Id.* 11-12). To this he adds their connections between philosophical and everyday human activity (and how theoretical problems are dissolved in practical life) and then argues that Marx's eleventh thesis and Wittgenstein's aphorism that philosophy leaves everything as it is ('with the "everything" ranging over the use of language') may be taken to be in fact complementary and not opposed (*Id.* 12-13). Gakis concludes that Wittgenstein's philosophy is of 'critical importance from a political point of view' (*Id.* 15).

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<sup>19</sup> Here Reid is portraying Marx at 'his non-scientific best', wanting to change things not through explanation but 'through description interlinked with action' (Reid 2002: 274).

One contact point that Marco Gigante pursues between Wittgenstein and Marx is the ‘attribution to philosophical thought, understood as *praxis*, of the power to transform the real’, the power to transform social relations (Gigante 2021: 42). He discusses Marx’s eleventh thesis and Wittgenstein’s remarks on the role of philosophy as therapy<sup>20</sup> and its task to leave everything as it is (*Id.* 48-49). Gigante couples Wittgenstein’s account of language with the transformative power of philosophy advanced by Marx (*Id.* 49-50). ‘Both philosophers,’ he says, ‘show the instruments for carving out a different role for [philosophy’s] exercise and therefore for the use of its own demystifying power’ (*Id.* 50). This task does not involve new interpretations of the world, Gigante continues, but the ‘description of the logics of social life’ that are always before one’s eyes and the understanding that enables us to ‘identify and remove the conditions that alone can transform them or give rise to other forms of life’. He concludes:

Marx and Wittgenstein aim at making philosophy an instrument of criticism, a tool by which men and women can more and more effectively recognize the contingent character of the ideological constructions they are surrounded by; that is, in doing so, the philosophical discourse becomes a practice of transformation, a way to change the process of description and interpretation of the world itself. (*Ibid.*)<sup>21</sup>

We have already started to touch upon the emancipatory or transformative power of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy. Moving onto my second task, and drawing on further

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<sup>20</sup> ‘There is not *a* philosophical method,’ Wittgenstein writes, ‘though there are indeed methods, like different therapies’ (PI §133).

<sup>21</sup> ‘In this way,’ Gigante says, we can find in Wittgenstein and Marx’s ‘philosophical investigations the idea that the transformation of the individual’s existential conditions involves a philosophical reflection on language to the extent that the latter permits them to recognize the processes of the ideological bewitchment of society’ (Gigante 2021: 50).

insights from Marxist thinking, we now investigate the possibilities that Wittgenstein's philosophy holds for reforming our social existence. The first thing to note is that a philosopher should not find him or herself trapped within any particular community of ideas. We all hold certain beliefs and values. And, not surprisingly, we are members of different human communities but, as philosophers, we need to keep our critical distance and try and see them for what they are.<sup>22</sup> 'The philosopher is not a citizen of any community of ideas,' Wittgenstein insists, and this is precisely 'what makes him into a philosopher' (Z §455).

T.P. Uschanov says that this remark is 'the core of Wittgenstein's attitude towards the mixing of philosophy and politics' (Uschanov 2002: 38). As philosophers we should not treat the ideas of one ideology more favourably than those of another; rather, we should be content to support our preferred political party's ideas 'from without' (*Ibid.*). Uschanov also cites Stanley Cavell's related point that 'when philosophers *do* change things, there's nothing about their being philosophers that specially enables them to do this' (*Id.* 39). Philosophy leaving everything as it is does not mean that philosophers are estopped from trying to change their society. Individuals and

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<sup>22</sup> A philosopher is not a citizen of any community of ideas, but someone who stands outside, indeed distances him or herself from, the human communities and who can see them for what they are (Kenny 1984: 55-56). Frank Ramsay is thus a 'bourgeois thinker' interested only in 'clearing up the affairs of some particular community' (CV 17), accepting what his mathematical peers ordain as truth or knowledge (*Cf.* Kenny 1984: 55-56; and Monk 1991: 246-247). As Marco Brusotti puts it, a 'genuinely philosophical reflection aims at showing that this state is not the only possible one'; and that a bourgeois thinker does not look beyond the horizon of his or her own society (Brusotti 2021: 185 and 188). Wittgenstein wants us to maintain our critical distance and be able to critique our systems of knowledge and truth as well as our own internal frameworks, beliefs, values and biases. The tenets of established authority are, in this sense, and to borrow from Friedrich Nietzsche, always open to question 'under the police of mistrust' (Nietzsche 2001: §344).

movements are free to work on changing things only that philosophy by itself, theory to be precise, will not get them there.<sup>23</sup>

The ‘obvious point,’ Pleasants explains, is that ‘to say *philosophy* leaves things as they are neither entails nor implies that they *should* be left as they are’; and, in line with Marx’s eleventh thesis, the ‘natural implication is, then, that if one really wants to change things, doing philosophy is not the way to go about it’ (Pleasants 2002: 169). He says we can bring Wittgenstein’s Socratic presentation of the reminders about things ‘we have always known’ but have since forgotten or misplaced<sup>24</sup> to bear on the problems that trouble us without resorting to any special philosophical insight or explanatory theory (*Id.* 164). The quest for universal critical standards remains ‘chimerical’ (*Id.* 174-175). Description that promotes changing how people see their reality is what is needed, not explanation that unearths its ‘hidden essence’ (*Id.* 177).

Pleasants demonstrates how Wittgenstein’s remarks—relating to changing the way we look at things<sup>25</sup>, the considerable effort of will rather than intellect required to make such changes<sup>26</sup> and his appeal that we ‘*look and see . . . don’t think, but look*’<sup>27</sup>—form an essential part of his philosophy as a therapeutic process and which is capable of producing a change in attitude; and that we can extend and apply Wittgenstein’s ‘way of seeing’ to new problems provided they are of ‘*personal* interest and

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<sup>23</sup> Uschanov rightly contends that philosophers can voice their political views, run for office and fight social evils but a philosophy of politics will not turn their political statements into philosophical ones (Uschanov 2002: 39).

<sup>24</sup> PI §109.

<sup>25</sup> PI §144.

<sup>26</sup> CV 17.

<sup>27</sup> PI §66.

significance' (*Id.* 165). This approach, he says, connects with Marx's maxim on changing the world; and 'stimulates a critical attitude towards traditional philosophical issues and problems' that is key to challenging 'aspects of social, political and moral life' (*Id.* 166).<sup>28</sup>

The point of a 'radical social critique'—one which strikes at the heart of our social and political foundations—is, Pleasants continues, 'somehow to get the participants themselves to see and share one's critical view' (*Id.* 175). He writes:

The task of the social critic is not a *theoretical* one; rather, the desideratum is to change the way people *see* their relations with their fellow creatures and their environment.

And with that change of seeing comes change in *acting*. (*Ibid.*)

Doğan Göçmen and Doğan Barış Kiliç discuss what Wittgenstein and Marx understand by criticising the world and what their intentions are in doing so. Marx is intent on changing the world and Wittgenstein wants to resolve philosophical problems by addressing language problems occurring in the real world (Göçmen and Kiliç 2021: 53).<sup>29</sup> The praxis of language, they suggest, should be taken in a wide sense in respect of both philosophers (*Id.* 64). They conclude:

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<sup>28</sup> Pleasants argues that: 'a more promising way of doing social criticism would be to provoke people into reflecting on what they do and know in the course of their everyday social life. This process might be stimulated by "reminding" them (and ourselves), through "perspicuous description", of some of the consequences and implications of their (our) actions and how these relate to their (our) basic intuitive sense of decency and justice. This, I submit, will not be achieved through promulgation of purportedly explanatory or revelatory theory, but only by coaxing and cajoling people into seeing what they actually do, or contribute to doing, to their fellow creatures and natural environment, and then questioning the moral adequacy of this way of life' (Pleasants 2002: 167).

<sup>29</sup> To resolve philosophical problems then entails resolving the real causes in the world (Göçmen and Kiliç 2021: 53). In this sense, Wittgenstein and Marx are suggesting changing the world. This may, Göçmen and Kiliç continue, 'also bring about conclusive solutions to our language and philosophical problems'.

In the *Tractatus* [Wittgenstein] presents how the proposition, language, and thought were gained from the world and now in the *Investigations* he suggests that they return to the world in the actions of socially embedded individuals to change the world. The aim of changing the world is to establish an ethical life, not beyond good and evil, but beyond ‘punishment and reward’. This is also the principle Marx seems to employ as the basis of his theory of socialism. (*Ibid.*)

Antonia Soulez conceives of Wittgenstein’s ‘praxis of the use of language’ as an activity in a social or institutional sense that nevertheless has indirect political implications (Soulez 2021: 171-174). And while Wittgenstein does not aim for social transformation through, for example, a ‘politically active programme’, she does ask how we may relate his idea of the transformation of oneself to taking action in the world (*Id.* 173). How does self-improvement lead to emancipatory action? Soulez says we can read Wittgenstein’s approach ‘as critical even in a social sense, even though it is not overtly political’ (*Id.* 176). This must be right.<sup>30</sup> Employing Aldo Gargani’s reading of Wittgenstein, moreover, we should dispense with the traditional philosopher’s task of ‘applying models to reality’; accept that reality is ‘irregular and uneven’ and that it ‘cannot be dealt with using exact tools’; and that we must adjust one’s tools to meet ‘contingent, uneven realities’ (*Id.* 177). Of Wittgenstein, she writes:

he certainly provided us with the epistemological tools useful for building a political conception of constructive models that could shed light on praxis as a politically linguistic activity through the reversal of the very-relation of model to real. (*Id.* 178)

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<sup>30</sup> Linguistic analysis and social critical theory should not be considered as separate domains whereby politics belong only to the latter. And even though Wittgenstein’s conception of semantics is not dialectical in Theodor Adorno’s sense, Soulez continues, it can still be read as critical in a social sense (Soulez 2021: 176).

The last step in our unorthodox advancement of Wittgenstein as an advocate for transformational change and the use of his philosophy to open up new horizons is afforded by Marco Brusotti. He reads the later Wittgenstein as a philosopher who takes up a ‘contemplative’ stance that is non-causal and at odds with science (Brusotti 2021: 185-186). But what does ‘contemplative’ mean here? Exploring Wittgenstein’s conversation with Rush Rhees, Brusotti suggests that ‘consideration’ and ‘comparison’ are what Wittgenstein is driving at and that Wittgenstein’s ‘contemplative philosopher’ is focused on showing other possibilities, other ways in which things might be done (*Id.* 186-187). Wittgenstein is, it seems to me at least, anticipating Maxine Greene’s notion of ‘looking at things as if they could be otherwise’.<sup>31</sup>

There are and always will be ‘other and different ways of social existence’ (*Id.* 187). Further, the reason why a contemplative philosopher is ‘concerned with pointing out other possibilities’ and to make comparisons is, Brusotti says, ‘understanding’. This may well include imagining ‘circumstances and surroundings in which a familiar institution or activity may lose its point’ (*Ibid.*). Wittgenstein is, to be sure, calling the necessity of our institutions into question.<sup>32</sup> He is asking us to consider ‘alternatives, even imaginary possibilities that show the alleged necessity to be contingent’ (*Ibid.*). This insight shows how Wittgenstein’s ‘contemplative’ philosopher is able to challenge our political landscape and envision alternatives in the name of democracy and social justice. Brusotti continues:

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<sup>31</sup> Greene 1995; Greene 2011; Greene 2017; and Greene 2018.

