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The Critical Spirit: Emotional and Moral Dimensions of Critical Thinking[1]

Abstract
In this article, I will introduce and explore the critical spirit component of critical thinking and defend it as significant for the adequate conceptualization of critical thinking as an educational aim. The idea of critical spirit has been defended among others by such eminent supporters of critical thinking as John Dewey, Israel Scheffler, and Harvey Siegel but has not thus far been explored and analyzed sufficiently. I will argue that the critical spirit has, in addition to cognitive, also moral and emotional dimensions. Finally, I will touch upon some critiques which see that critical thinking either does not or ought not to involve moral or emotional dimensions.

Keywords
Critical thinking, critical spirit, emotional, moral, political

Introduction

This article explores the critical spirit component of critical thinking. Its starting point is the conception of critical thinking which involves *both* critical thinking skills *and* the critical spirit, opposed to the view that holds that critical thinking should be understood as only skills. My discussion is motivated by the observation that the skill view of critical thinking is gaining ground as a learning aim in higher education. For example, OECD's Assessment of Higher Education Outcomes (AHELO) understands critical thinking merely as skills.[2] In the philosophical literature, the critical spirit is usually taken as an inalienable part of critical thinking. However, the nature of the critical spirit is not fully explored from the perspective of the philosophy of education.

1 I am grateful to Nicholas C. Burbules and Harvey Siegel for their worthwhile comments and criticism of the earlier drafts of this paper. I thank the Kone Foundation for financial support.

2 Karine Tremblay, Diane Lalancette, and Deborah Roseveare, *Assessment of higher education learning outcomes. Feasibility study report. Volume 1 – Design and Implementation* (OECD, 2012), accessed August 11, 2013, http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/AHELOFSReportVolume1.pdf . The narrow conception of critical thinking in the research field of higher education has been mentioned also by Hyytinen et al., see Heidi Hyytinen, Katariina Holma, Richard Shavelson, and Sari Lindblom-Ylänne, "The complex relationships between critical thinking and epistemological beliefs in the context of problem solving," *Frontline Learning Research* 6 (2014): 1-25.

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The aim of critical thinking can be found today in almost every educational program and ideology. However, the meaning of the term varies from context to context: critical thinking may refer to the ability of a workforce in leading nations toward economic growth and welfare, or it may refer to the ability of individuals in understanding and changing the oppressive structures of society. These two ideas both endorse criticality, but the political ideals that serve as their background stand in opposition to one another. For example, most European universities explicitly promote critical thinking as a learning aim, but they often appear to see critical thinking as related to "vocationalism", that is, they seem to assume that people with critical thinking skills are better contributors to the economic growth than those who lack these skills. In contrast, when for example the literature of critical pedagogy endorses critical thinking, critical thinking is seen in terms of understanding and thus being able to change the oppressive structures of society. Thus these two approaches, although both promoting critical thinking, interpret the notion very differently. What they do share, however, is the idea that criticality is beneficial and thus worth pursuing as an educational aim. The history of this idea is at least as old as the history of Western philosophy itself; for example, Socratic dialogues exemplify the pedagogical idea of critical thinking. Throughout the history of Western philosophy of education, critical thinking has been seen as fundamental for maintaining and fostering such values as democracy, freedom, and autonomy.

One can, of course, challenge the very ideals of democracy and autonomy, or the assumption that promoting critical thinking through education is an adequate means for fostering these values. However, the possibility to concentrate particularly on the philosophical analysis of the critical spirit requires that I take certain values and presuppositions as a starting point for the discussion. The following essay subscribes to the value of the democratic way of life, and it assumes, firstly, that maintaining and developing a democratic society requires a certain kind of education, and, secondly, that critical thinking is a crucial dimension of democratic education. It also presumes, thirdly, along the lines of such philosophers as John Dewey, Israel Scheffler, and Harvey Siegel, that the educational concept of critical thinking is closely connected to the epistemological concepts of rationality and reason. Fourthly, it assumes that an adequate formulation of critical thinking as an educational ideal cannot be formulated merely by referring to the skills of critical thinking, but needs a reference to the dispositions of a critical thinker.

In the following, I will explore the nature of the critical spirit and argue that the critical spirit has, in addition to cognitive, also moral and emotional dimensions. I will then touch upon some critiques which see that critical thinking either does not or ought not to involve moral or emotional dimensions.

