Reasoning, Critical Thinking and the Critical Person: Towards a Dialogical Theory of Critical Thinking

Jennifer Glaser

Submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

May 1998

Department of Philosophy
The University of Melbourne

Printed on acid-free paper
“Do not block the way of inquiry”

Charles Sanders Peirce\(^1\)

---

\(^1\) Charles Sanders Peirce: *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, Buchlus, J., *ed.*, p. 54.
ABSTRACT

The dialogical theory of critical thinking I develop in this thesis portrays critical thinking fundamentally as a social practice. Yet in saying this I am not suggesting that critical thinking is a form of practical reason - to be contrasted with some notion of theoretical or pure reason - rather, I shall be seeking to do away with the dichotomy. In this sense the thesis falls within the domain of the postmodern, reflecting a general reappraisal of the relationship between mind and body, thinking and experience, individual and community.

One of the central issues I seek to address is the way in which critical thinking is connected to personal identity on the one hand and to general principles and constraints on the other. These constraints will be both epistemic and moral. In characterizing critical thinking as a form of human activity, I suggest that critical thinking needs to be grounded not only in a theory of epistemology, but in a theory of persons. In characterizing critical thinking as a reflexive activity - involving reflection and deliberation - I suggest that we also need to ground it in a theory of self. In suggesting that persons and selves have uniqueness or autonomy, I suggest that a dialogical conception of critical thinking needs to accommodate plurality. Finally, in seeing critical thinking as a value, and not merely as utility, I come to characterize critical thinking in terms of virtues.

In suggesting that we make a place for the personal in critical thinking I am not suggesting we withdraw into relativism. Rather, I suggest we turn outward and see ourselves as members of a pluralistic community. As such, a central challenge for my theory is to offer a coherent account of what it is to think for oneself as a member of a pluralistic community. To develop such a theory is to accept the task of establishing a middle ground position between objectivism and Archimedean thinking on one hand and relativism on the other.
Acknowledgments

There have been many people who have actively encouraged the progress of ideas and offered constructive criticism in the writing of this thesis. I would like to thank Ralph Johnson, Christina Slade and Steven Norris for their helpful commentary on earlier drafts of chapters 1 and 2. Samuel Scolnicov mentored my encounter with Plato. His careful reading and perceptive questioning of earlier drafts of chapter 4 led me to think more deeply about Plato than I otherwise might have. Hanan Alexander offered me constructive criticism on the first four chapters. His knowledge of the field and collegiality was especially important at a time when, because my work involved me in other domains, I did not have someone to speak to from within the critical thinking movement. David Kennedy gave me much moral support. Our encounter over the net has shown that friendship and regard for others can flourish in a virtual-community.

My largest debt, however, is to Graeme Marshall. His encouragement, insight and critique has been invaluable both in enabling me to find my own voice and in leading me to avoid numerous errors. He was always open-minded enough to follow my leads and see where they might go, yet offered criticism when it was due. Through working with Graeme I have not only come to write a thesis, but have received an education. His manner of supervision exemplifies what good teaching is all about.

Despite my intention to take into account the many perceptive comments I have had along the way, I doubt I have managed to address every cause for concern. Errors and weaknesses in the views I present here remain, of course, fully my own responsibility.

In a less direct way, I owe a debt of thanks to many people whom I cannot acknowledge here on an individual basis. The questions that set me on the path of this PhD came out of my work with Philosophy for Children and with transforming classrooms into communities of philosophical inquiry. It was here that I experienced first-hand the deep connection between identity, selfhood and inquiry. I would like to thank the many teachers I have worked with, and the children whose wonder I had the privilege to experience, over the years. The children I met then are no longer children and I have been twice blessed to have met some of them again as adults and been able to talk with them about our classroom encounters.

In the middle of writing this thesis I moved countries - from Australia to Israel - and this experience too led me rethink the connection between language, interpretation, identity and reasoning. During the last year and a half I have been a Jerusalem Fellow. The personal support and encouragement of colleagues and faculty has
played no small part in giving me the impetus and energy I needed to finish this project, especially over the past year when I have been recovering from a spinal injury. Their support and encouragement during this time has been phenomenal.

The last thanks, rightly, belongs to family and friends. To my parents for their support, constant encouragement and for raising me to see reason as a virtue. I have also been blessed with ongoing encouragement and support from the rest of my family and from many friends who saw me through the highs and lows of this experience, some of whom had the courage to say “enough already!” when it seemed that this thesis was turning into a life long project.
Introduction

Aspects of Critical Thinking  1
From Fiction to Theory  4
Toward a Dialogical Theory of Critical Thinking: An Overview  11

Chapter 1: Four Conceptions of Critical Thinking

A Critique of Critical Thinking
A Critique of Critical Thinking  14
The Goal of Critical Thinking  15

The Skills View
The Skills Conception of Critical Thinking  17
The Place of the Critical Thinker in Critical Thinking  19

Skills plus Dispositions
Critical Thinking as a Social Activity  21
Critical Thinking as Skills plus Dispositions: Robert Ennis  22
The Way Critical Thinking Refers  24
The Role of Auxiliary Skills and Correlative Dispositions  25
Persons and their Thinking: What is Reasonable and Reflective?  26
Reflexivity in Critical Thinking  27
Personal and Social Points of View  29
Summary  31

Skills plus Traits of Mind
A Dia-logical Account of Critical Thinking: Richard Paul  32
Critical Thinking in a Weak and Strong Sense  33
Refuting Siegel’s Charge of Relativism  34
Identifying with the Universal Procedures of Inquiry  35
Paul’s Psychological Egoism  36
Commitment in Critical Thinking  38
Paul’s Account of Character Traits and Moral Virtues  39
Adapting Paul’s Position to Accommodate a Social View of Self  41

Skills plus Character: Being a Certain Sort of Person
Reasons and the Critical Spirit: Harvey Siegel  43
Principles, Standards and Reasons for Believing  44
Epistemology and Persons  47
Expanding the Character View: Taking Identity into Account  48

Chapter 2: The Critical Person

The Realm of the Personal
Personal Identity and Deliberation  52
The Personal Dimension of Critical Thinking  54
Critical Thinking and Self-Interpretation  55
What We Think and Who We Are  58
Critical Thinking as Inquiry  60
Critical Dispositions
The Problem with Generalized Dispositions 62
Four Understandings of Being Disposed 65
(i) Being Disposed in a Warrant Sense 66
(ii) Being Disposed by Virtue of our Nature 68
(iii) Being Disposed as Being Moved to Action 70
(iv) Being Disposed in the Free-Will Sense 72
Dispositions, Identity, and a Contextualized Life 73
The Critical Thinker as an Historically Achieved Individual 75

Hermeneutic Understanding
Temporality, Personhood and Critical Thinking 76
Hermeneutic Process and Evaluation of Given Arguments 78
Particularity without Relativism 80
Argument Revision and Identity 80

The Critical Thinker
First Person Engagement in Critical Thinking 82
Paul Ricoeur on the Temporal Nature of Self 83
Taylor and Ricoeur on Narrative Identity 84
The Critical Thinker as a Narrative Self 87
Critical Thinking as Dialogical Inquiry 89
Dialogical Inquiry and Rationality 92
Rationality as Reasonableness 95
Critical Thinkers and Unreasonable People 102

Chapter 3: Critical Activity

Thinking Together
Critical Thinking as Interlocutionary Practice 104
Avoiding a Divided Self 104
Maintaining a Singular Self 106
Modes of Attentiveness within Interlocution 106

Forms of Dialogue
Martin Buber’s Characterization of 3 Forms of Dialogue 107
(i) Monologue as Dialogue: Hearing One’s Own Voice 108
(ii) Technical Dialogue: Dialogue as a Means to an End 110
(iii) Genuine Dialogue: Dialogue as Relationship 111
Self-Determination and the Expressiveness of Speech 113

Perspectivity, Objectivity and Truth
Perspectivity and Shared Understanding 114
Objectivity and First Person Attachment 116
Nagel’s Two Views of Objectivity 118
Intelligibility of Propositions and Intelligibility of Persons 120
Nagel’s Realism 121
Propositional Truth, Missing Premises and Commitment 121
Remaining Attached in Critical Thinking 124
Gadamer's Hermeneutics

First-Person Attachment and Gadamer's Hermeneutics 126
The Rendering of Text into Speech 127
Dialogue as the Pursuit of Knowledge 129
Truth and Meaning as Motivations for Inquiry 131
To Understand or to Persuade? 132

Critical Thinking as Dialogical Inquiry

Inquiry as Unified Action: The Community of Inquiry 136
Critical Thinking: External Constraints and Individual Practice. 139
The Differences between Conversation and Inquiry 142
The Movement of Dialogue and Self-Correction. 143
The Place of Logic in Dialogical Inquiry 145
Choosing to Engage in Critical Thinking 147
Critical Thinking as an End 148

Chapter 4: Socratic Inquiry

Socratic Inquiry

Socratic or not Socratic? 152
The Unity of Complex Wholes 155
The Dialogical Relation “Neither-Nor” 156
Unity of Persons 158
Plato’s Concept of Logos 159
The Impact of Plato’s Theory of Recollection 163
Attaining Unity 164
Engaging in Dialogical Activity 166
The Challenge of Establishing Unity within Dialogue 166
Friendship as a Paradigm of Unity 170
Changing Conceptions of Friendship 170
The Unity of Knowledge 172

The Structure of Irony

Socrates' Ironic Stance 173
Simple versus Complex Irony 174
The Structure of Irony 175
Irony as a Complex Whole 179

Lysis

Lysis: Unity and the Relationship Between Friends 181
(i) Establishing the Conditions Under Which Two May Become One 183
The Difference Between Sophistry and Socratic Dialogue 185
Mutuality and General Understanding 186
Cognitive Understanding and Humility 188
(ii) Seeing One as a Relationship Between Two 189
Friendship for the Sake of Logos 190
Socratic Dialogue as Dialogical Action 191
Chapter 5: Critical Thinking in Pluralistic Communities: (I) Plurality

Pluralism
- The Challenge of Pluralism
- Pluralism Between and Within Traditions
- Pluralism and the Unity of Inquiry
- Context-Independent Justification of Claims
- Two Levels of Plurality
- Reconstructing the Search for Logos
- Uniqueness and Multiple Forms of Flourishing
- A Pluralistic Conception of the Dialogical Relationship
- The Valuing of Diversity
- Pluralism’s Ironic Stance

Persons
- The Self as a Complex Whole
- Who am “I”?  
- Unity of Self at a Time and over Time
- The Unity of the Intentional Subject
- Selves and Persons: A Summary

Intentional Communities
- A Challenge
- Intentionality, Selves and Communities
- We-intentions
- Intendings and Intentions
- Intending and Joint Action
- Ego-centrality and Communo-centrality

Relationship within Pluralistic Wholes
- Complex Wholes: Re-Casting the Personal and Social Points of View
- Intentionality and the Shaping of Obligations
- The Domain of One of Us
- Avoiding the Public-Private Split

Communities of Inquiry
- Epistemic and Moral Welfare
- Hannah Arendt’s Concept of Solidarity
- Initiating Inquiry
- Promising as the Commitment Toward a Shared Future
Chapter 6: Critical Thinking in Pluralistic Communities: (II) Limits

Constraints on inquiry
  Avoiding Self-Defeat 285
  Epistemic Self-Defeat 287
  Limits as Moral Virtues 289
  Ethical and Moral Constraints in Critical Thinking 291
  Reasonableness as a Virtue 292
  Epistemic Reasonableness 293
  Changing one’s Mind 295

Respect
  Respect in Critical Thinking: Epistemic and Moral 297
  Self-Respect and the Respect of Others as Ends 300
  Hannah Arendt on Being an End in Oneself 301
  Solidarity without Essence: Responding to Rorty’s Challenge 303
  Complex Wholes as Ends 306

Care
  Inquiry and Care 306
  The Relationship Between Epistemic and Moral Care 310

Trust
  Inquiry and Trust in Another’s Goodwill Toward One 311
  Constraints on Critical Thinking: Trust or Reliance? 312
  Extending Trust Toward Those on Whom We Rely 313
  Valuing the Other’s Participation in Joint Action 315
  Trust and Sincerity: Playing the Devil’s Advocate 316

Non-contradiction
  Contradiction and Contrariness 317
  Contradiction and the Limits of Intelligibility 319
  Recognizing limits to one of us 320
  Testing the Limits 323
  Contrariness: Being Out of Harmony with Oneself 324
  Avoiding the Dark Side 326

Bibliography 332
Preface

Sections from Chapter 4, together with smaller sections from chapters 5 and 6 have been published in “Socrates, Friendship and the Community of Inquiry” in Inquiry: Critical Thinking Across the Disciplines, vol. 16, no 4, Summer 1997, pp. 22-47.

Some sections of Chapter 6 have been published in “Agreeing to Disagree” in On Different Premises: Proceedings of the Third National Conference on Reasoning, Casey, P., ed., (Charles Sturt University, Wagga, Open Learning Institute Press), 1993, pp.225-244.


Due to the word processing package I used when producing this thesis, I have used American spelling throughout.
INTRODUCTION

Aspects of Critical Thinking

"You were selected as jurors in this case," Judge Lew Fielding continued, "in the belief that each of you could, without fear, favor, prejudice, or sympathy, in sound judgment and clear conscience, render a just verdict on evidence presented in conformity with these instructions. The very object of our jury system is to secure a verdict by comparison of views and discussion among jurors - provided this can be done reasonably and in a way consistent with the conscientious convictions of each. Each juror should listen, with a disposition to be convinced, to the opinions and arguments of the other jurors. It is not intended under the law that a juror should go into the jury room with a fixed determination that the verdict shall represent his opinion of the case at the moment. Nor is it intended that he should close his ears to the discussion and arguments of his fellow jurors, who are assumed to be equally honest and intelligent. You must in short, listen to one another. Stay objective, be reasonable."

The judge paused and let his words sink in. He let his eyes meet the eyes of each juror, holding the gaze, momentarily, of each. "Ladies and gentlemen... The outcome of the trial is up to you now. You may adjourn and begin your deliberations."

Kabuo Miyamoto is standing trial for first degree murder. A group of ordinary men and women sit, faces turned toward the judge, awaiting his final words before adjourning to decide the fate of a fellow human being. Judge Fielding looks out to the jurors. He knows that, if they find Kabuo guilty, he will be called upon to

---

3 David Guterson: Snow Falling on Cedars, pp. 421-422.
translate their verdict into a sentence of life or death. What instruction should he give them? The author, David Guterman, chooses his words carefully.

Judge Fielding's speech in *Snow Falling on Cedars* captures the complex nature of critical thinking. Fielding reminds the jurors that they constitute one unit, a jury, which must arrive at a single decision. Yet at the same time, he places on each a responsibility for independent thought. They are urged not to merely share views already formed, but to arrive at a determination only after listening, comparing views and speaking together. He places special emphasis on *listening*, for he knows that we do not generally view listening as a basic characteristic of thought. We tend to treat thinking propositionally as "asserting something about something", rather than with the "gathering in" of speech associated with concentrated listening. By ignoring this second dimension we reduce our view of deliberation to one that emphasizes only half of the dialogical situation, half the resources language provides thought.

But what kind of listening is appropriate to critical thinking? Judge Fielding exhorts the jurors to "...listen, with the disposition to be convinced." This is to approach what one hears skeptically, but it is a positive rather than negative skepticism. The jurors are urged not to listen merely in order to refute or persuade, nor to assume the truth of all they hear, but rather to listen open to the possibility that there is truth in what one another say. This image of deliberation is dialogical, it reflects a social view of thinking in which knowledge is inter-subjectively determined, emerging out of the dialogical situation as a whole. It requires from the jurors both inter-dependence and independence of thought.

Within this passage Guterman raises a central challenge for a communicative theory of rationality, and with it, a dialogical theory of critical thinking; namely, what does it mean to think for yourself as a member of a community? Here we are speaking of the jurors' membership in a specific kind of community, an *intentional* community,

---

4 Gemma Fiurama develops this point in relation to the etymology of *logos* and *legen* in *The Other Side of Language: A philosophy of Listening*, p. 3 (my italics).
5 Here I accept Harvey Siegel's position that an adequate theory of critical thinking needs to be underpinned by a theory of rationality. I explore Siegel's position further in chapters 1 and 2.
for it is by virtue of their seeking a verdict together that they constitute a single entity (one jury). Yet if we are to treat critical thinking as essentially dialogical, recognizing the place of both addressee and addressee, how may we understand this inter-subjective engagement reflexively for the individual critical thinker who engages in critical thinking on their own?

The Judge’s speech tells us more. In urging the jurors to treat one another as equally “honest and intelligent” he suggests that sound judgment carries with it moral, as well as epistemic, responsibility. The jurors are not only being asked to be honest in their deliberations, but morally honest in the way they relate toward one another during the course of the proceedings (and reflexively, in the way they regard themselves). A responsibility the defense attorney, Nel Gudmundson, hopes will ameliorate the “human frailty passed from generation to generation” that is expressed in the racism and family feuding that sets the background to the trial. But how does treating one another honestly and intelligently relate to seeking the truth honestly and intelligently, and what bearing does this have on deciding what is reasonable, or what constitutes sound judgment?

The background to the trial alerts us to yet further questions. The jurors addressed by the Judge are also members of a different sort of community, they are members of a small rural community of fishermen and berry farmers that has been torn apart by racism toward Japanese-Americans in the aftermath of World War II. A community in which Kabuo also resides. Many of them have known Kabuo since childhood and have formed their own convictions regarding the feud between Kabuo’s family and the family of the deceased. How are these jurors to reconcile their role in the courtroom with the social structures and convictions of this rural community in which they are also members? Here the question of how to reconcile objectivity with conviction is particularly pressing. What kind of objectivity is Judge Fielding calling for? What kind of objectivity will enable the jurors to ignore fear, favor and prejudice, and yet make it possible for them to remain true to their conscientious convictions? What if these convictions are themselves influenced by racism or family

---

6 David Guterson: *Snow Falling on Cedars*, p. 418.
allegiances? Furthermore, the Judge suggests that sound judgment is incompatible with sympathy, yet ought we regard all sympathy as inappropriate to critical thinking? What of empathy and care? What does the judge hope to communicate in his exhortation that the jurors be reasonable?

Finally, there is the question of how to interpret Fielding’s suggestion that the jury deliberate together. Should we regard it merely as a utilitarian ploy to improve the chances that they avoid infelicity, or does the judge’s emphasis on joint deliberation point to a deeper understanding of the relationship between communication and sound judgment? An understanding that is, perhaps, conveyed through the judge’s own decision to fix each juror in his gaze before they adjourn?

From Fiction to Theory
While I have begun by focusing on a case from fiction, the court of law returns as a paradigmatic case within much of the literature on critical thinking, dialectic and reasoned judgment. Amongst the many philosophers whose ideas I discuss in this thesis Robert Ennis, Matthew Lipman, Plato, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Hannah Arendt and Martha Nussbaum all focus in some way on the proceedings of a trial to illustrate the kind of dialectical deliberation they associate with the search for knowledge. The differences in the way they frame their discussions are telling, and taken together, enable us to “circle around” the concept of critical thinking.7

Like Guteman, Ennis focuses on the jurors’ task as they assess the arguments presented in the trial.8 The role of the jury is to give a detached assessment of the ‘text’, the propositional content (transcript and evidence), of the trial. In examining

---

7 The idea of arriving at understanding by circling around an issue or problem captures two ideas. (i) It captures the notion of bringing different perspectives to bear on a situation, a notion that is central to many conceptions of critical thinking, and also (ii) captures Hannah Arendt’s characterization of “...the incidents and stories around which the thinking process describes its circles.” Quoted by Lisa Disch: Hannah Arendt and the Limits of Philosophy, p. 3. The quote is taken from the manuscript of a lecture delivered in 1960 by Hannah Arendt.
the text they are to look for where contradictions lie, what lines of argumentation are sound, and whether conclusions are soundly drawn.⁹

Gadamer, by contrast, explores dialectic argumentation by reference to testimony and the cross-examination of a witness. Here, inquiry is concerned with understanding what happened; it concerns the meaning of what has happened not merely the establishment of facts. Indeed Gadamer’s intention in turning to a court of law is to point to the way in which treating words as detached text can distort meaning conveyed through speech. Here the witness can only truly be understood by taking into account what has been left unspoken as well as what has been spoken.¹⁰

As with Ennis, Matthew Lipman focuses on the process by which the jury arrives at a verdict.¹¹ However his view of this process is quite different. Like Judge Fielding, Lipman attends to the joint activity of the jurors as they engage with one another in order to reach a verdict. For Lipman, the jurors constitute a community of inquiry in which they interpret both evidence (Ennis’ stress on text) and testimony (Gadamer’s stress on meaning). The inter-personal deliberation that takes place within a community of inquiry suggests that the search for knowledge has both moral and epistemic dimensions. Taken together, these dimensions lead inquiry to be governed by epistemic and moral reasonableness.

Martha Nussbaum focuses on the task of the judge.¹² She is interested in exploring the kind of imaginative engagement the Judge needs to bring to bear in order to engage in critical judgment. How is the judge to develop an appreciation of the true significance of the act with which the accused has been charged? Her account of judicial spectatorship supports that of Gadamer and Lipman and exemplifies the kind of critical engagement Arendt calls for in her own account of critical judgment.

---

⁹ This is not the only aspect Ennis attends to, but it is a central feature of his account.
¹² Martha Nussbaum: Poetic Justice, see particularly her analysis of three Judges in chapter 4.
Finally, as Guterman illustrates, we cannot hope to fully appreciate the nature of critical thinking without attending to the relationship between individual and community. What both Plato and Arendt alert us to are the political and social dimensions of inquiry. Both philosophers reported on historic trials that touched them deeply (the trial of Socrates, the Eichmann trial), focusing their attention not only on the proceedings within the courtroom, but also on the political meaning and significance of the trial and the complex relationship between inquiry and justice.

We can learn something about critical thinking from each. From Ennis we learn the importance of evaluating arguments in order that we avoid error in our thinking as far as possible. From Gadamer, we learn to appreciate the significance of the dialogical situation in inquiry, and the important role interpretation and questions of meaning play in our search for knowledge. From Lipman we learn that the search for knowledge needs to be regarded holistically as an interpretative and communicative activity carried out by persons as they inquire together. We also come to appreciate how such inquiry contains both moral and epistemic dimensions. From Nussbaum we learn to appreciate the kind of sympathy and empathy that is integral to critical thinking. Finally, what Plato and Arendt remind us is that inquiry itself constitutes a normative ideal, and that our commitment to it needs to be seen as an ideological commitment.\(^{13}\)

Each of these aspects may be seen as central to the theory of critical thinking I develop in this thesis. In keeping with Judge Fielding, the theory I develop here portrays critical thinking fundamentally as a social practice. Yet in saying this it would be wrong to assume that I see critical thinking as practical reason - to be contrasted with some notion of theoretical or pure reason - rather, I shall be seeking to do away with the dichotomy. In this sense the thesis falls within the domain of the

---

\(^{13}\) Plato: Apology and the closing scene in Theaetetus. For Arendt this became clear with the controversy begun with the publication of her articles on the Eichmann trial in The New Yorker and continued with the publication of Eichmann in Jerusalem. Of all the authors here, her writings on critical thinking do not include reference to a court case. The trial, however, is deeply connected to my later discussion of Arendt in two ways. Firstly, in her reporting and analysis of the trial she exemplifies what it is to go visiting in the imagination; and secondly, the trial formed the background for her book The Life of the Mind in which she begins to offer answers to central question about judgment, intentionality and responsibility which the trial raised for her.
postmodern, reflecting a general postmodern reappraisal of the relationship between mind and body, individual and community, thinking and experience. It is an approach that reflects the lead taken in contemporary moral theory and epistemology wherein greater attention is being given to the relationship between the contextualised moral agent and moral theory, and between knower and known. To develop such a theory of critical thinking is to accept the task of establishing a middle ground position between objectivism and Archimedean thinking on one hand and relativism on the other.

My discussion of *Snow Falling on Cedars* alerts us to a further issue; namely, the question of what it is precisely that the term ‘critical thinking’ is intended to capture. Even when addressing a common paradigm - that offered by a court of law - we are faced with seemingly conflicting pictures of critical thinking as (i) objective argumentation, (ii) deliberation, (iii) critical judgment, (iii) sound judgment, (iii) dialogical inquiry (emphasizing inter-subjectivity), and (iv) reasonable judgment. This range of vocabulary is neither arbitrary nor completely interchangeable. Yet what each of these terms share in common is a concern for the kind of activity we identify with *the search for knowledge*. Here I agree with Harvey Siegel that critical thinking is essentially an epistemological concept.

But if this search for knowledge is foundational to each of these terms, how are we to understand the differences between them? It seems to me that the differences lie not in *intentionality*, but in the theories of truth, interpretation and persons which underlie the varying conceptions. Indeed my choice in characterizing the epistemological basis of critical thinking as a search for *knowledge*, rather than as a search for truth, already points to the way in which I see truth, meaning, and interpretation to be inextricably connected.

---

14 Like Nicholas Burbules, I am using the term *postmodern* here as "...a revision and going-beyond of modernist conceptions and presuppositions - rather than an antimodern rejection of the whole enterprise." See Nicholas Burbules: "Beyond Reasonable Doubt" in *Critical Conversations in Philosophy of Education*, ed. Kohli, W, p. 84.

15 Indeed Lorraine Code argues that the relationship between moral agent and moral theory is analogous to the relationship between knower and known in epistemology in *Epistemic Responsibility*, pp. 37-67.
With this in mind, the theory of critical thinking I begin to develop in this thesis should not be seen as the only theory, or the best theory, or the one that supersedes earlier ones. Yet neither am I suggesting that this theory ought to be seen as just one amongst many. Rather, what this theory offers is a way of conceptualizing critical thinking which is consistent with a particular view of truth, interpretation and persons. For those who share in these commitments this theory, if coherent, should have normative force. A good deal of this force comes from its ability to avoid a number of problems which arise when traditional conceptions of critical thinking are incrementally enlarged to accommodate postmodern concerns and commitments. For example, when theories which reflect a modernist emphasis on universal principles and objectivity are enlarged to accommodate a postmodern focus on interpretation, perspectivity, narrative, character, context, virtues and plurality.

We can see this incremental move historically in the shift from the characterization of a critical thinker as someone who has (i) mastered certain skills, to (ii) someone who has both skills and critical dispositions, to (iii) conceptions of the critical thinker that increasingly widen the range of such critical dispositions (for example, to capture moral as well as intellectual traits), and finally to (iv) a characterization of the critical thinker as a certain sort of person whereby critical thinking is reconceptualized in terms of character.\textsuperscript{17} In each case the trend has been to try to add something more to the previous conception.\textsuperscript{18} However, this process of addition does not address the changing conceptions of epistemology, rationality and persons that

\textsuperscript{16} This claim is foundational to Siegel's writings. For example, see Harvey Siegel: Rationality Redeemed, pp. 13-25.

\textsuperscript{17} Harvey Seigel maps out this development in Educating Reason, pp. 1-31. Further developments are well reflected in the Symposium titled "Is Critical Thinking Biased?" in Educational Theory, vol. 45, no. 2, Spring, 1995, pp. 191-233.

\textsuperscript{18} An excellent recent example of this is the role Stephen Norris suggests for narrative in "Sustaining and Responcing Charges of Bias in Critical Thinking" in Educational Theory, vol. 45, no. 2, Spring, 1995, pp. 199-211. Faced with the charge of bias he suggests we allow for "more empathy and less criticalness" in critical thinking by allowing people to tell their story before we engage in criticism. Rather than reconceptualizing critical thinking to accommodate narrativity, we simply tack narrative on to the existing conception. A similar approach can be seen in the way critical thinking is 'expanded' to accommodate creativity and dialogue by other theorists (for example, by Peter Elbow in Re-Thinking Reason, ed. Walters, K., pp. 25-32.)
lies at the source of the discontent with prior accounts. Changes that signify "...a revision and going-beyond of modernist conceptions and presuppositions...".\(^{19}\)

Once we begin to characterize critical thinking as \textit{human activity}, and the critical thinker as \textit{a certain sort of person}, it seems to me that a theory of critical thinking needs to be grounded not only in a theory of epistemology, but in \textit{a theory of persons}. Furthermore, a critical thinker will not only be a certain sort of person, but will be a person who \textit{stands in relationship to other people}. A dialogical conception of critical thinking is, by virtue of involving a relationship between two (two persons, two ideas, two perspectives), inherently a \textit{social} conception of critical thinking. Here we can have weaker and stronger accounts of what a social conception might look like, but it will necessarily incorporate the idea of relationship. If we go further and say that critical thinking is a \textit{reflexive} activity - involving reflection and deliberation - then we need also to ground it in a concept of \textit{self}. If we go one step further still and suggest that persons and selves have \textit{uniqueness} or \textit{autonomy}, then our theory of critical thinking will need to accommodate \textit{plurality} (and, again, we may find this plurality taking a variety of forms, from perspectival differences to deeper substantive differences). Finally, if we see critical thinking as a \textit{value}, and not merely as utility, then we begin to speak of \textit{critical virtues}.

Indeed, the dialogical theory of critical thinking I develop in this thesis can be seen to be grounded in:

(i) A \textit{character view} of critical thinking:

Here the notion of character is understood in a deep sense as a person's \textit{historically achieved individuality}. Character, in part, reflects the mode of life we choose for ourselves and thereby attests to our autonomy and uniqueness. A theory of critical thinking that recognizes character in this deeper sense needs to show how the \textit{personal realm} both shapes inquiry and finds expression through it. For this we need a theory of \textit{self} in which deliberation and identity are deeply connected to one another. It will also need to accommodate plurality (our uniqueness).

\(^{19}\) Nicholas Burbules: "Beyond Reasonable Doubt" in \textit{Critical Conversations in Philosophy of Education}, ed. Kohli, W, p. 84.
(ii) A social-constructivist conception of personal identity and self:
We are selves-in-process. Infants are born into a world and become independent persons and selves over time through their interaction in human community. A dialogical theory of critical thinking will need to provide an account of how public dialogical inquiry, carried out in community, is reflexively experienced for the individual as they think autonomously for themselves. It also suggests that moral relations are integral to a dialogical theory of inquiry.

(iii) A temporal view of human experience:
Critical thinking is a temporal process. A dialogical account of critical thinking will need to attend to how persons engage dialogically in critical thinking over time as well as at a time. Such a theory will need to provide a model of how unity is maintained (over time and at time) within the dialogical relationship.

(iv) A hermeneutic view both of critical thinking and of personal identity:
Critical thinking is an interpretative activity that is carried out by persons whose sense of self in turn develops over time through a process of hermeneutic reflection. The attainment of selfhood and the development of knowledge are hermeneutic synthesizing processes that are deeply connected to one another.

(v) An interpretative view of truth:
An interpretative theory of truth situates the search for knowledge within particular traditions and languages. Truth claims are made from within the resources provided by language and, as such, are never free of interpretation. In accepting an interpretative view of truth, critical thinking will need to be characterized in terms of the search for truth and meaning.

These claims allow me to situate my own usage of the family of terms surrounding the concept of critical thinking in the pages ahead. In this thesis I use the term critical thinking synonymously with the term inquiry. The problem I face is that neither term points to whether we are treating critical thinking as inherently dialogical - For example, when we speak of critical thinking as deciding what to believe or do, there is nothing to say that we are engaged in a dialogical mode of thinking. Here I take a dialogical mode of thinking as one in which two (two ideas, two perspectives, two people) are brought to bear on one another. It is perhaps best charaterized in the notion of thinking about something together.

Even in the public sphere, where critical thinking carries with it the idea of public discourse (or conversation) we may be engaged "in dialogue" (communicating our thoughts) without being engaged in a dialogical mode of critical thinking with another person. For example, debating, as a public mode of argumentation, is
structured this way. Each person addresses a topic (individually taking into account what the other has said), but they could not be described as thinking together. Furthermore, we may characterize a conversation as dialogical in the sense that people are thinking critically together, but this will not tell us whether (reflexively) each person’s thinking may itself be regarded as dialogical.\(^{20}\)

Thus, in developing a dialogical conception of critical thinking, I need a way of distinguishing between: (i) critical thinking as a practice that involves dialogue (for instance, involves us in an exchange of views), and (ii) critical thinking as a practice in which our mode of thinking is itself inherently dialogical (both in the public domain and reflexively for the individual). I use the term dialogical inquiry to refer to an inherently dialogical form of critical thinking. The particular conception of dialogical inquiry that underlies my theory of critical thinking emerges in stages within the context of this thesis.

Toward a Dialogical Theory of Critical Thinking: An Overview

Chapter 1: Four Conceptions of Critical Thinking

I begin in chapter 1 by exploring the theories of several leading figures in the Informal Logic and Critical Thinking movements (those of Michael Scriven, Robert Ennis, Richard Paul, Harvey Siegel). In particular, I set out to explore: (i) The concept of person which informs their characterization of the critical thinker; and, (ii) How the terms ‘disposition’, ‘character trait’ ‘reflective awareness’ and ‘reasonableness’ are used and how these concepts are related to the critical thinker as a person.

Chapter 2: The Critical Person

Chapter 2 explores the connection between critical thinking and personal identity, in particular I examine the kind of activity that can be characterized as thinking for oneself. In accepting that inquiry involves self-interpretation and is closely linked to who we are, we will need to understand the term ‘critical thinker’ in both temporal

\(^{20}\) As I point out in Chapter 1, Richard Paul’s “weak sense” critical thinker is someone who engages in
and developmental terms. I then turn to explore the connection between critical thinking; counting oneself as a member of community; and reasonableness.

Chapter 3: Critical Activity
Where chapter 2 looked to ground a dialogical conception of critical thinking in a theory of persons and self, chapter 3 grounds it in a theory of interpretation and hermeneutic engagement. This interlocutionary model will need to be one in which the public activity itself provides the mechanism for revision or correction. Within this discussion I explore the relationship between particularity, objectivity and truth.

Chapter 4. Socratic Dialogue
This chapter offers an account of the kind of structural unity that underlies dialogical inquiry. Here I turn to explore the structure of relationships that underlie Plato’s dialogues suggesting that, for Socrates, the dialogical relationship can be characterized as a relationship between friends. However here I note that we need to be careful to understand this relationship in light of Plato’s theory of individuals rather than a contemporary theory of persons. I then offer a detailed analysis of 2 dialogues that relate directly to the nature of friendship and inquiry - Lysis and Theaetetus.

Chapters 5: Critical Thinking in Pluralistic Communities (I) Plurality
Essential to my account of the critical thinker in chapter 2 was the individual’s perception of their own uniqueness - a human individuality which reflects our autonomy as original, or unique, beings who choose a mode of life for ourselves. To maintain autonomy while engaged in inquiry as members of a community suggests that a dialogical conception of critical thinking needs to be underpinned by a form of pluralism.

a dialogical form of critical thinking with other people but who does not reflexively think dialogically for themselves.
Chapter 6: Critical Thinking in Pluralistic Communities (II) Limits

In this chapter I approach the question of limits or constraints within a pluralist conception of critical thinking. In rejecting an account of context-independence that is based on either shared human essence or universal principle, I suggest that the constraints which govern dialogical inquiry are best grounded in the conditions which enable us to avoid epistemic and moral self-defeat.
I wish to draw attention to the distinction between critical thinking and the critical thinker, and suggest that a full conception of critical thinking must provide not only criteria for assessing pieces of reasoning, but also a characterization of the attributes of the sort of person who is rightly regarded as a critical thinker.

Harvey Siegel

CHAPTER 1

Four Conceptions of Critical Thinking

A Critique of Critical Thinking

In beginning with an analysis of 4 characterizations of critical thinking my purpose is three fold. (i) to illuminate where these approaches to critical thinking are similar and different from one another, (ii) to share what I take to be important and what I see as problematic within these positions; and (iii) to appreciate how each of these approaches characterizes the relationship between the individual critical thinker and the kind of activity that is characterized as critical thinking.

Three of the four positions discussed here are associated with particular theorists, namely; Robert Ennis, Richard Paul and Harvey Siegel. Not only have these three theorists provided the critical thinking movement with some of the best known definitions of critical thinking, ones which are often used to orient other theorists work, but each represents a different position concerning what a theory of critical thinking ought to look like. Importantly I have focused on these three thinkers because each, in their own way, offers a way of broadening our conception of critical thinking from one that views critical thinking soley in terms of thinking skills, to one
that focuses on the character of the critical thinker. Each of them is concerned with what it takes to bridge between our *knowing* what counts as a reason and our *deciding* to take reasons into account.

**The Goal of Critical Thinking**

There is a useful distinction to be made here between the goal of critical thinking as “not getting our reasoning wrong”, and the goal as “getting our reasoning right”.\(^2\) Avoiding infelicity - avoiding contradiction or incoherence - is a public constraint placed on reasoning arising from conditions for intelligibility within a language community. Applying such constraints in our thinking is required of us if we are to be intelligible to others and if our position is to be recognized as a reasoned one. If critical thinking is equated with avoiding fallacious and faulty reasoning then its primary tool will be formal and informal logic. Yet avoiding infelicity is not the same as getting our reasoning right - they will only be equivalent when there is just one answer, one interpretation or understanding to get too. Often there is more than one appropriate answer or understanding, and how to choose between them, given that neither are wrong or inappropriate, depends on choosing the one that is *most appropriate for us* as individuals and groups.

When critical thinking is equated with getting our reasoning right, it will not only concern the rules of logic, but also involve judgment about the kind of response a certain situation calls for and what factors ought to be taken into account. It involves determining what interpretation and meaning is appropriate in a particular context, expanding and refining our understanding of the concepts we use, and exploring their fit with other concepts as we reason something through. It involves asking such questions as: “What is meant by friendship in these circumstances?”, “When does friendship end?”, “Is friendship compatible with lying?”. *Getting it right* then will amount to getting it *right for these circumstances*, or getting it *right for me*, or for *us*, and this is often personal and particular. *Getting it right* (judgments, decisions,

---

1 Harvey Siegel: *Educating Reason*, p. 8.
2 I am aware this is not the only way to set up the constraints on reasoning; for instance, some would set up constraints in relation to coherence (Dummett) or in relation to justification from practice (Priest), but it is the one I will be using in this chapter.
understandings) will involve attending to our individual evaluations, commitments, experience, interpretations, desires and emotions as individuals and communities; it will involve the fact that we value this more than that, or find something to be meaningful in a particular way, or are motivated to do X but not Y. It is this particularity that explains why critical thinking may lead me to be doing X even though it would lead you to be doing Y in the same circumstances.

Importantly, there is a stronger and weaker sense of what it means to take particularity into account in critical thinking. We may mean that there is a difference arising out of the contingent historic differences such that, had our circumstances been the same, I would reason to the same conclusion as you do. In this case, differences will be considered perspectival, and getting our reasoning right means adapting general procedures of critical thinking to our own circumstances. This I am calling the weaker sense of taking particularity into account. Alternately, we may mean that there is a substantive difference in the way we get our reasoning right that goes deeper than this.

In speaking of particularity and differences we might mean that I reason to different conclusions than you because I am a different person than you are - I may be committed to a different morality, or a different theory of truth, envisage a different sort of future for myself, or simply experience different desires and emotions. Such differences may point to substantive and irreducible differences in our identities and may be grounded in differences of gender, tradition, proclivities, or language. In this case it is not to be taken for granted that, in taking particularity into account we would come to the same conclusions even if we faced the same situation.

This is not to say that when we take particularity into account in this stronger sense we are necessarily reduced to relativism or incommensurability. A further possibility would be that the multiplicity of ways in which we can get our reasoning right points

---

3 Indeed, this is the basis of the charge of bias against critical thinking traditionally conceived. I shall return to this at the end of the chapter. See the symposium, "Is Critical Thinking Biased?" in Educational Theory, vol. 45, no. 2, 1995.
to a kind of pluralism within critical thinking. Yet a pluralistic view requires us (i) to account for how it is that our individuality shapes our reasoning, while also (ii) pointing to the way in which such individuality is itself limited by general constraints which are applicable across individual critical thinkers.

Whether a theory of critical thinking reflects a weaker or stronger sense of what it is to take particularity into account will not only depend on our theory of rationality, but on our theory of persons. That is, it will depend on (i) the kind of uniqueness we attribute to persons - whether we see the differences between us as merely perspectival or as substantive and irreducible; and (ii) whether we associate critical thinking primarily with states of mind, with the validity of propositional contents, or with the activity of persons.

While this chapter primarily explores the connection between critical thinking and rationality - and thus how particularity may be seen to impact on justified belief - the next chapter takes as its starting point the connection between critical thinking and personal identity.

With these issues in mind, let us now turn to the different characterizations of critical thinking.

**The Skills Conception of Critical Thinking**

The narrowest definition of critical thinking is one in which critical thinking is viewed solely in terms of fallacy recognition and avoidance. Here critical thinking focuses on providing a rule-governed means of determining that we (and others) are not going wrong in our reasoning. According to the skills view, whether someone counts as a critical thinker is determined solely by their ability to assess and defend arguments. That is, it would make no sense to say of someone: "They didn’t argue any of the points well, they got totally carried away - but you know underneath it all, they really do think critically." There simply is no underneath because the existence

---

4 Indeed, this is the possibility that this thesis addresses.
of a critical thinker is only inferred from their ability to assess the soundness of the argument. Such an approach has resulted in a swathe of textbooks which mix truth tables and formal logic with practical reasoning skills such as staying on track, attacking the person, begging the question, and dealing with analogies. These informal skills are characterized in terms of informal fallacies or errors, and the emphasis in texts is on assessing where given arguments contain such errors. In this context Damer asks a crucial question:

If good or error-free arguments are so important, then why should one spend time studying fallacious reasoning, or more specifically, the fallacies in this book?  

Damer offers three answers: (i) discrimination between fallacious and non-fallacious patterns of reasoning are a necessary condition for constructing sound arguments; (ii) familiarity with common errors in reasoning is a defense against being misled or victimized by others; and (iii) avoiding faulty reasoning may have serious moral consequences - it may enable us to avoid harm.

Damer is certainly correct that the ability to detect fallacious reasoning is crucial to critical thinking. If we are unable to detect the errors in our own arguments, and in arguments put forward by others, we will be seriously hindered in determining which conclusions are prima-facie unjustified. There is also a broad consensus that the ability to accurately assess arguments protects people from being manipulated or misled by others and thus that critical thinking may have moral consequences by leading us to avoid harm. The problem with Damer's approach, however, can be seen in his expressed "wish" and "hope" that (i) being shown where given arguments go wrong will equip us to construct error-free arguments, and (ii) that knowing how to

---

5 I take rationality to point to a theory of justified belief here as it is the one most commonly used by the critical thinking theorists I explore in this chapter.
7 Ibid., pp. 6-7.
8 That Damer addresses himself to critical thinking (rather than reasoning generally) is evident from the preface to his book: "The motivation for this second edition can be attributed to the new interest in informal logic created by the so-called 'critical thinking movement.'... The introductory chapter deals with the most important of the topics that are generally covered in courses that give special attention to critical thinking or sound reasoning." (p. viii).
avoid error will at the same time motivate us to do so. Both these assumptions have been challenged. The first confuses retrospective argument analysis with the forward focused activity of getting our reasoning right, whereas the second raises the question of whether we see mastery of skills as enough to consider someone to be a critical thinker. As Siegel states:

This “pure skills” conception of critical thinking faces an obvious objection: it sanctions our regarding a person as a critical thinker even though that person never, or only infrequently, thinks critically.10

The Place of the Critical Thinker in Critical Thinking

Despite its emphasis on skill acquisition the skills view of critical thinking does aim to develop critical thinkers rather than mere competencies, so we may still ask: How do proponents of the skills conception view the relationship between critical thinking and the critical thinker? Here we find that the attention given to the critical thinker is often limited to the ways we, as critical thinkers, can distort or bias the argument. Within the skills approach the aim seems to be to keep our particularity as far from ‘objective reason’ as possible. We might see this emphasis on objectivity arising out of an epistemological position in which knowledge and judgments concerning truth are seen to stand independently of individual knowers. Critical thinkers are those who know how to construct and evaluate sound arguments, they are not defined by the way in which they arrive at an interpretation of the issue (or concept) at hand, nor by the way they see truth related to meaning.11 Thus in Zachary Seech’s Logic in Everyday Life we find:

Humans are emotional beings. Emotions... constitute a grand and pervasive aspect of humanity, and life without them is close to inconceivable. Your emotions should often enter into your communications with other people, but not in a way that unfairly biases your reasoning or its presentation.12

9“Focusing attention upon mistakes in reasoning should assist one in avoiding them” and “I hope that the facility developed in recognizing mistakes in reasoning may lead to constructive principles of good [error-free] reasoning” (Ibid, p. 2, my italics).
10 Harvey Siegel: Educating Reason, p. 6.
11 Indeed, the interpretative process is often seen as a matter of creative thinking and contrasted with critical thought.
For Seech, "unfair bias" is created when language is used to persuade by its positive or negative connotative force. This is indeed an important point. But here we also need to note what Seech is not addressing. Despite the strong claim linking emotion to our very humanity, the attention placed on the role of emotion in reasoning is limited to alerting us to the way in which it may lead us astray.\(^{13}\) There is no attention give to the positive role emotion may play in critical thinking - for example, in the way empathy may contribute to our understanding of a person or their plight, or how emotion itself may constitute a kind of knowing.\(^{14}\) This points to the narrowness of a straight skills conception of critical thinking and poses a challenge for broader theories of critical thinking.

Yet even within the skills view we may recognize two ways in which critical thinkers are implicated within the process of argument evaluation (either implicitly or explicitly). They are implicated in: (i) assessing the appropriateness of premises and assumptions, and (ii) in their ability to communicate with others like ourselves.\(^{15}\) As Scriven points out, although assumptions may not be based on reasons when first formed, to remain committed to our assumptions when they are open to critical reflection requires us to have *good reason* for our continued belief in them.

I sometimes think one can best spotlight the gap between formal logic and real reasoning by pointing out that almost every argument involves assumptions, but that, as far as I know, there has never been an even moderately successful attempt to analyze the concept of an assumption... The truth of \(P\) guarantees the truth of \(P\), but it sure isn't a good reason to believe it.\(^{16}\)

Potentially at least, Scriven's emphasis on having good reasons for believing places an emphasis on the critical thinker as interpreter. Judging what counts as a good

---

\(^{13}\) See also Douglas Walton: *The Place of Emotion in Argumentation*. Walton's book is devoted to the way emotion may interfere with our reasoning. Here, too, the ways in which our reasoning may go wrong are characterized in terms of informal fallacies, and adequate attention to the positive role emotions may play in argumentation is sorely lacking.

\(^{14}\) I return to the kind of empathy appropriate to critical thinking in chapter 5.

\(^{15}\) Seech and Damer implicitly incorporate these dimensions into their accounts of critical thinking, whereas Scriven explicitly draws our attention to these two aspects of critical thinking. See Michael Scriven: *Reasoning*; for (i) see note 2-2, p. 13, in regard to creating a critical attitude toward texts (though I think this is an example of a general metacognitive emphasis to critically reflect on one's thinking emphasized throughout the text); for (ii) see notes 1-3, p. 3, 2-3 and 2-4, p. 13.
reason for believing may require that we reflect on our motivations and feelings, or examining the meaning an assumption has for us, as much as it may involve determining truth. However, in limiting good reason for believing to finding the best (most reliable) indicators of truth we can, Scriven’s theory of critical thinking is linked to a view of rationality as justified belief in a way that minimizes the place of such interpretation in critical thinking.17 This lack of emphasis on interpretation - and the way that interpretation is linked to judgment - considerably narrows Scriven’s account of what it is for a critical thinker to have good reason to believe.

Critical Thinking as a Social Activity

For Scriven, communication plays an important role in critical thinking because communication enables us to determine the extent to which our own assumptions are reasonable or justifiable. Communicability broadens the skills conception of critical thinking (as fallacy recognition and avoidance) to include one in which it is also involves our assessment of the justificatory strength of arguments; a strength determined in part through the activity of justifying our arguments (beliefs or actions) to others. The critical thinker, then, is someone who is able to engage in reasons assessment with other people.

In this respect Scriven’s version of the skills view does place some emphasis on critical thinking as a social activity - for it is in the public realm that reasons are defended or amended - however this emphasis on communication is purely utilitarian. Critical thinking involves acting or believing according to the best reasons we have, either individually or collectively, and this means we had better listen carefully to what others say. “Listening with an open mind to other views” is regarded instrumentally as a means of avoiding claims we may later regret - a way of avoiding “superficial, partisan, irresponsible” reasoning - rather than being

16 Ibid, p. xvi.
17 Indeed, for Scriven, “... that’s all reason is - the best indicator of truth” (ibid, p. 4, paragraph 1-6). Such reasons may come in the form of formal arguments or intuitive judgments. Intuitive judgments can constitute reason for acting when they can be considered reliable guides to the truth. See pp. 3-7, paragraphs 1-5 and 1-7.
regrettable because it is antithetical to the very nature of critical thinking itself.\footnote{Ibid. Seech also offers this justification of taking other views into account in a discussion of “fair language” (Logic in Everyday Life, p. 177). Siegel discusses this as the utilitarian means-end view of rationality in Educating Reason.}

Being reasonable is a measure of our beliefs or the warrantedness of our actions, it is not about how we relate to the world - as long as we communicate effectively, how we treat each other in other respects is not seen to be relevant. This concern for the relation between justified belief and action, however, becomes the basis for expanding the skills conception of critical thinking to include critical dispositions (the position of Ennis, Paul and Siegel).

There is certainly an implicit message in Reasoning that reasonable critical thinkers become reasonable people in a much richer sense than this; that reasoning - enacting our inherent rationality - will lead us to become better persons, relate to each other in a better way, and uphold democratic principles and practice. However this does not emerge from his theory (or the skills view in general). Scriven does not consider the concept of reasoning itself to be dialogical, nor a critical attitude as constitutive of critical thinking.

\textbf{Critical Thinking as Skills plus Dispositions: Robert Ennis}

In turning attention to dispositions as well as skills, Robert Ennis seeks to bridge the gap between knowledge and practice. While Ennis' conception is still focused on reasons assessment, it is no longer enough to hope that once someone knows how to think critically they will choose to do so. Rather, we determine whether someone counts as a critical thinker by observing their practice. Ennis defines critical thinking as reasonable, reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do and follows this definition with a functional description of 12 abilities and 14 dispositions ideal critical thinkers possess.\footnote{Ennis has developed his conception of critical thinking over several publications since 1980. I am using his most recent conceptualization (Critical Thinking, forthcoming), which marks a recent change in the way he characterizes critical thinking. In publications prior to “Critical Thinking: A Streamlined Conception” (Teaching Philosophy, 1991), Ennis characterizes critical thinking as involving both dispositions and abilities. In the 1991 publication and thereafter he refers to ideal critical thinkers having abilities and dispositions. In the description I quote here the dispositions are characterized quite differently than in the 1991 account. However, they are still considered constitutive of critical thinking rather than of the thinker. As the book is unpublished (though}
as an elegant theory of critical thinking... it is intended to be a useful guide to educational decisions”. For instance, the characteristics of the ideal critical thinker may be useful in determining educational objectives for the teaching of critical thinking. While Ennis’ view may not be constructed as theory, his description, together with his definition of critical thinking, can still be used as a means of determining the theoretical commitments that underlie his conception.

To appreciate Ennis’ position we need to note some of the specific skills and dispositions his critical thinkers possess. For Ennis, “ideal critical thinkers” possess the ability: to ask and answer questions of clarification, identify unstated assumptions, deduce and judge deductions, induce and judge inductions, and make and judge value judgments. They may also possess the following auxiliary abilities: the ability to proceed in an orderly manner (including monitor one’s own thinking); be sensitive to the feelings, levels of knowledge and degree of sophistication of others, and employ appropriate rhetorical strategies. Importantly for this discussion, auxiliary abilities are not themselves constitutive of being a critical thinker.

In addition to these skills or abilities, ideal critical thinkers also have the following dispositions: “to care that their beliefs are true... that is, care to “get it right” to the extent possible” and “Represent a position honestly, theirs as well as others” (which includes the disposition to seek and offer reasons; take into account the total situation; seek as much precision as the situation requires; and be reflectively aware of their own basic beliefs). Importantly, Ennis notes that ideal critical thinkers may also possess a third disposition - the disposition to:

3. Care about the dignity and worth of every person. This includes the dispositions to
   A. Discover and listen to others’ views and reasons;
   B. Avoid intimidating or confusing others with their critical prowess, taking into account others’ feelings and level of understanding; and

---

21 Ibid, p. 9, and Appendix A (slightly different items).
C. Be concerned about other’s welfare.

He then notes:

The disposition #3 to care about the dignity and worth of every person is not required of critical thinking by definition, but in order that it be humane. I call it a “correlative disposition”, by which I mean one that, although not part of the definition of ‘critical thinking’, it is desirable for all critical thinkers to have it, and the lack of it makes the critical thinking less valuable, or perhaps of no value at all.22

We need to keep this list of skills and dispositions in mind as we turn to explore what commitments, and possible inconsistencies, underlie Ennis’ view.

The Way Critical Thinking Refers

One of the underlying difficulties in understanding Ennis’ account of critical thinking, lies in his shift from a conceptual definition of thinking to a functional characterization of the idealized thinker. The primary problem here arises when we switch from viewing terms such as ‘reasonable, reflective’ and ‘focused’ as descriptions of thinking to descriptions of persons. This alerts us to the multiple ways the term ‘thinking’ may refer.

We can take the word ‘thinking’ to refer to a set of propositions, for instance in expressions like “I don’t agree with your thinking here…”, or we can take it to refer to mental events of a certain kind, such as in “there are many types of thinking: remembering, calculating, etc.”, or we can take it to refer to a kind of human activity, for instance in “I’m thinking about what you said the other day…”.23

If we take critical thinking in the second sense, then Ennis uses the adjectives reasonable, reflective, and focused to describe the mode of thinking we engage in - to determine whether the thinking was reflective we look to describe the mental state and propositional contents rather than look to the intentional activity of the person. This is how I interpret Ennis to use the term. He identifies critical thinking with certain modes of thinking and thinkers who instantiate these modes are considered to

22 Appendix A.
23 Toulmin makes a similar point in relation to two uses of the word ‘argument’: argument as ‘an argument’ and ‘arguing’ as human activity. His two uses correspond to my first and third uses of ‘thinking’. Stephen Toulmin: Knowing and Acting, pp. 84-85.
be ideal critical thinkers. Yet if this is the case, then the following questions are raised in connection to the relationship between Ennis’ definition of critical thinking and his characterization of critical thinkers.

(i) What role do the auxiliary skills and correlative dispositions play in Ennis’ theory? What can be learnt by the fact that these skills and dispositions are not seen as necessary to critical thinking, but are either necessary or preferred when characterizing critical thinkers?

(ii) Can thinking be characterized as *reasonable, reflective* or *focused* without the person engaged in thinking themselves being reasonable, reflective or focused?

(iii) Is the term *reasonable*, as it is used by Ennis, to be understood from a personal or social point of view? Can we define someone’s thinking as reasonable even when it is not judged so by others? Is such reasonableness epistemic or moral in nature?

These are the questions that we shall now address.

**The Role of Auxiliary Skills and Correlative Dispositions**

Underlying the distinction between necessary (constitutive) and non-necessary (auxiliary or correlative) skills and dispositions is a division between engagement with ideas and an engagement with persons. Whereas the willingness to engage with the ideas of another comes under the description of critical thinking, a willingness to engage with other people in a certain way is viewed as a ‘humane’ characteristic outside the parameters of critical thinking itself, though useful to it. We can see this division in the difference between the necessary disposition to “consider seriously other points of view” and the correlative disposition to “discover and listen to other’s views”; whereas attending to *other points of view* involves our reflection on propositional contents, *listening to other’s views* requires our engagement with people, and it is through this engagement that we come to attend to their view.

As with Scriven, Ennis’ list of necessary skills and dispositions leaves the actual interaction between critical thinkers as a kind of utilitarian competency, a managing of interactions with others out of an interest in avoiding error. Indeed, we might

---

24 And in this regard it is the same as the role *talking to others* plays in the Skills view. This means that for Ennis, a person may engage in critical thinking without caring about the dignity and worth of
take Ennis' correlative dispositions to bridge the gap between thinking as a kind of mental event and thinking as a kind of human activity (the second and third senses of thinking discussed above). When we take thinking as human activity, exchanging points of view will be deeply embedded in inter-personal activity (listening to others). This would then explain why Ennis considers the correlative dispositions necessary in order that critical thinking be humane - for as human activity, critical thinking involves us in interactions in a world shared with other people. Without these correlative dispositions critical thinking becomes "less valuable, perhaps of no value at all... deficient and perhaps dangerous", but it is still to be regarded as critical thinking and the person as a critical thinker.  

**Persons and Their Thinking: What is Reasonable and Reflective?**

If, however, critical thinkers are not bound by social or moral considerations how do we square a critical thinker’s potential inhumanity with Ennis’ view of the necessary (definitional) reasonableness of critical thinking?

The issue here is to understand how reasonableness refers. Do terms like reasonable and reflective refer to and describe mental states (the thinking), or do they refer to and describe the intentional subject - the person doing the thinking? To suggest the former is to suggest that in critical thinking our actions as critical thinkers are not subject to the same critical reflection as are our thoughts. For instance, on Ennis’ account I could be yelling at a student in a way that intimidates her, threaten her through the use of body language as I speak, yet still be instantiating the characteristics of the ideal critical thinker in relation to the substantive issue we are discussing. That is, I could still be reasonably and reflectively engaged with what she says as I decide what to believe or do. This would, for Ennis, make me an unreasonable or inhumane critical thinker, who is nevertheless engaged in critical thinking. But does it make sense to characterize a person as unreasonable even when we would describe their mode of thinking as reasonable and reflective? I think not.

others, without showing concern for the other's welfare and they may intimidate and confuse people with their "critical prowess". That is, they may not show the correlative dispositions 3a-c (see Appendix A). They may also fail to show sensitivity to another's feelings, use inappropriate rhetorical strategies and proceed in an a disorganized manner. Ibid, Auxiliary skills nos. 13-15.
The issue here is to understand what counts as a proper object for critical thinking. Does being a critical thinker require me to bring to bear on my behavior the same critical reflection I apply to the substantive issues I am addressing? If so, then reflection in critical thinking will involve not only our reflection on propositional contents, but reflection on the situation in which we find ourselves as we engage in critical thinking, and on the way in which we conduct ourselves within that context. Of course reasonableness admits of degrees, and we may not always relate to others in ways conducive to critical thinking, however I would want to say that someone who is conscious of themselves acting this way recognizes that such behavior is antithetical to the nature of critical thinking itself. Here the reasonableness of thought and the reasonableness of the thinker are inextricably connected. What makes them inextricable is the reflexivity of certain kinds of mental activity, and it is the consequences of this reflexivity that I think Ennis ignores.

**Reflexivity in Critical Thinking**

While mental activities like calculating or identifying may be engaged in a way that does not refer back to the subject, this does not seem to be true of mental activities like reflecting or deciding. Reflecting and deciding involve the agent in a particular way. A cat crosses the road and I swerve the car to avoid hitting it. In so doing I am certainly identifying, calculating and even judging the situation to which I react, and I can do all of this while I am talking to my passenger and looking for a street sign. The situation involved thinking, but not necessarily reflective thinking. I simply responded to the situation, engaging practical reason, in the best way I knew. Of course I may also reflectively think about the situation, for instance I might find myself exclaiming: “If I hadn’t put new tyres on the car last week we’d have been in trouble!” or “If I swerve I’m going to hit the pole, what should I do?” or perhaps “Lucky you weren’t driving!”

---

25 Ibid.
26 Ennis would, I think, want to say yes to this, for on his account critical thinking is not only directed toward belief, but towards action in the world.
27 These, too, are implied in the auxiliary abilities and correlative dispositions.
28 Bear in mind that Ennis defines critical thinking as “reasonable reflective thinking focused on deciding...” (my italics). I take up this issue of reflexivity in greater detail in chapter 2.
What makes this thinking different from assessing an argument is that it involves my awareness of the situation as a situation, and requires me to locate myself in it in order to respond adequately to it. This awareness and engagement involves a certain self-relatedness or reflexivity in which I am aware of myself as experiencing something and responding to it. Indeed this understanding seems to lie behind Ennis' description of the critical thinker as being "reflectively aware of their own basic beliefs". Epistemically, this kind of self-aware reflection may lead to a deepened understanding of the meaning and significance that our beliefs and actions have for us, rather than to a decision concerning what to believe or do. This aspect of depth, and the way critical thinking may lead our thinking to deepen, is ignored in accounts of critical thinking that focus on argument assessment alone.

A similar issue arises in relation to the way focusing as a mental activity is ascribable to intentional subjects rather than mental contents. It is not the thinking - the mental events - which are "focused on deciding", rather, it is the person who, through their thinking, focuses on what to do or believe; it is to characterize our intentions. Indeed it may be that as we focus on deciding what to believe or do the individual mental processes we are engaged in may be characterized as something else; for instance, focusing on deciding may involve me in elaborating on a counterexample, or establishing a hypothesis.

If we are to follow Ennis in defining critical thinking as reflective thinking we will need to understand critical thinking as a term that does not solely refer to mental activity as events but that also captures aspects of agency. When we do this, the terms reflective and focused and deciding are seen to be attributable to the thinker as they engage in the mental activity of thinking, rather than attributable to the thinking per se. This raises the further question of the relation between epistemic and moral reasonableness. Indeed Ennis' correlative dispositions may be seen as characterizing

---

29 Frank Farrell explores the sense of self-relatedness we have in reflective thinking in Subjectivity, Realism and Postmodernism, pp. 217-244.
30 Disposition 2F in Ennis' list of skills and dispositions (see Appendix A).
31 I return to explore the issue of meaning and depth in critical thinking in chapter 2.
the moral reasonableness needed for inquiry to be humane. In arguing that these dispositions are necessary to critical thinking I am suggesting that when critical thinking is tied to the reasonableness of belief and action, both epistemic and moral reasonableness become defining characteristics of critical thinking.

**Personal and Social Points of View**

We can see this when we pose the question “Reasonable for whom?” From what perspective is reasonableness being judged? Does Ennis consider reasonableness to be judged according to public interests and public criteria, or according to the critical thinker’s own interests and criteria? Does Ennis judge reasonableness from the social or personal point of view? What is at stake is the possibility that, on Ennis’ account, there may be a critical thinker who is very successful at thinking critically (and thus satisfies the demand that their thinking be reasonable) and yet who is considered unreasonable or even dangerous. It will not be enough here to say that dangerous critical thinkers are dangerous because they are unsuccessful at critical thinking - for what is lacking is not constitutive of critical thinking per se.

Pointing to the reflexivity of reflecting and deciding will not always help here. If reasonableness is interpreted solely in light of my own perspectivity, then my reasoning may be egoistic or egocentric yet still be considered reasonable as long as, in reflecting and deciding, I adequately take into account what my own interests are. In the case of yelling at the student, what made my behavior unreasonable to me as a critical thinker was not that others determined this to be the case, but that I recognized that this behavior was inappropriate for me as a teacher. It was in continuing to treat her that way once I became reflectively aware of my behavior that exposed the lack in my own ability to think critically - a lack in my ability to reasonably decide what to do in that situation. But this judgment already presupposes that I saw her as someone worthy of being treated in a humane way. Ennis may still want to claim that it is possible to engage in critical thinking and yet be unreasonable as a critical thinker in precisely those cases where I do not have the belief that the

---

32 That is, there is no need here to call on public judgment to determine what is reasonable.
person I am dealing with should be treated humanely. Here reflexively alone will not tell me I am doing anything wrong.

Central to Ennis’ account, however, is the idea that critical thinkers take other positions and the total situation into account in their thinking; so the question now becomes: who determines the parameters of the situation and who determines the domain of “one of us” whose views ought to be taken into account in this way? It seems to me that such parameters are determined by the kinds of activity and forms of inter-relationship in which we are engaged. That is, that critical thinkers at least minimally take into account the views of those implicated by their actions. But this means reasonableness is determined not in relation to my subjective ends, but in relation to the community in which my action is taken up. That is, it is determined inter-subjectively (or relationally) rather than subjectively. Here deciding what is reasonable will reflect both moral (inter-personal) and epistemic considerations.

Here I think Scriven and Ralph Johnson point to something important when they suggest that the justificatory strength of the position we set out to defend is to be measured not by our own support of it, but by the activity of justifying it to others. From a social perspective, for my reasoning to count as reasonable I will need to take other’s ideas and interests into account in my reasoning in a way that makes sense to them as well as well as to myself.

On this account, Ennis’ claim that we can be an unreasonable critical thinker would in the end turn out to be contradictory, for “caring to get it right to the extent possible” would not just involve reasonably deciding what to believe and do

---

33 See Appendix A, dispositions 2 a-g. The issue of what determines the domain of “one of us” and the imperatives (oughts) incumbent on critical thinkers becomes the central focus of chapter 5.
34 Indeed, this is what Ennis appeals to when he responds to the question of whether critical thinking is sensitive to context. See Jennifer Wheary and Robert Ennis: “Gender Bias in Critical Thinking” in Educational Theory, vol. 45, no 2, 1995. p. 219.
35 It would seem that the necessary ability and the disposition to “Care that their beliefs are true ... that is, get it right to the extent possible” and “Represent a position honestly, theirs as well as others” already involves a social perspective (Appendix A). It already involves recognition on the part of the thinker that each person’s thinking is perspectival and needs to be seriously evaluated against other views. Ralph Johnson makes the same point in “The Problem of Defining Critical Thinking” in The Generalizability of Critical Thinking, ed. Norris, S. pp. 49-50.
according to my own subjectivist interests, or getting it right in relation to the total set of propositional contents, but reasonably deciding in relation to the total situation, a situation in which I perceive myself as a critical thinker amongst other people whose point of view and interests I am obligated to take into account in my own thinking. Here caring to get it right minimally involves caring that I present my views in an intelligible and fairminded way to others - that they see me as someone who can be reasoned with - in order that I receive the most constructive criticism they have to offer and will be in a position to hear the most illuminating of alternate views. Anything short of this would undermine my own endeavor as a critical thinker.\footnote{This is to accept a utilitarian position regarding why listening to others' views is constitutive of critical thinking - and we may take exception this - however, it seems to me that this much at least is implied by Ennis' own theory.} In this sense, individuals and communities would only be able to reasonably engage in critical thinking from a subjective point of view when there is nothing to contrast subjectivity with - no larger community of which they are part.

\textbf{Summary}

The skills plus dispositions view characterized by Ennis looks to characterize critical thinking in terms of what ideal critical thinkers do. In this it responds to the critique of the skills view in which people may be characterized as critical thinkers irrespective of their practice.

Problems with the \textit{skills plus dispositions} view arise from the way critical thinking is seen to be connected to persons, a problem that comes to the fore when we examine (i) the difference between referring to critical thinking as reasonable, reflective or focused and using these same terms to characterize critical thinkers; (ii) the nature of critical thinking dispositions; and (iii) what counts as \textit{reasonableness} within personal and social domains. Importantly, an account of critical thinking that focuses exclusively on justification of belief and action does not provide an account of what it is for our understanding to deepen. This deepening of our understanding involves our agency and is made possible by the way reflecting and deciding involve a certain self-relatedness or reflexivity. On Ennis' view, meaning and significance are
presumed as givens from which we reason, rather than factors which emerge from our engagement in critical thinking itself.

A Dia-logical Account of Critical Thinking: Richard Paul

Richard Paul’s characterization of critical thinking includes not only skills and dispositions, but also critical attitudes and moral virtues. Paul’s account of critical thinking emphasizes both the inter-relational and reflexive dimensions of critical thinking. Yet to understand the particular way in which Paul regards critical thinking to be inter-relational and reflexive we need to appreciate what he means by the term dialogue. Here it is important to realize that Paul’s view of critical thinking is not a social conception (whereby dialogue points to the interlocutionary nature of critical thinking as a relationship between critical thinkers), but is one which stresses the relationship between multiple frameworks.37

For Paul, the term dialogical literally means dia-logical (across or between logics). Here the term ‘logic’ refers to the basic structure of meaning and interpretation that underlies our thinking and that enables us to reason something through.38 Without this underlying conceptual framework we would have an unintelligible mass of thoughts but would have no way of organizing them into worldviews, opinions, or claims of truth.39 For Paul, these logics or frameworks differ between cultures, disciplines, and even individuals. Given all claims to knowledge are made from within a conceptual framework, critical thinking requires that we take these frameworks into account in deciding what to believe and do. This does not mean we judge views relative to their internal logic, but rather, that we need to appreciate the logic which underlies different views if we are to understand and bring judgment to bear on them at all. This is also true regarding our own thinking - reflexively we need to be aware of the perspective of our own view of the world and the logic that

37 This is important in order that we distinguish Paul’s view of critical thinking from a dialogical account of critical thinking where dialogue is seen as conversation (an interlocutionary relation between two or more subjects). See Richard Paul: Critical Thinking, (1991 edition).
38 Ibid, pp. 20-26. (“The Logic of Critical and Creative Thinking”)
39 Ibid, pp. 19-20. Paul’s use of the term ‘logic’ is more like the notion of the worldview carried through language.
underlies it before we can bring judgment to bear on it.\textsuperscript{40} It is this question of perspectivity and how perspectivity is related to our interests that underlies his distinction between weak and strong sense critical thinkers.

**Critical Thinking in a Weak and Strong Sense**

For Paul, if we use critical thinking skills to promote our own interests we are "weak" critical thinkers, however if we use it to seek truth (irrespective of our own egocentric attachments), then we are critical thinkers in a "strong" sense.

Critical thinking... comes in two forms. If the thinking is disciplined to serve the interests of a particular individual or group, to the exclusion of other relevant persons or groups, I call it sophisticated or weak sense critical thinking. If the thinking is disciplined to take into account the interests of diverse persons or groups, I call it fairminded or strong sense critical thinking.\textsuperscript{41}

This distinction between weak and strong sense critical thinking is central to Paul's account. While all critical thinkers internalize the procedures and rules of argument assessment, weak sense critical thinkers do not apply these skills reflexively - they do not question their own assumptions and remain blind to the perspectival nature of their own thinking. In contrast to this:

Strong sense critical thinkers are not routinely blinded by their own points of view. They know they have a point of view and therefore recognize on what framework of assumptions and ideas their own thinking rests.\textsuperscript{42}

Strong sense critical thinking may be described as objective because it requires us to approach our own position as one position amongst many in a detached way, as if it were the position of a second-person. In this respect Paul's position can be seen to echo Thomas Nagel's position in *A View From Nowhere*.\textsuperscript{43} This does not mean our thinking becomes perspective-less, only that we are aware of ourselves and others as perspective-bound and treat all such perspectives equally. One consequence of treating all views equally in this way is that our own view becomes secularized and

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid, p.184, ("Critical Thinking and the Critical Person").

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid, p. 48, ("Critical Thinking in North America").

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid, p. 185, ("Critical Thinking and the Critical Person").
depersonalized, for it now becomes merely one view amongst others and carries no special weight because it is our own.\textsuperscript{44}

**Refuting Siegel’s Charge of Relativism**

For Paul, the ability to understand another point of view and to reason from *within* that other framework is central to fairminded critical thinking. Not only does this enable us to identify contradictions internal to another’s thinking on their own terms, but enables us to argue to our own position from other foundations. This is where I think Siegel’s charge of relativism against Paul is shown to be mistaken.\textsuperscript{45}

For Paul, arguing from within other frameworks ensures we break out of a subjective or egoistic model of reasoning in which our own assumptions and motivations are accepted as givens. To say that I may argue to my own position from within another’s framework suggests that claims to truth are translatable between frameworks and inter-subjectively valid. Such a view suggests that differences in frameworks and worldviews are perspectival rather than substantive or incommensurable.\textsuperscript{46} It is this attention to another’s perspectivity, together with the use of questioning to lead people to an awareness of their own perspectivity and internal inconsistencies, that leads Paul to describe his approach to critical thinking as *Socratic* in nature.\textsuperscript{47}

**Identifying with the Universal Procedures of Inquiry**

While perspectivity plays an important role in Paul’s account of critical thinking, we need to be careful to distinguish between perspectivity and subjectivity. Subjectivity involves not only having a point of view, but being attached to it in a certain way - it involves feeling connected to, or experiencing, my view as *my own* rather than

\textsuperscript{43} In chapter 3, I discuss objectivity and truth in Paul’s account via a discussion of Nagel.

\textsuperscript{44} Harvey Siegel’s characterization of Paul’s position in *Educating Reason*, p. 13.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid, p. 14.

\textsuperscript{46} I discuss this more fully in chapter 3 in relation to Paul and Nagel’s conception of objectivity. I take Paul to be a realist concerning truth; "It is the severe, inflexible, stern fact of reality that forces intellectual criticality… into one seamless whole". Richard Paul; “The Logic of Critical and Creative Thinking”, *Critical Thinking* (1991), p. 18.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid, p. 189, ("Critical Thinking and the Critical Person"). I also think that he takes his approach to be Socratic because he is committed to realism concerning truth; it is the one truth that we all seek. For Paul, plural claims to truth point to our lack - that we don’t know what the truth is - rather than to pluralism concerning truth.
someone else's. For Paul, perspectivity is not attached to who we are (to our identity) in this way. Perspectives offer different interpretations of the world, but they may be viewed objectively as propositional contents. Indeed this is how the critical thinker ought to view them. In fairminded critical thinking my view is, even to me, merely a view, like other views. My commitments may affect what I reason about, but not the way I reason. Instead of being passionate about what we are thinking critically about, we become passionate about how we reason about it. In seeing myself as a critical thinker I see myself necessarily as a person who thinks according to certain universal procedures and only contingently as a person committed to the particular beliefs, values and commitments I hold.

If I learn to think critically... I think of myself less and less as defined by the substance of my beliefs and more and more by the critical processes that enable me to shape and re-shape them... Who I am and how I think - rather than what I think - become importantly united.

That is, I come to identify myself fundamentally with the process of inquiry rather than the content of my thoughts. As such, critical thinking will be motivated by my commitment to these procedures rather than a commitment to a particular point of view.