<sup>32</sup> Brusotti says that comparing an institution with alternative possibilities calls its alleged necessity into question and that ‘thinking of alternative activities, of remote ages and cultures, is simply a tool that enables “contemplation” to find out the nature of a familiar institution, e.g. to understand “what sort of thing, what sort of activity science is”’ (Brusotti 2021: 187).

For the philosopher, alternative possibilities are mere objects of comparison in order to better understand a familiar cultural phenomenon. Even when this phenomenon seems to be necessary and unique, the ethnological eye looks at it as something that could have been otherwise. (*Id.* 188)

Brusotti's ideas certainly connect with Greene's work. It also meshes with José Medina's notion of 'resistant imaginations'<sup>33</sup> and further compliments the contemplative philosopher in his or her task of calling into question the alleged necessity of our institutions. This insight demonstrates how Wittgenstein's 'contemplative' philosopher can take up Marx's gauntlet and not only interpret the world, but *change* it. Again to borrow from Fraser, Wittgenstein is inviting us to cut our teeth on the struggles and wishes of our age (Fraser 1989: 113).

I close this section with these thoughts from Gavin Kitching:

Wittgenstein found a voice—a form of speaking and writing—that *is* appropriate, and deeply appropriate, not just for doing philosophy in a postmodern, highly individualised, bourgeois democratic society, but also a voice which is equally appropriate for doing political and ethical and religious and aesthetic debate (both with others and with oneself) in such societies. (Kitching 2002: 15-16)

### 7.3 Complimentary vistas in criticality scholarship

Chapters 3 to 6 stress the importance of interpreting the concept of criticality in circumstances that fertilise its potential for growth and adaptability. They acknowledge the merits of educational philosophers devising different conceptions of

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<sup>33</sup> Medina 2013, Chapter 6.



criticality and of highlighting alternative ways of knowing. Rationalistic accounts of thinking based on purely deductive, *a priori* reasoning and the principles of formal logic and the prevailing scientific methods of inquiry are, as we witnessed, only part of the jigsaw puzzle of how human beings think. Indeed the aesthetic, hermeneutic, critical, feminist, moral, Indigenous, gay, lay and religious are equally significant. As progressive educators, we open our students' eyes to non-discursive or presentational symbols as well as the traditional discursive forms traversing, juxtaposing and reconciling music, art, ritual, poesy, literature, formulae, experiments, quantifications and statistics. Criticality scholarship provides a forum in which to reflect upon our different forms of knowledge and discuss how, in a critical education, we might bring together our evolving, diversifying and multifaceted epistemic landscapes.

Freire and Wittgenstein caution against modelling our ways of knowing on the scientific paradigm. In different ways, they focus just as vitally on aesthetics, ethics and religion and they share a humanist outlook to the concrete problems we encounter as human beings. Reason and scientific methods have their place but so too do our emotions, feelings, ambitions and lived experiences as well as the high status of conceptual and aesthetic questions. We draw on all these resources. The approach of both thinkers is, moreover, consistent with the way arts based research is posited by Tom Barone and Elliott Eisner as a heuristic capable of penetrating phenomena and deepening our understanding of the human condition albeit in ways very different to those employed by the scientist but, nevertheless, complimentary, valuable and insightful (Barone and Eisner 2012).

In Section 7.3.1, I argue, first, that Freire envisions the human being as a totality; a person who knows with one's body, feelings, passions, reason and the storehouse of

his or her lived experiences. Second, I argue that, for Freire, naïve, epistemological and aesthetic curiosity play a central role in how human beings think. Third, I argue that Freire discerns the limits of science and of rationality. And finally, aesthetic curiosity is key, according to Freire, to the critical being overcoming her state of unfinishedness, her incompleteness. No longer anaesthetised by the methods of science, she is able to harness, through poetry, music, literature, language, artworks and the natural environment, a critical posture and envision a utopia of solidarity.

In Section 7.3.2, I argue that one constant in Wittgenstein's writing is his deep respect for the mystical and, with it, questions touching upon aesthetics, questions of value, God and the meaning of life. Also I argue, briefly, that, for Wittgenstein, there is an asymmetry between aesthetics, ethics and religious belief on the one hand, and science on the other; and that reflection on Wittgenstein's mystical germinates other ways of knowing and helps the critical being appreciate the significance of seeing things differently.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Perhaps this is a convenient juncture to indicate Wittgenstein's influence in aesthetics. For example, interpreting art as a family resemblance concept dispenses with the Socratic desire to find an exhaustive definition but, of course, we are not denying the logical possibility of someone providing a detailed explanation of what art is or, indeed, what any of its related terms might be. Morris Weitz, in 'The Role of Theory in Aesthetics', applies the Wittgensteinian notions of games and family resemblances to the concept of art and its subsidiary components such as music, painting and literature (Hanfling 1992: 16-17). Susanne Langer, in *Feeling and Form, Philosophy in a New Key* and *Problems of Art*, develops a theory of art based on Wittgenstein's work and advances the idea that art picks up where language leaves off (Hagberg 1995: 8-30). *Wittgenstein, Theory and the Arts*, edited by Richard Allen and Malcolm Turvey, comprises a collection of informative essays on theory and criticism of the arts. Further, in ethics and religion, Wittgenstein's mystical is taken up by Cyril Barrett in *Wittgenstein on Ethics and Religious Belief* and Donald Hudson in *Wittgenstein and Religious Belief*.

### 7.3.1 Freirean aesthetic curiosity

My first argument, that Freire sees the human being as a totality embodied with emotions and lived experiences, restates our position in Section 4.4 where we examined who a critical thinker is and in Section 5.3 where we explored different ways of knowing. There I argued that critical beings are not automatons or rational abstractions. The human condition reveals, on the contrary, subjects each of whom are uniquely armed with reason, a body, emotions, intuitions, feelings, dreams, fears and an intentionality towards the world (Freire 2005b: 5 and 54; and Freire 2016: 50). ‘I know with my entire body, with feelings, with passion,’ Freire reminds us, ‘and also with reason’ (Freire 2016: 2). We know with our entire bodies and so we must dare, as progressive educators, ‘never to dichotomize cognition and emotion’ (Freire 2005b: 5). The act of knowing is, after all, neither neutral from the political standpoint nor from that of the body (Horton and Freire 1990: 23).

The Freirean idea of entwining rationalistic experience with lived experience is pertinent to foregrounding otherness and achieving inclusiveness. It affords opportunities to build bridges with the lived experiences, fears, suffering, hopes and aspirations of others. It paves the way for criticality scholarship to open up the window of the present to new vistas, to more just realities. We are better informed of how the human being thinks and acts in and with the world.

This ties in with my second argument that naïve, epistemological and aesthetic curiosity, properly interlinked and progressed, play a central role in how we think. In Section 6.3.1 we touched on this when discussing conscientização. There I argued that Freire’s demand of challenging the learner’s naïve curiosity so that together with the progressive educator they may both share criticalness (Freire 2016: 52) is

consistent with John Dewey's concern to cultivate the 'attitude of childhood' that 'is 'naïve, wondering, experimental' (Dewey 1997: 156). Children's curiosity needs to be awakened and kept alive (Freire 2005b: 57-58). We gave naivety a positive spin focusing on the vitality and natural curiosity of young engaging minds. We contended that in the right pedagogical conditions and with appropriate dialogical experiences this curiosity can be integrated with the aesthetic and the epistemological (Freire 2016: 35-36 and 51-54; and Freire 2005b: 54-58).

Freire demonstrates his passion for aesthetic experience in his re-encounter with the mango tree in *Pedagogy of the Heart*—entitled 'under this mango tree' in the original Portuguese and from which the lengthy opening quote is taken. Shaded by the mango tree, Freire lets himself be taken by the feelings of being under it, and living it, cognisant of the varied colours and smells and the company of birds (Freire 2016: 1 and 7). Lost in contemplation of the sunset and the majesty of the clouds navigating the sky, aesthetic curiosity is awakened and Freire is touched, he confesses, in the same way an artwork 'centers me in beauty' (*Id.* 51). Again we relate this to Rudolf Otto's conception of 'mysterium tremendum' (Otto 1950: 7, 12-24) and to Ishmael's mystical depiction of the 'whiteness of the whale' in Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (Melville 1953: 169 and 175-176). Here, again, the aesthetic is taking root in our rich and diverse epistemological landscape.

We are tasked, as progressive educators, to show our students how to move from unguarded, naïve or spontaneous curiosity to epistemological curiosity by mediating concrete existential situations and by bringing their lived experiences, their realities, into the classroom (Freire 2016: 51-54; *Cf.* Freire and Macedo 1987: 29-30; and Horton and Freire 1990: 31). This epistemological curiosity, to be sure, 'does not

refuse to consider the aesthetic,' but, as Freire insists, 'it avails itself of it' (Freire 2016: 51). The link between epistēmē and our passions are restored. Also we remember that, for Freire, only an education of asking critical questions 'can trigger, motivate and reinforce curiosity' (*Id.* 2-3).

My third argument revisits some of the ground we covered in Section 5.3.2 and states that, for Freire, there are logical limits to science and to rationality. There we observed Freire's dread that epistemological curiosity 'achieved by an educational practice reduced to pure technique may be an anesthetized curiosity, one that does not go past a *scientific* position before the world' (*Id.* 54). An uneven focus on scientific methods would not only send learners back to sleep again, as Wittgenstein also fears (CV 5), but leaves little room for a 'utopia of solidarity' or even a 'critical posture' (Freire 2016: 54). Worse still, Freire laments, their technical training would be 'directed toward survival in a world without dreams'; a world without protest, agitation or challenges to conceptions of the truth; a world of silence (*Id.* 54-55). We drew parallels with Friedrich Nietzsche and Hans-Georg Gadamer on the limits of science, its laboratory of truths and methods of inquiry and there acknowledged the merit in Freire's objection that epistemological and aesthetic curiosity should not be anaesthetised.

Science and technology, Freire contends, should not be the handmaidens of the dominant ideology but be 'at the service of permanent liberation, of humanization' (Freire 2017: 132). Traditional approaches to literacy, he notes, celebrate scientific rigour and methodical refinement and subordinate theory and knowledge to the imperatives of its paradigm and, quoting Henry Giroux, 'history is reduced to a minor

footnote in the priorities of “empirical” scientific inquiry’ (Freire and Macedo 1987: 100-101).

Consciousness ‘does not end with rationality’; rather, perception of the world, myself and others, and the ability to understand the world ‘is not limited to a rationalistic experience’ (Freire 2016: 50). It is, as we have seen, consciousness of a totality. We ‘study, we learn, we teach, we know with our entire body’ (Freire 2005b: 5). We should avoid the ‘fears that *scientism* has instilled in us’ and remember that whatever I know, I know with my total self: my critical mind, my feelings, my intuitions and my emotions (*Id.* 54). Freire is right to be critical of the intolerance of scientism since it takes ‘science for the *ultimate truth*, outside of which nothing counts’ while properly accepting that such intolerance should not discredit science itself (*Id.* 77-78).