The Moral Nature of the Critical Spirit

The critical spirit refers to the inclination, force, and motivation to think critically; that is, it refers to the personal dimensions necessary for a critical thinker to use her skills properly. I have borrowed the term from Siegel, one of the proponents of the view of critical thinking

that involves both critical thinking skills and the dispositions. Siegel describes the critical spirit as follows: "In order to be a critical thinker, a person must have … certain attitudes, dispositions, habits of mind, and character traits which together may be labeled the "critical attitude" or the "critical spirit."[3] The concept of the critical spirit is thus related to the idea of a critical thinker as a certain sort of person,[4] who is not only able to think critically but really thinks critically in her everyday life. In the educational context, it is quite important that students not only have critical thinking skills, but that they adequately use these skills as well.

Bringing to bear the critical spirit on the definition of critical thinking, however, generates complexities, because this spirit is related to the moral and emotional dimensions of critical thinking. This is perhaps one reason for the aforementioned fact that there is a tendency in today's empirical research to understand critical thinking merely in terms of skills and to bypass the role of dispositions. If I am correct in this, the problem is the same to which Scheffler refers in his language of education, when he writes that "we talk of giving pupils the 'ability to think critically' when what we really want is for them to acquire the habits and norms of critical thought."[5] According to Scheffler, the reason for the overemphasis on skills at the cost of dispositions is indeed that skills are taken to be morally neutral, whereas dispositions are always related to value-laden issues.[6]

As an example, one argument in Connie Missimer's defense on excluding dispositions from the definition of critical thinking is that the Skill View (which defines critical thinking as involving solely skills), contrary to the Character View (which incorporates both skills and dispositions in critical thinking),[7] "does not smuggle in moral prescriptions."[8] Missimer argues that the Skill View "allows for free ethical theorizing"[9] whereas the Character View accepts certain moral values uncritically.[10] However, we cannot discuss education without "smuggling in" moral concerns, and the moral neutrality of the Skill View actually makes it untenable as an educational ideal.

Educational aims cannot be morally neutral. In Scheffler's words, "the inculcation of habits, norms, and propensities pervades all known educational practice, and such practice is not therefore merely a matter of skills."[11] Education is always intentional activity, aiming to foster some abilities, dispositions, and virtues, those which are seen as valuable for moral agency and a good life. Thus educators must take the moral reasons into account in deciding the aims, contents, and methods used in educational practice. As, for example, Dewey

3 Harvey Siegel, *Educating Reason: Rationality, Critical Thinking, and Education* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 39.
4 Siegel, *Educating Reason*, 42.
5 Israel Scheffler, *The Language of Education* (Springfield, Illinois: Thomas, 1960), 98-99.
6 Scheffler *The Language of Education*, 66.
7 Connie Missimer, "Perhaps by Skill Alone," *Informal Logic* XII.3 (1990), http://ojs.uwindsor.ca/ojs/leddy/index.php/informal_logic/article/view/2610/2051.
8 Missimer, "Perhaps by Skill Alone," 145.
9 Ibid., 145.
10 Ibid., 151.
11 Scheffler, *The Language of Education*, 99.

and Scheffler have both pointed out, the importance of fostering a student's critical ability derives from the aim of giving that student the capacity needed for a good life, both on the personal and societal levels.[12] Along the same lines Siegel argues that teaching critical thinking is morally obligatory because it follows the Kantian principle of respect for persons.[13] Furthermore, the ideal of critical thinking itself has moral roots, since it aims at such values as freedom of mind and a democratic way of life. Therefore, an educational ideal which is fully independent of moral concerns is patently impossible.

This does not, however, "entail an uncritical acceptance of those morals," to address Missimer's criticism of the Character View of critical thinking. In contrast, as I will next argue, an adequate definition of critical thinking indeed "smuggles in" at least the epistemic value of truth and the ethical value of the respect for persons. The main reason for this is that, otherwise, any kind of criticism towards anything, if skillfully put and formulated by following adequate rules, can be taken as an example of critical thinking.