**Paul’s Psychological Egoism**

Paul’s distinction between how and what we think needs to be seen in the context of his commitment to a psychology that distinguishes between a *primary egoistic* self and a *secondary rational* self. Understanding Paul’s developmental psychology is critical to our ability to appreciate his conception of critical thinking because this distinction between egoism and rationality underpins all aspects of his theory. Despite this centrality, however, the impact of Paul’s psychology on his theory of critical thinking has generally been ignored or underplayed by theorists commenting on his work. This makes it especially important to address here - for if we do not

---

48 In chapter 3 I further explore the implications of this view for a theory of critical thinking.
50 Ibid, p. 271 (“Dialogical Thinking: Essential in the Acquisition of Rational Knowledge”). In this article Paul outlines his theory of primary and secondary human nature.
51 For instance, Siegel points to Paul’s atomistic view and egoism, but does not show how this impacts on his theory overall; Johnson charges Paul with placing too much emphasis on the individual
understand the role egoism plays for Paul, we are likely to misconstrue his talk of
dialogue and moral virtue as implicating a commitment to a dialogical conception of
self and a relational (or communicative) understanding of persons. Such a view
would be mistaken.\textsuperscript{52}

For Paul, the egoistic self is the natural self and is self-serving in nature. It constitutes
the way in which we first experience the world and is expressive of values and
beliefs that are formed through lived experience. The \textit{potential} for rationality lies in
our desire to satisfy our primary needs and desires. Thus rationality emerges as we
develop a reflective awareness of the needs and desires of our primary egoistic self. It
is a second-order self which evaluates the primary self’s experience in, and response
to, the world. Where the intentional object of the primary self is the world, the
intentional object of the rational self is thought.

Left to ourselves, the rational self seeks to further the interests of our egoistic self,
and indeed weak-sense critical thinkers may be seen to be rational in just this
naturalistic, self-promoting way. With appropriate intervention, however, this
emerging rational self can develop the capacity for self-critique. Strong-sense critical
thinkers are people who have learnt to attend to their own thinking in this way.
Importantly, on Paul’s view self-critique is regarded as \textit{unnatural}.\textsuperscript{53}

It is certainly the nature of the mind to think - spontaneously, 
continuously, and pervasively - but it is not of the nature of the human
mind to think critically about the standards and principles guiding its
spontaneous thought. It has no built-in drive to question its innate
tendency to believe what it wants to believe... It takes a special kind of

\textsuperscript{52} For example, Johnson states: “Paul’s position has a strongly Platonic character: critical thinking is
dialogical and heavily dependent on moral character.” We cannot read this at face value. It would be
a mistake here to interpret Paul’s use of the term \textit{dialogue} as \textit{interlocutionary activity} and his notion
of \textit{moral character} as an \textit{attribute of persons}. As I shall show in chapter 4, Plato’s conception of
dialogue, and the inter-personal moral dimension of \textit{inquiry between friends}, is much richer than
Paul’s emphasis on dialogue as dia-logics and his view of moral virtue as traits of mind allow. See

intervention process to produce the kind of self-criticalness that enables the mind to question effectively and constructively its own creations....

Learning to think critically is therefore an extraordinary process that cultivates capacities merely potential in human thought... It is not normal and inevitable or even common for a mind to discipline itself within a rational perspective and direct itself toward rational rather than egocentric beliefs, practices, and values.⁵⁴

Learning to be a fairminded critical thinker involves developing the extraordinary capacity to think critically with other people, and this is the task of education.⁵⁵ This view of the connection between dialogue and critical thinking differs significantly from other theorists (for instance, Scriven and Lipman), who emphasis the naturalness of dialogical inquiry and self-evaluation.⁵⁶

This view of the artificiality of inter-subjective reason and of dialogue seems somewhat strange. Paul's psychological egoism rests on a developmental understanding of human beings in which we are seen to develop first self-servingly as individuals and only later develop the skills and dispositions necessary to enter into reciprocal relationships and live in community with others (this is why the egoistic self is taken as primary). This view is grounded in an interpretation of Piaget and in studies in early childhood developmental psychology (namely; the early relationship of child to mother).⁵⁷ Yet fairminded critical thinking will only be an artificial and extraordinary process if relationship and reciprocity are themselves seen as unnatural.

Paul's mistake here seems to be in taking the self-promoting and relational aspects of our development and identity as mutually exclusive rather than as interdependent, for even the child who is not yet cognitively aware of the relationships in which she is embedded, lives her life in relationship and reciprocity with others. Indeed the

---

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 45 ("Critical Thinking in North America").
⁵⁵ Formal education provides the social public environment in which we can practice exposing multiple logics and bringing them to bear on one another. Through such practice we come to reflexively internalize a dialogical mode of thinking and become internally motivated to act according to universal principles of reason. Paul explores his position more recently in relation to the natural self-deception and egoism of students and the task of education in "Teaching Critical Thinking in the Strong Sense" (in Re-Thinking Reason, ed. Walters, K.). In particular, note pp. 184-185.
⁵⁶ For example, Matthew Lipman: Thinking in Education; and Michael Scriven: Reasoning.
mother-child relationship is central to many moral theorists who stress the primacy of relation within human experience and development. On such a view we do not begin as an ego but become one, with the emergence of ego happening through our co-existence and inter-relationship with others. If we accept the position that the self develops in relationship to other selves, this egocentric aspect of Paul’s account of critical thinking should be rejected. This is not to reverse the claim and to say reciprocity is primary and natural and self-interest and egoism are secondary and unnatural. Rather, it is to suggest that both social and self-promoting relationships are natural to us as we seek to balance our need for autonomy with our need for community.

**Commitment in Critical Thinking**

Paul does capture something important about critical thinking when he suggests that the critical thinker identifies with the procedural constraints of inquiry. However I think he is mistaken in suggesting that this identification **supersedes** our identification with substantive beliefs and commitments. There is a difference between considering another's point of view because the strength of one’s commitment to one’s own view requires one to take seriously other alternatives or critique, and considering another’s view because one is not at all committed to the view one is expressing. In the former, a tension is established through our acknowledgment of the still existing commitments we have to a particular point of view. A tension in which strong substantive commitment requires from us a strong procedural commitment to examine all other possibilities. While the constraints we apply to our own thinking will be the same as those we apply to the thinking of others, this does not make our reasoning any less personal, any less expressive of the self we are.

The way in which we are responsible for the views we express also highlights the way in which what we say is connected to who we are. To be responsible for our thinking is not simply to be responsible for the processes we have used to arrive at substantive views, but to be responsible for the views themselves as **our own** rather

---

58 Macmurray, Baier, and Noddings, to name a few.
than anyone else’s; it is to see myself as accountable for believing this, or deciding to do that. Matthew Lipman speaks of this as taking cognitive as well as epistemological responsibility for our claims to truth. To say “Men are not responsible for rape.” or “The Holocaust did not happen.” requires not only that I take epistemic responsibility for the truth of the propositional content (such that I am prepared to provide reasons for my claim), but requires me to take cognitive responsibility for myself as someone who is committed to this as truth - as a way the world could be - and as someone who argues for it.59

What Paul fails to address here is the place of passion, value, responsibility and commitment in critical thinking itself - not as passion about how one thinks, but as passion felt toward what one is thinking critically about. If critical thinking is to be more than disinterested debate (where we may be called upon to defend any position irrespective of our own commitments) and yet avoid subjectivism, we need to understand how our identity - our personal commitments, beliefs, values - are altered as we engage in critical thinking. This involves understanding the ways in which what we think is connected to who we are.60 Paul goes some way toward this when he attends to the reflexive dimension of critical thinking - a reflexivity captured in his notion of the way strong sense critical thinkers are aware of their view as their own - however because the reflexivity experienced in critical thinking is, for Paul, detached from our commitments as situated individuals, it cannot account for the way identity effects, and is affected by, our engagement in critical thinking.

Paul’s Account of Character Traits and Moral Virtues
The significance of Paul’s psychological egoism and his association of critical thinking with a secondary self has strong repercussions for the way he conceptualizes character traits, moral virtues and the role of emotion in critical thinking.

59 Matthew Lipman, from a speech given at Mendham, NJ, in 1984. While these examples are extreme, we might see the two sides of the abortion debate also reflecting this sort of cognitive responsibility. Indeed, I think any view we put forward consciously in argument involves us reflexively this way.

60 This becomes my focus in chapter 2.
For Paul, intellectual traits and moral virtues are interdependent and together provide the motivation for critical thinking. For example, as well as possessing intellectual humility the critical thinker will be humble (she will be aware of herself as limited), and in having the intellectual virtue of empathy she will also have moral empathy. The moral virtues associated with critical thinking include the virtues of: humility; courage; empathy; integrity; perseverance; faith in reason; and fairmindedness.\(^{61}\)

One of the important contributions of Paul’s account of critical thinking lies precisely in the attention he gives to the moral and reflexive aspects of critical thinking. However we need to be careful to appreciate what Paul is really saying here, for when Paul draws attention to moral virtues as an aspect of critical thinking claiming “our basic ways of knowing are inseparable from our ways of being” he is not talking about our mode of being in the world - our situated identity as persons - but rather, of our being as thinkers whereby moral virtues are seen to motivate moral states of mind rather than moral actions.\(^{62}\) That is, when Paul speaks of moral empathy he is not speaking of an inter-subjective virtue which acts as a constraint on my relationship with other people, but of the constraints that I as a thinker bring to bear on my own and other’s thinking. For instance, moral empathy involves remembering an occasion when we were wrong and imagining ourselves being similarly deceived in the case at hand. Here intellectual empathy is not informed or motivated by feeling for others but is spelt out in terms of feeling for myself - feeling empathetically toward myself in the past so that I may recognize that, just as I have been wrong about my convictions in the past, I may also be wrong now. That is, I need to recognize the possibility of my own vulnerability before I can be motivated to imaginatively put myself in the place of others with opposing views.

Similarly with courage: for Paul, intellectual courage to face prejudice is motivated by the moral trait of being true to our own thinking. This is quite different than feeling empathetically toward another, or having the courage to face another. As a

\(^{61}\) Richard Paul: Critical Thinking; in particular, see “Critical Thinking, Moral Integrity and Citizenship”, pp. 255-268.

critical thinker I am required to engage with another's view empathetically, but am not required to show empathy toward them as a person, and while I ought to have courage to face views that I have a strong negative emotion toward, this does not mean I should have the courage to face the person with whom I have this strong disagreement.63

While this sounds very much like Ennis' position in which a critical thinker may be unreasonable as a person, what prevents Paul from agreeing to Ennis' conclusion is his richer account of the reflexive and cognitive awareness critical thinkers have of their own reasoning, and the way in which this awareness leads in turn to attitudinal and moral traits of character (such as humility and empathy). For Paul our own behavior is included amongst those things on which we critically reflect.

Thus, due to the psychological theory that grounds Paul's account of critical thinking, we may note three curious dimensions to his view: (i) moral virtues do not point to a social conception of persons or critical thinking but refer reflexively to my relationship with myself. This means that moral virtues may be expressed atomistically by individuals independently of their participation in the social domain (or inter-personal world); (ii) character traits associated with being a critical thinker are universal traits of mind we bring to bear on our own egoistic selves from a second person detached position; and (iii) the identity of critical thinkers is tied to these general procedures of thinking rather than to their particular commitments.

Adapting Paul's position to Accommodate a Social View of Self

While much of what Paul says about critical thinking and reason is valuable - in particular, his emphasis on traits of mind, virtues and frameworks - if we are committed to a social view of self (as I am) we will need to reconceptualize Paul's account of critical thinking to place the reciprocity of existence (and the social self) at the center of our account of critical thinking.

---

Such a reconceptualisation will lead us to reject Paul’s psychological egoism and his
dualistic model of the self in favor of a psychological theory which views our
engagement in experience and our reflection on experience (including self-critique)
as dynamically inter-related dimensions of the formation of self.\textsuperscript{64} Once we make this
move, fairminded critical thinking will not be seen as \textit{extraordinary}, but foundational
to human experience and communicative practice, for critical thinking itself will be
inextricable from the network of human inter-relationships which provide the natural
context in which interpretation and assessment of reasons takes place.\textsuperscript{65}

If we accept the claim that selves are constructed within a social network of
relationships, then intellectual and moral virtues will need to be understood as arising
within lived inter-personal experience (projecting outward to our relationship with
others) as well as understood reflexively in relation to ourselves. Here, both reflective
and experiential dimensions of our experience in the world will contribute to our
character as critical thinkers. That is, the character traits of a critical thinker will be
seen to be the traits of a \textit{self-aware thinker’s character}, inclusive of the beliefs,
values, commitments, and life-experiences that constitute that thinker’s perspective.
Critical thinkers are \textit{actors} in the world, are \textit{reflectively aware}, and \textit{have character}.

Indeed, If we balance Paul’s egoism with a concern for community and human
relationship, then we may agree with him in his own assessment of the weakness of
the cognitive psychology on which he bases his own theory:

\begin{quote}
Cognitive psychology... tends to leave out of the picture what should be
at its very centre: the active, willing, judging agent. The character of our
mind is one with our moral character. How we think determines how we
behave and how we behave determines who we are and who we become.
We have a moral as well as an intellectual responsibility to become
fairminded and rational.\textsuperscript{66}
\end{quote}

It is this active, willing, judging agent that I take up further in chapter 2.

\textsuperscript{64} We may turn to a Vygotskian developmental psychology to underpin such a social constructivist
view.
\textsuperscript{65} Indeed this is close to Nicholas Burbules’ account of the critical thinker in “Reasonable Doubt”, in
Reasons and the Critical Spirit: Harvey Siegel

Harvey Siegel views critical thinking as the educational cognate of rationality and defines critical thinking as "thinking appropriately moved by reasons". Siegel enlarges our conception of the critical thinker to reflect our attitude toward thinking critically as well as our capacity to do so. This critical attitude, (also referred to as a critical spirit) includes attitudes, dispositions, habits of mind and character traits which together ensure that the critical thinker will be appropriately moved by reasons. Being so moved reflects on a person's character. On this view (in contrast to the skills view) there is a sense in which one could say of someone: "They didn't argue any of the points well, they got totally carried away - but you know underneath it all, they really do think critically". It would make sense if, in presenting their ideas, the person was personally motivated to think critically but was having trouble articulating their point of view or the reasons on which it was based - for instance, if they had forgotten the reasons on which their point of view rested, or if their position was still being developed and their reasons not yet fully articulatable. In such cases the person may not produce a sound argument, or good reasons for believing, but they are exhibiting a critical attitude and showing themselves to be a critical thinker.

Importantly, Siegel's conception of critical thinking is tightly bound to his conception of rationality as justified belief, and in calling his own view a "reasons conception", he seeks to highlight the epistemological nature of critical thinking.

To be a critical thinker is to be appropriately moved by reasons. To be a rational person is to believe and act on the basis of reasons. There is then a deep conceptual connection, by way of the notion of reasons, between critical thinkers and rational persons.

67 Harvey Siegel: Educating Reason, p. 32 (original italics).
68 Ibid, pp. 38-42. "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 'critical spirit'. Most generally, a critical thinker must not only be able to assess reasons properly... but should be disposed to do so as well....".
69 In this regard Siegel identifies himself with the "skills view" represented by Scriven, Ennis and Paul. In aligning critical thinking so closely with rationality, Siegel limits the domain of critical thinking to the process of reasons assessment.
70 Ibid, p. 34.
Siegel's conception of *reasons* and *character* therefore underpin the two central tenants of his position: (i) That critical thinking is derivative upon our conception of rationality, and (ii) That critical thinking is a form of action. The motivations, attitudes, and dispositions that ensure that rationality is realized in action (i.e., that we are *moved* by reasons) are therefore attributable to a *certain sort of person* - a person who possesses a *critical spirit*, or *critical attitude* rather than being descriptions of states of mind. This is where Siegel parts ways with Ennis and Paul

Tendencies to think or act in certain ways are properties of persons, not pieces of thinking. Ennis' distinction slides over this distinction... but I think it is important...  

**Principles, Standards and Reasons for Believing**

For Siegel, rationality - and with it critical thinking - centers around the relationship between reasons and principles. For something to count as a reason for believing (or acting) an individual needs to be able to show both (i) how the belief or action follows from a generalized principle and (ii) that this principle is applied equally in all relevantly similar cases. By appealing to general principles, impartiality and objectivity are built into the rational process. Assessing reasons (and determining justified belief) therefore involves examining the relationship between reasons, principles and the consistency of their application.

... suppose that Johnny's teacher keeps him after class one day as punishment... The teacher's *reason* for keeping him after class is that his behavior was disruptive. For this properly to count as a reason, the teacher must be committed to some *principle* which licenses or backs that reason... e.g. "All disruptive behavior warrants keeping students after class"... which must be consistently applied to cases... the teacher's putative reason is rightly regarded as a reason, which warrants or justifies her behavior, only if it is backed by some principle which (can itself be justified and) is consistently applied in relevantly similar cases.  

---

71 Indeed, this has led others to characterize his position on critical thinking as the *Character View* of critical thinking. I believe Missimer first coined this title to characterize Siegel's view, and Siegel has recently adopted it for himself. See Connie Missimer: "Perhaps by Skill Alone" in *Informal Logic*, vol. 12, no. 3, 1990.

72 Harvey Siegel: *Educating Reason*, p. 9.

73 Ibid, p. 34.
On the one hand, the way Siegel links critical thinking to reasons seems quite narrow, limiting our conception of critical thinking to judging the warrant of beliefs and action. Yet on the other hand, tying the notion of reasons to principles and consistency in this way enables Siegel to take an extremely broad view of what might count as a reason. Emotions, preferences, ideals, desires, fears, hopes and tastes may all count as reasons (or shape reasons) as long as they can be linked to some principle or standard that is applied consistently in all relevant cases. Furthermore, for Siegel, (in contrast to Paul) these hopes, fears and preferences refer back to the person engaged in the thinking, and project forward onto the situation. There is no primary and secondary self on Siegel’s view. Thus judgments about justified belief need to be made in light of a person’s lived context and requires an understanding of what it means for people to be appropriately moved within differing circumstances.

However, as with Ennis, there is a problem here between subjective and inter-relational (or social), judgments concerning reasons, principles and their application. The question is whether the warrant of Johnny’s teacher’s reasons can be assessed solely in accordance with her own principles and standards and her own consistency in applying them, or whether principle and questions of consistency are to be inter-subjectively determined.

Because of the connection between reasons and principles, critical thinking is principled thinking; because principles involve consistency, critical thinking is impartial, consistent, and non-arbitrary, and the critical thinker both thinks and acts in accordance with, and values, consistency, fairness, and impartiality of judgment and action. Principled, critical judgment... thus presupposes a recognition of the binding force of standards, taken to be universal and objective, in accordance with which judgments are to be made.

How ought we to understand the concepts of impartiality, universality and objectivity of critical thinking on Siegel’s view? We might see this a problem of domains. Over what domain does the principle “All disruptive behavior warrants keeping students
after class.” need to apply in order that it may be used to license or back her reason for acting? (Herself? The school? The larger school system?). On what basis, then, is such a principle regarded as universal or as objective?

This question is particularly pertinent in Siegel’s case because of the weight he places on the critical spirit and the comment that reasons in critical thinking need to be regarded from an internalist perspective.

The rationality of an action can be appraised externally, by inquiring as to whether there are (were) good reasons for performing the action; or internally, by inquiring whether the agent has (had) good reasons for performing the action, and acts (acted) for those reasons... It is clear... that critical thinking is to be understood in an internalist way.

This identification of critical thinking with an internalist perspective seems to follow not from Siegel’s theory of rationality per se, but from his understanding of rational persons (or critical thinkers). The critical spirit is what motivates a person to be the “sort of person” who engages in critical thinking and it is this motivation that is personal and internal. As Bernard Williams states, in any account of internal reasons, reasons for believing or acting need to be viewed relative to the subjective motivations of the agent: “Basically, and by definition, any model for the internal interpretation [of reasons] must display a relativity of the reason statement to the agent’s subjective motivational set.”

Yet if reasons for acting are viewed relative to the individual subject’s motivations, how then do we reconcile the persons internal reasons for believing or acting with notions of universality, objectivity and impartiality? What does it mean for an individual critical thinker to be personally motivated by public standards and principles (however we may decide to characterize them)? It seems to me that any

77 Ibid, p. 33. “For this properly to count as a reason, the teacher must be committed to some principle which licenses or backs that reason.”.
78 I take this problem up in chapter 5 where I discuss inter-relational points of view and domains of “one of us” in critical thinking.
80 See Bernard Williams: “Internal and External Reasons” in Moral Luck, p. 102.
attempt to reconcile objectivity, impartiality and the “binding force of standards” with an internalist perspective needs to be grounded in a theoretical understanding of both (i) a dynamic view of the inter-relationship between personal and social points of view and, (ii) a hermeneutic understanding of the relation between who we are and the reasons that motivate us. While this understanding is not excluded by Siegel’s account, neither is it theoretically developed within it.\textsuperscript{82}

**Epistemology and Persons**

Perhaps the two greatest strengths of Siegel’s position are the identification of critical thinking with epistemology on one hand and persons on the other. In this regard it seems surprising that while he calls for a theory of rationality to underpin a theory of critical thinking he does not at the same time call for it to be underpinned by a theory of persons.

Siegel is, I think, correct in seeking to ground critical thinking in epistemology, however the reasons conception may be seen to focus critical thinking too narrowly around rationality as justified belief.\textsuperscript{83} It becomes too narrow once we look at critical thinking as an interpretive activity of persons who are equally concerned with meanings. To think critically about friendship is not only to decide whether a certain person may be counted as a friend (through the application of criteria or reasons), but to explore the meaning of the concept of friendship itself. That is, epistemology concerns the search for truth and meaning.\textsuperscript{84} Meaning and significance may impact on our critical thinking in two ways; (i) it may affect what factors we bring to bear on our thinking (moral constraints, values, traits), and (ii) it may affect our self-perception as critical thinkers - the way critical thinking leads to depth and complexity in our thinking as well as to decisions, and how the reasons we offer reflexively matter for us.

\textsuperscript{81} I return to this in chapter 5 where I explore the kind of impartiality and objectivity that underlies Nussbaum’s notion of judicial spectatorship and Arendt’s notion of visiting.

\textsuperscript{82} Indeed, it is this theoretical understanding that becomes the major focus of this thesis.

\textsuperscript{83} This is not only a problem for Siegel’s account, but also for the Skills view. Insofar as Ennis and Paul identify critical thinking solely with rationality as reasons assessment and they do not identify it with meaning.

\textsuperscript{84} I take this up further in chapter 2.
It is true that Siegel does attend to the way reasons reflexively matter for us when he rejects a means-end conception of rationality (a utilitarian conception) because it both overlooks moral constraints on rational choice and is unable to account for the values and character traits of a critical thinker. Yet his claim here only offers a global understanding of the connection between reflexivity and critical thinking; it does not extend his definition of critical thinking beyond reasons assessment. Within his account he does not offer us a way of understanding the hermeneutic process that leads moral constraints, values, and attitudes (our character) to have an impact on critical thinking. How being moved by reasons is inextricably connected to the meaning of deciding belief or action for me in this context - how who I am both transforms my critical thinking, and how critical thinking transforms who I am (and who I take myself to be). This points to the potential power of Siegel’s insistence that critical thinking is an activity of persons (rather than a mental process or state of mind), yet leaves the development of this connection as a further task.

**Expanding the Character View: Taking Identity into Account**

As Siegel states, his conception of critical thinking still needs to be underwritten by an appropriate theory of rationality, and this is a task he sees still lying ahead. His account of the critical spirit is also only offered in global terms as a “macro-disposition”. However Siegel is content to speak in global terms because his primary focus is to establish and justify critical thinking as a normative educational ideal, and a general account of the role of character in critical thinking is sufficient for this purpose.

If we are to develop a theory of critical thinking that involves character in the way that Siegel envisages, greater attention will need to be placed on developing the philosophical commitments and coherency of such a position. When Siegel states

---

85 Harvey Siegel: *Educating Reason*, pp. 131-132.
87 Ibid, pp. 39-40. We recognize the “sort of person” who counts as a critical thinker by recognizing the outcome - if they have a love of reason, if they value good reasoning, and if they care about reason and its use, then they have the critical spirit. I return to this briefly in chapter 6 when I look at critical thinking as ideology.
both that (i) character traits are *definitive* of the critical thinker, and that (ii) critical
thinking is as much a *conception of persons* as it is of skills, it seems to me that this
connection between personal identity and traits commits him to more than his own
conception of critical thinking allows. The question is whether it makes sense to
characterize reasoning - particularly the type of reasoning called critical thinking -
independently of the critical thinker's moral agency and personal identity. In
particular, Siegel's justification of critical thinking as a regulative ideal would be
strengthened by a stronger theoretical account of the relation between critical
thinking, character (being a certain sort of person) and personal identity. As Siegel
notes, only then can we fully appreciate the *depth* of the concept of critical thinking.

critical thinking... concerns the characterization not simply of cognitive
skills or criteria of reasoning assessment, but more importantly of a
certain sort of person. *To recognize this is to recognize the depth of the
concept of critical thinking, and the importance of character, values, and
other moral dimensions of the concept.*

Of course in saying this, we still need to recognize that individuality is not the whole
point. We must still recognize the activity we are engaging in as *critical thinking*
rather than something else and be able to recognize such thinking in others. As the
skills view emphasizes, critical thinking requires that there be a way of deciding that
we are not going wrong and this will be a *general* constraint on critical thinking, but
as we also noted at the beginning of the chapter, this is different from getting our
reasoning right. What Siegel's account allows for is the possibility that getting it right
involves not only how we think, but who we are as persons. As Scheffler suggests,
reason (and with it critical thinking):

... must... also be conceived as an autonomous character trait.... it is not
simply a tool used by a developed ego to solve its problems in the world,
*but enters, so to speak, into the very structure of the ego itself* in so far as
the ego is capable of identifying problems, formulating coherent choices,
grasping propositions and maxims, and gauging their import for intended
action. If rationality is an instrument, it can be regularly used only by
those whose characters embody rational dispositions. *We do not normally*

---

88 Ibid, p. 10 (my italics). Indeed, Siegel goes on to note that, by not distinguishing clearly between
characteristics of pieces of reasoning and characteristics of persons, Ennis "robs critical thinking of a
considerable portion of its depth and significance" (p. 10).
focus upon our own characters in analyzing specific problems of action in the environment, but we presuppose them nevertheless.\textsuperscript{89}

In linking rational dispositions to our existence as egos Scheffler can be seen to be suggesting that such traits reflect the individuated “I” that gives them expression. In this regard he seems to suggest that such traits do not merely point to a certain sort of person, but rather to a particular individual. It is the situated person - a person who speaks from the first-person perspective as “I” - who formulates choices, grasps the meaning of propositions, and gauges importance.\textsuperscript{90}

This is to see the critical spirit as expressive of one’s individual character (expressing who I am) as well as defining one’s character (whereby traits enable others to recognize who we are).\textsuperscript{91} Being a thoughtful person will not only mean I am seen to be the sort of person who engages in reflection, but that I am regarded as a person who does so. Critical thinking will then become a means of expressing who we are, and will need to be addressed in personal as well as general terms. This richer view of character traits - one that links them to identity rather than merely to behavior - raises the question of the extent to which such traits are separable from the historically situated identity of the critical thinker.

The question both Scheffler and Siegel raise, but which neither fully explores, is how our understanding of persons and personal identity affects our understanding of both rationality and critical thinking. This question also lay at the center of my critique of Robert Ennis and Richard Paul. We might ask; if critical thinking (as a form of reasoning) is seen to be definitive of the person I am - of my own individual character - how does this individuality emerge through my instantiation of general principles? How can we characterize critical thinking such that it will be:

(i) Constrained by generalizable principles and procedures of reasoning (Such that the activity I am engaging in is publicly identifiable by myself and others as the kind of reasoning which counts as critical thinking).

\textsuperscript{89} Israel Scheffler: \textit{Reason and Teaching}, p. 28 (my italics).
\textsuperscript{90} Though Scheffler, like Siegel, does not play this all the way out.
\textsuperscript{91} In chapter 2 I turn to Ricoeur's notion of narrative identity to show how these two elements may be brought together as dual aspects of who we are.
(ii) Expressive of who I am - expressive of my own individual character. (Such that what it is for me to get it right may be different from what it is for others to get it right.)

While much attention has been given to critical thinking as thinking which is constrained by general principles of reason (and rightly so), the same attention has not been given to the way the personal manifests itself in critical thinking. It is to this issue that we now turn.
...the subjects of reason are finite, embodied and fragile creatures, and not disembodied cogitos or abstract unities of transcendental apperception...

Seyla Benhabib

To ask what a person is, in abstraction from his or her self-interpretations, is to ask a fundamentally misguided question... we are only selves insofar as we move in a certain space of questions...

Charles Taylor

CHAPTER 2

The Critical Person

Personal Identity and Deliberation

One place to begin when trying to understand the personal dimension of critical thinking is to examine the general nature of deliberation and, in particular, what it means to think for yourself. Indeed, the idea of thinking for yourself is both central to our conception of reason and paradigmatic of our understanding of what it is to be a critical thinker.

To understand this notion more fully, we need to examine how the activity of deliberation is connected to the subject as an “I”, a first person with specific projects, evaluations and self concept etc. In particular, we need to consider whether it is possible to understand or characterize first person deliberation in general terms separated from the self-understanding and identity of the person so engaged.

---

1 Seyla Benhabib: Situating the Self, p. 5.
2 Charles Taylor: “The Self in Moral Space” in Sources of the Self, p. 34.
3 Gilbert Ryle speaks of thinking for oneself in terms of pondering. See “Thinking and Self-Teaching” in Thinking, Children, and Education, ed. Lipman, M., pp. 468-476. While Ryle’s concern is with the possibility of teaching thinking, he raises many of the issues concerning the connection between the identity of the thinker and the internal process of thinking which I discuss below.
Raimond Gaita discusses this point when addressing the extent to which moral deliberation involves the personal. He too begins by asking whether we can account for deliberation in a generalized way.

When one first looks at it, it seems as though such an account must be right.... To deliberate, then, is to think about what kind of action, I, being a kind of agent, should perform in this kind of circumstance; for, as was said earlier, deliberation is about which action is appropriate to the problem, and it is difficult to see how one can make sense of the concept of an appropriate action unless one links it to kinds of agents in kinds of situations... Compelling though this conception may be, it is seriously mistaken, at least in its application to ethics... If I am deliberating about what, morally, to do, then I cannot pass the problem over to anyone else: it is non-accidentally and inescapably mine.... [seemingly external features - such as time-frames and advice] are no external features of moral problems... they condition what we mean by a problem, a solution, and thus by thinking, in the one case and in the other.4

In discussing the way in which ethics is personal Gaita is arguing a strong case, and it may well be that there are additional reasons why moral deliberation is inescapably ours. However the personal can also be seen as a feature of deliberation generally when deliberation is considered as thinking for oneself. Thinking for oneself involves, at least in part, taking responsibility for oneself as a thinker and in this way our deliberation is inescapably our own. Here, Gaita’s reason for rejecting deliberation as a kind of activity distinct from the personhood of the reasoner is particularly relevant. Gaita dismisses the idea that such deliberation is personal merely because decisions, as acts, are personal in that deciding is something I do. He also dismisses the idea that decisions are personal because they are supported by reasoning we accept, that is, that the reasons on which we act are reasons for us. Instead, Gaita argues that decisions are personal because in reaching a conclusion or solution we find out something. Such ‘finding out’ is not a matter of finding out what others who find themselves in the same situation ought to do, but finding out something about ourselves - finding out what we ought to do.5

---

The Personal Dimension of Critical Thinking

I am suggesting that critical thinking, like moral deliberation, is (at least in part) as much a finding out, as it is a drawing of a conclusion, a deciding; it is to find out what I think about the issue at hand. If I must decide what to believe by Monday, I cannot pass the problem off onto you and ask you to think about it over the weekend and provide me with the answer on Monday; this would be to act uncritically or to avoid reasoning about the issue at hand. Of course I can seek your advice and given your opinion, I can choose to act on it or not, but this is merely to transfer what it is I’m reasoning about. In thinking for myself I am now thinking about your trustworthiness or acuity as well as the problem. The important requirement is to think for oneself, and in doing this our thinking becomes “radically personal”. It is radically personal because it involves us in a critique of self that is at the same time formative of who we are. It is to suggest that we emerge as a self through the activity of deliberation.

To think for yourself can be understood in three ways, and each of these three senses are relevant to critical thinking. Thinking for yourself can be understood in a provisional sense, for instance when the instruction to think for yourself is meant as a direction to do the thinking yourself. We might find ourselves saying this to someone as a form of admonishment: “I’m not going to tell you what to do, think it out for yourself”. Here, to think for yourself could mean either of two things. It could mean (i) to arrive at the answer yourself, to come to your own conclusions, or (ii) to go through the process yourself because the process itself could lead you to realize something of significance. The third sense of thinking for yourself is (iii) to think it for yourself, the same sense that is implied when we say to someone “don’t do it for me, do it for yourself”. Here ‘for’ means something like for the sake of your Self, as a way of attending to the self. In the first and second cases to think for yourself is to be self-reliant, to take responsibility for oneself and one’s reasoning, whereas in the third case to think for yourself is to attend to the meaning in relation to yourself; to reflect on the significance it has for you and how you see yourself in light of it. This

---

5 Ibid, pp. 132-133.
6 To rephrase Gaita’s example about moral deliberation, see ibid, p. 129.
discovery of what things mean in relation to oneself is itself significant because it
involves the development of self understanding; it raises the further question “what
am I going to do about this?” Reasoning in this third sense is as much to do with
critique, with achieving deeper understanding, seeking meaning and discovering
significance, as it is to do with making appropriate decisions.

It is this third sense thinking for yourself which defines critical thinking as a kind of
activity which is fundamentally connected to the identity of the reasoner. Yet it is
precisely this dimension that is ignored in theories of rationality which focus on
reasons assessment and in accounts of critical thinking which focus on deciding what
to believe or do. To think critically in Scriven’s, Ennis’, or Paul’s sense is not to
achieve depth to one’s thinking, though it is to enlarge its scope and ensure as far as
possible that both we and others do not get our thinking wrong. Furthermore, this
does not mean that they do not welcome depth, even celebrate it as an aspect of
critical thinking if it happens to occur - only that their accounts of critical thinking do
not account for how it arises within critical thinking. While this deepening of our
self-understanding is not present in every moment of critical thinking, this does not
mean that when it does happen it is extraneous to it. Rather, this sort of reflection on,
and discovery of, self is a salient feature of much of our critical thinking.

**Critical Thinking and Self-Interpretation**

The significance of this personal dimension of critical thinking can also be seen when
we look at a certain kind of difficulty which may arise in the process of deliberation,
a difficulty that is experienced because of the way critical thinking is connected to
who we are, rather than because of indeterminacy concerning reasons. It is true that
not all critical thinking involves reflective self-aware deliberation of this sort, but it is
a feature of critical thinking in as much as critical thinking involves deciding what to
believe or do. The difficulty I am referring to arises when deciding what to believe or
do involves deciding who I am.

---

7 Ibid.
Shall I place the poison in the chalice? We made a pact that gives me good reason to do it, I am motivated to do it, I am prepared to take the consequences of doing it, my best friend says I should do it, if he was in my place he would do it (and to keep Ennis and Paul happy), when I think of it from the victim’s point of view, even he would say I should do it), but is it in me to do it? Is it the right thing for me to be doing? This is not a question about my basic beliefs or a question about who I am as a thinker, but a question about who I am as a self, as an historically achieved individual. To answer this is to develop insight, it is to come to find out, or realize, something about myself. It is to deepen my self-understanding and through this, to deepen my understanding of the substantive issue under consideration. It is the sort of deliberation in which the deciding what to do is also a realizing in which:

...the knower’s life thickens and solidifies. The reality in his realizing turns out to be his own as well as the fact’s... It is as though the realizer of a truth owns it or otherwise has power through it instead of just happening to be in the neighbourhood when it is apprehensible.

This deepened understanding involves a struggle for self interpretation. Charles Taylor addresses this issue when he speaks of deliberation as choosing our mode of life. To determine whether it is in me to do it in the sense of realizing or finding out is to examine the kind of life and kind of subject that this action properly belongs to. It is to reflect on the choices that lie before me in terms of who I am and who I want to become. This type of reflection calls for evaluation of a strong, or deep, sort.

Taylor’s distinction between strong and weak evaluations is an important one: where weak evaluations are evaluations between commensurate desires, desires that satisfy the same motive (do I want to do it this way? place poison in the chalice or strychnine in the pie?), strong evaluations concern choosing between our motivations, and this involves self-interpretation in relation to the core values that underlie such motivation (Should I put poison in the chalice? Do I value retribution

---

8 I return to this example in chapter 5 in relation to Sellars’ example of Smith’s deciding to poison his aunt. Wilfred Sellars: Science and Metaphysics, pp. 191-194.
11 Taylor makes these distinctions in ibid, p. 115

56
over forgiveness? Is that the sort of person I want to be?). Here the nature of the deliberation changes, it becomes deeper, it concerns the meaning of deciding for me. Taylor’s account of human agents is one in which the “…capacity to evaluate desires is bound up with our power of self-evaluation, which in turn is an essential feature of the mode of agency we recognize as human.” 12 To reflect on our desires according to worth, to evaluate some desires as desirable and others as undesirable is to engage in second order evaluation concerning the sort of person we take ourselves to be, or the sort of person we desire to become. It involves:

...a kind of orientation. To know who you are is to be oriented in moral space, a space in which questions arise about what is good or bad, what is worth doing and what not, what has meaning and importance for you and what is trivial and secondary... 13

These second order evaluations and desires place our moral identity at the heart of our character. Such evaluations find expression through a language of evaluative contrasts that distinguish between different modes of life: courageous or cowardly, sloppy or rigorous, adventurous or staid, noble or base; these distinctions convey the qualitative worth of values for us, they convey our desires and underlie our motivations. To deepen one’s character, then, is to develop a richer language of evaluative distinctions. It is to define oneself more clearly in relation to different desires, and thereby be motivated in qualitatively different ways. Most importantly, deliberation of the sort is it in me?, leads us to interpret ourselves in light of these values, to determine the meaning and significance of what lies before us. To place emphasis on meaning and significance in this way is not to deny the importance of paying attention to whether we are reasoning soundly. Rather it is to say that in this sort of reasoning criticism and critique are inextricably entwined. It is to say that getting our reasoning right is not only a matter of avoiding logical error, but of paying attention to interpretation.

While the case for the connection between personal identity and critical thinking has been argued in relation to strong moral ground, I think that much of our reasoning -

13 Charles Taylor. Sources of the Self, pp. 28.
and certainly critical thinking as a kind of reflective self-aware deliberation - is linked to our identity in this way. Such critical thinking is personal in the sense that the deliberation is both conditioned by and transformative of our person. To think critically about friendship is to come to understand oneself as a friend of others differently, to see our relationships with others in a different light, to have - even if in a small way - our friendships transformed. To think critically about literature, about a particular text or literary form, is to change or deepen the significance it has for one and to alter or deepen the quality of one's engagement with it.  

What We Think and Who We Are
Not all reasoning involves deliberation of this sort - much of our reasoning is in the form of weak evaluations, the everyday determining of preferences, deciding between commensurable alternatives. However in as much as critical thinking involves us in strong evaluations of this sort, it illustrates the connection between what we think and who we are. Such critical thinking can be seen as ethical in nature, not because it involves deliberation about an ethical issue (though that may be may the case), but because it gives rise to ethics; through it we develop ethical and moral character as agents. This kind of deliberation has ethical and moral depth because it goes to the heart of our existence as self-interpreting subjects.

Is it in me? is both a question about the core values constitutive of my identity as a self and about my vision of the future. What makes the question inescapably mine is that in asking and addressing it I both realize who I am and choose who I will become. It is this type of deliberation that can only be made by me and only for myself. In deciding whether to put the poison in the chalice I am not deciding whether someone else, given the same situation, should add the poison but whether I should do it - whether in being the self I am, I choose to desire to do this sort of thing. Is it in me? is a question about what I want to affirm myself as being; it concerns my commitments, my evaluations, and aspirations. It is a question about

14 I return to our engagement with literature in my discussion of Arendt and Nussbaum in chapter 5.
15 The connection between reasoning, or critical thinking, and our identity as ethical agents is something I return to later - evaluations are made from a certain orientation. This is discussed in relation to Ricoeur and in relation to the nature of judgment and dialogue.
core values because my identity is at least in part determined by my convictions, and my convictions determine what meaning things have for me.

The connection between who I am and my reasoning critically about it is not a contingent one. It is not only that I bring my knowledge of myself to bear on my thinking about the issue at hand, but that I reflexively designate who I am in the very process of thinking about it. *Should I put the poison in the chalice?* In choosing to go ahead I am, or become, my decision; my character is affirmed or transformed. If I choose to go ahead, I (now) become the person for whom this action was necessary. If I choose to refrain it would have been impossible for me to do otherwise.\(^\text{16}\) This is what it means for my life to thicken - for the deliberation to be inescapably mine. Such deliberation: "...takes us to the centre of our existence as agents...[it is] about the quality of life, the kind of being we are or want to be. It is in this sense deeper..."\(^\text{17}\)

Here Gaita's comments in regard to the nature of deliberation and its connection to deepened understanding are also relevant to our understanding of critical thinking. For Gaita, deliberation is:

... an attempt to understand the significance of what one would be doing, which rarely means thinking of the empirical consequences of what one would be doing, or how one's principles stand in relation to those consequences and to one another. It is, most often an attempt to achieve a deepened understanding of the meaning of one's actions... It is therefore important to an understanding of moral deliberation to look at what it is for moral understanding to deepen.\(^\text{18}\)

... in moral matters (though not only in moral matters) the achievement of deeper understanding requires that we have the depth to receive it, and that depth in ourselves, I am claiming, is not a depository of propositions in one's head which God could have put there 'in a flash', but an

\(^{16}\) Taylor discusses this in ibid, p. 109. This raises a problem of freedom. I discuss this in chapter 5.

\(^{17}\) Ibid, p. 115. Indeed, this kind of deliberation is also the kind that Winch and Gaita discuss in relation to the story of Billy Budd and the captain's dilemma. See Peter Winch: *Ethics in Action*, pp. 164-165; and Raimond Gaita: "The Personal in Ethics" in *Wittgenstein: Attention to Particulars*, eds. Phillips, D.Z., and Winch, P., pp. 130-133.

\(^{18}\) Raimond Gaita, ibid, p. 133.
historically achieved individuality. A res cogitans could not seek a deepened moral understanding because it has, could have, no depth.\textsuperscript{19}

In speaking of critical thinking traits as traits of a certain kind we need to guard against making the same mistake as Gaita addresses. We need to guard against treating critical thinking dispositions as general, rather than individual, traits of character which can be understood without reference to the achieved personhood of the reasoner. That is, to guard against seeing character traits as attributes of an idealized res cogitans whose identity is linked to procedures of thinking rather than descriptive of a historically situated person to whom critical thinking involves discovering and understanding as well as judging and deciding.

Critical Thinking as Inquiry

In turning away from a res cogitans and towards a situated critical thinker, critical thinking can be seen as synonymous with inquiry. To inquire is to ask, to seek something out; it may involve us in a search for meaning and significance as well as to establish fact or assess truth. Seen as inquiry, critical thinking focuses on the engaged activity of the search for truth or meaning - and the curiosity, commitments, or puzzlement that motivates it. The question "Is it in me?" is not a question I can answer through an assessment of reasons alone.\textsuperscript{20}

Indeed it seems to me that one of the effects of moving from a skills conception of critical thinking to a character view has been to link critical thinking more fully with the motivations and intentional states of the critical thinker without putting aside the importance of achieving competency in skills. To see critical thinkers as people moved by reasons is to see critical thinkers as people who have internalized the significance of reasons; as people for whom having a reason means something. We can see this even in very young children's thinking, for example in 9 year old Fiona's claim that critical thinking has changed the way she relates to her sister.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid, p. 135. Taylor expresses a similar sentiment toward the res cogitans when he suggests that the problem with the theory of radical choice is mistaken. I take this up in relation to Taylor and Arendt in chapter 5.

\textsuperscript{20} This also points to a certain stand I take in relation to the connection between inquiry and truth. Critical thinking is traditionally associated with epistemology and seen to lead to objective truth. It is
Fiona: Philosophy has helped me with my fights.

Jen: What do you mean?

Fiona: I used to fight with my sister all the time. When she said something different [to what I said] I used to think she was just saying it to annoy me. That’s what I used to do. Now I think “maybe she really does think that!” And I think “Is that what she really thinks?” and then I really think about it.

Jen: When you say you really think about it, what are you thinking about?

Fiona: I think about what might cause her to think that. [If] she had something to back it up and how she came to think that.

Fiona not only comes to look for reasons herself, but comes to appreciate that her sister may also be someone who is moved by reasons, and that being so moved is more tied to her sister’s own way of perceiving the world than it is a reaction against her. She begins to see her sister’s opinions as being motivated by reasons that back them up. Fiona’s own thinking - her inquiry - is now focused not on assessing truth (which of them is right), but on exploring meaning and significance. The point here is not whether Fiona is right about her sister’s motivations, but that (i) she has herself internalized the significance of reasons and is now projecting that onto someone else, and (ii) her interest in reasons is not one of assessment but one of curiosity and puzzlement at the thinking which underlay them. Here critical thinking can be seen as ‘figuring things out’, or inquiry, in a richer sense than a focus on critical thinking as reasons assessment alone allows. There is a sense in which she is figuring out who her sister is through her reflection on what her sister says.

When we view stated opinion and the truth of propositions as being connected to the character of the person who speaks them we can appreciate the way in which critical thinking involves personal choice and may lead to deepened understanding. Such

---

often contrasted to moral inquiry, which is seen to lead to subjective truth. I do not accept this distinction - neither in relation to truth in epistemology nor truth in ethics.

21 From a taped interview with Fiona, Grade 3 student, King David School, Victoria, Australia, 1993. (Fiona is not the student’s real name). Fiona took part in the critical thinking program called “Philosophy for Children” twice a week at school. Philosophy for Children involves establishing classroom communities of inquiry in which children engage with philosophical questions. Here Fiona exemplifies Paul’s notion of a fairminded critical thinker.

22 In this thesis I treat the term inquiry as synonymous with my own use of the term critical thinking. When I refer to other theorists’ use of the term critical thinking it should not always be assumed that they would see it as synonymous with inquiry.
critical thinking, or inquiry, is personal because it involves not only determining whether our reasons or assumptions stand on good grounds, but questioning what we choose to take as our reasons or assumptions. To engage in such inquiry is to engage in a forward-focused activity that involves choosing which line of inquiry to pursue based on projections of where different lines of inquiry might take us; it involves making evaluations based on our understanding concerning the significance of an idea, or of the value of one motivation over another.

Our aim in such critical thinking may be to arrive at greater understanding through identifying the ramifications of an event in light of some goal or value, or seeing whether seemingly disparate ideas connect, and whether this helps the inquiry proceed. Most importantly, to say our thinking is forward-focused is to appreciate the role of choosing in reasoning, and to see such choosing - choosing to see the substantive issue as this rather than that, choosing our values or motivations, choosing to act on motivations - as the determining of a self toward a future. It is this self-determination through reasoning that needs to be addressed in our account of the critical thinker as an historically achieved individual who expresses certain traits of character.

So far I have been arguing for a connection between critical thinking and personal identity by an examination of moral deliberation and character. However we may see this connection also when we explore the importance of context in making judgments concerning critical dispositions. It is to this we now turn.

The Problem with Generalized Dispositions
For Ennis, Siegel, and Paul critical dispositions are characterized as general traits of character derived from an idealized image of the critical thinker. The problem with taking critical dispositions this way is that many such traits can only be partially understood when divorced from their particular contexts. What it is to have the trait (rather than not have it) requires knowledge of the person in their context.
The notion of generalized traits is certainly an important one. We clearly have an idea of what it means to take reasons into account, and we have this because we have a notion of what reasons are and the sort of thing that attending to them requires. However in treating them as general and context-independent it is easy not to give adequate weight to the broader cultural context in which this general understanding is embedded. At best this treats cultural norms and understandings as objective facts. The question we have to ask is: If we characterize traits as general, by virtue of what do we describe them this way? (language or conceptual scheme? human nature? the human condition? human essence? God?).

The problematic nature of treating critical thinking dispositions as culturally objective can be seen in the design of tests for specific critical dispositions, such as Richard Paul’s test for fairmindedness, wherein all fairminded critical thinkers are assumed to approach the question the same way and make the same choices. For instance in Paul’s test for fairmindedness, candidates are asked to pick which statement “seems... to be the most reasonable or correct.”. In one question candidates must choose between the statements “Being patriotic is a good thing” and “Being patriotic is a dangerous thing”. The fairminded candidate is supposed to pick the first statement.\(^{23}\) This assumes that such things as meaning and significance are objective givens that we utilize in our reasoning, rather than being aspects of ourselves which emerge through our reasoning. It assumes that we reason about our perspective, rather than from it. To say this does not mean critical thinking is relativistic, we need to keep in mind that in reasoning from our perspective we are not reasoning solipsistically but in the presence of others with whom we communicate and through the resources of the culture and language we share with them.\(^{24}\)

It seems to me that in order to regain the contextual understanding that underlies our general understanding of traits we need to pay greater attention to the way dispositions are both externally identified and yet expressive of who we are. Take

Ennis' disposition to "take into account the total situation", there is no vantage point from which to take the whole situation into account outside of, or beyond, our own particular contexts. Taking the total situation into account - let us say in the context of the Middle East peace process - requires us to understand what the particular situation entails. The parameters that define the situation, and therefore define the question, will be dependent on context. It will involve understanding the personal and collective motivations, visions for the future and self-concept of the parties concerned, motivations which are intimately connected to who they are.

Here I am not just saying that the standard by which we judge the disposition is determined by the context, that the situation determines how much we have to take into account before it is enough, nor am I saying that what it is to account for a situation may have different meanings in different cultures. What I am suggesting is that what is meant by the disposition to take the total situation into account cannot be separated from our situatedness, and that this is entailed by the very notion of taking particularity into account. That is, to be so disposed will be to choose to be motivated to respond to our situation in a certain way as the persons we are (as individuals and a group). To be disposed or motivated to take into account the total situation is at the same time to choose to locate oneself in the situation and to determine what counts as the situation and to determine what the situation requires of us. In this respect it involves our own intentions and intendings and is inescapably ours. Of course we can always interpret Ennis to mean precisely this, that while thinking skills (or abilities) can be viewed independently of particular persons who manifest them, dispositions are ascribed to historically achieved persons. However he will need to mean more by this than merely noting that thinkers are persons with dispositions.

---

24 What such a view allows for is that there might be more than one such culture and language - that is, pluralism (but not relativism) within critical thinking is a possibility. This is the central focus of chapters 3 and 6.
25 Paul's point in relation to reasoning in appropriate modes of discourse - the mode determines the parameters of what is appropriate, how much is enough, etc.
26 I take up the connection between our intentions and identity in chapter 5.
It seems to me that the problematic place of dispositions within theories of critical thinking stems from the multiple senses of what being disposed means. If we can clarify these different senses I think we will be in a better position to understand the way in which dispositions, as an aspect of identity, capture something that is both general and personal.

**Four Understandings of Being Disposed**

In theorizing about critical thinking, dispositions have been characterized four ways:

(i) we are warranted in claiming A will φ

An observed tendency to utilize certain skills or abilities (Ennis)

(ii) A will φ by virtue of some structural property or nature

Reason is a defining characteristic of humanity, as rational animals we are disposed to reason. (Scriven)

"Just as sugar has the disposition to dissolve in water... so does the critical thinker have the dispositions..." (Siegel)

(iii) A has a second order propensity to φ

"the willingness, desire, and disposition to believe and act in accordance with reasons" (Siegel)

"My discussion... is concerned with the general, global disposition to pay attention to reasons... " (Siegel)

(iv) A makes a free-will choice to φ

"A person who thinks to use an ability, and, in addition, chooses to use it in appropriate circumstances is disposed in the free will sense." (Norris)

When we say a critical thinker has a disposition to think a certain way, in what sense are we using the term? Firstly, we have (i) which corresponds to the anti-realist Rylian interpretation of disposition whereby critical thinkers are attributed critical dispositions because they have been observed thinking critically often enough to warrant the claim. Then there is (ii) the realist interpretation of disposition, this is the sense of disposition Scriven utilizes when referring to the human capacity to reason

---

27 This is the way Robert Ennis uses the term disposition in his discussion of the court case in “Critical Thinking: A Streamlined Conception” in *Teaching Philosophy*, vol. 14, no. 1, 1991.


29 Harvey Siegel, ibid, p. 23 and p. 8 respectively.
as something we are disposed to do because of the kind of animal we are. The third and fourth interpretations of disposition are more problematic, for while they certainly correspond to normal language usage, it is questionable whether the term ‘disposition’ is actually the appropriate one.

(i) Being Disposed in a Warrant Sense

To say that critical thinkers have a tendency to utilize certain skills or abilities in the warrant sense of disposition may be true, however understanding character traits in this way may turn out not to be very illuminating. The warrant may be a necessary but not sufficient condition for regarding someone as a critical thinker. As a general tendency the disposition may point to uncritical practice - someone may realize the disposition often, but may be doing it quite unconsciously or inappropriately. Indeed, as Gilbert Ryle points out, habits are determinate and inflexible, they are as close to automatic as we can get.\(^\text{31}\) Ryle’s distinction between habits and skills points to an important difference here. Where habits are considered to be are unreflective, unthinking, and unintentional, skills require us to respond to new situations in a self-critical, intelligent and vigilant way. This notion of vigilance and self-criticism is, I think, essential to our concept of critical thinking. It requires that we be aware of what we are doing; we need to be in a position to consider what the situation requires of us and need to be able to critique ourselves - to ask ourselves (perhaps retrospectively) if our response to a given situation is what was required.

This is not to say that there is no room for the automatic and habitual in critical thinking. I think we can agree with Passmore that Ryle’s distinction overlooks the way in which skills may contain habits as ingredients. Passmore points out that competencies, such as driving, do not involve us in consciously thinking about every maneuver we make, every skill we utilize.\(^\text{32}\) We can agree that in order to be a critical thinker a person needs to have mastered certain skills in such a way that they come to utilize these skills in their critical thinking automatically or habitually, however


\(^{31}\) Gilbert Ryle: The Concept of Mind, p. 42.

\(^{32}\) John Passmore: The Philosophy of Teaching, pp. 121-122.
evidence of the practice alone will not provide us with the warrant to say that they are the sort of person who is disposed to think critically.

The problem is that someone who has unconsciously acquired the habit to think critically (to practice critical thinking skills) and does so automatically may not think of themselves as a critical thinker; it will not be part of their self-concept. If this is the case they will have the character trait of a critical thinker in a warrant sense but they will not be able to dispose themselves to think critically. They will not be able to decide that critical thinking is what is called for in a particular situation and to consciously act accordingly. Yet I think that when we describe someone as being the sort of person who is disposed to think critically the sort of person we have in mind is one who not only thinks critically without conscious effort, but one who is able to choose to think critically when the occasion is called for. Habit alone leaves out the engaged intentionality of critical practice.

Interestingly, even the theorists who suggest we teach for critical thinking by inculcating critical habits - and who mean by this the habitual non-reflective practice of critical thinking - note that in order for students to be able to apply what they learn in new situations they must be given the opportunity to reflect on what it is they have unconsciously been doing.\textsuperscript{33} For example, in a text by Sandra Parks and Robert Swartz in which the teacher guides students through a critical thinking exercise we find a further activity in which:

\begin{quote}
The teacher now helps the students understand what they did so that they can guide themselves in the future...If students know how they think about their decisions, they can choose whether they want to continue to think about decisions in this way or to choose some different way.\textsuperscript{34}
\end{quote}

Unless there are also moments of reflection in which we recognize what we are doing as critical thinking, and unless there are moments of reflection in which we become aware of our habits as constitutive of who we are, we will not be able to care about thinking critically nor bring vigilance or self-criticism to bear on our thinking. We

\textsuperscript{33} For example, David Perkins, Robert Swartz, and Sandra Parks.
will not be able to decide if critical thinking is called for, nor intentionally decide to engage in it.

(ii) Being Disposed by Virtue of our Nature

Siegel’s suggestion that critical thinkers possess critical thinking dispositions “Just as sugar has the disposition to dissolve in water” links dispositions to our nature as human beings.\(^{35}\) Informal logic texts often approach dispositions in this way, for instance Scriven’s appeal to human beings as rational animals can be seen in this light. We are all disposed to think critically, we just need to learn how. According to Scriven, whether the disposition is realized is not a matter of motivation but of opportunity. If we master critical thinking abilities or skills - for instance, learn how to seek alternatives - then our inherent rational dispositions lead this knowledge to be realized as critical practice. Indeed the sugar analogy becomes problematic for Siegel’s own position because he also takes motivation, or the critical spirit, to be imperative for critical thinking practice.\(^{36}\)

One way to reconcile Siegel’s two accounts of disposition (one as an aspect of human nature and the other as an aspect of achieved individuality) is to consider dispositions to be of first and second order kinds. First order dispositions are to be seen as general features of human nature, whereas second-order dispositions motivate our instantiation of these first order dispositions. It is the first order dispositions which are to be likened to the disposition of sugar to dissolve. I think this is what he means when he speaks of his notion of dispositions in global, or ‘macro’ terms, as opposed to Ennis’ list of micro-dispositions.

There is a difference between Ennis’s view about the way dispositions or tendencies enter into an account of critical thinking and my own... Ennis’s list of dispositions is composed of rather specific items... whereas my discussion... is concerned with the general, global disposition to pay attention to reasons and to regard them as important, i.e. to be “appropriately moved” by them... I am concerned, then, with the

\(^{34}\) Robert Swartz and Sandra Parks: Infusing Critical and Creative Thinking into Content Instruction, pp. 15-16.

\(^{35}\) Harvey Siegel: Educating Reason, p. 41.

\(^{36}\) Indeed, this is the basis for Siegel’s critique of Ennis’ view of critical thinking as merely deciding what to do or believe rather than being moved by our decisions. See ibid, footnote 14, p. 141.
macro-disposition... while Ennis's discussion is more concerned with specific "micro-dispositions"... I do not believe there is any incompatibility between Ennis's discussion... and my own.\(^{37}\)

Because these first order, or micro, dispositions are seen as part of our being as rational creatures - a general attribute of all humans - they are not identified with our achieved individuality or identity. As a characteristic of humans it seems plausible to describe such dispositions generally or ideally and look for their instantiation - after all, we are all human. Similarly, in observing similar critical activity in two individuals we can infer that the same disposition is present. Once again, it may well be true that we are disposed to think critically due to some structural human property, yet to account for critical thinking in this way alone ignores the individuality of our critical thinking. The fact is that in reasoning about an issue we do not automatically 'by nature' respond a given way. A variety of people will think critically about the same issue differently, they will engage with it not as a generic person (predisposed to think this way rather than that), but as an historically achieved individual whose mode of thinking about it is inextricably bound to who they are.

Most importantly, Siegel's analogy is misleading in that the ethical and moral significance of critical dispositions is lost.\(^{38}\) People are motivated to act, disposed to critically think, in a way that sugar is not. In ascribing critical thinking dispositions to the kind of being we are - persons - we afford them ethical and moral significance. What it means to be an ethical and moral agent will then be closely bound up with what it means to be disposed to reason. The "I" who thinks, reflects, wonders is an ethical and moral "I", and the disposition or motivation to think critically rather than uncritically is a choice made by a moral agent.

It is this connection between our ethical and moral existence as persons and what it means to be rational that is lacking in accounts of critical thinking that treat reasoning solely in terms of sound argumentation, best reasons for believing, or fairminded reflective practice. The moral realm is seen as separate from the rational,

---

\(^{37}\) Ibid, pp. 8-9.

\(^{38}\) Where the distinction between ethical and moral domains is seen as a distinction between personal and social realms.
relating only to the human identity of reasoners and the social constraints of reasoning practice rather than constitutively connected to reason. I think this is a mistaken view. If, in responding to an argument we respond to the person arguing, then our disposition to seek reasons will be a disposition to engage with a reasoner in order to elicit their reasons, not to seek a propositional statement - it will involve interlocution. Critical thinking is an activity of persons not a feature of propositions; we reason, propositions do not. Similarly, the disposition to provide reasons will be a disposition to explain ourselves to others, not merely to provide propositional statements. Critical thinking dispositions need to be seen as having both an ethical and moral core: ethical because the disposition to engage in reflective deliberation is reflexive, involving our identity as strong evaluators; and moral because many of the dispositions pertain to relations between people, they arise from persons and are directed toward persons in a social context. These dispositions are then inseparable from our moral identity. Good critical thinkers can only be unreasonable thinkers when dispositions to think critically are segregated from our lives as persons. Indeed one way of seeing the connection between reasoning and reason is via the notion of reasonableness, we shall return to this later.

(iii) Being Disposed as Being Moved to Action

This leads us to the third interpretation of dispositions as second-order propensities. An interpretation in which to be moved by reasons is seen as a global disposition to respond to our reasoning in a certain way, to be moved by it. On this account, to be moved by reasons must be more than being motivated to act on reasons, because one can be motivated to do many things one never realizes. Similarly, it needs to be seen as additional to having the willingness (preparedness) or desire to act on reasons.

Here the notion of disposition seems to capture a volitional sense of being moved to action. It can be seen to fill the gap between deciding what to believe and believing it, or determining what to do and doing it. To have the disposition to be appropriately moved by reasons then, is to have the will to act on our reasoning. Yet in as much as the disposition is a willing, it is no different in kind from first order
dispositions - they too can be characterized in terms of the will - for instance, the will to avoid contradiction, to explore alternatives, to makes inferences, etc.  

Rather than characterizing being moved in terms of a second-order disposition it would seem more appropriate to view it as a form of attention given in thinking critically. That is, in the form of attention by which one determines what is significant or judges what is appropriate in one's reasoning. This corresponds more closely to Siegel's other characterization of the global disposition to be moved by reasons as the disposition to pay attention to reasons. Paying attention, however, is not a disposition so much as an engaged intentional practice.

It is this engagement that I think best characterizes what is meant by saying that a critical thinker has a character trait that disposes them to think in a certain way. Here the character trait can be seen as the trait to pay attention in one's thinking. This is not to speak of critical thinking as a meta-cognitive activity (thinking about one's thinking), but as cognitive one in which we bring a certain mode of attentiveness to bear within our thinking. One cannot purposefully be attentive in one's thinking unconsciously or habitually, or automatically. Being attentive involves more than merely making our thinking the focused object of our attention, it is to be alert, to take notice of our thinking, to be moved to accommodate or respond to the object of our attention, to be put on notice by it.

To be attentive to something is to bring oneself to it, and in so doing, to judge what response is appropriate. It is this attentiveness that is personal and particular rather than automatic. This characterization fits well with critical thinking seen as reflective, self-aware deliberation in which one attends to and responds from the self in one's reasoning.

39 This is not to reject the idea that the will has a role to play in critical thinking. In chapters 5 and 6, I suggest how the will is involved.
(iv) Being Disposed in the *Free-Will* Sense

The fourth account of dispositions, in which the disposition to $\phi$ is interpreted as a free-will choice to $\phi$, finds expression in everyday expressions such as: “On all accounts I should walk away from this, but I’m disposed to give it another go”, or “I’m disposed to ignore my intuitions in this case”. The emphasis here is on freedom. To be disposed in this sense is to be free to act on one’s own motivations; to be free to attend to the situation, to be alert to it, in the way one wants. Stephen Norris alludes to this point when he distinguishes between two forms of being disposed - a probability sense and a free will sense.\(^{40}\)

A person is disposed in the probability sense to use ability such-and-such in appropriate circumstances when the person habitually uses or thinks to use the ability. A person who thinks to use an ability, and, in addition, chooses to use it in appropriate circumstances is disposed in the free will sense... [it] involves more than practice. The issue is a motivational one, and, in part, an ethical one.\(^{41}\)

While Norris’ contrast between a *probability* (or habitual) sense of disposition and a *free-will* sense (characterized juxtapositionally by choice, motivation and freedom) is, perhaps, somewhat confused, I think the point he is trying to make is nevertheless an important one. To think critically rather than uncritically, to reason rather than intuit, to attend to this rather than that, is a free-will choice we make. Yet to see this free-will choice in dispositional terms may be mistaken. While we may need critical dispositions to think critically, and these dispositions may indeed be inherent capacities we can be motivated to realize, the choice to be attentive is not itself a disposition but a *judgment*. Confronted with a problem or question we choose to think critically about it. In so doing we make a judgment to respond *this* way rather than *that*.

The choice to pay attention in a *reasoned* way is not motivated by the desire for some consumable, but by a motivation to be attentive to a situation in a certain way and in

---

\(^{40}\) In discussion, Norris suggested replacing the term ‘probability sense’ with the term ‘habitual sense’ - a suggestion I have taken up. This does not affect the nature of the distinction he makes, or my use of the distinction. (Sixth International Conference of Thinking, Boston, July 1994.)

so doing to be a certain sort of person. In this it is personal and particular, an aspect of our identity stemming from our strong evaluation that reason is a qualitatively better way to respond. It is to see reason as worthy.

Dispositions, Identity, and a Contextualized Life

The act of choosing is fundamentally tied to human activity and thus needs to be addressed in motivational and ethical terms. It is an important expression of our orientation, an expression of the values we instantiate and the kind of life we choose to lead. It comes from valuing the desire to figure things out or to think for oneself over the desire for a quick answer.

This is I think what is intended when Ennis and Siegel claim that critical thinkers need to be passionate about thinking critically, or the claim that critical thinkers need to care about reasoning (claims made by Lipman, Scriven, Paul and Siegel). These claims, however, skirt the central issue. They suggest that we should care about reasoning and be passionate about it because we recognize it as a valuable methodological guide to truth, rather than because we recognize it as constitutive of who we are or because it may express the kind of person we aspire to be. That is, they fail to articulate the connection between the ethical and moral identity of the thinker as a particular person who aspires to a certain mode of life, and how this is expressed in their commitment and choice to engage with ideas and others in a reasoned way. Critical thinking, however, is not something we choose to do - and be passionate about - after reflecting on its worth from some “secularized, or depersonalized” position.\(^\text{42}\)

To identify our passion, motivation and choice to think critically only as a passion toward assessing arguments or reasons, is to ignore the way in which reason itself represents a way of life. Here we may be motivated to think critically because we think that the kind of life reason expresses is one that gives greater dignity to persons. In this case my choice to being fairminded in my thinking is not only motivated by my desire to provide the best answer, but also by my desire to be someone that is

\(^{42}\) Siegel’s characterization of Paul’s position in *Educating Reason*, p. 13.
attentive to other people and their thinking. That in choosing to reason, to attend to life and people a certain way, we are choose a qualitatively different way of relating to others and the world.\textsuperscript{43}

To say that critical thinking needs to be viewed in ethical and moral terms is not to suggest that ethical or moral considerations arise in every act of deliberation and choice. We do not put ourselves ethically and morally on the line every time we choose. But rather, that the choice to think critically, to attend to what is before us in a reasoned way, is a choice which reflects our values and aspiration. It involves our existence as persons, as strong evaluators, and the way we choose to relate to other persons and their ideas, it is to see reason as a normative ideal.

To recognize that the critical thinker is operating from the sense of who they are and from their own motivations is not to say that this is all critical thinking involves - neither is it to contrast it with anything else (for example, to contrast it with objective standards). It is simply to recognize that this is one aspect of critical thinking that is not taken into account when we speak of critical thinkers as having certain general character traits, as being certain kinds of persons. In characterizing and looking for dispositions we need to recognize that they evolve over time and have a history. As such, they are shaped by cultures and by the individual people who give them expression. I am suggesting that rather than generalizing what it is to have a disposition and then looking for instatations, we need to look at practice and then to see what it means to have the disposition in that case.\textsuperscript{44} There is no requirement for the disposition to be expressed the same way for me as for you - for our dispositions to be tokens of the same type - rather, they can be seen as attributes that collect together under the same general description.

Such an approach respects that aspect of reasoning that emerges from our existence as a person living in a context with a history, and which forms the basis from which

\textsuperscript{43} This way of understanding dispositions is similar to Nicholas Burbules' notion of 'critical virtues'. See "Reasonable Doubt" in Critical Conversations in Philosophy of Education, ed. Kohli, W. This also links critical thinking with ideological frameworks. I return to this in chapter 5.
we enter into critical discussion. This is to recognize that being disposed to taking the whole view into account is not a matter of being disposed to take into account other thoughts, but to be disposed to take into account other persons, and through this encounter with persons, to attend to their views.\textsuperscript{45} It is to acknowledge the fact that as persons we experience reason a certain way (as an engagement with people), and that any attempt to understand reasoning or critical thinking needs to take this experiencing of reason into account. This would require that we not only account for how a person's individuality is tied to general principles (logic) and procedures - and this is important - but that we attend to the experiential nature of reasoning as a relational activity of persons engaged with each other.

What is needed then is an account of the person that is rich enough to underpin critical thinking conceived this way.

**The Critical Thinker as an Historically Achieved Individual**

It seems to me that this approach to critical thinking may benefit from thinking about the critical thinker as a first-person. Such an approach offers a richer concept of the critical thinker as a contextualized self, and corresponds more fully to Ricoeur's notion of persons as having a contextual and developmental identity spanning a specific past and future. It builds on a concept of persons in which selfhood evolves as the person's character develops and implicates a psychological theory of self in which:

> The self is something which has a development; it is not initially there, at birth, but arises in the process of social experience and activity, that is, develops in the given individual as a result of his relations to that process as a whole and to other individuals within that process.\textsuperscript{46}

Such a conception of critical thinking takes temporality seriously on two accounts: firstly, it recognizes that critical thinking will have a developmental quality closely associated with the development of the self; and secondly, it recognizes that

\textsuperscript{44} This is similar to Nussbaum's suggestion that in literature we come to general understanding through attending to the particularity of the situation. See Martha Nussbaum: *Poetic Justice*.

\textsuperscript{45} A point I addressed in my discussion of Ennis.

\textsuperscript{46} George Herbert Mead: *Mind, Self, and Society*, p. 135.
reasoning itself is temporally located, that every argument is located between past and future and necessarily takes time in the life of an individual.\textsuperscript{47} It acknowledges that critical thinking happens \textit{at} a time and takes place \textit{over} time. This is not a trivial point. It is not simply to point out that the clock ticks on as we reason - that we are getting older - nor is it to say that this sort of temporality is a uniquely defining feature of reason for it is a feature of much of our psychological life. However taking the temporal nature of selfhood and character seriously enables us to better understand how we, as selves, can be transformed through critical thinking and the way in which critical thinking itself is expressive of our personal identity. Indeed it is the temporal quality of critical thinking that enables it to manifest itself the way it does. It is this connection that we need to appreciate if we are to understand the way the \textit{personal} presents itself in reason.

\textbf{Temporality, Personhood and Critical Thinking}

The nature of the connection between time, personhood and critical thinking can perhaps be helpfully illuminated by turning to Wittgenstein’s comment concerning the psychological condition of grief; namely that “The question was really, of course, a temporal and personal one, not the logical question which we wanted to raise.”\textsuperscript{48} The ascription of psychological states such as grief or hope to persons is interesting on two accounts. Firstly, to attribute these states to a person is at the same time to acknowledge that they, as individuals, have a particular past and future which has bearing on their present feelings. Grief and hope arise from particular contexts and constitute our response to them, they arise in relation to an empirical, historically achieved, self. Secondly, grief and hope take time in the life of the individual, they are not momentary happenings, nor can they be understood \textit{a-temporally}. They are inescapably ours not only because the events that harbored them constitute part of our life, but because we may not be the same when the process ends as we were when it began. Grief and hope have their own natural history, what is felt and what is expressed when first experienced may be quite different from what is felt and

\textsuperscript{47} David Cockburn makes this point in “Commitment to Persons” in \textit{Wittgenstein: Attention to Particulars}, ed. Phillips, D.Z., and Winch, P., pp. 74 and 86. I think the position Cockburn argues for is remarkably similar to Ricoeur’s; while he does not refer to the narrative concept of self, I feel that this idea would have helped his articulation!
expressed in the end. In experiencing them over time we may come to attend to things differently.

So too with reasoning; to attribute critical thinking to a person is to acknowledge that what they are engaged in has a relationship to who they are. Inquiry arises in relation to a particular past and future, a history which has bearing on our present thinking. Who we are will have a bearing on how we go about our inquiry and how we are effected by it. In this way it constitutes our response to the empirical circumstances surrounding our historically achieved self. Critical thinking too has a natural history, we begin with one idea and end with another and through it our understanding may be deepened or transformed.

The analogy between reasoning and psychological states like grief and hope focuses our attention on the aspect of critical thinking or inquiry which concerns meaning and interpretation. In as much as critical thinking involves the interrelated meanings and significance things have for us, it will involve descriptions not in terms of truth and falsity, validity and invalidity, but in terms of:

...sense and nonsense, coherency and its absence; and must admit of a distinction between meaning and its expression... What is lacking here is the notion of a subject for whom these meanings are.\(^{49}\)

That is, critical thinking may be characterized as hermeneutic sense-making activity, in which the temporal span of reasoning enables interpretations and judgments to be re-evaluated as one’s reasoning unfolds. In thinking something through, what seemed significant, full of potential, or rich in meaning only a moment ago may come to be judged insignificant, barren or obtuse. Through the process of re-evaluation a person may change what they find meaningful and this in turn may transform their motivations, the way they make sense of their past, or it may change the direction of their future inquiry. We may change our minds about what kinds of reasons count, or about the implications for a certain course of action, or come to judge significance in a new way. The concern for developing coherency may lead the critical thinker to

\(^{48}\) Ibid, p. 77.
redefine the problem in the midst of thinking about it, or to change their idea about what would count as an answer. Such inquiry requires us to remain open to the possibility of re-interpretation, of refocusing our attention, and through this come to think differently about the subject at hand.