Certainty can be provided, indeed is also provided, outside of science.

This brings me to my final argument. Freire believes that aesthetic curiosity creates pathways to the critical being overcoming her state of unfinishedness, her incompleteness, to becoming more fully human. Free of the constraints of scientism in particular, she is able to reflect on her experiences of aesthetic objects and find possible solutions to her problematised reality. Poetry, music, literature, language, works of art and nature itself sharpen her critical posture and open up alternative vistas, possible transformations. The mango tree certainly keeps Freire’s vision of a democratic world free of oppression, domination and inequalities very much alive. The symbolism transmitted by the Christ of the Gospels also directs his aesthetic way of thinking. Indeed all of these reflections rekindle important connections between aesthetics, ethics and religion.

Aesthetic ways of knowing inform our epistemological base. When I read a novel, Freire recounts, 'I am involved in an aesthetical event' and 'I also may be rewriting the beauty I am reading' (Horton and Freire 1990: 23). Even if I am reading Gramsci, Vygotsky or Giroux, for instance, I am 'in search of some beauty, which is the knowledge I have there' and, more to the point, I am understanding not only what I am reading but 'something beyond the book' (*Ibid.*). Reading Marx or poetry are, equally, acts of beauty (*Id.* 26-27). I connect what I am reading, Freire continues, with the concreteness, the reality, it relates to and this 'is the relationship I try to establish between *reading words and reading the world*' (*Id.* 31). There is an important connection being made here between our aesthetic experiences and concrete reality.

Freire's critical literacy programmes demystify the harsh conditions of subjugation through the use of aesthetic engagements: various forms of music, poesy, language and different worldviews (Freire and Macedo 1987: 35). He believes that the 'astuteness' of marginalised persons to problematise their realities and resist oppression is explicit through their use of language, works of art and music (*Id.* 94-95). Understanding their limit situations, as reflected in various forms of cultural production including works of art, music and language, 'leads to a better comprehension of the cultural expression through which people articulate their rebelliousness against the dominant' (*Id.* 95). Art expressed in the form of murals and graffiti also have a meaningful place. Freire writes:

These artworks are an astute method that the dominated classes use to denounce their unjust and often oppressive domination. They denounce through artistic expression and sometimes they hide their denunciation with artistic expression. It is this context of oppression that triggers the oppressed classes' need to be astute and to resist. (*Ibid.*)

This is reminiscent of Adorno's conception of art as the 'social antithesis of society', as we saw in Section 5.3.3 (Adorno 2002: 176). Artworks, he writes:

By emphatically separating themselves from the empirical world, their other, they bear witness that that world itself should be other than it is. They are the unconscious schemata of that world's transformation (*Id.* 177)

Aesthetics and ethics are irretrievably webbed together for Freire and Wittgenstein. In the *Tractatus*, the early Wittgenstein says, 'Ethics and aesthetics are one and the same', but given their transcendental nature, they 'cannot be put into words' and 'we must pass over [them] in silence' (TLP 6.42, 6.421 and 7). Freire, on the other hand, advocates, 'Ethics and aesthetics are intimately tied together' (Freire 2005b: 100). Moreover, it is Freire's conviction that there are no themes or values of which we cannot speak or areas in which we must be silent (*Id.* 103). And given his ethical struggle for the annunciation of a freer and more inclusive, democratic society, which we noted in Section 6.2.1, we are free to talk about our lived experiences and our dreams as they relate to our biological, cultural, historical and political conditions as well as aesthetics and ethics (*Id.* 103 and 170). I agree that if we are serious about criticality scholarship working towards a more humane and just world then our aesthetic and ethical experiences count as much as any others. I also agree with Freire that an authentic educational practice to that end, a process incorporating the gnoseologic, ethical, aesthetic and political, must be built on hope (Freire 2016: 59-60). In the result, ethics and aesthetics allow us to see that our '*history is possibility and not determinism*' (*Id.* 7).

We conclude this Freirean analysis with the importance of writing as precisely and elegantly as possible. This must be the case if we wish to be understood by our



audience and perhaps influence their thinking. Freire refers to this as the aesthetical moment of language (Freire 2014: 61; and Horton and Freire 1990: 32). Rigour in our quest for understanding and knowing the world is compatible with the beauty shown in the form of words we use to express what we find (Freire 2014: 61). ‘A writer,’ he says, ‘commits no sin against scholarship by refusing to wound the ear and the good taste of the person reading or hearing his or her discourse’ (*Id.* 62). The scientist and the philosopher alike have a duty ‘to make understanding easier’ (Horton and Freire 1990: 32).

### 7.3.2 Wittgenstein’s mystical

‘What is good is also divine,’ Wittgenstein confesses, ‘Queer as it sounds, that sums up my ethics. Only something supernatural can express the Supernatural’ (CV 3). Wittgenstein takes a wide view of ethics and it includes aesthetics (NB 77 and 79; TLP 6.421; and LE 4). His conception of the mystical also includes religious belief (NB 74 and 79; and TLP 6.44 and 6.45). Here we are taking an aesthetic-ethical-religious interpretation of Wittgenstein’s conception of the transcendental.

Certainly there are developments and changes in Wittgenstein’s views on the mystical. We can make connections between the earlier and the later Wittgenstein. We can also highlight important differences. Treading through this labyrinth of ideas, which is beyond the scope of our present inquiries, includes, *inter alia*, neutralising the sublimity of the crystalline purity of logic; abandoning the picture theory of meaning; assessing the extent to which the doctrine of saying and showing survives in Wittgenstein’s later works; exploring the roles that language-games and forms of life, together with gestures, metaphors and presentational symbols, play in aesthetics,

ethics and religious belief; and examining the relationship, the distance travelled, between the ineffability of the mystical on the one hand, and its lack of a theoretical justification or foundation on the other. The research literature takes stock of continuities and breaks concerning the nature of the mystical and its overall significance in Wittgenstein's thinking.<sup>35</sup>

Wittgenstein's critique of empiricism and the hegemony of science pervades much of his work. Aesthetic, ethical and religious ways of knowing are, for Wittgenstein, essential for human flourishing. The opening passage in which he remarks that human beings have to 'awaken to wonder', as do peoples, and that science is a way of sending them back to sleep (CV 5) speaks to this. This brings us to my first argument that a pivotal and recurring theme in Wittgenstein's thinking is a deep respect for the mystical; the passion to 'unconceal' aesthetic, ethical and religious meaning; the quest to better understand the ways in which music, poesy, works of art, architecture, literature, film, the meaning of life and God affect our modes of thought and of life. As he puts it:

People nowadays think that scientists exist to instruct them, poets, musicians etc. to give them pleasure. The idea *that these have something to teach them*—that does not occur to them. (CV 36)

The mystical first appears in the *Notebooks 1914-1916*. Wittgenstein's entry at page 51 proceeds:

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<sup>35</sup> See, for instance, Arnsward 2009: 20-22; Bai 2017: 405; Barrett 1991: 246-248 and 252-259; Glock 1996: 32-34, 107-111 and 320-321; Hacker 2001: 39; Hudson 1975: 137-140 and 151-154; Mersch 2009: 30-31 and 42-46; Monk 1991: 51, 122-123 and 278; and Pitkin 1972: 336-337.

The urge towards the mystical comes of the non-satisfaction of our wishes by science. We *feel* that even if all *possible* scientific questions are answered *our problem is still not touched at all*. Of course in that case there are no questions any more; and that is the answer.

Wittgenstein's conception of the mystical, the aesthetic-ethical-religious instantiation of the transcendental, is succinctly set out in the *Tractatus* at 6.42, 6.421, 6.44, 6.45, 6.522 and 6.53. Meaningful discourse is restricted to propositions about the world; it pictures or represents what is the case. The propositions of the natural sciences can therefore be said; but they 'can express nothing that is higher' (TLP 6.42). God, the meaning of life, questions of value and aesthetics fall within the realm of the 'higher'. 'They *make themselves manifest*,' Wittgenstein contends, 'They are what is mystical' (TLP 6.522). Our traditional paths to aesthetic, ethical and religious discourse are cut off. What is aesthetic, ethical or religious can only be shown. And invoking his ineffability thesis, 'What *can* be shown, *cannot* be said' (TLP 4.1212). Similar constraints apply to logic. Logic is a 'mirror-image of the world' and is transcendental (TLP 6.13).

Donald Hudson explains that neither form of the transcendental can be expressed in words, but they nevertheless show themselves (Hudson 1975: 68). Logical form, or the structure of language, is the logical instantiation of Wittgenstein's transcendental. It shows itself in logical grammar or logical syntax. Likewise, the mystical cannot be put into words but, as we discover in his later works, shows itself in art and in human action (*Id.* 68-69 and 94-104).

Having climbed the Tractarian ladder, we must now let it go, throw it away, so that we 'will see the world aright' (TLP 6.54). The nonsensicality attached to Wittgenstein's

pseudo-propositions have served their heuristic purpose. Liberated we can see the world differently and let it take on a new significance. Finally, 'What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence' (TLP 7). In relation to aesthetics, ethics and religious belief, the axiom of the unsayable translates into a moral prohibition, We 'must' not speak about that which is higher; and this is tantamount to a refusal rather than an inability to speak (Mitchell 2005: 293-294). In many ways none of this is surprising. 'The book's point is an ethical one,' Wittgenstein affirms, and 'all that I have *not* written' is what is important (Engelmann 1967: 143). 'I believe,' he continues, that 'I have managed in my book to put everything firmly into place by being silent about it'.

I do not wish to push Wittgenstein's point about silence since his position changes. Nor can I offer a logical reason why what is 'higher' should remain ineffable. Science may not be able to explain aesthetics, ethics or religion but we have other narratives to deal with them. And we do in fact engage in aesthetic, ethical and religious discourse. In aesthetics, for instance, we are not troubled by the failure of Wittgenstein's distinction between saying and showing to indicate how we may perceive the significance of the unsayable elements in works of art; though his later analysis of the 'seeing of aspects' certainly helps with this (Verbin 2010: 476).

In respect of a piece of music, a poem or religious artwork sometimes it may be that we say nothing and simply let it speak for itself. On other occasions, we will not be silent about it and say a considerable amount even though residues of the ineffable may remain. Such phenomena, to be sure, have much to teach us. Mediating with these forms of human expression, talking about them, making connections to

existential experiences and using our imagination all help to foreground the significance of our multiple ways of knowing.

Let us return to Section 5.3.3 and relive Ishmael's vivid depiction, in *Moby Dick*, of the Albino whale (Melville 1953: 175-176). The 'whiteness of the whale' is 'yet so mystical and wellnigh ineffable,' Ishmael shudders to think, 'how can I hope to explain myself here' (*Id.* 169). And yet, as we experienced there Ishmael is successful in telling us a great deal about the whiteness of the whale and its sublimity. Does this not count against Wittgenstein's ineffability thesis? Ishmael, by all accounts, breaks his silence and utters what is meant to be unsayable. Similarly, we recall Martin Heidegger's colourful and telling account of Vincent van Gogh's *A Pair of Shoes* (Heidegger 2002: 14-19). The painting speaks to us and unconceals its truth. Yes it does. But does not Heidegger's representation of the aletheia, the disclosure of the truth at work, itself function as a further counterexample to aesthetic ineffability?