The ideal of critical thinking presupposes the epistemic value of truth. This claim does not imply any naïve version of realism necessitating that we are able to confirm our beliefs by comparing them directly with the facts existing independently of humans. It implies only the commitment to the semantic account of truth, stating, to put it simply, that the word "truth" means that the true sentence, description, or theory, holds up. There is no necessity of being able to compare any particular statement, description, or theory to "reality" or other alleged source of verification to say that the word "truth" refers to correctness, accuracy, and tenability in our language. Critical thinking pursues truth in the sense that it does not pursue fallacies, lies, or illusions. This does not imply that some final truths can be reached, but it does imply that the concept of critical thinking is fundamentally linked to the concept of truth.[14]

The commitment to the ideal of truth also has a moral dimension. It is easy to imagine the situation where it would be much more comfortable not to think critically or try to find out the truth, although thinking critically would be the morally right action. There are many situations in our everyday life where it would be easier to believe in authorities, salesmen, or other sources of unreliable information, but where moral reasons require us to aim for the truth instead. The decision to investigate ecocides, or violations of human rights, which take place in the production of one's everyday consumer products, and change one's consumer habits on the basis of this information, exemplifies the moral nature of the pursuit of truth.

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12 See also Siegel, "Educating Reason: Critical Thinking, Informal logic, and the Philosophy of Education. Part Two: Philosophical Questions Underlying Education for Critical Thinking," *Informal Logic* V11.2&3 (1985): 71, http://ojs.uwindsor.ca/ojs/leddy/index.php/informal_logic/article/view/2706

13 Siegel, "Educating Reason," 71.

14 On the interconnections of the notions of rationality, objectivity, and truth, see Israel Scheffler, *Science and Subjectivity* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 1982, 2nd ed.), and on the relationship of these with the possibility of justifying moral education, see Katariina Holma, "The Epistemological Conditions of Moral Education: The Notions of Rationality and Objectivity Revisited," *Educational Theory* 61:5 (2011): 543-547, doi: 10.1111/j.1741-5446.2011.00419.x.

The respect for persons as an ideal inherent in critical thinking differs from the ideal of truth in the sense that the respect for persons is not a conceptual necessity for an adequate definition of critical thinking. Furthermore, as Siegel states, the respect for persons as a moral requirement is "independent of any specific educational aim."[15] There are, however, many ways in which this ideal is connected to critical thinking. Siegel has argued that respecting and encouraging students' independent judgment and the moral requirement of being honest with students both exemplify how the educational ideal of critical thinking is compatible with the moral requirement of respect for persons.[16]

In my view, critical thinking as an educational ideal necessitates the commitment to respect for persons also in the sense that this moral ideal should be presented to students as a criterion of thinking critically on moral and political issues. Is my claim, now, guilty of the "uncritical acceptance" of moral principles that Missimer accuses the Character View of committing? In what follows, I will argue that it is not. I base my argument on two crucial insights of philosophical pragmatism; Charles Sanders Peirce's epistemological fallibilism and Nelson Goodman's notion of "initial credibility."

As I have previously described this basic idea of Peirce:

> Fallibilist epistemology originates from Charles Sanders Peirce's philosophy, in particular two articles (Peirce, 1934a, 1934b): 'Some consequences of four incapacities' and 'Questions concerning certain faculties claimed for man'.[17] Peirce formulated the concept of fallibilism to counter the two prevailing epistemological traditions of his day: rationalism and empiricism. He stated that both of these traditions fail in their assumptions regarding the possibility of certainty: rationalism in basing the possibility of certainty on reason and empiricism in connecting certainty to perception. Peirce, who was impressed by Darwin's groundbreaking theory, argued that due to the evolutionary origin of human knowledge, there can be no certainty. Consequently, there are no fixed starting points from which we could derive infallible knowledge.
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> This line of thought did not, however, lead Peirce to scepticism regarding human knowledge. Instead, he argued that while certainty is not possible, there are good reasons for taking our current conceptions as a starting point for action and further inquiry. In Peirce's view, the Cartesian concept of systematic doubt is self-deception, not something real human beings can achieve. We have to begin our thinking, doubting and criticizing from where we are. This position, like the belief that all human knowledge is uncertain, coheres with the evolutionary understanding of knowledge: the bodies of knowledge we now have may be mistaken and are thus possibly subject to revision, but they have, nevertheless, survived the

15 Siegel, "Educating Reason," 71.

16 Siegel, "Educating Reason," 71.

17 Charles Sanders Peirce, "Questions Concerning Certain Faculties Claimed for Man," 135-155, and "Some Consequences of Four Incapacities," 156-189, both in *Pragmatism and Pragmaticism*, volume 5 of *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1934).