If asked "What is the tale of Little Red Ridinghood about?" I may begin with a literal account of the tale only to find myself wondering at the symbolism of the forest, or the meaning of Red Ridinghood's straying from the path. In becoming aware of my own literal interpretation, I begin to question other possibilities (what aspect of ourselves could the forest symbolize? What about the wolf?). Through the very activity of reasoning about the story that which I judge to be significant within it becomes transformed. What would have counted as an answer when I began (it is a story about a young girl on a journey to visit her grandmother) becomes quite different from what would count as an answer in the end (it is a story about temptation and the loss of innocence). Toulmin makes a similar point in relation to argument revision when he states:

It is always possible, in addition, that we may have occasion to review and reconsider our descriptions in light of subsequent developments... such revisions rarely involve withdrawing or contradicting previous judgments absolutely... the value of hindsight is that it puts us in a position to speak... more perceptively and discriminately.²²

Hermeneutic Process and Evaluation of Given Arguments
The temporal and hermeneutic dimensions of critical thinking offer a richer picture of critical reflection and the search for truth than that which is captured solely through the assessment of given arguments, arguments viewed a-temporally in which premises and conclusion are presented together in rational reconstruction. We can see this difference in the way contradiction annuls meaning. If both P and ¬P are asserted

---

⁵⁰ This transformation in thinking is made possible by reflection in which I judge my own thinking in relation to who I am - its significance and meaning for me. Yet not enough attention is paid to the way hermeneutical re-appraisal is grounded in the particular orientation of the reasoner so engaged.
⁵¹ This interpretation is drawn from Bruno Bettelheim's discussion in The Uses of Enchantment.
⁵² Stephen Toulmin: Knowing and Acting, p. 191.
as true within a formal argument we are left with a total loss of meaning, we have in
effect said nothing at all. However this is not necessarily the case when temporality is
taken into account. In presenting an argument as a process - to begin with P at t₁ and
reason to ¬P at t₂ - we may communicate the development of an idea rather than the
contradiction of one. In offering an account of how I arrived at ¬P, I may offer a
natural history of the argument. I may show how I began with a problem that led me
to assert P, that this led me to another problem and another until finally I was led to
assert ¬P.

In asserting ¬P *now* when I began by asserting P may leave me with something to
explain, but it does not make my argument unintelligible or devoid of meaning. It
may point to development, to a change of mind or to a discovery. Our awareness that
we began at P and ended at ¬P may lead us to see that at a certain point either
alternative was possible, or that neither is fully adequate in the end. We see this time
and again in the Plato’s Socratic dialogues. Theaetetus begins by asserting that
“knowledge is nothing but perception” only to later agree with Socrates that
“knowledge and perception are different”, but this does not make his inquiry with
Socrates, or his attempts to define knowledge, unintelligible or meaningless. In
presenting the argument as a developmental process, both the assertion of P and ¬P
have their place in the overall argument. Here time, and the development of thinking
which time makes possible, is an important condition for critical thought.

Importantly, in stressing the hermeneutic process of argumentation I am *not* trying to
diminish the importance of logic to critical thinking. I am merely alerting us to a
dimension of inquiry, and the relationship between meaning and soundness, that
logic on its own does not capture. Such a difference emerges when we regard critical
thinking as assessment of arguments *at* a time and critical thinking as a process we
undertake *over* time.

---

Particularity without Relativism

Reconstructing the temporal hermeneutical process by which I reasoned from P to \( \sim P \) (accounting for the choices I made as I proceeded, the changes in my understanding, the digressions and false starts I pursued) may turn out to be more illuminating because it may convey more of what is significant about P, of what was surprising or noteworthy in thinking the issue through. In asserting \( \sim P \) now, I am left to rethink what it meant for me to assert P at the outset and how this connects to the inquiry as a whole. The natural history I describe here is as much a history of me as it is of the argument, it is to offer a particularized account of my reasoning about P. This will especially be true if we give up objective realist notions of truth and accept the position that all truth claims are interpretative. But here again, it is important not to be seen to go further than I intended. To say truth claims are interpretative is not necessarily to endorse relativism. We may still regard truth as objective in the sense that it is justifiable in the public sphere - that is, that it is expressed inter-relationally, or inter-personally (relative to language or worldview). To emphasize objectivity in relation to language is in fact to emphasize an objectivity that can be internalized when we think for ourselves. For our own particularity is itself shaped through participation in a common language and culture, through the adoption of public standards and norms. As much as we express our particularity - our personal perspectivity and mode of thinking - we will do so within the framework of a common language shared with others. This is an important point. To say truth is inter-relationally relative to a language is also to claim there is no private truth, this makes critical thinking, as a search for truth and meaning, both general and particular.

Argument Revision and Identity

I begin with premises I have good reason to accept as true, make a valid inference and arrive at a sound conclusion. Yet I find the conclusion is one I cannot accept and begin wondering where I’ve gone wrong. I begin by checking the inference was well drawn and then go back to question my initial acceptance of the premises... But if I

---

54 This is what makes a dialogical account of critical thinking attractive. Truth is that which arises between us. I return to this later in the chapter and in reference to Gadamer in chapter 3.
initially think the conclusion to be sound why didn’t I just accept it? Why turn back to reconsider premises which (when I began my argument) I had good reasons to accept as true?

It seems that one reason for rejecting the conclusion may be that it conflicts with certain values, understandings and commitments which provide the framework, or horizon, within which I reason. Take the following argument:

\begin{quote}
\textit{All money making ventures are good for Melbourne}

\textit{The Casino is a money making venture}

\textit{The Casino is good for Melbourne.}
\end{quote}

What makes the conclusion untenable is that in affirming this I must confess that I no longer understand what being a ‘good’ thing means. Applying the word \textit{good} simply doesn’t make sense to me given my other beliefs and understanding.\textsuperscript{55} Such cases point to the impact of seeing ourselves as a whole on the way we engage in critical thinking. It is because I am the same person who is aware of the social effects of gambling, who is the same I who deplores corruption, that the initial conclusion concerning the Casino becomes problematic. To accept the conclusion would not be to accept contradiction between propositional contents, but to accept contradiction within \textit{me}. Given my commitment to these other values, I don’t understand what it would mean \textit{for me}, as the person I am, to say the Casino was good for Melbourne - it is simply incoherent given the other things \textit{I} stand for. In this way my sense of self, my beliefs, understandings, and commitments, contribute to the way I engage in critical thinking (e.g.; whether I reject a conclusion well drawn).

Considering myself as a whole involves being aware of who \textit{I} am both at any \textit{one} time as well as \textit{over} time. It involves the way I see my beliefs and understandings to be connected and integrated with the person I take myself to be. In this regard coherency (in relation to language, to our understanding or worldview) is prior to consistency, for judgments about consistency already rest upon us ordering our world \textit{this} way rather than \textit{that}. We can only judge two things to be inconsistent if we have
a clear idea or concept of what they mean. Talk of witches may make sense to me - it may be coherent in relation to my worldview - yet the very same witch-talk may be incoherent to you ("But what do you mean by ‘witches’?" I hear you ask). It may be that some beliefs I hold about witches may be inconsistent with other beliefs I hold - and this may warrant further reflection - however for you there will be no inconsistency because there is no coherent understanding of witches to begin with.

First Person Engagement in Critical Thinking

To fully appreciate how temporality is linked to the role of the personal in critical thinking requires a more detailed understanding of ourselves in relation to time than can be conveyed through the description of ourselves in the second or third-person as historically achieved individuals. For this is a description of the person about which we speak, rather than a description of the person we are in speaking (or thinking). That is, in speaking of the critical thinker as an historically achieved individual:

...the person is one of the ‘things’ about which we speak rather than itself a speaking subject.57

Yet critical thinkers carry out their thinking in the first person, not as a second or third person, they are engaged as speaking subject who reflexively designate themselves in the activity of thinking something through. For this reason, the perspective we need to understand in analyzing critical thinking is that of the historically achieved speaking subject - a first person who implies their achieved individuality reflexively within their thinking.

55 Of course I may preserve coherency by changing the meaning of ‘good’ such that it makes sense in this context.
56 The term ‘worldview’ is used in two ways. Sometimes it refers to the individual’s structuring of the world - the way a person organizes his experience and knowledge; this is the sense used by Nagel when he speaks of the individual’s view of the world (and viewing points), and by Gadamer when he uses the analogy of horizon to point to the limit of the individual’s worldview. However, another use of the term ‘worldview’ is captured in the notion of a language and refers to collective perspectives, especially cultural or social worldviews. This is often done in order to contrast such views in arguments pertaining to relativism - this is the sense used by Paul and Siegel. Here I use the term in the former sense, though in chapter 6 I explore how this relates to issues concerning translation and interpretation when individuals are reasoning from two distinct cultural worldviews.
57 Paul Ricoeur: “Person and Identifying Reference” in Oneself as Another, p. 31.
Ricoeur’s concept of self is an extremely powerful one here, and one that I believe provides the structure to integrate our understanding of the various aspects of the thinker as an individuated character that I have discussed so far - that is, aspects of reflective awareness, focus, realization, deliberation, traits, dispositions, motivations, temporality, evaluations and hermeneutic re-evaluations. While Ricoeur’s concept of self is not developed in relation to critical thinking or rationality, his schema of the inter-relationship between different aspects of the person as a self, makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of the critical thinking.

Paul Ricoeur on the Temporal Nature of Self

Ricoeur’s first-person concept of a narrative self can be seen to correspond to the historically achieved individual as speaker. Ricoeur describes two theoretical approaches to characterizing the individual who speaks:

(i) We can seek an understanding of individuals through their public spatio-temporal identity. Here the notion of an individual carries with it the idea of sameness, that is, being the same temporal agent rather than a different temporal agent. When we say “I did it” we are saying both that I (now) am the same individual as the one (then) who did this thing, and also it is I as opposed to you who did it. It is the “I” of identifying reference, where the self is seen as same self. This is the self as idem or identity.

(ii) We can seek an understanding of individuals through their identity as speaking subjects. Here the individual self, the I, designates itself reflexively as a particular individual through the activity of speech. When a person speaks they designate themselves as an I separate from Other (designate the individual they are). Here “I” points to ‘the being in question’, the being who speaks, self as distinguished from other than self. This is the self as ipse or being.

It is important to note that these two approaches are not to be seen in opposition: for instance, in the act of speaking subjects both identify themselves as the particular individuals they are, and speak from themselves. The difference between the two approaches could be seen as a difference between characterizing the self as the individual about which we speak and the self from which we speak. For Ricoeur,

58 The aim here is not to present Ricoeur’s study on the self as a whole, but to focus on those aspects that pertain to my own inquiry. For this reason the account here is a sketch only of salient features of his view that I find useful.
how these two characterizations are related to the concept of one unified self is at first glance problematic because they are seemingly incompatible - or at least incommensurate. The relation between same and different associated with identity on one hand, and the relation between self and other associated with being on the other. How does one bring these together within a unified conception of self? Ricoeur's goes on to explore this question in relation to a three-fold inquiry. An inquiry into (i) the self who speaks and recounts (ii) the self who acts, and in relation to (iii) the self who is morally responsible. Through this Ricoeur develops a conception of self as narrative identity in an attempt to develop this unified view. Each of these aspects of the self can contribute to our understanding of the critical thinker.

The key transition that I think is useful here is the transition from seeing the self as an historically achieved individual to the self as a narrative identity. Once again, these do not stand in opposition to one another, but reflect different characterizations of what personal identity consists in - the former characterized in relation to second person identification, the later characterized in terms of first person being. The narrative self spoken of here is the "I" of speaking subjects who perceive, and are implicated by, their own story as their lives unfold, selves aware of their own past and future as it pertains to the present. For Ricoeur, the notion of character which is fitting for such a concept of self is that of narrative character.61

Taylor and Ricoeur on Narrative Identity

Central aspects of Ricoeur's and Taylor's projects meet in their characterization of narrative identity, but the differences between them are significant for the way we see the critical thinker as a narrative self.62 Both address the issue of "who speaks?" and respond with an account of the speaking subject that draws on the transcendental and empirical nature of selfhood. Both articulate the connection between selfhood and

---

60 Ibid. Sometimes these are referred to as four areas of inquiry, in which case (i) is divided into two areas - speaking and recounting (e.g., p. 19).
61 The concept of narrative character captures the interconnection between the self's empirical and transcendental natures - a theme I return to later.
62 Paul Ricoeur's project to bring together the analytic and hermeneutic traditions in a full account of the self in Oneself as Another; and Charles Taylor's project to account for the essentially moral character of modern identity in Sources of the Self.
interlocution, however their focus differs in an informative way. For Taylor, the orientation of an individual is essentially a moral orientation, an evaluative preferences or strong evaluations through which one’s life is given meaning:

My sense of myself is of a being who is growing or becoming... In the very nature of things this cannot be instantaneous... I can only know myself through the history of my maturations and regression, overcomings and defeats. My self-understanding necessarily has temporal depth and incorporates narrative... We want our lives to have meaning, or weight, or substance, or to grow towards fullness... if necessary, we want the future to “redeem” the past, to make it part of a life story which has a sense of purpose, to take it up in a meaningful unity... we cannot be without an orientation... and hence must see our lives in story... these conditions [are] inescapable structural requirements of agency.63

Taylor argues that our orientation - the evaluative distinctions that lead us to be motivated and attend to things in a particular way - arises out of our desire to be a certain sort of person. While our orientation will be implicated reflexively through our preferences, decisions and distinctions; aspiring to be a certain kind of person - aspiring to a higher form of life - requires that the values underlying this orientation be visible to us. Self-aware deliberation of the sort “is it in me?” will involve deliberation about the story or narrative we see as constituting our life. Hermeneutic re-evaluation, re-evaluation in which the past can be redeemed, is made possible by the unity of the story overall and it is the development of a particular orientation that provides this narrative unity and embeds it with a sense of purpose. A purposeful life is one that aspires to narrative unity overall - one which aspires to develop an achieved orientation that is “incomparably higher”.64 In this regard Taylor’s concept of self is essentially teleological in nature.

For Ricoeur the temporal span of narrative is also the empirical span of one’s life, the narrative as a whole still providing the frame in which the individual develops and establishes meaning. The difference is that the overall narrative is not necessarily visible to the self, and meaning does not solely arise from one’s own moral orientation. Ricoeur’s notion of orientation is divested of Taylor’s teleological

---

64 Charles Taylor: “Inescapable Frameworks” in ibid, p. 19.
aspirations, and is perhaps a broader and consequently more useful one in relation to a theory of critical thinking as a result. According to Ricoeur, aspirations and strong evaluations still have an important place in determining how we make sense of things, how we determine meanings, however not all sense-making activity will be subsumed under the umbrella of giving one’s life meaning in a teleological sense. Things may have meaning without necessarily contributing to the meaning of our life when that meaning is couched in terms of life’s greater narrative. In its application to critical thinking, not all inquiry will involve conscious reappraisal of oneself, though it will all involve the particular perspective of the reasoner.

For Ricoeur, our orientation as a self (our motivations, values and attentiveness) is implied reflexively through our operations rather than held to the fore as a beacon. While our reasoning will still reflexively implicate our orientation, and meaning will still be meaning for us, meaningfulness will not always be determined in relation to our orientation as a life (a narrative whole). Ricoeur’s speaking subjects make sense of their own particular context in light of who they are and what they understand at the moment of reflecting or speaking. Selves perceive their past and future in light of their current self-understanding and these perceptions and understandings will change as the contingencies of life add to their experience. That is to say, their perception of their own narrative - what it consists in and what orientation lies behind it - will change as their life unfolds. If we apply this to critical thinking, then critical thinking can be characterized as hermeneutic sense-making activity in which the temporal span of inquiry enables interpretations and judgments to be re-evaluated as one’s reasoning unfolds. I consider the question “is it in me?” from the self I am now, not from the self I am overall (or in the end).65

Importantly, Ricoeur’s account of the narrative self allows for a more dynamic interchange between circumstance or experience and one’s orientation. The self of idem, of identity, is more than a self with moral orientation, it is also a self orientated by experience. Habits, traits and preferences arise from our contextual experience and

---

65 This will have implications for the way we see constraints on critical thinking. Constraints hold over us for that period in which we engage in inquiry, not over our lives overall. See chapters 5 & 6.
become an aspect of our identity over time. That is, character traits may be as much a result of repeated practices as they are a choice to be a certain sort of person. This allows for the possibility of education toward critical thinking impacting on a persons identity. Today I think carefully about whether my generalization is justified, while this attention to generalizations is not to be identified as a habit or trait of mine now, with repetition it may become habitual and come to be seen as a particular trait of my own. In this way what was once innovative and new, an uncharacteristic response at a particular time, becomes an aspect of idem, of my identity fixed over time. That is:

...habit gives a history to character, but this is a history in which sedimentation tends to cover over the innovation which preceded it.... Each habit formed this way, acquired and become a lasting disposition, constitutes a trait - a character trait, a distinctive sign by which a person is recognized.  

Ricoeur’s concept of self is one allows for the way in which one’s past experience, the acquisition of skills and competencies, and one’s valuations are together formative of one’s orientation. This has important implications for critical thinking, for it points to the way that external (social or communal) practices and constraints of language (e.g.; the principle of non-contradiction) become internalized as aspects of our own particular identity as a self. In reflective deliberation the contingencies of our life along with our communal and cultural frameworks find themselves reflected in our sense of ourselves as particular spatio-temporal persons. We bring to inquiry a sense of ourselves as people living in the world, not merely a sense of what we stand for (our evaluative distinctions). While Taylor certainly acknowledges the place of the empirical self, because his central concern lies with the moral realm and its role in identity, he does not elaborate on this aspect of identity as fully as Ricoeur.

The Critical Thinker as a Narrative Self
The Critical Thinker, as a first-person narrative self can be seen to incorporate both transcendental and empirical dimensions. It involves being both a self and being the particular self I am. Being a self concerns the transcendental nature of self. It involves general constitutive aspects of personhood namely; (i) being a self amongst

\[66\] Paul Ricoeur: Oneself as Another, p. 121.
other selves (being a member of community, of a shared language and form of life) and, (ii) having orientation, attending to things from a particular perspective. It is through this perspectivity that I come to see myself as a distinct self amongst others, speaking from a particular evaluative standpoint and yet addressing a particular community. Both of these aspects are “inescapable structural requirements” of being a self. Yet to answer the question “who is speaking?” is also to point to a particular person, to an empirical temporal self that admits of development. It is this empirical self that, when thinking in the first person, implicates their particularity (a particular orientation and history) reflexively in their thinking. Thus to speak of a person’s narrative character is to speak of their orientation as an empirical or particular locutor amongst other locutors; a person who has a sense of herself as an instance of something more general and who sees herself as someone unique.

We might say that Critical thinking, when seen as first-person activity, involves our engagement in two forms of thinking which may be seen to correspond to these two different aspects of the identity (idem and ipse) that Ricoeur describes.

(i) In the activity of reflection and hermeneutic re-appraisal we are concerned with the self as idem, the empirical self we happen to be, with the values and experiences that identifies us as a particular reasoner, and our concern is with the coherency of our ideas, the depth of our understanding, the kind of self we are.

(ii) In the activity of projection we are concerned with the self as ipse, the self as a member of a community of speakers, an interlocutor who both has a particular orientation from which to think or speak, and who projects him/herself into the world through their thought or speech.

(ii) incorporates (i), for even reflective hermeneutic re-appraisal is itself a forward-focused activity concerned with prospective truth or meaning, an activity through which we project ourselves into the language community of which we are part through our motivations, our intentions and attentions, our choices or judgments. To be a fairminded critical thinker who “knows they have a point of view and understands the viewpoints of others” is not only to recognize our own and other’s perspectives or orientations, but to recognize oneself as a self amongst others, to recognize oneself as a participant in a language community.


88
Critical Thinking as *Dialogical Inquiry*

In tying the notion of character in critical thinking to personal identity and to the development of a self, the inter-locutionary structure of selfhood and inquiry become inextricably linked. If we accept the position that selves are socially constructed through interaction within a language community, our development and identity as critical thinkers will itself take an interlocutionary form. This strongly suggests that in accepting a character view of critical thinking we might do best to characterize inquiry or critical thinking itself in *dialogical* terms.

There are two aspects of dialogical activity that need to be addressed here, aspects which lead to a weak and strong sense of dialogical inquiry. The first looks to dialogue as interlocution. Here, a dialogical conception of critical thinking will be one in which the critical thinker speaks to, and is addressed by, others. The constraints on inquiry will at least in part be public constraints that enable those who share a language to interpret one another. The second looks to dialogue as a form of unified action. This leads to a stronger sense of dialogical inquiry because added to the notion of dialogue as inter-locution, is the notion of dialogue as co-ordinated action that requires us to participate with the other in a particular kind of way. While I take both to be central to a dialogical conception of critical thinking, I am concerned with the first, weaker, sense here.\(^6^8\)

To say inquiry is essentially *communicative* is to say that it is essentially has a social structure, grounded in language and inter-relationship. Interlocution engages us in the public sphere as addressee and addressee. This is to view critical thinking in interactionalist and intentional terms.

Facing the speaker in the first person is a listener in the second person to whom the former addresses himself or herself - this fact belongs to the situation of interlocution. So there is no illocution without allocution and, by implication, without someone to whom the message is addressed.\(^6^9\)

---

\(^6^8\) I take up the stronger notion of dialogue as dialogical action in relation to Gadamer in chapter 3

\(^6^9\) Paul Ricoeur: *Oneself as Another*, p. 43.
Such an approach suggests that ‘reasonable reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do’ is an interlocutionary act through which we project ourselves into the world.

The central significance of seeing inquiry in dialogical terms is that language comes to mediate a middle ground between public procedures by which we may determine if our reasoning is going wrong (the traditional rules and procedures of logic and argument evaluation) and what it is to get our reasoning right. It provides us with the resource through which to develop a personalized sense of who we are and to develop a particular way of going about our reasoning. Importantly, the constraints of inquiry will not only be determined by epistemological constraints (such as non-contradiction), but social constraints of speaking to others and being addressed (such as respect), for it is through the first-person activity of speaking and being addressed, that a critical thinker, as a self, realizes themselves as a critical thinker within a language community. On this account, internalizing inter-locutionary activity is not merely to internalize a vocabulary - the resources for communication - but to internalize the activity of interlocution itself.

This changes the parameters of what is meant when we speak of what it means to become a critical thinker. Critical thinking will involve internalizing the process of speaking within a community as a member of that community, rather than internalizing the rules governing the way the community speaks from the outside. That is, if critical thinking is seen as a language game, then we learn to think critically be participating in the game as well as by mastering the rules. The problem with the skills approach to critical thinking is that it focuses on the rules of the game and then claims good game-playing is done by those who follow the rules, that is, by those (i) disposed to follow rules and by those (ii) moved to play by them. But observing rules is only a small part of what is involved in participating the game. We play a game from the inside as participant, and this means bringing our own particularity to bear on the game as well as applying the rules properly.\footnote{Indeed for Wittgenstein, the practices involved in playing the game are taken as primary. This notion of play is explored further with reference to Gadamer in chapter 3.}
Recognizing the interlocutionary structure of critical thinking involves both (i) seeing ourselves as a self who can only develop amongst other selves, and (ii) seeing ourselves as self-determining, and in this way unique. Together, this is to see ourselves as mutually self-determining members of a community. The evaluative preferences and empirical practices of the language community - its form of life - forms the background in which our own identity as critical thinkers, and the identity of others, is formed. We see ourselves as critical thinkers at least in part because we recognize ourselves as critical thinkers within the community. We see ourselves within a certain paradigm exemplifying its structures.

To a large extent, in fact, the identity of a person or a community is made up of these identifications with values norms, ideal, models, and heroes in which the person or community recognises itself. Recognising oneself in contributes to recognising oneself by... Here the two poles of identity [ipse and idem] accord with each one another. 71

Understood reflexively, this enables us to appreciate the way in which thinking for ourselves allows for self-understanding to deepen. It is to see thinking for ourselves in dialogical terms, as the reflexive dimension of thinking with others. Such inquiry generates and illuminates our identity because it involves the interlocutionary activity that is necessary for self-definition. In reasoning for ourselves we become our own dialogical partners.

This proves that one cannot think the idem of the person through without considering the ipse, even when one entirely covers over the other. Thus are incorporated into the traits of character the aspects of evaluative preference which define the moral aspect of character, in the Aristotelian sense of the term 72.

To acknowledge inquiry is dialogical in this sense is to recognize the way in which the personal realm is only possible through our participation within a public domain. Given this understanding, making a place for the personal in critical thinking is not

71 Ibid, p. 121.
72 Ibid. pp. 121-122

91
to suggest we withdraw into relativism, but that we turn outward and see ourselves as individual members of a community.

**Dialogical Inquiry and Rationality**

If we take critical thinking as an interlocutionary activity through which we project ourselves into the world, then how does this alter our understand of rationality *per se*? As Siegel reminds us:

> There is... an intimate connection between the notions of critical thinking and rationality.... Indeed, the theory of critical thinking - in so far as it involves more than the spelling out of the educational ramifications of an intellectual ideal - depends fundamentally on the theory of rationality. Theorists of critical thinking must perforce turn to the development of the theory of rationality, for it is that latter theory that undergirds the former. 73

The question is, what sort of theory of rationality is adequate to underpinning a dialogical conception of critical thinking? Traditionally, models of rationality take the concept of *reasoning* as foundational and *reasoning persons* as derivative. Viewed this way the social and ethical dimensions of reasoning are seen as features not of reason itself, but of the *application* of reason within a social context. While dialogical encounter may still play a key role as the vehicle through which people and societies engage in reasoning together, such encounter is not taken to be a constitutive factor of reasoning itself. Here it makes sense to talk of reasoning solely by reference to individuals, and indeed reasonable societies will be groups of such individuals reasoning together.

Yet, for a dialogical conception of critical thinking this will not do. If we take *critical persons* as foundational, the social dimensions of inquiry are as central to what *constitutes* reasoning as inference and judgment. When critical thinking is characterized as a dialogical form of inquiry the meaning of the saying - that it is said at all (rather than left unsaid), how it is said (critically, creatively, dismissively), whether it is said openly or in secrecy - become as important as the meaning of what is said. Here we cannot base critical thinking on a theory of rationality that adds the
conditions of community and inter-relationship as social extras, for such reasoning itself will no longer make sense divorced from social, or inter-relational, frameworks.

One way of establishing a theory of rationality that can underpin a dialogical theory of critical thinking is to move away from the term reasons in favor of the phrase reasoning persons. That is, to turn to a theory of rationality that focuses on what it means to engage in a certain sort of human activity (reasoning) and to use this to underpin our theory of critical thinking. Such a view will retain the focus on reasons, but see these as one aspect of a broader conception. Such a theory of rationality would provide grounds for a social, or dialogical, conception of critical thinking by providing a theory in which rationality is grounded in a social theory of persons as well as logic and argumentation. Such an account should be able to make sense of what it means to be reasonable as well as what it means to be appropriately moved by reasons. On such an account the very notion of rational belief will now be considered to be social in nature - connected to language and linguistic rules that themselves must be regarded as social if they are to do the epistemic job we require them to do.

The idea of taking persons as foundational to our concept of rationality is explored by Harold Brown in Rationality. Here Brown points out that the classic model of rationality takes the concept of rational belief as fundamental, and the notion of a rational persons as derivative. Philosophy, he then notes, focuses on what counts as rational belief, and rational persons are persons who meet these standards. On this model, the relationship between reason, the reasoner, and good reasoning may be characterized as one in which: (1) reasoning involves engagement in means-end justification procedures (2) the role of the reasoner is to focus on the logical relations

73 Harvey Siegel: Educating Reason, p. 127.
74 Harold Brown: Rationality, pp. 185-188. Brown argues: A rational belief is one that will be arrived at by a rational agent. In the classic model, the central emphasis is placed on logical relations between evidence and belief, while the role of the agent is minimized or left out. In the later model, the role of the agent is basic, and the way she (the agent) deals with evidence in arriving at a belief will determine which beliefs are rational beliefs for her. Brown notes that this relativizes rational belief to individuals, but not the notion of rational belief. In focusing on the role of the agent, Brown provides a good foundation for an alternate theory of rationality; however, I do not feel he takes this far enough. Thus, while I use Brown as a starting point, I do not accept his formulation of what is, in the end, required.
between propositions, and (3) good reasoning is carrying out these procedures competently thereby preserving truth as one reasons from one set of propositions to another. He then suggests an alternative: that we should consider the rational person as foundational and what constitutes rational belief as derivative.

If we take Brown’s lead and use such a conception to underpin critical thinking, then the notion of a critical person becomes foundational and what constitutes critical thinking becomes derivative on that. Critical thinking will be seen to involve principles of human relationship and communication as well as principles of sound argumentation. Such an account would focus on critical thinking as dialogical inquiry not as an exchange between points of view (as an encounter between ideas), but as dialogue - a communicative activity carried out by persons between persons. It will require us to have something to say as well as to master a way of saying it.\textsuperscript{75} It does not dismiss logical structure as unimportant, but sees logical structure in the broader context of making sense of human experience.\textsuperscript{76} Giving an account of critical thinking will require us to give an account of the way in which persons encounter, structure, and make sense of their world.\textsuperscript{77}

With the focus on human activity, the connection between reason, the reasoner, and good reasoning becomes one in which: (1) reasoning involves engagement in inquiry (a form of action), (2) the role of the reasoner is to make sense of experience, develop understanding, and determine truth (3) good reasoning is reasoning that ‘gets somewhere’ in the quest for truth and meaning. Brown’s model is necessarily a social one: “rationality requires other people - not just any people but other people who have the skills needed to exercise judgment in the case at hand.”\textsuperscript{78} This is because for “a belief based on judgment to be a rational one, it must be submitted to

\textsuperscript{75} See Matthew Lipman: Thinking in Education. “Learning to speak is not a matter of what we can skillfully do, but of who we are.”, p. 79.
\textsuperscript{76} Note Lipman in ibid, pp. 137-138; and his comments concerning reasonable as satisficing, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{77} Lipman points out that this conception of reasoning is linked to theories of critical discourse; in particular, the work of Gadamer and Ricoeur (amongst others, such as Derrida, Perelman, I.A. Richards, and Blumenberg). Matthew Lipman: Thinking in Education, p. 111.
\textsuperscript{78} Harold Brown: Rationality, p. 187.
the community of those who share the relevant expertise for evaluation against their own judgments.... [because we regard] rationality to be a social phenomena".79

For me, one of the strengths of this approach is that it gives equal significance to the affective and social dimensions of reasoning. The idea of reasoning well, when taken from the perspective of the reasoner, will involve having reasons and making judgments, but will equally involve listening effectively, empathizing with and respecting others. Indeed, in giving primacy to the reasoning person (and with it, the relation of self to other) the ethics of inter-personal engagement become an integral component of the theory of reason. Yet while Brown approaches rationality as an activity of persons, he does not focus on the way in which his conception of rationality transforms our understanding of motivations and dispositions in reasoning (and critical thinking) nor how grounding rationality in inter-personal relationship transforms our understanding of the social and moral constraints on reasoning. In order to explore these dimensions we need to turn to Nicholas Burbules account of rationality as reasonableness.

Rationality as Reasonableness

Nicholas Burbules has, perhaps, provided the best sketch of the way in which refocusing rationality around persons engaged in rational activity changes the way we think about critical thinking.80 For Burbules, focusing on human activity enables us to replace our Enlightenment conception of rationality (the view Brown characterized as the traditional conception) with a functional conception of rationality as a form of contextualized practice; a reconceptualization in which rationality is recast in terms of reasonableness.

...Notice what a different conception of reason this approach leads us to: one sensitive to cultural difference and diversity; modest about its claims to universality; situated in human relations and moral reflection; grounded more in practical social activities of speaking, listening, and

79 Ibid.
80 My discussion of Burbules is based on his article “Reasonable Doubt” in Critical Conversations in Philosophy of Education, ed. Kohli, W. While this article is about reason rather than critical thinking, it is clear that Burbules is addressing the critical thinking debate by the way he draws on Ennis, Paul and Siegel. I take it that Burbules, like Siegel, sees the terms rationality and critical thinking as coextensive.
reflecting than in dispassioned logical deduction or a scientistic search for "facts".\textsuperscript{81}

... "reasonableness" refers to the dispositions and capacities of a certain kind of person, a person who is related in specific contexts to other persons - not to the following of formal rules and procedures of thought. Although a reasonable person is one who will tend to have, and offer, reasons to support his or her choices of belief and action, these are the manifestation of something more basic about this sort of person. A characterization solely in terms of "reasons-giving" or "reason-following" confuses the symptom with the source of reasonable dispositions.\textsuperscript{82}

It is no coincidence that he alludes to being a "certain kind of person", and then specifies the kind of person he means as one who lives in a network of relationships with others.\textsuperscript{83} In many ways Burbules view, like my own, is an attempt to take Siegel's notion of the relationship between critical thinking and character seriously. Because Burbules' account views rationality essentially as a communicative practice, the "source" of reasonable dispositions are social interactions rather than rules and procedures of thought. \textit{Taking character seriously} for Burbules means attending to our sense of self and to the moral factors that underlie rationality as communicative practice in which "...the full play of human thought, feeling, and motivation operate".\textsuperscript{84} Importantly, Burbules does not intend to undermine the place of reason-assessment in critical thinking, but to supplement it.\textsuperscript{85} For this reason his account approach provides valuable insight into what a view of rationality as an activity of persons might look like. Indeed, in developing my own dialogical conception of critical thinking, I accept that the adequacy of my conception will in no small part be judged by its ability to address the issues that emerge from the critique of Burbules offered below.

Overall, we may see Burbules as establishing a direction for the development of an alternate model of rationality rather than providing a theory of critical thinking \textit{per}

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid, pp. 87-88.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid, p. 85.
\textsuperscript{83} Thus capturing what it is that he feels Siegel's account ignores.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.
In order to transform his functional characterization of rationality into a theory - a theory that can in turn be used to underpin a theory of critical thinking - it needs to be supported by an account of: (i) the way in which rationality is grounded in social activity (for which, it seems to me, we need a dialogical theory of persons), (ii) the way in which personal identity is connected to reflection (for which we need a theory of self), and (iii) the way in which moral and epistemological constraints are inter-related within an account of reasonableness. In order to see why this is the case we need to turn to three insights that can be gained from Burbules account.

(i) A recognition of pluralism
Firstly, Burbules notes that accounts of rationality and critical thinking adequate to the postmodern period need to come to terms with plurality while avoiding relativism. Plurality is, for Burbules, a default position rather than a claim about reality. “For better or worse” the postmodern acceptance of cultural diversity, together with the increased attention being given to different kinds of reasoning, leaves those interested in rejecting the antimodern “rage against reason” no choice but to acknowledge pluralism in a theory of critical thinking. Reconceiving rationality as reasonableness allows Burbules to respond to this challenge by suggesting that we view reason as “a human invention and achievement, one that is hardly arbitrary...but one that is neither necessary nor universal.” This allows for a more modest assessment of the role of logic and reasons-assessment in rationality, and an acknowledgment that there may be persons or groups “who might have evolved different ways of answering questions, solving problems, and adjudicating disagreements.” In the place of generalizable rules of thinking we have “...some very general human traits that more broadly guide reflective thought and action.”

---

85 We need to keep in mind that he sets out to offer a defense of reason rather than contribute to the Postmodern demolition of it. I return to this later in discussing Siegel’s critique of Burbules.
86 Indeed these are the three areas I have addressed in this thesis.
87 “In my view, it is crucial for concerned scholars to acknowledge this “rage against reason” as a real intellectual and political movement.” Ibid, 83.
88 Ibid, 85.
89 Ibid.
The questions that Burbules’ pluralist stance raises for a theory of critical thinking concern the status of what he calls “general human traits”; namely, how such traits are related to cultural diversity (and individual identity) on one hand and yet remain culturally independent as traits (general human traits) on the other. If these traits are universal (as I think Burbules implies) then the notion of pluralism he is employing is a contextual cultural pluralism, based in language and practices.\textsuperscript{90} This makes sense of why Burbules falls back on a form of human essentialism, for he needs general traits if he is to protect his view of reasonableness from claims of moral relativism. Without recourse to essentialism, Ennis’ inhumane critical thinkers would count as reasonable people (and I do not think Burbules would want to claim this). General human traits enable Burbules to claim that there are general moral constraints on reason. Forms of essentialism have, however, been particularly problematic for pluralists, and in light of this Burbules needs to show us: (i) the basis on which his claims to general traits (and the moral constraints on reasonableness that arise from them) are being made; and, (ii) how this still allows for the kind of plurality that those who “rage against reason” call for.\textsuperscript{91} If his account is not based in a form of essentialism, then Burbules needs to provide an alternate ground on which to establish the existence of general traits, and general moral constraints, on reasonableness.\textsuperscript{92}

\textit{(ii) That critical dispositions are better characterized as virtues.}

In basing his account of reasonableness on the social context of rationality, Burbules rightly points out that the notion of critical dispositions as individual traits is no longer sufficient to underpin the way in which the motivations and attitudes which lead us to engage in critical thinking are formed. He suggests instead that we turn to the concept of virtues.

Virtues are flexible aspects of character, related to our sense of self and integrity, but also fostered and encouraged by the communities and relations with others that provide the context in which we decide and act. We express virtues out of the choices we make, because of the types of

\begin{itemize}
\item A view supported by his use references to Taylor and Rorty.
\item A rage he identifies with poststructuralism and feminism.
\item I explore the problematic nature of essentialism for a pluralist account of critical thinking in chapter 5. Here I ground general constraints of critical thinking in the human condition rather than in human essence. This is a possible solution for Burbules.
\end{itemize}
people we are, in relation to the actions and choices of those around us. The term "disposition" does little to suggest this richness and complexity.\footnote{93}

This is an important observation and one that has immediate implications for the construction of a dialogical conception of critical thinking. It is important because it points to the value systems that underlie the way in which idem identity comes to be reflected in ipse identity. As I noted in my discussion of Ricoeur, habit and practices (not only moral orientation) gives rise to character, however what Burbules alerts us to is the normative dimension of community practices. Shared communal practices give rise to habit, yet such practices are hardly neutral. While some habits are ones we may accidentally fall into, others are instilled in us through the intentional activity of others amongst whom we live. When Burbules claims "A better understanding of reasonableness as a human characteristic and achievement requires a deeper account of how virtues affect conduct...", the deeper account that is called for includes an account of the relationship between individual persons and the communities (and traditions) of which they are part.\footnote{94} Such an account needs to address the social and reflexive dimensions of selfhood that give rise to our understanding of who we are. Indeed, if we view dispositions as \textit{virtues} then they become aspects of character in a personal sense. They are:

\begin{quote}
... not simply the activating sentiments that motivate us to apply the formal rules we have learned, but the aspects of character that bring us to care about learning or paying attention to such standards in the first place. They are part of who we are. A person who is reasonable wants to make sense, wants to be fair to alternative points of view,... and so on.\footnote{95}
\end{quote}

\textit{(iii) The need for a richer conception of dialogue}

For Burbules:

\begin{quote}
... the second, related dimension of reasonableness [is the] capacity to enter into communicative relations in which persons together inquire,
\end{quote}

\footnote{93}{Ibid, p. 86.}
\footnote{94}{Ibid}
\footnote{95}{Ibid.}
disagree, adjudicate, explain or argue their views in the pursuit of a reasonable outcome.\footnote{Ibid, p.88.}

This focus on communicative relations requires a richer account of dialogue than that offered by Scriven, Ennis or Paul. For these theorists, dialogue serves a utilitarian function of maximizing our chances of avoiding error. While Paul has the strongest requirement to explore another’s perspectivity, even here the emphasis is on the comparison of frameworks, rather than on the social practice of communication. We might say that a rich sense of dialogical practice is one in which we do not merely talk to one another, but one in which we engage with others in inquiry; a sense of dialogical practice in which we develop an idea together. It is this richer notion of dialogue that I develop in my account of critical thinking as dialogical inquiry in the chapters ahead.\footnote{In particular, in reference to Charles Taylor’s notion of dialogical action in chapter 3, to Socratic dialogue in chapter 4, and to a pluralistic conception of dialogue in chapters 5 and 6.}

The benefit of characterizing critical thinking as dialogical inquiry, rather than reasonableness, is that it captures two notions that are central to a theory of critical thinking in which the engaged practice of reasoning persons is taken as primary; (i) Whereas reasonableness may, reflexively, be seen as a trait of a monological self, dialogical inquiry suggests that reflexively the self too is dialogical in character. This is, I think, essential for a pluralistic account of critical thinking. (ii) The notion of inquiry maintains a more explicitly epistemological focus for a theory of critical thinking than the notion of reasonableness alone suggests.\footnote{The question of a monological account of self, and the importance of this for a pluralistic conception of critical thinking, is explored in chapter 5.}

Indeed this last point is the source of Siegel’s critique of Burbules.

While Siegel is generally sympathetic to Burbules account, he claims that Burbules “thicker” account of rationality as reasonableness loses sight of the epistemological constraints that are foundational to critical thinking as rational activity. Siegel notes:

Burbules’ account of reasonableness completely excludes epistemic considerations; it says nothing of the way in which beliefs, judgments and
actions are reasonable (or not) because of their substantive, contentful relations to putative reasons which support them (or not).  

While I think Siegel’s critique of Burbules is harsh, missing the way in which Burbules stresses that reason-giving is a necessary but insufficient condition for reasonableness, he does point to two significant weakness in Burbules position. Firstly, Burbules does not adequately distinguish between, and explicate, the way epistemic virtue (caring about putative reasons) is connected to moral virtue (caring about the inter-personal dimension of reasoning with others). Secondly, Burbules does not offer an account of what it is to be epistemically reasonable, where epistemic reasonableness involves judging the reasonableness of our inferences and reasons. It is this epistemic reasonableness that I think Siegel is referring to in his comment about putative reasons.

Siegel’s critique reminds us that in our attempt to broaden our conception of critical thinking (in order to take character and the social and contextual aspects of reasoning more seriously), we need to be careful not to lose sight of the goal of critical thinking as a search for knowledge. We may offer an alternate account of what this search for knowledge consists in - replacing the idea of knowledge as justified belief with knowledge as a search for truth and meaning, or knowledge as socially mediated judgment about what counts as reasonable (getting it right) in a given context - however the search for knowledge needs to remain central to any attempt at developing a theory of critical thinking.

---

101 I return to the notion of epistemic reasonableness in chapters 5 and 6.  
102 This is a major concern when we broaden the notion of critical thinking to include imaginative thinking, creativity, associative thinking, etc. We need to careful that in so doing we do not lose track of the connection between critical thinking and epistemology. For example, I think Peter Elbow emphasis on creativity and Delores Gallo emphasis on empathetic role-playing lose this epistemic concern. We may apply critical thinking to such experiences, but ought to wary of counting them as critical thinking. See Peter Elbow: “Teaching Two Kinds of Thinking by
Critical Thinkers and Unreasonable People

The view of reasonableness that Burbules draws stands in contrast to the common view that rational people (and paradigmatically, critical thinkers) can be unreasonable people.\(^{103}\) This view is given credence by the utilitarian argument in which rational conduct involves maximizing values.

Assuming that \(A\) is an egoist, bent on maximising his own welfare [and \(A\) takes \(B\)'s share of the goods]... to condemn \(A\) as unreasonable is not ipso facto to mark him as irrational... [this is because] \(B\)'s-being-happy is not, for \(A\), a positive value at all. ...from his point of view, values have been maximised, and we cannot say (without further evidence at least) that he has been irrational.\(^{104}\)

Sibley correctly points out that being reasonable involves not only being aware of others' interests, but being disinterestedly influenced by them as well - influenced to the point of adjusting one's own actions in a way that takes into account the effect of one's action on others. Sibley's mistake however lies in the assumption that one's interests can stand independently of the community to which one belongs; that rationality only concerns reasoning about, and not reasoning with. The irrationality of \(A\)'s unreasonable decision lies not in the justification procedure \(A\) uses as an egoist, but in \(A\)'s very egoism. \(A\) can only be rational but unreasonable if 'rational' is understood thinly as a justification procedure rather than richly in relation to a speaking subject. What is irrational is for \(A\) to view himself as an a self detached from other and to reason accordingly. Both rationality and reasonableness are grounded in the inter-relationship between self and other, and it is from our desire for self-determination that both gain their value. Reason leads us to realize that each self within the community requires for its own self-determination the existence of others and that no self occupies a privileged position in this regard.\(^{105}\) It is this that ties critical thinking with our autonomy as a self on the one hand and with our concern

---

\(^{103}\) For Example; Michael Pritchard in *On Becoming Responsible*, p.191; my discussion of Ennis in Chapter i; Siegel's discussion in relation to a utilitarian conception of rationality in *Educating Reason*, pp. 128-132.


\(^{105}\) This is, in Arendt's view, the plurality and solidarity of the human condition. I take this up in chapter 5.
for the autonomy and selfhood of others on the other. In as much as I value myself and my existence as a critical thinker, I must also value my relationship with others, and this will at least involve attending to their views as members of the same community together with my own. More fully, reasonableness involves more than merely accommodating others' ideas, it involves accommodating other persons as members of the one community engaged in dialogue with one another; other selves with wills, interests, projects, histories and orientations of their own.

It is in grounding critical thinking in a rich sense of dialogue as interlocutionary practice that we establish strong theoretical grounds for equating critical thinkers with reasonable people. It is once reasoning and critical thinking are seen to involve the internalization of dialogue - the parameters of which are themselves established in the context of community practices - that the connection between critical thinking and reasonableness becomes clearer. It is the internalization of dialogue that enables us to equate critical thinkers with reasonable people as well as people who are moved by reasons. Critical thinking will then necessarily involve ethical issues such as respect for the integrity of persons (including ourselves), as well as aspects of communication (the conditions needed for agreement and the conditions that set the limit to disagreement). Here, giving an account of critical thinking will require us to give an account of the way in which persons encounter, structure, and make sense of their world as a world shared with others. On this view critical thinking and reasonableness are coextensive. If we accept the interlocutionary structure of inquiry, then a thin notion of rationality in which egotistic interests can be served through rational means will no longer be adequate to underpin a theory of critical thinking, for what was initially seen as rational turns out not to be so rational after all.

---

106 As Toulmin suggests, a central issue in reasoning concerns the limits to which agreement is necessary before disagreement can emerge. Stephen Toulmin: Knowing and Acting, p. 164.
Dialogue between mere individuals is only a sketch, only in dialogue between persons is the sketch filled in.

Martin Buber\(^1\)

...the other is not condemned to remain a stranger but can become my counterpart...

Paul Ricoeur\(^2\)

CHAPTER 3

Critical Activity

Thinking Together: Critical Thinking as Interlocutionary Practice
What kind of public conversation provides a model for the activity of critical thinking? If we are to view thinking critically for ourselves as the reflexive dimension of thinking critically with others the question we now face is how best to characterize such interlocutionary activity.\(^3\) This is the question I set out to address in this chapter.

Avoiding a Divided Self
The situation we want to avoid when we take critical thinking between individuals as paradigmatic of thinking critically for ourselves is one in which we construe the individual critical thinker in terms of a divided self. Nowhere does the image of the critical thinker as a divided self seem more apparent than in accounts of critical thinking in which thinking critically is characterized as a meta-cognitive practice. A characterization in which one ‘thinks about one’s thinking’ as if there is a self who

---

\(^1\) Martin Buber: *Between Man and Man*, p. 39.

\(^2\) Paul Ricoeur (commenting on Husserl) in *Oneself as Another*, p. 335.

\(^3\) Clearly, not all expressions of critical thinking will provide an adequate public model of what it is we are doing when we are thinking critically for ourselves; for once the model becomes internalized we may apply it in conversational situations which do not themselves exemplify the practice of dialogical inquiry.

104
Initially thinks (the *ipse*, or speaking subject) and a secondary self who detachedly reflects on what had been thought from outside (and who approaches the *ipse* self as if it were *idem* - a second-person). Such an account of critical thinking might be seen to be the reflexive counterpart of dialectic as a form of public argumentation in which first one person speaks and then the other replies - a process in which the aim is to persuade one's dialogical partner toward one's own point of view. A view Douglas Walton describes:

> It has become increasingly widely accepted that informal logic requires a dialectification of logic whereby reasoning is seen as an interactive relationship between two (or more than two) arguers. According to such a dialectical perspective, both participants take turns making moves, in the form of speech acts like questioning and replying...

In this type of dialogue, the proponent (protagonist) has the role of trying to show that his thesis is right, that it can be successfully argued for by the rules of the dialogue. The respondent (antagonist) has the role of asking critical questions to throw doubt on the proponent's argument for the thesis. \(^5\)

Characterized this way, the two dialogical partners seem to be focused on different objects. The proponent is focused on a substantive issue, while the respondent is focused on the proponent's argument. This model of dialogue is also suggestive of the dialectic relationship between teacher and student, or tutor and tutored, wherein the tutor (or protagonist) is concerned with challenging the substantive ideas of the tutee (or antagonist) in order to strengthen their argument. \(^6\) However such a model

---

\(^4\) Such a model of interlocution can be seen to underlie Paul's characterization of critical thinking as *thinking about one's thinking* in which the secondary self practices the universal procedures of fairminded thinking on the substantive thoughts of the egoistic primary self by holding the unreflective thoughts of the primary self up to critical examination. This something I have argued against. I explored this in greater depth in relation to Paul in chapter 1.


\(^6\) One could speculate that this tutor/tutored model of dialectical exchange arises from thinking about critical thinking as an educational ideal. What is the teacher’s role in developing critical practice? If the teacher’s role is to develop or strengthen students’ arguments, one way to achieve this is by challenging the students’ ideas in this way. Here the role of the teacher is to provoke the *students* to think critically; they are not expected to engage in thinking about the substantive issue *for themselves*. The teacher is not expected to be genuinely puzzled by the questions the students are grappling with.
does not correspond to critical thinking internalized, for we do not stand in a relation of novice and expert, guide and guided, toward ourselves.\textsuperscript{7}

Maintaining a Singular Self
If we want to maintain a singular self as the one who engages in critical thinking, yet also consider critical thinking to be dialogical - a reflexive dimension of public interlocutionary practice - we need to turn to a form of public conversation in which two subjects become one in the act of thinking critically together. Only then can the critical thinker as ipse (or speaking subject) constitute a unified self when thinking critically on their own. Furthermore, given that when we are thinking for ourselves there is no outside expert who guides us, this interlocutionary model will itself need to provide the mechanism for revision or correction.\textsuperscript{8}

In terms of public interlocutionary practice, this will be to characterize critical thinking as dialogical inquiry in which two (you and I) reason together as one (as we). While the task remains to clarify what the term ‘we’ captures, all we need to acknowledge for now is that this suggests a sense of non-separability or holism in which the whole (our thinking) is not reducible to parts (my thinking and your thinking).\textsuperscript{9} This sense of non-reducibility is sometimes felt at the end of a good conversation when, if asked “whose idea was that?”, we would want to say “ours, we developed it together”. It is not that we have forgotten whose idea it was, but that the idea emerged from our talking together - it was born in a shared space encompassing us both, and found expression in the public space between us, and as such, the content is not assignable to either of us individually.

Modes of Attentiveness within Interlocution
In order to address the issue of how to best characterize the public relationship between critical thinkers and the content of inquiry, we need first to distinguish between two dimensions of interlocutionary activity. These two dimensions

\textsuperscript{7} Gilbert Ryle is illuminating on this point. He points to the way Socrates’ guidance of the dialogical exchange differs from unguided critical reflection. See “Thinking and Self-Teaching” in Thinking, Children, and Education, ed. Lipman, M, pp. 468-476.

\textsuperscript{8} I explore this in greater depth in chapters 4 and 5.

\textsuperscript{9} The question of what kind of holism characterizes inquiry will be discussed in the next chapter.
correspond to the two modes of attentiveness present within the dialogical, or interlocutionary, situation.

1) *an attentiveness toward the content of what is said:*
   The attentiveness we direct toward the content of what is communicated and its meaning, including, when appropriate, judging the truth or warrantedness of what is said.

2) *an attentiveness toward the person with whom one reasons:*
   The attentiveness we direct toward one another as conversational partners. The attentiveness present in interlocution as an encounter between Self and Other.

Furthermore, because these forms of attentiveness will be manifest in any conversational situation, the question that needs to be addressed here is how these modes of attentiveness can be characterized in relation to critical thinking, and thus how critical thinking is distinguishable from other forms of talk.

**Martin Buber’s Characterization of 3 Forms of Dialogue**

In *Between Man and Man* Martin Buber points to three forms of dialogue that provide a useful framework to explore these modes of attentiveness as they pertain to inquiry. For Buber, the term *dialogue* itself does not distinguish one form of interlocution from another (for instance, inquiry from social conversation), but is used generally as a term for the engagement between self and other. The three forms of engagement Buber characterizes are:  

1. *Monologue that passes as dialogue.* This is conversation in which one person is seen as absolute and legitimate and the other as relativized and questionable. In monological conversation the other person is treated as an object rather than as another person. (The basic movement is one of reflection.)

2. *Technical dialogue:* Here, conversation is fueled by the desire for objective understanding. Such conversation is marked by an awareness of someone that is not oneself, but with whom one nevertheless communicates. This is "...the inalienable sterling quality of "modern existence."

3. *Genuine dialogue:* Here, dialogue exists between two persons as a living mutual relation. The boundaries between self and other are dissolved as participants experience one another as fellow beings. Genuine dialogue

---

can be spoken or silent. (The basic movement is a turning towards the other.)

We might say that critical thinking involves an attentiveness toward content as characterized by Buber in his account of technical dialogue together with an attentiveness toward the person as characterized in his account of genuine dialogue.

In viewing dialectic argumentation as a form of inter-personal human activity, our attentiveness toward our dialogical partner becomes as much an aspect of what it means to engage in critical thinking with others as the evaluation of one's own and the others' arguments. However how we understand these two dimensions of interlocutionary practice will differ within each of the three dialogical forms. That is, conceptions of critical thinking as techne will account for the relation between interlocutors and knowledge differently from those theorists who see critical thinking as a form of genuine dialogue. Indeed, these three characterizations of dialogue provide an excellent organizational structure to examine the underlying conception of dialogical activity expressed by several critical thinking theorists and informal logicians. It is to this I now turn.

(i) Monologue as Dialogue: Hearing One's Own Voice
Monologue that passes as dialogue occurs when people speak primarily to hear their own voice (to bask in the self-importance of having an audience), here the subject “...never gropes out over the outlines of the self.”11 In extreme cases this might be characterized as people talking at each other rather than to or with each other. To talk at someone is to treat the other person as an object. Importantly, we can still describe the position articulated by a person who is engaged in monologue as a reasoned position - it may involve inferring or judging, and show a sound foundation in logic - however the public activity of speaking will not itself be dialogical. Because the person approaches their conversational partner as if they were an object they reason as if they were alone. Such practice will not illustrate the public interlocutionary

---

activity of thinking critically with others. Buber characterizes debating as just this kind of critical practice.\textsuperscript{12}

In less extreme cases of monologue there may be an element of responsiveness, of conversational activity, but one that is guided by the speaker's own thinking. Here the dialogue is seen as an opportunity to further their own argument or cause.\textsuperscript{13} It signifies the classic "I'm right and your wrong" story in which my whole interest in listening to you is to find a crack in your armor and use it to turn your thinking around until it corresponds to my thinking - I am not about to rethink my position because of something you say. This form of reasoning corresponds to Paul's characterization of monological thinkers as weak sense critical thinkers\textsuperscript{14}. Here, one view is seen as absolute and legitimate while the other is seen as relativized and questionable. The speakers may be speaking to each other but not with each other, and in this regard it is not a paradigmatic of two who act together as one.\textsuperscript{15}

The very possibility of monological thinking raises an important question concerning a dialogical theory of critical thinking. Can this kind of reasoning constitute a form of critical thinking? If we take seriously the dialogical nature of critical activity then I think that the answer is no. But here we might need to distinguish between (i) a monological presentation of arguments, where the intention of the speaker is to engage with you about the issue at hand, and (ii) a monological presentation of arguments where the intention of the speaker is to discredit another person irrespective of the worthiness of their views (e.g., in debating) or where they treat the other person as an object. While this second case seems incompatible with a

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid, pp. 37-38.
\textsuperscript{13} Indeed this could be seen to correspond to the 'adversarial method' in philosophy. See Janice Moulton: "A Paradigm of Philosophy: The Adversary Method" in Discovering Reality, eds. Harding, S., and Hintikka, M. The adversarial style is also a subject of feminist critique for this reason. See Re-Thinking Reason, ed. Walters, K.
\textsuperscript{15} This is, I think, why debating is a poor model of critical practice. It involves reasoning but is intentionally aimed at asserting one's own legitimacy over one's partner (who one generally intends to discredit). Walton points to debating as a form of argumentation in which the "real goal of each participant is to persuade some third party.". See Douglas Walton: "Commitment, Types of Dialogue and Fallacies" in Informal Logic, vol. 14, nos. 2&3, 1992. p. 94. At best, debating is weak-sense critical thinking.
dialogical relation between speaker and addressee, the first case of monological presentation of arguments is not so clear.

In the first case, what seems to present as monologue is not necessarily monologue after all - for in speaking I am still addressing you as a person (rather than object) and may see you as a participant in the inquiry. Here monologue may merely be a step in a longer dialogical process (for example, when we present our reasons to one another). What I think is important here is *that I see you as a participant* - for I may also relate to you as a person without treating you as a participant, and in this case the monologue really is a monologue (I may be giving you an explanation without any intention of letting you respond). In this case, even though I am not relating to you as an object, I do not think we would want to say we are dialogically engaged.

What this highlights is the role of *intentionality* in a dialogical conception of critical thinking. In particular, an intentionality directed toward seeking the truth and developing understanding together with others.\(^{15}\)

(ii) *Technical Dialogue: Dialogue as a Means to an End*

The idea that critical thinking involves a search for truth or understanding brings us to Buber’s definition of *technical dialogue* as dialogue “prompted by the need for objective understanding”.\(^{17}\) Firstly; the description of dialogue as *techne* suggests that dialogue is seen as a *means to an end*. Here, both inquiry and dialectic argumentation are seen as *purposive* forms of dialogue prompted by the need to know. This means-end conception was heavily underscored in conceptions of critical thinking I discussed in chapter 1. As Scriven reminds us:

> Let’s sum it up, then, by reminding ourselves of the whole point of logic and reasoning. Reasoning is the process whereby we get from old truths

---

\(^{15}\) I explore the issue of intentionality further in this chapter in relation to Gadamer, in the next chapter in relation to Plato, and again in chapter 5 in relation to communities of inquiry.

\(^{17}\) Martin Buber: *Between Man and Man*, p. 39. The following description of Buber’s concept of technical dialogue is framed more tentatively than the descriptions of monologue and genuine dialogue because Buber’s own account is much sketchier than the others. Its meaning is understood mainly through the way in which collectivity is contrasted to the community. I have taken collectivity to be an aspect of technical dialogue.
to new truths, from the known to the unknown, from the accepted to the debatable (in order to make it less debatable), and so on.\textsuperscript{18}

In characterizing technical dialogue as \textit{objective} Buber suggests that underlying our search for truth is the understanding that we are each bounded by our own subjectivity and that this limits our search for general understanding. We can either pretend an escape from this subjectivity by depersonalizing the language in which we state what we know or understand, or we can strive for objectivity by enlarging our view-point through engaging in dialogue with others.\textsuperscript{19} Such models often paint the human condition as one in which we are ultimately unable to escape our own atomistic existence as \textit{individuals} - the best we can do is to recognize subjectivity as a limitation of our existence and aim to expand our viewing point by opening ourselves to others' ideas. Dialogue becomes an important means by which we may come to broaden our own perspective and get closer to the truth.\textsuperscript{20} It enables us encounter, and imaginatively engage with, perspectives different from our own.\textsuperscript{21}

This focus on perspectivity raises an important question in relation to the connection between models of dialogue and critical thinking - namely; the question of how we should understand the connection between perspectivity, dialogue, and objectivity. We shall return to this question in a moment.

\textbf{(iii) Genuine Dialogue: Dialogue as Relationship}

Buber characterizes the difference between people engaged in technical dialogue and people engaged in genuine dialogue as the difference between a \textit{collection of individuals} and a \textit{community of persons}: “Collectivity is not a binding but a bundling together... but community is no longer being side to side but \textit{with} one another...”\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{18} Michael Scriven: \textit{Reasoning}, p. 57.
\textsuperscript{19} The paradigm example of this being the claims to 'objectivity' within science and the use of the impersonal voice within scientific discourse. Arendt also addresses this theme; I discuss this in the section on 'internalized dialogue' in chapter 4.
\textsuperscript{20} Paul, Scriven, and Siegel all stress the importance of dialogue on this basis. This raises the question of whether dialogue should be seen as a methodological tool to be employed when we reason - a methodology reasoners can use to improve their chances of getting their reasoning right - or whether dialogue is constitutive of what reasoning is.
\textsuperscript{21} Langsdorf points to the importance of imagination in critical thinking for this reason. See Lenore Langsdorf: “Is Critical Thinking a Technique, or a Means of Enlightenment?” in \textit{Re-Thinking Reason}, ed. Walters, K.
\textsuperscript{22} Martin Buber: \textit{Between Man and Man}, p. 51 (italics in the text).
Whereas technical dialogue involves *differentiation* and *objectification*, genuine dialogue is one of *direct association* and *engagement*.

The possibility for genuine dialogue depends on our capacity to address one another as persons. For Buber, the mode of attentiveness in genuine dialogue is characterized by the relationship between *I* and *Thou* - a characterization in which we approach the other as a first-person speaking subject who has presence for us.

The I-Thou relationship can perhaps be best understood by contrasting it to the relationships of I-It, and I-You. The I-It relation can be seen as the relation of the first person speaking subject to objects (to things) whereas I-You captures the relation of speaking subject to a second-person. Here the term *You* represents the impersonal *You* in German which speaks of formality or detachment from the person so addressed. In contrast, I-Thou (*Ich-Du*) is a relationship of personal engagement or connection, it is the form of address used between friends.\(^{23}\) I-Thou is more properly translated as I-You, where the term 'You' is understood as an *attached* relationship to another person. The I-Thou relation is the relation of *speaking subject* to *speaking subject* in which we acknowledge the first-person behind the second-person we see. When addressing a friend we do not attend to them as *idem*, from the outside, but rather, we address them as *ipse* and in so doing attend to them in their particularity as a person whose character or identity stands in an attached relationship to our own.\(^{24}\) Where, in the encounter between I-It and I-You we experience something (an object, a person), in an encounter between I and Thou what we experience is a *relation*.

Encounter is an experience of direct engagement, in which I and You lose our subjectivity in an encompassing oneness. As a *turning toward the other*, such dialogue involves reciprocity within the process of self-determination. We cannot speak when alone - to engage in dialogue requires the presence of an other, and the act of speaking is at once a self-determination and addressing of the other.

---

\(^{23}\) I have used the term 'Thou' because English makes no equivalent distinction between detached and attached relationships when characterizing our relationship to a second person. This is an important distinction for my argument.

\(^{24}\) Buber, Arendt, and Gadamer all call on the mode of relationship captured in the notion of friendship. How to characterize this relationship becomes the major subject of the next chapter.
"I require you to become, becoming I, I say You".  

The reciprocity of genuine dialogue involves

"receiving something that is said and feeling... approached for an answer".  

**Self-Determination and the Expressiveness of Speech**

For Buber, communion is a relationship which holds between *speaking* subjects and is therefore dependent on our capacity for speech. Here the capacity for speech is not a linguistic capacity, but an *expressive* one; it is the capacity of ‘that which is created’ to express something. Yet we need not answer the underlying theological question (who created?) in order to appreciate Buber’s characterization of genuine dialogue as the mode of relationship appropriate to *self-determining* subjects.  

Such dialogue captures the *quality of engagement* experienced by interlocutors who recognize each other’s speech as an act of mutual self-determination. To treat one another as self-determining subjects capable of *expression* is to treat one another as ends, rather than merely as a means toward our own ends. What this adds to our characterization of critical thinking as *techne* is the mode of attentiveness between speaking subjects as one in which we enter into communion - or relationship - with our conversational partners. This is a oneness not of identity but of *inter-dependence*.

In saying this, we must keep in mind that Lipman is correct in pointing out that the conditions of genuine dialogue are not sufficient in themselves to characterize inquiry - consider two friends sitting in companionable silence, each feels themselves spoken to and addressed by the other, however while their mode of interaction is dialogical, they cannot be described as *reasoning* together.  

If genuine dialogue is to characterize the relation between persons in critical thinking, for the encounter to constitute an inquiry, the constraints of inquiry will still need to form the foundation on which knowledge and understanding is developed.

---

26 Martin Buber: *Between Man and Man*, p. 38.  
27 This is why, for Buber, genuine dialogue is not limited to human relationship. Buber’s theology underlies the ‘Thou-Thou’ relationship expressed in genuine dialogue - for the mountain climber who climbs in the solitude of companionship views nature not as an ‘object’ but as something created, and thereby as capable of expression. Thus he is climbing in solitude but is not alone.
To appreciate the implications of genuine dialogue for a dialogical model of critical thinking we need to turn to Gadamer. Gadamer, like Buber, characterizes the I-Thou relationship as the experience of a relation between speaking subjects rather than an experiencing of one another as objects. Indeed, it is this experience of relationship that lies at the center of Gadamer’s hermeneutics. Yet in order to appreciate Gadamer’s contribution, we first need to return to the notion of critical thinking as techne - for Gadamer’s insight into the nature of inquiry does not replace the notion of critical thinking as a means to an end, but points to the way in which critical thinking is not to be regarded as merely a means.

Perspectivity and Shared Understanding

The notion of dialogue as techne raises the question of what it is to have a point of view or perspective and to what extent individual perspectives can be shared. At a very basic level there is a way in which our perspectives are uniquely ours and non-transferable - my perspective is uniquely mine in the sense that “all my experiences are my own”. It is I who experience them directly and who make sense of them - and this means making sense of them in light of my own historically achieved individuality. At this level we cannot occupy one another’s position.

Yet despite our individuality, histories may be similar, and in this sense our individual perspectives may overlap a great deal, encompassing much of the same content as one another’s. We drive on the same roads and we experience the same traffic and share the perception that there is not enough public parking available in the inner city area. It is this content that we communicate propositionally in the statement “There is not enough public parking in inner Melbourne”, and it is

28 Matthew Lipman: Thinking in Education, p. 236.
29 See Hans-Georg Gadamer: Truth and Method, pp. 358-362. Gadamer’s account of ‘Thou’ is consistent with Buber’s on this point. Buber writes: “The world of experience belongs to the basic word I-It. The basic word I-Thou establishes the world of relation” in I and Thou, p. 56. Whereas Gadamer writes: “A Thou is not an object but relates itself to us” and “Thou is not an object but is in relationship to us” in Truth and Method, both quotes from p. 321. While Gadamer’s concern is to show how hermeneutic interpretation can generate an ‘I-Thou’ relationship between reader and text, the same issue can be raised in regard to conversation.
agreement on the truth of these propositional contents that constitutes objective knowledge within our community.\footnote{Where objective truth is inter-subjectively determined in relation to communities (rather than individuals). Of course, what we consider this truth amounts to will depend on the theory of truth we subscribe to.}

It is important to remember, however, that perspectives themselves are not reducible to propositional contents. Perspectives are much richer than propositions, they include all that could be said, not just what is said. What \textit{could} be said is, in turn, dependent on our individual historicity. Perspectives not only involves what subjects say (propositional contents) but also includes, for instance, how they arrived at what they said, the range of their experiences, and how they see themselves in relation to what they say. We may agree that it is objectively true that Australia was not \textit{Terra Nullius} before European settlement, yet be committed to different political platforms.\footnote{\textit{Terra Nullius} literally means ‘empty land’ and characterizes Australia as an uninhabited land before European arrival in the late 1600’s, thereby denying Aboriginal Australians Land Rights.} Saying that we \textit{share the same perspective} as someone else is not to say that we arrived at our view the same way, nor is it necessarily to have the same associations or range of identifications with the view that’s shared. In this regard we need to keep the richness of content with the richness of the individual.

Viewed this way, arriving at agreement is not a matter of arriving at a shared point of view (or viewing point), rather, it is to arrive at agreement on certain propositional contents within our individual perspectives. But to identify objectivity with agreement on \textit{shared} propositional contents is not the same as identifying objectivity with \textit{detached} propositional contents. We may arrive at agreement on statements (regarding them as true) while still remaining attached to them as expressive of who we are as individuals. When I say “The concept of \textit{Terra Nullius} is wrong” I am speaking as a Liberal, whereas when you say it you are speaking as a Socialist. Here common-ground understanding represents those contents we can agree upon from within multiple \textit{attached} positions.
Objectivity and First Person Attachment

This issue of attachment is important for it directly influences the way we understand the nature of critical thinking as a search for truth. If critical thinking is seen as a means of ascertaining the truth of detached propositional contents alone, then our commitment to those contents will be seen either as an irrelevance or as a hindrance. Critical thinking will aim to determine which contents within our perspectives are ones we can put forward "objectively" - that is, free of our attachment to them - and it will be these contents that are then examined in relation to truth. Objective knowledge will capture what is true from all our perspectives - almost in spite of our perspectives. Yet to view objective understanding as detached propositional content in this way is to forfeit our first-person attachment to truth and meaning.

Alternatively, if we see critical thinking as a means of ascertaining the truth of attached propositional contents, then in asking "what is true" I will not be asking "What is true for all of us independently of who we are?" but asking "What is true for all of us given who we are?". In seeking truth together we will be aiming to determine where our perspectives overlap and what contents are shared in common between us. In asking the question of truth in relation to these multiply-attached shared contents we each approach the question attachedly from the inside. Objective knowledge, or common ground agreement, captures what is true from all our perspectives because of who we are (individually and collectively) and not in spite of who we are.

Importantly, this is not to say truth is determined relative to each perspective - it should not be confused with asking "what is true for me?" (independently of what is true for you). Extreme relativism and subjectivism are avoided because the question is posed by speaking subjects - and as such is a question posed within a dialogical

---

32 I am not agreeing with this formulation, just articulating it as a common understanding of how objectivity and subjectivity are seen to relate to perspectivity in certain accounts of knowledge, for instance in those of Nagel and Paul. In this regard, I think Buber was correct in calling knowledge as \textit{techne} a modern preoccupation. For example, it is reflected in the Logical Positivist's judgments regarding ethics, emotions, and taste as merely subjective because they were based on 'attached' feeling. As such, moral knowledge (etc.) was a matter of subjective understanding rather than truth. This view - that truth is something detached from who we are - implicitly underlies much of the thinking about critical thinking. It is this view I am arguing against.
(inter-locutionary) framework. In inquiring together we will be examining the question "what is true?" from within multiple attached perspectives. As such, the objective content will serve as a place from which to critique our own perspectivity, and each of our perspectives will serve as a place from which to critique what counts as the objective content. In searching for the truth together we allow for the possibility that my perspective, like yours, may need correction, or that what each of us took until now to be objectively true needs to be re-examined. It is this that enables the inquiry to self-correct as it proceeds.

That is, addressing the question "what is true?" will involve us in a two-way movement in which:

(i) Ascertaining what contents we share leads us to focus on the way we are individually attached to those contents, what they mean to us and what they reveal or tell us about ourselves.

(ii) Exploring the way we are each uniquely attached to shared contents will in turn lead us to critique what these 'common' or 'objective' contents amount to.

Determining what is true attachedly from within our perspectives looking out (that is, from the first-person perspective) will still involve us in determining truth relative to objective contents (propositional statements), for these shared contents will constitute an important part of our individual perspectives, but the truth of our view will not be reducible to the truth of those contents alone. This is an important consideration to

---

33 As I shall suggest in chapter 5, this makes dialogical inquiry compatible with certain forms of monism and with pluralism, but not with extreme relativism. In chapter 4 I develop the monist account through an exploration of Socratic dialogue, whereas in chapter 5 I develop a pluralist alternative. In accepting the uniqueness of persons it is, I argue, a pluralist account that needs to underpin a dialogical theory of critical thinking.

34 How we are to understand the notion of self-correction is a question I take up later.

I think that this two-way movement holds irrespective of whether we are committed to a correspondence theory of truth or consider truth to be relative to conceptual schemes. What is ruled out is an extreme relativism in relation to truth. Here Putnam's comment concerning conceptual relativity is relevant: "Our concepts may be culturally relative, but it does not follow that the truth or falsity of everything we say using those concepts is simply 'decided' by the culture.". Hilary Putnam: The Many Faces of Realism, p. 20. To rephrase this in relation to perspectives - while our perspective is unique to us, it does not follow that the truth or falsity of everything we say from within our perspective is simply 'decided' by the perspective itself.
keep in mind if we are to argue for the place of the personal in critical thinking.\textsuperscript{36} What we need to remember is that the objective contents or propositions we explore are themselves expressive of choices, interests, assumptions, values, and commitments in us. Ascertain the truth of our view will require us to explore what the shared contents within our perspectives mean to us and what they reveal or tell us about ourselves. It will involve us in an activity of self-critique. In this way critical thinking as a search for truth will lead not only to objective knowledge but to personal insight, discovery and realization.

To understand how this two-way movement is realized in critical thinking requires us to explore further how first-person perspectivity is connected to dialogue and objectivity.

Nagel’s Two Views of Objectivity: Broader Perspectivity or Detachment

For Thomas Nagel, dialogue as \textit{techne} enables us to achieve greater objectivity because it provides a means by which we can come to recognize the limits of our own perspectivity.\textsuperscript{37} Nagel States:

Objectivity is a method of understanding. It is beliefs and attitudes that are objective in the primary sense. Only derivatively do we call objective the truths that can be arrived at in this way. To acquire a more objective understanding of some aspect of life or the world, we step back from our initial view and form a new conception which has that view and its relation to the world as an object... the distinction between more subjective and more objective views is really a matter of degree... The wider the range of subjective types to which a form of understanding is accessible - the less it depends on specific subjective capacities - the more objective it is.\textsuperscript{38}

In this passage Nagel seems to be suggesting two characterizations of the relation between subjectivity and objectivity: firstly, (i) approaching objectivity from the perspective of a first-person who looks out as speaking subject on the world, then (ii) approaching objectivity from the perspective of a person’s intelligibility to other

\textsuperscript{36} That is, those elements Siegel identifies with a ‘critical spirit’ and I identify with our character as an historically achieved individual.

\textsuperscript{37} For an explication of this view see chapter 1 in Thomas Nagel: \textit{A View From Nowhere}, page 4 in particular. This view often underlies accounts of critical thinking - for instance, Paul’s position.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid, pp. 4-5.
subjective types, people who perceive the subject externally (as a second-person). In
the case of the former, my perspective is subjective in as much as it arises from my
historically achieved individuality, including my subjective capacities. Here my
perspective becomes more objective as I step back and take more of my particular
relation to the world into account. Such a view can be seen to be consistent with
Ricoeur’s account of the hermeneutic construction of self - objectivity increases the
more “I” as ipse (or speaking subject) takes “I” as idem (or object) into account.
Importantly, there is no suggestion here that increased objectivity makes my
perspective any less uniquely mine as a perspective. My (broader) view still speaks of
who I am as an historically achieved individual.