These concessions aside, the significant point to take away from our discussion is Wittgenstein's concern not to trivialise or undermine the significance of the mystical. This is a constant in all his life and works. As Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin rightly contend, it is not the case:

that the *attempt* to express the 'unsayable' in ethics must be totally renounced. It is only that we must, at all costs, avoid overintellectualizing and so misrepresenting the true character of the issues involved. (Janik and Toulmin 1973: 195)

This salutary advice applies with equal force to aesthetics and religious belief. When we write or talk about ethics or religion, Wittgenstein says, we 'run against the boundaries of language' which he believes is 'absolutely hopeless'; and our desire to say something about the meaning of life, what is good, what is value, cannot

constitute a science or contribute to our knowledge (LE 11-12). ‘But it is a document of a tendency in the human mind,’ he continues, ‘which I personally cannot help respecting deeply and I would not for my life ridicule it’ (LE 12).

Talking about his *Lecture on Ethics* to Friedrich Waismann, Wittgenstein underlines our ‘urge to thrust against the limits of language’; and concedes that in trying to get to the essence of ethics, the ‘tendency, the thrust, *points to something*’ (LE 12-13). The mystical remains significant but some of Wittgenstein’s endeavours to protect it are misguided. We do not—at least we should not—adopt the ‘scientific way of looking at a fact’ when we look at a miracle (LE 11). Science is a legitimate, indeed vital, human endeavour but its terrain does not include ethics, aesthetics or religion. We do not use scientific hypotheses or causal explanations to tackle ethical, aesthetic or religious problems. Separate narratives deal with them adequately and they play a different role in our inquiries. Moreover, they inform us of our different forms of knowledge. Wittgenstein has, in other words, overstated his case. We have no need to fear that what counts as ethical, aesthetic or religious knowledge should be viewed in the same way that science treats of scientific facts. On the contrary, they all bear significantly on our understanding the human condition.

With the introduction of family resemblances and forms of life Wittgenstein embarks on numerous discussions touching upon the mystical.<sup>36</sup> If his use of metaphors,

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<sup>36</sup> Wittgenstein does engage directly with aesthetic, ethical and religious topics. Here are some prominent examples: Aesthetic judgements involve ‘right’ and ‘correct’ rather than ‘beautiful’ and ‘fine’; and function within a family of cases that include expressions of admiration, smiles and gestures. What is the role of pictures of Biblical subjects? Michelangelo’s ‘Creation of Adam’. The Last Judgement. The word ‘God’ is one of the earliest learnt. God’s eye sees everything (LC); This tune says something. Music conveys to us itself (Brown Book); We should not look for definitions corresponding to our aesthetic and ethical concepts. How did we learn the word ‘good’?—Look at the language-games and see a family of meanings. This picture, this musical theme, tells me itself. What is involved in understanding a piece of music or a poem? (PI); How words are understood is not told by words alone, as in theology. A poet’s words can

similes, religious imagery and the importance of gestures is added to the equation we can safely conclude that ‘silence’ is no longer a bar to sensible discourse about aesthetic, ethical and religious questions. But, again, his deep respect for them remains as does his caution not to undermine their significance.

My second argument is that there is an asymmetry between aesthetics, ethics and religious belief on the one hand, and science on the other. This is consistent with Wittgenstein’s reverence for all matters mystical. In Section 5.3.2, I argued that he shares Nietzsche’s concern not to throw in the towel by turning philosophy into a science (Nietzsche 1979: §55). Wittgenstein does not want philosophy to become its handmaiden. Nor should we be preoccupied with the ‘method of science’ and ‘ask and answer questions in the way science does’ (BB 18). And though he finds scientific questions interesting, Wittgenstein is adamant that only conceptual and aesthetic questions really grip him (CV 79).

In my view, the religious, ethical and aesthetic problems arising from our lived experiences can be dealt with in many different ways. Together, they broaden our epistemic outlook and allow us to look for new solutions and imagine new horizons. Our existential questions are, as I argued throughout Chapter 5, not dependent solely on rationalistic ways of thinking or the Cartesian method. The scientific paradigm

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pierce us; and they can have a use in our lives. Music speaks to us and so does poetry, but not in the language-game of relaying information. What is expressive playing?—Look at the culture to which it forms part. A poem makes an impression on us as we read it. Poetry and music point to things beyond themselves and are connected with our network of language-games and forms of life (Z); and Good art is hard to understand for there is a sense in which it is subtler than anything else and its truth never leans towards plausibility. The work of art compels us to see it in the right perspective. Music is the most sophisticated art of all. In art it is hard to say anything that is as good as saying nothing. Shakespeare displays the dance of human passions. Within all great art there is a wild animal: tamed. Architecture is a gesture. This musical phrase is a gesture for me; it creeps into my life and I make it my own (CV).

does not enjoy a logical monopoly over the resolution of all the problems we encounter in human life.

Wittgenstein warns us not to partake in the ‘idol worship’ of science and the ways of the scientist (LC 27). He correctly asserts that the scientific style of thinking is not more rational than the religious; they both give us ‘satisfaction’ (LWL 104).

‘Causality stands with the physicist for a style of thinking,’ he continues, while the ‘postulate of a creator’ works for the religious believer; the nebula is one style and God another. “‘Rational’ is a word whose use is similar’. Rationality, we can say, allows for both ways of knowing.

Aesthetics, ethics and religious belief are fundamental areas of human thought and life. Turning them into a science would risk confusion, misrepresentation and triviality. Indeed any fears of an excess of scientism are tempered by the fact that there are other, equally valid, narratives at work. We do not, for instance, rely on the principle of falsifiability or random control trials in coming to understand the human condition. The research literature supports a reading of Wittgenstein along these lines.<sup>37</sup>

My final argument is that investigating Wittgenstein’s construct of the mystical allows us to consider other ways of knowing. Further, it offers the critical being the opportunity to appreciate the significance of seeing things differently. This also connects with the design of Wittgenstein’s philosophy as pedagogy, as we observed above in Section 7.2.2, to shift our thinking, to bring about a change of attitude.

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<sup>37</sup> See Arnswald 2009: 17-23; Bai 2017: 403, 407-408 and 411-412; Barrett 1991: 255-256; Davis 2018; Hacker 2001: 39 and 72-73; Hanfling 2001: 75 and 87-88; Harris 2017: 135-136 and 141-142; Monk 1991: 298-301, 404-405, 410 and 484-486; Peters and Marshall 1999: 45-48, 157 and 167; Sass 2001: 253-254 and 279-285; Skilbeck 2017: 202-206; Smeyers 2017: 243-244; Standish 2018: 230-234; and Stickney 2018: 22.



In the *Notebooks*, Wittgenstein quotes Friedrich Schiller's remark that 'Life is grave, art is gay' (NB 86). Linking aesthetics with ethics, 'The work of art,' he says 'is the object seen *sub specie aeternitatis*; and the good life is the world seen *sub specie aeternitatis*' (NB 83). Instead of seeing objects from the midst of them, we view the artwork or the world under the form of eternity, from outside; we see it together with space and time and not in space and time. We experience a change in its significance.

In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein writes:

To view the world *sub specie aeterni* is to view it as a whole—a limited whole. Feeling the world as a limited whole—it is this that is mystical. (TLP 6.45)

Wittgenstein's early approach to dealing with ethics and aesthetics can serve as a heuristic. It may alter our ways of thinking and help us find new answers to our questions. Perhaps this is what he is alluding to when he says, 'every view is significant for the one who sees it as significant' (GB 135).

In relation to religious belief, Wittgenstein adopts Luther's sayings that theology is the grammar of the word 'God' (PG §144; AWL 32; and PI §373) and that 'Faith is under the left nipple' (PI §589). When we talk about the features or attributes of God, disputes will invariably arise and all of this throws light on the use of that word.

'What is ridiculous or blasphemous,' Wittgenstein remarks, 'also shows the grammar of the word' (AWL 32). The same considerations apply to words like 'soul', 'death', and 'immortality'. We need to assess how these religious concepts are used by religious believers to get a better understanding of their significance and, of course, there will be similarities and dissimilarities in their use.

'The human body,' for Wittgenstein, 'is the best picture of the human soul' (PI II: iv, 152). Christianity is not a doctrine or set of theories about what may happen to the

human soul but a description of what takes place in human life (CV 28). This includes actual events like consciousness of sin, despair and salvation through faith. Wittgenstein struggles with how to be true to himself, how to act appropriately, ethically. Submerging himself in religion is one possibility, he imagines, that would still these doubts since ‘only religion would have the power to destroy vanity and penetrate all the nooks and crannies’ (CV 48). Religious belief provides its possessor with a system of reference that can be taken hold of passionately, as a way of assessing and living life (CV 64). It offers, in other words, another way of understanding and coping with the world. The religious models of thinking and acting are plainly important parts of the story covering the human condition. What is significant is the difference religious concepts make in various points in human life. As Wittgenstein says, ‘*Practices* give words their meaning’ (ROC §317).

The research literature evidences the connections we are making between Wittgenstein’s mystical and the forms of knowledge they relate to.<sup>38</sup> In closing this section, we can say that reflection on religious, ethical and aesthetic concepts will enable the critical being to see the world quite differently. Understanding other possibilities of knowing will broaden her horizons.

## 7.4 Summary and conclusion

Operating within the field of criticality scholarship we have extended our conception of criticality even further. In Section 7.2, we allied criticality with the resolution of

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<sup>38</sup> See Arnsward 2009: 19-23; Bai 2017: 403 and 414; Barrett 1991: 255-259; Bearn 2019: 705-706 and 710-713; Glock 1996: 320-323; Hudson 1975: 78-80; Mersch 2009: 32-34 and 46-49; Schroeder 2006: 99-104; and Verbin 2010: 476-480.

democratic and social justice concerns. We reasserted our claim that the critical being is equipped to take up Marx's gauntlet and not only interpret the world but change it for the better. Also in Section 7.3, we surveyed Freire and Wittgenstein's views on aesthetic, ethical and religious ways of knowing. Our epistemological outlook has been sharpened and enlarged.

In Section 7.2.1, I argued that Freire's idea of the critical being naming the world and the word shows us how to link criticality with democracy and social justice. To be truly human means we must name the world, to change it and, once named, the world appears to us as a problem demanding a new naming. Critical beings are built, we found, in word, in work, in action-reflection. We took inspiration from Freire's interpretation of Christ, as depicted in the Gospels, as a denouncer and announcer, a teacher and a radical who redirects our thinking towards change and freedom.

In Section 7.2.2, I presented a Marxist reading of Wittgenstein and showed how his later philosophy aligns with Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach rather than reverses it. I presented Wittgenstein as an advocate for social and political reform and foregrounded the emancipatory or transformational power of his later philosophy.

The unorthodoxy expressed by my ideas is, I believe, consistent with emerging trends in political philosophy and Marxist thinking that offer different perspectives on how we may interpret Wittgenstein's philosophy and methods and which underscore their significance for tackling democratic and social justice issues.