> process of evolution to this point; as such, they provide the best available starting point for how to proceed at the present moment with respect to further inquiry.[18]

The notion of "initial credibility"[19] is from Nelson Goodman's philosophy and it shares this Peircean rejection of knowledge based on certainty or fixed starting points. To put it roughly, we have to begin our thinking, doubting, and criticizing from where we are and thus start the refinement of our thinking from our current conceptions. Our current conceptions have some initial credibility, because they have been formulated during the generations in interaction with a surrounding world as well as other people. This is, of course, not to say that they are infallible, but, on the contrary, everything can be submitted to critical thinking, even those beliefs which have the highest initial credibility. The replacement of these beliefs must, however, be supported by required evidence and reasons. The difference from all-embracing Cartesian doubt is clear: in cases where we have no serious alternatives to our current beliefs, we do not have reasons, or justification, to reject them merely because they are uncertain.

One might now say that the fallibilist epistemology necessitates the conception of objectivity which is applicable only in the realm of science but not in the realm of ethics and morality. In my previous work, I have argued that there are not sufficient reasons for abandoning the objectivity of ethics.[20] This argument on the whole cannot be discussed within the limits of this article. To summarize: both fields (science and ethics) are liable to error, and neither of them necessitates a conceptual link between objectivity and certainty or objectivity and ontological realism.[21]

When the principles fallibilist epistemology and the idea of initial credibility is applied to the moral principle of the respect for persons it appears to have very high initial credibility. Firstly, some version of it has been accepted in almost every culture; secondly, no compelling arguments for its rejection has thus far been presented; and, thirdly, no serious alternatives have been presented either. Its level of initial credibility – accepted by almost everyone, and neither serious rejecting arguments nor serious alternatives existing – is actually almost as high as any belief, conception, or theory can reach. The burden of proof is, thus, on the side of the one who wants to reject this principle. Moreover, I am quite sure that when Missimer criticizes the Character View as preventing "free ethical theorizing," she is not suggesting the abandonment of the respect for persons as a moral criterion for critical thinking.

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18 Katariina Holma and Heidi Hyytinen, "The Philosophy of Personal Epistemology," *Theory and Research in Education* 2015 (forthcoming), doi: 10.1177/1477878515606608, see also Katariina Holma, "Fallibilist Pluralism and Education for Shared Citizenship," *Educational Theory* 62:4 (2012): 397-400.

19 Nelson Goodman "Sense and Certainty," *Philosophical Review* 61 (1952): 160-167, doi: 10.2307/2182906.

20 Holma, "The Epistemological Conditions of Moral Education," see also Thomas Nagel, "Ethics," in Moral Relativism: A Reader, ed. Paul K. Moser and Thomas L. Carson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 241-243 and Robert Nozick, Invariances: The Structure of the Objective World (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001), 286, 291.

21 Holma,"The Epistemological Conditions of Moral Education," and Scheffler, *Science and Subjectivity.*

If my argument is correct, the critical spirit is committed, at the minimum, to the epistemic value of truth and to the moral value of respect for persons. In education, fostering the critical spirit thus implies that education aims to contribute to students' maturation into persons who are committed to these basic values. Moreover, it is not sufficient that they take truth and respect (and the related values of honesty, justice, and so on) as valuable in principle, but they should be disposed to live out these values by actively searching, by means of critical thinking, the obstacles of their realization. Furthermore, they should have force and motivation to act according to their judgments based on critical thinking. They should thus be disposed to think critically and to act accordingly, instead of believing or acting, say, on the basis of fear, self-indulgency, self-interest, or then on the basis of moral or intellectual laziness. This turns our attention to the source of the force and motivation for critical thinking, which is, at least partly, related to the role of emotions in the functioning of reason and morality.

The Emotional Nature of the Critical Spirit

The emotional dimension is connected to critical thinking in many respects. Firstly, emotions have a direct epistemic function, which is to say that they work in cooperation with cognition in the processes of interpreting the world. Secondly, emotions can work as either encouraging or weakening one's moral agency, a fact which naturally has enormous educational significance. In critical thinking, emotions thus have a role in both critical thinking per se, and in the motivational function of fulfilling the moral command of thinking critically.