As an account of the hermeneutic process by which we come to develop our
understanding, I think this first account of Nagel’s is a correct one. However as an
account of objective understanding, I think it is problematic. I do not think that we
would want to claim that a view is more objective simply because it is more fully
worked out. This kind of hermeneutic reappraisal may simply lead us to develop a
more thorough understanding of a distinctly subjective view Indeed this is the case
with conspiracy theories. A person may begin with a vague notion that they are a
victim of a conspiracy. This may, over time, develop into a completely coherent
belief in the plot. From time to time, the victim steps back and re-evaluates their
beliefs and seeming evidence concerning the conspiracy in light of new information
or other points of view they encounter. However there is nothing to say that the
process of stepping back will lead such a person to a position that is more intelligible
to other individuals. We should not confuse the mere process of stepping back with
our intelligibility to others, or with common-ground (objective) understanding.\footnote{Here we need to ask what it is about the process of stepping back that enables general understanding to emerge - I take this up in chapter 5.}
Significantly, characterizing objectivity according to a process of hermeneutic
reappraisal maintains a connection between our perspective and who we are as a Self.
Whether there is room for such situatedness in the second case is not so clear.

39
In suggesting that my perspective is subjective in as much as it is inaccessible to others, Nagel places the emphasis on communicability. He suggests that objectivity does not result from stepping back and reflecting on our previous view from within a broader frame, but from stepping back in order to present our view as a detached propositional content to others. That is, I present it as a view (one I happen to believe is correct) rather than my view. For Nagel, what makes such a view objective is that it becomes disengaged from who we are - from our own “subjective capacities”.

Importantly, for Nagel, to regard our view detachedly is not to regard it as lacking perspectivity, only that the perspective represented in the view has now become impersonal. It is no longer expressive of who I am.

What really happens in the pursuit of objectivity is that a certain element of oneself, the impersonal or objective self, which can escape from the specific contingencies of one’s creaturely point of view, is allowed to predominate. Withdrawing into this element one detaches from the rest and develops an impersonal conception of the world...

... it is natural to seek a general understanding of reality, including ourselves, which does not depend on the fact that we are ourselves.

That is, in reasoning with others one subjects one’s perspective (separated from who one creaturely is as a spatio-temporal being) to “detached examination”.

**Intelligibility of Propositions and Intelligibility of Persons**

While there is something right about Nagel’s attempt to separate out the perspective from the individual, his account of perspectivity becomes too thin when it is separated from the particularity of the speaking subject. To accept that one is a self amongst other selves is not necessarily to detach from the self one is, nor is it to treat one’s perspectivity detachedly as propositional content.

Indeed the problem here is that Nagel seems to confuse the intelligibility of propositions with the intelligibility of persons. Nagel’s view suggests that it is one’s

---

40 For Nagel, other ‘subjective types’ are primarily other persons, though not necessarily only persons.
41 Ibid, p. 9.
42 Ibid, p. 25.
perspective (as expressed within the propositional content of what one says) which is intelligible, or communicated through dialogue, rather than one’s perspectivity - a perspectivity that includes all the things we could say, given who we are. In so doing, Nagel de-personalizes shared or common-ground understanding.

Nagel’s Realism
This detachment of our views from who we are explains why Nagel sees common-ground understanding as the closest we can pragmatically get to understanding the world as an independent object of which our perspectivity is only one feature. It is a position which arises out of Nagel’s realism. It is necessary to combine the recognition of our contingency, our finitude, and our containment in the world with an ambition of transcendence, however limited may be our success in achieving it... It means in particular not abandoning the pursuit of truth... Pursuit of the truth requires more than imagination: it requires the generation and decisive elimination of alternative possibilities until, ideally, only one remains, and it requires a habitual readiness to attack one’s own convictions. That is the only way real belief can be arrived at.

It is this generation and elimination of possibilities in the public space provided by language that is associated with dialectic argumentation. Indeed the persuasive force of argumentation rests on our creaturely detachment from the argument itself.

Propositional Truth, Missing Premises and Commitment
The informal logician’s concern for context can be seen in this light. It can be seen as a concern to articulate aspects of the speaker’s identity - their commitments, values, prior experiences, interests - within the propositional content of the formal argument itself. Stating a person’s commitments propositionally provides a “reconstructed profile or persona of a participant’s beliefs”. These propositional contents play the role of premises in arguments. Walton uses the term ‘dark commitments’ to refer to

---

43 Nagel also wants to argue that language has the capacity to reach beyond human experience and enable us to understand aspects of the external world that are beyond our perceptual capacity. It is because language occupies a position between individuals that it can ‘reach beyond’ what we experience individually or as a group. I am not sure why collective human perspectivity should tell us anything about the nature of things from outside that perspective. This is, I think, his mistake.

44 Ibid, p. 9
commitments which are “only partially apparent or plausibly surmised in the discussion”\textsuperscript{46} They are not explicitly contained in the propositional content of the argument and need to be “inferred by presumption”.\textsuperscript{47} To articulate dark commitments in propositional form is to provide missing premises. The identification and articulation of a speaker's commitments as propositional statements can be seen as an attempt to objectify and incorporate the person's identity - the speaking subject as a who - into the perspective of the argument itself as a detached object (a what). Walton views the commitment-set of an individual propositionally in this way.

The identification of a subject's commitments in dialogue with externalized or detached propositions, rather than with the “thoughts, ideas, and motives which may underlie them”, is seen to avoid a kind of psychologism.\textsuperscript{48} The threat of psychologism - understanding judgments in the context of a person's life, rather than in terms of concepts - goes back to Frege and is a concern to avoid seeing dialectic argumentation in relation to the person giving the argument rather than in relation to the argument itself. It seems that if the choice is between externalization and psychologism, externalization is seen to be preferable. My question is whether these represent the only two alternatives.

Indeed this construction of commitments points to what is deeply problematic about the view that critical thinking as argumentation is primarily concerned with the detached status of propositions. This approach represents a “naive faith in objectivity and method”.\textsuperscript{49} If we view arguments as an example of a product transmitted from within a certain tradition, then Gadamer's critique of interpretation within history is telling here:

Someone who understands tradition in this way makes it an object, i.e. he confronts it in a free and uninvolved way, and, by methodically excluding all subjective elements in regard to it, he discovers what it contains... he

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid, p. 97.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid, p. 94.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
thereby detaches himself from the continuous action of tradition, in which he himself has his historic reality.\textsuperscript{50}

Nagel also seems to be aware of this problem when he points out that while this detachment enables us to develop objective understanding, it also creates “the new problem of reintegration”.

...the problem of how to incorporate these results into the life and self-knowledge of an ordinary human being. One has to be the creature whom one has subjected to detached examination...\textsuperscript{51}

Indeed to understand a person’s commitments in terms of what a person is propositionally willing to accept as true is to miss the point about commitments altogether. To be committed to something (the legalization of abortion for instance) is not merely to observe one’s perspective (or persona) detachedly from the outside, but to see oneself as attached to the point of view expressed.\textsuperscript{52} If we say “yes” detachedly - observing our self as a second-person from the outside - then we are merely communicating what a person with a particular persona, or viewpoint is committed to. Communicating one’s commitment to others is not the same as being committed. Nagel makes a similar point in relation to action:

...my doing of an act - or doing of an act by someone else - seems to disappear when we think of the world objectively. There is no room for agency... Even if we add sensations, perceptions, feelings we don’t get action, or doing - there is only what happens... Action has its own irreducibly internal aspect as do other psychological phenomena... \textsuperscript{53}

It is the actions’ attachment to me that is irreducible and internal - they are my actions. If we take critical thinking as a form of action, then this is true of critical thinking. To say “yes” attachedly from the inside looking out is not only to communicate the commitments embedded in a particular perspective to others, but at

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{51} Thomas Nagel: A View From Nowhere, p. 9.


\textsuperscript{53} Thomas Nagel: A View From Nowhere, p. 111.

123
the same time to say who we are. Here we do not need to integrate what we are willing to affirm with who we are because there was no prior separation of the two.

The problem Nagel identifies only arises because of the external detachment associated with a model of dialectic argumentation and critical thinking soley as techne. It is this detachment that transforms dialogue as activity between first-person speaking subjects into dialectic argumentation between second-persons who face one another as idem from the outside. To put this another way; to see dialectic argumentation as the assessment of propositions from 'the outside looking in' is to approach critical thinking as a form of detached textual analysis. It is to see arguments as constituting texts which communicate a particular perspective, or point of view, but which are detached from who we are as arguers. The purpose of dialogue is then primarily seen as determining the acceptability of arguments, rather than understanding who we, as speakers, are through our arguments.

Remaining Attached in Critical Thinking
The model I am rejecting views the principal end to which critical thinking is a means as that of reaching agreement on detached propositions. Such a view places only incidental significance on the relationship between the argument and the person arguing and thereby marginalizes the meaning of the argument for me. It is a model which is reflected in comments such as:

---

54 Hannah Arendt makes this point in The Human Condition, p. 179-180.
55 Brinton points to dialectic as "essentially first-person/second-person" such that to reason dialectically with oneself is to cast oneself into both first- and second-person roles. Thus, to say, "I won't have dessert if I don't finish these papers," is not a clear case of dialectical reasoning; but to say, "Self, no dessert for you unless you finish these papers," is. (See Alan Brinton: "The Ad Baculum Re-Clothed" in Informal Logic, vol. 14, nos. 2&3, 1992. pp. 86-87.) It would seem that Brinton considers the first case to be unclear because it leaves ambiguous whether the "I" finishing the papers is perceived as the speaking subject (ipse) or the person addressed (idem). Yet, if our construction of the relationship between interlocutors in dialectic argumentation means that in cases of internal reasoning we are required to consider our self as you - unattachedly from the outside - this suggests a serious problem with the model; the persuasive force of the argument lies in the fact that this 'you' is 'I' and not some detached 'other'. I am concerned with missing out on dessert myself. This is the problem Nagel identifies as the problem of integrating the consequences of the argument for me. It raises the question of what it means to be the second person oneself - how can I be both attached and detached? N.B.: Brinton is actually concerned with whether the former is a clear case of Ad Baculum reasoning, but the grounds on which he questions it is whether it satisfies the first-person/second-person condition for dialectic.
Arguments are given in rational discourse in order to persuade, in order to arrive, by reason, at agreement. It is wrong, therefore, to assume that the only point, or even just the main point, of considering an argument is to settle - for oneself - the issue in question.  

or

The goal of a critical discussion is to resolve a conflict of opinions by rational means. But in practice, too often critical discussions... on controversial issues fail to result in a clear-cut resolution of the issues. Even so, such a discussion can be very valuable, it is conceded, in virtue of its having revealed the commitments of the participants more fully.

This value of increased insight into one’s own position was called “self-knowledge” by Socrates... This capability to reveal previously hidden commitments could be called the _maieutic function_ of dialogue... It ought to be stressed here that the maieutic function of dialogue is an important _side-benefit_ of a good critical discussion. By revealing the fallacies and logical faults in his arguments on an issue, a critical discussion can prepare the way for knowledge by clarifying an argument’s commitments.  

Walton rightly points out two ways critical discussion can be valuable - it can lead to settling the issue at hand (by revealing fallacies and clarifying the argument’s commitments) and it can lead the arguer to clarify their own commitments thereby achieving self-knowledge or insight. But why is insight seen as a _secondary_ aspect of the inquiry? Revealing fallacies and logical faults in the text of the argument can lead to insight or self-knowledge only if the arguer sees him or herself _in_ the text under discussion and thus realizes something about their own commitments. Such insight, or gains in self-knowledge, is not a mere ‘side-benefit’ of the discussion but part of what constitutes it. Here, the maieutic function of discussion will be centrally important to what makes the critical discussion a good, or beneficial, one in the first place. Indeed we could say that now the maieutic function is primary and the side-benefit of discussion is to resolve the issue through the explicit statement, and communication, of our commitments.  

---  

58 Socrates' tutoring of his pupils led them to greater self-knowledge because they remained attached to the points of view they expressed and were required to examine as text. The question is whether Socrates was similarly engaged or whether he examined their ideas _detachedly_ from the second-person perspective. That is, whether he too had the potential to gain self-knowledge.
The question is whether there is a way of attaching arguments to critical thinkers as particular speaking subjects without relativizing those arguments to the individual or propelling us into psychologism. The possibility of such an attached view leads us back to Nagel's original characterization of objectivity from the perspective of the speaking subject who looks out on the world. However here Nagel is concerned only with the internal thinking of individuals - the view from inside each thinker as they increasingly take their own previous perspectives into account. The question is, what would a hermeneutic model of dialogue between two such subjects look like? What would a model of critical thinking look like if, instead of the text or argument being attached to one partner (the first-person ipse) and detached from the other (the second-person idem), the one text was seen to be attached to both speakers - attached to both addressee and addressee? It is Gadamer who offers us a model of what such hermeneutic engagement might look like.

First-Person Attachment and Gadamer's Hermeneutics

Gadamer's insightful distinction between speech and text highlights the error we make when we model a dialogical conception of critical thinking after a model of dialectic argumentation by which critical thinking is construed as the detached (second-person) assessment of given arguments.

For Gadamer, dialogue is seen not merely as a means to determining truth, but also gives expression to who we are. In inquiry we speak our views attachedly as first-persons and, in the process, experience our dialogical counterpart as another first-person, a Thou. Through Gadamer we come to see how critical thinking not only engages us in dialogue as techne but also brings us into a direct relationship with other persons. Indeed, it is Gadamer's characterization that offers us a rich understanding of the way two first-persons can be seen to address a common object together and, in the process, give shape to the activity of critical thinking as a dialogical search for truth and meaning.

59 Thus satisfying my suggestion that critical thinking involves an attentiveness toward propositional content according to Buber's account of dialogue as techne, and an attachment toward another according to Buber's account of genuine dialogue.
In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer points to an important distinction between the status of the word in speech and text. While both conversation and textual analysis are interpretative and concerned with an object placed before them, in speech we stand in direct relationship to both the historicity and meaning of the object - for me to speak is for me to mean something now, and the meaning (or possible range of meaning) is what is communicated through the words. The words uttered, the argument I develop, never becomes detached from my speaking it and thus there is no object-in-itself apart from my saying of it. In this, the word spoken constitutes an event not an object, and speech itself is an action people engage in, one that remains attached to them as individuals. To take part in dialogue is to feel oneself directly addressed by one’s dialogical partner, and in speaking, to address them in turn. The content of what is said becomes temporally located in the life of the individuals who participate in it. It is this sense of speech as a living mutual relation between people that links Gadamer’s hermeneutics to Buber’s characterization of genuine dialogue.

Indeed, for Gadamer, it is only when the act of speaking becomes temporally discontinuous with it’s addressing someone that the word becomes an object-in-itself. This is the status of the written word. In written texts words mediate between speaker and addressee. The written word becomes a-temporal, once written it lies “...idling and abstracted from its use” until it is reinvested with meaning by a reader. The written text, then, is a secondary form of dialogue (with the primary form of dialogue being the public spoken word). It is only in this secondary situation that the person addressed approaches the text detachedly in the second-person.

**The Rendering of Text into Speech**

Yet for Gadamer, even if we were to consider given arguments to be texts (or objects-in-themselves) whose existence lies independent of who we are, we cannot engage with them from this detached position. In order for text to speak - for the propositions to come to mean something - the words must once again become part of

---

60 My account of Gadamer’s approach to speech and text, and his metaphor of a ‘fusion of horizons’ between speakers, is drawn from *Truth and Method*, Part II, Section B, through to Part III, Section 1 (1994 edition, pp. 277 - 389). In general, references are only given to specific quotes.

61 Joel Weinsheimer: *Gadamer’s Hermeneutics: A Reading of Truth and Method*, p. 243.
a particular conversation in which the historicity of author, text, and reader become linked through the words spoken. The reader attaches themselves to the text by re-speaking (reading) it, thereby reconstituting the text as a temporal event. This re-introduces an historical, personal, and temporal dimension to the argument (as object) by transforming the detached word back into a language event, a communication carried out between specific individuals at a specific time.

But this means that the interpreter’s own thoughts too have gone into re-awakening the text’s meaning. In this the interpreter’s own horizon is decisive, yet not as a personal standpoint that he maintains or enforces, but more as an opinion and a possibility that one brings into play and puts at risk, and that helps one truly to make one’s own what the text says.  

The horizon of which Gadamer speaks is the horizon created by the question that lies behind every statement, the thing which is not known, which motivated the participant to speak and to which the statement is a response. The limit of this horizon consists in the range of possible answers to which this question leads. Every answer, every statement or argument, needs to be seen in relation to the question which preceded it and for which it was the answer. If I am to understand what you are claiming to be true when you say “Abortion is wrong” I need to understand the underlying questions concerning the sanctity of life and limits on human action that led you to this statement. I can only do this by asking myself “What underlies this statement for me?” In this way I come to think with you regarding the issue at hand. For Gadamer, this is the role of question and answer in hermeneutic interpretation and can be seen as the essence of dialogue, or substantive conversation. In conversation we approach what another says as their answer to a prior question, and in interpreting or judging what is said, we in seek to understand the range of possible questions for us it could answer. In order to hear the other we must bring ourselves to the object spoken.

...it belongs to every true conversation that each person opens himself to the other, truly accepts his point of view as valid and transposes himself into the other to such an extent that he understands not the particular individual but what he says. What is to be grasped is the substantive rightness of his opinion, so that we can be at one with each other on the

---

63 Ibid, p. 370.
subject. Thus we do not relate the other’s opinion to him, but to our own opinions and views.64

When a translator interprets a conversation, he can make mutual understanding possible only if he participates in the subject under discussion; so also in relation to a text it is indispensable that the interpreter participate in its meaning.65

Such dialogue moves us beyond our subjectivity not merely by informing us what another person thinks, but by joining us with one another in a moment of shared conversation in which we generate our thinking as one. Such conversation generates community out of individuals, for the resulting shared understanding is not reducible to either participant individually. The object, or argument, becomes objective, in the sense that it constitutes something in common between them, but is nevertheless attached to who they are through their very participation in the conversation.66 Indeed “...this is what takes place in conversation, in which something is expressed that is not only mine or my author’s, but common”.67 In this regard Gadamer’s metaphor of ‘fusion’ points to the holism of the emerging collective understanding.

To reach understanding in a dialogue is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one’s point of view, but being transformed into a communion, in which we do not remain what we were.68

Dialogue as the Pursuit of Knowledge

If we take Gadamer’s model of dialectic argumentation as a model for critical thinking, this relationship between question and answer creates a tension in the pursuit of objective (common ground) understanding. Rather than merely seeking to settle the issue at hand, or come to agreement on the object before us, dialectic will also aim to uncover the further question underlying any answer we achieve. Thus we will be propelled from opinion to question - from knowing to not knowing - and from there back to a further opinion. In arriving at common-ground understanding, all such propositions will be temporally situated. We will need to recognize that they

64 Ibid, p. 385 (my italics).
65 Ibid, p. 388.
66 In Arendtian terms it comes to exist in the space in-between speakers. I explore Arendt’s notion of the ln-between in chapter 5.
67 Ibid. I explore this sense of community formed around a common problem in chapter 5.

129
constitute answers for us now given the questions that currently shape our horizons. Answers, as propositions or arguments, may therefore be superseded in response to further questions. Such conversation can be seen to be "...propelled from behind by lack and difference but also drawn from before by possibility and community."  

Importantly, the questions that propel the dialogue will now arise out of bringing the horizons of both participants to bear on the object before them together. Here it makes no sense to speak of pursuing truth detachedly, the conversation as a dialogue will be propelled by the interplay between two attached perspectives. It is only if we forget this attachment, and see answers detachedly as an objective truth separate from ourselves, that we loose the impetus for dialogue and the possibility for further insight. That is, in dialogue we follow the conversation where it leads. "... all playing is a being-played... the game masters the players..."  

In viewing statements detachedly we lose sight of the fact that the meaning of statements lead back to the richness of who we are. We lose the impetus for dialogue when the answer no longer leads us to uncover further questions (questions in us) that may in turn become the new focus of the inquiry. In this regard Gadamer takes Socrates as an exemplar of the hermeneutic process. By acknowledging that he does not know - by acknowledging his ignorance and partiality of his understanding - Socrates leaves the way open for further dialogue. The question and answer we find in Plato leads to insight and self-knowledge precisely because Socrates seeks to re-instinate the voracity of the questions for which his dialogical partners consider they already have the answers, and through this motivates them to ask the questions anew:  

... people who think they know better cannot even ask the right questions. In order to be able to ask, one must want to know, and that means knowing that one does not know.  

---

69 Joel Weinsheimer: Gadamer's Hermeneutics: A Reading of Truth and Method, p. 209.  
71 Ibid, p. 363. See also p. 375.
Truth and Meaning as Motivations for Inquiry

While, for Gadamer, truth exists in a realist sense (and it is the search for this capital ‘T’) Truth that motivates, and is revealed through, the activity of inquiry, pragmatically common-ground understanding is the closest we can get to understanding what the truth is. Common-ground understanding reveals historically determined truth (truth with a little ‘t’) because truth is revealed in, and limited by, our historically situated horizons and the way they merge. In this way truth is never free from interpretation. While I agree with Gadamer that common-ground understanding is historically influenced, and agree with him that there is a way the world is, I do not think that when we engage in inquiry we are seeking this ultimate (and ultimately inaccessible) capital ‘T’ Truth. Rather, I think we are motivated to engage in dialogue in order to determine what it is we can agree upon (what we hold as true according to our common ground understanding), where our differences lie, and to enrich our understanding. That is, we are concerned with both truth and meaning, both for us collectively and for us as individuals. While the hermeneutic process of argumentation, and its rejection of claims to truth free from interpretative schemes, may seem to condemn all knowledge to the charge of relativism, it is a relativism consisting of the boundaries, or horizons, of whole language communities (or conceptual schemes) - it does not lead toward individual subjectivism, for this would deny our own historicity. Indeed, in the broadest sense, the claim to know may be limited merely by human perspectivity.

In agreeing with Gadamer that we engage in dialogue as a search for truth (whatever we consider the status of this truth to be), there is a further question about how the search for truth motivates the dialogue. In suggesting that we view critical thinking as a form of dialogue (i) driven from behind by questions and (ii) aiming at common ground understanding, I am suggesting that the search for truth and meaning are

72 Here I have borrowed Hilary Putnam’s distinction between small ‘r’ realism and metaphysical Realism (with a capital ‘R’). See Hilary Putnam: Realism with a Human Face.
73 In this I am in agreement with Hilary Putnam’s account of realism and truth in Realism with a Human Face.
74 If we accept Gadamer’s realism concerning truth, then there is no charge of relativism. However, if we reject realism (as I think we must) then this becomes an issue. I return to this in chapter 5 where I suggest that this recognition of particularity in critical thinking on one hand, and the recognition of
inextricably connected. That is, critical thinking will not only be concerned with criticism (determining the truth of statements, determining where our reasoning is going wrong), but will also involve critique (exploration of meaning, and significance, determining what counts) as we come to a richer understanding of the meaning of the statement for us, both collectively and as individuals. This suggests that methodologies of both criticism and critique will find their place in a conception of critical thinking.\footnote{This opens the question of the relationship between dialogical inquiry, critical theory and critical pedagogy, however this question is complex and goes beyond the scope of this thesis.} We might see this more broadly as a search for knowledge.

**To Understand or to Persuade?**

If we take critical thinking, or argumentation, to be motivated primarily by questions - by not knowing and wanting to know - rather than by the desire to persuade someone toward what we already know - we change the relationship between dialogical partners and the function of dialectic. While dialogue as *techne* will still be aimed at arriving at truth, it will now also be aimed at understanding the object and its relation to ourselves more fully.\footnote{As Levi reminds us: "...what we should be doing when we think critically. We should be seeking a better understanding of the issues, not a final verdict on the argument." See Don Levi: "The Limits of Critical Thinking" in *Informal Logic*, vol. 14, nos. 2&3, 1992. p. 144.} Such dialogue will still involve the traditional moves of argumentation - the weighing of argument against counter-arguments, the forming of inferences, and the avoidance of infelicity - however it will also involve arriving at critical understanding. The dialogue will not only be directed toward reaching common understanding concerning a *statement* or argument, but will also be directed toward determining the appropriate range of *questions* for which it was the answer - to determine which question(s) out of the many possible questions enables us to better understand the statement *as* an answer. As with Socrates, we may still begin our inquiry with statement - but we attend to the statement or opinion as an answer that will lead us into further questions.\footnote{I return to this in my discussion of *Theaetetus* in chapter 4.}

What would be the shape of such inquiry? In bringing dialectic argumentation to bear on the abortion debate, we come to the inquiry with our existing pro- and anti-
abortion positions not as conclusions to which we want to persuade others, but as vehicles through which to once again address the underlying questions as genuine questions for us. In engaging in critical thinking we aim not only to resolve the pro-and anti-abortion debate as far as possible between us (to determine the truth of the matter or achieve greater common ground understanding), but to understand more fully what being pro- or anti-abortion means - what questions these positions provide meaningful answers to - and determining what our own commitments are in relation to those questions. In this way, dialogue may lead us each to better understand our own views, to realize more clearly where the differences between our views lie or to develop an better appreciation of our own particular commitments and values. Offering criticism toward our partner’s argument would not be aimed at persuading them their view is wrong or needs modification - to convince them that our reasons constitute better reasons for believing - but to explore and illuminate our views more fully with one another such that emerging understandings develop and any emerging inconsistencies addressed. In this we face one another as persons who are engaged in the process of self-creation or self-determination as the inquiry proceeds. Importantly, within this process dialectic will still be aimed toward agreement on the content under discussion (and thus may result in greater objective or common-ground understanding about the issues involved) but such agreement is achieved neither by persuasion nor by assessment of detached second-person arguments.

Similarly, consider the following scenario: Meeting you on the street, I express the opinion that logging should stop in Victoria’s State forests. You respond with an argument supporting sustainable felling. In listening to your argument, I realize that my thinking is founded on a belief in the value of bio-diversity, a belief you do not share. We agree that this is a difference in our subjective values, a difference regarding the way we want the world to be. We discuss this for a while and you question the value of new forests in relation to native wildlife, pointing out that it is only the logging of old-growth forests that endanger the habitats of the native animals. In thinking about this, I come to see that it is the old growth forests that I should be concerned to see protected from logging, not all State forests. I now come
to agree with you that some sustainable felling - sustainable felling within new
growth forests - may be acceptable and recognize that I will need to give this more
thought. With this we go our separate ways.

In talking together, we have each been thinking critically about the logging issue,
engaging in dialectic argumentation about several sub-issues involved. We have
certainly reached greater agreement - however this agreement is not agreement in the
sense of a verdict (should the State’s Forests be logged?). The agreement we have
reached is agreement in the sense of shared understanding. Dialogue has led us to a
mutual recognition of the appropriate range of questions or issues which underlie and
inform our opinions. We have been led to a deeper understanding of our own view
and a deeper appreciation of one-another’s.

In engaging in such dialectic argumentation, our intention was not primarily to
persuade one another, but to illuminate the issue together. Even when I was
seemingly persuaded by your arguments - for instance, in relation to the biological
value of new forests - it is not that I saw the correctness of your view detachedly, but
that the way the discussion unfolded led me to a realize something for myself about
my own position. In talking with you I came to understand how your arguments
connected to the questions underlying my position (the questions for which my
position was an answer) and this led me to see how my own position needed to be
modified if it was to be an adequate response to those questions. That is, your
arguments persuaded me to modify my position precisely because I related to my
own position attachedly - as my answer to a set of questions that were significant
questions for me - and I saw how your answer related to that set of questions. We can
say that the conversation was led by the object (the dialogue), rather than by either of
us individually, because the horizon in which the discussion operated did not exist
prior to its enactment.

To conduct a conversation means to allow oneself to be conducted by the
subject matter [object] to which the partners in the dialogue are oriented.
It requires that one does not try to argue the other person down but that
one really considers the weight of the other’s opinion. Hence it is the art
of testing. But the art of testing is the art of questioning... As against the
fixity of opinions, questioning makes the object and all its possibilities
Dialectic consists not in trying to discover the weakness of what is said, but in bringing out its real strength. It is not the art of arguing (which is able to make a strong case out of a weak one) but the art of thinking (which can strengthen objections by referring to the subject matter [object]).

By acknowledging the priority of the question over the answer, dialectic generates answers which transcend the subjective opinions of the partners to the dialogue because the meaning of the argument itself is not known prior to the dialogue. The meaning of the argument only exists in relation to the partners engaged in it. If, however, we give priority to the answer by entering into dialogue primarily in order to persuade or convince others of our opinion (together with the reasoning that led to that opinion or conclusion) then we are claiming to already know before we begin conversing together. In aiming to persuade others of our view, the range of possible questions underlying the argument is itself no longer open to us. If this is the case, we no longer have genuine inquiry at all for there is nothing left to determine.

Recognizing the dangers of such persuasion, characterizations of critical thinking as dialectic stress that, in aiming to persuade, we must at the same time leave ourselves open to be persuaded - that we need to consider our own views as open to revision. Without this, what passes as critical thinking is at best only critical thinking in the weak sense. But what are we doing when we leave our views open to revision if not acknowledging that the question for which ‘our view’ is an answer is not at least potentially still a real question for us? That is, acknowledging the priority of question over the answer? As such, the ensuing discussion will not merely aim to persuade someone who disagrees with us of the correctness of our view, nor aim merely to establish a conclusion, but to join with others in an investigation of the issue.

---

78 Hans-Georg Gadamer: Truth and Method, (1994 edition), p. 367. The 1975 translation (p. 331) uses the term ‘object’ rather than ‘subject matter’ - which is, I think, a little clearer as Gadamer repeatedly describes the object as being partly constituted by the horizons of the participants. The more general term ‘subject matter’ has everyday connotations of constituting a topic which stands independent of our own views on it. Thus I have added the clarifier [object] to the quote taken from the 1975 edition.


80 Joining with others in an investigation - the purpose being to come to a better understanding - could be seen as fulfilling the purpose of ‘establishing’ (as per P. Chittleborough and M.E. Newman: “Defining the Term Argument” in Informal Logic, vol. 15, no. 3, 1993), but if establishing conclusions is the purpose, the emphasis shifts significantly. The focus in argumentation is shifted from the mode of engagement to the establishment of content, from thinking something through
These two aims of dialectic (persuasion and understanding\(^{81}\)) are not contradictory in relation to the way dialectic pragmatically proceeds (for instance; a pattern consisting of statement - question - statement - revision of statement - question - evaluation of inference - question - statement - etc.), nor does one place higher value on the formal rules governing intelligibility and infelicity than the other, however they need to be understood according to distinct and incompatible models of dialogue.

They are incompatible both in respect to the kind of relationship which exists between participants and in respect to the relationship between participants and the object they address. Gadamer’s model differs from Nagel’s in two regards. (i) The process of dialectic is driven by the fused horizons of the participants - by the questions and which arise for them both as historically achieved individuals. As such, dialogue is characterized from the perspective of the community - of two who act together as one - rather than from the perspective of the individual thinker who encounters another thinker; and (ii) The process of dialectic is a collaborative search for meaning which involves the development of arguments rather than an attempt to persuade toward a pre-existing argument. Both these aspects depend upon the attachment between speaker and the word spoken, on seeing arguments as conversations rather than written texts.

**Inquiry as Unified Action: The Community of Inquiry**

In Chapter 2 I suggested that there was a weaker and stronger conception of dialogical inquiry. There I focused on the weaker sense of dialogue as inter-subjective communication in order to show how human relationship, and the

\(^{81}\) Sometimes referred to as the difference between 'critique and criticism'. See discussion of the etymology of 'critical' in Laura Kaplan: “Teaching Intellectual Autonomy” in *Re-Thinking Reason*, ed. Walters, K.
moral realm, are integral to a dialogical conception of critical thinking. What my discussion of Gadamer points to, however, is the stronger sense in which dialogue may function as a form of unified action through which two people come to participate in a single inquiry together.

The concept of communication as unified action is elucidated by Charles Taylor in his discussion of dialogical action. For Taylor, paradigmatic examples of dialogical action are “two people sawing a log with a two handled saw, or a couple dancing”, such action contains more than mere co-ordination, it requires and sustains an integrated whole.\(^{82}\)

Now, in cases of sawing a log and ballroom dancing, it is crucial to their rhythming that it is shared. These [actions] only come off when we place ourselves in a common rhythm in which our component action is taken up. This is a different experience from coordinating my action with yours.\(^{83}\)

A collection of individuals may co-ordinate action with one another, but a community engages in action together. This stronger sense of dialogical inquiry is captured in the concept of a community of inquiry. In engaging in dialogue together there is a common rhythm to the inquiry in which our component actions are taken up. It is this joint participation in something shared that binds epistemic and moral constraints on inquiry together, for participants in joint action stand in concrete relationships with one another as they inquire together.

While Taylor speaks of the cadence of conversation in terms of the mutual head nodding and the rhythming of people’s entrances and exists from the conversational space, it seems to me that his notion of cadence may be equally applicable to the cognitive and moral participation that is integral to thinking about an issue together with other people. We might say that in inquiry cadence is expressed not only in the participatory social rhythm of the conversation but also in the cognitive entrances and exists from one another’s points of view and in the moral rhythm of approachment.


\(^{83}\) Ibid, p. 62.
and withdrawal which sustain the integrated unity of the inquiry as a whole. A rhythm which is expressed in the way are first introduced into the public realm and then held up to critical reflection, and through the process of question and answer through which the inquiry is invigorated and led forward. It is by viewing dialogical inquiry in this richer sense - as a form of dialogical action - that we are able to maintain the unity of a single inquiry in which two think together as one. As with Gadamer’s account of play, inquiry in which two act together as one constitutes a single event in which our individual component actions are taken up. In treating critical thinking as dialogical action the cognitive and moral dimensions of discourse are no longer extricable from one another.

It is this account of dialogical inquiry as dialogical action which responds both to (i) to the need for a richer conception of dialogue that I raised in my discussion of Nicholas Burbules’ account of critical thinking, and (ii) adds to our discussion of inquiry as participation in a language game. As dialogical action, inquiry will involve speaking with others as a member of an inquiring community, rather than internalizing the rules governing the way the community speaks from the outside. As we noted in our discussion of critical thinking as dialogical activity in chapter 2, this changes the parameters of what is meant when we speak of what it means to become a critical thinker. We learn to think critically by participating in the game as well as by mastering the rules. We play a game from the inside as participant, and this means bringing our own particularity to bear on the game as well as learning to apply the appropriate rules.

It is this richer notion of dialogical inquiry that I consider necessary to underpin a dialogical, or social, view of critical thinking. Yet such a view poses two further challenges for a dialogical theory of critical thinking: (i) the challenge of maintaining a place for autonomy within a conception of critical thinking as unified action; and,

---

84 I discuss this notion of dialogical action in relation to Socratic inquiry in chapter 4, and in relation to the phenomenology of joint action in chapter 5.
85 I explore this further in relation to intentional communities in chapter 5.
86 In my discussion of Burbules’ thicker account of rationality as reasonableness in chapter 2, I pointed to the need to show how epistemic and moral constraints on inquiry are related. I elaborate on this further in chapters 4, 5 and 6.
(ii) the challenge of providing an account of the moral and epistemological constraints which govern dialogical inquiry as a form of unified action. I take these challenges up in the chapters ahead.

**Critical Thinking: External Constraints and Individual Practice**

It is in Gadamer’s notion of substantive conversation as a form of play *propelled by the object* that we can come to a better appreciation of the connection between external constraints of critical thinking and individual practice. The activity of inquiry may be likened to playing a game. As in playing a game, the play plays us.\(^{88}\)

We bring ourselves to the dialogue - and in this it is personal - but the dialogue itself leads us forward. It is the *activity* of dialogical engagement that leads our inquiry. It plays us on two accounts; firstly, the dialogue is propelled not by my thinking alone or yours, but by the dialogue itself which is connected to both of us. Secondly; the dialogue leads us both by establishing what it is *possible* to say - the rules establishing what will count as a move in the game - and this will be determined by the type of dialogue it is. To be engaged in critical thinking will involve being engaged in a game which operates according to a defined set of rules within a field of particular shape. The conversation between a psychotherapist and patient will proceed according to a different set of rules than those governing dialogical inquiry.

\[^{87}\] Indeed for Wittgenstein, the practices involved in playing the game are taken as primary.

\[^{88}\] For a discussion of Gadamer’s notion of play and its relevance to dialogue see: Richard Bernstein’s *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, pp. 118-126.

requires a playing field. Setting off the playing field.... sets off the sphere of play as a closed world.\textsuperscript{90}

It is in the way the dialogue is led by the object within the ‘play’ of dialogical inquiry that prevents critical thinking as attached first-person conversation from falling into psychologism. Where the conversation between psychotherapist and patient has the patient themselves as the object of inquiry, in critical thinking the object of inquiry is thought (the dialogue itself), and the rules which structure the play are concerned with the evaluation of thoughts not persons. To recognize that the object is attached to, and reflective of, individuals does not mean that we turn to investigate the individuals in order to evaluate the thought.\textsuperscript{91}

Indeed this analysis offers a promising approach to the ‘Network Problem’ in critical thinking. Ralph Johnson describes the network problem as the problem of distinguishing between critical thinking and its close cousins (problem solving, argumentation, metacognition, argumentation, rationality, decision making, rational thinking). For Johnson:

\begin{quote}
Sorting out the relationships among the members of this network is... one of the principle tasks that must be dispatched before we can expect an adequate theory of critical thinking. \textsuperscript{92}
\end{quote}

Johnson points out that one way of differentiating these terms may be in relation to what these ‘ends’ amount to - for instance, he tentatively suggests that the ‘end’ to problem solving is finding the solution to a problem, whereas the ‘end’ to which critical thinking aspires is the evaluation and appreciation of some intellectual product.\textsuperscript{93} But, as he is quick to admit, differentiating games solely in terms of their

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{91} In \textit{Therapeutic Discourse and Socratic Dialogue}, Maranhao offers a fascinating account of the difference. Dialogical inquiry and dialogical therapy share much in common: Both are oral forms of discourse, hermeneutic and narrative in form; both require a conception of dialogue as interlocutionary practice and conceive the person in developmental terms such that his or her identity is revealed through the process of discourse. However, they also differ in that the therapist’s interventions spring from textual programs for action, and this manifests itself in the way the dialogue is played out; for example, in the way dialogue is affected by the inequity of relation between therapist and patient and the way the ‘personality’ presented by the therapist is only partially authentic. Interestingly, both the issue of equality and authenticity are raised in relation to the role of teachers in leading dialogical inquiry.


140
ends will not provide us with a rich enough framework to explore the similarities and
differences that lie between them, for this we need “a theory of reasoning in which
these terms are all given appropriate identity and location in respect to one
another”.

Here is where Gadamer's notion of playing a game may be useful - for it allows a
multi-dimensional approach to understanding the nature of each game and the
possible points of inter-relationship between them. In developing this analogy,
different modes of reasoning may be seen to constitute different games (critical
thinking, problem solving, etc.,) each played according to different (but related) sets
of rules on differently shaped fields. Such an approach would seek to explain the
differences between different forms of reasoning neither solely in terms of the rules
governing their play, nor by the shape of the field. Rather, it would seek to explain
the similarities and differences between the various ‘games’ of critical thinking,
problem solving, etc., according to the complex set of the relationships between what
is seen to count as a move, the shape of the inquiry, and how these aspects find
expression in the activity of play (thinking critically, solving problems, etc.). Because
the game exists only in its being playing, to describe the game, or theorize about it,
will require us to pay attention to the interrelationships between rules, shape of field,
and the specific identity of the players (both individually and as a team) and how
these factors come together to propel the game's play overall.

95 Here the rules of the game might correspond to the normatively defined set of moves seen as
defining the game (e.g.; inferring as a defining move in informal logic, openness to rebuttal as a
defining move for critical thinking, etc.), whereas the shape of the field would be determined by such
factors as the relationship between players and the games history. In exploring the relationship
between different games in the network we might find some rules or moves general to all these
games (e.g.; inferring), while others are more local (e.g.; acceptability conditions). We might decide
that the shape of all the fields share certain characteristics that affect the game's play the same way
(e.g.; the shape as dialogical allowing an openness to rebuttal), or we may decide that the
relationship between the shape of the field and form of play cannot be generalized. This will have
serious implications for how we view the question of generalizability - that is, in what ways we think
learning to play one game prepares us to play, or increases our proficiency at playing, another.
96 Thus, on this account, some instances of ‘solving a problem’ would count as instances of critical
thinking and some would not. In as much as the activity required reflective deliberation on a problem
and the reflection was attentive to external constraints (such as principles of logic), it would count as
a case of problem solving that could be described as critical thinking - if on the other hand ‘solving a
problem' involved brainstorming and then randomly selecting one of the ideas to see if it helped, it
may still achieve its end (solve the problem), but it would not count as an instance of critical
thinking.
The Differences between Conversation and Inquiry

Not all dialogical activity constitutes inquiry. For conversation to count as inquiry the dialogue must seek something out, the dialogue needs to be the mechanism by which we aim to resolve or explore some content in pursuit of getting ‘from old truths to new truths’, etc. It is this notion of dialogue as a method or procedure for seeking truth and understanding that establishes the rules of the critical thinking game. In this regard the rules governing dialogical inquiry will be significantly different from the rules governing social conversation and this in turn will influence the boundaries and form of the games play.97 Lipman notes:

A conversation is an exchange: of feelings, of thoughts, of information, of understandings. A dialogue is an exploration, an inquiry. Those who converse with one another do so cooperatively... the aim is to extend [it] as long as possible. Those who engage in dialogue do so collaboratively... the aim is to resolve the case in as short a time as possible...

In contrasting conversation with dialogue, one of the things that is striking is the way in which the conversation aims at equilibrium while dialogue aims at disequilibrium... disequilibrium is enforced in order to enforce forward movement. One cannot help thinking of the analogy with walking, where you move forward by constantly throwing yourself off balance. When you walk, you never have both your feet solidly on the ground at the same time. Each step forward makes a further step forward possible; in a dialogue, each argument evokes a counterargument that pushes itself beyond the other and pushes the other beyond itself.98

The rules of social conversation may require that we remain intelligible to one another, that we take a degree of interest in the exchange (and this may involve seeking the questions behind what is spoken), and that we look to scaffold our own contributions onto some aspect of what our conversational partner has said. In this it is an exchange involving interpretation and reasoning. Indeed a good conversation may be generative of new ideas and lead to insight and understanding. However in inquiry the purpose of the activity is to think anew on a specific issue or question. We begin inquiry with a question, something we seek to know, and aim to develop

97 I argue for what I take to be the external constraints on critical thinking in chapter 6. Notably, the conditions of non-contradiction, trust, care, and respect.
understanding and establish truth, but we do so in order to raise new questions. Maintaining a *conversation* requires us to continue to have something to say, maintaining *inquiry* requires us to continue to have something we are ignorant about. While the rules governing conversation involve co-ordination (deciding how the conversation will proceed) they do not require us to collaborate together. A conversation will count as such even if I speak about one thing and you another as long as the transitions between turns flows smoothly enough. In contrast, dialogical inquiry requires joint action if we are to move beyond our current thinking.

**The Movement of Dialogue and Self-Correction**

The *play* of critical activity will involve a two-way movement between common ground understanding and our own perspectivity - using our perspectivity to critique common understanding, and common understanding to critique our own perspective. In this way the very possibility of hermeneutic engagement (and critical thinking) requires that we bring our own historically achieved perspectivity - prior understandings, our ignorance and questions - to the task. Here, the movement of criticism and critique that leads us from certainty to uncertainty and back to certainty again not only leads us forward in relation to the ‘content’ of our inquiry, but also in relation to ourselves.

In order that dialogical inquiry establish objective knowledge, or common ground understanding, the dialogical exchange will need to be regulated by (i) constraints that stop our reasoning from going wrong (e.g., logic); by (ii) the procedures that enable us to explore our thinking with one another as we establish together what counts as an answer (providing reasons, establishing criteria, giving examples), and (iii) by the general constraints on dialogical action (constraints of intelligibility, trust, care and respect).

---

99 This characterizes dialogical inquiry as a certain kind of intentional activity. I explore this in chapter 5 by turning to Sellars’ and Carr’s discussions of shared intentionality.

100 While co-operation is possible even within a power relationship (conversations can be carried out between wardens and prisoners without altering the relation of power and inequality between them), I take it that *collaboration* is only possible between equals (at least, equality in relation to the thing they collaborate about).
The two-way movement of dialogical inquiry suggests that one of the constraints on inquiry is that we be open to changing our minds, to critiquing our own perspectivity, as we investigate the topic, or content, together. Inquiry not only requires an open question, but requires us to be open as well. Just as inquiry will be precluded if we are already consider we have the answer, so too will inquiry be precluded if we enter it rigidly committed to our existing self-perception. As such, the very notion of self-correction encompasses both the correction of the object of inquiry and the correction of our own perspectives as outlooks on the world. Here, the participant’s identity can be seen itself to be shaped by the critique and criticism that comes from examining a common object together in light of who the participant is.

The mutuality of collaborative inquiry in which two think together as one gives rise to another way in which the inquiry’s forward movement and self-correction is made possible. Ann Sharp points out that in a community of inquiry participants are conscious not of themselves as separate subjects of experience but of themselves as a single reasoning community.\(^\text{101}\) This sense of oneness or mutuality experienced in genuine dialogue enables participants to think with and for one another. It enables participants to help one another with their thinking. Such mutuality is expressed when one person finds words that clearly express an idea that someone else is struggling to articulate, or has articulated badly, or when participants hear one set of words and understand another responding with “Is this what you mean?...”, or when they ask “does anyone know what I’m trying to say?” Here the concept of self-correction refers not to the capacity for the inquiry to self-correct in relation to logical error, or to affect (even correct) individual perspectives on an issue, but to the dialogical community’s capacity to self-correct in relation to the articulation, clarity of expression, and communicability of ideas as they are expressed, explored, and developed together within the inquiry.\(^\text{102}\)


\(^{102}\) Indeed, here we might see the public argument as a communal object corrected by the hermeneutic clarification and appraisal conducted by a communal ‘self’. I develop this idea in chapter 5.
The Place of Logic in Dialogical Inquiry

In discussing the idea that dialogical inquiry is led by the object, I suggested that the process of self-correction emerged from the inquiry’s dialogical nature. Yet while it is perhaps easy to see how the two-way movement of inquiry enables the individual to critique their own perspectivity (leading to insight) and how individual perspectivities can contribute to a critique of the common object (thereby leading to new understanding of the content) there is a further question of how logical form is connected to the dialogical process. For Gadamer it is the game’s play that gives rise to the rules which give structure to the play. Similarly, for Lipman, the rules governing the way inquiry proceeds will emerge out of the activity of the inquiry itself. Yet what does it mean for the rules of the critical thinking game - the external rules of logic - to emerge through (or arise from within) the game’s play?

At a basic level, the question is whether we see dialogical inquiry (or critical thinking) as an activity in which we bring logic to the inquiry, or whether we see logical form as arising from within the inquiry. This is an important question in relation to the development of critical thinking. Do we need to master the rules before we take part in a game, or do we master them through playing it? Do we require drilling in the rules (learning logic and how to avoid informal fallacies) before we can be expected to reason with others and think critically for ourselves, or is it sufficient to place people in a dialogical situation and encourage them to pursue the truth? Is the dialogical process itself sufficient to generate the logical tools necessary to stop the reasoning from going wrong? Here Lipman follows Dewey in suggesting that logical form is generated through reasoning and is only later formalized into rules.

... logical forms (with their characteristic properties) arise within the operation of inquiry and are concerned with control of inquiry so that they yield warranted assertions. This conception implies much more than

---

103 Lipman makes this point in relation to the deliberation of a jury giving rise to the rules governing the way the deliberation shall proceed. See Thinking in Education, p. 218-219.

104 Furthermore, if we see logic as emerging from the activity of inquiry, we face a further question concerning the relationship of logic to particular language communities - whether there is one logic or multiple logics (relative to different traditions of dialogue and inquiry). I shall not be exploring this question in this thesis, although the challenge such an idea poses may be seen as an example of the challenge of plurality in critical thinking in general. This I discuss in chapter 5.
that logical forms are disclosed or come to light when we reflect upon the processes of inquiry that are in use. Of course it means that; but it also means that the forms originate in operations of inquiry. To employ a convenient expression, it means that while inquiry into inquiry is the *causa cognoscendi* of logical forms, primary inquiry itself is *causa essendi* of the forms which inquiry into inquiry discloses.\(^{105}\)

Reflection on the inquiry will lead to an awareness of the logical form of the argument, but the form itself emerged from within the inquiry.\(^{106}\) The flow of the dialogue itself generates the logical structures that constituted the argument. This suggests that logic is deeply embedded in the structure of our language, but does not require that we see one having priority over the other. What it requires is a recognition that traditions (in this case our tradition of argumentation) are developed and transmitted through dialogical activity. It is because dialogical inquiry involves both initiation into language use (speech) and reflection on what is transmitted through speech (propositional contents) that it is gives rise to logical development and self-correction within the inquiry itself. In this way the inquiry is seen to be propelled by the object’s (i.e.; the dialogue’s) own logical requiredness.

As a community of inquiry proceeds with its deliberations, every move engenders some new requiredness. The discovery of a piece of evidence throws light on the nature of some new evidence that is now needed. The disclosure of a claim makes it necessary to discover the reasons for that claim. The making of an inference compels the participants to explore what was being assumed...Each move sets up a train of countering or supporting moves.\(^{107}\)

Lipman stresses that inquiry - in contrast to conversation - is led principally by the unfolding *logical* requirements of the dialogue. However it is important to remember that these requirements are not the dialogue’s only propelling force. As noted earlier, the dialogue will also be propelled by the two-way movement between individual orientation and common content which together establish the underlying questions the dialogue pursues and challenges the emerging collective understanding.


\(^{106}\) This is not to say that teaching the rules explicitly has no place. Lipman is also committed to students’ mastering the rules through drilling as the rules become relevant.

\(^{107}\) Matthew Lipman, *Thinking in Education*, p. 236.
Choosing to Engage in Critical Thinking

The decision to play the critical thinking game reveals *who* we are, both in the way the form of the game reflects our achieved individuality and in our very choice to engage in the activity at all. This leads us back to our observations concerning critical dispositions and our discussion of Taylor in the previous chapter. To be disposed to think critically requires me to see a life of reason as a qualitatively better way to live and to choose it as a mode of life for myself. That is, to be a critical thinker involves choosing to submit my thinking to the constraints of critique and criticism, and this is a qualitative distinction I make about the sort of ‘games’ I consider worth playing.\(^{108}\)

...it seems to me characteristic of human play that it plays *something*. That means that the structure of movement to which it submits has a definite quality that the player “chooses.” First... by wanting to play. But even within his readiness to play he makes a choice. He chooses this game rather than that.\(^{109}\)

Of course we may just find ourselves playing because we find ourselves in a game (we may have teachers who don’t talk about critical thinking but who lead us to think that way and we develop the unconscious habit), or we might play because we are required to play (for instance, if we are taking a course in critical thinking), however neither of these cases produces what is needed in the end. In the first case, we may be acting critically but we will not recognize or understand that this is what we are doing, nor be able to choose to play this way for ourselves when encountering a new situation. We will not be able to *care* about whether we think critically - indeed we may just as easily find ourselves in the midst of a different game. In the second case we will see the process of critical thinking as an activity as something separate from ourselves, and while we may learn the rules and apply them to specific tasks, the resulting ‘game’ will be a distortion - what will be lacking is the genuine intrigue and motivation that comes from seeing the object of inquiry as addressing questions that

\(^{108}\) This reminds us of the point I made in the discussion of dispositions - that the disposition to engage in critical thinking results from a choice we make that arises out of seeing a life of reason as a qualitatively better way to live.

are genuine questions for ourselves. What is lost is the dynamic interaction between object and subject.\textsuperscript{110}

This is, perhaps, the major limitation in taking a textbook or fallacies approach to teaching critical thinking. Even when an attempt is made to make the problems in critical thinking texts realistic there is no subject for whom the content of the inquiry is real, and therefore there is no motivation for the student to ask themselves what questions the argument may be a response to. Students therefore look see whether the argument fits the rules of the game, rather than attempt to understand it as a piece of the play.\textsuperscript{111}

**Critical Thinking as an End**

It is through this activity of play that inquiry as a form of *techne* gives rise to inquiry as *poesis* - or creation - and thereby becomes an end in itself and not merely a means. This is to lead us back to Buber's characterization of dialogue as a relation between persons. For Hannah Arendt the distinction between means and ends is a distinction between carrying out an existing procedure or sequence (*techne*) and initiating something new (*poesis*). Persons are ends because they are able to create new sequences through action.\textsuperscript{112} This *generative* capacity arises out of our freedom to choose action - including the action of inquiry - for ourselves. In discussing the problem of free will and causation, Arendt refers to Kant's example of rising from a chair commenting that:

\[\ldots\] there is something fundamentally wrong with Kant's example. Only if he, arising from his chair, has something in mind he wishes to do, does the "event" start a "new series"; if this is not the case, if he habitually gets up at this time or if he gets up to fetch something he needs for his present occupation, this event is itself the continuation of a preceding series.\textsuperscript{113}

\textsuperscript{110} Richard J. Bernstein: |Beyond Objectivism and Relativism|, pp. 122-123. Bernstein notes that, for Gadamer, to describe the phenomena as an object 'out there' distorts the very thing you are trying to understand because it denies the dynamic interaction between subject and object.

\textsuperscript{111} The artificiality of the examples set up in critical thinking texts has been a source of criticism because they lack realism. I am suggesting that 'realistic' examples suffer just as badly. Both invite the wrong sort of attention to be brought to bear.

\textsuperscript{112} I further explore Arendt's conception of ends and inquiry as an end in itself in chapter 5, part II.

\textsuperscript{113} The passage Arendt is responding to reads: "if...I at this moment arise from my chair...a new series...has its |absolute| beginning in this event, although [he adds] as regards time this event is only
The judgment of whether the event of Kant standing up constitutes the beginning of a new series is not a matter of what he does, but what led him to do it. If standing was merely a means to an established end (something habitually done, a means of carrying out a task already begun) then it does not constitute something new, it is not an act of initiation and he is not acting as an end in himself. Only if the activity of standing signals an affirmation, a purposeful response to something he wishes to do, does the action constitute a new beginning; for here the possibility of not standing was equally a possibility. At the time of standing, the action of standing was a contingent act - he could have done otherwise, even though the same act, “from the perspective of memory... now being an accomplished fact, of become part and parcel of the reality in which we live” seemed necessary - it seemed he could have done none other.\textsuperscript{114}

This discussion of standing is reminiscent of Taylor’s comments concerning the seeming necessity of acting as we do. What is initially a choice to carry out a certain action - to respond to a situation a certain way - on reflection seems necessary. What is created is a person who acts the way this person has acted; that is, a person’s character develops. We are initiators, or ends in our ourselves, in as much as we are self-determining regarding the mode of life we choose to lead - we establish our own projects, make strong evaluations, and adopt rules to live by individually and collectively. To do a critical thinking exercise because it was placed before us will not be generative of something new in this way. We might say dialogical inquiry is an end and not merely a means when participants come to the inquiry; (i)wanting to engage with the topic and with one another; and, (ii) with the intention of initiating something new. In such a situation the two-way movement of critique and criticism may be generative both of new knowledge (about the subject under investigation) and of ourselves (our character, our perspectivity).

\textsuperscript{114} Hannah Arendt: The Life of the Mind: Willing, p. 30.
Indeed it is this capacity to initiate something new through inquiry that places on us a cognitive responsibility toward our views. We are obliged to take responsibility (individually and as a group) for the picture of the world that our emerging view entails, and we do so by being cognitively accountable for that which we say (we feel an obligation to supply reasons, consider alternatives, modify our view in light of further considerations). Indeed we might say that such responsibility arises not only because the propositional content is attached to who we are but because we are responsible for it as its creator. In this case our responsibility toward the inquiry is seen to stem not only from our collaboration in the inquiry as a process of techne, but from our involvement in the inquiry as a form of poesis.

When critical thinking is viewed as dialogical inquiry, critical thinking is creative, or generative, because it involves our participation in an argument which is in turn attached to another. The horizon of questions are not a ‘given’ existing prior to the inquiry, but are themselves generated through dialogue as the inquiry proceeds. Similarly, the relationship between us as inquirers is not a given that exists prior to inquiry but is realized in the activity of interlocution. In this regard critical thinking is both an end in itself and a means.

This view of critical thinking as poesis sheds light on the way in which creativity is fundamentally embedded within critical thinking. Rather than dichotomizing the differences, regarding critical and creative thinking as two kinds of thinking, I think we need to pay greater attention to the way creativity and criticism emerge from

---

115 See Matthew Lipman: Thinking in Education, p. 118.
116 I referred to Lipman’s notion of cognitive responsibility in relation to who we are in chapter 1.
117 For a general discussion of creativity and critical thinking, see Raymond S. Nickerson, David Perkins, and Edward E. Smith: The Teaching of Thinking, pp. 86-100. The distinction between creativity and critical thinking as two distinct modes of thinking is a common one in the critical thinking literature. (McPeck might be considered paradigmatic of this approach. See John McPeck: Critical Thinking and Education.) While some theorists argue for the role of creativity in critical thinking, such accounts continue to be problematic in as much as they maintain the dichotomy between critical and creative modes of thought, suggesting that a person’s critical thinking is more effective if that person also thinks creatively. At times they are portrayed as contrastive opposites. In particular, see Peter Elbow: “Teaching Two Kinds of Thinking by Teaching Writing”; and Kerry Walters: “Critical Thinking, Rationality, and the Vulcanization of Students”, both in Re-Thinking Reason, ed. Walters, K.
within the play of critical activity itself. To see the object of inquiry as *attached* content is to see subject and object as interconnected. To see ourselves in the propositional content is to allow for the possibility that insight (*poiesis*) may emerge from hearing a counter-example or articulating a premise, and that detecting a fault in logic (*techne*) may come about through introspective reflection. On this account, the capacity for *poiesis* within inquiry does not lie in a different kind of *thinking*, but in *us*; it lies in our capacity to speak, to generate and transmit meaning.

Perhaps what the links between technical and communicative aspects of dialogue point to are the relational constraints that underlie the very activity of inquiry itself. Here the primary constraint on critical thinking will be that of non-contradiction - for contradiction destroys the very relations on which inquiry is founded. However, we need to be careful here not to view relationship - and the constraints of non-contradiction - solely in terms of logical relations between propositional contents. Rather we need to broaden our understanding of non-contradiction to capture the kind of non-contrary relations that underlie inter-personal (or moral) and hermeneutic (interpretative) activity as *dia*-logical activities.

Indeed this is where Plato’s Socratic dialogues may be seen to be particularly illuminating. Plato provides us with a vivid portrait of first person speaking subjects as they engage in inquiry together. Plato was not only concerned with the structure of arguments, but also with the possibilities of relationship between dialogical partners as they engaged in the search for truth together. As such, his dialogues provide us with an ideal vehicle through which to explore the relational non-contradictory structure underlying dialogical inquiry. Furthermore, it seems to me that Plato too was clearly concerned with the way context, orientation, commitments and the maieutic effect of inquiry contribute toward a unity of self, dialectic and truth. It is the relational structures which underlie Socratic dialogue that I set out to explore in the next chapter.

---

118 Sharon Ballin is, I think, right here in suggesting that inquiry involves the “dynamic interplay of generation and constraint” and that this interplay requires us to recognize the role of creativity within critical thinking itself. See “Discovery, Justification, and the Generalizability Question” in *The Generalizability of Critical Thinking*, ed. Norris, S. See pp. 93-95 in particular (quote is from p. 95).
Aristotle, speaking about friendship, remarked: "The friend is another self" ... Socrates would have said: The self, too, is a kind of friend. The guiding experience in these matters is, of course, friendship and not selfhood.

Arendt

...one needs friends to be able to think.

Leah Bradshaw

CHAPTER 4

Socratic Inquiry

Socratic Inquiry as a Paradigm for Critical Thinking

In drawing upon the Socratic tradition, theorists writing on critical thinking, philosophical inquiry, and dialectical argumentation have drawn attention to different features of Plato’s dialogues to characterize their understanding of dialogue as critical activity. Within this literature much attention has been placed on Socratic questions, on the relationship between Socrates and his dialogical partners, the nature and function of Socratic irony, and on Socrates’ sincerity within the dialogues.

My focus in this chapter is to explore the relational structures which underlie Socratic inquiry and to see how these relationships are effected by our conceptions of (i) unity, (ii) persons, and (iii) knowledge. Here I suggest that the structure of Socratic inquiry is best characterized dialogically as a relation between friends.

---

1 Hannah Arendt: The Life of the Mind: Thinking, p. 189.
2 Leah Bradshaw: Acting and Thinking: The Political Thought of Hannah Arendt, p. 119.
3 Throughout this chapter my references to Socrates are to the fictional character in Plato’s dialogues. As Kidd rightly notes: "Plato wrote, created and directed the whole" (p. 83). How much Plato’s Socrates reflects the historical figure is an open question. See Ian Kidd: "Socratic Questions" in Socratic Questions, ed. Gower, B., and Stokes, M.
Indeed for Plato, the unity of the individual, of inquiry, and of knowledge, may each be seen to be expressive of this same structure.

However, as Amelie Rorty succinctly notes: “The concept of a person is not a concept that stands still.” As our concept of persons changes, so too will our understanding of the relations between friends and the conditions that enable friendship to flourish - for our concept of human friendship is intimately bound up with our concept of persons. Indeed, while the relationship between friends may continue to characterize the underlying structure of relations within a community of inquiry, what this relation signifies today will be different than what it signified for Plato.

Surprisingly, the differences between Platonic and contemporary theories of persons has not been explored in depth within the critical thinking literature, despite the many references to critical thinking as “Socratic” in nature. These differences, however, will have a strong impact on the way we understand the unity of dialogical inquiry. Indeed this lack of appreciation for the differences between Plato’s

---

4 For instance, if we view persons (selves) as socio-politically defined according to their place within public life, we will be led to describe the relations between persons in terms of the socio-political structure. Friendship will then characterize the situation in which the unity of the polis flourishes. However if we view persons as autonomous, self-determining subjects, we will be led to characterize the relationship between individuals in terms of parameters of freedom and responsibility. The relationship between friends might then focus on such issues as the possibility of altruism and how to understand the balance between freedom and responsibility. If we view persons as socially constructed, then our description would be different again - here, relations between persons will be expressed in terms of their interdependence, and the unity of friendship characterized in terms of such notions as community, human solidarity, or mutuality. In each case the paradigm of 'friendship' will symbolize a relation of non-contradiction and interdependence. For all such descriptions friendship will be seen as paradigmatic of a thriving form of inter-relationship.


6 While increasing attention has been given to notions of disembodied and embodied knowledge and the implications of this for critical thinking, little attention has been given to differences in theories of persons. Differences in theories of persons do underlie some critiques of theories of critical thinking, for example, within some postmodern critiques of modernist conceptions of critical thinking (See Nicholas Burbules: “Reasonable Doubt: Toward a Postmodern Defense of Reason as an Educational Aim” in Critical Conversations in Philosophy of Education, ed. Kohli, W.; and Karen Warren: “Critical Thinking and Feminism” in Re-Thinking Reason, ed. Walters, K.) However the difference between ancient Greek understanding of persons, etc., and the implications of this difference for our understanding of Socratic inquiry as a model of critical thinking, has not been explored within the critical thinking literature. This is the case despite many appeals to the Socratic paradigm. This is why I turn primarily to scholars writing on Plato to appreciate this difference in this chapter.
conception of persons and our own might be seen to have led to a distorted understanding of Socratic method and its relevance for a contemporary theory of critical thinking. I noted this briefly in chapter 2 in reference to (i) the maieutic function of Socratic inquiry, and (ii) the kind of attachment between dialogical partners and the object of inquiry. We can also see this in the way critical thinking theorists characterize the engagement between Socrates and his dialogical partners.

Indeed, understanding these differences is particularly important in relation to my own construction of a dialogical theory of critical thinking, for the theory I develop in this thesis is Socratic in its structure but not in its commitments. I am not suggesting a return to Ideal Forms, to a Platonic conception of individuals or to a monistic theory of truth. I am, however, suggesting that (i) the dialogical structure of inquiry be understood as a relation between friends; (ii) that critical thinking can best be characterized as a search to realize logos, rather than merely as a search for propositional truth (though what we mean by logos will differ from Plato); and, (iii) that Plato’s dialogues might broaden our understanding of non-contradiction within inquiry by capturing not only the logical non-contradiction required for realizing logos, but also the kind of non-contrary relations that characterize inter-personal (or moral) and hermeneutic (interpretative) activity as dialogical activity in which two act together as one.

With this in mind, our task now becomes twofold.

(i) To take a detailed look at Socratic method:
   To examine the structure of Socratic dialogue in light of Plato’s conception of unity, persons and knowledge.

(ii) To explore how our own account of persons as both unique and as ends-in-themselves transforms our understanding of the unity of friendship, and with it the way we understand the structural unity of dialogical inquiry.

Whereas (i) remains the focus of this chapter, (ii) becomes the focus of chapter 5.

---

7 A distortion arising from superimposing contemporary notions of persons, unity, and the nature of argumentation onto our reading of Plato’s dialogues.
The Unity of Complex Wholes

Both Socratic Inquiry and dialogue within a community of inquiry offer models of reasoning in which two or more subjects form a single unit in their reasoning together. However, it is not at all clear how to conceptualize this notion of we. At the beginning of chapter 3 I noted that we need to think of the dialogical relationship holistically, yet the problem underlying any holistic account of we is the problem of individuation. How are we to understand the unity of the individual (each being one, in and of ourselves) given that together we constitute a single indivisible unit?

To characterize two (you and I) as one (we) suggests that unity, or oneness, is itself a matter of complexity. Whereas a simple unit is one because it contains no parts (and therefore no internal relations), a complex whole is one because it is not reducible to its parts. It is this holism that underlies the unity of dialogical inquiry such that:

(i) Two may reason together as one.
   (Finding a way to establish unity within public dialectic - between self and other)

(ii) One reasons as if he/she were two.
    (Finding a way to establish unity reflexively - between me and myself)

We might account for the unity (or irreducibility) of complex wholes in three ways:
(i) we may see them as irreducible because the relationship between parts (as well as parts) are constitutive of the whole; (ii) we may consider them irreducible because the relationship between the parts contributes to the identity of the individual parts at a time; or (iii) we may consider them irreducible because the relationship between the parts contributes to the identity of the individual parts over time.

What would such unity look like? We might take a piano as an example of (i), and an eco-system and novel as examples of (ii) and (iii) respectively. While the piano is more than the bits of wood and felt, etc., from which it is constructed (and this ‘more’ could be seen as the spatial network of relations between the parts), if one of the parts was altered - let’s say a wooden key replaced an ivory one - this would not

8 Mary McCabe uses the term 'complex whole' when developing a theory of Plato’s concept of individuals. See Plato’s Individuals, chapter 9. For McCabe, the term characterizes a ‘complex and inter-connected entity.’
alter the nature of the relationship between parts nor the identity of the other parts themselves. In the case of an eco-system, however, there is a dynamic interdependence between parts. Changes in one species or changes in the physical environment may bring about physiological changes in other animals and changes in the relationship between species which inhabit the region. Similarly, in the case of a novel, changing one part (let’s say the ending) may change what is meant by other passages (for instance, how we interpret the beginning). While both (ii) and (iii) may involve dynamic change over time, the difference between them concerns the temporal nature of the relationship between parts when determining the unity of the whole. In the case of an ecosystem, we speak of its unity (or state of equilibrium) at any one time. The unity of a novel or conversation is different in this regard. Here the unity is hermeneutic with the unity of the system (the novel, the conversation) necessarily incorporating a temporal span.

So the question we need to explore is which sort of unity, or holism, characterizes the complex whole of dialogical inquiry?\(^9\) Whereas Socrates’ concern for unity was primarily a concern for unity at a time (between a person’s life and belief, between their beliefs, between interlocutors), the contemporary focus on narrative unity shifts the concern to one of hermeneutic unity over time. This will effect the way we characterize the we of friendship, and with it the unity of the dialogical relationship.

The Dialogical Relation “Neither-Nor”

While complex wholes can tolerate difference between parts they cannot tolerate contradictory relationships, for such contradiction will break the one into two. The challenge Socrates repeatedly confronts in the Dialogues is how to establish a non-contradictory relation between parts that seemingly stand in opposition to one another (for example, opposition between himself and his dialogical partners, or contradiction within a set of beliefs). In order to establish unity across such

\(^9\) For Plato, it may not be a matter of deciding between different forms of holism so much as determining how each sort of holism manifests itself - for instance, in relation to logos, Plato’s theory of the forms suggests that the unity of logos is like the piano, yet the ‘reconstructed’ logos in this world seems to reflect the unity of an eco-system. Finally, the process of determining logos - giving birth to ideas and examining them might be seen as hermeneutic unity - what is understood changes, previous conclusions and statements are called into question and reassessed for meaning and truth. (e.g., *Theaetetus* 189e-190a, 191a ).
contrariness Socrates turns to the dialogical relation neither-nor. The relation 
neither-nor enables Socrates to establish a “friendly” (non-contrary) relationship 
between oppositionaries while avoiding contradiction.

Take the following propositions:

(i) “Either we agree or we disagree”, (or “It is either X or Y.”)
(ii) “Neither do we agree nor do we disagree”, (or “it is neither X nor Y”).

In the first case, to decide on an issue in which we hold opposing views requires us 
to accept one alternative and reject the other. The choice is binary and cannot 
accommodate difference - we dismiss one of the options as we latch on to the other. 
Either we agree, in which case we think the same, or we disagree, in which case the 
“we think” fragments into an oppositionary “I think” and “You think”.

The case of neither-nor is different. Rather than focusing on a choice between binary 
opposites, our attention is drawn to the multiple relations between alternatives. Here 
the unity of the whole supervenes on interdependent parts; we are invited to hold 
opposing views in juxtaposition and to investigate each one in light of what it says 
about the other. Through this juxtaposition we develop a view of the whole that is 
not reducible to our understanding of each component part separately.

We can see this in the different way Laches and Socrates relate to Nicias in Laches. 
Whereas Laches seeks to dismiss Nicias’ views because they stand in opposition to 
his own, Socrates preserves the contrast and tension between the differing views by 
encouraging Nicias in the development of his ideas and by bringing the differing 
views to bear upon one another. Whereas Laches’ approach is binary (either we 
agree with Laches or we agree with Nicias), Socrates’ highlights the multiple 
relations between views by neither dismissing them out of hand nor fully accepting 
them. Through this he accommodates them within a single inquiry. In this way the 
relation neither-nor preserves the contrast and tension that exists when 
oppositionaries are brought into relationship with one another without landing us in

10 Plato: Laches. For a clear illustration of this process see Laches 195a-e.
contradiction. For Socrates, it is this relation that captures the complex unity of the dialogical relationship. Indeed it seems to me that it is this relation that lies at the heart of Socratic inquiry, Socratic irony and Socrates’ disavowal of knowledge.\(^{11}\)

So far in this chapter we have primarily been exploring what unifies a complex whole, however the problem of individuation also involves the question of what counts as a whole (what counts as a single-thing, a ‘one’).\(^{12}\) Here the difference between Plato’s concept of individuals and the contemporary account of persons will have a strong impact.\(^{13}\) In order to explore this further, we need first to explore these different conceptions of the unity of persons.

**Unity of Persons**

Drawing on Jean-Pierre Vernant, Samuel Scolnicov points to three different conceptions of individuals or persons:\(^{14}\)

1) The individual, in a restricted sense, defined by his place, function and worth within the group.

2) ...the subject ...the individual who speaks about himself in the first person, expressing his own characteristics, which distinguish him from the others in his group.

3) ...the person: “The entirety of psychological practices and attitudes which give the subject a dimension of interiority and unity, which constitute him within himself as a real, original and unique being, a singular individual... to which no one except he himself can have access, because it defines itself as one’s consciousness of oneself”

Scolnicov and McCabe both point out that at the time of Plato the individual was thought of only in the first two senses.\(^{15}\) This is not to deny that individuals had a

---

\(^{11}\) To argue for the unity of dialectic in terms of the inter-dependence between parts is to argue a stronger case than McCabe suggests in *Plato’s Individuals*.

\(^{12}\) We might put the two questions of individuation thus: (i) What counts as a ‘single thing’, a ‘one’, a ‘whole’? (ii) What unifies such a ‘single thing’, or ‘one’, or ‘whole’? In *Plato’s Individuals*, Mary McCabe states: “...the problems of individuation pull apart into two separate issues. One asks what counts as an entity. The other asks what unifies an entity.” (p. 18). McCabe argues convincingly that Plato repeatedly returns to these two questions of individuation within the dialogues.

\(^{13}\) Contemporary conceptions of persons based on notions of reflexivity, uniqueness, and interiority.

psychological sense of their own individuality and distinctness, however it is another question whether this psychological life was important when counting who a particular individual was.\textsuperscript{16} In Greek thought it was a person’s public context and role in society that primarily identified who they were.

The difference between Vernant’s second and third senses of individual (as subject and as fully fledged person) rests on the perception of one’s own uniqueness.\textsuperscript{17} While the subject is aware of themselves as different from others (e.g., different memories, beliefs and projects), these differences are seen to stem from the uniqueness of their experience and context in the world rather than any constitutive uniqueness. Here the “I” has a “generalized individuality”.\textsuperscript{18} For Plato, the first person speaking subject is a ‘one thing’ - a basic (numerical) unit in their own right - but what it is to be that ‘one thing’ they share with all others.\textsuperscript{19} To understand this notion of generalized individuality we need to appreciate Plato’s understanding of logos.

\textbf{Plato’s Concept of Logos}

The concept of logos has been an evolving one. For this reason it is important to distinguish between what logos represented for Plato, and the re-appropriated usage of the term in Western thought.\textsuperscript{20} While later we shall explore this re-appropriation, here our task is to come to appreciate Socrates’ and Plato’s understanding of logos in

\textsuperscript{13} See Mary McCabe: \textit{Plato’s Individuals}; and Scolnicov, ibid, pp. 2-4. Whereas McCabe identifies full subjectivity with Descartes, Scolnicov identifies this ‘third sense’ of the individual in Greek thought with Augustine. While there is some evidence of this in earlier writing, here it is only of private interest - interior subjectivity does not count in determining ‘who’ one is in the world.

\textsuperscript{16} Thus it is feasible that one could be aware of oneself, and that this awareness includes one’s memories, projects, etc., which make one psychologically unique, while still holding that – in terms of what one is - one is the same as everyone else. Scolnicov alludes to this, ibid, (p. 3), when he speaks of Telemachus’ search for Odysseus as a private enterprise to be contrasted with interests that occupy the public domain. It is the public domain that determines who one is.

\textsuperscript{17} Whereas McCabe places more emphasis than Scolnicov on the psychological individuality of Plato’s individuals, she is in agreement with Scolnicov in denying that Socrates and his interlocutors had a sense of their own uniqueness as persons.