In Section 7.3.1, I argued, first, that the human being, according to Freire, is a totality. She is someone who knows with her body, feelings, passions, reason and her storehouse of unique lived experiences. Second, I argued that naïve, epistemological and aesthetic curiosity, properly interlinked and progressed, play a central role in how

human beings think. Third, I argued that Freire perceives logical limits to science and to rationality. And fourth, I argued that awakening aesthetic curiosity helps the critical being overcome her state of unfinishedness, her incompleteness. We ring-fenced the methods of science to free up, as it were, the fundamental insights and the increase in knowledge that poesy, music, literature, language, artworks and the natural environment have to offer her.

In Section 7.3.2, I argued that one persistent theme in Wittgenstein's work is his deep respect for the mystical and, with it, questions touching upon aesthetics, questions of value, God and the meaning of life. Second, I argued this is reconcilable with the asymmetry in his thinking between aesthetics, ethics and religious belief on the one hand, and science on the other. And finally, I argued that exploring Wittgenstein's domain of the mystical leads us to consider other possible ways of knowing. In this sense the critical being is able to value seeing the world differently.

Both Freire and Wittgenstein's insights into tackling aesthetic, ethical and religious questions inform criticality scholarship. Without any fear of an excess of scientism, the narratives that deal with these issues can be employed to help engage with democratic and social justice concerns.

We can also say that our epistemic perspective has been greatly enhanced by traversing Freire and Wittgenstein's ideas about aesthetics, ethics and religious belief. Other ways of knowing have been foregrounded. Such an outlook paves the way for imagining new vistas, new horizons.

Our discussions in Chapter 6 and 7 have shown how the mutually enriching perspectives of Freire and Wittgenstein shed further light on the educational concept of criticality. This work is original. Also it has added to our innovative work on

policy, theory and practice in Chapters 2 to 5. Section 8.3 will sketch out how our efforts can continue to gain purchase in the new domain of criticality scholarship. Signposts will be erected there to indicate possible paths we might take towards imagining and bringing about a more humane and just world.

## Chapter 8 Reflections, inspirations and new horizons

Discipline, social efficiency, personal refinement, improvement of character are but phases of the growth of capacity nobly to share in such a balanced experience. And education is not a mere means to such a life. Education is such a life.

(Dewey 2016: 247-248)

### 8.1 Our dialogue, our investigations

Education is not merely preparation for life, John Dewey properly remarks, it is life itself. Education should provide each person with the abilities, dispositions, virtues and knowledge to problematise reality, challenge what we take for granted and try and change the world to make it a better place. The notion of criticality is, to be sure, what links education with our social, political, cultural and economic existence. However, for the connection to be relevant, significant, we must be able to say what we mean by a critical citizenry. We must, in other words, have an educational policy that reflects how criticality is conceptualised and used in practice.

Our investigations in earlier chapters look into the ordinary workings of criticality. They underline the concept's importance in national and transnational educational policy and in the scholarly literature. We examine policy. We reveal the mutability of the idea of criticality. We explore theoretical positions that inform it. We create a new public space 'criticality scholarship' in which we develop the concept further. We ask what critical thinking is and tie-in commensurate skills, propensities and

character traits. We think about who is and who is not a critical being. We tackle field dependency and the problem of transfer and favour a mixed approach to teaching critical thinking. We are encouraged by pedagogical strategies that support criticality. We explore the pedagogical experiences of Paulo Freire and Ludwig Wittgenstein. We take stock of their insights into the educational notion of criticality and link them with criticality scholarship's concern with democratic and social justice issues.

We are, however, sceptical of the continuing encroachment in the arts and humanities of traditional rationalistic conceptions of thinking and the Cartesian method. We advocate equality in terms of our broader, richer, styles of teaching and different forms of educational research. We embrace, whole-heartedly, alternative conceptions of criticality. We remain committed to providing clarity and coherence to the overall concept. We accept it is much wider than the sum of its constituent parts—critical thinking skills, creative thinking, independence and so on. We continually question the function, the relevance, of criticality in education and in the broader society.

## 8.2 Criticality: observations, findings and recommendations

In this section we reflect on the contribution of our work in terms of how it supports the development of the underlying principles (the features or characteristics) of criticality. To that end we now offer some general observations concerning some of its features, make known our results and list two recommendations for policymakers. It is important to stress that in addressing these matters our reflections have been informed by educationalists and that the tasks set out in Recommendations 1 and 2 should be undertaken by educationalists given their expert knowledge and experience in these matters. The crucial point is that policymakers should work with

educationalists so that any policies concerning the implementation of criticality in educational settings are duly informed by the latter's efforts.

Our critical investigations have shown that criticality operates at a collective level. As Freire makes plain, our critical awareness, in which we insert ourselves in the reality that is being unveiled, is not individual but social, communal (Freire 2005a: 132). We remarked in Section 6.3.1 that his notion of *conscientização* demonstrates the interrelatedness and interdependence of critical consciousness and action; and, further, that the interlinking of the individual with the social highlights our responsibility to others in the context of emancipatory action. Thus 'consciencia' and 'ação' awaken the critical being's consciousness and empower her to organically participate in life-altering transformations. We acknowledge a community of critical speakers and listeners who are driven by a transformative spirit working together to bring about a more humane and just world. In Section 7.2.2. we presented a Marxist reading of Wittgenstein. We challenged the pessimism inherent in orthodox readings of Section 124 of the *Philosophical Investigations* and presented him as an advocate for social and political change. Our notion of criticality gains further support from just such a novel approach.

All of this resonates with Richard Paul's notion of 'strong sense' critical thinking and Nicholas Burbules and Rupert Berk's helpful suggestion of viewing criticality as a practice. In Section 4.2.3.3 Paul describes the strong sense critical thinker as one who develops 'emancipatory reason' and employs strong sense skills and abilities to work with others—to listen to and reconcile competing perspectives (Paul 1990: 32-33, 51, 88, 100 and 568-569). We noted, however, that on Paul's analysis, she is not necessarily committed to taking transformative action when it might be appropriate to



do so. We added, later, that an ethical component needs to be incorporated into her critical toolbox, into her internal framework, such that failing to take action in appropriate circumstances (including in social justice settings) would constitute a ‘failing’ (Bowell and Kingsbury 2015: 236).

In 3.4.3.2 we took up Burbules and Berk’s proposal of viewing criticality as a practice and one in which we ‘foster *thinking in new ways*’ (Burbules and Berk 1999: 59). Part of invoking new ways of thought, they suggest, is to allow difference to become a ‘condition of criticality’ so that we can engage authentically with ‘deeply challenging alternatives’ (*Id.* 60). And as a practice, criticality is a ‘mark of what we do, of who we are, and not only how we think’ (*Id.* 62). We argued that the critical being is one who accepts *who* she is: that she is open to see others for whom they are and reconcile points of conflict; and of *what* she does: that she can change her position in light of new ways of thinking, co-construct new forms of knowledge and be moved to action when social justice calls for it. To reiterate, this critical practice operates at a collective level. Criticality is a means of persuading others to ‘change their patterns of action’; and, when viewed as a ‘stimulus to change’, it allows the community of critical beings to create the possibilities for change (Burbules 1998:486).

This is not to forget, as I have argued throughout the thesis, that criticality provides the critical being with the means necessary to live an examined life—fulfilling Socrates’ edict (Plato 1997: 33)—and be a meaningful participant in society (as well as a socially transforming agent). Self-fulfilment is also an important part of the story of criticality (PG 382; and Monk 1991: 17-18 and 213).

These remarks about the principles of criticality are intended to help give the concept traction in further theoretical and empirical research. The six key findings that now

follow show related features of the educational concept of criticality. We outline our findings:

**1. *The educational term ‘criticality’ is a family resemblance concept.***

We have observed how educational policy is caught up with a particular conception of critical thinking skills that is itself only a part of the much wider concept of criticality. Criticality is, as we have accepted, much broader than critical thinking (Davies and Barnett 2015: 17).

We have also argued that the terms ‘criticality’, ‘criticalness’, ‘critical thought’, ‘critique’, ‘creative thinking’, ‘reflective thinking’ and associated educational expressions (including problem-solving) form part of a family of meanings. They share similarities and relationships that exhibit ‘family resemblances’ in a Wittgensteinian sense (PI §§66-67).

If any of these resemblances should deviate from normal usage we should be able to point out how they do and all of this serves to shed light on the overall concept of criticality. In Section 6.3.2, for example, Wittgenstein addresses the problem of thinking. He makes the point that we are easily confused by psychological verbs like ‘to think’ (or ‘to mean’ or ‘to understand’) since their employment is anything but uniform or transparent (Z §§112 and 113). ‘I cannot enumerate the conditions under which the word “to think” is to be used,’ Wittgenstein confesses, ‘but if a circumstance makes the use doubtful, I can say so, and also say *how* the situation is deviant from the usual ones’ (Z §118). The use of the word ‘to think’ may well be ‘tangled’ but by looking at its use in our everyday language we learn what we mean by the concept ‘thinking’ and how to use it correctly (RPPII §20).

Here we can also revisit Walter Benjamin's analogy of constellations. 'Ideas are to objects,' we noted, 'as constellations are to stars' (Benjamin 1998: 34). In order to apprehend criticality (or justice or beauty), we need to discern the relationships between their conceptual elements which we can mark 'as points in such constellations' and which are most evident at the extremes (*Id.* 35). The depth in our understanding, Benjamin insists, comes from viewing the constellation as a whole including any encroaching asterisms.

***2. Criticality is an evolving and mutable concept and its paradigm markers are not fixed.***

Chapter 3 discovers that criticality is not a mature concept, but an emerging one. It is informed by critical theory, critical pedagogy, critical thinking scholarship and the informal logic movement. In Section 4.2.1 we considered H. L. A. Hart and John Rawls' analyses of justice. We accepted that since we work in different philosophical frameworks, different conceptions of criticality will continue to emerge, and that the roles to which these conceptions play and the sets of principles they have in common will together shed light on the concept itself (Rawls 1972: 5-6).

Given our finding that criticality is a family resemblance concept we are not concerned about the lack of a precise definition or list of exhaustive explanations. We rest content with consistent and clear descriptions, examples, illustrations of how it is used in educational practice and are mindful of the ways in which it develops, changes. We reject any search for a final definition on the basis it may fetter the concept's natural growth. Here we reconnect with Theodor Adorno's point (made in Section 4.2.2) that we do not need to strive for unity (Adorno 1973: 5). Our concepts

are no less adequate for any perceived failure to lock them into tight definitions or dress them up with fancy labels.

***3. Criticality connects education with democracy and social justice. Further, democratic and social justice problems can be approached from a pedagogical perspective.***

Throughout our discussions we have contended that education serves to improve justice for all by converting emancipatory spirit into transformative action. Criticality awakens and empowers individual and collective consciousness. This critical awareness and the possibility of organic participation in societal reconstruction belong to all people regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual preference, age, and economic and social status.