The idea that critical thinking is so strongly connected to emotions may be surprising to those who are used to dichotomizing reason and emotion and think that critical thinking appeals to reason and ignores emotions. Recent finding from neuropsychological studies, however, support the idea of philosophical pragmatism, namely, that both reason and emotion serve a vital function in formulating adequate knowledge of the world.[22] Although they are both fallible, each plays its own specific role in knowledge construction. The dichotomy of reason and emotion derives from the worldview of Antiquity, and although it is untenable, it still exerts a palpable influence on our thinking.

It is also important to realize that assuming the significant role of emotions in the functioning of reason and morality does not imply the philosophical stance of moral emotivism, i.e. the position that reduces moral assertions to the emotional states. Neither does this imply that emotions can, or should, determine what we take to be good reasons. At the minimum, it implies that the motivation to think critically or act morally derives, among other things, from emotions.

22 Holma, "Fallibilist Pluralism and Education for Shared Citizenship," 397-409.

At their best, emotions work in directing our attention toward what is worth noticing, they motivate our action, and they give us pleasure when we succeed. The role of emotions in the service of cognition is considered by Scheffler in his *In Praise of the Cognitive Emotions*. Scheffler demonstrates, for example, how the emotional stance of surprise indicates that we have found something that we have not known before,[23] and how the emotional stance of joy is connected to the scientist's success in verifying her hypothesis.[24] These emotions keep us motivated in cognitively demanding activities, such as scientific or philosophical work, or critical thinking.

Emotions also serve a role in morality, which is, as argued in the previous section, fundamental for genuine critical thinking. Although their exact role is the subject of huge philosophical dispute, there is quite wide agreement that they play some role both in moral motivation and in moral epistemology.[25] To put the motivational role in Jesse J. Prinz words: "We want to be good, and we find good behavior rewarding. Bad behavior is, in contrast, emotionally costly. And we are motivated to help others, in part, because we feel affection for them, affinity, or compassion."[26] The epistemological role, for its part, is related to our tendency to see things as good or bad.[27] According to Prinz, "[s]omething strikes us as good or bad in virtue of the emotional response it elicits."[28] Prinz argues that emotions, for example, point to what is morally praiseworthy or blameworthy.[29]

This is not to imply that emotions would have some kind of direct or infallible access to moral "truths." On the contrary, emotions may work also in the service of self-deception or morally wrong action. The emotional manipulation that dictators use to get people on their side serves as one example of this possibility. The tendency to avoid emotional discomfort can lead to "rationalization," that is, to the process in which one gives reasons for one's action which are not real reasons but are based on self-deception.[30] This leads us to

23 Israel Scheffler, *In Praise of the Cognitive Emotions and Other Essays in the Philosophy of Education* (Routledge: New York, 1991), 9-11.

24 Scheffler, *In Praise of the Cognitive Emotions*, 7-8.

25 Jesse J. Prinz, "The Moral Emotions," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Emotion*, ed. Peter Goldie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), accessed November 2012, http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com.libproxy.helsinki.fi/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199235018.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199235018-e-24, 2-3, doi: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199235018.001.0001.

26 As Prinz continues, this is true independently of whether the nature of this behavior is rooted in self-interest or altruism, Prinz, "The Moral Emotions," 2.

27 Prinz, "The Moral Emotions," 3.

28 Prinz, "The Moral Emotions," 3.

29 Prinz, "The Moral Emotions," 5-19.

30 Robert Audi makes the distinction between rationalization (giving reasons that are not real reasons) and explanation (giving the real reasons) in *Moral Knowledge and Ethical Character* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 131-156. In the field of educational research, Kaisu Mälkki has argued that an unconscious aim to avoid uncomfortable emotions in learning is an obstacle for critical reflection; see Kaisu Mälkki, "Building on Mezirow's Theory of Transformative Learning: Theorizing the Challenges to Reflection," *Journal of Transformative Education* 8: 1 (2010): 42-62, doi: 10.1177/1541344611403315, and Kaisu Mälkki, *Theorizing the Nature of Reflection* (Helsinki, Finland: University of Helsinki Press, 2011).

one fundamental problem of the Skill View, that is, the difficulty in distinguishing between highly skilled pseudo-justification (rationalization) and accurate justification (explanation).