\textsuperscript{18} Scolnicov, ibid, p .4.

\textsuperscript{19} For McCabe, this view is expounded in Socrates’ theory of recollection. Mary McCabe: \textit{Plato’s Individuals}, p. 266.

\textsuperscript{20} In chapter 5 I contrast Plato’s conception of logos to Heidegger and Gadamer’s conceptions. It is the enlarged sense of logos we find in Heidegger and Gadamer that will underlie my own account of dialogical inquiry as a search to establish logos together with others.
order to see how this effected Plato’s understanding of persons, unity and knowledge as reflected in the Dialogues.\textsuperscript{21}

Scolnicov argues that Socrates’ understanding of logos draws upon three earlier senses of logos within the Greek tradition; those of Heraclitus, Parmenides, and Protagoras: (i) Heraclitus suggests that we receive logos by being open to it and by putting effort into understanding it. Each of us must seek logos for ourselves, it is not something we can pass on to one another (and therefore is not achieved through refutation with another).

[For Heraclitus:]... it is not I who thinks, but the logos thinks in me and through me; in expressing myself I express the logos. And this logos is most common because it is most private.\textsuperscript{22}

From Heraclitus Socrates’ takes the notion of the singular logos which is expressed from within, is non-transferable, and yet is common to all.\textsuperscript{23} (ii) Parmenides views logos both as “the judgment required of him and the organ whereby he judges.”\textsuperscript{24} Yet while logos is expressed in personal judgment, this does not mean Parmenides is free to choose (in the Cartesian sense of asserting his will). While he judges for himself, what he will judge is already determined by the gods. It is this over determination that allows logos to be personal and yet not subjective, “The logos, once the decision is handed over to it, is not free in its decision. It cannot but decide its due...”\textsuperscript{25} For Parmenides, truth is what survives refutation, and refutation involves elenctic testing, based on the principle of non-contradiction.\textsuperscript{26} This refutation is private, it takes place within oneself and, as with Heraclites, the logos one arrives at


\textsuperscript{22} Samuel Scolnicov: “The Private and the Public Logos” in The Philosophy of Logos, ed. Boudouris, K.J. p. 4. This makes the logos “personal but not subjective”, p. 6.

\textsuperscript{23} There is obviously much more to be said about what Plato takes from the Heraclitian tradition (as there is for Parmenides and Protagoras), however further exploration here is beyond the scope of my thesis. In developing an appreciation for Heraclitus’ position I found Edward Hussey’s article excellent. See: Edward Hussey: “Epistemology and meaning in Heraclitus” in Language and Logos, eds. Schofield, M. and Nussbaum, M. pp. 33-60.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid, p. 5. Scolnicov has more to say on each of these prior conceptions of logos, but to explore these further goes beyond the scope of the thesis. My focus is simply to ground our understanding of Socrates’ notion of logos within an earlier Greek tradition.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid, p. 6. “Parmenides’ logos is thus both autonomous, drawing its authority from itself and, at the same time, necessarily subordinated to the goddess’ revelation.”
cannot be passed on to someone else. From Parmenides Socrates takes the idea that *logos* finds expression through submitting one’s inner convictions to refutation and testing, and that this testing requires one to judge the truth for oneself.

Finally, (iii) Protagoras accepts Parmenides’ idea that *logos* requires personal conviction reached through refutation, but such refutation now takes place *inter-subjectively* in the public sphere. *Logos* is no longer connected to the soul (realized from within) but is expressed through open contest in which two opposing *logoi* are pitted against one another. Such *logos*:

...no longer receives its justification in the deep understanding or the necessary decision according to an impersonal [revelation]. One is not required to find the logos within oneself or to decide it oneself: the process becomes public, social, political.\textsuperscript{27}

Here we come to the heart of Socrates’ disagreement with the sophists. Socrates’ scathing reference to dialectic as a “sophistical set-to with great clashing of arguments” refers to this sort of argumentation in which two *logoi* are pitted against one another and “the strength of the one over the other is determined solely through the open contest between the two”.\textsuperscript{28} Socrates takes from Protagoras the idea of establishing *logos* through inter-personal refutation, however he keeps the earlier notion that each of us must find *logos* for ourselves.

For Socrates too, personal conviction is a necessary condition of knowledge. But personal conviction cannot be accepted without examination, and the only possible examination of it is the elenchus, now interpreted, with the sophists and against Parmenides, as inter-personal refutation. However Socrates does not oppose logos to logos.... Each logos is confronted, not with another logos, but with the opinions and actions of him who puts it forth.\textsuperscript{29}

We might say that for Socrates, *inter*-personal refutation leads to *intra*-personal unity (unity within a person, between convictions or between conviction and action). I can only give expression to *logos* by *judging for myself* that I am free from

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{28} First quote, Plato: *Theaetetus*, 154e; second quote, Scolnicov, ibid.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid, p. 8. (In Scolnicov's article, the word ‘elenchus’ appears in Greek).
contradiction. As such, inquiry leads me not only to establish the truth as a whole, but also to establish who I am as a whole. Importantly, for Socrates, in establishing internal unity I become more like everyone else; the search for logos:

...leads from the inter-personal to the most personal which turns out at once to be the most impersonal.... what one - anyone - ultimately finds within oneself is that which is common to all.\(^{30}\)

Socrates’ conception of logos allows for a “peculiar blend of subjectivism and objectivism...” in which logos is both personal and yet inter-subjectively valid.\(^{31}\) This is a powerful idea. Indeed in chapter 5 I shall suggest that in accepting both (i) the social construction of persons and (ii) the idea of truth held relative to language communities, this distinction between subjectivism and objectivism once again becomes blurred (albeit in a very different way). It is this notion of truth as personal yet inter-subjectively valid that suggests to me that a dialogical account of critical thinking might best be characterized in terms of the search to establish logos. Here, as in Plato, dialogical inquiry may be best characterized as a relationship between friends for the sake of establishing logos together.\(^{32}\)

In speaking of individuality we need to distinguish between a human individuality that arises out of our contextualized experience and mistakes and a human individuality which reflects our autonomy as original, or unique, beings - a uniqueness that arises as we choose a mode of life for ourselves. For uniqueness in this sense (Vernant’s third category) we need there to be at least two possibilities - two images of flourishing - and this is something Plato would reject. This conception of uniqueness is only introduced with Kant.\(^{33}\) For Socrates, the question “Who will

\(^{30}\) Ibid, p. 10.

\(^{31}\) Ibid, p. 3.

\(^{32}\) I foreshadow the significance of logos for my own theory of critical thinking here to highlight two things: (i) to show that I am aware that how we interpret logos for a contemporary theory of critical thinking will not be the same as it was for Socrates, and yet that (ii) in light of the blurring of the distinction between subjectivism and objectivism, there is an important way in which the structure of Socratic inquiry contributes to a postmodern conception of dialogical inquiry.

\(^{33}\) For Kant the two possibilities (being this sort of individual or that) are arranged hierarchically, one being better/higher than the other. Modern critiques of Kant have argued that the two possibilities may in some cases be commensurate alternatives (e.g., Sartre’s Soldier).
you become?" is not a question about what kind of unified individual you will be (a
sophistical one or a dialectician) but rather, whether you will be a unified person.34

The presumption of sameness which underlies Plato’s notion of individuals means
that there is no asymmetry between first person and second or third person
perspectives. For Plato, knowledge of ones individuality is not set against a
background of doubt about others. Socrates accepts the reality of other minds and
does not raise “the possibility that I and my mental states may be unique”.35 For
Plato, we can quite literally, know what someone else is thinking. It is only the
post-Cartesian (or perhaps, post Augustinian) person who takes their direct access to
themselves and their experience as something that sets a fundamental divide between
themselves and others.

This difference underlies an important difference between Socratic dialogue and
contemporary models of dialogical inquiry. Whereas for Plato dialogical inquiry
leads one to look inward to find what is general (and thus what others think),
contemporary notions of dialogical inquiry (involving fully-fledged persons) suggest
that inquiry leads people to move outward beyond the private boundaries of self in
order to determine what is general. Here the activity of interlocution involves a
two-way movement between what is general because it is common and what is
private and interior.36

The Impact of Plato’s Theory of Recollection

If internal unity is viewed in terms of the recollection of a singular logos, then the
recollected system is potentially the same for everyone.37 Yet if we are potentially all
the same, how do we account for the difference between individuals? For Plato,

34 It is only with acceptance of this uniqueness that we can argue for a pluralist conception of critical
thinking. This will be my major departure from Plato in chapter 5.
35 Mary McCabe: Plato’s Individuals, pp. 264-280.
36 It is here that such notions as mutuality, solidarity, and communion become important frameworks
for developing shared understanding between unique persons (e.g., as we found in Gadamer). The
implications of this for a dialogical theory of critical thinking are taken up more fully in chapter 5.
37 For Plato, in giving expression to the common logos we do not create it but recollect it. In this
section I am not concerned with explicating Plato’s theory of recollection per se, I merely want to
point out several implications that follow from this theory for the way Plato views the unity of self,
difference will reveal itself in three ways: (i) we will be different in that we will have recollected different parts of this innate understanding (due to contingent differences of context, experience and inquiry); (ii) difference will emerge as a consequence of mistakes - given that what is true is true for all, what is personal about our thinking is where we (rather than someone else) go wrong; and (iii) when faced with contradiction, difference will emerge in light of what we are prepared to give up.

The second and third cases reflect not only difference, but reflect something personal about the arguers.38 In a reductio argument where the conclusion shows itself to be untenable or in indirect arguments where premises form an inconsistent set, it is the arguer who must decide which premise to forgo. Here it is a matter of determining which premise (or commitments) we feel we can afford to give up and which we wish to affirm. For Plato, not being prepared to face this choice openly and honestly (for instance allowing political considerations to interfere) leads to elenchic shame. This is the shame Gorgias and Polus experience in the Gorgias.39

**Attaining Unity**

In order to build internal unity we need to do two things: (i) increase our understanding through inquiry (i.e.; recollect more), and (ii) become aware of where we are going wrong. Such a process leads to deepened understanding because it calls into question the inter-relatedness of our whole system of thought. It requires us to search out the common logos within our own understanding.40 Such an aim is an aspiration - it is a task for life.41

...being a unified person is not something I can take for granted (once I start to focus on my own intellectual activities) but rather something to which I aspire. Being a unified person is to Plato an honorific title; hence the proper question to ask is indeed “who shall I become”.42

---

38 Mary McCabe makes this point in Plato’s Individuals, p. 19-20.
39 See Plato’s Gorgias; e.g., Gorgias when he is shamed into saying he would teach rhetoric to a pupil who did not have knowledge of justice (460), and Polus for valuing the good of political power (466c) above the good of truth (477-480).
40 Logos is generalized because it is the one logos that is expressed within each of us.
41 This connects strongly with Taylor’s ‘teleological’ account of the unity of persons - striving for a life that is forever higher, to reach unity in the end. See my discussion of Taylor in chapter 2.
42 Mary McCabe: Plato’s Individuals, p. 264.
If the struggle for internal unity is at best an incomplete project, does this mean that, for Socrates, the subject has no unity? (that subjects are only potentially individuals?). Here we need to remember that for Plato being an individual (a single thing) was not only a matter of having internal coherence but was also determined by external identification - it was determined by one’s place and function in Greek society. This meant that individuals were always contextually marked out in relation to an other: “Individuation is thus relative to something’s place amongst other things, over and above its nature”.

In regard to dialogical activity, we can therefore speak of the external identification of those who constitute the one inquiry (this group of people sitting around a table, that group of Athenians sitting with Socrates), or we can speak of the internal coherence of the group as they inquire - the inter-connectedness that establishes them as a single community of inquiry from, so to speak, the inside. If we take truth itself to be a complex whole, then the structure of truth will also consist of external identification (a way of marking it out from that which it is not) and internal coherence (avoidance of inner contradiction). Socrates’ public engagement in elenctic inquiry reflects both these characteristics.

It is this combining of external and interior individuation that I see echoed in Ricoeur in his distinction between Ipse and Idem identity, however Plato and Ricoeur’s accounts are also significantly different. For Ricoeur - who thinks of the individual in terms of fully fledged persons (Vernant’s third category) - it is my consciousness of myself as as the same person that contributes to my unity of self. That is, ipse identity subsumes idem identity. However for Plato idem identity is not internalized with respect to marking me off as an individual in the world (though it may be psychologically important). It is my actual physical or public externality that contributes to my unity, not (only) my consciousness of this externality. Indeed I would suggest that, for Socrates, it is external identification in the public domain.

43 Ibid, p. 231.
(idend identity) that provides the subject with a sense of being one while engaged in the search for inner unity (ipse identity), where the subject is yet to become one.

Engaging in Dialogical Activity

This has powerful implications for the way we understand Socrates’ call to engage in dialogical activity, for it suggests that it is the public dialogical situation itself that both cements one’s identity as an individual and is expressive of what is at stake in the inquiry.\footnote{44} Without the public context of the dialogical performance (and with it, the multiple voices of dialogue) logos could not be revealed. This is one of Gadamer’s insights:

The logos always requires that one idea be ‘there’ together with another. Insight into one idea per se does not constitute knowledge. Only when the idea is ‘alluded’ to in respect to another does it display itself as something.\footnote{45}

Applied to dialectic argumentation, this suggests that not only is the relationship between Socrates and his interlocutors important in determining the ‘one’ of dialectic, but that the way Socrates attends to his conversational partners also determines who Socrates is, and this too is part of what defines Socratic method.\footnote{46}

Friendship as a Paradigm of Unity.

In Plato’s dialogues Socrates brings to his discussions an understanding of the relation between dialogical partners as one of friendship. Here, friendship can be

\footnote{44} A point made in many studies of Plato’s dialogues. For example, the relationship between the context in which the dialogues are set and the identity of Socrates’ interlocutors is particularly elaborated upon in Hans-Georg Gadamer: *Dialogue and Dialectic*; Henry Teloh: *Socratic Education in Plato’s Early Dialogues*; Kenneth Seeskin: *Dialogue and Discovery*; and Henry Wolz: *Plato and Heidegger*. I adopt this approach in my analysis of *Lysis* and *Theaetetus.*


\footnote{46} There are further parallels to be made between the individual and public life - e.g., ‘homonoea’ as referring to both a harmonious condition among members of a political community and the condition of an individual at peace with himself. Plato uses it in *The Republic* to draw an analogy between State and Individual. See Michael Nill: *Morality and Self-Interest in Protagoras, Antiphon, and Democritus*, pp. 52 and 71. Nill contrasts self-interest to altruism and suggests Socrates comes down firmly on the side of self-interest; but this is precisely where understanding Socrates’ view of Individuals makes a difference. Morality, as ‘other-regarding’ behavior is consistent with self-interest if we see regard for the interest of others as the same interest as regard for oneself, i.e., both are generalized expressions of ‘harmony’. Self-interest here is not ‘uniquely mine’ because ‘my interest’ is at the same time the interest of all (it is personal but not relative).
seen to symbolize the non-contradictory organizational *structure* by which complex wholes express a single unit.

To say that Socrates’ engagement with his dialogical partners illuminates the structure of complex wholes is different than saying Socrates’ relationship with his partners is predominantly a friendly one. Indeed Plato’s dialogues often illustrate the kind of tensions and opposition that stretch the structural *relationship between friends* to its limits. The central question is “What is the *structure of friendship for Socrates*?”, rather than the question “When does friendship between Socrates and his partners *succeed*?”. While the two questions illuminate one another (and perhaps illuminate Plato’s contrast between ideal form and experience in the world), what I am interested in is the *structural nature of complex wholes* (the one formed through dialogue between friends), for it is this structure that I am claiming continues to underpin the unity of the dialogical relationship in contemporary communities of inquiry.

Importantly, friendship between individuals is paradigmatic of the relationship in which we, as a single unit, *thrive*. So too for the individual - to flourish as a unified whole (a non-contradictory one), is reflexively to be a friend to oneself. Here, the recognition and elimination of self-contradiction becomes a necessary step toward establishing inner unity. Arendt translates a key passage in the *Gorgias* thus:

[Socrates says to Callicles] “It would be better for me that my Lyre or a chorus I directed should be out of tune and loud with discord, and that multitudes of men should disagree with me rather than I, being one, should be out of harmony with myself and contradict me.”\(^\text{47}\)

For Arendt, contradiction - being at odds with yourself - precludes *being one* because it breaks the very condition for relationship. If we can no longer be a friend to ourselves, then solitude is transformed into loneliness. Solitude is a situation in which we are alone but not lonely, for we keep ourselves company by thinking. Loneliness, however, is the condition in which we cannot even keep ourselves

\(^{47}\) See Hannah Arendt’s translation of *Gorgias* 482c in *The Life of the Mind: Thinking*, p. 181. I have used her translation here because her choice of words and emphases stresses the issue of unity.
company; a condition in which we exist “in default” of ourselves. Thus we may be one in two ways: by refraining from inquiry (dialogue) or by engaging in inquiry between friends.

The partner who comes to life when you are alert and alone is the only one from whom you can never get away - except by ceasing to think [reason].... the dialogue of thought [reasoning] can be carried out only among friends, and its basic criterion, its supreme law, as it were, says: Do not contradict yourself.49

For Arendt, it is this that leads Socrates to say ironically to Hippias “...how blissfully fortunate” he is in comparison with poor Socrates, who at home is awaited by a very obnoxious fellow who always cross-examines him.”50 She remarks that the irony lies in the fact that Hippias, who is not concerned with unity (realizing logos, being one) has the ‘fortune’ to be one because the life of monologue and oratory he leads enables him to refrain from true dialogical activity (from thinking or inquiry). In contrast, Socrates, who fervently desires unity, is constantly struggling to find it. Socrates cannot declare falsehoods monologically as truths and remain one because he is never alone - he must satisfy the “obnoxious fellow” who cross-examines him - this fellow will not allow him to declare what is false to be true.

...When Hippias goes home he remains one, for, though he lives alone, he does not seek to keep himself company... When Socrates goes home, he is not alone, he is by himself... Better at odds with the whole world than be at odds with the only one you are forced to live together with when you have left company behind.51

Socrates’ only way of achieving unity is to treat this fellow as a friend, and that means not declaring falsities as truths.52 Better declare truths that set the world against you than declare falsities and cease to be a friend to yourself.53

48 Ibid, p. 185. Arendt is quoting Jaspers.
49 Ibid, p. 189.
50 Ibid, p. 188.
51 Ibid.
52 That is, the falsehoods the orators such as Hippias declare as truths in their “eloquent and beautiful speech to a law court or council meeting.” This is Hippias’ characterization to Socrates in the Greater Hippias 304b.
53 Once you have ceased to be a friend to yourself, thinking (dialogical activity) leads to self-destruction. This kind of destruction is typified for Arendt in the soliloquy of Shakespeare’s Richard III: “What do I fear? Myself?... Then fly: What! From myself? Great reason why: Lest I revenge. What! Myself on myself?” in Hannah Arendt: The Life of the Mind: Thinking, p. 189. For Arendt, this is also the point of Socrates’ statement, “...it is better to be wronged than to do wrong”.

168
If we see friendship for Socrates as symbolizing thriving unity within complex wholes, then calling our dialogical partners “friend” signifies that we both stand (i) in a *publicly* identifiable non-contradictory relationship with them (and, reflexively, toward ourselves), and that (ii) *internally* as individuals we do not stand in a contrary relation to one another (for, given Plato’s view on individuals, internally we each give expression to the singular *logos*). As with the unity of individuals, the external identification of friendship does not necessitate a personal element, but neither is this precluded. Personal friendship is simply not what mattered when identifying friendship in the public domain.

Importantly, for Socrates, the relation between friends is personal (subjective) but not relative - it realizes a *generalized* form. It is this form that is expressed in the external role-guided activity labeled dialectic, a mode of discourse that itself protects against contradiction as the inquiry proceeded. As with the individual, the dialogical relations of non-contradiction and interdependence will establish the important conditions under which the complex wholes of dialectic and truth may flourish.

Robinson offers a useful account of the formal social structure of Socratic dialectic thus: (i) it was between two persons (any third person stepping back and listening); (ii) one led and the other followed; (iii) the leader posed the questions and the follower answered; (iv) the answerer was expected to say what he truly thought and nothing else; (v) the answer’s opinions should not be contradictory; (vi) there should be agreement between the partners in order for the dialogue to move forward (otherwise disagreement needed to be resolved). 54 For Socrates, such dialectic, *in contrast to sophistry*, did not place one in publicly structured *opposition* to one’s dialogical partner (as in the law courts or in debate) but instead placed one alongside one’s dialogical partner in a coherently structured non-oppositionary relationship. 55

---

54 See Richard Robinson: *Plato’s Early Dialectic*, pp. 77-78.
55 A difference Plato makes explicit in *Gorgias* 471d-e. It is this structured opposition that precludes inquiry, a point I raised in relation to debating in the previous chapter.
Changing Conceptions of Friendship

The relationship between friends is an interesting notion because we can see this relationship both according to unity at a time and unity over time. Friends may be seen to constitute a single unit (a we) at a time, but friendship also suggests a depth of relationship, it involves a maturing with one another through time. Here the temporal span of friendship reflects the issue of depth we explored in chapter 2 in relation to moral character. Whereas Socrates’ concern for the unity of his interlocutors may be seen primarily as a concern for their unity at a time (between a person’s life and belief, between their beliefs), the contemporary focus on narrative identity shifts the emphasis toward a concern with unity over time.56

Socrates’ concept of friend is very different from the non-substitutional concept of friend associated with fully fledged persons. Here friendship is seen as a reciprocal relationship of equality where both the external structure and the internal patterning of the relationship is unique to any pair. While friends may be externally identifiable as a single unit at a time, the nature of their friendship - the way it expresses unity between them - will itself be reflexively designated through their interactions (through the smile that communicates, the implicit understanding of another’s response to a situation, the projection of the other’s needs, etc.). This notion of friendship is more closely linked to our interiority than to our public performance. It is a difference that is perhaps best captured in the contrast between being friendly and being friends. This interiorization of uniqueness will have an effect on the way we see unity within a contemporary community of inquiry. The non-contradiction of friendship will no longer rest on the singular nature of logos, but on recognition of our similarities and differences. Communities of Inquiry need time to develop, they require members to develop a history, a way of being, with one another.57

The Challenge of Establishing Unity within Dialogue

The challenge Socrates often faced was how to establish a non-contradictory relationship with interlocutors with whom he radically disagreed. Establishing such a

56 I explore this further in relation to Carr’s account of community in chapter 5.

170
relationship required Socrates to pay attention to the particular situatedness of his
dialogical partners (their perspectivity, experience, socio-political location) and to
take this into account in the way the inquiry was conducted. In this way, avoiding
contradiction shaped not only his relationship with his dialogical partners but the
content of the dialogue itself.

This is also perhaps where Socratic dialogue was most vulnerable, for if the
interlocutor could not state a coherent position to begin with, or took an
oppositionary stance to Socrates, progress would be limited. Indeed we often find
Socrates referring to his dialogical partners as friends at these sensitive moments.
This act of naming can be seen as Socrates’ attempt to stem the tension and preserve
the dialogical relationship.\textsuperscript{58} When, in \textit{Gorgias}, Polus accuses Socrates of insincerity
and begins to treat him as an opponent Socrates appeals not to be drawn into
sophistical debate “like those... in the law courts”. A few exchanges later Socrates
points to the unity of their relationship despite their differences of view.

\begin{tabular}{ll}
Polus: & That is a preposterous theory you are attempting to uphold, 
Socrates. \\
Socrates: & I shall try to make you share it with me, my friend, for I 
account you a friend. For the moment then, these are our 
points of difference...\textsuperscript{59}
\end{tabular}

By placing their differences within a temporal context Socrates allows for the
possibility that such differences may only be transitory (for there is only one \textit{logos}).
By framing the two views within a larger whole (“these are our points of
difference”), he focuses the inquiry on the relationship between opposing views.
Importantly, we need to remember that, for Socrates, the relation that characterizes
unity between friends is not a \textit{psychological} relation but a \textit{structural} one.\textsuperscript{60} Polus is
‘my friend’ because he is counted as ‘a friend’- as someone with whom inquiry is
possible. With Polus and Gorgias this friendship is extremely fragile. Here Socrates

\textsuperscript{57} I explore this further in chapter 5.
\textsuperscript{58} Often such references to friendship are seen as ironic precisely because of this tension. I am
suggesting another alternative. We can see the act of naming the other \textit{friend} as a call to remember
the non-contradictory basis of the relationship. E.g.; Plato: \textit{Gorgias} 471e and 473a.
\textsuperscript{59} Plato: \textit{Gorgias} 473a.
\textsuperscript{60} Of course, in saying this I am not suggesting that friendship can be reduced to structural (or logical)
form, only that the ‘we’ of friendship offers a paradigm of unity within complexity
uses every strategy to maintain the balance - flattery, irony, personal appeal, and elaborate warning. Later, with Callicles, we are shown that when this balance is broken dialogue never quite succeeds. If the interlocutor refuses the offer of friendship, maintaining a hostile and oppositionary stance, the possibility of inquiry is thwarted. This is the limitation of Socratic method, a limit that itself illuminates the way in which the unity of knowledge and the unity of the dialogical relationship come together within a single inquiry.

The Unity of Knowledge

Within dialogue, maintaining non-contradiction in the course of inquiry (between two statements made by a single person, or statements between two interlocutors) requires one to pay ongoing attention to the relations between what is known. Any change in one’s understanding and commitments will call into question, and require one to re-examine, one’s whole system of knowledge. In order to maintain unity in the face of difference, agreement must be reached at each juncture of the inquiry before the dialogue can move forward.

For Plato, the relation neither-nor captures the complex unity of truth as something we know, but only imperfectly. What we know is neither the truth (because we can only realize logos imperfectly), nor is it different from the truth (because it is, nevertheless, the one logos that is imperfectly expressed in and through us). Because each of us realizes the single logos, Socratic inquiry asserts an optimism that contradictions and differences between our views may ultimately be resolved; differences are differences for now. On this account, self-examination leads to deepened understanding because it calls into question the inter-relatedness of our whole system of thought. Contradiction (whether in the public domain or within ourselves) weakens our web of knowledge and it is one of Socrates’ tasks to direct us to where such entanglements lie. Here, Socrates’ concern is to examine an

---

61 Socrates’ speech in Gorgias (457 d-e) is a wonderful combination of such strategies (appeal, flattery, and warning of consequences) within the space of a damning description of rhetoric practice. Euthydemus also provides rich examples of the external struggle between different conceptions of the relationship that holds between interlocutors, and a corresponding struggle between conceptions of knowledge.

62 We shall return to this characterization in chapter 5 in relation to different forms of irony.
individual’s unity, and the unity of what they know, at a time. Importantly for Socrates, while it is true that the construction of the web of knowledge will depend on our individual context - and in this way the overall shape and location of the web is reflective of us - each web realizes (or recollects) a pre-ordained pattern, a pattern that, in being recollected, is never perfectly rendered. In this way, both who we are and what we know is neither the same nor different from other individuals.

Importantly, the relation neither-nor may alert us to what is not the case while leaving what is the case open to interpretation. Understanding the way in which neither you nor I have a satisfactory answer may illuminate where we are going wrong in our thinking, but it will not necessarily lead us to a view of a better alternative - and this is, more often than not, where Socratic dialogue leaves off.

Socrates’ Ironic Stance
So far in this chapter I have suggested that, for Plato, the structural unity of complex wholes consists in both (i) being externally identified as one (the parts being parts of this thing rather than parts of something else), and (ii) having an internal unity which arises out of the inter-dependent relationship between parts (parts that are neither the same nor different than one another). Such a relation is particularly important for Socrates because it allows for the preservation of multiplicity of meaning while avoiding contradiction.

In this next section I shall explore Socratic irony with this view of complex wholes in mind. This is important for three reasons: (i) it helps to illuminate the functional role of ironic discourse in Plato’s dialogues by illuminating how irony enables Socrates to construct a single thing out of contrastive opposites and multiplicity (two views, two orientations, two individuals); (ii) irony may be seen to exemplify the way in which the relations within a complex whole contribute to the meaning of the constituent parts, thereby illuminating the kind of hermeneutic holism that lies at the center of dialogical inquiry. Thirdly - and importantly for my thesis overall - (iii) if I can show how the structure of knowledge for Socrates expresses the same internal relations as we find in irony, then understanding how Socratic irony works is an
important step toward understanding how truth in critical thinking can be both attached to the personal identity of the reasoner and yet not be relative to that individual.\textsuperscript{63}

**Simple versus Complex Irony**

In "Socratic Irony" Vlastos distinguishes between two forms of Socratic irony which he labels *simple* and *complex*.

In "simple" irony what is said just isn’t what is meant, taken in its ordinary, commonly understood sense the statement is simply false. In "complex irony" what is said both is and isn’t what is meant: its surface content is meant to be true in one sense, false in another.\textsuperscript{64}

For Vlastos, the meaning conveyed through an ironic comment rises out of our appreciation of the truth and falsity of what has been stated. Where the meaning conveyed in simple irony consists in the direct opposite of what is explicitly stated, complex irony operates more as a riddle. Complex irony is "peculiarly Socratic", constituting a new form of irony "unprecedented in Greek literature".\textsuperscript{65} In such irony we know that what is literally stated is meant to be understood as false, but the truth to which it points is left open. The interpreter’s task is to distinguish the multiple meanings inherent in the single proposition and to then determine in which sense the proposition is being taken as true and in which false - such is the game that underlies Socratic discourse.\textsuperscript{66} The more we are left to ponder the multiple senses of the proposition the more subtle the irony. For Vlastos, this is true of all but the simplest cases of irony. Thus Vlastos explains Socrates’ claim that Alcibiades’ must see in him something “inconceivably beautiful” as ironic because the proposition conveys both truth and falsity depending on the concept of beauty the reader has in mind. Given what we know of Socrates’ physique, the proposition is literally false if we judge beauty on aesthetic grounds. However, if beauty is judged according to

\textsuperscript{63} This will make the structure of irony particularly suited to exploring a pluralistic conception of critical thinking, I take this up in chapter 5.

\textsuperscript{64} Gregory Vlastos: "Socratic Irony" in *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher*, p. 31.

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{66} For Vlastos, this enables us to reject the claim that Socrates’ intent is to deceive.
functionality, Socrates is beautiful indeed (his nose being a ‘beautiful’ specimen of a nose in that it is extremely efficient in its function).\textsuperscript{67}

For Vlastos, irony avoids contradiction and deceit because it transforms one statement into two. This is true of both simple and complex irony. In the case of simple irony, however, there is no secondary sense of words being implied - the speaker merely intends to communicate the opposite of what is stated. In this way simple irony points more directly to its meaning and there is no “riddle” to solve. When, in the midst of a downpour someone utters “lovely weather we are having” there are not two senses of ‘weather’ or ‘lovely’ at stake, rather we are alerted to two senses in which language can be used (to tell the truth or to deceive). The ironist makes a false claim but with no intent to deceive.

The weather is foul, he calls it fine and has no trouble making himself understood to mean the contrary of what he says.\textsuperscript{68}

Thus even in simple irony contradiction is avoided by transforming ‘one’ into ‘two’ - only here it is not two senses of the single proposition that are seen as respectively true and false but rather, two propositions; what is stated and its contrastive opposite.

\textbf{The Structure of Irony}

While I think Vlastos is right to point to the riddling aspect of complex irony, an aspect that is left to the interpreter to figure out for themselves, I think there is something misguided in trying to unravel irony into different senses and assigning truth values to these discrete meanings. Vlastos’ focus on the truth value of propositions misses a very significant dimension of the way irony functions. Such an approach interprets the logical structure of irony according to the relation \textit{either-or}. The statement (or aspect of a thing) is \textit{either} true \textit{or} it is false. In fleshing out the opposing senses and then choosing which one is meant to be considered as true we lose the contrast and tension implicit in the ironical stance.\textsuperscript{69}

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid, pp. 31-32.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid, p. 21.
\textsuperscript{69} This is not to say that all ambiguity is resolved, but the nature of the ambiguity changes; unraveling the irony transforms the ambiguity from an ambiguity of meaning (an ambiguity inherent in the fuzziness of a non-literale expression) to an ambiguity of scope.
Indeed for Vlastos, it is the structure of *either-or* in Plato that is the pervading one. We can see this in a different, but related, domain. We can see it in Vlastos’ suggestion that Socrates’ disavowal of knowledge needs to be understood as complex irony. Here Vlastos suggests that we resolve the problem of Socrates’ disavowal of knowledge by distinguishing between two discrete kinds of knowledge \( \text{knowledge}_e \) and \( \text{knowledge}_c \), taking his disavowal of knowledge to be true in one sense of ‘know’, but false in the other.\(^7\) Yet, in making such a distinction, it seems Vlastos loses sight of the way in which it is *the same* knowledge which, for Socrates, is both personal and yet expressive of the universal. A view of knowledge that needs to be understood in light of Plato’s concept of individuals and a singular logos.

So what is the alternative? It seems to me that what makes a statement ironic is not its revealed and accepted falsity, but rather the way in which the literal meaning of what is stated brings forth in us contrasting images that can only be fully appreciated in reference to the dissonance between the two images. What leads us to appreciate a proposition or situation as ironic is the way the relationship between the two images generates within us a new appreciation of the meaning inherent to each by juxtapositioning the two images taken together within a unified whole. In this regard the meaning generated through irony is not simply equivalent to the meaning of the proposition or to its negation. The meaning emerges out of - or supervenes on - *the relationship we establish between the two images*; it emerges out of the way in which the qualities and relationships in one thing point to and deepen our understanding of the qualities and relationships of another, rather than from assessments of truth (though such assessments may still be involved).

\(^7\) Where ‘knowledge,’ is ‘elenctic knowledge’ and ‘knowledge,’ is ‘certain knowledge’ - Vlastos argues that Socrates’ claim not to know is a claim that he has elenctic knowledge without having certain knowledge. See Gregory Vlastos: “Socrates’ Disavowal of Knowledge” in *Socratic Studies*, pp. 57-61. Davidson likes this approach, I would suggest, because of his own coherence theory of truth. For Socrates, unity is based on non-contradiction. Yet Davidson’s theory of interpretation requires that our beliefs not only to be non-contradictory but to cohere, and this requires that we can give a positive account of our beliefs/understanding, not only say what they are not. See Donald Davidson: *Plato’s Philebus*, in particular his discussion of Vlastos, pp. 3-8.
Here, I think that the way irony works is closely allied to the everyday activity of interpretation. As with general interpretation, irony requires from us an understanding of what it would take for a given proposition to be literally true, but in addition it requires from us an appreciation of the extent to which our own state of affairs differs from this imagined scenario. To take the statement “lovely weather we’re having” ironically requires us to consider or imagine the conditions under which this statement would be literally true and to appreciate the connections and dissonance between these circumstances and our own situation. Here it is the juxtaposition of meaning that gives rise to the irony. The point is not that the statement “lovely weather” is intended to mean its contradictory “foul weather” (though this will be the case or the irony fails), but that the dissonance between the statement and the reality creates a contrastive understanding that is generative of new understanding of both images, and it is this new appreciation of the situation in light of the statement (and the statement in light of the situation) that communicates what it means for us for it to be raining now in these circumstances. In this irony is highly contextualized to situations and individuals or groups.

There is also a difference worth noting between recognizing something as ironic for ourselves and communicating ironically. In communicating ironically we are not only aware of the dissonance between the two images for ourselves, but we project a similar dissonance onto the person to whom we are talking. In this regard making a point ironically requires knowledge of one’s audience, to know enough about them (their context, life experience, beliefs) to be able to predict what they think or to play with their imagination. Appreciating someone else’s irony requires us to bring three images or understandings into relationship with one another: What ‘lovely weather’ would amount to for us, what we think it would amount to for the ironist, and our assessment of the current state of affairs.\(^{71}\) This is, perhaps what makes irony shared between friends slightly conspiratorial - and why irony between adversaries can cut

---

\(^{71}\) Of course we may, and sometimes do, get this wrong. We may both appreciate a situation as ironic but, in consequent discussion, discover that we each saw a different irony to the situation. Here we might say something like, “Oh, but I was thinking of...”. In this situation we realise we weren’t thinking as alike as we thought we had been, and it heightens our awareness of our difference. Of course we may also appreciate as ironic something that was not intended as such - but then the irony is not intentional; the person did not set out to be an ironist and the irony is not shared between us. Socrates engages in irony intentionally.
deep. Here the ironist conveys just how well they understand how things stand with their opponent. In this way, sharing in an irony requires that we think *neither the same nor differently* from one another; it requires that we juxtapose the current state of affairs with similar contrasting images or understandings. Of course these images will not be identical, for each is constructed out of our own life experience, preferences and understanding. As with the act of interpretation, what is required for the irony to work is simply that there is enough we share in common..

Perhaps another example can be useful here, for irony - especially Socratic irony - is usually explained in terms of a proposition that, when taken literally, is intended to be understood as false. But what of ironic situations? Here truth and falsity is not the issue. What is at issue is the contrast between the present situation and alternate possibilities of what might have been. For the farmer, the irony of heavy rain arriving immediately after their crops have failed in draught lies not in the fact that the rain isn’t welcomed, but that it arrived at the wrong time. The farmer wanted rain -indeed *still* wants rain, but the conditions under which *this* was the rain that was needed stands in stark contrast to the situation at hand. The irony involves understanding what it means to be a farmer in these circumstances and to appreciate what other possibilities might have played themselves out. The comment “so now the rain’s come” conveys irony when it places before us these alternate states of affairs together with an appreciation of what rain signifies in each of them. The force of irony emerges from the way it points to what *is*, what *is not*, and what *could have been* the case within a given context. Here there is no ‘falsity’ at stake and we cannot understand the force of the irony by simply taking its reverse to be true, rather, we need to look to what the situation means for the people experiencing it.

Such an account of structure of irony fits well with those theorists who see the ironic stance as one which is inherently ambiguous and thick with meaning.

The realization of new fields of meaning opened up by Socrates’ irony is not independent of the very act of appreciating his irony. The Socratic meaning is not there before the ironical shift. We are not required to move from one meaning which is openly entertained to another which is a possible, pre-existing alternative, another part of the *langue* as it were,
underlying the *parole*. Rather Socrates’ irony expands the range of possible meanings.72

**Irony as a Complex Whole**

The comprehension and appreciation of irony depends on the imaginative and interpretative capacity of the hearer. The more we understand the complexity and nuances of the situation, the more nuanced will be our appreciation of the irony. Here our task will be to puzzle out for ourselves the way in which our understanding of one image impacts on our understanding of another. The more ways in which we come to see the truth as being *neither* that which has been stated *nor* its opposite, the more subtle the irony. What distinguishes simple from complex irony will be the level of ambiguity or ambivalence that is felt between the two situations or understandings that are held in juxtaposition. The richer the set of relations we come to appreciate, the more we may come to see new ranges of possible meanings opened up before us. On this account, irony itself may be understood as a complex whole in which the relations between parts contributes to our appreciation of the meaning of the parts themselves. Once again, this is clearest in cases where *falsity* is not the issue.

...it is not clear that Brutus is not an honourable man... There is in Mark Antony’s description of him an intrinsic ambiguity. One cannot simply cash his words for some well-defined, ‘real’ meaning behind them. Mark Antony is not expecting us to understand ‘black’ for ‘white’. The situation is itself ambiguous and indeterminate....

In fact, in Socratic irony, as in all good irony, it will not do to change one meaning for another. Understanding the opposite or the contrary of what the words mean is just as bad as taking them at face value. One has to get the point that, deep down, words can, after all, be ambiguous, or, rather, that their meaning is not to be taken for granted and cannot be passed on without residue.73

Finally, the ironic stance may enable us to entertain *contradictory* alternatives or understanding in a non-contrary relationship because the alternatives are entertained hypothetically. That is, we look to see what it would take *if* we were to take the

---

proposition as true, and it is this hypothetical situation that is held in juxtaposition to the way we understand things to actually be. In this regard, appreciating irony requires that we have already arrived at an assessment of the situation at hand (the way things are), but that we leave room open for the significance of our understanding to deepen or even be transformed through the contrast.\(^74\) This is perhaps why Socratic method begins with what Socrates’ interlocutors already believe to be true. By submitting these beliefs to elenctic examination as if they were indeed true, Socrates leads his dialogical partners to appreciate the contradictions within their own thinking. Elenctic method cannot lead to firm (pre-ordained) resolution because its purpose is to lead to an appreciation of multiplicity and contradiction where before there was thought to be singularity and consistency. For Socrates, the irony is there from the beginning, for he takes the commitments of his interlocutors as if they were true without committing himself to believe them. But for his dialogical partner the irony emerges only as the dialogue proceeds (and then not always). What begins as firm commitment becomes, through the process of inquiry, less certain, more hypothetical, and more contrastive. In the end, certainty is gone.

Understood this way, the ironic statement functions in reverse to the way Vlastos suggests. Rather than understanding irony by treating the one proposition as if it was two, I am suggesting that we should see the ironic proposition as a complex whole

\(^{73}\) Ibid, 327.

\(^{74}\) This ‘leaving room’ can be seen as a ‘stepping back’ from our certainty, the creation of a critical distance. This is not the same type of ‘stepping back’ as we find in accounts of critical thinking that suggest we ‘step back’ from our view and treat it as a view like others. That kind of stepping back creates a detached point of view and would not generate irony. We need to step back while remaining attached. This is, I think, what Rorty alludes to when he speaks of the ironist as one who treats truth (and the quest for knowledge) as if it were attainable while at the same time recognizing that truth is bounded by the ‘language games of the times’. This double recognition (of the contingency of the game but the earnestness of playing it) means all claims of truth are ultimately recognized as ‘truths for now’. In dialectical argumentation this ironical stance means that one argues hypothetically. See Richard Rorty: “Private Irony and Liberal Hope” in Contingency, Irony and Solidarity. Samuel Scolinivov makes a similar point in “Derrida’s Drug and Plato’s Antidote” in Commitment in Reflection, ed. Toker, L. “To engage in dialectical argument is to be ironical toward the position one accepts (hypothetically), to defend it (perhaps even believe it fervently), and yet to do one’s utmost to disprove it. The dialectal argument, like any form of irony, requires a detachment from the position under consideration.... In a hypothetical argument, one commits oneself to a position, but only on the conditions specified by the hypothesis, and only under the interpretation required by it. In a hypothetical argument, the conclusions are never unequivocally asserted, never secured once and for all.” (p. 8).
that brings two into relationship as one. What makes irony such a powerful linguistic form for Socrates is that it enables opposing stances (or persons, or a multiplicity of meanings) to be brought into relation with one another. Only in attending to the way two are neither the same nor different from one another does unity between such opposites even become a possibility. This is, I think, the point of Socrates ironic stance in Plato’s dialogues.

The most fruitful way to fully appreciate the structure of Socratic inquiry, especially as it connects to the themes explored so far - namely: to the structure of complex wholes, the relation between friendship, the structure of irony and of knowledge - is to turn to Plato’s dialogues themselves. Therefore, for the rest of this chapter, I shall turn to apply and extend our understanding of these themes in the context of a detailed discussion of two Socratic dialogues; dialogues in which these themes are themselves the object of Socratic inquiry: (i) Lysis, in which friendship is the focus of discussion, and (ii) Theaetetus, in which Socratic method, the motif of midwifery as the art of dialectic, and relativism concerning truth is explicitly explored.

**Lysis: Unity and the Relationship Between Friends.**

In Plato’s Lysis friendship itself is the focus of discussion. Here friendship is seen not to express a relationship between individuals who are the same as one another, but between two who are neither the same nor different. The question then becomes: what kind of difference is important for friendship (and with it, the activity of inquiry itself) to flourish?

_Lysis_ begins with Socrates walking from the Academy to the Lyceum via the road that skirts the city’s walls. Along the way he meets with a group of young Sophists who invite him to join them in the nearby Palaestra. This particular day is the Hermian and, because of the festival, men and youths are mingling and playing together. Within the enclave is Lysis, the youth Hippothales purports to love but who scorns him in return. As with other Socratic dialogues, to appreciate the variety of levels at which this dialogue works we need to keep this context in mind. While the

---

75 See Plato: Lysis 211d-223.
explicit subject matter of the first inquiry in Lysis (up until 211) concerns the necessary conditions under which love or friendship may flourish, the deeper subject of the dialogue concerns the conditions under which a relationship between contraries becomes possible - and it is here that the context establishes just which opposites are being addressed: the contraries of sophistry and dialectic, youth and maturity, and unrequited love. In each case Socrates illustrates for us the mode of relationship in which two (two modes of discourse, two levels of knowledge, two individuals) have the possibility of becoming unified as one.

Following this exchange is another, this time carried out for Lysis’ benefit rather than for Hippothales’. The second inquiry explores the nature of friendship and here Socrates suggests that even in cases where two friends are readily identified as one unit (as is the case with Lysis and Menexenus), it is a mistake to see this unity in terms of sameness. What actually unifies them is their inter-dependence as complementaries - being neither the same nor different from one another. Indeed, the two topics of discussion in Lysis can themselves be seen as constituting a complex whole, for together they address the two questions concerning individuation. Whereas the first inquiry asks ‘what counts as love?’ (and then asks what counts as the conditions under which love is a possibility), the second dialogue asks ‘what unifies love or friendship?’, exploring the nature of the internal relations between friends.\(^{76}\)

There is a further way in which the two inquiries within Lysis differ; they differ in the mode of inquiry itself. The first inquiry is an instructional inquiry carried out for the sake of Hippothales. Here the overarching demonstrative point of the dialogue seems to be largely lost on Lysis. What Lysis recognizes is the outward game of

\(^{76}\) Wolz describes the theme of the early part of Lysis as a concern “not with friendship as such, but with the conditions of its possibility” (p. 216). He also picks up on the themes of unity and the ‘third alternative’ offered by the relation of ‘neither-nor’, but his major concern is to use these to relate the thinking of Plato to that of Heidegger. In doing so, Wolz suggests that Socrates’ view of the individual is one in which genuine selfhood is linked to the complex psychological interiority of individuals and the dynamic structure of human personality (see pp. 216-217). In this regard, “what Plato hides in paradox, Heidegger states explicitly”. Thus, for Wolz, “Heidegger is not so much engaged in breaking new ground as he is making explicit and appropriating an ancient tradition.” (p. 234). While I do not agree that this is Plato’s view of individuals, I think Wolz’s Heideggerian
eristic inquiry and he is eager for Socrates to play the same sport with Menexenus when he returns. For Lysis, used as he is to sophistry, Socratic method is merely a game in which Socrates puts down his opponent. Here Socrates makes no real intellectual demands on his interlocutor and leads him toward a definitive and instructional conclusion. In the second exchange this is different. Turning toward Lysis and Menexenus' own conception of friendship Socrates now uses this to initiate a new inquiry for the boys own benefit. Here we find the three hallmarks of Socratic Inquiry (i) Socrates profession to ignorance, (ii) the eliciting of genuine or committed opinion from his interlocutors, and (iii) an open-ended conclusion.

Given this interpretation of *Lysis*, it should be no surprise to find that Socratic irony underlies both the form and content of *Lysis*. Indeed it can be seen as one of the dialogues strongest defining characteristics, contributing to both its sense of playfulness and its moral message. While we might see this irony surfacing in different forms at different moments within the discourse, in each case it functions to create the possibility of relationship between seeming opposites (or contraries). How it does this is important to our discussion, for my claim is that Socrates' ironic stance is a purposeful strategy through which he brings opposites into a friendly, non-contrary, relation thereby opening the possibility for unity between them.

(i) Establishing the Conditions Under Which Two May Become One

*Lysis* begins with Ctesippus ridiculing Hippothales' devotion of Lysis to Socrates.

It is such a joke, Socrates. The idea of a lover devoting himself exclusively to the object of his love, and yet having nothing of a personal interest to say to him that any child might not say - isn't it absurd?

As Ctesippus so eloquently points out, it is the *public* Lysis that Hippothales expresses in his proclamations of love. The poetry and songs Hippothales' writes reflect Lysis' social and political identity: the role his father and grandfather have

---


77 This is possibly an overly simplistic description of Lysis' understanding of what has transpired. I offer the possibility of a more complex view of Lysis' understanding later on in this chapter.

78 For instance, in Plato's *Lysis* 211e-212a, 213d, and 223b, respectively.

79 Ibid, 205b.
played in the city, their feats in battle and their wealth. Recognizing the weakness of such an approach, Hippothales asks for Socrates' help. It is in this context that Socrates offers to model for Hippothales the appropriate manner in which to speak to Lysis.\textsuperscript{80} Socrates offers to model the personal sense of relationship within conversation that Hippothales lacks. Because this first inquiry aims to explicitly model a particular mode of relationship it is important to pay close attention to the way Socrates conducts the inquiry, not only to the content of the exchange. Here Socrates is faced with a challenge - if two people are not already unified, how is it possible to establish the conditions under which unity between them may emerge? Socrates addresses this problem at two levels:

(i) Hippothales' lack of personal relationship to Lysis
While Hippothales externally identifies Lysis as the object of his love, he does not know how to engage him in personal conversation. Here Socrates' task is to demonstrate how to engage Lysis in a friendly and non-contradictory way. Only then is it possible for them to constitute one together.

(ii) Lysis' opposition to Hippothales.
Lysis does not consider himself a 'we' with Hippothales and takes a stance in which he opposes him. (to the point where Hippothales hides in the background fearing Lysis' scorn). Here Socrates' task is to lead Lysis to replace his stance of opposition with another relation in which the potential for unity is present.

Furthermore, for the demonstration to be instructional for Hippothales, Socrates must model a personal mode of engagement suited to a dialogical exchange between sophists - between Hippothales and the young students of Ctesippus - and indeed the kind of verbal sport that characterizes the early section of Lysis can be seen to reflect Socrates' adaptation of his own dialectic to meet this challenge. This is, I would suggest, why the structure of this first exchange differs from the second, being neither purely sophistic nor dialectical in style. What Socrates demonstrates is how irony as a form of dialogical engagement can unify the opposing forms of sophistic and dialectic discourse.

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid, 206c-d.
The Difference Between Sophistry and Socratic Dialogue

The gap between sophistry and dialectic is a narrow one. Both are social activities carried out in a public forum, both employ a method of question and answer, both generally involve two players of whom one leads by posing the questions and the other answers, and both utilize contradiction as a strategy for achieving their ends. Indeed for Robinson, sophistry is simply “a vinegary dialectic”. Yet Socrates considers his own practice of dialectic to be qualitatively different from that of the sophists. This difference stems from both a difference of intention and in the mutuality of understanding required in order that inquiry proceed. Where sophists are concerned with persuasion - employing a strategy of question and answer in order to win the argument - Socrates’ aim is an educative one. Thus we find Gorgias agreeing with Socrates that rhetoric aims at persuasion, a “competitive art like boxing and mixed fighting”. In sophistry one views the other as one’s opponent and the conversation is guided by the agenda of the leading partner. There is no requirement that mutuality of understanding be reached at each step of the inquiry.

In contrast, Socratic dialogue engages in question and answer in order to dispel false belief and with the hope of preparing the ground for genuine knowledge. Here one engages with one’s conversational partner as a friend. Socratic conversations are constructed around the interests and views of one’s dialogical partner and mutual agreement on meaning is required in order that the dialogue move forward.

---

81 For two accounts comparing the structural similarities of dialectic (or Socratic) argumentation and sophistry (or eristic argumentation), see Richard Robinson: Plato’s Early Dialectic, pp. 77-88; and Jurgen Mittelstrass: “On Socratic Dialogue” in Platonic Writings, Platonc Readings, ed. Griswold, C., Jr. pp. 130-132.
83 Plato: Gorgias 456d.
84 Dionysodorus and Euthydemus provide wonderful examples of the principles and practice of sophistry in Euthydemus, see 275-276e. In particular, Dionysodorus at 275e: “I prophesy that whichever the lad answers he will be refuted.”
85 For Robinson, this leaves us with two distinct images: The image appropriate to dialectic is that of the road, or the search, whereas the image for eristic conversation is the fight. See Plato’s Early Dialectic, p. 85. Mittelstrass makes a useful distinction between the ‘practical intention’ in Socratic dialogue, which aims at mutual understanding, and the ‘theoretical intention’, which aims at truth (which he characterises in terms of justification). See “On Socratic Dialogue” in Platonic Writings, Platonc Readings, ed. Griswold, Charles, Jr. pp. 130-131. I would suggest that the ‘practical intention’ is focused on the dialogical unity, whereas the ‘theoretical’ intention is focused on
Mutuality and General Understanding

In speaking with Lysis with a sense of irony, Socrates is able to participate in Sophistry without ‘being’ a Sophist. Here Socrates’ ironic stance plays a double function: on one hand it enables Socrates to transform the outward oppositionary nature of sophistic discourse into one of mutuality - thereby enabling Socrates to establish a non-contradictory and friendly relationship with Lysis based on their mutual appreciation of the irony. On the other hand, it enables Socrates to establish unity with Lysis at a cognitive level. Here the shared understanding that arises out of the mutual appreciation of the irony transforms the dualistic mode of sophistic argumentation and sets the ground for the development of a shared generalized understanding. Thus even though Socrates outwardly mirrors the style of the Sophists, in applying an ironic mode within that framework he achieves what Sophistry cannot: mutuality and a claim to generalized understanding.

This developing unity between oppositionaries is illustrated in moments such as when Socrates’ say to Lysis “So your parents would let you...”. Here the resulting irony is not a product of Socrates saying something that is merely meant to be taken as false, but arises from the activity of reflection in which Lysis imagines what it would take for this to be the case and in which he appreciates the dissonance. Interpreting the irony calls forth the situation between him and his parents in all its complexity and brings these memories into the arena of conversation despite the fact that they are not explicitly articulating within the discussion itself. As the ironic teasing is repeated we are led to see that the truth of the situation is not to be seen as merely the opposite to any one of the situations which Socrates calls forth (as Vlastos’ simple irony would have us see it). Rather, the multiple examples work together to illuminate the richness and complexity of the relationship between Lysis and his parents as one which expresses their love. What Lysis understands of this relationship is thrown into sharp relief against the literal meaning of Socrates’

knowledge. In this case the categories correspond to the two tasks Socrates needs to accomplish in his demonstration.

Vlastos also makes the point that Socrates “outsophists the sophists” by plying them with ironical sophistries, and it is the irony that prevents this being ‘paradoxical’ behavior on Socrates’ part. See “Socratic Irony” in Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher, p. 43.

Wolz provides a lovely description of Lysis’ home life as a ‘a typical Athenian boy’ based on these images. See Plato and Heidegger, pp. 214-216.
questions thereby enabling Lysis to appreciate the nature of his familial relationships in a new way.

We can see this burgeoning mutuality in the progression of Lysis responses to Socrates’ questions. When Socrates first questions Lysis, Lysis replies half in earnest - seemingly uncertainty as to whether Socrates shares this understanding or not.\(^8^8\) However as the exchange continues, Lysis catches onto the intended irony and adopts a suitable form in his replies. When, Lysis replies “Rule myself! I should think not.” he is not opposing Socrates but agreeing with him.\(^8^9\) Finally, when Socrates’ suggests that Lysis’ mother allows him to tamper with her spinning tools, Lysis responds with laughter. In order to appreciate Socrates’ comment, Lysis must understand that Socrates’ himself has this ironic juxtaposition in mind and this is only possible if Socrates’ already appreciates the real nature of Lysis’ familial relationships. Such is the complicity inherent in shared irony. For Socrates to have called these familial experiences to mind in a way that places himself as a co-conspirator with Lysis is to have already engaged Lysis at one of the most personal levels possible. Indeed by the end of the first exchange we can see that Lysis relates to Socrates in a friendly, even intimate, manner. This is evident by the way in which he whispers to Socrates “in a boyish fondling way” to repeat their discussion for Menexenus and the earnest manner in which he accepts Socrates’ rejection of this request.\(^9^0\)

What Socrates models for Hippothales is the possibility for dialogue to be anchored in the contextualized experience of the individual without falling prey to psychologism or sophistry. While the quest for truth begins with the inward examining of one’s own experience, truth is not relative to that experience.\(^9^1\) Socrates begins by examining Lysis’ situation in all its particularity, yet he does this in order to arrive at a general understanding. Leading Lysis through a range of hypothetical cases, Socrates ends with a generalized moral lesson. A lesson

\(^{8^8}\) Plato: Lysis, 207e.
\(^{8^9}\) Ibid, 208c.
\(^{9^0}\) Ibid, 211a-c.
\(^{9^1}\) For example, Protagoras views truth as relative. See Samuel Scolnicov: Plato’s Metaphysics of Education, p. 6.
concerning the basis of relationship between youth and maturity, between adults and the youths whom they love (Lysis father to Lysis, Hippothales to Lysis). While bringing the conversation to closure in a didactic lesson more in keeping with sophistry than Socratic inquiry, the method by which Socrates checks and humbles Lysis is his own. He does not oppose Lysis, but establishes a public relationship of mutuality with him. It is within this structure that he then leads him to see what his own ideas commit him to.

**Cognitive Understanding and Humility**

It is important to remember that in the first exchange Socrates is not only concerned to model a mode of relationship, but to open up the possibility of friendship between Lysis and Hippothales on a cognitive level. He is concerned to alter Lysis’ disdain for Hippothales by leading him to reconsider the foundation of love and the possibilities that a relationship between adult and youth may offer. With this in mind we may also look to the manner in which Lysis is *cognitively* humbled and checked. Rather than being humbled by losing in a battle of refutation, he is humbled and checked by arriving at new understanding that leads him to see his relationship to his teachers in a different light. In seeing friendship and love as a relationship based on the recognition of what one lacks - a lack which a friend may help one address - Lysis is led to understand the implications of his own ignorance and to appreciate anew the role of a mentor. In praising what Menexus already is (his public identity), Hippothales flatters and pampers him. In leading him to see what he has not yet become, Socrates opens the way for Lysis to recognize that he has need of an older man’s instruction. If Lysis is to grow in knowledge and maturity and thereby himself be worthy of love, he will need to develop the capacity for reciprocity within such a relationship. This is the kind of humbling that establishes the conditions in which unity with Hippothales becomes a possibility.

While Lysis seems unaware or the demonstration of which he has been part (i.e.; Socrates’ demonstration for Hippothales), we are nevertheless left with an open question concerning the extent to which Lysis is himself aware of the differences between Sophistic discourse and Socrates’ dialogical style. What is Lysis’ intention
when he asks Socrates to engage his friend who is "fond of disputes" in conversation so that he too may be put down. Is Lysis asking Socrates simply to outsmart Menexenus - to win in dispute - or is he asking Socrates to lead Menexenus in discussion in a manner such that he too may come to recognize his own weaknesses (as he himself was led)? That is, does he want Socrates to engage Menexenus in a way that will lead him to appreciate the limitations of the very form of oppositionary relationship he is so fond of? Here there is a further level of irony shared between Plato and the reader of the dialogues, as the reader shares in the knowledge that it is this more complex task that Socrates addresses in the second exchange.92

(ii) Seeing One as a Relationship Between Two

The second exchange begins with Socrates' confession of his ignorance concerning the nature of friendship - something Lysis and Menexenus seem to have found at an early age. What unifies two people as friends? Here Socrates takes the public recognition of friendship between Lysis and Menexenus as the starting point and sets out to explore the nature of this relationship. Again, it is Socrates' use of irony which provides a non-contradictory way in which to begin the dialogue. Rather than offering a different conception of friendship to that of the two youths (thereby seeming contrary), he ironically characterizes the boys' friendship and professes 'not to know' how such friendships are established.93 This allows him to invite them to join him in his own process of figuring friendship out, thereby creating mutuality between them despite their differences of opinion. Within this publicly mutual framework Socrates then proceeds to explore with the youths the consequences and contradictions that underlie their understanding.

92 Henry Teloh suggests that this is Socrates' goal, but that Lysis merely wants to playfully see his friend "trounced". I am suggesting that we may view Lysis as being more astute than this. See "Friendship and Education in the Lysis" in Socratic Education in Plato's Early Dialogues, p. 74.

93 At the beginning of the inquiry it seems that it is how friendships are established - how one comes to acquire a friend - that Socrates claims ignorance of, not the structural nature of friendship itself. I think he begins (as do the two boys) with an idea of the nature of friendship; however, he comes to see the problems with this definition on examination during the inquiry. That is, the 'Socratic method' of exposing oneself to one's ignorance is at work on him too.
Friendship for the Sake of Logos

Socrates now leads the youths from an understanding of the friendship as sameness to a view of friendship as unity between two who are neither the same nor different from one another. Here the friendship as a relationship of identity between like and like (good and good, evil and evil) is shown to end in inconsistency. Socrates then suggests that friendship, or unity, expresses a reciprocal relationship between two who are neither the same nor different from one another. The question is then what kind of difference is important for friendship to flourish? Here Socrates suggests that difference ought not be viewed as contrariness, but rather as partiality - as a result of our own lack.\textsuperscript{94}

To be partially good in this sense is not to be part good and part evil, but to be incomplete. A friend is someone whom we love (hold in regard, show concern for) because the relation between us enables us to recognize and address this lack. Here the value of friendship does not emerge from seeing one another as worthy (being for one another) but in a mutual valuing and commitment to logos. It is for the sake of realizing logos that we illuminate and complement one another’s lack. But here we need to keep in mind Plato’s concept of logos as being both internal and external to the individual - for realizing logos is not only self-realization (addressing one’s lack as an individual) but realization of the unity of the social relationship itself - the realization of the good within community. This is the unity that prevents friendship from being instrumental.

It is the desirability and mutuality of this relationship (of love for the sake of logos, not love for the sake of the other) that Lysis is reluctantly forced to accept and that allows for the possibility of a friendship between Lysis and Hippothales. The friendship between Lysis and Hippothales ought to be seen not as love for the sake of one another (as it is between Lysis and Menexenus), but as friendship for the sake of knowledge.\textsuperscript{95} This is the friendship Lysis has no reason to refuse.

\textsuperscript{94} Underlying such a view we can see Plato’s conception of individuals.

\textsuperscript{95} And his success in communicating this to Lysis is evident by Lysis’ silence, reluctance, and discomfort at 222 (which is beautifully contrasted to Menexenus’ rapture).
Within this second encounter Socrates actively models his understanding of friendship within the structure of the inquiry itself. Indeed it is this structure that constitutes Socratic method. Another way of saying this is that Socratic method expresses logos in ergon. To engage in inquiry as friends is to uncover one another’s lack for the sake of logos through the deed of establishing a unified ‘friendly’ relationship, (where ‘lack’ is at times seen as inconsistencies, at times ignorance). Here again we need to recall Plato’s concept of individuals and the unity of logos - to uncover one another’s lacks is at the same time to become more like one another - friendship leads us each to express more fully the same truth. When Socrates’ calls his dialogical partner by the title ‘friend’ it is this relationship that he is naming.

Socratic Dialogue as Dialogical Action

In modeling his own dialogical style in this second exchange Socrates strategy for establishing non-contradiction between himself and the two youths changes. Where, in the previous exchange, he used irony, he now engages in a rhythm of approachment and withdrawal as the dialogue proceeds. This rhythmic movement brings to mind what we referred to in chapter 3 as the cadence of dialogical action. There we noted that, for Charles Taylor, dialogical action contains more than mere co-ordination, it requires and sustains an integrated whole.

We might say that cadence in Socratic discourse is expressed in the cognitive entrances and exists from one another’s points of view that sustain the integrated unity of the developing ideas as a whole. A rhythm captured in such paradigmatic responses as: “And so do I, I rejoined. Still there is a something in the way that troubles me...”. Here Socrates avoids contradiction by first creating a unitary we

96 This is Gadamer’s insight in “Logos and Ergon in Plato’s Lysis” in Dialogue and Dialectic. See pp. 14-15, in particular.
97 This suggests an important difference between Socratic dialogue and contemporary models of dialogical inquiry. In-acknowledging our own uniqueness as individuals, we can no longer take this shared logos for granted. In order to prevent a slide into subjectivism and relativism, we need to establish an alternate grounding for a shared logos.
98 Kenneth Seeskin also points out that Socratic elenchus is as much about the behavior of the dialogical partners as it is about knowledge. In particular, he points to the mode of life lived by Socrates’ interlocutors and by the forms of behavior suited to dialogue. Thus, within the dialogues, “the literary devices are part of the elenchus and have a definite epistemological function.”. See Dialogue and Discovery, pp. 2-7.
99 Plato: Lysis, 214e.
based on sameness or agreement, only then does he raise doubts within the framework of that agreement thereby showing how the 'we' incorporates multiplicity. Seen this way, the question of whether Socrates' is sincere in his claim to 'agree' with his conversational partners is misdirected, the issue is not one of truth but of approachment.\textsuperscript{100} This methodology is one we also find in \textit{Theaetetus}.

The very instructional nature of this dialogue raises an important question concerning the type of unity that exists between dialogical partners separated by age or expertise. On one hand, Socratic dialogue is seen as a mode of inquiry based on reciprocity; both need the other to address their own lack. On the other hand, Socrates artful leadership in the dialogue is no mere blundering around in the dark. One might see Socrates as a well informed Athenian educator who has a good understanding of the form of life of his students.\textsuperscript{101} Not only does he know where he is going, but prior to the dialogue he is fully aware of the youths' child-like commitments and perspectives (as is evidenced through the ironies within the first exchange). This is a question about the potential for reciprocity between initiated and novice, between youth and the adults who love and guide them. Here again irony acts as a paradigm for our understanding. In turning toward one another we do not merely turn toward someone who can lead us to identify our mistakes - rather, we turn toward another person who opens up, and encourages us to explore, the potentiality and multiplicity of meanings that develop within the dialogue itself.

It is, I think, in this sense that we find Socrates speaking as a friend with Lysis and Menexenus, treating their presence within the dialogue as indispensable to the development of his thoughts, the tentativeness of his articulations and the transformations in his own thinking.\textsuperscript{102} As with irony, the internal relations and shared understanding that develops in dialogue opens up possibilities of meaning.

\textsuperscript{100} Here we are reminded of the different levels at which the dialogue functions (see my account of Socrates' 'ironic stance', p. 21).

\textsuperscript{101} This has strong implications for the use of Socratic discussion in education: namely, in understanding the teacher's role in Socratic discussion. Gilbert Ryle points to the same issue in his discussion of the education of the slave boy in the \textit{Meno}. How is the teaching of reasoning (modeling it for others) different from straight reasoning (doing it for oneself)? See "Thinking and Self-Teaching" in \textit{Thinking, Children, and Education}, ed. Lipman, M.

\textsuperscript{102} A passage that illustrates each of these is Plato: \textit{Lysis} 218c-e.
that are richer than any reduction into a single definition will accommodate and which in turn must be investigated through further inquiry. It is with this in mind that Socrates is inspired to call out to the two youths his parting irony:

... Well Lysis and Menexenus, we have made ourselves rather ridiculous today, I an old man, and you children. For our hearers here will carry away the report that though we conceive ourselves to be friends with each other - you see I class myself with you - we have not as yet been able to discover what we mean by friend.\(^\text{103}\)

Before concluding with *Lysis* it is, perhaps, worth revisiting the context in which the dialogue takes place to see the extent to which its setting itself suggests its central themes. In walking alongside the city walls Socrates is physically neither in the city nor outside of it. He is traveling on a path that creates a link between the Academy and the Lyceum, stopping in the Palestrada which is home to both sport and inquiry. The day is the festival of Hermes, with the ritual sacrifice itself expressing an attempt to establish a point of relation between the opposites of mortal (man) and immortal (god). Sacrifice marks out the ‘special situation of human beings’ in which they are neither god nor beast.\(^\text{104}\) Not coincidentally, Hermes is the god of travelers and safe passage, the “mobile god of transactions, exchanges and movements”.\(^\text{105}\) He protects those embarked on a journey - the journey itself constituting a complex whole which unites the point of departure with its opposite, the point of arrival. In the case of transactions - including the interlocutionary transaction of dialogue - this journey is figurative, but it makes Hermes protection no less relevant.

**Theaetetus: The Relationship Between Knowledge and Inquiry**

The inquiry into knowledge which forms the core of *Theaetetus* is a reconstruction of a conversation between Socrates, Theodorus, and Theaetetus. The conversation was recorded by Euclides shortly before Socrates’ death, when Theaetetus was still a young boy. Euclides now arranges for it to be read to Terpsion. At this point in time Theaetetus is fully grown and a soldier brave in battle. The event that prompts the reading is the return of Theaetetus, mortally wounded, from the battle front. Euclides

\(^{103}\) ibid, 223b.

\(^{104}\) Jean-Pierre Vernant: *Mortals and Immortals*, pp. 296-298.

\(^{105}\) Vernant offers this evocative description in Ibid, p. 278.
has just returned from the docks where Theaetetus has been carried in on his way to Athens. As well as battle wounds, Theaetetus is suffering from dysentery.\textsuperscript{106} In meeting him as a young man, Socrates had predicted that Theaetetus would become a remarkable man - a prediction that Euclides considers to have shown Socrates' prophetic insight.

How does this introduction of the dialogue contribute to our understanding of the dialogue itself? The reader is immediately struck by the parallelism - the conversation between Theaetetus and Socrates took place shortly before Socrates' death, now the transcript is read as Theaetetus lies close to his own death. Both give their lives according to the will of the State, neither shy away from their fate. Theaetetus' modest rejection of the seriousness of Theodorus' praise is reminiscent of Socrates' own reaction to the oracle at Delphi.\textsuperscript{107} Indeed even their physical characteristics are similar - Theodorus introduces Theaetetus as sharing in Socrates' snub nose and protruding eyes. Such an introduction calls us to consider the similarity of countenance between these two men as it is reflected in their lives. Indeed, we may expect to see within the young Theaetetus the traits that lead one to live the good life according to a Socratic model.

It is not surprising, then, that the young boy we are presented with in the \textit{Theaetetus} is of a very different character from the young boys in \textit{Lysis}. Theaetetus is thoughtful, modest, and deeply aware of his own ignorance. He is a "natural philosopher" caught in wonder and puzzlement who speaks with candor and looks to his dialogical partner to help him uncover his mistakes in the pursuit of knowledge.\textsuperscript{108} Unlike Socrates' dialogical partners in \textit{Gorgias} and \textit{Lysis}, Socrates does not have to humble and check Theaetetus or use irony to establish a non-contradictory relationship between them.

\textsuperscript{106} Theaetetus' condition (external wounds and internal illness) may also be seen to reflect Plato's understanding of the interconnectedness between thriving in the social realm and the thriving of the individual. When the polis is 'ill' (disrupted in war), we should not be surprised to find dysentery in the camps.

\textsuperscript{107} For Socrates' account of his reaction to the Delphic oracle, see \textit{Apology} 21b.

194
That Theaetetus promises to be an ideal partner for a Socratic search for truth complements the topic of the dialogue itself, a topic that concerns the nature of knowledge and its acquisition. A central issue addressed within the dialogue is that of relativism. In rejecting a Protegorean relativization of truth and knowledge Socrates offers Theaetetus a variety of analogies out of which to construct an alternate understanding. Indeed this rejection of relativism might also be seen to be hinted at in the parallelism of the literary frame. In presenting us with two men separated in time and historic circumstance in which the one virtuous life can be seen to structurally echo the other, Plato is suggesting that despite differences of time and context, logos reveals itself through the individual in a generalized form. Logos is personal, expressed through the individual (reflective of the circumstances of their life, their commitments, etc.), but is not subjective.

As in Lysis, the process of the Socratic inquiry exemplified in the dialogue illustrates the themes under discussion. For this reason we may expect Theaetetus to offer rich insights into, and exemplars of, Socratic method. In the following discussion I shall focus on several of these features, namely:

(i) Inquiry as a moral activity
(ii) The Socratic art of midwifery
(iii) The relationship between objectivity, perspectivity, and truth.

(i) Inquiry as a Moral Activity: Socratic Method and Attached Conversation
Socratic questioning demands that the speaker speak his true commitments. If the choice is between saying what one feels is required and speaking one’s mind, then we have a responsibility to speak our mind. This requires us to genuinely examine ourselves and speak from the heart.\footnote{Plato: Theaetetus, thoughtful, modest (144c); aware of his ignorance (148e); natural philosopher (155d); speaks with candor and looks to his dialogical partner to correct his mistakes (146c).}

\begin{quote}
Socrates: ...What will you answer? 
Theaetetus: I should answer no, if I were to speak my mind with reference to this last question, but having regard to your
\end{quote}
previous one, I might reply yes, to guard against contradicting myself.

_Socrates:_ An excellent answer; really, you might be inspired. But a apparently, if you say yes, it will be like the situation in Euripides; the tongue will be incontrovertible, but not the heart.\(^{110}\)

To speak one's mind is to speak in the first person in a way that maintains our attachment to the ideas we espouse. In this way, Socratic inquiry closes "the gap between _logos_ as a public proposition and genuine opinion."\(^{111}\) To examine the truth of our ideas requires us to acknowledge our beliefs and ideas as our own, as articulations of _our own_ commitments and thus to examine ourselves in light of the inquiry. This self-examination is regarded by Vlastos, Seeskin, and others as the _moral form_ of elenctic inquiry.\(^{112}\) If we do not speak from the heart then we may change what we say, but our own _logos_ - the truth expressed from within - will remain as before. Dialogue will become merely a "sophistical set-to, with a great clashing of arguments".\(^{113}\)

In insisting that the positions put forward express the convictions of the individual, Socrates points to the connection between who we are and what we say. Here we need to remember that, for Plato, _who we are_ is largely determined by our participation in public sphere. In the Socratic context, one cannot defend a position at odds with one's behavior, and because of this, the real subject of Socratic inquiry inevitably turns toward the moral intuitions and preferences that guide the public life of his dialogical partners. On this account:

... elenchus is more than an exercise in philosophical analysis. In asking people to state and defend moral intuitions which underlie their way of life, Socrates inevitably reveals something about their characters. Elenchus, then, has as much to do with honesty, reasonableness, and courage as it does with logical acumen....

---

\(^{110}\) Ibid, 154d.


\(^{112}\) For example, see Kenneth Seeskin: _Dialogue and Discovery_ and Gregory Vlastos: "Socrates’ Disavowal of Knowledge" in _Socratic Studies_. Here, Socrates’ intention is for his interlocutors to “witness against themselves” (p. 44). For Socrates, this means not “preparing to face the faces he will meet but facing up to what he is” (p. 48). See also Vlastos: "The Socratic Elenchus" in _Socratic Studies_, pp. 3-5.