Education opens students' minds to their existential experiences. Freire shows how students can problematise their hegemonic constraints, make explicit the 'limit situations' and question 'why' things are as they are. They can imagine ways to overcome them, transform them, and to make society freer, more inclusive and democratic. Freire and Wittgenstein want students to think for themselves and develop their own criticality. They encourage educators to teach students to approach problems from a pedagogical standpoint. Education is not neutral and its facilitators are free to challenge the tenets of the established order. The methods, the styles, the therapies inherent in Freirean critical pedagogy and Wittgenstein's philosophy as pedagogy are just as applicable in the real world as they are in the classroom. And both thinkers want students to make their own distinct critical paths.

Having explored the lived experiences of both thinkers we also see the merit in applying their methods to show students how they can approach democratic and social justice problems from a pedagogical perspective.

***4. A critical education involves balancing the demands of the market economy with the equally important pedagogical aims of advancing students' autonomy and intellectual, moral and social development.***

We aim to foster criticality in our teaching and learning environments. In Chapter 2, we raise a concern that an educational policy heavily weighted on economic considerations and market forces may reduce the significance and scope of criticality. The teaching of 'soft skills' to meet employer demands is, to be sure, important but only part of the critical citizenry we are trying to shape.

Critical beings need skill sets and a knowledge base to embark on a career. However, they also need the educational opportunities to develop and enhance their own criticality to become fully-fledged citizens. Education is, to take Dewey's lead, not simply preparation for life, but is a critical and democratic life itself; a social existence that mutually respects individual decision making that is informed by all kinds of relevant factors—historic, cultural, intellectual, spiritual as well as economic and political. Put another way, personal or individual worth is not measurable solely in fiscal or employability terms. The politics of market forces is not logically the superior driving force in education.

***5. A critical education broadens our epistemological base by admitting different ways of knowing. Indeed all our forms of knowledge and canons of rigour and validity are equal.***

Chapters 5 to 7 operate on the premise that the scientific model of epistemology should not discredit the ‘possibilities of knowing’ that lie outside its usual sphere (Gadamer 2013: 76). There is no logical reason why the paradigmatic scientific way of knowing should surpass or devalue other ways of knowing including the critical, creative, feminist, hermeneutic, aesthetic, moral, religious, lay and indigenous all of which form part of the jigsaw puzzle of how human beings think.

Traditional rationalistic accounts of thinking and the Cartesian method do not have an elevated status. There is a rich diversity in the different ways in which we think, investigate phenomena, conduct academic research and teach. We have different reasons for why we believe some things to be true or accept as valid and others not. A critical education respects this position and recognises that we live and teach in evolving, diversifying and multifaceted epistemic landscapes. Educators perceive the logical limits to science and to rationality. Research and teaching criss-cross the arts and humanities and the formal, natural, social and applied sciences. Students are exposed to non-discursive or presentational symbols as well as the traditional discursive forms traversing, juxtaposing and reconciling music, art, ritual, poesy, literature, formulae, experiments, quantifications and statistics.

***6. Teachers should be encouraged to adopt a mixed methods approach to teaching criticality.***

We take the view, expressed in Chapter 2, that the implied assumption that critical thinking skills are generic in nature and transferrable across subject domains should be challenged. In Chapter 5 we acknowledge a growing consensus for adopting a mixed approach to teaching criticality. We accept that both the generalist and specificist camps contribute to our understanding of criticality. There are general and subject-

specific abilities and dispositions. There may be occasions where specific approaches to teaching criticality arise in certain subject domains. However, given an emerging consensus for interdisciplinary or cross-curricular teaching, the teaching of criticality should be viewed in that context as well. Students need to learn to reconcile competing criteria and methods from different subject areas and recognise the limitations of their respective epistemologies.

Now we turn our attention to making two specific recommendations to policymakers. They are directed to those persons and entities responsible for implementing the teaching of criticality in our maintained primary and secondary schools in England. We reiterate our point about the necessity of being clear in what we mean by criticality and consistent in how we use it.

**Recommendation 1: Educational policy should encourage, and be informed by, collaborative efforts at theoretical and empirical research into the nature, purpose and teaching of criticality.**

Chapter 2 highlights a willingness, in the international arena, to engage in collaborative work to better understand the nature of critical thinking skills and competencies and to yield supportive pedagogical strategies. There we took stock of Esther Care and Rebekah Lou's report commissioned for UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report 2016 (Care and Luo 2016). It clearly identifies an insufficient understanding of transversal competencies—what they are and how they might be taught and assessed. Also it raises the question of consistency in their application.

Chapter 5 demonstrates how policymakers can be informed by educationalists who work with criticality. The nature, purpose and teaching of criticality are examined in

detail. In the context of field dependency and the problem of transfer, Paul Ashwin, Ronald Barnett, Ken Brown, Nicholas Burbules, Robert Ennis, Anna Jones, John McPeck, Richard Paul and Harvey Siegel speak to this. Further, policymakers are directed, in Section 5.2.2, to six significant pedagogical strategies that support the teaching of criticality. Our narrative plainly encourages students to think for themselves, choose to be cognisant of developing their own intellectual frameworks and to value the enduring importance of criticality in their own lives.

**Recommendation 2: Educational policy should assist with the compilation, updating and distribution of teaching resources that support the teaching of criticality.**

International models of criticality demonstrate a genuine need to provide teachers with pedagogical strategies and methods designed specifically for teaching criticality.

They need to be informed as to why teaching criticality is important. Teachers need to be encouraged to develop suitable strategies and techniques. They should be able to inform students what is expected of them and be able to monitor their progress.

Students, moreover, will be able to appreciate the value of criticality, internalise what they are learning and mature as critical beings. Dialogue with local agencies is important. Pedagogical strategies and methods for teaching criticality as part of the National Curriculum are, for instance, developed and revised by subject associations and teacher networks. There should also be engagement with international agencies on the development of these materials. Chapter 2 speaks to this.



### 8.3 Criticality scholarship: opportunities for further empirical and theoretical research

Criticality scholarship proceeds on the basis that criticality is grounded in democracy and social justice. It is a public space open to multiple epistemologies, different activities and practices, the voices and lived experiences of significant others and it grants equity to each and all of them. Criticality scholarship invites conversation. Theorists, practitioners and policymakers are encouraged to work together and advance the notion of criticality in education, reflect on the development of the critical being and promote democracy and social justice through a critical education. Also criticality scholarship is an invitation to interested parties to engage in genuine dialogue where the participants share a vision of emancipating excluded, subordinated and marginalised people, of eliminating injustices, inequalities and all forms of domination and discrimination, and of becoming more fully human.

In this context, and taking up our second research question, we now suggest opportunities criticality scholarship holds for further theoretical and empirical research into the conceptualisation and the usability of the notion of criticality. We relive our existential experience depicted in our thought experiment in Chapter 3. Alone in the wilderness we are confronted by a daemon. We are presented with the witches' brew. Do we have the courage to lift the veil of maya? Situated at the crossroads of power and domination, wealth and poverty, and self-respect and feelings of worthlessness—contradictions that still plague us, what critical action can we imagine and work towards executing?

### 8.3.1 Underscoring an ecology of knowledges

Criticality scholarship encourages us to move beyond what Boaventura de Sousa Santos describes as ‘abyssal thinking’ (Santos 2007: 45-47; and Santos 2014: 118-120). It aims for global cognitive justice by granting equity to our different ways of knowing and multiple forms of knowledge and which, in turn, supports our democratic and social justice expeditions across the globe (Santos 2007: 53; and Santos 2014: 237).

Further research along these lines is welcomed. We can take up Santos’ persuasive thesis that the ‘diversity of the world is inexhaustible’ and attempt to provide it with an adequate epistemology (Santos 2007: 65; and Santos 2014: 15 and 108-111). The diversity of our social experiences is indeed inexhaustible and ungraspable. We can accept being ‘a learned ignorant’ of the epistemological diversity of our world, as he puts it, and work to identify, evaluate and respect our multifarious forms of knowledge and use this understanding to imagine and build better futures (Santos 2014: 111). Connected with this is José Medina’s pertinent observation that ‘diversity is the human condition’ (Medina 2013: 298). All of this suggests we must unthink dominant ideology, learn new ways of knowing and rediscover our intricate networks of interpersonal relations.

This important research can help us create the conditions necessary for rebuilding social emancipation. Key is Santos’ counter-epistemological notion of the ecology of knowledges (Santos 2007: 63-72; and Santos 2014: Chapters 6 and 7). It is founded on the premise that knowledge is inter-knowledge. There exists a plurality of heterogeneous knowledges the autonomies of which are not compromised. Scientific knowledge is, to be sure, not discredited but its hegemonic use is rejected. There is

considerable work to be done in terms of assessing the relations between our multiple epistemologies, dealing with questions of incommensurability and incompatibility and with translating marginalised and oppressed people's experiences and expectations so as to give them traction in the real-world (Santos 2007: 77-78; and Santos 2014: 213-214). Disposing of the abyssal line means allowing all people the ability to participate in transformative action. Santos writes:

To experience the world as one's own is to experience the world as a set of problems in whose solution one can meaningfully participate. (Santos 2014: 240)

### 8.3.2 The role of imagination in critical action

Meaningful participation is fuelled by imagination. In terms of educational practice, criticality scholarship research can explore ways in which Maxine Greene's pioneering work on this concept<sup>1</sup> can help students develop as critical beings and engage with democratic and social justice issues. In Chapters 3 and 4 we took up her suggestion that by mediating with creative and imaginative works students engage with their powers of imagination and tear apart the 'cotton wool of daily life' (Greene 2018: 185). Unconcealing and repairing the 'lacks' that plague ordinary and mundane existence empowers them to 'move through the openings, to try to pursue real possibilities' (*Id.* 223). 'Imagination,' she argues, 'alters the vision of the way things are; it opens spaces in experience where projects can be devised, the kinds of projects that may bring things closer to what ought to be' (Greene 2017: 496).

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<sup>1</sup> Greene 1995, 2011, 2017 and 2018.

Continuing with our endeavours to sharpen critical awareness we can move to drive Greene's *Landscapes of Learning* forward and research how we can help students 'feel' they are grounded in their own unique histories, in their lived experiences (Greene 2018: 2). As she rightly argues 'Transcendence has to be chosen' and this will only happen if we provide students with adequate cognitive and affective tools.

The imaginative leap required to lead to transformative praxis is, moreover, dependent on 'seeing things close up and large' (Greene 1995: 16). No longer seeing things small, from a safe distance, and as mere objects—in the way we may have previously looked at 'schooling through the lenses of a system' (*Id.* 11), we see people and things for whom and what they truly are. And this passion for seeing the world big is the 'doorway for imagination', where there is the 'possibility of looking at things as if they could be otherwise' (*Id.* 16).