It is quite clear that education, if anything, has a crucial role to play in the formation of the personalities, whose emotions work in the service of adequate cognitive and moral action. Thomas Green has argued that the educational processes of "normation" give "specific content to the emotions of guilt, shame, pride, [and] regret . . . and thus [make] it possible for self-deception to have its risks."[31] Particia Greenspan, who draws upon her philosophy of emotion from contemporary neuropsychology, argues that "an innate emotional basis of ethics might be modified in essential ways by adult interaction with prelinguistic children" and that "an emotional basis may be further altered and expanded through language-encoded cognitive elements of emotion at more advanced states."[32]

Martha Nussbaum, for her part, combines the defense of critical thinking with the discussion of the role of emotions in mature personalities and genuine critical thinkers.[33] Nussbaum links critical thinking skills, personal dispositions related to moral emotions, and education for democratic citizenship by arguing that "cultivated and developed sympathy is a particularly dangerous enemy of obtuseness, and moral obtuseness is necessary to carry out programs of economic development that ignore inequality."[34] In this sense, the emotional disposition of sympathy seems, for Nussbaum, to precede critical thinking skills.

Nussbaum also seeks "psychological balance and political balance" in citizenship education and examines, in this connection, the emotional life of early childhood, deriving mainly from the theories of the pediatrician and psychoanalyst Donald D. Winnicott. Nussbaum illustrates how children solve the problem of intolerable emotions by projecting them onto different others and thus demonstrates how emotions can be employed both in the service of the critical spirit or work against its proper functioning.

The role of emotions is of crucial importance especially when critical thinking is considered in the educational context. Emotions can work both in the service of critical thinking and in the service of self-deceptive rationalization. Critical thinking skills, disconnected from their emotional associations can lead to the deception of both self and others. In this respect, today's neuroscience points in the same direction as both psychoanalytical theories and philosophical pragmatism.

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31 Thomas F. Green, *Voices: The Educational Formation of Conscience* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 26.

32 Patricia Greenspan, "Learning Emotions and Ethics," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Emotion*, ed. Peter Goldie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), accessed November 2012, http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com.libproxy.helsinki.fi/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199235018.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199235018-e-25, 3, doi: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199235018.003.0025.

33 Martha C. Nussbaum, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010).

34 Nussbaum, *Not for Profit*, 23.

Discussion on Some Critiques

I will next consider two crucial criticisms of the view of critical thinking defended in this essay. The first one comes from the direction of critical theory, and is related to the alleged moral neutrality of the educational ideal of critical thinking. I will argue that this criticism is accurate in terms of the Skill View but not in terms of the Character View. The second one challenges the justification of psychological explanation in educational theorizing, which my reference to the role of emotions represents. I will argue that the educational ideal of critical thinking necessitates both psychological and political dimensions.

In my view, many of the critiques of critical thinking as an educational ideal result from understanding critical thinking as composed mostly or merely of skills and, consequently, understanding critical thinking as morally and emotionally neutral and, thus, insufficient as an educational aim. For example, when Nicholas C. Burbules and Rupert Berk compare Critical Thinking[35] and Critical Pedagogy, they describe Critical Pedagogy as being "in the service of demonstrating how certain power effects occur, not in the service of pursuing Truth in some dispassioned sense."[36] However, as I hope the previous discussion has demonstrated, the pursuit of truth, and the related dispositions of being honest, fair, and diligent in the search for evidence, are far from dispassioned. However, the Skill View of critical thinking can perhaps be interpreted as a calculating use of rationality without any moral concerns and related emotional dispositions, and if Burbules and Berk have something like this in mind, their criticism may be justified. I fully agree with Burbules and Berk if they are saying that the Skill View is problematic as an educational ideal, due to its moral neutrality. One can use critical-thinking skills for purposes which fail to respect others as persons, or aim to hide the truth in order to advance one's own interests. Critical thinking of this sort can be very skilled, but it is not worth fostering through education, because it violates the important values of truth and respect for persons.