\(^{113}\) Plato: _Theaetetus_, 154e
The importance of ethics to epistemology is all the more obvious if we conceive of the search for knowledge in dialogical terms. If nothing else, dialogue requires cooperation with another person, which in turn, requires appropriate forms of behavior. This entire way of looking at knowledge comes to a head in the Socratic dictum that virtue is knowledge. Unless we understand how knowledge comes to present, this claim, the heart of Socratic philosophy, is likely to seem absurd.\textsuperscript{114}

For Socratic inquiry to give expression to logos, logos must itself be manifest in the behavior of the dialogical partners within the inquiry. If the search for knowledge is a search for unity, then the relationship between dialogical partners will itself strive for such unity (a \textit{we}). If we see the unity of logos as the \textit{good}, then the relationship between dialogical partners will be one that strives to express virtuous behavior. To do any less would be to behave contrary to the search for logos and to impede the search for knowledge.

Of course we may find ourselves in a position in which this commitment to treat the other as a friend for the sake of realizing logos together is absent - as Socrates so often does when conversing with people who oppose him - at such times, our convictions may be sorely tested. Socrates may strive to be a friend to his dialogical partners, but even he can become exasperated and exasperating on occasion. The point to be made here is that, while we may find ourselves in an oppositionary (or unfriendly) relationship, if our aim is to search for truth and meaning we cannot seek to establish such a relationship nor defend one when it occurs. \textit{Theaetetus} is rare in that, in this dialogue, Socrates is freed from the oppositionary stance of most of his dialogical partners. Theaetetus is a willing partner in the search for truth and shares Socrates' temperament. As such, we may expect to find in \textit{Theaetetus} a paradigmatic portrait of the ethical relationship between dialogical partners that the establishment of logos requires - and this is, indeed, what Plato portrays.

\textbf{Socrates' Ethic of Care}

The sensitivity and care Socrates displays toward the young Theaetetus illustrates the inter-personal dimension of the attached dialogical relationship. Throughout the dialogue Socrates emerges as an empathetic and responsive listener. He praises

\textsuperscript{114} Kenneth Seeskin: \textit{Dialogue and Discovery}, pp. 3-4.
Theaetetus in his successes, at times teases him, scaffolds his thinking to further draw him out; encourages him in moments of self-doubt, and supports him in his efforts to respond to Socratic questioning with candor and sincerity.\textsuperscript{115} This does not mean that Socrates is any less demanding - indeed to be demanding is how he shows his friendship - rather, it means that Socrates pays attention to the psychological and ethical demands of inquiry as well as the cognitive ones. The psychological and ethical demands of inquiry, that is, not the psychological an ethical demands of inter-personal relationship per se. It is not one’s friend who places ethical obligations on the inquiry, but the activity of inquiry itself which carries with it a duty of care toward the flourishing of one’s dialogical partner.\textsuperscript{116} What is considered a right way to act within the inquiry will be that which promotes and secures the unity of the activity of inquiry, thereby promoting the expression of logos.

So in what way does Socrates attend to Theaetetus? To “speak from the heart” and expose one’s inner convictions to public scrutiny is at the same time to expose oneself. Speaking one’s mind may challenge a person’s sense of inner security.\textsuperscript{117} This is one of the ways in which Socratic discourse requires courage. Socrates employs several strategies which may be seen as expressive of his sensitivity toward this challenge, strategies which represent a particularly Socratic way of caring. They represent Socrates’ care both toward the inquiry and toward the individual with whom he is engaged. We need to be careful here to guard against seeing Socrates’ care for the individual as instrumental (i.e.; that care for the welfare of the other is necessary because we care that the inquiry should have a chance to succeed), for that would be to suggest that there are two kinds of care and one is seen in the service of the other. Rather it is to say that, for Socrates, attentiveness toward the individual

\textsuperscript{115} For instance, to point to examples of each early in the dialogue, see Plato’s Theaetetus: Praise: “well done!” (147e), “Excellent: And what next?” (148a); teasing: “We don’t want him to have to give evidence by oath...” (145c), the passage quoted above (154d); scaffolding: “Forward then on the way you have just shown. Take as a model...” (148e); encouragement: “...so tell me, in a generous spirit...” (146c), the complete midwife analogy (149-151e); support: “Good, that is the right spirit...” (151e).

\textsuperscript{116} This is in keeping with the account of friendship I offered in Lysis. Such an approach founds the ethical basis of the dialogical relationship differently from the way it is founded in communicative ethics or an ethics of obligation arising out of our encounter with the face of the other. I take this up in the section on care in chapter 6.

\textsuperscript{117} N.B.: This is the ‘flip side’ of the point I made earlier vis à vis the outward form of Socratic inquiry as providing the necessary unity to individuals in order that they face inner contradiction.
and attentiveness toward the procedures of inquiry are both expressions of the one care, which is care for the establishment of logos.\textsuperscript{118} Again, this is in keeping with Socrates (or, more accurately, Plato’s) view that it is the one logos that is established both in ourselves and in the world.\textsuperscript{119}

Care is expressed by the way in which Socrates: (i) puts Theaetetus at his ease, (ii) creates a safe environment for disclosure, and (iii) focuses on stated opinion as a tentative starting point for inquiry. In each case he highlights, and seeks to preserve, the non-contradictory and collaborative nature of the dialogical relationship. Each of these is worth a brief comment.

Socrates spends considerable time putting Theaetetus at his ease, and he does this in several ways: by communicating to Theaetetus that he is highly regarded by those who know him best (Theodorus); by expressing his own good will toward him; by engaging him at the outset in a topic with which he is familiar and comfortable (geometry); and by pointing explicitly to the collaborative nature of their inquiry. All of these are established within moments of Theaetetus sitting down.\textsuperscript{120} Beginning in light banter concerning their facial similarity, Socrates turns to suggest they examine whether their similarity goes deeper, mentioning in the process Theodorus’ praise for his student. Socrates responds to Theaetetus’ humility (or reluctance to be examined) by jokingly de-emphasizing the seriousness of the engagement (“no one will indict him for perjury”) before asking him about his studies. At the first opportune moment he likens himself to Theaetetus, pointing to what they share in common. Here he speaks as a ‘fellow student’ rather than as an expert. Only then, with a degree of

\textsuperscript{118} I further explore this sense of care in chapter 5.

\textsuperscript{119} There are interesting connections between the view of unity I am suggesting here and Terry Penner’s view of the unity of virtue in Plato. See “The Unity of Virtue” in Essays on the Philosophy of Socrates, ed. Benson, H. The difference between Penner’s view and mine is a matter of what account we give of the ‘one’. For Penner, the ‘one’ that enables him to say knowledge=good=bravery=virtue is the underlying “psychological state that explains how certain men do brave acts” (p. 165) (or virtuous acts, wise acts, etc.). It is this psychological state that is the same in each case and allows us to see the “=” as a claim of identity rather than equivalence. In contrast, I am suggesting that the underlying ‘one’ is structural (the structure of logos, as characterised by friendship). It is this unified structure that is given expression through each of these cases, and it is to the unity of this structure that we refer when we understand knowledge=good=bravery=virtue, etc., as a claim of identity.

\textsuperscript{120} Plato: Theaetetus, 144d-145d
equality and common purpose established between them, does he admit that he is “puzzled about one small matter” which precipitates the ensuing inquiry.

Theaetetus: I certainly do my best to learn.
Socrates: And so do I, from him [Theodorus] and from anyone else who seems to understand these things. I do moderately well in general, but all the same I am puzzled about one small matter which you or our friends must help me to think out...\textsuperscript{121}

Socrates does not ask Theodorus for an answer to his puzzlement, but for partnership in inquiry. “I cannot make out to my own satisfaction what knowledge is. Can we answer that question? What do you all say?”.\textsuperscript{122} At this point Socrates’ enthusiasm breaks the very ease he has set to establish - he suggests they treat the inquiry like a game with anyone who misses “sitting down as donkey”. When no-one responds (who wants to risk being donkey?) he apologizes for his manner and explicitly states that his only intention was to start a conversation in which they will be “at ease with one another like friends”. Socrates then asks Theaetetus to speak in a “generous spirit”.\textsuperscript{123} It is at this point that Theodorus proffers his first definition of knowledge.

\textbf{Moral Constraints on Inquiry}

What gives Theaetetus courage to proceed is his confidence that Socrates will help him if he goes wrong. But in what situations does the possibility of having your mistakes corrected give you courage (as well as require courage)? It seems to me that such courage arises when one trusts that speaking one’s mind will be heard in the spirit of a first articulation - an articulation which can then be built upon by all taking part in the inquiry - rather than regarded as a summative statement, the truth of which the speaker alone is called upon to defend. This is to trust that one’s co-inquirers place greater importance on what is achieved for all participants by the end of inquiry, rather than on what is said by one speaker at the beginning - it is to trust that one’s dialogical partner is thinking with you rather than against you.\textsuperscript{124} This is what Socrates explicitly models when he asks Theodorus and Theaetetus to

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid, 145d
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid, 146a
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid, 146c

200
help him think through his own puzzlement. Such collaboration does not require that
dialogical partners agree, rather, it requires that they listen and respond in a manner
that shows that what is at stake in the inquiry is at stake for all of them. In this case,
the generosity that Socrates asks for is a *generosity of spirit*. He is asking Theaetetus
to be generous in his assessment of him (Socrates) - to trust him that he will listen to
what Theaetetus says in the right way. It is this that will, in turn, give Theaetetus the
courage to be generous in opening his own opinions to scrutiny. Through such
exchanges, courage, generosity of spirit and trust emerge as ethical dimensions of
Socratic discourse. These ethical constraints arise out of the communicative
demands of inquiry as a collaborative search for truth.

When Theaetetus offers his first definition of knowledge, Socrates does not point
directly to its inadequacy. Instead, he avoids placing himself in direct opposition to
Theaetetus by critiquing the definition obliquely. His gentle teasing (“you are
generous indeed, my dear Theaetetus”) acts to strengthen the public tie of friendship
between them at the same time as it shows a difference of opinion.\(^{125}\) He then gently
leads Theaetetus toward an understanding of the problem with his definition through
multiple examples, ending with a clear account of how he would answer given the
type of distinction he has in mind.

Yet despite Socrates’ enthusiasm for Theaetetus’ account, and his urging of
Theaetetus to model his answer about knowledge along the same lines, Theaetetus
once again finds himself unable to speak. Here the problem is not with his *trust of othen*,
but with his *trust of himself*. He cannot persuade himself that he has an
answer worth offering. Theaetetus’ sense of his own ignorance and his inadequacy in
being able to formulate a satisfactory definition of knowledge make him a reticent
partner (148c-d). It is at this point that Socrates offers his account of his own work
as a midwife. In offering the metaphor, Socrates’ displays his sensitivity toward the
psychology of his partner and illustrates his strategy for building Theaetetus’

\(^{124}\) This points to why the idea of “sitting down as donkey” was inhibiting - you were judged ‘donkey’
by others in the group; it generates competitive judgment rather than collaboration.

\(^{125}\) Plato: *Theaetetus* 146d. It strengthens the tie because it acknowledges that Theaetetus has indeed
done precisely what Socrates asked of him - to be generous - only not in the way he had in mind.
confidence. That is, I am suggesting that the midwife metaphor can be seen as a direct attempt to counter Theaetetus' self-doubt and reluctance for disclosure.

How does the metaphor function? Firstly, faced with Theaetetus' reticence to disclose what he thinks, Socrates' offers him a disclosure of his own. He shares the secret of his work as a midwife. As with irony, the sharing of secrets is conspiratorial, it serves to establish their relationship as one between friends. Whether this secret is indeed a secret is not the point - by framing it as a secret "not to be given away" Socrates establishes their relationship as one of trust in which personal understanding can be shared. Secondly, the metaphor itself serves to reassure Theaetetus by unequivocally describing Socrates position as one that is both skilled and supportive. Thirdly, Socrates' account makes it clear that the confusion Theaetetus' is currently feeling is not only natural, but a sign that he is already making progress. Socrates lets Theaetetus know that he has already ascertained that Theaetetus has something to say and that, with his support, Theaetetus should have no fear to bring forth his opinion into the public realm. Once delivered to his opinion, they will together examine the value of the child so born. In this way he eases Theaetetus' feeling of inadequacy and offers him encouragement to go on by trusting that he has something to say. It is encouragement that hits its mark. Theaetetus responds: "with such encouragement... it is shame not to do one's best to say what one can." 

The ethical dimension of Socratic method illuminated here is in the precise nature of the support dialogical partners offer one another. The midwife expresses her care for the mother by doing what she can to ease the delivery of the attached child. In dialogical terms, it is to recognize the attachment between stated opinion and the one who states it, and requires that dialogical partners think with and for one another in

---

126 Burnyeat states this particularly well when he speaks of the double function of Socrates' role as midwife. First, Socrates delivers people to their opinions; only then can he help deliver them from them. This first description of midwifery serves to build Theaetetus' confidence that his opinion can be delivered. One might see this process of delivery continuing until 161. Then begins the task of delivering Theaetetus from his opinion. See Myles Burnyeat: "Socratic Midwifery, Platonic Inspiration" in Essays on the Philosophy of Socrates, ed. Benson, H. pp. 54-55.

127 Plato: Theaetetus, 151d.
order that the idea come into full view. It is to show our care through treating one another’s ideas (and the unity of logos) as worthy of our own attention and effort.

Finally, by focusing on the elicited view as a tentative starting point for inquiry and speaking in the plural, Socrates stresses the collective nature of the inquiry. While we are required to express our own opinions honestly, once voiced, the views expressed are no longer mine or yours but ours. The responsibility to affirm or refute the truth of that which is stated is shared by all partaking in the inquiry. By framing the inquiry in the plural Socrates shifts the focus from the individual’s expression of logos (and themselves) to the common logos (knowledge). What is examined is the truth for all of that which has been stated. This does not require the individual to detach themselves from their view and see it as ‘just one view amongst many’ because the many are each expressive of the one (the one logos). What has been stated is attached to each one of us, if not because we ourselves expressed it, then because it is we who are called upon to respond to it in light of our own understanding. Here Socrates exemplifies an ethics of responsibility toward the establishment of logos rather than a responsibility toward the Other qua moral agent.

(ii) The Socratic Art of Midwifery

While the function of the midwife metaphor may be seen as allaying Theaetetus’ fears, the details of the metaphor communicate important understandings concerning the relationship between thinker and knowledge within Socratic inquiry. Burnyeat points to the significance of the midwife image when he states:

The necessary background of the picture of Socrates’ as midwife... is of course the metaphor of the mind giving birth to the ideas it has conceived. The compelling naturalness of this image is a matter of common experience and needs no argument. But it can be taken more or less seriously. At a superficial level it is a metaphor like any other, based on a sense of resemblance between physical and mental creativity. To

---

128 Such care is shown when we help scaffold one another’s thinking, draw out consequences, or articulate assumptions (etc.). Thus we can see the period between Theaetetus’ first articulation at 151e and the “birth” at 160e as a period in which Socrates leads Theaetetus to give full birth to his original opinion - bring all that it entails and implies to light.
take the metaphor seriously is to recognise it as embodying an important part of the meaning that the creative process can have for someone.  

The mother’s relationship to the child is one of attachment - the child begins in her, but in the process of birth, comes to stand objective to herself - the child comes to occupy public space in which it is visible to all. To occupy public space is not, however, to lose that sense of attachment. The child is neither the same nor different from the mother, it is neither Self nor Other. How does this relate to Socrates’ view of Socratic inquiry? For Socrates, stating one’s opinions in the public arena gives the ideas independence while preserving the speaker’s attachment to them. In including matchmaking as the midwives’ skill, Socrates recognizes that one does not arrive at an opinion on one’s own but by virtue of one’s relationship to another. Creating an opinion - having something to say - emerges out of dialogue with others. Dialogue is a necessary condition for inquiry, though what is established through inquiry comes from within oneself.

Socrates’ comparison of the status of the child with the status of truth also points to the way in knowledge is, for Socrates, both general and personal. While the terms ‘parent’ and ‘child’ are general, the relationship between a particular parent and child is non-transferable. What does this communicate about knowledge arrived at through midwifery? In some ways the knowledge is general (a child), but it is also irreducibly personal (my child). The fact that the child is uniquely my child doesn’t make it subjectively a child. Furthermore, the judgment of whether I gave birth to a child or a mere phantom depends on its capacity to survive independently in the public sphere. Coming to appreciate the way in which my opinion constitutes knowledge - both self-knowledge and general understanding - requires submitting my opinion to public scrutiny.  

130 Here we can see the open and multi-dimensional way in which the child both is and is not the parent as paralleling the internal neither-nor structure of irony.
131 In ancient Greek terms, giving birth did not guarantee the status of ‘child’ - an infant who died at, or soon after, birth was not considered an independent life, it was seen as an extension of the mother. No mourning customs were practiced, there was no burial. Independent status came with the capacity to survive independently.
(iii) The Relationship between Objectivity, Perspectivity, and Truth

*Theaetetus:* ... *It seems to me that* one who knows something is perceiving the thing he knows, and, *so far as I can see at present,* knowledge is nothing but perception.\(^{132}\)

When Theaetetus offers Socrates his second account of knowledge he buffers his opinion in relativism of two sorts: The phrase “It seems to me” captures the relativism of Protagoras (in which knowledge is relativized to the perception of the individual), whereas the phrase “as far as I can see at the present” captures Heraclitus’ doctrine of flux - it is what I take knowledge to be now, not at another time. While Socrates will later tease out the problems that puzzle him with this view, his first task is to bring the two doctrines into the full light, in this he does not state his own opinion but acts as midwife to Theaetetus:

*Theaetetus:* ... *Really, I am not sure* Socrates. I cannot even make out about you, whether you are stating this as something you believe or merely putting me to the test.

*Socrates:* You forget, my friend, that I know nothing of such matters and cannot claim to be producing any offspring of my own. I am only trying to deliver yours... \(^{133}\)

At the point where Socrates brings all three doctrines together, the process of birthing is complete:

*Socrates:* So you were perfectly right in saying that knowledge is nothing but perception. And it has turned out that these three doctrines co-incide [converge] - the doctrine of Homer and Heraclitus and all their tribe that all things move like flowing streams, the doctrine of Protagoras, wisest of men, that man is the measure of all things, and Theaetetus’ conclusion that, on these grounds, it results that perception is knowledge.

Is it not so, Theaetetus? May we say that this is your newborn child which we have brought to birth? What do you say?

*Theaetetus:* I can only agree, Socrates! \(^{134}\)

\(^{132}\) Plato: *Theaetetus*, 151e (my italics).

\(^{133}\) Ibid, 157c.

As in *Lysis*, Socrates takes care not to directly oppose Theaetetus, even though their judgments differ. Instead he stands at a critical distance from Theaetetus thinking neither the same nor differently from him. He accepts judgments in seeming accord with Theaetetus then suggests how he finds “one thing” puzzling in the judgment - which (on elaboration) shows that he does not accept it after all. As in *Lysis*, we may see this approach and withdrawal as the cadence of dialogical action, allowing Socrates to think with Theaetetus (to stand in a relation of friendship or non-contradiction with him) while not thinking the same as him. Within such a framework Socrates can work to bring about fuller agreement.

Importantly, we need to remember that, for Socrates, the relation that characterises unity between friends is not a *psychological* relation but a *structural* one. Of course, in saying this I am not suggesting that friendship can be reduced to structural (or logical) form, only that the *we* of friendship offers a paradigm of unity within complexity that breaks from the *either-or* framework. While friendship is individual and expressive of oneself, for Plato it is general - it is a public role incumbent on *anyone* who is another’s dialogical partner. Here the concept of friendship might be seen as sharing a similar structure to that of having a vocation, the duties of friendship that are not sourced in the particular identity of this friend or that. This is what Lawrence Blum refers to when he speaks of friendship as defying the personal/impersonal framework. The relations are personal (reflecting one’s own identity), but the *structure* of the relationship is impersonal.

Could it be that this relation itself offers us an alternate way in which to account for the structural relationship between objectivity, perspectivity, and truth? For Theaetetus, arriving at a definition of knowledge is a matter of determining whether a particular definition under consideration is the correct one: “Either knowledge is perception or it is not”. However, for Socrates, to earnestly ask ‘what is knowledge?’ at a content level (and expect to arrive at an answer) already presupposes that we

---

135 Plato: *Theaetetus*. For instance; 161c, 187b, 187d.
136 Ibid, Socrates invokes the term friend in order to arrive at fuller agreement at: 157c,167e-168d, 207d (to point to a few).
understand the conditions under which such an inquiry proceeds at a ‘meta’ level. That is, it presumes that we know how to go about reasoning about knowledge. Griswold astutely reminds us of this when he writes:

...there would seem to be a difference between, on one hand, the metalevel rules that allow one to define the problem or area one wishes to investigate, the rules of investigation, as well as the rules that determine when the investigation is complete, and, on the other hand, the investigation itself.\textsuperscript{138}

The problem Socrates faces is that of the regress of knowledge. If logos - the examination of belief - is a precondition for knowledge, then any claim to know will itself need to be held open to elenctic examination. Either we know something, in which case we can give an accounting of it, or we do not. But to give an accounting requires further examination.

If knowledge requires logos and logos is analysis, then the end-points of analysis, as well as the starting points, will require logos. But then we have a regress: the end-points of analysis are, after all, subject to analysis. We are forbidden to stop the regress by saying that the end-points have no analysis; that would make them unknowable. But we can hardly just live with the regress. It looks as though all Plato’s requirements for knowledge, taken together, make knowledge impossible. To know anything I must offer a logos of it; but this either imports unknowables or starts a regress of logoi.\textsuperscript{139}

Repeatedly, Socrates tries to involve Theaetetus at this metalevel of inquiry, however Theaetetus just does not get his point. This is, perhaps the source of the inquiry’s seeming failure. Theaetetus fails to see that there are prior understandings on which any claim to knowledge rests.

Socrates: And in each and all cases, it is possible for us either to know a thing or not know it?...

Theaetetus: Well then, Socrates, there is no third alternative left in any case, besides knowing and not-knowing.\textsuperscript{140}


\textsuperscript{140} Plato: Theaetetus, p. 188.
So what could such a third alternative be? If we accept my account of the structure of friendship (or complex wholes) then such a possibility will be one in which individual perception and general understanding are most fruitfully thought of as being neither the same nor different from one another. Such an alternative hinges not on the term know but on the term us - it is to ask "what is objectively the case in an inter-personal world"?^{141} It is this that I think Plato models through the dialogue form. Importantly, for Plato this makes dialogue a condition for coming to know, but what we come to know is not inter-subjectively determined (for we can only establish logos for ourselves through our own deliberations). It is the dialogical situation itself that provides us with a method for beginning an inquiry into knowledge - for now the beginning is an action rather than a claim to knowledge - the action of stating our true opinion in the public sphere.^{142} What this does not addressed however is the problem of regress at the end-point of inquiry, for there will always be another logos to offer. Thus our conditions for knowledge ironically preclude our success at establishing it.

By starting the search for truth with genuine opinion, dialogue grounds inquiry in the personal, but also limits it from becoming merely personal. It bounds inquiry by the general constraints and norms of intelligibility (and of the inter-personal community) that move it out of the personal realm. For Plato, the search for truth for me is the search for truth simplicitor, not because we can generalize from "I" to everyone else, but because my search for the truth is carried out for the sake of truth itself and truth is One. Any inquiry into truth will reflect my perspectivity, but it will reflect my perspectival way of framing a truth that is general. As Griswold succinctly notes:

"A presupposition of the demand that one give a logos for one's opinions is that there is a Truth, and correspondingly that there is a "whole" in terms of which opinions somehow reflect what really is."^{143}

---

^{142} I take up the notion of action again in chapter 5 in relation to Hannah Arendt.
Each life can serve as the starting point that both grounds critical inquiry (giving it a place to begin) and refutes relativism (for it gives expression to the one *logos*). As Socrates points out, the alternative - relativism - denies us the very capacity to speak.

**Socratic Inquiry and the Good of the State**

While Socrates succeeds in leading Theaetetus to see the multiple features of the child he has borne, he is ultimately unsuccessful in leading Theaetetus to address the questions that lie at this metalevel. It is this failure, perhaps, that forms to the dialogues parting scene.

> **Socrates:** Now I must go off to the portico of the King-Archon to meet the indictment which Meletus has drawn up against me. But tomorrow morning, Theodorus, let us meet here again.\(^{144}\)

We must ask ourselves why *Theaetetus* ends with Socrates heading off to meet the indictment - an indictment of subversive incitation which ultimately leads to his death. That inquiry can itself be seen as a subversive act points to the political dimension of the search for truth as a normative ideal. Socrates and Meletus (and the Athenians who support his indictment) represent opposing visions of what it is for the State to flourish. Perhaps what Plato is suggesting is that Theaetetus' failure is of the same kind as the failure made by the State in their search for the truth about Socrates. In judging each definition of knowledge merely as propositional content (knowledge is *this* or *it is not*) Theaetetus loses sight of the inter-relationships that are so central to a search for *logos* as a whole. So too with the State; what the State fails to consider is *how* it is going about answering this question. In asking "Is Socrates either for the State or against it?" the State judges Socrates commitments and teachings alone.\(^{145}\) For Socrates, one could assume that the question they should rather have asked was: "In what way is Socrates neither for the State nor against it?". In asking the second question the State would begin its inquiry by an examination of Socrates actions (of his life rather than his beliefs). They would turn to examine his place (his function and role) within the complex unity of the polis. Here the jurors

---

144 Plato: *Theaetetus*, 210d.
145 That is, judging only if Socrates' beliefs and teachings are the same as the State's or different.
would be called upon to attend to the way in which Socrates' “stinging” role might be seen to contribute toward the good of the State. In this way tensions between seeming contradictories would themselves to be viewed in terms of the encompassing logos of the greater whole. Only then can they hope to arrive at deepened appreciation of the good life to which the State aspires.

*Socrates:* If you put me to death, you will not easily find anyone to take my place. It is literally true, even if it sounds comical, that God has especially appointed me to this city, as though it were a large thorough-bred horse which because of its great size is inclined to be lazy and needs the stimulation of some stinging fly. It seems to me that God has attached me to this city to perform the office of this fly... You will not easily find another like me, gentlemen...  

Thus the ending of Theaetetus leads us back to the beginning; back to the death of an exceptional citizen for the good of the State - and again we are faced with the parallelism between Socrates and Theaetetus:

*Socrates:* In a court of law, just as in warfare, neither I nor any other ought to use their wits to escape being killed by any means. In battle it is often obvious that you could escape being killed by giving up your arms... But I suggest, gentlemen, that the difficulty is not so much to escape death; the real difficulty is to escape from doing wrong...  

As a mature man, Theaetetus' courage in battle is of the same kind as the courage Socrates displays at his indictment, which in turn parallels the courage that the young Theaetetus is called to exhibit in inquiry. In each case courage arises out of an orientation toward something beyond one's own perceptions. It is to see Ergon as an expression of living for the sake of logos. It is this that makes it impossible for a good man - a man who sees themselves as part of a greater whole and lives his life accordingly - to do harm. As a youth, Theaetetus may not have grasped Socrates' meta-philosophical lesson, and so his account of the nature of knowledge fails. However as an adult Theaetetus' life gives testimony to the fact that he indeed learned what Socrates had to teach.

---

Not Man but men inhabit this planet. Plurality is the law of the earth.

Hannah Arendt

We might do well... as we pursue community, to keep a postmodern slogan in mind, “We is not the plural of I”.

Nel Noddings

CHAPTER 5

Critical Thinking in Pluralistic Communities
(Autonomy, Limits and the Establishment of Community)

(I) Plurality

One of the key theoretical challenges facing the theory of critical thinking I have been developing is that of constructing a conception of structural unity that is sufficient to replace the Platonic concept of a unified logos. An account of unity and flourishing (in community, in inquiry) that is consistent both with pluralism and with a contemporary account of persons. It is this challenge that I take up in this chapter.

The Challenge of Pluralism

The central difference between the contemporary notion of a community of inquiry and the Socratic model of a dialogical community hinges on the issue of pluralism. Central to my account of the critical person was the individual’s perception of their own uniqueness, a uniqueness arising from their autonomy and historically achieved individuality. Such uniqueness is substantial rather than contextual, reflecting people’s freedom to choose a mode of life for themselves; it implies that there is

1 Hannah Arendt: The Life of the Mind: Thinking, p. 19.
3 Based on notions of reflexivity, uniqueness, and interiority.
more than one kind of unity to be had, and that a person’s autonomy lies in their freedom to determine what kind of unity they want - to be this sort of unified person or that. Indeed, accepting multiple forms of flourishing requires us to reject a singular vision of the good, and with it, various forms of monism.⁴

Uniqueness will also transform the way we conceptualize shared understanding, for it suggests that there is a limit to the extent that we can generalize from our own case to that of others. Rather than turning inward to a singular logos to find what is general, inquiry now involves moving outward to determine what is general. Here the very possibility of shared understanding rests on the belief that, even though we are each unique, we share enough in common (e.g.; common values or common language), such that we can reach across to one another.⁵ However, while shared understanding may be possible, there is no longer any guarantee that differences between alternate visions of flourishing can (even theoretically) be fully resolved.

Furthermore, if, as I suggested in the previous chapter, we see the search for truth as realizing logos, then the issue of uniqueness or autonomy will be more pervasive for a pluralistic theory of critical thinking than merely pointing to the possibility of a difference of moral ends. If we approach the search for logos as the search for interpretative truth and meaning, then (as with self-determination) the process of constructing knowledge and completing systems of thought will itself be context-dependent and plural and may reflect methodological and systematic differences.⁶ Histories, traditions, and cultures will affect both our accounts of knowledge and truth, and the meta-structure through which we construct our world views (for example, the style of philosophy we engage in or the kind of ethics we adopt). My way of reasoning critically, as well as the judgments I am led to, may be right for me while not necessarily being right for you. This is the position I argued for in chapter 2 when I discussed the way in which reasoning reflects the personal

⁴ For example, the varying monisms of Plato, Kant, and Gadamer.
⁵ For example: (i) Taylor, Ricoeur, and Gadamer ground the possibility of shared understanding in the capacity for speech (we explored the intersubjectivity of speech in chapter 2); (ii) Kant, Kekes, and Nussbaum ground the possibility for shared understanding in moral agency; (iii) Noddings grounds it in empathy (one-caring); and (iv) Buber and MacMurray ground it in communion.
character and orientation of the reasoner. Pluralism also raises the question concerning the possibility of engaging in dialogical inquiry across deep disagreements - disagreements that arise amongst people committed to different ontologies and values - that we explored in chapter 3 in relation to the abortion debate.\footnote{For an overview of one way to categorize varying types of pluralism see: Amelie Rorty: "Varieties of Pluralism in a Polyphonic Society" in \textit{Review of Metaphysics}, vol. 44, no. 1, pp. 3-20.}

\textbf{Pluralism Between and Within Traditions}

Indeed it seems to me that it is this question of plurality within conceptions of critical thinking that underlies the generalizability debate on one hand and the challenges of Western and male hegemony raised by critical theorists and feminists on the other - though these debates are rarely couched in these terms.\footnote{I explored deep disagreements in chapter 3 in relation to the abortion debate where people are committed to different ontologies and values. In chapter 3 I discussed this by reference to a series of articles on deep disagreement published in \textit{Informal Logic}. I suggested that not only was such inquiry possible, but that it contributed to both our own self-understanding and to the construction of knowledge (the search for truth and meaning).}

We might see the generalizability of critical thinking across the disciplines as involving two related questions: (i) the question of whether it is possible to engage in a single search for truth across disciplines that are systematically or methodologically different from one another. If so, a theory of critical thinking needs to address the nature of the relationship between these pluralities; and, (ii) the question of whether searching for truth within the different disciplines may be described as the same kind of searching. That is, whether our seeking to establish or express scientific truth bears any similarity as a \textit{search for truth} to our seeking to establish or express aesthetic truth. Usually, the generalizability debate is focused around questions of commonality of method (whether there is a core of critical thinking skills that exists unilaterally across the disciplines and across cultures), however we should not

\footnote{One exception worthy of note is Karen Warren: "Critical Thinking and Feminism" in \textit{Rethinking Reason}, Kerry Walters (ed.), pp.15-176. In regard to critiques of male hegemony in critical thinking that could be seen in light of issues concerning pluralism see other essays in the same volume and also; Elisabeth Porter: \textit{Women and Moral Identity}, especially chapter 4 "Reason, Passion and Objectivity" pp. 88-118; Annette Baier: \textit{Moral Prejudices}, especially ch. 5. "Hume, the Reflective Woman's Epistemologist?" pp. 76-94. For an overview of the generalizability debate see Stephen Norris (ed.): \textit{The Generalizability of Critical Thinking}. Of particular note is the article by Ralph Johnson: "The Problem of Defining Critical Thinking" (I referred to this in chapter 1) and Harvey Siegel: \textit{Educating Reason}, pp.155-176.}
confuse this with commonality as a search for truth - a commonality grounded in shared intentionality. It is this shared intentionality that makes critical thinking across difference possible.9

The question of plural possibilities within traditions of critical thinking surfaces amongst feminist theorists for whom “women’s ways of knowing” constitute a subjugated discourse; one that is invalidated by the traditional enlightenment notion of reason.10 As Wendy Kohli argues: to validate and include women’s style of knowing into epistemology and theories of critical thinking, “...it isn’t just a matter of ‘add women and stir’.”11 What needs to be recognized is a plurality of ways of knowing.12 Here, MacIntyre’s recognition of competing traditions is not enough to ensure we recognize the plurality internal to traditions themselves (in this case, a plurality which may be attributed to gender).13 Indeed, we can take Noddings critique of MacIntyre (posed at a political level) and see it as expressing precisely the feminist argument against the hegemony of certain styles of argumentation within critical thinking.

MacIntyre, for example, recognizes and appreciates competing traditions, but he describes a “living tradition” as “an historically extended, socially embodied argument.” In describing traditions this way, he entirely overlooks the traditions that belong to what Michael Foucault calls “subjugated discourses.” Voices not captured in historically recognized texts are not recognized as traditions.14

9 My problem with the standard approach is that it tends to either become reductionist (if we accept generalizability), thereby losing what is significant about critical thinking within different systems (for it is the common skills that then become the focus of critical thinking programs), or (if we view critical thinking as discipline dependent) it looks to deny the possibility of relationship across disciplines and asserts a kind of relativism concerning inquiry (e.g., McPeck’s position).
10 Mary Belenky, Blythe Clinchy, Nancy Goldberger and Jill Tarule: Woman’s Ways of Knowing.
13 I am not interested here in the question of whether differences in thinking are gender based or not. We may still speak of ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ styles of thinking as culturally ascribed types. My issue here is with how we can make judgments of viability for styles of critical thinking, for which feminist critique is an example.
If critical thinking is thought of as a tradition: “a discursive community bound by its texts, debates, personalities, and histories”, this question of hegemony becomes critical. But here we need to distinguish between two possible forms of bias - bias arising from applying existing standards unevenly, and bias caused by the standards themselves (whereby chosen standards exclude, or act detrimentally against, some members of the group). Sharon Bailin points out that the charge of bias in critical thinking corresponds to the second sense. She then notes:

The principal assumption upon which such charges of bias are based is that different groups in society have employed different methods in constructing knowledge but that those in power have privileged their own ways of knowing. The bias then consists in setting up these ways of knowing and the standards inherent in them as universal, thereby excluding the practices of some groups.

We must then ask if such bias is remediable (by pluralizing our conception of critical thinking to make it work for all groups), or unremediable (in which case critical thinking is recognized as partial and placed alongside other modes of inquiry groups in the community utilize). While there is general agreement that the charge of bias within critical thinking is a question whose time has come, I agree with Jennifer Wheary and Robert Ennis that what it will take to answer the charge is complex, empirical as well as conceptual. This is especially true when styles of thinking are attributed to gender, an issue on which more empirical data is needed. However the central issue here lies not in determining whether the charge of gender bias in critical thinking is legitimate, but rather (using gender as the example), in determining the bases on which judgments are made concerning viable ranges of possibility; for the

---

16 Sharon Bailin: “Is Critical Thinking Biased? Clarifications and Implications” in ibid, p. 193. The two forms of bias are discussed by Bailin (who draws them from Robert Nozick’s *The Nature of Rationality*).
17 Ibid, p. 194.
18 Ibid, indeed the need to address this question in critical thinking theory emerged as a common theme by all who took part in this Symposium. In relation to the complexity of answering the charge.
19 Jennifer Wheary and Robert Ennis: “Gender Bias in Critical Thinking: Continuing the Dialogue” pp. 213-224. There is an equally strong claim that while there is plurality within critical thinking, we should not confuse this with biological gender differences. Wheary and Ennis suggest this possibility, as does Blythe Clinch in her reporting that, while differences in thinking may be gender related, some male students identify with what is called women’s ways of knowing. See “On Critical Thinking and Connected Knowing” in *Rethinking Reason*, pp. 41-2.
charge of bias itself presumes that there is more than one viable mode of critical thinking to be had.

Importantly, establishing a pluralist model of critical thinking does not commit us to the claim that in every case critical thinking will involve engaging with one another across such differences (we may find homogenous communities where no deep differences arise). However given the possibility that uniqueness and individuality may involve just this kind of deep difference, only a pluralist model can accommodate it without denying that judgments arising within different traditions can be compared and without one tradition necessarily emerging as dominant over another.\textsuperscript{20}

The central purpose of this chapter is to present a full account of what a pluralist model of critical thinking would look like. Here I am not concerned with showing how such a conception is superior to other models of critical thinking, but rather, am concerned with showing its own internal coherence as a theory. Here the challenge is to develop a model of critical thinking that allows for the possibility of pluralism; one that acknowledges the autonomy and uniqueness of persons while also accepting the social construction of self and knowledge.\textsuperscript{21} If I am successful, such a model will provide a coherent account of what it means for critical thinkers to think autonomously for themselves as they engage with others in dialogical inquiry.

Furthermore, in light of the view of the critical person I developed in chapter 2 (wherein thinking for oneself is regarded as the reflexive dimension of thinking with others), I will need to allow for the possibility that persons themselves contain

\textsuperscript{20} It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore the feminist critique of male hegemony within critical thinking and the generalizability debate in detail. Both involve a wide range of positions that are supported by differing assumptions and concerns. Here I raise them merely as examples of what is at stake in arguing for a pluralistic conception of critical thinking. If I am successful in showing that a pluralistic conception of dialogical inquiry holds together, then a future task would be to explore how such a model addresses the concerns raised by the range of theorists writing on these two issues.

\textsuperscript{21} Such a view threatens to be inconsistent in that it seeks a middle ground between the autonomy of persons associated with liberalism on one hand, and the inter-relational (or social) view of persons associated with communitarianism on the other. See Noddings: “On Community” in \textit{Educational Theory}, vol. 46, no. 3, 1996. pp. 257-259.
plurality.\textsuperscript{22} This requires turning to a pluralist model of self as well as of community. Here, as with dialogical inquiry between ‘two who are neither the same nor different from one another’, the challenge will be to show how unity of the whole is maintained across substantive differences.

Accepting the possibility of inquiry across such plurality does not require that we decide now as to the limits of plurality in critical thinking - in particular, it does not require us to decide the sense in which suggesting that there are plural images of flourishing or plural modes of critical thinking already presupposes a shared (or partially shared) conceptual scheme. For now, let us assume translatability and interpretation is possible across substantive differences and address how this plurality is to be understood.\textsuperscript{23} In particular, how to understand the unity of dialogical action (participation in a single inquiry) across such difference.

**Pluralism and the Unity of Inquiry**

A principle difference between pluralist and non-pluralist accounts of critical thinking concerns the relation of part to whole. Whereas non-pluralist approaches to inquiry are able to seek truth through the examination of discrete parts (individual persons, discrete truths), a dialogical model of inquiry cannot. Non-pluralist approaches are able to seek the truth through the examination of discrete parts because they are either underpinned by universalism (monism) or relativism. (i) In the case of monism, inquiry may establish universal truth through the examination of a single person’s thinking because what is true will be true for all. (ii) In the case of relativism, inquiry will seek to establish what is true for me because that is the only place it can start - there is no truth independent of the context in which it is determined.

\textsuperscript{22} Such that critical thinkers reflexively are engaged in thinking across plurality when (autonomously) thinking for themselves.

\textsuperscript{23} That is, we do not need to determine the extent to which we need to speak the same language in order for intelligible differences to emerge in the first place. We shall take this up in the next chapter. Here I agree with Donald Davidson’s claim that differences in perspective and language (and differences in the conceptual schemes that underlie them) can only be understood against a common background (shared beliefs, concepts, etc.). See “On the Very Idea of a Conceptual
In contrast, a dialogical model requires that different parts are able to be brought into relationship with one another in order that truth and meaning be established. Here it is the conditions for communicability and inter-relationship that enables truth to emerge through inquiry. Faced with disagreement whether a certain picture constitutes art or pornography, we will only be able to think critically about the issue together if we are able to communicate our differences and come to understand what is entailed by one another's positions. In this regard, a dialogical theory of critical thinking locates the search for knowledge in the public realm. The focus is on the dialogical action of the inquiry as a whole.

While such an approach may be consistent with monism or pluralism, in accepting the autonomy and uniqueness of persons I am rejecting the monist alternative. Indeed on a pluralistic account, the challenge of establishing unity within the inquiry will be most pronounced when individuals stand in opposition (or tension) with one another because they value, and pursue, different ends. A good example of this is offered by Peter Strawson in his description of the encounter between Bertrand Russell and D.H. Lawrence. The failure of sympathy between these two men illustrates such an oppositionary stance and the potential limits of dialogue across such difference.

The spectator familiar with both [men] may say: Russell is right; he tells the truth; he speaks for civilization. He may also say: Lawrence is right; he tells the truth; he speaks for life. The point is that he may say both things. It would be absurd to hope for a reconciliation of the two conflicting attitudes. It is not absurd to desire that both should exist, in conflict.24

The task of a pluralist account will be to explain how we can engage in a single inquiry across such differences while allowing that these alternate visions of flourishing may potentially be intractable.

Indeed this is where dialogical accounts of critical thinking are most vulnerable - either; (i) truth is ultimately considered justifiable only internal to perspectives (thus

---

24 See Peter Strawson: "Social Morality and Individual Ideal" in Freedom and Resentment, p. 29.
sliding into relativism); or, (ii) theorists seek to resolve difference between opposing positions by finding a greater encompassing commonality, (thus sliding into monism); or, (iii) differences are seemingly made inconsequential by focusing dialogue on that which is shared in common. Here differences are privatized, attributed to the personal, rather than social, realm.

Returning to the situation where we disagree whether a certain picture constitutes pornography or art, our inquiry might be seen to slide into relativism if, faced with this difference, we each consider the other entitled to their opinion and focus on understanding the internal coherency of one another's judgments. What began as disagreement has developed into agreement to differ. In the second case, our inquiry might be seen to slide into monism if, in seeking the truth, we seek one explanation that satisfies both our judgments ("Ah, really we are in agreement about what is important here, only you give more weight to the aesthetics of presentation and I give more weight to historic context."). Finally, our inquiry can be seen to privatize differences and emphasize commonality if we find that, as the inquiry proceeds, the questions we choose to pursue are those that emerge out of agreement. For instance, when we find that we disagree about the violence portrayed in the picture but agree that the use of color can itself be violent, and choose to pursue the issue of color rather than attend to what it is we are in disagreement about.

**Context-Independent Justification of Claims**

It is in regard to conditions for inter-relationship between discrete parts (persons, truths) that the pluralist claim to the context-independent justification of claims becomes important. While relativism and pluralism both assert that judgments are context-dependent, interpretative and internal to perspectives, they differ about the way such judgments are to be justified. For a pluralist it is not enough that we can each arrive at judgments about truth from within our own perspectives (our contexts), rather, we need to be able to justify our judgment to someone else. I not only need to justify that this picture qualifies as art to myself, but I need to be able to communicate this to you in a way that enables you to equally appreciate this interpretation as a viable one. We might say that whereas the relativist can justify
their claim from the personal point of view, the pluralist needs to be able to justify their claim from the social point of view - from the perspective of the inquiry as a whole.

The issue here is what it means for me to judge someone else’s reasoning to be right or wrong. A relativist can only judge someone else’s vision of flourishing or truth to be inadequate by pointing to internal inconsistencies in their thinking. A pluralist, however, may determine that someone’s notion of flourishing is inadequate, or judgment concerning truth mistaken, even though he accepts that such a judgment is internally consistent. He may see it as inadequate because it fails to satisfy certain standards or criteria that apply across different contexts (and are therefore considered context-independent). The two questions then facing pluralists are: (i) in what way are these standards considered independent and, (ii) how are these independent criteria or standards or criteria grounded.

On a pluralist account, if I cannot lead you to see that this picture could justifiably count as art (even if you don’t view it that way), then the statement “This picture is art” will not be regarded as true. If, however, I convince you that it could count as art, and you in turn convince me that it could count as pornography, then both statements will be regarded as possible expressions of truth for us. In this case, determining which of these statements is true for me will involve my choosing from amongst a viable range (a publicly justifiable range) of possibilities. What a pluralist approach to truth and visions of flourishing requires is that we see all truth and ends as interpretative. This does not mean, however, that such interpretation is carried out in a vacuum; interpretation occurs within a tradition and within the resources provided by language, that is, it will always be relative to some community.

\[25\] For judgments concerning ends and truth will be justified in light of the perspective of that individual

\[26\] In moral pluralism such context-independence is generally grounded in notions of human nature (e.g., in the moral pluralism of John Kekes); whereas in (a perspectival) epistemological pluralism we find context-independence grounded in conditions for intelligibility (e.g., in Donald Davidson’s notion of a shared conceptual scheme that allows for judgment across perspectives). I suggest that in the case of pluralist conceptions of dialogical inquiry, a better alternative is to ground criteria in a
Two Levels of Plurality

In the case of critical thinking, what will prevent the context-dependence of an attached first-person account of truth from sliding into relativism (a context-dependence I have repeatedly stressed) is the acceptance of context-independent means by which to evaluate our respective claims as legitimate possibilities. This evaluation of claims will need to be possible at two levels of plurality: plurality between visions of flourishing, and plurality within them. As John Kekes states in relation to moral plurality:

Living a good life is the end, but it is not a common end. For the plurality of valued possibilities entails the plurality of good lives in a double sense. Different lives may be made good by the realization of different possibilities; and even if the possibilities are the same in some lives, the value attributed to them may differ from one good life to another.  

What does this mean for critical thinking? A pluralist conception of inquiry will need to be able to acknowledge that what it is to think critically from within different perspectives may substantially differ without denying the possibility that we can evaluate another's claims, or judge whether a certain sort of activity counts as critical thinking. Furthermore, even if we find that we share ways of philosophizing, we may find that we weigh considerations differently or utilize different modes of thinking in our deliberations - here too we need to be able to evaluate whether one another's claims are viable. Without such means, inquiry across substantially different perspectives and modes of thinking - the possibility of establishing a we out of you and I - would not be possible. If we are to avoid relativism it will not be enough for my way of thinking to be recognized as critical thinking to me, it will also need to be

creation of flourishing (the flourishing of the complex whole of dialogical inquiry). These will be the conditions that enable us to avoid self-defeat. I address this in chapter 6.

27 Ibid. p. 29.
28 The idea that we may utilize different modes of thinking in our deliberations is argued by Carol Gilligan (In a Different Voice) in relation to gender differences in moral reasoning. Michael Pritchard also explores this in On Becoming Responsible. We may also see it in the way that some individuals in a community of inquiry will reason from abstract principles to concrete cases, whereas others reason from concrete cases toward generalizable principles. See Sandy Yule and Jennifer Glaser; Classroom Dialogue and the Teaching of Thinking; and Jennifer Glaser: “Dialogical Inquiry and the Liberation of Women” in Thinking, vol. 11, nos. 3&4, 1994. pp. 14-17. See also Amelie Rorty’s comments concerning psychological pluralism in “Varieties of Pluralism in a Polyphonic Society” in Review of Metaphysics, vol. 44, 1990. pp. 9-11.
recognized as a form of critical thinking by you. Similarly, it will not be enough for reasons to be recognizable as reasons to me (but not to you), they will need to be recognizable as reasons by both of us. The challenge of a pluralist model will then be to explain how this is possible. This is well stated by Eugene Garver:

The interesting and unprecedented problem of pluralism is a problem of ... the one and the many. I can recognize that my position is one among many, without the others being alternatives for me, even that, asymmetrically my position can be a live possibility for someone else, but that her position is not an option for me. What forms can those recognitions take? Once I realize that my thought is only one amongst many possible thoughts, how does that affect my thinking?²⁹

The challenge to pluralism in philosophy... is to treat competing reasons as reasons while still holding that they are competing. Pluralism requires a commitment to taking other people’s most fundamental and most diverse reasons simultaneously as other and as reasons.³⁰

How might we respond to Garver’s challenge? It is here that I think returning to Plato’s notion of the dialogical relationship as a relation between friends - a relation in which we seek to complete one another’s lack for the sake of establishing logos - is highly illuminating. Once again, it is important to remember that, for Plato, friendship constituted a publicly recognized structural relationship not a psychological one. A relationship between two who were neither the same nor different from one another. It is this structure that equally characterizes pluralistic conceptions of communities of inquiry. With the acceptance of uniqueness, however, this plurality no longer points to our lack, but becomes foundational to the dialogical inquiry as a search for knowledge. We no longer seek to eradicate plurality but seek to preserve it.

Reconstructing the Search for Logos

In chapter 4 I noted that it was the peculiar blend of subjectivity and objectivity in Greek thought that made the search for logos a fitting characterization of the goal of dialogical inquiry.³¹ I also noted, however, that once we accepted the social construction of persons and truth relative to language communities, this

³⁰ Ibid, p. 399.
characterization of the ‘peculiar blend’ would be significantly different. This difference is reflected in the differing metaphors of *midwife* and *fusion of horizons*. Gadamer takes from Plato the idea that knowledge is both *personal* and *inter-subjectively* valid, however the way inter-subjectivity is grounded is radically altered. For Gadamer, truth is inter-subjectively valid not because we each uncover the same truth from within, but because language makes truth *communicable*.

Socrates could act as midwife and ease another’s birthing pains, but he could not communicate the truth to another. Each *logos* needed to be tested from within by testing it according to the principle of non-contradiction against other beliefs and against one’s action. While the common *logos* was brought to light through the activity of dialogue, it was not contained in the language. For Gadamer, however, language not only becomes the vehicle for establishing truth (or common ground understanding), but finds expression *within the resources of the language itself*. This makes speech itself part of the *logos* rather than merely expressive of it.

The reclamation of a universal *logos* is grounded, however, rather than in a divine, all pervasive *nous*... in the commonality of all understanding which is intrinsic to its grounding in language. That is, language itself is the event structure in which and through which rationality emerges, and holds together.

Once *logos* is expressed in language - and not just through it - language serves as a vehicle through which we can communicate knowledge to one another. The metaphor of the fusion of horizons is one in which two *logoi* are brought to bear on one another through the activity of speech. Dialogical inquiry leads to the expansion of my horizon because I come to share in (or experience) *your logos*. I come to appreciate the range of questions *for you*, for which your statement was an answer, and I do this not because the more I turn inward the more I find what is independently common to

---

31 See the section titled “Plato’s Theory of Logos” in chapter 4
32 He could show another (for example his modeling of the sort of friendship Lysis could not refuse in *Lysis*, and the modeling of inquiry that occurred within the dialogical relationship itself) because modeling, as a form of action, was a playing out of *his own logos*.
us both, but because language enables me to appreciate what is true for you given your uniqueness.

For Gadamer, logos is personal and yet inter-subjectively valid because what is discovered by me from within is both (i) constructed using the resources of a common language and (ii) opened to inter-subjective examination.\(^{34}\) The testing that results from such inquiry differs from that of sophistry because it does not disassociate what we think from who we are; we still judge for ourselves according to our own commitments. Where this differs from Socrates however is that I am now able to bring your logos to bear on my problem, and in so doing, I open myself to inter-subjective critique.

It is this aspect of communicability that lies at the center of both a social constructivist theory of persons and an interpretative theory of truth. The peculiar blend of objectivity and subjectivity we have here is the recognition that all ‘objectivity’ is interpreted (and thus relative to who we are as individuals and groups), and that all subjectivity (judging for ourselves, individual uniqueness) is only made possible through the resources of that which we share in common (a language, a tradition, this planet).

There are two important consequences of this change for dialogical inquiry. The first concerns the way listening - or receiving - now becomes an important epistemological dimension of inquiry, and the second concerns how best to characterize the way in which our sharing in another’s construction of logos contributes to our own understanding. We shall explore the question of listening briefly here, and then turn to the way in which our experience of another’s experience in dialogue transforms our own judgment.

It is in turning to Heidegger that we see a philosophy of logos in which the term logos captures not only the laying out of speaking, but the gathering in and

\(^{34}\) As I noted in chapter 3, there is also a question here concerning Gadamer’s realism. But this is a question about whether the logos expressed in language itself reflects a way the world is
synthesizing that occurs through listening. Heidegger, too, goes back and grounds this in the philosophy of Heraclitus:

When you have paid heed, not to me, but to the logos, it is wise to agree that all things are one.\(^{35}\)

In contrast to the interpretation I offered in relation to Socrates in chapter 4 - wherein paying heed to the logos was to leave oneself open to passively receive it - for Heidegger, to receive the logos involves an active process of gathering it in. It is, in Gemma Fiumara’s words, a form of “concentrated listening”.\(^{36}\) This is to see the term logos in relation to the verb legein:

No-one would want to deny that in the language of the Greeks from early on legein means to talk, say, tell. However, just as early and even more originally, legein means what is expressed in the similar German word legen: to lay down, to lay before. In legen a ‘bringing together’ prevails.... Legien properly means the laying-down and laying-before which gathers itself and others.\(^{37}\)

It is this laying before and gathering in that is essential to a communicative theory of critical thinking. This conception of dialogue as speaking and listening - a responsive listening out of which community is constructed - is reflected in my exploration of Ricoeur in chapter 2 and Gadamer in chapter 3. Here we may see logos as the truth that finds expression in the word spoken between us. Agreeing with Heraclitus that, in heeding the logos, “it is wise to agree that all things are one” will no longer point to our belief in a singular logos realized individually within each of us; but will now point to the power of synthesis. It will require of us an attentiveness to the particularity of our logoi, an attentiveness that will enable us to construct an enlarged sense of truth and meaning ‘as the whole’.\(^{38}\)

\(^{35}\) Heraclitus: Fragment 50, quoted in Gemma Fiumara: The Other Side of Language: A Philosophy of Listening, p. 3.

\(^{36}\) Ibid.

\(^{37}\) Heidegger: Early Greek Thinking, p. 67

\(^{38}\) This concept of attentiveness goes back to my discussion of dispositions in chapter 2.
Uniqueness and Multiple Forms of Flourishing

The challenge of viewing logos as ‘one’ concerns how to allow for individuality. That is, how to speak of a common logos which respects the uniqueness of persons (and character), and the possibility of distinct language communities. Here, to realize logos for oneself will take place through the shared resources of language, but within that framework I will develop my own moral orientation - my own vision of what it is to flourish. This corresponds to the two forms of plurality mentioned earlier. Here we have kept Parmenides’ idea that establishing logos requires me to judge for myself, but such judgment is no longer over determined. Now it will involve an assertion of the will in which I choose this life over that.

The question we now need to ask is how the possibility of multiple forms of flourishing effects the dialogical relationship. Here, the central difference can be seen to lie in the way autonomy transforms what it is to be ‘neither the same nor different’ from one another. For Plato, sameness pointed to a common logos and vision of flourishing whereas difference pointed to the human condition (our inability to realize logos perfectly). On a pluralistic account this becomes reversed; sameness now points to the human condition whereas difference points to alternate logoi and alternate conceptions of flourishing. This has a strong impact on what it means to ‘complete another’s lack’ and to ‘establish unity’ in critical thinking. It alters the meaning in three ways:

(i) Completing another’s lack will no longer make us more the same.
   Rather than leading us to realize a singular logos (or a single vision of flourishing) more completely, inquiry will now lead us to the realization of multiple ends. Here the relationship between parts (i.e.; between inquirers) will not be founded on commonality but will founded on an appreciation of difference. Completing another’s lack will be to complete another in all their distinctiveness.

(ii) Completing another’s lack will involve relating to others as ends-in-themselves.
   Completing one another’s lack will involve us in an act of mutual self-determination in which we relate to the other as an autonomous end. Here, completing another’s lack will be to lead the other to assert their autonomy more fully.

39 For example, Kekes, Noddings, and Nussbaum all turn to human nature to underpin commonality; Arendt turns to shared intentionality as human solidarity. I will return to this later in the chapter.

226
(iii) Establishing unity between us will involve establishing an appreciation of the full range of possibilities 'we' represent.

The range of possibilities for us collectively will no longer be identical to the possibilities each us recognizes for ourselves individually (we will no longer merely be the enlargement of I). Whereas for monists, unity is exemplified through arriving at agreement on propositions (propositions which express the truth for both of us), for pluralists unity involves arriving at agreement on viable ranges of possibility. This requires that we be aware of the range of possible ends for others as well as for ourselves. Most importantly this means that logos as it is expressed between us will no longer replicate the logos each of us strives to express for ourselves.

A Pluralistic Conception of the Dialogical Relationship: Revisiting Socratic Irony

In exploring what this means for the structural unity of pluralistic inquiry much can be gained from our previous discussion of Socratic irony. In chapter 4 I explored the way in which irony provided a structure by which two distinct parts could be brought into relationship to form a single unit. Such unity was created not by assimilation, but by juxtapositioning parts in a way that expanded the possibilities of meaning for the whole while also illuminating the other as other. In chapter 4 I noted that in irony the unity of the whole supervenes on both the relationship between parts, and on the way in which this relationship in turn affects our understanding of the parts themselves. Furthermore, because the inter-relationships between parts and emerging whole is dynamic and generative of new possibilities of meaning, the meaning of irony can never be fully fleshed out without loss. As in chapter 4, the sense of supervenience that is relevant here is the sense we find in accounts of holism whereby the unity of the whole rests on a dynamic inter-relationship between part and part and between part and whole.

Our understanding of truth and meaning for us will now structurally be like the emergent meaning of shared irony. It will emerge from a three way relation which juxtapositions (i) the meaning for me (which includes, as a factor, my appreciation of the meaning for you), with (ii) the meaning for you (which includes, as a factor, your appreciation of the meaning for me), with (iii) our joint appreciation of the viable range of emerging possibilities. This, I think, elucidates the structure of Gadamer's
fusion of horizons we discussed in chapter 3. It elucidates what Gadamer means when he says *logos*, or truth, *emerges from* the inter-subjective activity of inquiry by pointing to the supervenient nature of *logos* so conceived.

This structural holism is helpful in developing an understanding of the unity established between autonomous persons within a pluralistic conception of inquiry. As with irony, the unity of the inquiry will emerge from the expansion of possibilities of meaning that happens when differences of perspective or accounts of the truth are brought into relationship with one another. This is, I think, what Gadamer is pointing to when he suggested that the common-content in the fusion of horizons is marked out by *the possible range of questions* for which that which is stated propositionally would count as an answer (rather than by the propositions themselves).40 In agreeing that a mutual friend may be trusted, you may pick out her loyalty whereas I pick out her integrity. While both statements may be regarded as true ("She is trustworthy because she is loyal." and "She is trustworthy because she has integrity.")41 the common understanding of trustworthiness that emerges out of the conversation is one that juxtaposes loyalty and integrity to arrive at an *inter-relational* truth concerning the meaning of trustworthiness. If we take *logos* as the *knowledge that finds expression in the word spoken between us*, then it is this expanded meaning that captures the *logos* concerning our understanding of trust.42 This logos will be *common* in that it is relative to the group of discussants and emerges out of the inter-relationship between viable possibilities, rather than being relative to our particular *logos* - our own situated understanding of trust and the way we express this in our own language use.43

---

40 This refers to my discussion of Gadamer in chapter 3. I am not suggesting here that Gadamer was a *metaphysical* pluralist, although his position on truth is open to interpretation. I see Gadamer as a realist concerning truth and thus the pluralism implicit in his fusion of horizons is, for me, a perspectival rather than metaphysical pluralism.

41 It is this *inter-relational* understanding of emergent love and trust that Martha Nussbaum points to in *Love’s Knowledge*, pp. 274-280.

42 This reading of logos takes us back to our discussion of logos in chapter 4.

43 This relates to the way general understanding is tied to conceptual schemes and language and how we might understand these notions. I explore this further in chapter 6 in the section on non-contradiction.
The task of inquiry will now be twofold. It will involve determining the limits to viable ranges of possibility for all of us while at the same time leading us to construct the ranges of possibility for ourselves and our own particular articulations of truth.\(^{44}\) Here our individual expression of logos will be illuminated not only by coming to see that our own perspective is but one amongst many, but by recognizing the relationship this perspective stands to other viable possibilities, as together we develop an appreciation of the emerging whole. Meaning for me will be affected by how I appreciate the meaning for others, for the meaning of parts and whole are dynamic and inter-dependent. "Truth for me" will then involve the practical judgment of how I may interpret these possibilities for myself given my own historic individuality. This narrows the gap between practical and theoretical reasoning by illuminating the way each incorporates the other as 'part' of its own 'whole'. Again, what will make this pluralistic will be that the multiple accounts of truth will not be subjectively determined as viable but inter-subjectively so determined.\(^{45}\)

**The Valuing of Diversity**

Autonomy also leads pluralists to hold a different attitude toward diversity than we found in Plato. For Plato, individuals are not free to choose their own ends, and without such autonomy, diversity has no intrinsic value (rather, diversity points to our lack). In contrast, for pluralists difference is not only acknowledged but celebrated and valued. This is not to say any end is valued, but any end that is

---

\(^{44}\) Speaking about moral pluralism, Kekes writes; "The pluralistic ideal is that we should make a good life for themselves [sic]. The monistic ideal is that we should find the one good life that is good for all of us. The pluralistic view of individuality is that it involves constructing a good life out of the available plural possibilities.... Pluralism involves not only the celebration of human possibilities, but also the necessity of imposing limits.... Limits need to be imposed to exclude unreasonable possibilities.... Relativists deny this can be done.... Possibilities are valued from the human point of view, anthropocentrically." John Kekes: *The Morality of Pluralism*, pp. 14-15.

\(^{45}\) Interestingly, it is determining truth for ourselves that distinguishes a pluralistic view from a Platonic one - in our discussion of *Theaetetus* we noted that Theaetetus was first delivered to his views and then delivered from them. Alderman points out that we may see this as a move from practical to theoretical reason. To be delivered to my view is to discover what I (practically) think, dialectic then delivers us from our view by leading us into a deliberation of the conceptual issue - from "what I take to be X" (practical inquiry) to "what is X?" (theoretical inquiry). In both cases, the search for theoretical understanding is inextricably connected to practical reason - but in the pluralist case, determining theoretical truth does not require us to reduce the ranges of possibility for all of us to a single one. While possibilities will need to be recognized theoretically (or conceptually) as possibilities for all of us (rather than for each of us severally) - or we are left with relativism - on a practical level, particular alternatives within these possibilities may be 'right for me but not right for
recognized as viable is valued. This will be the case even for those differences that bring "parts" into tension with one another. Pluralism places value on diversity because difference is a condition for our own autonomy - for our own ability to construct (as opposed to recollect) logos for ourselves. Indeed the greater the range of available possibilities, and the better we appreciate the nature of these possibilities as possibilities we may try to realize, the greater will be our freedom to create a unified mode of life, a vision of flourishing, for ourselves. This is, I think Hannah Arendt's insight when she links the plurality that is present in thinking (engaging in a dialogue with oneself) with the conditions for human freedom. Without alternatives there is no choice. This does not mean choice itself is unlimited, rather, truth and flourishing will involve 'a peculiar mix of subjectivity and objectivity'. We do not construct ex nihilo; truth and visions of flourishing will be tied to interpretations of reality, to traditions and to a shared language through which they find expression, and will need to be seen as viable expressions of truth and flourishing by others engaged in inquiry with us (other members of our community).

Pluralism's Ironic Stance

As with monisms and relativism, pluralism will display its own form of irony toward the human condition. An ironic awareness that can perhaps be best appreciated by contrasting it with the ironic stances of Socrates and Rorty. Socrates' stance toward flourishing is ironic because we can only express logos imperfectly, and thus even our best efforts to flourish will be flawed. In contrast, for Rorty our attitude toward flourishing is an ironic one not because our best efforts are imperfect, but because we can never be sure that the efforts we are committed to are the ones we should be engaged in. At any moment we may find a different conception of flourishing that challenges our most fundamental beliefs and commitments. Here the purpose of inquiry is not one of "convergence to the antecedently present" but of seeking out and

---


46 As John Kekes states in relation to moral pluralism: “The central evaluative claim of pluralism is that... plurality of values is not a regrettable feature of our life but a positive value.”. See The Morality of Pluralism, p. 12.

47 This last condition being what distinguishes a pluralist constructivism from a relativistic one.
constructing new varieties of the good life.\textsuperscript{48} We are never sure whether we are better off being "one of us" rather than "one of them". The tension between these two conceptions may be felt as a tension between differing understandings of the goal of inquiry. The dual goals of: (i) exposing and resolving differences of view in order to converge on a shared truth or understanding; and (ii) developing clearer and more coherent articulations of each person's particular way of seeing things and, where appropriate, trying on these different accounts to see how they feel.

The ironic stance of pluralists shares an awareness with these two forms of irony but gives them a different focus. In keeping with Rorty, pluralistic irony emerges out of a recognition of human contingency. But, whereas for Rorty irony arises out of our awareness of the contingency of being ourselves rather than someone else; for pluralists irony arises out of our awareness that any singular expression of who we are - any one thing we do or say - cannot give full expression to the complexity of who we presently are. We can never fully flesh out who we are (all the possibilities open to ourselves as individuals and as communities) without loss. In choosing to pursue philosophy I forgo becoming a professional musician.

Similarly with our search for knowledge, any attempt to fully flesh out truth or meaning will involve loss: loss of other ways truth could have been expressed; loss of the possibilities that were left unexplored; or loss in the depth of meaning that comes when we eliminate ambiguity and explicate metaphors. In relation to this thesis we might see such ironic awareness as my awareness of: (i) the loss engendered by choosing one vocabulary and range of concepts over another; (ii) the loss engendered by not exploring Aristotle or Habermas or Heidegger on inquiry; (iii) the loss that would have come from explicating the concepts of friendship, logos and flourishing more fully than required. As with Plato, pluralistic irony recognizes the infinite nature of the task of inquiry and thus views all knowledge as "knowledge for now"; but whereas Socratic irony grounds this awareness in an awareness of human

\textsuperscript{48} Richard Rorty: "Private Irony and Liberal Hope" in Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity, p. 78. Rorty also articulates this contrast in his description of the contrast between the (monistic) metaphysician and the ironist's approach to books.
imperfectability and limitation, pluralism grounds it in the emergent open-endedness created through the juxtaposition of multiple perspectives and ends.

Finally, within a pluralistic model of inquiry, the dual goals of inquiry remain the same, but how these goals are understood is altered. (i) The goal of exposing and resolving differences in view will now involve both (a) developing clearer and more nuanced articulations of ranges of possibility for the community and for ourselves, and (b) developing a stronger appreciation for the inter-subjective standards, values and criteria that enable us to make judgments concerning the viability of these possibilities. Thus, in exploring the nature of friendship, our inquiry will focus both on exposing the many ways friendship may be expressed, and on understanding more fully the contradictions and tensions between these differing conceptions (for instance, in the tension between trusting someone and caring for them, wherein our care may at times require us to break our trust). 49 Whereas, (ii) the goal of trying on different perspectives will no longer involve imaginatively assuming another’s perspective, but will involve “visiting” their perspective as oneself. Such visiting acts to enlarge both our understanding of the subject of the inquiry and enriches our understanding of our own ranges of possibility. 50

So far we have been exploring the consequences of pluralism for inquiry between individuals, but what is the consequence of pluralism for inquiry when inquiry is carried out by one person on their own; a solitary inquiry between “me and myself”? 51

The Self as a Complex Whole

One of the advantages of a pluralistic model of critical thinking for the individual thinker is that it gives full recognition to the fact that selves are not wholly consistent or unitary. For Taylor our orientation in moral space arises from a singular point of location. The narrative of who we are is an encompassing narrative that seeks to


50 I elaborate on this notion of “visiting” later in this chapter.
assimilate all parts into one consistent view. In chapter 2 I referred to this as the teleological nature of Taylor’s conception.

However, as Strawson points out, this view of the self often conflicts with common experience. I think Strawson is correct in pointing out that selves contain plurality and that not all these ends are compatible.

Men make for themselves pictures of ideal forms of life. Such pictures are various and may be in sharp opposition to one another; and the one and the same individual may be captivated by different and sharply conflicting pictures at different times.51

When Strawson says this plurality captivates us at different times he is not only referring to different periods of one’s life (such that these conflicting ends may be shaped into a singular narrative), but also highlighting the fact that we may be committed to multiple ends at a time. When this occurs we must make decisions between conflicting possibilities; faced with backhanded wit we must decide between responding with seriousness or humor, indignation or magnanimity, and in so doing we choose to stand for principle or comradery. As a matter of “practical efficacy” we engage in courses of action that realize one set of ends rather than another, even if we acknowledge that both alternatives are equally to be desired.52

But does the idea of a self driven by plural equally desirable ends lead us back into relativism? For Taylor, unless some options are more significant than others, the very idea of self-choice falls into triviality and hence incoherence - in such situations we do not know where we stand and thus lose a sense of who we are.53 Here I think we need to distinguish between the way plurality may lead to arbitrary choice and the way it may lead to limited choice. What prevents pluralism from dissolving into the soft relativism that Taylor describes (a relativism in which there is loss of meaning) is that choices themselves emerge from judgments of viability. It is true that multiple ends may at times require that we decide what to do on non-principled grounds, but this lack of principled decision does not trivialize the choice because, rather than

52 Ibid, pp. 27-29.
pointing to a lack of purposefulness (a lack of ends we choose to pursue), it points to multiplicity of purposes.

In a sense, to make Taylor’s view compatible with pluralism simply requires that we go one level up and acknowledge that the answer to the question “What sort of person do I want to be?” may itself contain plurality, and that not all these second-order desires will be compatible - not because they are contradictory, but because they cannot both be realized.\textsuperscript{54} Strawson’s suggestion is that in such cases we may turn to the efficacy of what is required in order to determine what to do, rather than to criteria of value. We might see this as turning toward politics. We choose between ends (all of which we consider worthy) as if between factions. This is to see the self (and inquiry) as realizing a political structure as much as a moral one.\textsuperscript{55}

Strawson accepts that often this plurality of ends is only played out imaginatively. Yet the significance of our willingness to imaginatively identify with “different and conflicting visions” - visions we accept as justifiable alternatives for ourselves - points to an inner plurality that should not be underestimated for a theory of critical thinking. Indeed it is not insignificant that Strawson mentions in this context “...the enormous charm of reading novels, biographies and histories...”. I shall return to the connection between critical thinking, imagination and our engagement in reading literature later when we turn to explore Hannah Arendt’s metaphor of the visiting imagination and Martha Nussbaum’s notion of the judicious spectator. While this plurality of mind may find but “the scantiest expression” in people’s behavior, Strawson warns us that:

\textsuperscript{54} Charles Taylor: “The Dialogical Self” in Rethinking Knowledge, eds. Goodman, R., and Fisher, W. p. 58; see also “What is Human Agency?” in Human Agency and Language, p. 32.
\textsuperscript{55} Taylor comes close to this position at times - for example, in his discussion of radical choice in “Responsibility for Self” in Identities of Persons, ed. Rorty, A. pp. 289-294. However, it seems to me that he ultimately resolves the issue by appeal to hierarchical senses of what constitutes a “higher mode of life” that transforms plurality of ends (ends bearing equal weight) into an uncertainty about the distributive weight of different ends given who I am.

This correlation between politics and the structure of the self is explored by Eugene Garver in “Why Pluralism Now?” in The Monist, vol. 73, no. 3. 1990.
... it is easy to exaggerate it; easy to exaggerate the unity of the personalities of those we say we know, when we really know them only in one or two particular connections; easy to dismiss as phases or moods whatever lacks conformity with our only partly empirical pictures of one another.\textsuperscript{56}

Who am “I”?  
The unity of “I” will now follow the structure of irony - my sense of who I am as a whole will supervene on the ranges of possibility that I accept as justified for myself given the multiple ends I strive to achieve. Here my sense of self is not equivalent to the sum of these possibilities, but emerges from holding these possibilities in juxtaposition to one another - my sense of self is as someone who balances magnanimity with indignation, comradery with principle. As with our appreciation of irony, this supervenient sense of who we are will be something that cannot be fully fleshed out without loss.

Here too the practical sense of who we are is inextricable from the theoretical.\textsuperscript{57} We might say that our self-concept reflects the dialogical play between “who I am” by reference to what I do (in acting and judging) and “who I am” as a concept (the ranges of possibility I see for myself). The ambiguity in saying “I responded with humor, though I could just have easily have become indignant.” is telling. We could be saying that humor and indignation were both practical possibilities for action (given the situation), or that they were equally theoretical possibilities for me to realize (reflecting my beliefs about who I am). This connection, however, will not always be symmetrical - we may see possibilities for ourselves that cannot be realized, or find ourselves acting in contra-indication to our principles.

Unity of Self at a Time and over Time  
We might say that this sense of ourselves as complex wholes provides a phenomenological description of the unity critical thinkers, as intentional subjects, have at a time. A unity that can be characterized in terms of an emergent dialogical

\textsuperscript{56} Peter F. Strawson: “Social Morality and Individual Ideal” in \textit{Freedom and Resentment}, p. 27.  
\textsuperscript{57} We noted the connection between practical and theoretical realms earlier in the section exploring a pluralistic conception of the dialogical relationship.
self of consciousness. Such a description views the self of cognition as an emergent intentional first-person. This is not to make a claim about the ontological 'reality' of the self as a complex whole, but to give a description of how we present as first-persons in our deliberations.

This description of the emergent sense of who we are at a time complements, rather than conflicts with, the hermeneutic sense of self we develop as selves over time. Here unity of self can be described in terms of narrative, identity - we present as story. This takes us back to Ricoeur's formulation of the self as emerging from the relationship between ipse and idem identity; to the way in which ipse identity (the self designated reflexively in speech) incorporates a sense of ourselves as idem (as historic subject).\(^{58}\)

We might put this another way by modifying Taylor's metaphor of the self in moral space. In viewing our sense of self in terms of emergent ranges of possibility we transform Taylor's vision of the self as a point in moral space to that of a region. The self at a time is defined by the boundaries, or limits, which mark out the area on the map in which we could legitimately see ourselves being. Unity of self emerges out of our developing awareness of the multiple possibilities for story that this demarcated area would allow. As with Taylor, who we are over time is given through the narrative we construct that links our past with our prospective future. Here unity over time emerges out of our awareness of the shifting boundaries of this area together with the series of points that mark where principled judgment and practical efficacy have required us to act (or speak) from at different moments along the way.