This is conceivably a necessary step towards acting on the belief that we can repair the lacks and transform the world. Imagination is key. Its power can rekindle and illuminate the light of hope, of new and unforeseen possibilities, in these seemingly dark and slavish times.<sup>2</sup>

Again we draw a parallel with Medina's work. He is right to say we should explore the role imagination plays in our epistemic lives and especially when we are contemplating epistemic alternatives (Medina 2013: 53). Further research would, in my view, benefit greatly from engaging with his idea of 'resistant imaginations' (*Id.* Chapter 6). We need to resist ossification, Medina insists, and reimagine our generic

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<sup>2</sup> Greene 1995: 44; Greene 2011: 70; and Greene 2017: 501.

categories (man, woman, white, black, straight, gay, etc.). To remain truly alive and to cease following the path of least resistance we need the assistance of:

*a resistant imagination*—an imagination that is ready to confront relational possibilities that have been lost, ignored, or that remain to be discovered or invented. (*Id.* 299)

I have made this connection between Greene and Medina elsewhere arguing that their respective notions of ‘looking at things as if they could be otherwise’ and ‘resistant imaginations’ both run along the same Wittgensteinian tracks which head in the direction of imaging alternatives and contemplating concrete possibilities for changing the world.<sup>3</sup>

### 8.3.3 Significant others

Criticality scholarship promotes the interests of others whom we want to make ‘*our eminently relevant significant others*’ (Medina 2013: 157). Here we connect with the contemporary work of Miranda Fricker and Medina.

*Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* brings to the fore two ethical aspects of our basic epistemic needs: to convey knowledge to others by telling them and to make sense of our own social experiences (Fricker 2007: 1-2). Criticality scholarship research employs Fricker’s conceptions of testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice and the corrective measures available to offset the negative impact of prejudice in both the hearer’s credibility judgements and the speaker’s hermeneutical marginalisation. These ideas are significant for all speakers, as

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<sup>3</sup> Deegan 2023: 4-5 and 12-13.

conveyors of knowledge, especially when we are dealing with issues pertaining to gender, colour, sexual preference, indigeneity, religiosity and able-bodiedness.

Others have important knowledge to pass on. As responsible hearers, we need to be able to receive it which means we must be critically open to the words of others so that we may take on new knowledge (*Id.* 66). To neutralise any negative impact of prejudice in our credibility judgements, Fricker insists, we compensate ‘upwards to reach the degree of credibility that would have been given were it not for the prejudice’ (*Id.* 91-92). We restore to others their status as knowers (*Id.* 145).

As feminist and race theories make plain, marginalised and oppressed speakers have often struggled to articulate their suffering because their concerns were not being expressed in an inclusive hermeneutical environment. To correct for the prejudicial impact of the speaker’s hermeneutical marginalisation, Fricker continues, we need to adjust the degree of credibility ‘upwards to compensate for the cognitive and expressive handicap imposed on the hermeneutically marginalised speaker by the non-inclusive hermeneutical climate, by structural identity prejudice’ (*Id.* 170). As responsible hearer’s, in other words, we listen just ‘as much to what is *not* said as what is said’ (*Id.* 171-172). We reserve judgement, as it were, and keep our minds open to what the speaker is trying to articulate (*Id.* 172).

Some of us, Medina contends, lack ‘critical awareness of what we know and do not know about the experiences of people who are significantly different from us’ (Medina 2013: xiii). He builds on Fricker’s work to develop his epistemology of resistance. He draws on Wittgenstein’s notions of needing friction and returning to rough ground (PI §107). Dispensing with the Socratic craving to encapsulate a theory of justice, Medina focuses on particulars of injustice, systemic injustices, and proceeds

in a non-ideal way going ‘back to the rough ground of our actual practices where we find differently situated knowledges and perspectives—where there is friction’ (Medina 2013: 11). As mentioned in Chapter 3, we share his desire to gain ‘epistemic friction’ among ‘significantly different perspectives’ and to make ‘others *our eminently relevant significant others*’ (*Id.* 18 and 157).

Criticality scholarship research can seek to find ways to create ‘more equal participation’ in all our hermeneutic practices (*Id.* 117). Inequality has indeed been the ‘enemy of knowledge’ (*Id.* 27) and, for that reason, the sharing of our social spaces and conceptual resources is essential (*Id.* 157). We can find relations of solidarity with our fellow thinkers and inquirers. Their epistemic appraisals will create friction with ours even if some of our valuations and theirs do not fit neatly together (*Id.* 306). Medina writes:

A community of thought and interpretation is a community of solidarity, that is, a community of subjects who are prepared to think and believe together as they act on their beliefs through collaborations, and who are ready to be responsive and accountable to each other as they try to share their experiential and agential perspectives. (*Ibid.*)

#### 8.3.4 Indigenous voices and ancestral wisdom

Criticality scholarship is, to be sure, a public space in which we advocate the significance of ancestral knowledge. Chapters 3 and 5 speak to this and make reference to some of the recent literature concerning indigeneity and decolonisation.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See also Pihama *et al.* 2019; Santos 2007 and 2014; and Smith 2019b.

Connections also lie with much of what has already been said here in Section 8.3. To aid this continuing research, I make three further references to the educational philosophy literature.

Jeff Stickney's article on transformative environmental education (Stickney 2020a) is, I suggest, instrumental in demonstrating the value of Indigenous knowledge perspectives. Drawing on Martin Heidegger and Wittgenstein, Stickney argues we can bring in Indigenous ways of knowing and alter our ways of seeing and regarding nature.

Similarly, Yulia Nesterova's article on rethinking environmental education through Indigenous ways of knowing and traditional ecological knowledge (Nesterova 2020) is directly on point. In the context of restoring Indigenous identities and ways of life, and against the backdrop of decolonisation and reconciliation, she stresses the value of seeing Indigenous peoples as guardians of the Earth and appreciating their closeness to nature and their interdependence between the living and non-living world.

Nesterova demonstrates that there is merit in running learning programmes that view environmental education from an Indigenous and transformative perspective.

Lastly, we can use Medina's idea of resistant imaginations to help restore, discover or reinvent Indigenous epistemologies (Medina 2013: 299). His reference to the High Court's decision *Mabo v Queensland (No 2)* is apposite. As he says, it called for a 'rethinking and reimagining' such that the bounds of 'we' in contemporary Australian identity were torn apart (*Id.* 279-280). Such was my own experience as Counsel Assisting the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and, in particular, with the question of whether Darren Wouters was an Aboriginal person and not to mention the tragic circumstances surrounding his death (RCIADIC 1991).



### 8.3.5 Wittgenstein and social justice

In Chapter 3 we clarified that we are not aiming for crystalline purity when we examine concepts like criticality but rest content with description and illustration which expose their fluidity and plasticity (PI §§107-109; and II: xi, 171). Indeed if we want cognitive and affective epistemic friction, Medina encourages us to return to rough ground (Medina 2013: 11, 48, 215 and 281). ‘We want to walk,’ Wittgenstein says, ‘so we need *friction*. Back to rough ground!’ (PI §107).

In Chapter 7 we analysed Wittgenstein’s aphorism that philosophy ‘leaves everything as it is’ and, in an unorthodox fashion, we aligned his later philosophy with Karl Marx’s eleventh thesis on Feuerbach.<sup>5</sup> We presented Wittgenstein as an advocate for social and political change. No doubt further work can be done to extend our ideas in this regard.

### 8.3.6 Critical interdisciplinarity

Chapter 5 raises contemporary concerns about the stronghold of reason and the scientific paradigm in education. Criticality scholarship can investigate these concerns and seek to address the encroachment of science in the arts, humanities and social sciences. Joint research and cross-disciplinary teaching across all academic areas is welcomed. In this respect, we recognise Stephen Rowland’s conception of critical interdisciplinarity (Rowland 2006: 71, 78-81 and 92). We can create opportunities to bring different disciplines into critical relationships. We can confront

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<sup>5</sup> See also Deegan 2023.

and negotiate their respective theoretical positions and underlying assumptions. We can broaden further our epistemological base.

In Chapter 7 we continued this narrative and accepted Freire and Wittgenstein's caution against modelling our ways of knowing on the scientific paradigm. Cognitive and affective friction extends beyond traditional rationalistic approaches and scientific methods. Our emotions and lived experiences are equally relevant as are all our forms of knowledge. This is consistent, we argued, with the manner in which arts based education is promoted by Tom Barone and Elliott Eisner (Barone and Eisner 2012). Criticality scholarship is well suited to diversifying and extending our research and teaching methods. Again imagination and experiment can work together.

### 8.3.7 Supporting the teaching of criticality and the implications of our work for educators and learners

In Section 1.5 we made it clear that our emphasis was not on how to support the development of the teaching of criticality given the sheer complexity of that task. Section 5.2.2 speaks to some of the recent pedagogical methods suggested in the research literature all of which warrant serious consideration. Criticality scholarship can certainly engage in theoretical and empirical research into this important endeavour.

We close this section by addressing the implications that our work holds for educators and learners. We will rely heavily on the lessons we have taken from Freire and Wittgenstein in focusing on criticality at work in our class, lecture and seminar rooms. Of course important aspects of Freirean critical pedagogy and Wittgenstein's philosophy as pedagogy have already emerged in Section 8.2. Now we propose a

series of questions designed to draw out the mutually enriching perspectives of these two thinkers.

First, is criticality an educational concept? In pedagogic terms it is hard to imagine any concept that is not educational in the sense that surely we can find some place for it in our theatres of learning. We have approached criticality as an educational concept. The depth grammar of psychological verbs like ‘to think’ and ‘to critique’ as well as ‘to understand’ or ‘to mean’ should be explained to learners so as to avoid (or dissolve) the puzzlement that happens when we are seduced by the similarities in their surface grammar (PI §664). Wittgenstein’s discussion of the problem of thinking in Section 6.3.2 is an important heuristic for educators. He shows us how to look at the ordinary use of words and therefore cease being confused by the visual or auditory similarities they happen to share with other words. Even the example of ‘I have a pain’ and ‘I have a pin’ is instructive in this respect. Plotting the depth grammar of these expressions would appear as points in Benjamin’s constellations and be evident at the extremes (Benjamin 1998: 35). It would be interesting to see how learners would depict this critical exercise and then listen to their descriptions.

Freire’s notion of conscientização adds to our collage of the educational concept of criticality. In the classroom breaking this down into ‘consciencia’ and ‘ação’ would open learner’s eyes to the fundamental connection between awareness and action. An important juncture, this would be, for discussing the relation between theory and praxis or, indeed, Marx’s infamous retort that the point is to change the world and not merely interpret it. Tie this in with the theme of democracy and social justice (in say a discussion on citizenship, politics, human rights, history, philosophy or ethics) and we meet head-on Freire’s principal question, ‘How can the oppressed, as divided,

unauthentic beings, participate in developing the pedagogy of their liberation?’ (Freire 2017: 22). The educational experiences would be heightened especially if learners were to ask (and should be encouraged to ask) provocative questions. Why do the oppressed need saving? How do you convince the oppressors to acknowledge their complicity? Why would the oppressors enter into this liberation process anyway? And why is Freire preoccupied with love, hope and with faith? Educators, according to Freire, have a duty to challenge what learners take for granted and expose hidden contradictions and hegemonies and encourage them to think about how to remove prejudice and inequalities. They should, you may recall, never ‘apply the brakes’ to the learner’s ‘ability to think’ (Freire 2014: 108). Freire, Wittgenstein and Marx are on the same page—they rupture what we otherwise take for granted. And it is often only from studying someone else’s problem that our own complacency, our own thinking, is unsettled. Freire’s use of ‘limit situations’ certainly has a meaningful place in our critical activities.