Therefore, when Burbules and Berk say that for the critical-thinking tradition "to be 'critical' basically means to be more discerning in recognizing faulty arguments, hasty generalizations, assertions lacking evidence, truth claims based on unreliable authority, ambiguous or obscure concepts, and so forth," whereas "[t]he primary preoccupation of Critical Pedagogy is with social injustice and how to transform inequitable, undemocratic, or oppressive institutions and social relations," Burbules and Berk seem to be referring to the Skill View of critical thinking and to the related moral neutrality of the concept. Namely, although recognizing faulty arguments, hasty generalizations, and so on are clearly important for the pursuit of truth, to be careless about social injustice or about undemocratic or oppressive institutions is not compatible with the conception of critical thinking defended in this article. Thus interpreted, the difference seems to be only in the emphasis or perspective, not at the conceptual level. However, as I hope that my previous argumentation has

35 Burbules considers critical thinking as a movement, and thus uses capital letters.

36 Nicholas C. Burbules and Rupert Berk, "Critical Thinking and Critical Pedagogy: Relations, Differences, and Limits," in *Critical Theories in Education*, ed. Thomas S. Popkewitz and Lynn Fendler (New York: Routledge, 1999).

demonstrated, I hold that the moral dimension of the ideal of critical thinking has not been sufficiently analyzed in the previous literature related to the ideal.

However, there may be a real difference with some advocates of Critical Pedagogy and the conception of critical thinking as I understand it. Namely, the ideal of critical thinking cannot be subordinated to any particular political program, and if this is the requirement of criticality by Critical Pedagogy, I see this as something a genuine critical thinker cannot accept. A critical thinker can, of course, have political commitments, but she cannot subscribe to the notion that the ideals of rationality and critical thinking would be subordinated to these commitments in the first place. It is in the very nature of the ideal of critical thinking that we must be free to think critically about political programs, ideologies, and religious authorities, both those which are dear to us and those which are not.

There is also another contemporary line of thinking, which tends to prevent conceptualizing the critical spirit adequately. This viewpoint is suspicious of explanations that originate in the individual. Indeed, this line of thinking looks, rather, to the structures of society as the ultimate source for educational challenges. From this perspective, all references to the education of individuals – to which concepts such as character traits, attitudes, personalities, and emotions refer – serve as examples of unacceptably concealing the social origin of a person's psychological make-up. Nancy Fraser, for example, describes the dangers of "psychologization" in relation to Axel Honneth's conception of misrecognition as follows:

> When misrecognition is identified with internal distortions in the structure of the self-consciousness of the oppressed, it is but a short step to blaming the victim, as imputing psychic damage to those subject to racism, for example, seems to add insult to injury.
>
> Conversely, when misrecognition is identified with internal distortions in the minds of the oppressors, overcoming it seems to require polishing their beliefs, an approach that is illiberal and authoritarian.[37]

However, the morally untenable misuse of psychological knowledge, of which I sense Fraser is worried about, need not follow in the manner she fears. The misuse of psychological knowledge need not follow from taking adequate psychological understanding into account in educational theories. This is important particularly because the same exaggerated fear of psychologization can, in my view, prevent discussion of fostering the critical spirit through education. The critical spirit surely cannot be created merely by challenging the structures of society, because the educational challenge is rather, how to educate persons who have skills, motivation, and force to challenge the distorted structures. Moreover, education always has something to do with individual persons, since social structures cannot be educated. Persons, for their part, are complicated mixtures of cognitive, emotio-

37 Nancy Fraser, "Integrating Redistribution and Recognition: Problems in Moral Philosophy," in *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, trans. Joel Colb, James Ingram, and Christiane Wilke (London: Verso, 2003), 31.

nal, moral, and other dimensions. This implies that contributing to the growth of persons, or education, must take both psychological and political, or individual and social dimensions into account.

Conclusion

Understanding the critical spirit as involving cognitive, emotional, and moral dimensions implies that, in advancing critical thinking as an educational ideal, we must think, in addition to the skills of critical thinking, about educating certain sorts of persons. Naturally, it is difficult to define such a person, and it is even more difficult to figure out how education can contribute to the growth of these kinds of persons. However, it is something both philosophers and empirical researchers should pursue, since critical spirits are vital for preserving and developing democracy and the related values of our culture and society. I hope that my discussion has pointed to the fact that if we want to construct an adequate conception of the educational ideal of critical thinking, we have to seek understanding of the complex relationships of emotional, cognitive, and moral dispositions in the development of persons who really care and go to the trouble of thinking critically.