On this account, having a sense of self involves having a sense of one's own boundaries or limits as well as one's possibilities. If there were no boundaries and every place on the map was viable, we would not be a particular self, but if the boundaries limited what was viable to the intersection of a single set of co-ordinates,

\(^{58}\) As we noted in our discussion of Ricoeur in chapter 2.
we would contain no plurality and no freedom.\textsuperscript{59} We might be free in Taylor's sense of choosing whether we will be \textit{this} sort of person or \textit{that}, but not in my pluralistic sense of recognizing that there may be alternate (even potentially conflicting) ends which are equally expressive of the person we are at any \textit{given} time.\textsuperscript{60} Indeed, this points to a way in which our participation in communities of inquiry may lead us to be better able to negotiate our own inner plurality. The way in which developing a capacity to bring multiple ends into relationship in the social domain may, reflexively, enable us to negotiate our own multiple ends more effectively.\textsuperscript{61}

\textbf{The Unity of the Intentional Subject}

What is the relationship between this emergent “I” and the intentional bodily \textit{subject} who thinks? We can now appreciate more fully Strawson’s comment that consistency of action is an important factor that mitigates against the effects of the internal plurality of self. Speaking of the plurality of ends Strawson notes:

\begin{quote}
...however great the variety of images which dominate, at one time or another, our ethical imaginations, our individual lives do not, as a matter of fact, exhibit a comparable internal variety. Indeed they scarcely could. Something approaching consistency, some more or less unsteady balance, is usually detectable in the pattern of an individual person’s decisions and actions.\textsuperscript{62}
\end{quote}

Why is it that people empirically seem to attain something approaching consistency in their decisions and actions despite their plurality of ends? Perhaps because decisions and actions implicate a single intentional bodily \textit{subject}. In our deliberations we may be drawn in two opposing directions, see two responses as equally viable possibilities, but in speaking, judging and acting it is the intentional subject (rather than the emergent self) that is implicated and such activity is attributed to a unitary historic subject.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[59] This addresses the problem of determinism and freedom discussed in chapter 2 in relation to Taylor - namely, how we can choose anew who we are rather than play out who we already take ourselves to be.
\item[60] Note Taylor's contrast between the singular monological self of individual subjects and the dialogical self who stands in relationship to others in "The Dialogical Self" in \textit{Rethinking Knowledge}, eds. Goodman, R., and Fisher, W.
\item[61] This may explain the anecdotal connection between critical thinking and self-esteem and self-respect. I refer to the connection to self-esteem in chapter 6.
\item[62] Peter F. Strawson: “Social Morality and Individual Ideal” in \textit{Freedom and Resentment}, p. 27.
\end{footnotes}
This distinction between the plurality of self and the singularity of a bodily subject brings to mind Hannah Arendt’s distinction between the ‘two’ of thinking and the ‘one’ of action. For Arendt action calls for us to stop thinking - to stop the dialogue between me and myself - and to take part in the world as a single thing, a ‘one’:

...the two-in-one become One again when the outside world intrudes upon the thinker and cuts short the thinking process. Then, when he is called by his name back to the world of appearances, where he is always One, it is as though the two into which the thinking process had split him clapped together again.

Here we might say that whereas the emergent, reflexive self becomes unified through the juxtapositioning of plural ends, the acting self becomes unified through ‘inserting herself into the world’ as a bodily subject (as idem). We need “something approaching consistency” in our decisions and actions if we are to constitute one thing over time - if we are to come to stand for something as intentional subjects.

Of course certain forms of speech may themselves count as action. Faced with plurality, I (as a whole) insert myself into the world of opinion by arriving at judgments (through the dialogical process of thinking). These judgments may themselves only occur internally as thought. Judgment requires us to choose from amongst plural possibilities - from amongst all the things we could justifiably say. Making this choice - like action in general - may often involve matters of “practical efficacy”. When critical thinking is characterized as “making judgments” it is this idea of thought as intentional action that I think it captures.

---

63 Here, and throughout my later discussion of Arendt, I interpret her term “thinking” to be what I am calling “inquiry”. For Arendt, thinking is a mode of dialogical engagement that enables us to engage in principled judgment. She distinguishes thinking from consciousness or perception on one hand, and from non-thinking (acting without judgment) on the other.

64 Hannah Arendt: The Life of the Mind: Thinking, p. 185.

65 The expression is used by Hannah Arendt. “With word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world”, Hannah Arendt: The Human Condition, p. 176.

66 Speech (internalized or externalized) also offers me the opportunity to test out what it is to stand for something without acting it out in the world.

67 This, too, is essential to Arendt’s notion of autonomy as judging in freedom. The notion of critical judgment is foundational to Lipman’s and Nussbaum’s notions of critical thinking. See Matthew Lipman: Thinking in Education, pp. 62-65; and Martha Nussbaum: Poetic Justice, pp. 83-100.
Furthermore, by pointing to the way in which the plurality of self is never fully realized in action (in speech or deed) we begin to appreciate the important role imagination comes to play within pluralism. Imagination enables us to explore both other possibilities for ourselves and possibilities we reject as choices for ourselves but accept as choices for others (given their historically achieved individuality). In viewing flourishing in terms of ranges of possibility, we can see how:

the owner of one life may with perfect practical consistency wish that his conflicting images should be realized in different lives. The steadiest adherence to one image may coexist with the strongest desire that other incompatible images should have their steady adherents too.68

This is, I think, part of what Garver means when he points to the asymmetry of reasons and says the challenge of pluralism is to be able to view reasons both as reasons and as other. Of course this does not mean we consider any image worthy of expression - this would result in extreme relativism. The pluralist claim is simply that two incompatible images may both fall within the viable set. Within communities of inquiry this pluralism will find expression in the way we, as members of the community, contribute toward one another's autonomous flourishing; how completing another's lack for the sake of logos may engage us in helping others to realize alternate visions of flourishing to the ones we choose to pursue for ourselves.

Selves and Persons: A Summary
We might now summarize the relationship between selves and persons in terms of the different way unity is established. We might say that whereas the emergent (or supervenient) self establishes unity at a time through the juxtapositioning of plural ends, and unity over time through the construction of narrative and hermeneutic reappraisal; the intentional subject establishes unity at a time through action (speaking, judging), and unity over time through consistency of action and integration of change (linking diverse actions to a single actor).69 If, as I have

68 Peter Strawson: "Social Morality and the Individual Ideal" in Freedom and Resentment, p. 28. This will be important for addressing the issue of dissent within community.
69 This way of understanding the unity of persons is very helpful in responding to a problem in critical thinking theory concerning the basis on which we can decide whether a particular person may be characterized as a critical thinker (or not). Note especially the ongoing argument between Connie Missimer and Harvey Siegel (primarily) located in the pages of Informal Logic and summarized in Siegel's latest response to Missimer in Rationality Redeemed?, pp. 55-71.
claimed, the structure of critical thinking in the individual may be seen as a reflexive dimension of dialogical inquiry with others, we will expect to find these same elements within communities of inquiry.

A Challenge

I have suggested that the structure of critical thinking in the individual might be seen to parallel the structure of engaging in dialogical inquiry with others. We might say that the ‘one’ engaged in inquiry differs only in size - the smallest complex whole of inquiry being ourselves as individuals, communities of inquiry (as complex wholes) varying in size, whereas the largest complex whole of inquiry may potentially be that of the community of human beings. However, in drawing a distinction between the unity of the dialogical self and the unity of the intentional subject I introduce an important challenge to my own thesis; for even if we accept this structural analog, there is an important difference between the way we characterize individual subjects and communities that threatens to weaken my claim. This difference comes to the surface when we explore the different way intentionality is ascribed to individuals and communities.

Intentionality, Selves and Communities

Traditionally, singular subjects are ascribed intentional mental states (seeking truth, thinking, believing, intending to act) in a way communities are not. As David Carr notes, generally: “it is to the I as an individual subject or person, rather than to any sort of plurality, that intentionality properly belongs”.

In the case of a single critical thinker the idea of a plural self does not create a problem for the attribution of intentions because the plurality of intention is ascribed to the one subject or person (that is, we maintain the traditional many-one relationship with many intendings referring back to the one subject). In contrast, within the community of inquiry there are multiple subjects, multiple dialogical selves. Whereas unity for the individual critical thinker involves the unity of an emergent self, the unity of a community of inquiry involves a dialogical relationship.
between selves. In the former I am the complex whole, in the latter I am only a part of a greater whole - I seek the truth and you seek the truth, so we embark on the enterprise together. Furthermore, for single subjects critical thinking cannot result in plural forms of action at a time - this was the point of Strawson’s appeal to practical efficacy - but for pluralistic communities we would want to allow (even encourage) the possibility that joint deliberation within a single community of inquiry could lead to multiple forms of action.

In what way then does it make sense to say that the community (rather than the individuals within it) has established truth, or accepts a certain range of possibilities as justifiable, or determined a certain course of action as reasonable? Similarly, if we characterize inquiry as a relationship between friends in which we complete one another’s lack for the sake of establishing logos, how should we view this intention? Is it that we each intend to seek the truth, or that we share in a plural intention? Is what way does the notion of a shared intention make sense? If, in generalizing from the structure of persons, we want to claim that in thinking together the community becomes a kind of collective subject, then what happens to the autonomy of individuals? What are the parameters for dissent within such communities?

How we answer these questions has an important consequence for how we understand the unity of communities of inquiry and for the parallel I have drawn between the individual thinker and dialogical inquiry. In particular it will have important consequences for the way in which the context-independent criteria, standards or values place limits on the viable ranges of possibility in critical thinking - whether they are grounded in subjectivity or inter-subjectivity.

It is here that our previous discussion of the emergent first-person self points us in an interesting direction. Communities of inquiry, like selves, engage in inquiry from the first-person perspective of participating members. This suggests that we might address questions of intentionality within communities of inquiry from the perspective of the intentional first-person plural “we”. Here the statement “we

---

70 David Carr: “Cogitamus Ergo Sumus: The Intentionality of the First-Person Plural” in The Monist,
believe..." (or think, or seek to flourish) might be seen to point to our sharing in an intention in a stronger sense than if we were to merely share a certain intentional content. We might say that members of the community come to speak from a kind of emergent collective dialogical self attributable to the community as a whole. This is the position I am going to argue for in the following section.\textsuperscript{71}

The idea of a collective self seems at first a strange idea and one that has some uncomfortable consequences. As Carr points out, in general we tend to shy away from notions of "group mind" and "collective consciousness".\textsuperscript{72} Nel Noddings also rightly warns us that there is a "dark side" to communities constructed in this manner.\textsuperscript{73} However this unease and seeming danger is not as great as it appears when we consider both the nature of communities of inquiry and how plurality modifies the totalitizing force of community. Furthermore, constructing the community as an "I", as a communal self, points in an important direction for understanding the relation between autonomous persons and the complex whole of communities of inquiry. In particular how the commitments we take upon ourselves in light of who we are as individuals are related to the obligations that fall on us as members of a community. Or to put this another way, how we might understand the notion of a person's autonomy as a member of community. Finally, it is this concept of an emergent sense of community (a communal I or self) that enables us to begin to answer Garver's question of how we can count reasons both as other and as reasons.

In order to develop this idea of an emergent communal self we shall first turn to explore Wilfrid Sellars' notion of we-intentions and then to apply this to David

\textsuperscript{71} Of course here we need to be cautious - for what may present at first as a common intention may not be so in the end - we may find that our ends are so different that in the end we cannot describe ourselves as engaged in a single activity after all (in talking together, you seek truth, I seek empathetic understanding). However, as with the principle of charity, the only way we can determine this is through assuming a common end and then discovering where we differ.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., pp. 521-534; see also p. 523.

\textsuperscript{73} Nel Noddings notes the 'dark side' of communities in her discussion of liberalism and communitarianism in "On Community" in Educational Theory, vol. 46, no. 3, 1996. pp. 253-259. The debate between liberalism and communitarianism is of obvious importance here. In chapter 6 I will address how an appreciation of pluralism mitigates against the 'dark side' of intentional communities (see as the pull of inquiry toward consensus).
Carr's discussion of specific kinds of intentional communities. Here it is (i) the *structure* of we-intentions and (ii) the way communities might be seen to phenomenologically *present* as a communal self that we will explore, rather than questions about the ontological status of communal selves. In particular we are looking to understand what it means to *think together* and to *intend to flourish*. Importantly for our purposes, Carr discusses the way communal experiences present to those involved in them in order to show how communities might themselves be seen as *subjects* of intentions, not just objects toward which intentions are directed.

**We-intentions**

In *Science and Metaphysics* Wilfrid Sellars offers an account of the logical structure of first-person plural intentionality (we-intentions). Sellars is concerned with two issues that are particularly relevant to our inquiry: Firstly, in what way intentions can be said to be shared *between* subjects; and secondly, how we should understand the force of the “ought” which follows from intending, as a community, to achieve certain ends. That is, how we might understand the imperatives that may reasonably be seen to be incumbent on members of a community when they act together. This is critical for our discussion of critical thinking in as much as we take there to be both viable and non-viable ways for inquiry to proceed.75

In posing the question “in what sense can two people have the same intention?” Sellars makes a distinction between the *descriptive content* of an intention and the *intending*. He notes three ways in which two people may have the same intention.76

(i) There is the sense of ‘same intention’ in which two people might be said to have parallel intentions - for instance when two people intend to visit the Taj Mahal.

(ii) There is a sense of ‘same intention’ in which two people can share in an intention to bring about a single state of affairs - for instance that a certain child be happy. Sellars regards this to be a “tougher sense” of having the same intention and notes that here the derivative intentions (what we intend to do to bring this about) are no longer the same in this tough sense.

---

74 Interestingly, Carr does not mention Sellars.
75 That is, critical thinking is a normative notion.
76 This account of Sellars is drawn from “Objectivity, Intersubjectivity and the Moral Point of View” in *Science and Metaphysics*, pp. 188-189. I have paraphrased his account.
(iii) There is a sense in which I can intend that John do X and he can also intend to 
do X. Here the two people have the same intention (that John do X). Here Sellars 
notes that there is an asymmetry concerning the intending - while we both intend 
that X be done, only John is intending to do it.

We can recognize these three senses in different accounts of the role of dialogue in 
critical thinking. (i) Atomistic accounts of critical thinking in which the one thinker 
alone is responsible for getting to the truth corresponds to the first case of parallel 
intentions. Each of us is earnestly seeking the truth but we accept that it is expedient 
to talk together in order to further our own inquiries. (ii) Dialogical accounts of 
critical thinking fit in the second category - we share an intention, though what 
derivatively follows for each of us might be quite different. This is the sense in which 
I want to say that dialogical inquiry intends to establish truth and meaning. (iii) 
Teachers who see their task as engaging their students in critical thinking may often 
be characterized according to the third sense of having the same intention. While 
students intend to find the truth, the teacher intends for the student to seek it (rather 
than the teacher seeking it themselves). This is an accusation often hurled at Socrates, 
an accusation that rests on Socrates' seeming insincerity in his disavowal of 
knowledge. He is seen as wanting the truth to be found by the student, but not doing 
the intending to find it himself (because, despite his claims of ignorance, he has 
oftensibly found it already).77

Yet it is not at all clear how we are to understand Sellars' second tougher, or 
stronger, sense of having the same intention - for even when intentions are the same 
in a strong sense of sharing the same content or covering the same domain, we would 
seem to still be speaking of the occurrence of two intendings and thus parallel 
intentionality:

...even where the descriptive content of two people's intentions is in the 
strongest sense the same not only are the intendings numerically

77 (i) characterizes Nagel's and Scriven's sense of critical inquiry as intending to establish truth as 
discussed in chapter 2; (ii) characterizes my account of dialogical inquiry; (iii) often characterizes 
critical inquiry between teacher and student. This was my critique of Paul's position in chapter 1, 
both in relation to his pedagogy and in his view of internalized reasoning. Dialectic argumentation is 
an interesting case because, while it masquerades as the third kind of intending (each person aiming 
to lead the other toward a truth they already possess), the fact that both partners approach the 
discussion in this way shows this in practice to be a case of two distinct sets of intentions.
different, which is true even in the case of belief, but the total content of the intendings involves a special mode of egocentricity... If, therefore, we distinguish between the descriptive element in the content of the intending, and that element which is expressed by the operator ‘shall’ [intends], we can say that where the descriptive content is, in a tough sense, the same - as in the case of the child’s happiness - the two intentions are ‘parallel’.

Intendings and Intentions

In noting the egocentrism of intending to do something - seeking to achieve certain ends - Sellars rightly observes that only I can do the intending. Yet if this is the case, how can we claim there to be cases (such as within communities of inquiry) where intendings are in some way the same? For even in cases where intentions in the community of inquiry are in a tough sense the same (where we share an intention to realize logos and flourish in the second sense of bringing about a single state of affairs), it seems there are still two such intendings held in parallel by two subjects. That is, we have an agreement in attitude, but there is not an identity of intentions.

The egocentrism of intentions has an important consequence for establishing the constraints under which dialogical inquiry operates. A consequence which follows from the way ought statements can be reasonably implied from our intendings. Here Sellars’ account of the transition from personal statements of intent to imperatives which follow from them is an important one. For Sellars, hypothetical imperatives are better stated as relative imperatives because their status as imperatives stands relative to my own intending to achieve a certain end. That is, the implication that I ought to do X follows from my intending to achieve Y, where X is causally connected to achieving Y. This is what makes intendings ego-centric. As Sellars notes in his consideration of whether a certain man, Smith, should poison his aunt:

---

78 Ibid, pp. 189, paragraphs 34 and 35. For Sellars, intentions and intendings are the same in a strong sense if they share the same content (e.g., in cases of propositions) or cover the same domain (e.g., in cases of belief or intending).

79 Here the state of affairs we intend to bring about (realizing logos) will, by necessity, be one that contains plurality (for we may have two logi). Here it is the stronger sense of dialogue as dialogical action that enables us to see a pluralistic account of realizing logos as one in which our two intendings are nevertheless intendings to establish a single (dialogical) state of affairs.

“only one person, I; Smith, can draw an inference in accordance with this implication...” 81

The reasonableness at issue here is not the moral reasonableness of the action but the epistemological reasonableness of drawing the inference. It concerns the causal connection between conclusion intentions (intending her death) and the premise intention (adding the poison). The difference between hypothetical and categorical imperatives rests on this egocentricity. Where hypothetical imperatives are relative to individuals, categorical imperatives are seen to be incumbent on whoever falls within a certain group, or class. Every member of the group, by virtue of their membership in an us, is implicated as someone who ought to do X - that is, in the case of categorical imperatives we can say of one another that they “ought to do X”.

Indeed Sellars’ discussion of Smith’s intention to poison his aunt takes us back to my own example in chapter 2 in which I considered the kind of deliberation involved in deciding whether I ought to place poison in the challis. Here I was concerned with the way such a decision was irreducibly personal. Sellars’ discussion helps elucidate the way in which it is personal - the ought which reasonably follows from my intention is personally or subjectively reasonable in light of my own intendings. These intendings include not only my intending to add the poison, but my intending to be a certain sort of person. I may decide to poison my aunt and determine the only way to do this is to put poison in the challis. Others may say of me conditionally “If she wants to poison her aunt she ought to put the poison in the challis”, but only I can reasonably say without any conditionals “I ought to add the poison”. As with Sellars’ account, in saying this I am not saying that it is morally right or reasonable to want to poison my aunt - the question is not about the reasonableness of my intention to bring about her death - the question at this stage is solely about the reasonableness of the inference; the question is, given I intend to do X (poison my aunt) is it epistemologically reasonable for me to conclude “I ought to add the poison”? Indeed it is precisely through cases like these - cases in which we conclude that it is reasonable to infer that an act of murder ought to be carried out - that we are alerted

81 Ibid, p. 192.
to the flaw in treating the *epistemic* reasonableness of inferences relative to the personal point of view (a person’s subjective intentions), rather than from the social (or inter-subjective) point of view.

To develop this idea we need to return to Sellars account of the way in which *intendings* too may be shared.

**Intending and Joint Action**

Given Sellars account of hypothetical imperatives, how should we understand the relationship between intentions and imperatives in a situation in which *two* people strive to bring about a single state of affairs - cases where intentions are seen to be in a strong sense the same? In what way are these imperatives also to be regarded egocentrically, from the personal point of view?

Consider the case where, in reasoning on my own, I think:

> “I shall do what I can to establish the truth”

And the case where, in reasoning within a community of inquiry:

You say:  “I shall do what I can to establish the truth”
and I say:  “I shall do what I can to establish the truth”

In the first case, the shall is binding on me by virtue of my intending to bring about a certain state of affairs. It is irreducibly mine, arising out of my subjective desire to attain truth. But what of the second case? Given what Sellars says about the egocentricism of intendings, it would seem that while you and I may have the same intentions in the sense that the descriptive contents of our intentions are in the tough sense the same (identical in content), our intendings will be two (yours and mine) and parallel. This suggests that the *oughts* that are implied by our own intendings are also two in number and parallel and not the same in a tough sense.\(^2\)

If we view the imperative in this way, we are saying that even in cases of joint action your participation in the inquiry places no obligation on myself. My *ought* implicates

\(^2\) Ibid, pp. 192-193. Indeed we may be mistaken in thinking our intentions are the same just because we seek to realize the same state of affairs, but then we could not speak of shared contents.
me alone. The imperatives that might reasonably follow from my intentions (and ultimately, the constraints on inquiry) will be personal, tied to conditions of subjectivity and the egocentricity of intendings. Indeed we find this in accounts of critical thinking in which respect of others is required in order to reduce our own risk of making mistakes in reasoning, or in accounts that suggest that an attitude of respect toward others is binding on me as a critical thinker because of the kind of ethical person I am.\textsuperscript{83}

Ego-centrality and Communo-centrality.

This is not a strong enough sense of obligation to underpin dialogical inquiry. The central problem with a subjective account is that does not allow for \textit{inter-subjective} implications (epistemic and moral) to follow from our engaging in the search for truth. A dialogical account of critical thinking requires that there be room for \textit{inter-subjective} obligations \textit{between} dialogical partners - a normative sense in which it is reasonable for them to say of \textit{one another} that they ought to engage with one another a certain way, by virtue of their joint participation in a single inquiry.

Given my account of complex wholes, I would want to say that while intendings are irreducibly mine and are in this sense parallel (because I and no one else carry them out), they are not necessarily egocentric. I want to allow for a stronger sense in which intendings (not just intentions) can be shared that respects the \textit{inter-subjective} nature of inquiry and truth. Here I will need to establish the imperatives that govern the activity of inquiry (for instance; constraints of trust, care, non-contradiction and respect\textsuperscript{84}) as social, or \textit{inter-subjective}, obligations incumbent on participants in the inquiry by virtue of their place as ‘part’ in the ‘complex whole’ of the inquiry itself. We might regard such obligations as \textit{communo}-centric in that they are inter-subjectively held; bearing a special irreducible relationship to the inquiry as a whole.

\textsuperscript{83} A position I explored in my critique of Scriven and Paul (in chapter 1), and in relation to Nagel’s instrumental account of engaging in inquiry with others (in chapter 3).

\textsuperscript{84} These are the four constraints on inquiry that I argue for in chapter 6.
Indeed Sellars, too, is concerned with the way in which the previous account of having the same intentions does not capture what it means to embark on a project (such as establishing truth) together. Returning to the second characterization of having the same intention, Sellars notes that we may have the same intention in a stronger inter-subjective sense in that we aim together to bring about a certain state of affairs. That is, where:

You say: “we shall do what we can to establish the truth”
and I say: “we shall do what we can to establish the truth”

In exploring such statements Sellars notes:

These statements in the first person plural have the interesting properties that (a) they express the speaker’s intention, yet (b) the intentions expressed are in the strongest sense the same. Put in terms of the distinctions I drew in my opening remarks, the intendings are two in number, but the content of these intendings is the same, in as strong a sense as the content of the two believings expressed by it... the intendings... have an inter-subjective form. 85

In what way are such intendings inter-subjective? Whereas claims of the form ‘I shall’ (or ‘I intend’) are made from the personal point of view and are subjective, claims in the form “we shall” are made from the point of view of the relevant group. For Sellars, groups or communities are established:

by virtue of thinking of each other as one of us, and by willing the common good not under the species of benevolence - but by willing it as one of us, or from a moral point of view. 86

This gives we-intentions an inter-subjective form.

We might translate this sense of we into a first-person singular form by stating “I seek, we to establish the truth as one of us” (where seek, we signifies we are seeking to achieve something together). 87 It is this form of intending that characterizes the complex whole of dialogical inquiry in which two members of a community together seek to bring about a single state of affairs (establish truth, realize logos). For Sellars,

85 Ibid, p. 217.Sellars' example is of two people who say "we shall do what we can to end the war".
86 Ibid, p. 222, paragraph 132.
this makes the resulting imperative categorical (rather than hypothetical), for it now takes the form of a general rule which holds normatively over a certain domain - the imperative is implied for anyone by virtue of their place as a member in the group, rather than by virtue of their (subjective) intention.  

Complex Wholes: Re-Casting the Personal and Social Points of View

Indeed we can make more productive use of Sellars’ distinction between the personal and social points of view by referring back to our prior discussion of complex wholes and the dialogical nature of the emergent self.

For Sellars, as in approaches to intentionality generally, subjective statements are seen as being unitary rather than dialogical in form. That is, to say “I intend to do x” is to make a monological rather than a relational claim because it refers back to a unitary bodily subject. It is to claim something for myself as a single thing, a one. I want to challenge this claim. My approach of characterizing both individuals and communities as pluralistic complex-wholes offers an alternate model that breaks down this unitary-relational distinction as a distinction between individual subjects and communities. We might now see all intentions and intendings to be from the point of view of complex wholes, but whereas in statements of “I shall” the relevant community (the relevant complex whole) is the dialogical self of a single subject, in the case of “we shall” the relevant community (or complex whole) is the dialogical communal self involving multiple subjects. The problem posed by the difference between how intentionality is ascribed between individual persons and communities

---

87 Sellars states: “It is still an individual who is valuing, but he is valuing in terms of we” in ibid, p. 220, paragraph 125. He elaborates on this on pp. 220-224.

88 Here Sellars’ account can be seen to complement Strawson’s notion of a socially sanctioned demand as a demand made on us by virtue of our membership. See: Peter Strawson: “Social Morality and the Individual Ideal” in Freedom and Resentment, pp. 31-36 in particular.

89 This point is made by Garver, Carr, and Taylor. See Charles Taylor: “The Dialogical Self” in Rethinking Knowledge, eds. Goodman, R., and Fisher, W. pp. 62-64; in particular, his distinction between the monological actions of a single agent and dialogical action between two agents. What Taylor does not consider is the dialogical action internal to individual agents.

90 An interesting consequence of explaining intentionality in terms of complex wholes is that it allows us to avoid viewing obligation only by Western understandings of individuals and groups. It equally explains subjective and inter-subjective intentionality for cultures where the smallest ‘unit’ is constituted by a family group or one’s line of ancestors. This intergenerational complex is now regarded as constituting a single ‘I’ and it is this group of people that is implicated in my intending to do something (and thus literally it is their honor at stake when I fail in my obligations).
is now mitigated by our seeing all intendings emerging from within complex wholes - we might say that the personal point of view is intra-subjectively connected to the emergent consciousness of individual subjects, whereas the point of view of the group is inter-subjectively (or intra-communally) connected to the emergent consciousness of the group as defined by the parameters of one of us.

This distinction between the personal and social points of view suggests that communities themselves might be seen to give rise to a supervenient sense of themselves as a communal self. Here we may speak of the community’s desires (to constitute a safe neighborhood, to understand a problem), or goals (to establish neighborhood watch, to learn the truth) as a whole. Such communities can be considered as subjects to the extent that we can say such things as “we don’t do that here”, or “we offer reasons to support our judgments”. Such statements do not refer to any one member’s practice but refer back onto the group as a whole. Such statements point to the intentions and intendings shared intra-communal (from the personal point of view of the group as a single subject, a one) without involving inter-subjective reference to the intendings of other communities - they include no joint inter-communal action.

As in the case of individual persons, communities will constitute autonomous complex wholes (intra-communally) while at the same time taking their place as members (i.e.; as parts) in other multiple and overlapping communities (inter-communally). Here the imperatives that are incumbent on them as they act together with other communities will be those that are implied by the joint intending (not by intending to realize their own intra-communal ends). Our community may be religious and intra-communally place obligations on members, while at the same time also constituting part of a predominantly secular society. From a personal point of view such communities will aim to realize ends that they determine for themselves, ends expressive of their own personal vision of what it is to flourish. From a social point of view the same community may join with other communities to achieve a common end together, an end that is expressed significantly differently from their
own. Of course these imperatives may share the same descriptive content (e.g., the imperative “don’t steal!”) as those implied by their personal agenda. What will be different between the two imperatives will be whether they are grounded in subjectivity or inter-subjectivity (in this case, whether grounded in theology or in social contract theory).

**Intentionality and the Shaping of Obligations**

We might ask why this grounding is important - does it really matter if I show respect for you out of personal or social considerations of your worth? This difference is important because of the way intentions give shape to obligations. In both personal and social domains it will be the conditions for realizing our intentions that ground (i) which imperatives are appropriate, and (ii) what forms of expression they may viably take. Thus when I say “I ought to respect you” or “I ought to take the total situation into account” from a personal point of view, we might see the intention reflected back on to me (as intentional subject) and my intending to be a certain sort of person, and directed forward onto you (as the intentional object), whereas when I say “I ought to respect you” from a social point of view, the intention is reflected back onto *us*, and directed forward onto you *as a member* of the group.92

If we follow Sellars in seeing constraints as relative to *intendings*, the constraints of group activity will be determined as much by the particular kind of activity the group is engaged in as they are determined by the personal intentions of members. For example, in the case of communities of inquiry it will be the constraints of *inquiry* that determine whether respect is incumbent on members of the group (on *us*), and the form this respect might viably take (e.g.; listening attentively, considering one another’s reasons and not speaking over each other). Similarly, if “we” are ballet dancers engaged in a performance, what it means to *realize our intentions* will be

---

91 In the extreme, this could generate imperatives that are global but conditional on membership - e.g., imperatives that fall on all human beings by virtue of their membership in the one global community, but only if we mutually recognize one another’s membership. This is Arendt’s approach when she links imperatives to the human condition of life on this planet; and perhaps what Nussbaum has in mind when she speaks of world citizenship as citizenship in “a complex inter-locking world”. See the prologue to Hannah Arendt: *The Human Condition*, pp. 1-6; and Martha Nussbaum: *Cultivating Humanity*, p. 6.
different. Here it will be the constraints of dance that will determine what oughts are incumbent on the group and the form these constraints might viably take (and here respect may still be seen as an appropriate constraint relative to the activity, but giving reasons may not be). In relation to dance, the ways in which this respect might viably be expressed will also differ from the ways respect is expressed in inquiry – it may include such forms as maintaining an appropriate distance from fellow dancers and keeping to the choreographed moves. In these two diverse situations, however, I come to the activity intending the same thing from a personal point of view – I am intending to realize who I am – though the two different activities will provide me with the opportunity to express these ranges of possibility for myself in different ways (as dancer, as inquirer).

The way in which complex wholes may be seen to be multiple and overlapping helps us appreciate the way in which members’ participation in communities of inquiry will be shaped by both subjective and intersubjective intentionality – and with it, personal and inter-subjective limits on ranges of possibility. In engaging in inquiry with others, the constraints arising from my personal point of view will form a dynamic inter-relationship with the constraints the group sees for itself by virtue of this activity.

This can be made clearer through an example – for instance by exploring the different ways in which respect and commitment to respectfulness might be grounded within inquiry: (i) Respect may be part of my personal vision of what it is to flourish (an aspect of who “I” am) shaping the range of possibilities I see as viable for myself in relation to others. I may believe all rational beings are worthy of respect and feel personally obligated to express this valuing in my relationship with others. (ii) Others in the group however may not hold a similar regard for all rational creatures (they may consider respect something that depends on how one applies one’s rational capacity and thus not consider rational creatures worthy of respect simplicitor). As such, from their own personal point of view, they may not feel it is incumbent on them to respect me just because I am a rational creature. (iii) However we may both

---

92 The imperatives reflected back onto us will be reflected in the normative constraints of our
recognize respect as foundational to the viability of achieving an end together (i.e.; to develop understanding through our inquiry), in this case we will both feel obligated to respect one another ‘from a social point of view’. Respect then becomes an integral characteristic of who “we” are as an inquiring community. (iv) In acting out our obligations we may, of course, each express this respect in different ways, but it will need to be appreciated as respect by other members in the group.\textsuperscript{93} (v) Others in the community may rightly consider that I “ought” to respect them from a personal point of view given my beliefs (as well as feel obligated to respect them by virtue of their being members of the group), but (depending on their personal visions of flourishing) their respect for me may be based on moral imperatives alone.

This also has important implications for the way we view self-respect in inquiry. Self-respect will be the reflexive dimension of respect we show others as ‘one of us’. That is, self-respect in inquiry will be an internalized social, or inter-relational, respect - the sort of respect we show others as fellow inquirers - and as such will involve both moral (expressed in relation to persons) and epistemological (expressed in relation to the activity of inquiry) dimensions. In suggesting this I am making a clear departure from those accounts of respect in inquiry which ground our respect for one another (and reflexively for ourselves) in moral theory alone.\textsuperscript{94} Turning to the inherent worth of persons in order to account for “why we should respect others in the group” cannot explain the epistemological form of the respectfulness that is incumbent on us to show one another in inquiry.\textsuperscript{95} Having self-respect as a critical

\textsuperscript{93} A classic example of misreading these signs within the Australian educational system concerns Koori (Australian Aboriginal) education. While both Western and Koori societies consider respect between teacher and student an imperative, within Koori culture the way to express this respect is to avert one’s eyes when being addressed, especially in situations of admonishment - one does not look an elder directly in the face. Western teachers would interpret this lack of eye contact as disrespect. From their own personal (Western) point of view, avert one’s eyes is not the way respect is expressed. If they are not taught its meaning, both sides will misunderstand what is going on and respect within the group will break down. The pluralist response would be to affirm respect but allow for its multiple expression.


\textsuperscript{95} This was Siegel’s critique in relation to Burbules’ thicker account of rationality as reasonableness, which we noted in chapter 1. It seems that such views ultimately fall back on an account of human rational essence, something I seek to avoid as it leads us back to a form of monism (whereby our flourishing is universally held relative to our existence as ‘rational creatures’).
thinker may involve such things as: taking my own ideas seriously, acknowledging my differing intuitions, giving myself adequate time to think before coming to an opinion, asking myself what one thought or feeling means in light of another, or seeing inconsistencies in my beliefs as problematic.

This same inter-relationship of parts and wholes points to how reasons may structurally be considered both reasons and other. As members of a deliberative community, (i.e.; inter-subjectively), reasons count as reasons if they fall within valid ranges of possibilities for the community (valid forms of explanation or interpretation). However as a complex whole (intra-subjectively), personally these reasons may not count as reasons for me (given the form of explanation and ends I have accepted for myself).  

The Domain of One of Us

The critical point is that, for Sellars, unity between two is established in virtue of a common end or set of ends. I am suggesting that this holds for both groups and individuals. Inter-subjectively ranges of possibility for us are judged relative to our ends (i.e.; relative to our activity - inquiry) whereas intra-subjectively (or individually) ranges of possibility for me are judged as viable relative my ends (i.e.; relative to my projects and values). Inter-subjectively "one of us" refers to all those individuals that are recognized by us as members of this inquiry. In seeking to establish a common end the people so engaged must see each other as being one of us by virtue of this end.  It will not be enough simply to count oneself as a member of the relevant group. Similarly, intra-subjectively "one of us" refers to all those aspects of me (as a historic subject) that are recognized by me as part of who "I" am.

---

96 As a group we may agree that a certain picture could count as pornography or art depending on the way it is viewed (the cultural assumptions underlying its being displayed), etc. I understand that it could viably be seen as both and thus accept another's reason for putting it in an art exhibition. However, I would not choose to display it an exhibition myself. Or (given a Reubens or Klimpt), you may value it because you appreciate its expressive possibility as art and its place in the history of art, whereas I see its worth in its erotic possibilities. In this case we may differ on what we accept as reasons for our valuing it, but agree that both are reasons. This may also involve change over time - change in our own judgment or public interpretation. What began as erotic art in the privacy of men's smoking rooms may become appreciated and placed on public display as exemplars of their genre.

97 "It is a conceptual fact that people constitute a community, a we, by virtue of thinking of each other as one of us." Wilfred Sellars: Science and Metaphysics, p. 222, paragraph 132.
Indeed as Garver points out, since modernity the individual has had increasing freedom to choose even those aspects of themselves which have traditionally been determined at birth (e.g.; religion, sex, body), and if not choose them, has had the freedom to count or discount them as contributing toward their self-definition. Intra-subjectively:

... we all choose our identities, and make that choice from among a heterogeneous set of data, of given that can become, if we choose, part of identity - a nationality, a sex, a religion, a profession, some strong preferences and values. We rarely choose our nationality, sex, or religion, but we do choose whether to make these data part of our identity....

Avoiding the Public-Private Split

Rorty also views Sellars as naturalizing Kant and my interpretation of Sellars is consistent with his. However, unlike Rorty, I do not want to privatize contingency (or plurality) and politicize commitment (or solidarity). Rather, I want to be able to show how contingency and commitment are expressed dialogically within both individual and social domains. Where Rorty links Sellars' account of subjective and inter-subjective intentionality with the distinction between private and public domains, I want to avoid this connection by linking "I" and "we" intentions to the unitary and relational aspects of complex wholes respectively. This will enable me to apply both forms of intentionality within personal and social domains. I need to do this if (i) I am to maintain my claim that the structure of critical thinking in the individual is a reflexive expression of dialogical inquiry with others, and (ii) to account for the way a critical thinker can both view their position as a position (one of many viable possibilities) while retaining a strong attachment and commitment to it as the position (or possibility) they choose to realize for themselves.

Importantly, linking contingency and commitment (or autonomy and obligation) to complex wholes provides a solution to the problems Nel Noddings identifies with conceptualizing the solution to the problematic relation between individual and community along the public-private split. The problem Noddings is referring to is

---

99 For Richard Rorty's discussion of Sellars see Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity, pp. 59-65 and 189-198.
how “dedication to individual liberty” can be seen to contribute to a collective understanding for “a community has to stand for something. ‘We’ refers to a certain kind of person...” 100 Couched in the language of the Liberalism-Communitarianism debate, this issue expresses the same concerns as our own regarding how to understand the autonomy of the individual as a member of community, a we. For Noddings, solving this problem by accepting a split between public and private domains addresses one set of problems but introduces others. She states:

One possibility would be to accept the public-private split described by Richard Rorty. In such a scheme, people would be liberals at the public level and ironists at the private level, using two different and incommensurable vocabularies to express themselves at the two levels.... Although Rorty could be right that such a split arrangement would achieve a global reduction in cruelty and also allow self-creation, it clearly would not address the great human longing to be part of something significant beyond the self. Further it neglects the equally human desire for unity - a self that can meet the world as both individual and part with no loss of integrity....

At the philosophical level, our problem is to reconceptualize the self in a way that avoids as nearly as possible the split into individual entity and member of groups. 101

It is this “reconceptualisation of the self” that I aim to achieve by linking I and we intentions to intra- and inter-relational aspects of complex wholes respectively. It is this move that “avoids as nearly as possible” the split of ourselves into autonomous individuals (the liberal vision) and members of groups (the communitarian vision). In so doing, it seems that we address the problems Noddings identifies with Rorty’s pragmatic alternative: (i) We avoid incommensurability between public and private spheres because we now take parts and wholes as dialogically connected (where the juxtapositioning of multiple ends gives rise to a supervenient sense of unity both for individuals and groups); (ii) the “human longing to be part of something significant beyond the self” does not require us to abandon the self for the sake of community, but rather points to the way our autonomous ends are dynamically inter-related with the ends of the communities of which we are part (and who, in turn, contribute to our self-realization); and (iii) it suggests a model of engagement by which we may meet the world as both individual (i.e.; whole) and member (i.e.; part) with no loss of

integrity. There is no loss of integrity because it is the same self which is engaged from personal and social points of view.\textsuperscript{102}

Interestingly, Noddings goes on to suggest that postmodern and feminist philosophers who turn to the Other may offer a solution - namely, Buber, Levinas, Derrida, and Mayeaux - primarily for their articulation of the way this turn toward the Other brings with it responsibility toward the Other (in different ways for the different thinkers). She then turns to Feminist philosophy and the concept of care to explore how this responsibility may be expressed in community. But Noddings notes that while each of these approaches stresses the primacy of relation, “a doubt arises whether care... can provide a center for community. Perhaps, like liberty, it can only draw people together when a threat arises.”\textsuperscript{103} This is where the model of shared intentionality I have developed enriches our understanding of what Noddings describes.

From my point of view, each of her formulations of our responsibility toward the Other reflects a two-way intentional relationship in which we care for the other for the sake of the other, and for this reason can be seen to fail to provide a center for the community as a whole - it fails to provide a sense of something shared as a group rather than between you and me as individuals. For this we need a three-place intentional relationship in which X cares for Y for the sake of Z, where all members care for the sake of Z. It seems to me that the situation of threat Noddings describes does this work - it transforms the two-place care into a three-place intentionality. That is, we no longer care for one another “from the personal point of view”, but together care for the community (care that we be delivered from threat) “from a social point of view”. It is the community that is threatened, not merely the individuals within it. Or should we say, the individuals are threatened by virtue of their membership. In this way, Noddings’ account of the problem of theorizing the relation of individual to community - a problem she develops in another (i.e., political) domain - supports the usefulness of the direction I have taken when dealing

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid, pp. 260-261.
\textsuperscript{102} I take up this issue of integrity later in relation to Arendt and the notion of standing alongside another.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid, p. 265

258
with this problem when developing a theoretical conception of the community of inquiry.

Epistemic and Moral Welfare
The question that remains to be addressed, however, concerns the nature of the relationship between epistemic and moral welfare. In particular, how to understand the connection between moral and epistemological domains of "one of us", and thus the relationship between the epistemic and moral constraints incumbent on us as members of a community of inquiry.

The Kantian project Sellars is engaged in involves trying to establish a connection between inquiry (and epistemic welfare) and moral law; universal moral constraints binding on human beings generally by virtue of their membership in the community of rational agents. However while this task (on his own admission) fails, what I think succeeds is the more modest task I am suggesting - that there are moral and epistemic constraints placed on all members of a particular inquiry by virtue of their seeking logos together. Like Sellars, my approach is to naturalize Kant, grounding imperatives (epistemic and moral) in communal obligation. But unlike Sellars I am not aiming to arrive at universalism. I simply need to establish that communal membership (in this case, membership in communities of inquiry) places obligations on all members by virtue of their sharing in a common intention. It is the intention (to seek knowledge, realize logos) that will ground what such obligations reasonably consist in.

104 In Sellars' terms the task is to explain the inter-subjective status of moral reasoning based on an analysis of the inter-subjective nature of truth in theoretical reasoning. That is, if Tom argues 'P, P implies Q, so Q', and Dick independently argues '-Q, P implies Q, so -P', while both arguments may be valid, when taken together they cannot both be good (sound) because they contradict one another. Truth has an inter-subjective status because we may speak of a logical clash between the two (valid) arguments asserted by different people. Sellars wants to extend this to moral reasoning. [See Wilfred Sellars: "Science and Metaphysics", pp. 214-219.] There may seem to be a danger here that, in accepting Sellars' arguments, we cease to affirm pluralism (because two opposing judgments - while valid - cannot both be considered good), but this is not the case if we utilize Sellars' position not to test whether particular propositions are 'good', but to judge whether ranges of possibility are viable. That is, if the intendings that are inter-subjectively the same in the strong sense of same are those that determine the limits of what is regarded as viable for communities. Within that range people may offer different accounts of truth.

105 For a similar attempt to link the requirements of rationality to ethics through a focus on community of inquiry (rather than the individual) see: Philip Clayton and Steven Knapp: "Ethics and Rationality" in American Philosophical Quarterly, vol.30, no. 2, April, 1993, pp. 151-161.
For Sellars, the moral point of view refers to “mankind generally” because he accepts that there is a moral end (realizing our human welfare) to which all rational agents strive, and by virtue of which they count one another as one of us. It is the inter-subjectivity of intending to maximize our (human) welfare that establishes:

...the Kantian principle that everyone shall be treated as an end in itself and not as a means only. For to treat someone as a means only is, in effect, to consider his place with respect to our conduct not from the point of view ‘We would that...’ but from the point of view which singles him out... as an exception. It is to consider him from the point of view ‘I would that...’.

In a footnote elaborating on this point he points out that this has not always been the case and sketches the changing parameters in which moral judgments have moved from the tribocentric sense of one of us to a universalistic sense of encompassing community. But as Sellars notes “it by no means follows that the group whose welfare is ‘our’ welfare consists of rational beings generally”. This is where his attempt to establish the categorical moral imperative as a universal imperative covering the domain of all rational beings fails: “This might... be true if the welfare in question is what might be called epistemological welfare, but not if we take into account, as we must, needs and desires generally” That is, for Sellars, maximizing our human welfare as inquirers and as people with particular needs and desires potentially mark out two different domains. As such, we can only universally (by virtue of our rational essence) consider the domain of “one of us rational creatures” to establish our epistemological welfare (epistemological needs and desires) and not moral welfare.

Sellars’ failure to link epistemological flourishing and human flourishing at a universal level does not, however, stop us linking epistemological and moral welfare categorically within particular kinds of intentional groups. We may still establish the categorical imperative as a constraint holding over the domain formed by

---

106 Wilfred Sellars: Science and Metaphysics, p. 222, paragraph 134.
108 Ibid, p. 224, paragraph 139. This is, I think, the reason for rejecting moral constraints on inquiry in traditional theories of critical thinking.
communities of inquiry, not by virtue of members being ‘rational beings generally’, but by their being ‘members of this inquiring community’. In this case, the particular domain of inquirers (now seen as a domain marked out by virtue of intentional activity rather than human essence) marks out the same domain as those intending to realize our communities welfare (rather than aiming for the welfare of all humans generally). Interestingly for us, immediately after these comments Sellars notes:

Perhaps the most interesting point is that to discuss with another person what ought to be done presupposes (shall I say dialectically?) that you and he are members of the one community.\footnote{Ibid, p. 220, footnote 1.}

What is interesting here is that in discussing with another person what ought to be done it is our engagement in a common problem (a common end) that presupposes the us. Discussing a problem together presupposes an us in that it enacts a commitment toward the other as a fellow inquirer. This takes us back to Plato’s notion of unity (or friendship) for the sake of establishing logos. It is also central to Hannah Arendt’s conception of solidarity.

**Hannah Arendt’s Concept of Solidarity**

For Arendt solidarity - an us - does not arise out of the recognition of some common human essence, nor out of some abstract principle, but arises out of a commitment to address one another as members of the one community. Solidarity is created rather than found; it is expressed through shared intentionality, through our commitment to address a common problem, or interest, together.\footnote{It is the commitment toward one another in light of a common object that links Arendt’s view both to Plato and to Gadamerian hermeneutics.}

... These interests constitute, in the word’s most literal significance, something that “inter-est”, which lies between people and therefore can relate and bind them together.\footnote{Hannah Arendt: The Human Condition, p. 182.}

Importantly, what Arendt’s characterization adds to Sellars’ account is the way in which the differences between us are as important in defining who we are as our common intendings. For Arendt, what gives rise to an us is both what links and what separates us as distinct persons intending the same thing. Solidarity consists in a
principled commitment to act in concert across substantive differences. This is not to say Sellars and Plato ignore difference, but it is significant to them for other reasons. Whereas difference for Plato is circumstantial, for Sellars it is logical. While Sellars states that one intention can involve two intendings because they refer back to different subjects, he does not focus on the effect the difference between us has on our understanding of what we stand for.

Central to Arendt’s conception is the idea that our awareness of this difference is both valuable and irreducible to some common measurement or denominator (i.e.; to a common conception of flourishing or to a common essence). In this way, her account of solidarity adds a pluralist twist to Plato’s account of friendship as a relation between two who are neither the same nor different from one another. Solidarity is only possible where “… plurality, the irreducible particularity of individuals’ positions is valued more highly than consensus.”\(^{112}\)

**Initiating Inquiry**

Yet pointing to difference and autonomy raises the question of how it is that we find ourselves addressing a problem together. When Sellars says inquiry “presupposes we are a community”, should we see the presupposition as historical or logical? If communities of inquiry are formed by virtue of the intention to establish knowledge together in what way is it possible to approach the other as co-inquirer before the first word is sounded? Do we begin inquiry as you and I and forge an us as the discussion gives rise to a common object, or is inquiry only possible within pre-established communities?

Here David Carr makes a useful distinction. Carr distinguishes between a we formed around a common event (e.g., a traffic accident), and a we formed through participation in joint action (e.g.; by playing a game together). In the former there is an object outside ourselves around which the we is formed. In the later, however, the object (or objective) “is literally brought forth or produced by the activity itself”.\(^{113}\)

---

\(^{112}\) Lisa Disch: *Hannah Arendt and the Limits of Philosophy*, p. 89. I return to this in Chapter 6.

In the case of joint action Carr suggests that "the we-subject must exist independently of it - not independently of its conception, perhaps, but at least independently of its existence."\textsuperscript{114} That is, it seems we must already exist in relation to a future object (the game we have gathered to play) when we identify each other as ‘one of us players’ before action begins. This leads Carr to suggest that communities of experience must exist prior to communities of action.\textsuperscript{115} This, however, does not explain how individuals or communities who share no past experience with one another can think critically together - yet I think we would want to make a place for the possibility of such activity within a theory of critical thinking.\textsuperscript{116}

Promising as the Commitment Toward a Shared Future

Hannah Arendt responds to this problem by suggesting that joint action begins with an act of promising. Promising - a promising directed at the future - is most salient whenever we begin inquiry because in the act of addressing one another (as addressee and addressee) we acknowledge that we are two who are different from one another. Promising is a public performative act that expresses our commitment to a shared public life, we make this promise (and express this commitment) when we address a common problem together. Addressing a common problem together both opens a space between us (showing our situation to be one of plurality), while also establishing an intentional space “in-between” our personal points of view that makes it possible for mutual understanding to develop.\textsuperscript{117} This mutual understanding will not be agreement (for then we deny plurality) but an enlarged consciousness that informs the subject, or problem, from the multiplicity of our different perspectives.\textsuperscript{118}

discussion of games in chapter 3. In Gadamer’s words, “the game is in the game’s play” - the common object is constituted and brought forth by the intentional activity of playing together.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid, p. 527.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{116} This seems uniquely to be a problem concerning the social conditions for inquiry, for we have this prior history with ourselves. For the individual the situation might arise for someone suffering full amnesia or perhaps undergone radical conversion, however I shall not pursue this further here.
\textsuperscript{117} For Arendt, this points to the paradoxical nature of the human condition. If we were not different from one another, speech would not be necessary. If we were not the same, speech would not be possible. “Human plurality is the paradoxical plurality of unique beings” (my emphasis). Hannah Arendt: The Human Condition, p. 176.
\textsuperscript{118} This imagery offers another description of what I have characterized as the supervening unity that is created through the inter-relationship of parts in a complex whole. It is something I explore further in relation to the kind of situated but general truth that this reveals through my discussion of Arendt's storytelling and my discussion of Nussbaum’s judicious spectator.
For Arendt, such promising is necessarily inter-subjective and limited by an agreed purpose.

For Arendt, promising, and the solidarity it generates, mediates between the worlds of contingency ("Will we inquire together?") and necessity ("We must inquire together!"). It secures ". . . islands of certainty in an ocean of uncertainty". Without multiple possibilities, promising loses its intentional force; yet if there was only plurality, everything would be contingent and there could be no promises. We would neither be able to rely on ourselves nor able to foretell the consequences of our action amongst others.

The moment promises lose their character as isolated islands of certainty in an ocean of uncertainty, that is, when this faculty is misused to cover the whole ground of the future and to map out a path secured in all directions, they lose their binding power and the whole enterprise becomes self-defeating.

Promising becomes important when we acknowledge the contingency of human community. To return to Carr’s distinction between communities of experience and communities of action, we can say that communities of action may begin without constituting a prior "community of experience" when members commit themselves to a future experience together. That is, when children constitute themselves as a community by opting-in to an impromptu game of handball or, in this case, when we find ourselves engaged in dialogical inquiry with strangers on a train. To initiate such inquiry establishes an intentional community where previously there was none, and such an act requires us to trust the other to enter the inquiry with us. This requires more than a Davidsonian kind of trust - it is not a utilitarian posture toward the other,

---

119 And similarly in relation to the self, promising mediates between the contingency of who I may yet become and the necessity of who I now am (a necessity that arises out of the choices I have already made). Garver notes this problem in choosing an identity as a problem of "the possible and the actual" (in "Why Pluralism Now?" p. 397), and we noted it also in the discussion of Taylor and Ricoeur in chapter 2.

120 Hannah Arendt: The Human Condition, p. 244. Determination is the outcome of denying difference, of viewing identity in terms of sameness rather than plurality. This is true both for (i) determination of self (the problem we spoke of in reference to Taylor and Garver - if, in the act of choosing, the self becomes fixed by the choices it makes, how then is it possible to continue to choose?); and (ii) determination of society (the problem of totalitarianism for Arendt).

121 Hannah Arendt, Ibid.
but rather, is a virtue.\textsuperscript{122} It expresses our commitment to the inter-subjective activity of reasoning as something valuable in itself as a form of flourishing.

Interestingly, Sellars notes that promising generates a special case of subjective intending.\textsuperscript{123} We might see Arendt as pointing to the way promises constitute a special case when she notes that promises gain their status as promises by being witnessed.\textsuperscript{124} Witnessing is an inter-subjective event which transforms a commitment made “from a personal point of view” to one that constitutes a publicly binding act. In a sense, what promising does is to move an \textit{ought} that is binding on me by virtue of my own personal intentions to an \textit{ought} that is publicly binding by virtue of my relations with others (by virtue of my membership in the community). In the case of initiating inquiry, speech enacts a promise in the form of a commitment “to act in concert” in order to arrive at future understanding.\textsuperscript{125}

Of course, we may find that this promise is not kept or is compromised, and this will then endanger the possibility of continuing the inquiry, however without a shared intention of engaging in inquiry \textit{together}, joint action is not possible. It is also possible that we find ourselves drawn into the inquiry by others without our intending; we just happen to be in the vicinity and become caught up in someone else’s joint action. Yet, here too, it is not our action until we see ourselves as engaged in the inquiry together with these others - and that means intending to arrive at some \textit{future} understanding with them - until then, our contribution will be as an outsider rather than as a member of the community.

Locating the beginning of inquiry in the act of promising seems to offer a different way of understanding the initiation of inquiry than we found in Plato. For Socrates, inquiry begins with a question and with stated opinion.\textsuperscript{126} However on closer inspection this is not such a different starting point after all. What Arendt offers us is

\textsuperscript{122} See Donald Davidson: “On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme” in \textit{Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation}. I take the notion of promising up again in chapter 6 in the section on trust.

\textsuperscript{123} Wilfred Sellars: \textit{Science and Metaphysics}, p. 187, paragraph 29.

\textsuperscript{124} Hannah Arendt: \textit{The Human Condition}, p. 237.

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid, p. 244. This is true also for the individual. To engage in critical thinking enacts an implicit promise, in the form of a commitment, to bring all aspects of my thinking to bear on the problem.

\textsuperscript{126} See the discussion of Plato’s \textit{Theaetetus} in chapter 4.
a way of appreciating the way in which voicing one’s opinions in public may express a public commitment to inquiry. They express this commitment if they are offered as a member of a we - dialogically, or from the social point of view. Without this intentionality opinion becomes mere monologue. In this way, Socratic inquiry can itself be seen to involve an implicit promise and a commitment. This promise was enacted through committing one’s personal opinion to inquiry in the public domain. This is the commitment that Socrates understood to take courage, for it both exposed who the interlocutor was and placed on them an inter-subjective obligation toward a common end - establishing the truth - by following the inquiry wherever it lead.\textsuperscript{127}

The Community of Inquiry as an Ideological Community

Clearly, Sellars’ account of intentional communities does not define all types of community (e.g.; communities of experience, communities of memory, geographical communities, tribal groupings, communities of oppression), but it does mark out ideological communities - those communities we join in order to achieve a particular end together with others (communities of inquiry, political communities, communities established around a social cause).\textsuperscript{128} Communities of inquiry differ from many other kinds of ideological community because they come into existence and disappear in accordance with their active pursuit of a single end. They may exist for the period of a particular discussion, or they may exist for extended periods of time, developing a history, collective memory and shared experiences, but they are constituted as communities by virtue of members seeking to establish logos together.

It is true that once we relinquish the connection between inquiry and human nature, critical thinking may seem like just one more utopian ideology. As such, it may be seen to suffer from the excesses of idealism in that a theory of critical thinking will provide a normative model for harmonious co-existence that perhaps can at best

\textsuperscript{127} I discussed Socrates’ acknowledgment of the courage required in stating one’s opinion in my discussion of Theaetetus in chapter 4. Arendt also speaks of the courage required to state one’s opinions in public. See Hannah Arendt: The Human Condition, p. 180.

\textsuperscript{128} This takes us back to the observation in chapter 2 that the disposition to engage in critical thinking stems from seeing the life of reason as a better way to live - that is, it reflects an ideological choice we make as individuals or as societies when we choose to promote and educate toward critical thinking. This again points to the intentionality of choosing our form of life. See Eugene Garver: "Why Pluralism Now?" The Monist, vol. 73, no. 3., July, pp. 388-410.
remain only an model. As Amelie Rorty so succinctly states, the idea will seem propagandistic to some, representing:

... a coy, naive piece of propagandistic utopian nonsense. [as such] An attempt to evoke if not provoke Socratic inquiry should not assume the rhetoric of a fundamentalist sermon...  

Yet, as Rorty continues to argue, perhaps it is at least one way to avoid “the Janus-faced dangers of abdurate attachment to harmful practices”. Critical thinking does presume we value survival over self defeat, and flourishing over mere survival, and this is something that a theory of reasoning cannot itself defend by giving reasons. It rests on the assumption that “…reflective discussion is either a good in itself, or that it moves to improving our condition”

Here we need to remember that, as with social or political ideologies generally, the practice of dialogical inquiry will exist in varying degrees and in variously consistent and inconsistent combinations with the other ends people pursue. Critical thinking is an end critical thinkers strive to realize, but it is not the only end. What a coherent model can provide is the criteria and understanding by which to evaluate varying efforts.

What Sellars makes clear to us is that in as much as critical thinking is normative, it is normative for those who count themselves amongst one of us inquirers. Given the plural traditions in which inquiry takes place, a pluralistic dialogical conception of critical thinking will then be normative for one of us inquirers who accept (i) social constructivism (with its dialogical conception of self), and (ii) an interpretative

---

129 Amelie Rorty is speaking here of the utopian ideal of taking philosophical inquiry (rather than critical thinking) into the workplace, however her comments are just as relevant here vis-a-vis aiming for an ideal that, at best, may only be partly realized. Amelie Rorty: “Socrates and Sophia Perform the Philosophical Turn” in The Institution of Philosophy: A Discipline in Crises?, eds. Cohen, A. and Dascall, D., p. 279
130 Ibid, p. 281
131 It is, in my case, Deweyian. The idea of preferring survival over self-defeat is, I think, as basic as we can get. For a critique of the grounding of theories of rationality see John Kekes: “Some Requirements of a Theory of Rationality”, The Monist, vol. 71, no. 3, July 1988, pp. 320-338.
132 Ibid, p. 281
133 This was my reason for stretching the internal coherency of dialogical inquiry as far as possible in this thesis to see if it survives as a viable theory, rather than exploring varieties of borderline cases.
theory of truth which situates the search for logos within particular traditions and languages.\textsuperscript{134}

**The Community of Inquiry as an Emergent Self.**

In suggesting that people constitute a community by virtue of seeing one another as members, Sellars points to the way in which being a member requires that we are conscious of others as part of us.\textsuperscript{135} This aspect of the plural “we” is still to be explored. It is here that David Carr’s phenomenological exploration of how the community is present to its members is illuminating. The importance of this for a theory of critical thinking lies in the way this shared experiencing of “us” opens the space for critical judgment.

Carr’s project concerns establishing whether the concept of intentionality can be considered “a characteristic not of minds or of bodies or even of persons, but of certain kinds of groups of persons.”\textsuperscript{136} His interest is not to explain the logical structure of joint intentions, but to explore the way joint activity presents to those engaged in it. In this regard his discussion complements Sellars’ account and takes us back to our own account of the emergent first-person self of consciousness. It is the group’s emergent consciousness of itself as a single thing, a ‘one’, that he characterizes as a communal self (or communal I) and it is this self that reflects backward to a communal subject (we, the community).

Like Sellars, Carr acknowledges the special intimacy of the relationship between intentional subjects and their intentions and yet is not happy to view groups (the social subject) simply as “...a short-cut for talking about individuals”.\textsuperscript{137} And again,

\textsuperscript{134} Without these later two commitments, other models of critical thinking - e.g.; one based in objectivism or realism, may seem more suitable.

\textsuperscript{135} It is this that I think is characterized well in Arendt’s account of what it is to think with others (rather than as them or about them). I will return to this later.


\textsuperscript{137} In seeking to characterize this difference Carr’s approach is to look at those situations in which we commonensically ascribe experience or action to the group and then to reflect on our first-person experiencing of such groups. Situations in which I would refer to it “not merely as my experience but as ours, not my action but ours.” (p. 525). As with Sellars, Carr notes: “If we take such cases as our focus we have the advantage that we have not left the first-person point of view behind, but merely exchanged its singular for its plural form”. Ibid, p. 524.
like Sellars, the important thing for Carr is the notion of our seeing it together. In viewing the Eiffel Tower together "something essential to the experience is lost" when we re-describe this seeing as me seeing it and you seeing it.\textsuperscript{138} What is lost is our consciousness of the inter-relationship between the two citings. In the experience of seeing it together:

... each of us saw the tower and was aware that the other was seeing it too. This sense of seeing something together, as expressed in the use of "we" by both parties in describing the experience, indicates that the experience is as much referred back to a common subject as it is referred outward to a common object. That is the sense it has for both parties.\textsuperscript{139}

There is an emergent sense of us that develops through participation in an event in which our own participation includes our consciousness of the participation of others, and their participation, likewise, includes consciousness of our own.\textsuperscript{140} "For each of us, there is a complex experience 'going on' of this one tower which can properly be attached to only one sort of subject: the plural subject we."\textsuperscript{141}

From a phenomenological point of view, this sense of observing together involves the experience of simultaneity and reciprocity. While I do not see it through your eyes: "... its being seen through your eyes as well as my own is part of the experience I have of it - or rather, as I participate in it."\textsuperscript{142} How we characterize this simultaneity will differ between third person and first person accounts. On a third person account, the simultaneity of inquiring together can be broken down by reference to how each person propositionally includes the other's understanding in their own account of what is going on.\textsuperscript{143} But this is not the case in the first-person experiencing of the community - in the first-person each of us has an experience of participating with

\textsuperscript{138} Ibid, p. 525.
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{140} This is very similar to Arendt's concept of enlarged thinking - the emergence of a general understanding through examination of particulars. I explore this later.
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{143} This takes us back to my critique in chapter 3 of the attempt to explicate first-person commitments as third-person "hidden premises". Such a treatment of commitments looks to offer a full account of our commitments by stating them propositionally (in the third person) within the argument. The claim is that this leaves nothing out of the description. I rejected this in chapter 2, saying then that what was left out was our commitment (committedness) to the view expressed.
others.\textsuperscript{144} The simultaneity of acting together is not the simultaneity of many events happening at one time, but the simultaneous ‘happening’ of the one event.\textsuperscript{145}

Of course, many of the occasions in which we use the term “we” do not imply reciprocity or simultaneity of awareness between members in this way - for instance when we speak of we in virtue of being in a certain location (‘we who are sitting in this restaurant’) or the we who fall within a certain category (‘we Australians’). In such cases there is the possibility of being a member of the relevant group yet being unaware of our membership - a new born baby is a member of the group ‘Australians’, though not conscious of her membership. As Carr notes: “Clearly we are dealing with a special class of experiences”\textsuperscript{146}. It seems to me, however, that joint inquiry falls within this class precisely because it is our consciousness of the other as co-inquirer that is a condition for membership in the inquiry. Indeed educationally this is often an issue that concerns teachers. Is the student who does not verbally contribute to the inquiry to be regarded as a member of the community of inquiry? Are they participating in the class? Here we need to remember that the question of participation refers to participation in a shared intentionality, rather than participation in overt conversation. Listening is the “other side” of participating in conversation, yet, as Gemma Fiumara points out, a philosophy of listening is not nearly as well developed within the philosophical literature as a philosophy of speech acts.\textsuperscript{147} This is particularly true of the critical thinking literature.

It is this kind of experiencing of reciprocity that Taylor characterized in his account of dialogical action (and with it, dialogical inquiry). Of course we may be wrong in attributing reciprocity to others, but if we are made aware of this mistake it seems that we would no longer feel ourselves able to speak in the first person we. Viewed

\textsuperscript{144} I see Carr’s description of acting together as complementing the account I gave in my discussion of Gadamer in chapter 3 in that it explicates the way approaching a common content together appears from the inside looking out. The account of self-correction and critique in inquiry that I gave in chapter 3 is expanded in the account of Nussbaum’s judicial spectator, offered below.


\textsuperscript{147} Gemma Fiumara: \textit{The Other Side of Language: A Philosophy of Listening}, pp. 1-22.
this way we might see reciprocity and simultaneity as essential aspects of the way we experience the relation between part and whole within a complex whole - of the experience of dynamic inter-relationship between two who together constitute one.

From the first-person perspective, we may see community as the social analog of my previous description of the emergent self of consciousness. The communal sense of ourselves as a we evolves with the emergence of a first-person consciousness of ourselves as an us - a supervening awareness of the plurality and dynamic inter-relationships internal to us (the community) as a complex whole. Our sense of ourselves as an us will include a sense of plurality, simultaneity and reciprocity.

Communities as Unitary Subjects Over Time

For Carr, in order for us to constitute a communal subject, we need to be conscious of ourselves as one community over time. Carr’s suggestion that communities forged through common experience exist prior to communities who participate in joint action runs counter to my claim in relation to dialogical inquiry. In my discussion of Socratic dialogue I suggested that it was the public situation itself that established the relation between interlocutors as one of friendship (a we). Dialogical partners did not require a history with one another, unity was made possible through a publicly recognized non-contrary relationship. Arendt follows Plato in this.

It seems to me that a key difference between Plato and Carr’s account rests on the internalization of self and subject. In chapter 4 I suggested that with the internalization of identity (the sense of who I am), the concept of friendship has itself become internalised. It has become more closely connected with narrative identity than public life. For Carr, a history of relationship is required in order to establish that the relations between us are non-contradictory, for our character is revealed

---

149 Suggesting that communities are forged in the public realm through the act of promising, an act implicit in attending to something (a problem, a situation) together.
through speech and action over time as we participate in one another’s story. It is this maturing with one another through time that gives our friendship depth.

Yet we need to be careful here not to make too clean a break. We might do better, I think, to consider the difference to be one of weight and degree rather than a difference of kind. In cases where we engage in critical thinking with complete strangers, it is the public recognition of one another as ‘friends for the sake of the inquiry’ (an act of promising) that will bear the weight of establishing an us. The more extreme cases of this will be when the we of dialogical inquiry may last no more than the temporal span of a single inquiry. However, even in this situation, as the discussion develops the external recognition of who we are (the public recognition of acting in concert) may give way to an understanding of the other as a particular self engaged with other selves. It may lead to us seeing one another as friends, rather than merely being friendly.\(^{150}\)

This will be an important factor both in developing depth in inquiry and in developing a sense of identity as critical thinkers, both when thinking for ourselves and when thinking with others: (i) for the individual critical thinker it suggests how engaging in reflective inquiry over time may lead us to develop a more clearly defined sense of who we are as individuals (of the plurality we contain and how different aspects of ourselves can be brought into relationship with one another, a more nuanced understanding of ranges of possibility for ourselves), and (ii) it suggests how engaging in inquiry with others develops a sense of depth to who we are as communities, a sense of depth that arises out of an appreciation of our uniqueness as individuals as we develop a history with one another.

Importantly, as we come to appreciate one another’s differences over time (as well as to appreciate more fully what we share in common) we are able to develop a greater

---

\(^{150}\) This is, I think, reflected in students’ evaluations where they report that they have come to understand each other better through participating in classroom communities of inquiry. See in particular, Hreinn Palsson: “We Think More Than before About Others and their Opinions” in *Thinking*, vol. 12, no. 4, 1996. pp. 24-30. This contrasts with collaborative work in the classroom where students need to coordinate their work, but not participate jointly in it. This does not necessarily lead to the same increased understanding of students toward ‘who’ one another are.
appreciation for the viable range of possibilities both for us collectively and for each one of us individually. We might come to realise that a certain issue raises questions of aesthetics and politics where before we had been aware only of the politics, or that it may be approached with a posture of skepticism or trust. In so doing, our own response may become more richly nuanced and gain greater depth. This will be especially true for pluralistic communities where the ends individuals strive to achieve for themselves may richly vary. In seeking the truth or developing understanding together I come to appreciate who you are in your particularity through experiencing the way you speak from yourself as a first-person “I”, and come to see how your own ends are brought into relationship with those of the community. In so doing I also develop a more nuanced appreciation of the inter-subjective limits to the possibilities we see for ourselves in light of the constraints posed by the activity of inquiry itself and by our individual commitments.

Standing Alongside Others: Hannah Arendt’s concept of Visiting

What a first-person account captures that a third person account misses is the way in which critical thinking involves us simultaneously as speaker and listener in the dialogue. This simultaneous participation (as with Taylor’s dialogical actors) involves our consciousness of the experience as first-persons in both directions. This will mean engaging with other perspectivities by standing alongside others as they view the world from the inside. This does not mean we imagine we are another person - we cannot capture another’s perspective as they do, and indeed to try to do so would be to negate plurality (it would mean losing the sense in which we are aware of someone else as another person different from ourselves). Standing alongside involves our being conscious of the other as a Thou, another first person, and to imaginatively engage with their point of view in this way. Like Gadamer, Hannah Arendt characterizes thinking alongside another as thinking with them, indeed we may see Arendt’s characterization of this experience as fleshing out the kind of attentiveness that is present when horizons are fused. In relation to her study of the historic figure Rahel Varnhagen, Arendt remarks:

151 My account of Arendt and Nussbaum can be seen as an attempt to articulate the experience of Gadamer’s hermeneutical engagement - what it is like to experience a fusion of horizons with one’s
What I meant to do was to argue further with her, the way she argued with herself, and always within the categories that were available to her and that she somehow accepted as valid....

In arguing with Rahel she did not argue as Rahel, but with her, appreciating the way in which she saw the world without being fully absorbed by it. Arendt describes this kind of thinking as a mode of engagement in which our imagination “goes visiting”. Visiting can be contrasted with touring on one hand and the immediacy of empathy and testimony on the other. In touring one experiences a spectatorial distance toward what one encounters, whereas in empathy one assimilates someone else’s experience as one’s own.

Visiting differs from Archimedean seeing in that where the Archimedean thinker steps outside the world, the visitor ventures into it to regard it from a plurality of unfamiliar perspectives. It also differs from particularist testimony in that the persons who give testimony expect something different from their audience than does the storyteller. A testimonial is self-expressive; it asserts “this is the way I see the world.” The testifier wants to be heard and to be responded to with empathetic affirmation. In contrast, a story exhorts its auditor to “go visiting”, asking “how would you see the world if you saw it from my perspective?” The “visitor” is invited not empathetically to assimilate the different perspectives he or she finds, but rather, to converse with them to consider how they differ from his or her own.

We might say that thinking alongside another maintains the three-place relation that characterizes dialogical activity (the complex whole of thinking as an us), whereas thinking as them (engrossment) or about them (touring) replaces this three-place relation with a two-place relation. As Disch notes, “Both the tourist and the assimilationist erase plurality”. In a discussion of Kafka’s parable He, Arendt describes a man caught between two antagonists, one presses him forward to the future, the other blocking the road and driving him back toward the past. To engage with the parable as tourist is to watch the man embattled in his situation as an
outsider, we watch for what he will do without any challenge to ourselves. I am aware of him only as a third person - the intentional object of my own thinking. To become engrossed in the tale is to face the antagonists as if we were him, and again we are not challenged as ourselves. Only in the case of visiting - in standing alongside the man - do we ask what this means for us, for our own battle with time, in light of our awareness of the situation facing this man whose battle is at once similar and different from our own; only here do we face the situation together. It is in thinking together with another different from ourselves that the three-place relation is maintained - that I am able to engage in other perspectives without seeing you as totally Other or becoming absorbed by you and losing the sense who I am.

Plurality with Limits

The dual imaginative participation we experience in visiting offers an alternate stance toward the construction of knowledge than those captured by Rorty’s ironist or metaphysician. Arendt’s critical thinkers perceive themselves both in terms of contingency and commitment, integrity and humility. In as much as we are aware of others as having a different first-person perspective to our own, we are faced with our own contingency (we are conscious that our way of seeing it is not the only way), but in as much as we think alongside others we are able to speak from our own first-person commitments with integrity (we remain “attached” to our own point of view). In this way, visiting creates a dialogical tension between the “relative validity of our convictions” and our “standing for them unflinchingly”, and it is this tension that creates the conditions under which critical judgment can take place. Visiting opens a space for critical judgment because the juxtapositioning of contingency and commitment gives rise to a supervening sense of unity of the whole (of ourselves, of truth) as one thing containing both plurality and limits.