Second, how do Freirean-Wittgensteinian ideas translate to curriculum design and teaching practices? Our discussions in Sections 6.2 and 6.3 demonstrate how both thinkers radically disapprove of the banking model of education in which learners are depicted as docile recipients passively waiting for information to be handed down to them. Learners must be shown how to think for themselves and assume responsibility for their own learning. Freire’s notion of a problem-posing education speaks to this as does Wittgenstein’s last words to Maurice Drury, ‘Drury, whatever becomes of you, don’t stop thinking’ (Quinn 2000: 29). Educators and learners are co-creators and re-creators of meaning. Also, Section 7.3 shows how Freire and Wittgenstein value different ways of knowing (especially aesthetics, ethics and religious belief), are open to ‘knowledge democracy’ (Hall and Tandon 2017: 13) and are willing to leave reason

and the Cartesian method behind. Knowledge must be digested and it demands understanding and a commitment on the part of learners (Brown and Duguid 2000: 120). The challenge posed by Freire and Wittgenstein is for educators to convince learners of the intrinsic value of understanding and show them how to develop a taste for it.

In terms of teaching practice both thinkers, albeit in different ways, do demonstrate the importance of learners bringing their own knowledge, their own problems and their own dreams into the classroom. Unpacking the limit situations in his culture circles demonstrates this for Freire. With the exception of the awakening of the orthographic conscience of his young Austrian pupils (WV19), Wittgenstein's approach is more subtle. His treatment of the problems of reading, thinking, meaning, understanding, learning a language and doubt relate personally with pupils and readers who want to escape the fly-bottle of philosophical bafflement. Yet, as Chapter 6 aptly illustrates, both thinkers approach these problems from a pedagogical perspective. Their way of engaging critically with questions is something that educators can always develop further in their own teaching practices.

Third, how do Freirean-Wittgensteinian ideas link the teaching of critical education with the promotion of democracy and social justice? Section 7.2.1 shows how Freire makes this connection with his students reading the world and the word simultaneously. As critical beings they denounce structural inequalities and hardships and move to announce better worlds. Capturing his ideal of the Christ of the Gospels as a teacher and a radical reformer is something that has set off a few sparks in my own pupils' eyes. The imagery of a Presence that contradicts and that denounces and announces (Freire and Hunter 1984: 547) is a powerful one. Section 7.2.2 presents a

case for linking Wittgenstein's later work with tackling democratic and social justice issues. Educators could, for instance, open a teaching session with the question, Do you think philosophy (or theory) should leave everything as it is?—no matter how harsh or unjust a state of affairs might be! There is much to unpack here in terms of theory, praxis and ethics and it has relevancy in our philosophical and political discussions.

Fourth, how does the teaching of criticality relate to the personal development of learners? How does it promote their critical natures? To help answer these questions let us return to our thought experiment in Section 3.1. Having allowed our undergraduate students, for example, time to work through the details and then discuss briefly among themselves which life is the most dreadful and which is the most fulfilling, we open the dialogue. Let's say they vote on it and choose the story told by the Aboriginal woman as the most horrid and the profit-making entrepreneur's account the most appealing. It matters not which ones they select. We talk through the steps in the daemon's twisted game and quiz them on the significance of lifting the veil of maya. To our surprise someone has read Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* and we listen to her interpretation. We pause to reflect on her account of Apollo and Dionysis.

Next we unpack the Dionysiac plot at hand. We happen to agree that if we won the toss of the coin it would be courageous indeed to have the veil of maya lifted—especially if, by circumstance, we are fortunate enough to live in a privileged social setting where we are comfortable and largely undisturbed by structural inequalities and modes of domination. So we agree to proceed on the basis that we lose the toss and must now experience the fate of the apparition. Only this time we try and imagine

ourselves in her predicament and contemplate, in a Freirean sense, how we might become liberated given the then prevailing conditions.

The students are asked to write an essay on their encounter with this alternative existential event. We pose some initial questions. How disruptive is this imaginary experience for you? How do you reconcile the apparition's life with your own? How do you think you might be able to alter societal conditions to release you (or the apparition) from these bonds? What critical action could you take to liberate someone in a similar situation today? Who else would you work with to achieve such a social transformation? You can imagine some of the responses.

In terms of this critical exercise helping a student develop her personal development, her criticality, the rude awakening is painful. Her beliefs and values are suspended particularly when she has to imagine living in the Aboriginal woman's body. The apparition has lost her children. She has been violated and abandoned. She has been stripped of her humanity. This critical awareness ought to be very disturbing, most unsettling (Dewey 1997: 13; and Dewey 2016: 226).

The student feels the plight of the apparition. The asymmetry given differences (potentially) in gender, colour and class attacks her notion of one's self. How difficult it is to make 'others *our eminently relevant significant others*' (Medina 2013: 18 and 157). Yet, as Green rightly contends, 'Transcendence has to be chosen' and this will only happen if we provide students with adequate cognitive and affective tools (Greene 2018: 2). Fortunately, for our student this is only a thought experiment. But she may need to be able to choose transcendence in the future given the uncertainties that lie ahead.

And finally, in dealing with liberation, Freire is quick to remind us that criticality operates at a collective level. Our critical awareness is social (Freire 2005a: 132). This classroom encounter brings to life reflection, dialogue and action (Freire 2017: 60)—or at least allows us to imagine what action we might take in analogous circumstances. As we mentioned in Section 8.2 Wittgenstein’s case for social and political change can help focus our students’ critical thinking in scenarios like this one. There we also stressed that criticality awakens and empowers individual and social consciousness and, further, that this critical awareness and with it the possibility of collectively bringing about social and political change belongs to all peoples.

Educators can conjure up their own provocative thought experiments and push learners to uncomfortable places. We can cajole learners into thinking about questioning the legitimacy of the status quo. They can be empowered to tear apart the ‘cotton wool of daily life’ (Greene 2018: 185). They can imagine better worlds for themselves and for other people whose lives we might easily see as modern incantations of the unlucky apparitions in our thought experiment—the Australian Aborigine, the wandering Ronin, the displaced African slave and the young woman wrongly accused of being a witch. We can beckon learners ‘toward emancipatory futures’ (Darder 2015: 81). Thus the teaching of criticality does help instil in all of us a better understanding of one’s self, others and the world in which we live and all share.

#### 8.4 Summary and conclusion

Educational theory and practice inform policy regarding criticality. Our key findings and recommendations to policymakers are based on our refined conception of



criticality. We recognise that more work needs to be done in terms of collecting empirical data and engaging in theoretical analyses.

Criticality scholarship is a public space in which we can continue to converse about the educational idea of criticality, the development of the critical being and the promotion of democracy and social justice. We accept that all our epistemes, beliefs and practices are equal. In this spirit we have signposted opportunities for further research.

The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existence.

(Einstein 1955: 64)

### 9.1 Keeping a holy curiosity alive

Inquiring, questioning, critiquing, problematising, looking at things differently, imagining alternatives and finding new solutions are all part of the human condition. Curiosity does indeed have its own reason for existence. Continuing with his reflections on the meaning of life, Albert Einstein remarks:

One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery each day. Never lose a holy curiosity. (Einstein 1955: 64)

Section 8.2 brings together educational theory and practice to inform policy on what we mean by the concept of criticality and how we use it. It touches upon some of the key findings of our investigations and makes a couple of recommendations to educational policymakers.

Section 8.3 then puts a spotlight back on educational theorists and practitioners. By positing criticality in the new philosophical field of criticality scholarship, demonstrated by our extensive research literature in Chapters 3 to 5 and by the mutually beneficial ideas and methods of Paulo Freire and Ludwig Wittgenstein discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, we now think about the next steps we can take. We

place several markers in the evolving landscape. We encourage further theoretical and empirical research to be undertaken in criticality scholarship to strengthen our understanding of criticality and appreciate its potentiality in education and society.

What do we mean by the concept of criticality and how is it used in education? That is our primary research question and to which Chapters 3 to 5 speak. We witness a number of different conceptions, principles and philosophical positions all of which serve to explain, or better still, describe, or point towards, what we mean by criticality. Our investigations, our critical activities, continue in Chapters 6 and 7 where we glean significant insights from the lived experiences and philosophical perspectives of Freire and Wittgenstein.

How may criticality scholarship promote further theoretical and empirical research into the conceptualisation and the usability of the notion of criticality? That is our subsidiary research question. We have demonstrated its plausibility, dynamism and scope in Chapters 3 to 7. We have created this public space to accommodate different perspectives, ideas, experiences and dreams. Its mantra is democracy and social justice. Section 8.3 highlights, as we say, future paths that underline our avant-garde conception of criticality.

## 9.2 How have our exercises in criticality scholarship contributed to the scholarly literature?

The reader has, I hope, enjoyed engaging with the narrative spanning across our policy-orientated, theoretical and practical pursuits into the educational concept of criticality. Some of the views expressed may strike a resonating chord while others

not. The intention is simply to trigger thoughts of one's own and invite conversation. In the process, I hope we also feel that we have made original contributions to knowledge.

First, in terms of policy, our survey of national and international educational policy underlining criticality in Chapter 2 and our key findings and recommendations to policymakers in Section 8.2 add to the educational philosophy literature.

Second, our embryonic literature review as it matured through the different phases in Chapters 3 to 5 synthesised multiple ways of addressing the problem of criticality. Our dialogue incorporated certain views of the Frankfurt school of critical social theory, critical pedagogy, critical thinking scholarship and the informal logic movement as well as the perspectives of other theorists. We traversed theoretical and practical concerns. We also explored different ways of knowing and challenged the alleged primacy of the rationalistic thematic and the Cartesian method. In sum, we extended our knowledge and understanding of criticality.

Third, bringing together Freire and Wittgenstein in educational philosophy in Chapters 6 and 7 to discuss criticality is in itself original. We managed to find common ground. We demonstrated how their world views are mutually enriching. Our contribution to knowledge is evidenced by showing how their ideas and methods inform educational philosophy not only about criticality but also about the different ways of knowing that the human condition enjoys including the aesthetic, ethical and religious.

Fourth, and related to the previous point, is the seeming divide between Freire and Wittgenstein. Freire is without any shadow of a doubt an advocate for human emancipation. His critical pedagogy underscores this important ethical concern. His

personal accounts of engaging with students is also favourable. Wittgenstein stands worlds apart. However, his insights into teaching and learning are highly beneficial. Further, our discussion of philosophy leaving ‘everything as it is’ and our alignment of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy with Karl Marx’s eleventh thesis on Feuerbach may well ruffle some feathers! The unorthodoxy reminiscent in our approach adds to the scholarly literature.<sup>1</sup> It reflects recent trends in political and Marxist thinking and connects Wittgenstein with democracy and social justice.

Fifth, our review of the policy, theory and practice relating to criticality in Chapters 2 to 5 and the inspirations we drew from Freire and Wittgenstein in Chapters 6 and 7 are, taken together, original exercises in criticality scholarship.

Finally, the signposts we erected in Section 8.3 for further empirical and theoretical research should, taking Einstein’s cue, help us drive our endeavours forward without ever losing a ‘holy curiosity’.

For my own part, I have enjoyed our critical exercises and I wish to thank you for sharing them with me.

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<sup>1</sup> The publication of my manuscript on this point (Deegan 2023) will, I hope, lead to a lively debate.

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