---

157 We return to this in the section on treating persons as ends in chapter 6. For Arendt, to think about another is to treat them as an object.
158 This connects back to our discussion of Arendt’s conception of solidarity as one in which we are aware of both what links and what divides us as individuals.
159 Joseph Schumpeter’s famous line, quoted by Isaiah Berlin, Richard Rorty, Michael Sandel, and others. See Rorty: “The Contingency of Community” in Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity, pp. 46-61. For Arendt, situated critical thinking (characterized by “going visiting”) provided an answer
This interpretation of the critical thinker alters the meaning of the classic description of the critical thinker as a person who views their own point of view as one view amongst many. Rather than objectifying our view, removing it from the contingency of our personhood and impartially treating it as a view (the Archimedean approach to critical thinking we explored in chapters 1 and 3 in relation to Richard Paul and Thomas Nagel), we now understand this stance as one in which we juxtapose our own committed first-person view with the committed first-person views of others. Here we engage with alternate views to see how they illuminate truth and meaning, but we do not forfeit our situated commitment to our own view as our own. Truth is not objectified from, and contrasted to, situated thinking, but rather can only find expression through it. This is to treat representational thinking not as comparing our judgment with the position of “any other man” in the abstract, but to compare our judgment with the multiple positions of particular other men. It aims not at generalization in the sense of coming under a general rule, but for inclusivity, an enlarged sense of the matter under investigation that emerges out of specificity and attention to particular detail.

...[The] larger the realm in which the enlightened individual is able to move, from standpoint to standpoint, the more “general” will be his thinking.... This generality is not the generality of a concept... It is on the contrary closely connected with particulars, the particular conditions of the standpoints you have to go through in order to arrive at your own “general standpoint”...

Enlarged thinking and Critical Judgment

We might say that “going visiting” captures Arendt’s characterization of the activity of critical thinking because it captures the way in which we access the range of possible ways a situation may present to us, and in this process, opens the space for to the challenges posed by communitarianism (an empathetic view of ‘us’) and liberalism (an impartial view of ‘us’).

160 This position is also beautifully articulated by Amelie Rorty: “Socrates and Sophia Perform the Philosophical Turn” in The Institution of Philosophy: A Discipline in Crises?, eds. Cohen, A. and Dascall, D.

161 This is Arendt’s “creative appropriation” of Kant. “Creative appropriation” is Lisa Disch’s astute phrase. See Hannah Arendt and the Limits of Philosophy, pp. 147-148.

162 Hannah Arendt: The Life of the Mind: Appendix: Judging, p. 258. The “enlightened individual” is one who has abstracted self-interest (but not a personal point of view) when he or she goes visiting.
critical judgment. This is true for both individuals and communities. In the case of communities of inquiry, dialogue presents us with other first-person understandings of a situation. In thinking for ourselves we need to imaginatively construct the multiple ways a situation may present in order that we may stand alongside them. In both cases, the effect of standing alongside is that consciousness moves from the center in which we relate to an object subjectively (the two way relation characterized as the personal point of view), to the periphery in which we relate to the object inter-subjectively (or intra-subjectively) - a three-way relation characterized as the social point of view.

... Critical thinking is possible only where the standpoints of all others are open to inspection. [By] force of imagination it makes the others present and thus moves potentially in a space which is public, open to all sides...
To think with the enlarged mentality - that means you train your imagination to go visiting...\textsuperscript{163}

In what sense, however, can this attention to detail and specificity of others’ lives (or in imaginative construction of other possibilities) be seen as a search for truth and meaning? Returning to Carr’s phenomenological focus, we might ask: how does this examination of other possibilities present to us as first-persons as critical judgment?
In response to this question both Arendt and Martha Nussbaum turn to storytelling.

**Storytelling**

For Arendt, the paradigmatic example of situated critical thinking (or visiting) is that of storytelling. Storytelling does not present points of view in the abstract, nor does it present points of view as personal testimonial (where inquiry risks turning into therapy); rather, it invites critical engagement from the visitor who participates in its telling while standing alongside the storyteller. It invites the listener to imaginatively explore ranges of possibility that are outside their own experience yet situated in a particular first-person.\textsuperscript{164} This is, I think, the kind of engagement we saw

\textsuperscript{163} Ibid, p. 257.

\textsuperscript{164} The trend to psychologizing inquiry in communities of inquiry such that telling anecdotes takes the role of therapy is observable in some conceptions of what participation in a community of inquiry involves in Philosophy for Children. We can see this in Yule’s account of the role of anecdotes in building and strengthening classroom communities of inquiry, His account corresponds more closely to the giving of testimonial than Arendtian storytelling. See Sandy Yule and Jennifer Glaser: *Classroom Dialogue and the Teaching of Thinking.*
exemplified between Socrates and Lysis. Socrates’ questioning of Lysis required Socrates to stand alongside Lysis and to appreciate what Lysis’ familial relationships looked like from his own first-person experiencing of them.

We might say that while storytelling does not in itself constitute critical thinking, it describes the mode of engagement in which critical thinking takes place. Arendt distinguishes storytelling from the kind of stories we tell merely as anecdotes. In these cases we speak of experiences, but we do not speak from our experience. Anecdotes and tradition becomes a vehicle for situated critical thinking only when, through their telling, we are able to “circle around” a situation or problem illuminating it from multiple perspectives.\textsuperscript{165} When we are led to see how another’s personal experience (or interpretation of experience) contributed to their thinking of a problem, or situation, that they were addressing. That is, when it is the common inter-\textit{est}, not the person telling the story, that is under investigation.\textsuperscript{166}

\textbf{Martha Nussbaum’s Judicial Spectator}

Martha Nussbaum offers us a rich description of how storytelling may lead to the particular kind of ‘experiencing of another’s experience’ that is involved in critical thinking. We find this in Nussbaum’s metaphor of the critical thinker as judicial spectator. Like Arendt, Nussbaum seeks a concept of human flourishing that shows a “deep respect for qualitative difference” and turns to a form of imaginative spectatorship in order to characterize the unique nature of critical judgment.

For Nussbaum this spectatorial engagement is exemplified in the way we read novels. The reading process demands both “immersion and critical conversation”, it “is not only context-specific but also, when well done, comparative, evolving in

\textsuperscript{165} As Arendt notes, the academic posture assumed in lecturing hides from view the situated experiences and thoughts (stories) that triggered the development of ideas that are then communicated in a reconstructed linear form: “It is neither customary nor wise to tell an audience, and least of all a learned audience, about the incidents and stories around which the thinking process describes its circles. It is much safer to take the listener or reader along the train of thought itself, trusting to the persuasiveness inherent in the succession of connecting things, even though this succession hides as well as it preserves the original source out of which the thought process arose and from which it flew.” Quoted in Lisa Disch: \textit{Hannah Arendt and the Limits of Philosophy}, p. 3. Disch quotes it from the manuscript of a lecture delivered in 1960 by Hannah Arendt.
conversation with other readers whose perception challenges or supplements one’s own.” It is this experience of immersion and critique that forms the core of judicial spectatorship. We might say that, for Nussbaum, reading novels involves an Arendtian form of visiting. In reading we immerse ourselves in the fictional characters and their life, but do so by standing alongside them, and from this position we are able to bring judgment to bear. As with Arendt’s conception of storytelling, we might see Nussbaum’s characterization of reading as delineating a certain kind of critical reading, rather than a description of what reading entails simplicitor - it is possible to read in other ways. Critical reading establishes a three-place relation between oneself, the characters and the story on one hand; and between oneself, the story, and other readers on the other. In both cases a we is formed by virtue of a common object (a life, a book). Nussbaum’s reference to the public nature of judgment, like Arendt’s notion of public space, points toward the way critical judgments are inter-subjectively determined. It is the judicious spectator whose “judgments and responses are intended to provide a paradigm of public rationality”. The aim of judicial spectatorship is not merely to make sense of our own personal experience, but to do so in a way that:

...we can defend to others and support along with others and whom we wish to live in community.... The experience of the reader of literature shows us how to do this: by bringing our evolving sense of principle and tradition to bear on a concrete situation.

As with Gadamer, it is clear that, for Nussbaum, reading provides us with a secondary form of critical engagement, it is preparation and enrichment for

166 Indeed this might be seen to distinguish personal stories when told as anecdotes from those told in the context of a case study.
168 For instance, by remaining aloof (examining the world of the story as an object) or by fully immersing ourselves in the characters’ position - the two extremes of touring or empathy. In neither case do we participate alongside. In these cases we may not consider our reading as constituting a form of critical thinking.
169 Ibid, p. 73. (my italics).
170 Ibid, p. 84. Nussbaum says this in relation to the task of moral education, but here I am taking deliberation on moral matters as one example of critical thinking - moral education as one setting in which judicial spectatorship allows us to arrive at judgments that are personal but not subjectively valid. There is something slightly disturbing about two of Nussbaum’s assumptions: (i) that “we will naturally be most concerned with the lot of those whose position is worst” (p. 91); and (ii) that our concern is because we are conscious of the fact that we could be anyone in the novel (not just the
developing the capacity for engaging dialogically and critically in the world of politics and public life.

If we think of reading in this way, as combining one's own absorbed imagining with periods of more detached (and interactive) critical scrutiny, we can already begin to see why we might find in it an activity well suited to public reasoning in a democratic society.\textsuperscript{171}

There are further reasons why Nussbaum considers the novel particularly suited to forming a public kind of critical judgment, and we may choose to question these.\textsuperscript{172} For example, we may join Stanley Fish in questioning the way in which Nussbaum balances the moral judgments that arise out of our reading of literature against universal moral imperatives that, while not necessarily based in human essence, are based in a universal conception of the good.\textsuperscript{173} However we do not need to adjudicate on such matters here. The important thing for us is Nussbaum's description of the reading - and judging - process. It is this critical reading that I am suggesting characterizes the way critical thinkers engage with the first-person perspectivity of their dialogical partners. Furthermore, for such reading to count as a paradigm for critical thinking we will need to be able to see how the act of visiting, or judicial spectatorship opens a space for self-correction and revision in one's thinking.\textsuperscript{174}

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{171} Ibid, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{172} These further reasons for championing the novel as a vehicle for situated critical thinking are explored in ibid, pp. 6-11.
\textsuperscript{173} Ibid, p. 8. "In this way the novel constructs a paradigm of a style of ethical reasoning... in which we get potentially universalizable concrete prescriptions by bringing a general idea of human flourishing to bear on a concrete situation, which we are invited to enter through our imagination." The question is what this "general idea of human flourishing" amounts to - conditions of flourishing or a \textit{shared vision} of flourishing. Fish reads it the second way and for this reason is not ready to call Nussbaum a pluralist. He sees Nussbaum as tied foundationally to the Enlightenment project and charges her with assuming "privileged access to common or universal ethical values". I have sympathy for this reading (note her last paragraph on p. 43), but I think it is also possible to read Nussbaum the other way - where "general" simply means "from the social point of view", or inter-subjectively determined. Read the second way, her position is closer to that of Arendt. However, I do not think the stand we take on this affects the process of reading described by Nussbaum (though it may affect our judgments about her interpretation of the sympathies we will feel when reading the novels she analyses - for example, her presumption on p. 91 of how we will respond in reading \textit{Hard Times}). See Stanley Fish: \textit{There's No Such Thing as Free Speech}, pp. 43-45. In \textit{Poetic Justice} (p. 84), Martha Nussbaum fleetingly replies to Fish's charge, but not in a way that, to my mind, responds adequately to his critique.
\textsuperscript{174} This returns to the point I raised in chapter 3 in reference to Ryle's distinction between guided and unguided thinking.
For Nussbaum critical readers experience the story from two first-person positions - as characters and as spectators: "seeing the world, for a time, through their eyes and then reflecting as spectators on the meaning of what we have seen." As with Arendt, seeing the world through their eyes is not merely to experience their world as if we were them - that is, it does not merely involve empathetic engrossment. At the same time that we are imaginatively empathizing with what they think and feel (from their first-person perspective), we are also standing outside as spectator conscious of the character within their environment. This dual attentiveness modifies the kind of overall empathy we feel and in so doing opens up the possibility for critique. The empathy appropriate to critique, or inquiry is an emergent empathy that arises out of the juxtapositioning of engrossment and distance. It enables us to experience events and emotion empathetically with the character while externally assessing the character's response to their situation:

In neither case does the judicial spectator stop with the experience of the other person's pain: one must then ask, from the spectatorial viewpoint, whether that pain is appropriate to its target, whether it is such pain, or anger, or fear, as a reasonable person would feel in those circumstances. But the sense of what was really experienced is a crucial step along the way, without which any spectatorial assessment may miss the mark.

Nussbaum characterizes two features of spectatorship that are worth special note because they are also seen to be characteristics of the 'objectivity' ascribed to critical thinking - these are: (i) detachment, and (ii) enlargement of thinking.

Here we can appreciate the difference between Nussbaum's notion of objectivity and that characterized by Nagel, Paul (and others). We might see this as a difference between first-person and third-person understanding. As we noted in chapter 3, third-person accounts of detachment suggest that objectivity is attained when we understand the situation as "a situation", as if it represents the way any person in that situation would see it and judge it according to social point of view that is universal or general to Everyman. This is then contrasted to subjective first-person perspectivity. In contrast, Nussbaum provides a model of detachment that does not

---

175 Martha Nussbaum: Poetic Justice, p. 93.
176 Ibid, pp. 92-93.
dislocate it from the particularity of individuals. Detachment leads us to understand the situation as the view of a particular individual, yet to judge it from the social point of view of the whole (our self, the community, the world of the novel).

In characterizing the relation between our personal point of view and the social (inter-relational) framework of the text Nussbaum echoes Arendt in saying critical judgment requires us to leave behind that portion of our emotion “that derives from our personal interest in our own well-being”. The stance of judicial spectatorship is aimed at filtering out that portion of anger, fear, and so on that focuses on the self.

The judicial spectator... is not personally involved in the events he witnesses, although he cares about the participants as a concerned friend. He will not, therefore, have such emotions and thoughts as relate to his own personal safety and happiness; in that sense he is without bias and surveys the scene before him with a certain sort of detachment.

This detachment is not caused by taking a stance of disinterest, but is the detachment experienced in friendship - in reading we experience the pain of the character as we would the pain of a friend (or member of our community) who is suffering. We feel their pain with them, and this may constitute real pain for us, but our pain is not the same as their pain. The pain we feel emerges from imagined empathetic feeling of the pain they suffer juxtapositioned with our observation of the place of this pain in their life, and the life of those around them (which includes ourselves), as a whole. From this emerges a new understanding of their pain from “the social point of view”.

We cannot follow the novel without trying to see the world through Bigger’s [the character’s] eyes. As we do so, we take on, to at least some extent, his emotions of rage and shame. On the other hand, we are also spectators. As spectators we recognize the inappropriateness of some of his emotions to their object... This leads us as spectators to feel a further range of emotions - a deep sympathy, as I have suggested, for Bigger’s predicament, a principled anger at the structures of racism... As “judicious spectator”... the reader ... attends to the explanation of his entire life, and comes to understand the genesis of his violent character.

177 Ibid, p. 74.
178 Ibid, p. 73.
179 Ibid, p. 94.
What does this mean for the individual critical thinker engaged in thinking for him or her self? To leave self-interest behind when thinking for oneself is to be dialogically engaged in one’s own point of view as a judicious spectator. It will involve reflecting on the situation before us from both first-person positions, but now what is imagined and what is experienced is reversed. It will involve our attached experiencing of the situation while imaginatively “standing alongside” ourselves experiencing the same situation from another first-person view. But this is not to take on the “meta-cognitive” role of tutor and tutored, whereby my primary self engages in the situation (or constructs the argument) while my secondary self observes the primary self (evaluates the argument of the primary self). Rather, it is I, as one self, who is attentive to the situation, only what it means to be attentive to it is to attend to it with an enlarged consciousness. That is, it is the situation before me that I am experiencing from an inter-relational perspective (the social point of view). As imaginative spectator I become aware of the way self-interest manifests itself in my own perspectivity and ask “is this judgment warranted?” It is this participation as attached participant and first-person visitor (or intra-relationally, bringing different ends to bear on the situation) that gives rise to a supervening sense of the situation from the ‘social’ point of view. This is not the standard account of critical thinking as meta-cognitive practice, or “thinking about our thinking”.\footnote{The standard account corresponds to Sellars’ third case of sharing in an intention, whereby I experience X and you experience me experiencing it. For example, in the account of critical thinking offered by Paul.} This imaginative detachment does not objectify our view (as in Nagel), nor does it involve us in bringing universal judgment to bear on personal points of view (as in Paul), but rather modifies the judging process itself by opening it to intra-subjective critique. It is to treat oneself as a friend.

Summary

At the beginning of this chapter I noted that a pluralist account of critical thinking seeks to establish viable ranges of possibility out of which particular expressions of logos (particular to individuals and communities) may be realized. We noted that accepting such a pluralist stance involves accepting that the way we go about our reasoning may itself take plural forms. We also noted that such differences may
potentially be irreducible, reflecting systematic and methodological differences as well as differences of ends.

We then turned to explore the unity of the emergent sense of self and of community that enabled us to think together across such plurality. This exploration suggested that unity within inquiry may be characterized by a three way relation of solidarity between individuals and a common intending (to solve a problem, to explore meaning) - an understanding of critical thinking that is intimately bound with first-person attached perspectivity. Here I suggested three dimensions of inquiry that were critical to our capacity to think together as a unified whole. These were: (i) inter-subjective, or shared, intentionality with its emergent sense of unity, reciprocity and simultaneity; (ii) the dynamic inter-relationship between personal and social points of view (with the resulting interplay between subjective and inter-subjective imperatives); and (iii) an imaginative three-way engagement with another's first-person perspectivity characterized by "visiting" or "judicial spectatorship".

While we have noted that pluralism concerns both plurality and limits, to this point we have primarily been exploring the implications of plurality. In the next chapter I need to clarify the issue of limits within critical thinking. I need to establish what is meant by the pluralist claim that there are context-independent means to evaluate another's claims, and we need to determine how such context-independence is grounded. Our discussion of subjective and inter-subjective intentionality leaves us well prepared to do this.
To be treated as... an instrument of the purposes of other men... is intolerable for a man who is conscious of his own potential as a self-determining agent...

R.S. Peters

...an adequate philosophical account of reason must not explain away ethical facts, but enable us to understand how they can be facts, and how we can know them.

Hilary Putnam

CHAPTER 6

Critical Thinking in Pluralistic Communities

(II) Limits

Avoiding Self-Defeat

At the beginning of chapter 5 I noted that within a pluralist model of critical thinking context-independent criteria, values or standards establish the means by which ranges of possibility are judged as viable. Such context-independent means enable us to judge whether a reason counts as a reason (even while not being a reason for me), or whether a certain kind of thinking counts as a viable instance of critical thinking.

Following on our discussion of intentionality, we may now approach the question of limits or constraints within complex wholes not as a question of what is viable for parts, but as a question of what is viable from the perspective of the whole; that is, from the social or inter-relational point of view. Such limits will be context-independent not because they are postulated separate from individual contexts (idealized or abstracted from our particularity), nor because they are shared in common across contexts, but because they supervene on relations between contexts. Here we need to keep in mind the sense of supervenience developed in

---

1 R.S. Peters: Ethics and Education, p. 213.
2 Hilary Putnam: "The Place of Facts in a World of Values" in Realism with a Human Face, p. 162.
chapters 4 and 5, whereby supervening limits or constraints arise out of the dynamic relationship between part and part, and between part and emerging whole.

It seems to me that for dialogical relationships - and indeed for complex wholes generally - we might consider the foundational criteria for viability as the avoidance of self-defeat. In the case of complex wholes, the conditions which set the ground for self-defeat will be those emergent conditions which negate the possibility of inter-relationship between parts. Without such inter-relationship, the one of dialogical activity breaks into two; there can be no joint action.

Paradigmatic examples of such conditions might be seen to be: (i) contradiction, (ii) rejection, (iii) indifference, and (iv) antipathy or contempt. Contradiction destroys intelligibility and with it the possibility of communication; rejection negates the will to engage with another; indifference suggests that inter-relationship does not matter to us; whereas contempt or antipathy suggests that one sees no value in the other (and consequently, no value in establishing a relationship with the other). Conversely, the contrastive opposites of these conditions, namely; (i) non-contradiction, (ii) trust, (iii) care and (iv) respect, may be regarded quintessentially as conditions of inter-relationship. Indeed these four conditions can be seen to underlie the possibility, and viability, of all forms of dialogical action.

Yet in grounding the viability of dialogical inquiry in the avoidance of self-defeat in this generic sense, we still need to determine how the specific conditions of inquiry differ from the conditions that underlie other forms of dialogical activity (e.g.; dancing, playing music together, living in a community, etc.). Here we need to keep in mind that in the case of shared intentionality it is the common object around which us is formed that determines the limits to inter-relationship. We noted this in our discussion of Gadamer in chapter 3 and in our discussion of Sellars in chapter 5.
Epistemic Self-Defeat

While the constraints of inquiry will share much in common with constraints arising in other forms of dialogical action (for they are all sustained by relations between persons), the particular kind of relationship and flourishing we seek to realize in critical thinking is epistemological. It is for the sake of logos that we regard one another as friends. In order to establish the particular constraints on viability within critical thinking, we will need to understand what it means for the conditions of non-contradiction, trust, care, and respect to be seen as epistemological conditions (rather than as political, or aesthetic ones); conditions that establish boundaries on the range of ways in which we may seek to avoid self-defeat as seekers of truth and meaning.\(^4\) Such constraints will be incumbent on us relative to the emergent context of the whole; they are constraints implied by seeing others as one of us inquirers. Furthermore, by viewing individuals internally as dialogical rather than as monological units, the inter-relational constraints on inquiry will be constraints on the complex whole of individual subjects and communities in the same way.

Importantly, this does not exclude the importance of attending to one another’s flourishing as individuals, nor deny that individual accounts of what it is for truth to flourish will help shape the way the community gives expression to the constraints on inquiry. Rather, it attends to these dimensions as aspects of what it means for us to engage in inquiry together.\(^5\) We attend to one another’s individual flourishing by virtue of seeing them as one of us inquirers. Constraints that establish the boundaries of viability or flourishing will refer back to a single communal subject (we inquirers) and project forward onto a singular collective object (our inquiry).\(^6\)

---

\(^3\) This is also suggested by others, such as Kekes, though he is talking of moral rather than epistemological self-defeat. See John Kekes: The Morality of Pluralism, p. 98.

\(^4\) Clearly, epistemological self-defeat does not account for all sources of self-defeat; for example, there are also biological, psychological, and cultural forms of self-defeat. Yet it seems to me that in each of these cases, too, a lack of integration (or the possibility of inter-relationship) leads to a fragmentation of self. Lorraine Code describes a case of epistemological self-defeat in her account of a Catholic biologist in the late 1800s who, as a biologist, accepted Darwin’s theories, but as a Catholic rejected them. See “Father and Son” in Epistemic Responsibility, pp. 17-36.

\(^5\) I explored this earlier in relation to the personal and social (or inter-subjective) forms of respect.

\(^6\) This was the point I emphasized regarding the importance of Sellars’ distinction between personal and social points of view, and again in Carr’s notion of the community as a collective subject.
This is to offer a different account of limits to viability in theories of moral pluralism where the self is viewed monologically (as a simple whole) and communities dialogically (as a complex whole). For Taylor and Kekes, certain moral obligations fall on individual subjects because we could not live together with others without them - and without relationship to others, our own lives would not be viable. In contrast, on my account obligations act as constraints on individual subjects because we could not live with ourselves without them (as individuals or as communities) - and without relationship within ourselves, the subject (as a singular I or a plural we) would not be viable as a whole. This is to affirm a Platonic, rather than Aristotelian, paradigm. For Aristotle a friend is analogous to oneself (a friend is another essential one), whereas for Plato the self contains friendship (a relation between two). Building on our discussion of Sellars, we might say that the respect (trust, etc.) we show one another in communities of inquiry will not be respect shown by members toward one another as other selves just like us, but may be characterized as self-respect of a plural subject toward parts - it will be a respect we offer others as members of the single inquiring community.

Again, this is to place our obligations toward the flourishing of the other within a certain intentional context. It is to see the obligations that fall on us in inquiry as directed toward the flourishing of our dialogical partners as co-inquirers seeking to establish truth and meaning together, rather than as an obligation toward their biological, moral, or aesthetic flourishing per se. Even when our search for knowledge leads us to seek to realize different ends, these ends will be seen as expressive of the range of possibilities for us. This is, I think, what is implied in the pluralist claim that completing another’s lack - aiding others to flourish as

---

7 In particular, see Taylor: “The importance of dialogical action in human life shows the utter inadequacy of the monological subject of representations which emerges from the epistemological tradition. We can’t understand human life merely in terms of individual subjects, who frame representations about and respond to others, because a great deal of human action only happens insofar as the agent understands and constitutes himself as integral part of a ‘we’.” Charles Taylor: “The Dialogical Self” in Rethinking Knowledge, eds. Goodman, R., and Fisher, W., p. 63. While Taylor argues that the relation between self and other should be characterized dialogically, he does not apply this reflexively to the individual. He continues to view the individual subject as a simple whole; he is part of a we but not himself a we.

8 See Hannah Arendt: The Life of the Mind: Thinking, pp. 179-192. The notion of regard for others as other selves like us can be identified in much contemporary moral theory that might be seen as Neo-Aristotelian (including Kekes, Nussbaum and Noddings).
autonomous knowers - at the same time gives expression to who we are as one community of inquiry together.

**Limits as Moral Virtues**

In “Social morality and the Individual ideal” Strawson makes a distinction between ethical and moral domains that may help us clarify the types of context-independent criteria that ground critical thinking (or dialogical inquiry). For Strawson ethical principles are principles which matter in themselves, they are visionary and reflect our values, whereas moral principles are a “kind of public convenience”, they establish the conditions for everything that matters but do not matter in themselves. Sellars’ construction of the moral domain is similar to Strawson’s in that inter-subjectivity establishes the conditions for the flourishing of things that matter (truth, persons), rather than being valuable in its own right.

Strawson’s distinction between things that matter (ends) and constraints that establish the conditions for things that matter (means), and the identification of these with private and public realms, is an important one for the way we see limits within inquiry grounded. In particular, it is important because of the way in which this alignment of ends and means with private and public spheres can be seen to break down on a pluralist model of complex wholes. We can illustrate this through a discussion of trust.

For Strawson we might consider trust to be a necessary condition for dialogical inquiry on two independent (but not necessarily mutually exclusive) grounds; we might see trust as an ethical requirement or as a moral principle. In the first case, we ground the constraint of trust in our own values. Here my feeling of obligation to trust other people reflects my own vision of what it is to flourish. In this case, asserting trust as a constraint on critical thinking is to assert something about the way I ought to relate to other people as I engage in inquiry with them. In the second case the requirement of trust is grounded in our theory of interpretation - trust is a

---

Strawson makes more use of this distinction than I point to here - namely, in regard to the multiple
necessary condition for communication (and thus the examination of alternate points of view) but not valuable in itself (i.e.; Donald Davidson’s sense of trust).\textsuperscript{10}

Yet, if we view individuals and communities holistically as complex wholes - as multiple overlapping domains of one of us - Strawson’s alignment of the individual domain with \textit{ends} and the alignment of the social domain with \textit{means} breaks down. Given the inter-dependence between parts, and between part and whole, and given that parts themselves may also constitute autonomous ends, it is no longer clear that the conditions that enable me (or the community) to flourish are not to be valued in themselves as constitutive of who \textit{I} am (or \textit{we} are). On this account, the inter-relational domain is not merely a matter of public convenience but a domain of values - a domain of \textit{moral virtues} rather than moral principles. In the case of moral virtue, the constraint of trust in critical thinking is grounded in our conception of inquiry as a form of dialogical action. Here trust is considered a necessary condition for dialogical inquiry and for the flourishing of the whole (we) as an end in itself. Such trust is seen as a relational value, worthy in its own right.

A community may claim trust as a context-independent criteria for dialogical inquiry by appealing to each of these three alternatives, but what is meant by context-independence will be different in each case. (i) If we see trust as an ethical constraint, trust will be regarded as context-independent if we regard it as central to all human visions of what it is to flourish. In such cases it will be \textit{common} to all contexts - we will expect to find it expressed in some form within \textit{all} societies irrespective of cultural differences (indeed this is John Kekes position). (ii) If we see trust as a moral principle, trust will be considered independent of particular contexts because it is a tool that we adopt in order to compare contexts - we might say it is

\begin{footnotesize}
visions of flourishing that individuals and societies contain. I have referred to the plurality of our visions for ourselves elsewhere in this chapter with reference to Strawson.

\textsuperscript{10} Donald Davidson: “On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme” in \textit{Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation}. I take adopting Davidson’s \textit{principle of charity} as adopting an epistemic stance of trust. Here we need to be careful concerning whether we see trust as an epistemic or a moral principle. For Davidson, the principle of charity is an epistemological principle by which we assume others make sense and treat them as if they do. However, this stance also fits Strawson’s characterization of a moral principle (for here it establishes the \textit{conditions for the things that matter - truth and meaning}). Thus, I take Davidson’s principle also counting as a moral principle on Strawson’s understanding of \textit{moral}.
\end{footnotesize}
extra-contextual. (iii) If we see trust as a moral virtue, then trust is context-independent because it supervenes on the relationship between contexts. Here, trust will be regarded both as a means (a condition for establishing relationship between contexts) and something that matters - an end - because it is a constitutive part of a larger whole (us) that is itself regarded as something that matters.

Ethical and Moral Constraints in Critical Thinking

Indeed, according to the account of complex wholes that I have developed, critical thinking will be expressive of both ethical and moral value. The constraints of critical thinking will be ethical constraints in as much as they are linked to the subject as a thing of value and seen as integral to our flourishing as autonomous ends. The constraints of critical thinking will be considered moral virtues in as much as they are integral to our flourishing as a community together with others. In suggesting that the context-independent conditions of critical thinking may be seen as moral virtues I am suggesting that conditions of trust, respect, care and non-contradiction in critical thinking may be regarded as a means but not merely as a means. ¹¹

Importantly, this is not to see two sources of value - and ethics as distinct from moral virtue - rather, it is merely to characterize complex wholes as ends from two perspectives - from the perspective of parts and from the perspective of the whole. ¹²

We might say that critical thinking in pluralistic communities of inquiry will require us to relate not only toward the other as an end but with the other as expressive of an end together. It will require not only Buber or Gadamer’s sense of relating to the Other as a Thou, but an Arendtian standing-alongside another as we give expression to a Thou together. In pluralistic communities, conditions of trust, respect, care and non-contradiction will be necessary at both levels if we are to flourish as autonomous members of a single community together. ¹³

¹¹ The notion of treating something as an end and not merely as a means is introduced by various commentators on Kant in relation to treatment of persons as ends-in-themselves. To regard people as ends and not merely as means does not preclude the possibility of also regarding them as means to a further end. So, too, with the constraints on inquiry. Non-contradiction and trust, etc., are still means to an end (technē), but on my account they are not merely this - they are also things of value.

¹² In chapter 5 I described this as viewing complex wholes intra-relationally and inter-relationally.

¹³ That is, in critical thinking, care, non-contradiction, trust, and respect toward others will reflexively be expressed as self-care, self-trust, non-contradiction, and self-respect (for me or us).
Reasonableness as a Virtue

Given that the complex whole of one of us constitutes multiple overlapping domains, we might see the enlarged perspective achieved in critical thinking resulting from the juxtapositioning of perspectives across different domains (the juxtaposition of I and we, or we and you, or I and you). Indeed it is this juxtapositioning between parts and whole that I think is best characterized in the concept of reasonableness. Here, we might see reasonableness itself as an emergent virtue that arises out of our attentiveness to the relationship between individual and collective perspectives within a complex whole. This captures both the social nature of reasonableness and the way that reasonableness requires us to re-evaluate multiple aspects (reasons, ends, etc.) in light of the one another. Indeed it was this kind of attentiveness that we characterized in our account of judicial spectatorship and visiting. It is a connection Michael Pritchard notes in his observation that: “It is precisely the combination of children’s capacities to empathize and engage in reasoned thought that constitutes their potential for reasonableness.14

When we add to this understanding a conception of our autonomy as complex wholes (our uniqueness as individuals and communities), we begin to appreciate the implicit tension that will be integral to any pluralistic conception of complex wholes (including dialogical inquiry); a tension created through the juxtaposition of intractable ends that, nevertheless, are constitutive of us. It is this tension between realizing who we are as autonomous individuals and who we are as a single community that establishes the connection between critical thinking and reasonableness as a virtue. Laurance Splitter and Ann Sharp point to the social and valuative dimensions of critical thinking when they state:

Reasonableness is primarily a social disposition: the reasonable person respects others and is prepared to take into account their views and their feelings, to the extent of changing her own mind about issues of significance, and consciously allowing her own perspective to be changed by others. She is, in other words, willing to be reasoned with....

reasonableness is related, in important ways, to such concepts as (good) thinking, meaning, care, judgment, and personhood.\textsuperscript{15}

Here we are directed toward two dimensions of reasonableness - one to do with the relationship toward the other with whom we reason, and the other to do with our relationship toward contents of knowledge. This brings to mind the two modes of attentiveness in critical thinking we explored in chapter 3. On this account reasonable people (i) respect one another, and (ii) they are prepared to re-assess knowledge in light of the whole rather than arrive at judgments solely in light of our own ends.

**Epistemic Reasonableness**

What does this mean in relation to the pursuit of knowledge? Interestingly, the quote from Splinter and Sharp points to the *epistemic character* of the reasonableness critical thinkers show toward one another in inquiry. We might say that epistemic reasonableness requires us not only to juxtapose multiple ends, but to juxtapose part to whole regarding what we know as we critically think through an issue together. Such reasonableness will not only result in self-correction, but will involve such judgments as: determining when the reasons we have been offered count as enough reasons; determining when we are warranted in endorsing a position as justified; deciding when we have taken enough of the situation into account, judging when sufficient alternate viewpoints have been explored; and judging when we have arrived at the degree of precision in our thinking that a particular situation requires (etc.). It will involve our awareness that while all aspects of an issue may not have been resolved, we are confident enough in our assessment of a claim to make a judgment and move forward in our thinking.\textsuperscript{16}

Viewed this way, the lists of critical dispositions we noted in chapter 1 (lists associated with critical thinking theorists such as Robert Ennis) might better be considered in terms of a general constraint of epistemic reasonableness on critical thinking rather than as an indeterminate set of distinct dispositions, each of which a

\textsuperscript{15} Laurance Splinter and Ann Sharp: *Teaching for Better Thinking*, p. 6. See also Michael Pritchard: *Reasonable Children*, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{16} These items are among Ennis' list of dispositions in critical thinking. See Appendix A.
critical thinker is meant to ideally manifest. Such judgments - judgments concerning the reasonable parameters of inquiry - establish limits on the range of perspectives and considerations that can be brought to bear on our claims to know.

This kind of reasonableness (expressed by a whole toward its own plurality) also enables us to reflexively speak of the reasonableness of an individual’s judgment when thinking for themselves. Here, reasonableness does not require we take into account the multiple ends of other subjects, but that we take into account the plurality of our own ends. Indeed when we say someone is being unreasonable on themselves, this is often what we have in mind. What we mean is that they are not being balanced in their judgment; they are not judging particular demands in light of who they are as a whole (in light of the plurality of goals, demands, situations or limitations overall). This allows us to see how the marooned sailor may not only act rationally but also reasonably when living on his otherwise deserted island.

Importantly, such judgments enable inquiry to proceed by cutting short the infinite regress of arguments or (in a forward direction) the endless pursuit of further considerations. It also suggest how it is that we are able to develop commitments while recognizing their contingency. However, while this illuminates one way reasonableness serves as a means to an end (establishing knowledge), we need to be careful not to see epistemic reasonableness merely a means; merely as a matter of practical efficacy. We can understand why practical efficacy is not enough when we look at what it means to see the willingness to change one’s mind as an epistemological strength and not as a weakness.

---

17 Such judgments will be sensitive to context. As I noted in the discussion of dispositions in chapter 2, this suggests we look to specific situations to develop a general understanding of reasonableness, rather than generalizing what it is to have the disposition and then looking for its instantiation. This is in keeping with Arendt and Nussbaum’s notion that we can only arrive at the general by attending to particularity.

18 Out of all those perspectives and considerations available to us collectively through our traditions, cultures and experience.

19 This kind of reasonableness toward oneself is connected to self-esteem. Lago notes: “...if self-esteem is to be genuine, it must be founded in self-knowledge, in the discovery of one’s limitations and capabilities. Only if we know who we are now and what we are capable of can we know what we might become...” See Juan Carlos Lago: “The Community of Inquiry and the Development of Self-Esteem” in Thinking, vol. 9, no. 1, 1991. p. 13.
Changing one’s Mind

It seems to me that changing one’s mind may be seen as an epistemic strength (something of value) if we see it as integral to ‘something that matters’; an integral component of critical thinking as a search for logos. This contrasts with seeing changing one’s mind as an efficacious means of negotiating between things that matter (a utilitarian sense), or as a preparedness to fit in with the group (a conformist sense). If reasonableness is viewed merely as a means, then the command “Be reasonable!” represents our desire for members of the group to be prepared to compromise their own flourishing for the sake of the flourishing of the group. In this regard, the preparedness to change one’s mind will be seen as a pragmatic requirement needed in light of our differences and represents a less than ideal situation. Ideally, we would either all be able to pursue our own ends with no clash of interests (and therefore have no need to compromise), or we would all been in agreement (thereby having no differences to negotiate between).

While each of these cases requires us to consider our own flourishing in relation to the flourishing of others, only when changing one’s mind is seen as an integral aspect of what it is to flourish together will reasonableness be seen to constitute principled judgment. Here changing one’s mind does not reflect a willingness to relinquish principles in order to reach a position of compromise, but requires us to reinterpret the situation (the whole) in light of the multiple principles that we bring to bear on it. Such reasonableness recognizes the flourishing of individuals and the flourishing of a pluralist community as aspects of the one flourishing. Here, reasonableness may still require compromise when it comes to joint action, but the judgment is made holistically. “Being reasonable” will involve us in a process of hermeneutic reappraisal whereby we come to appreciate what it is for us to flourish as ourselves as part of a community we value. Faced with ends that cannot all be realized, we will judge the viability of possibilities in light of one another and in light of the ends we

---

20 I explore this further in the section on respect.
21 Where logos is understood as truth that finds expression in the word spoken between us (in accordance with chapters 3, 4 and 5).
22 A preparedness to forfeit our own commitments - the totalizing force of community when agreement is valued as the only form of unity. I return to this later when I explore the “dark side” or “totalizing force” of community as Noddings and Arendt speak of it.
23 I discussed this kind of compromise in relation to Strawson and Arendt regarding pluralistic selves.
seek to realize together, and we do this from the social point of view because we see us (singularly and as communities) as something that matters.\textsuperscript{24}

Indeed in being attentive to the situation it may not be my decisions that change when I change my mind, but my judgment concerning the reasonable parameters of the inquiry. In speaking with a group of loggers about the decision to open native forest for logging I continue to believe such action to be ecologically unsound, but through the process of inquiry I may come to a new appreciation of the complexity of the issue and change my mind concerning whether the grounds of the loggers' claims fit within the parameters of things to be taken into account within the inquiry.\textsuperscript{25}

On such a view, the truth of propositions will be seen relative to the domain which has been marked out by the boundaries (the reasonable limits) we have placed on the inquiry as we have gone along; boundaries that reflect not only our individual understanding, but our traditions of argumentation and our language. As these boundaries themselves change (for instance, by our encounter with the loggers), so too will our own judgment concerning the reasonable boundaries of the debate and the shape of the inquiry overall.\textsuperscript{26}

The challenge posed by a virtues conception of reasonableness is that it requires us to enter inquiry from the social point of view and accept as a value the dynamic tension implicit in balancing individual ends with the communal good. It requires us (i) not merely to tolerate compromise, but to value the constraining of personal ends (our own included) in order that relationships within the community may flourish, and (ii) to value the constraining of communal goals in order to enable individuals to realize their autonomous ends.

\textsuperscript{24} Faced with deciding between a jail sentence and community service for a juvenile offender we will judge what is reasonable in light of good of the community (a community in which the offender is as a member), rather than what is a reasonable compromise between legal representations.

\textsuperscript{25} This returns to an example I introduced in chapter 3.

\textsuperscript{26} This revisits an example I explored in chapter 3. There my concern was with attached conversation and developing common-ground understanding, here I am concerned with how the differences in the way we demarcate reasonable limits to the inquiry alter our addressing of a question.
In the process of dialogical inquiry, this will require us to willingly constrain the direction of our own thinking in order to attend to the thinking of others, and to value doing so even in situations when their interests may not capture the issue we find most pressing. It will also require us to constrain the divergence of inquiry (a divergence brought about through attending to individual interests) in order to pursue a single line of inquiry together. Epistemically it requires us not only to value the possibility that our truth may only be a truth and may require modification in light of other possibilities, but also to see the limits that we place on the parameters of our inquiry together as a valuable shaping of our search for knowledge as individuals.\textsuperscript{27}

**Respect in Critical Thinking: Epistemic and Moral**

Earlier we noted that reasonableness implies that we show respect toward others with whom we reason.\textsuperscript{28} But how should we understand this respect? On a surface level it seems to point to a respect for persons simplicitor - of course we show respect in inquiry because critical thinkers are the sort of people who know that everyone is valuable. This response takes us back to our argument concerning reasonableness in chapter 2. There, in arguing against the utilitarian claim that rational people can be unreasonable, I suggested that Sibley’s mistake lay in the assumption that our individual interests can stand independently of the community to which we belong. In chapter 2 I argued this by reference to the general dialogical character of selves. This kind of respect is a respect shown toward others as speaking subjects and will underpin all forms of dialogical action (including critical thinking).

The problem is that this explanation does not point to the particular *epistemic character* of the respectfulness that is required of us in inquiry. Earlier we noted two points concerning the structure of respect within complex wholes: (i) that the kind of respect that acts as a constraint on individual subjects (*I* and *we*) may be characterized as *self-respect.*\textsuperscript{29} This will be the respect of a plural subject (us

\textsuperscript{27} Educationally, this is experienced as a tension in establishing communities of inquiry in the classroom. Students may consider the pursuit of another’s interests as boring and irrelevant to their own inquiry, while at the same time valuing the diversity of views being offered. Yet despite its difficulty, it seems to me that negotiating this tension is an important exercise in educating for reasonableness.

\textsuperscript{28} We noted this in the quote from Splitter and Sharp.

\textsuperscript{29} We noted this in the section on establishing limits.
inquirers) toward itself, and (ii) that the intentional object determines the appropriate form such constraints will take. In this case, the object is our inquiry, and the respect will be for one another as fellow inquirers. Yet what is it about inquiry that will determine the parameters of the way respect can be shown? For example, what determines whether we should regard thinking about what someone else says as a way of showing them respect? What is it that we are being respectful of?

Here we need to recall the tension implicit to pluralistic complex wholes; a tension between plurality and commitment. In inquiry this tension is felt epistemologically as a tension between (i) the contingency of our claims to truth and meaning, and (ii) the need to commit ourselves to that knowledge if we are to use it as the premise on which to build further inferences. This tension is twofold and might be characterized as the ironic stance of the pluralist; a tension created by our recognition that any claim to know will only express one of the many things that could be said, now, in this situation; and the tension created by our recognition that in other circumstances we may have committed ourselves to other truths (or developed alternate meanings) which are equally viable.

This points to the connection between critical thinking and our autonomy. In a world of contingency and plurality, committing myself to the truth of a proposition, to say “I know”, requires an assertion of autonomous will, it requires me to engage in the active construction of knowledge not merely to imbibe it, nor algorithmically calculate it (though these too will play a role in our coming to know). As we mentioned earlier, this does not mean we construct knowledge ex nihilo - construction will occur from within traditions and in light of the constraints of language.

We might feel the tension implicit to plurality when, faced with a problem, someone asks us: “Given X, what is the answer?”. Here the tension might be felt between our desire to assert “Given X, Y is the answer!” and our knowledge of the contingency of our response, an awareness that leads us to want to say: “If we accept X is true, then Y is the answer.”, or “If we accept X, it could be Y, but then if we counted this other
factor too, it could be Z”. In the first case, examples of accepting X as true might be: “if we accept that science is done this way...”; or “if we accept that greed is a bad thing...”; or “if we accept that global warming is really happening...”. In the second case, committing ourselves to Y requires that we make a judgment concerning the parameters in which the question may be answered. In both cases, to assert un provisionally “Y is true” requires us to commit ourselves to a determination of knowledge in the face of contingencies. This does not mean that we can choose to assert anything as true (for truth is inter-subjectively determined), nor that all that we take to be true is that which we have personally chosen to affirm (for we assimilate truths through our culture and traditions). But in as much as we do epistemologically commit ourselves through asserting a proposition as true we express our autonomy as thinkers.

Faced with plural possibilities, we are called upon to make a judgment. Such judgment requires that we assert our will by participating in the construction of knowledge. For Arendt, this tension was felt both in the act of promising (implicit in speech) and in the public assertion of truth claims. This is, I think, Arendt’s point in her discussion of Kant’s example of rising from the chair - we need to see rising from the chair as an act of the will (as initiation rather than part of an existing series) if it is to count as action (as determining the truth, determining who we are).³⁰

How does this discussion help us to respond to the question of the epistemological nature of respect in critical thinking? What is it we are being respectful of? It seems to me that the kind of respect that acts as a constraint on inquiry is not grounded in our valuing others for their thoughts (for we may still respect them even when we passionately disagree with their thinking and see no value in their epistemological commitments), nor is it grounded in valuing some underlying human or rational essence. Rather, it is to see our respect for fellow inquirers grounded in our valuing of them as people who choose to assert their autonomy as thinkers, to engage in self-determination (as I and we) as they engage with questions of truth and meaning.

³⁰ I explored Kant’s example and Arendt’s interpretation of it in chapter 3.
together. Again, we can see this illustrated in Plato's Dialogues through the tension that is created when the will to construct knowledge is found lacking - either when Socrates' dialogical partners lack the will to seek the truth, or when they lack the will to engage with him as fellow inquirers.

Self-Respect and the Respect of Others as Ends
This notion of choice - of choosing to assert ourselves as thinkers - takes us back to our comments in chapter 2 concerning critical dispositions. There I suggested that we think of critical dispositions in the free-will sense of choosing to attend to our thinking in a certain way and that this reflects not a disposition but a judgment. To respect you as a critical thinker is to respect your choice to participate in the construction of knowledge and your motivation to do so. It is to respect your choice to treat yourself as an end, capable of generating logos, and not merely as a means serving the path of knowing that others have initiated. It is this respect for oneself (as an individual and as a group) that leads us to avoid epistemic self-defeat and to regard contradiction (both within ourselves and amongst us) as a threat to our own integrity.

It is this sense of our own capacity to be initiators of action that I think links autonomy with self-respect and self-esteem. We can see this underlying both (i) the anecdotal links made between students' participation in dialogical inquiry and their raised self-esteem and self-respect, and (ii) in research studies that explore the effect of collaboration and inquiry on self-esteem and student respect for one another. In

---

31 For instance, in Euthydemos (a lack of respect between Socrates and the Sophists) and in Gorgias (where Callicles accused Socrates of Sophistry - seeking to defeat his dialogical partner rather than seek truth, and shows great ambivalence toward him as fellow inquirer).

32 That is, to engage in knowing as an activity - as initiating something new - not merely completing "part of a series" where what you count to be true is accepted as the result of other's construction of knowledge rather than one's own. This shows how Arendt's conception of thinking is connected to her understanding of totalitarianism as a system that is only possible in the absence of thinking (absence of dialogical thought, or thinking for oneself).

both cases student participation in communities of inquiry is seen to raise self-esteem as students begin to see themselves as inquirers, as people who are capable of engaging in reasoned judgment for themselves as they reason together with others.

This discussion of critical thinkers as people who choose to engage in the construction of knowledge leaves us well prepared to explore in what way persons are taken as ends on this model. What our discussion shows us is the way in which the capacity for self-determination (as I and we) enables us to treat ourselves as ends without recourse to human essence. Such an account is necessary if we are to respond to Rorty’s critique that solidarity is not possible without foundationalism, without some version of human essence (a position I have repeatedly rejected).

**Hannah Arendt on Being an End in Oneself**

Arendt’s notion of being an end corresponds to a particular interpretation of Kant’s categorical imperative to treat persons as ends not merely as a means. Arendt suggests that it is not our existence as moral beings which makes us an end but our choice to adopt a certain moral code and live by it - a choice we make in freedom to be a certain kind of person. Such an understanding gives support to the portrait of a critical thinker as someone whose very capacity to engage in reasoning is contingent upon their inter-dependence with other reasoners, and yet whose reasoning can be characterized as autonomous, an activity in which they think for themselves.

As we have noted, for Arendt we are initiators, or ends in our ourselves, in as much as we are self-determining regarding the mode of life we choose to lead. This is reminiscent of Taylor’s comments concerning choosing our moral orientation - we establish projects, engage in strong evaluations and adopt rules to live by, both as individuals and as members of groups. Our autonomy then lies in our capacity to legislate laws for ourselves, to determine the way we ought to live our own lives. In *Treating Persons as Ends* Ping-Cheung Lo suggests a weak interpretation of the categorical imperative which is consistent with Arendt’s notion of persons as ends. Lo argues that the intrinsic worth of persons lies in their autonomy to adopt principles and rules which the self then states as imperatives.
... the idea of the autonomy of the will does not imply that the will is the author, inventor or creator of the practical rule. The will only adopts a rule, because after rational deliberation, it recognizes that a certain rule is the most befitting one, and therefore accepts it to have binding force (practical necessity) on itself. It then prescribes the rule in the form of an imperative.  

As critical thinkers, the principles and rules we adopt for ourselves as imperatives will be those that prevent epistemological self-defeat. This will make the constraints normative, but normative over the domain of one of us who choose to engage in inquiry together - who choose to live a life of reason with others. 

Arendt is careful to distinguish between the human condition and human nature. For Arendt, the generative capacity of persons (in which we choose to assert ourselves as thinkers) is reflective of the conditions of human life on this planet rather than a reflection of human essence. To describe our nature or essence is to describe “what” we are, while describing the conditions of human existence is to point to the contingent boundaries which give shape to our existence.  

We could live without principled judgments, but such a life would be a life without the pursuit of knowledge, one in which we would be incapable of expressing freedom and incapable of self-determination. Without dialogical engagement in thinking, we would lack a self. Judging in freedom then, is not to judge free of constraints, but to  

---

34 Ping-Cheung Lo: *Treating Persons as Ends*, p. 157. For Lo, the autonomy of the will lies in our ability to make evaluative distinctions. Autonomy lies in our ability to initiate laws, where initiation does not commit one to inventing or creating the law, just declaring, or proclaiming it. One creates the obligation to follow the law, but not the law itself. One creates the obligation by seeing it as valuable for us.  


36 See ibid, pp. 1-21. A condition that, for Arendt, is bounded by plurality, solidarity, earthiness, and temporality (the worlds of past and future) in which self-determination takes place. While we have discussed Arendt’s concept of plurality and solidarity, I have not discussed these other conditions per se. This limits our understanding of Arendt, however a greater exploration of these categories goes beyond the scope of this thesis. I have chosen to primarily focus on the inter-connections between aspects of her theory and how they point to a defense of a pluralistic concept of solidarity, and the moral nature of dialogical action. Temporality is another concept that links Arendt’s general framework to reasoning. Paul Ricoeur explores the “temporal condition of man” in relation to *The Human Condition* in “Action, Story and History: On Re-Reading *The Human Condition*” (in *Salmagundi*, no. 60, 1983. pp. 61-71). In particular, his analysis of Arendt’s connection of story provides a strong link between my discussion of narrative in chapter 2 and Arendt’s theory. While this is worth mentioning, I have not explored it further as it does not directly address the current issue.
see one’s thinking (one’s reasoning) as one’s own creation. It is to judge in relation to ourselves (with ourselves) about something.\(^{37}\)

Importantly, it is this sense of valuing of the other as someone who acts in freedom, and who thereby is self-determining, that is implicated in Arendt’s notion of visiting. In relation to Arendt’s study of Rahel Varnhagen, Elizabeth Minnich remarks:

> she wanted to think with Rahel, and neither as or about her... she chose not to think about Rahel, because of her conviction that to turn a subject, and individual, into an object violates the freedom that only makes sense for subjects - for people not things...\(^{38}\)

In speaking with you I address you as a subject who is able to act in freedom, and therefore acknowledge you as an end in yourself rather than means to an end (of mine). For Arendt, however, this freedom or autonomy is not solipsistic but one that is fundamentally dialogical, based in our will for inter-relationship. Autonomy consists in our freedom to choose our commitments, including our commitment to be counted as one of us, and thereby to become obligated toward others. The condition of persons as ends places upon us a moral obligation to engage with others in a particular way.

**Solidarity without Essence: Responding to Rorty’s Challenge**

By linking human action to the human condition of self-determination rather than human nature (or essence) Arendt suggests an account of solidarity that stands up to anti-foundationalist critiques such as that of Richard Rorty. Rorty describes the foundationalist position as one in which: “what we mean by ‘human solidarity’ is to say that there is something in within each of us - our essential humanity - which resonates to the presence of this same thing in other human beings...”.\(^{39}\) He then goes on to state that philosophers who deny human essence are unable to invoke this unilateral idea of solidarity:

\(^{37}\) This takes us back to my comments in chapter 4 concerning Plato’s *Hippias Major* and Arendt’s comments concerning the dialogical nature of thinking.


\(^{39}\) Richard Rorty: *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. 189.
Our insistence on contingency and our consequent opposition to ideas like ‘essence’, ‘nature’, and ‘foundation’, makes it impossible for us to retain the notion that some actions and attitudes are ‘inhuman’. Calling on Sellars characterization of one of us Rorty makes three claims that are particularly relevant to our discussion of solidarity in relation to critical thinking. (i) That, in rejecting human essence, contingency makes it impossible for us to retain some actions and attitudes as inhuman, (ii) that “one of us humans” (as opposed to animals, vegetables or machines) cannot have the same force as “one of us members of this particular community”, and that (iii) us typically contrasts with a they (who are also human). Rorty’s claims are interesting to explore in relation to Arendt’s grounding of solidarity in the human condition, especially in relation to critical thinking, because here we find that the first and third of Rorty’s claims must be rejected while the second needs modification.

Firstly, if we view solidarity as arising from the conditions of human existence (conditions of plurality and inter-dependence), it is possible to view these conditions as contingent while still retaining the claim that they constitute a moral obligation toward all speaking subjects (persons as ends) unilaterally. This solidarity does not, as Rorty suggests (along with people such as Paul and Nagel), arise from an “imaginative identification with the details of other’s lives”, nor from “something antecedently shared”, but from the activity of interlocution itself. Here we need to remember that we are part of many overlapping and inter-locking communities. The point is that if communication between us is possible, then whenever we are engaged in speech we will be bound by constraints of solidarity.

40 Ibid.
41 Ibid, pp. 189-190.
42 Arendt is suggestive of this when she says plurality is the “law of the earth”, the law of the world men are born into. She addresses this in the prologue to The Human Condition; in her comments concerning the world’s phenomenal nature in The Life of the Mind: Thinking (pp. 19-23); and in the distinction between human condition and human nature in The Human Condition (p. 10).
43 Richard Rorty uses these two descriptions in Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity, p. 190.
44 Here we need to remember my previous comments regarding Davidson and commensurability. Furthermore, in a world of increasing globalization Nussbaum may be right in suggesting that the notion of world citizenship holds out a hope for contingent yet universal membership in the human moral community. See Martha Nussbaum: Cultivating Humanity.
This approach also allows us to retain the idea that some actions and attitudes are “inhuman” in the sense that they deny human solidarity without recourse to foundationalism.\(^{45}\) Some actions and attitudes deny solidarity because they transform our existence as ends (as self-determining speakers, strong evaluators) into an existence in which we are merely means, thereby transforming dialogue into technical discourse.\(^{46}\) In denying solidarity, we act “inhumanely” in that we cease to be ends and, in so doing, preclude ourselves from participation in dialogical action.

Rorty’s second claim - that without foundationalism one of us humans cannot have the same force as one of us who belong to this group (as opposed to another group) - is also interesting when we examine the solidarity of dialogical activity. Here we may respond much as we did to Sellers. While the domains of one of us will not be the same in each case (one of us humans, one of us in this group), the values we place on being a member of each domain - the force - will be commensurate as long as we understand humans not biologically but intentionally (as selves, or persons). In as much as the force of us lies in our valuing of one another as ends - as selves capable of judging in freedom - then it will have commensurate force with one of us inquirers, for here too, the force (though not the membership) lies in our self-determination as an end. Indeed, it is when biological humans act as machines by ceasing to think for themselves (when they act merely as a means of someone else’s ends) that they will no longer have the same force as one of us (a member of this group of inquirers), but here we shall also have ceased to regard them as ends in themselves.\(^{47}\)

This relates to Rorty’s third claim that us typically contrasts with a they who are also human. In suggesting that communities are determined by our recognition of others as one of us, I am rejecting this claim by suggesting community norms are defined by

---

\(^{45}\) That we could not regard any acts as inhuman in a foundationalist sense was the lesson Arendt learned from the Holocaust - we have the capacity to carry out any number of “inhuman” acts. In this she is in agreement with Rorty. However, Arendt’s notion of solidarity points to an alternate way to see such acts as inhuman.

\(^{46}\) To treat someone merely as a means is different from treating him as a means while also acknowledging that he is also an end. For discussion of this point see Ping-Cheung Lo: *Treating Persons as Ends*, pp. 111-113. I take this to be consistent with Arendt’s position.
constraints of \textit{intra}-relationship (constraints of a plural subject toward itself) rather than \textit{inter}-relationship. This characterizes solidarity from the perspective of relations which hold \textit{within} a community rather than externally by relations that hold \textit{between} communities. Indeed, as we have argued, this suggests that dialogical inquiry may be better characterized not as an activity between subjects who perceive themselves as \textit{separate people} (Rorty's separate communities), but as people who, although separate selves, perceive themselves as members of a single community (i.e.; as parts within a \textit{plural} subject).\footnote{We might say that in ceasing to think they project themselves as machine, as an \textit{It} rather than a \textit{Thou}.}

\textbf{Complex Wholes as Ends}

The important point here is that, in locating value within the \textit{human condition}, we can characterize complex wholes (\textit{I} and \textit{we}) as ends (things of value) in the same way. This enables us to see how the same constraints of inquiry - constraints that enable us to avoid self-defeat - can be experienced both as constraints \textit{between} critical thinkers and as constraints reflexively incumbent on individual critical thinkers when thinking for themselves. This understanding of ourselves as autonomous ends not only underlies our understanding of respect as a constraint in critical thinking, but also our understanding of the constraints of care and trust and non-contradiction. Here too we will expect to see the same constraints expressed in relation to the complex wholes of \textit{I} and \textit{we}. As such, constraints that are incumbent on us as critical thinkers will be the same constraints expressed in our relation \textit{toward} others and \textit{within} ourselves. It is to these other constraints we now turn.

\textbf{Inquiry and Care}

To found the ethical basis of the dialogical relationship in our commitment toward establishing \textit{logos} grounds the ethic of care differently from the way it is founded in communicative ethics or an ethics of obligation arising out of our encounter with the face of the other (Such as in Buber or Levinas). It is to think \textit{with} and \textit{toward} others out of a duty of care toward relationship within the community of inquiry of which \textit{us}. Here I am considering two individuals, two selves, constituting a one. See: Paul Ricoeur: \textit{Oneself as Another}
we are both members. As in Plato, it is to see care for the flourishing of persons, for the relationships within community, and the establishment of truth and knowledge as inseparable dimensions of the one care. This is different from the notion of care that is called upon in current discussions of critical thinking and dialogical community. Here care is understood as a feeling toward one another based on our recognition of their status as persons.

Barbara Thayer-Bacon exemplifies such a position in “Caring and its relationship to Critical Thinking”:

...other feelings, such as caring, are necessary to help one be a good critical thinker... The person must rely on caring, not in the sense of caring for another person, such as liking or loving someone... It is possible to care without it involving friendship or romance. Caring for another person has been rightly judged to be potentially distracting... By caring, I mean being receptive to what another has to say, and open to hearing the other’s voice more completely and fairly. Caring about another (whether another person’s ideas, other forms of life, or even inanimate objects) requires respecting the other as a separate autonomous being, worthy of caring. Caring is an attitude that gives value to an other, by denoting that the other is worth attending to in a serious or close manner. Caring involves a “feeling with” the other, and it stresses engrossment. 49

We are now in a position to appreciate where my own view is in agreement with, and where it deviates from, this predominant view. I agree with Thayer-Bacon that caring is necessary to critical thinking, and that this caring is not the same care that we express in liking or loving someone. But I do not want to disassociate care in critical thinking from friendship. Thayer-Bacon associates friendship with the personal sense of care associated with liking, which is in turn associated with our uniqueness and interiority. She is right that this form of friendship is not structurally important to critical thinking. Rather, the kind of care relevant to critical thinking is the care expressed within Socratic friendship. On a Socratic model we are receptive to what another has to say, and open to hearing another’s voice more fully because we care

49 Barbara Thayer-Bacon: “Caring and Its Relationship to Critical Thinking” in Educational Theory, vol. 43, no. 3. 1993. pp. 325-326. Here she draws on Nel Noddings’ Caring; and Carol Gilligan’s In a Different Voice, among other sources.
about the other as a particular person who, together with ourselves, is seeking to establish logos and flourish.

The principle difference between Thayer-Bacon’s view and mine concerns the connection between moral and epistemic duties of care. Here we offer different understandings of the relevant domain under which we recognize each other as one of us worthy of care. For Thayer-Bacon one of us marks out the community of moral agents and the duty of care is directed toward a generalized other by virtue of what is common between us (our moral agency, autonomy). We express this care by attending to what one another say. As such, care in critical thinking is characterized as a two-place relation whereby I attend to your thinking out of a duty of care toward you. Even though such care will be expressed through our attentiveness to the other’s particularity (as in my view), it does not arise out of our recognition of the other as a particular other - a member of our inquiring community. Care is sourced not in our plurality as co-inquirers, but in our sameness as moral agents.

In contrast, on my view the community of which we are both members is the community of inquirers, and in critical thinking we express our care for each other as fellow inquirers by attending to the way each of us realizes him or herself as an end (constructs knowledge for him or herself) as part of us. As such, care in critical thinking is expressed by visiting, a three-place relation whereby I attend to you out of a duty of care toward our joint inquiry.\(^5^0\) Here, the duty of care arises out of our commitment to enter into conversation with others with whom we may (even radically) disagree for the sake of unity (of community, of truth and knowledge).

It is this duty of care that is captured in Socratic and Arendtian friendship. Such friendship:

\[...\text{does not depend on “the exclusive closeness of a brotherliness that obliterate[s] all distinctions, but on a plurality that opens up space for “a}\]

\(^5^0\) This formulation of care and trust (etc.) as ‘caring with and for one another as we care for inquiry (involving both two and three place intentionality) is my response to the question “What caring should be promoted under the banner “critical thinking”? asked by Jennifer Wheary and Robert Ennis in “Gender bias in Critical Thinking” in Educational Theory, 1995, vol. 45, no. 2. P. 222. They then ask the same question regarding trust.
discourse between thinkers". This discourse would not be intimate or comforting but would be disputational in order to foster the articulation of differences.  

For Arendt, such friendship seeks out the other in their difference rather than despite their difference. Here the constraints of care are determined not relative to the conditions necessary for reconciliation, but by the conditions necessary for inter-subjective disputation. Such disputation is not antagonistic but expresses care toward the very real and problematic differences between individual perspectives and images of flourishing as we act together toward a common purpose (realizing logos). It is the kind of care in which we recognize the other as other and yet count the other as a member of the dialogical community. It is this care that is illustrated in Arendt's correspondence with Jaspers when she agrees to write for the German magazine Die Wandlung after World War II only if she could write as a Jew and not, as Jaspers first suggested, on "what truly unites us". Where Jaspers suggested Arendt write on "what unites us", Arendt wanted to write across acknowledged (and problematic) differences. While Jaspers wanted to privatize differences and call attention to us (the Die Wandlung community) as a group sharing an essential sameness in the public realm, Arendt wanted to publicly acknowledge the difference between two whose commitment to act in concert (through writing and publishing in Die Wandlung) established them as a single community.

What Arendt reminds us is that it is only when care is grounded both in our recognition of difference and in our commitment toward relationship (or community), that the relationship between friends opens a space for critical discourse. Without this, the differences that are essential to plurality become marginalized. To care for the flourishing of the community as a pluralist community requires us to ground our care in a recognition of the community as constituted by particular others different from ourselves. Here care for one another is grounded in our commitment toward the flourishing of the community of which we are both part. Unlike Socratic friendship, where this difference is merely contextual,

---

52 In The Arendt-Jaspers Correspondence 1926-1969, pp. 26 and 33.
we need to recognize that such differences may involve irresolvable substantive
differences which arise out of multiple visions of flourishing. It is this that stops the
totalizing force of community, and again it is Arendt who points to this.54

**The Relationship Between Epistemic and Moral Care**

Yet we might rightly ask - if conditions of viability in critical thinking are directed
toward the flourishing of *inquiry*, in what way is this care in critical thinking a care
toward the other as an end and not merely an epistemological care? Here we need to
remember the connection between the construction of *logos* and self-creation. If we
accept the position that we become an autonomous selves through the activity of
creating meaning and determining truth, then care expressed toward establishing
*logos* will be the one care expressed toward knowledge, self and community. Care as
a moral and epistemological virtue is expressed in our attentiveness toward our
dialogical partners, to the communicative constraints of community, and to the limits
of what we know or understand. It may be seen when we attend to another’s thinking,
when we help one another to appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of differing
points of view, when we enable one another to realize their own autonomy by
participating with one-another in the process of self-realization (realization of who *I*
am, who *we* are), and when we engage together in the process of self-correction (as
individual selves and as a collective self).55 It is:

... the mode of caring which insures we remain open to the dual
possibility of knowledge and ignorance and to the proper role of man as
caretaker of speech. It is a mode of caring in which when we care for the
other we also care for ourselves. Through such mutual caring men
establish the polis of philosophy wherein they encounter each other as
quest-ioning beings.56

---

53 A point also addressed by Nel Noddings in “On Community” in *Educational Theory*, vol. 46, no. 3, 1996.
54 This is where Arendt’s political philosophy regarding totalitarianism connects to her views on
thinking (dialogical inquiry).
55 As I noted earlier (in my discussion of Siegel’s critique of Burbules in chapter 1), this establishes
epistemological care, and not just moral care, as foundational to critical thinking. Victoria Davion
argues for a similar conclusion from the opposite direction - she suggests that our care for, and
commitment to, others should be conditional on our evaluation of whether their projects are worthy
of our support of them as “one of us” (that is, our evaluation that their vision of what it is to flourish
falls within the set of viable possibilities). She concludes: “Any ethic of care that offers only caring
[of the other] itself as of absolute value can provide only an impoverished ethical ideal.”. Victoria
Inquiry and Trust in Another's Goodwill Toward One

For Annette Baier, trust constitutes a special form of reliance. To trust others is to rely on their goodwill toward oneself - a goodwill that expresses their "...willingness to look after, rather than harm, things one cares about which are entrusted to their care". Baier also rejects the idea that we can choose to trust others; the declaration "Trust me!" has no power - either you already trust me or you do not. Indeed: "the injunction "Trust me!" (or the reminder "I am trusting you") is a danger signal". It would seem that trust is just not something we can extend at will, or at least not in any circumstances; it is born out of shared experience and requires time to develop.

On the surface, it seems that Baier's account of trust fits with our characterization of the kind of trust required in critical thinking. We might say that trust in inquiry involves our reliance on others to show goodwill towards us as we embark on the search for truth together (where truth is something we care about, the search for which is entrusted to our care). But is this so? As Holton points out, there are many cases where we trust one another without showing goodwill toward one another in this way: two estranged parents may trust one another with their common child without having any goodwill between themselves; and, on the battlefield, I may trust you not to fire when I put out the white flag even though I know you resent not being able to do so.

In the case of critical thinking, such exceptions are illuminating, for we would want to allow for two people to engage in inquiry with one another even when personal goodwill toward the other is absent. Furthermore, I want to claim that we can choose to trust. Indeed both these situations arose in our discussion of Socratic dialogue. Socrates suggests that even when there is no personal goodwill between individuals (Socrates and Callicles), or when they share no prior history together (Socrates and

---

57 Annette Baier: Moral Prejudices, p. 128.
58 Ibid, p. 133.
59 This reminds us of Carr's claim in relation to we-intentionality that communities of experience precede communities of action.
Theaetetus), they may, for the sake of logos, choose to regard one another as a friend. In so doing, we choose to trust one another as we make ourselves vulnerable through the act of opening our true opinions to critique. Of course the fact that trust is a choice means that the opposite is also a possibility - we may choose not to trust. This choice, too, is illustrated in Plato’s dialogues. But when we choose not to trust, the very possibility of inquiry (and dialogical action) is cut short, and the pursuit of logos collapses in self-defeat.

Constraints on Critical Thinking: Trust or Reliance?

But perhaps, in suggesting that trust is a constraint on critical thinking, I am arguing too strong a case. Perhaps all we need in critical thinking is reliance. While Baier denies we can choose to trust, she claims we can choose to rely. What matters for reliance is not another’s good will, but that we take what it is we rely on into our plans. To rely on our car, or on someone’s actions, is to plan our own activities as if what we rely on will occur. Indeed we might do well to view Davidson’s “principle of charity” as just such a form of reliance. In critical thinking we assume a stance of epistemological charity and act as if people make sense (or reflexively, that we make sense to ourselves), engaging with them on this basis.

Davidson is certainly right – we need to rely on other’s making sense if we are to engage with views different from our own, but reliance does not seem to go far enough. Merely to treat another as if they makes sense does not account for the feeling of vulnerability and exposure that comes with opening our opinions to critique, nor does it account for the resentment we feel when we belatedly discover that our dialogical partner was merely playing the devil’s advocate. Our sense of

---

61 I discussed this in relation to Socratic midwifery in Theaetetus. Annette Baier also speaks of the connection between trust and making ourselves vulnerable to those we trust (see Moral Prejudices, pp. 100-108). Martha Nussbaum also speaks of trust as allowing oneself to be exposed, to be vulnerable to another. Like Baier, for Nussbaum, trust is something that evolves; it is a learned art that takes time, opportunity, and shared experience to develop. See Love’s Knowledge, pp. 274-278.
63 This connection between trust and resentment is explored more fully by Holton, Strawson and others. Indeed it is our vulnerability at the hand of the person on whom we rely that leads Baier to
vulnerability in trust comes, I think, from our awareness of the connection between what we think and who we are - in exposing what we think to others we expose ourselves. Again, this points to the tension between contingency and commitment and the role of the will.

Although nobody knows whom he reveals when he discloses himself in deed or word, he must be willing to risk the disclosure. 64

Trust concerns the nature of the will (rather than the nature of inquiry) because we have to choose to engage with the other (or with ourselves) in order for dialogical inquiry to proceed. 65

**Extending Trust Toward Those on Whom We Rely**

If dialogical inquiry requires us both to epistemically trust ourselves and to trust others with whom we engage in inquiry, in what way can we choose to adopt a stance of trust in inquiry? Like Baier, Holton considers trust to be a special case of reliance, however (against Baier) he suggests that we can decide to extend our trust. In so doing, he offers us an alternative account of the difference between trust and reliance, one that I think is directly relevant to our account of critical thinking.

Holton distinguishes between trust and reliance by turning to the emotions we feel when we rely or trust and are let down. In the case of reliance we may feel disappointed or frustrated, but in the case of trust “we do not just feel disappointed...We feel betrayed.... we feel hurt or resentful...” 66 For Holton, “Resentment and gratitude are examples of the particular attitudes that we feel towards people when they act in certain ways...” 67 We may rely on people or machines, but we can only extend trust to people. Trust not only involves reliance, but our adopting a participant’s stance toward the person on whom we rely.

---

64 Hannah Arendt: The Human Condition, pp. 179-180 (my italics).
65 I suggested this as a problem of the will when I first introduced the conditions for dialogical action via their contrastive opposites. There I suggested rejection (where there is no will to engage with the other) as the contrastive opposite of trust.
67 Ibid.
When you trust someone to do something you rely on them to do it, and you regard that reliance in a certain way; you have a readiness to feel betrayed should it be disappointed, and gratitude should it be upheld. In short you take a stance of trust towards the person whom you rely.... Perhaps it is best to see the stance of trust as part of the participant stance, in the sense that trusting someone is a way of treating them as a person.\(^68\)

The difference between reliance and trust is the way in which we hold the person we trust responsible for their actions. We hold them responsible as an end in Arendt's sense; as someone who chooses to initiate action, to participate with us in realizing our ends. We might say reliance is shown toward something (a person, a machine), whereas trust is experienced with them, it expresses our participation in joint activity.

Resentment and gratitude are examples of the particular attitudes that we feel towards people when they act in certain ways. Behind them stands a more general attitude, which Strawson calls the participant attitude, which I shall call the participant stance.\(^69\)

For Holton, then, trusting someone to do something involves (i) relying on them to do it (where "the motivation [for doing it] in some way comes from them") and (ii) adopting a participant stance toward the person on whom we rely.\(^70\) If we treat trust in critical thinking as an epistemological and moral virtue then in choosing to adopt a stance of trust toward our dialogical partner we (i) rely on them to be motivated from themselves to make sense regarding what they say, and (ii) we take a first-person participant stance toward them - a stance marked by a sense of simultaneity and reciprocity in inquiry. While both dialectic argumentation and dialogical inquiry require a Davidsonian kind of trust toward the other, only dialogical inquiry requires that we assume a participants stance with others on whom we rely.

---

\(^{68}\) Ibid, p. 67.

\(^{69}\) Ibid, p. 66.

\(^{70}\) Ibid.
Valuing the Other’s Participation in Joint Action

By deciding to trust the other as a participant in our action we strengthen the bonds between us in relation to a common object (the inquiry). Such trust is “...a three-place relation: one person trusts another to do a certain thing”.

Suppose we are rock climbing together. I have a choice between taking your hand, or taking a rope. In taking your hand, I trust you; in so doing our relationship moves a little further forward. This can itself be something I value... If I chose the rope over your hand; you might perfectly understand... But our relationship will not progress.

Choosing to trust one another in such situations requires that we value what it is to go rock climbing together (rather than both climbing independently but in one another’s company). It is to see acting together as part of what it is to realize our ends. Here, trust expressed toward one another and trust expressed toward the activity (rock climbing, inquiry) are personal and social expressions of the one trust. In inquiry, as with the rock climbers, deciding to trust is not only a condition for acting in concert (and thereby furthering our relationship), but is a condition for our making progress together toward a common end (reaching the peak, establishing logos). It involves seeing one another as reciprocally responsible for the inquiry and trusting our collective capacity for judgment. In this regard, trust in inquiry is the trust shown by a plural subject toward parts.

We might say that extending our hand in trust in inquiry is to engage in an Arendtian form of promising. Indeed despite Baier’s general claim that we cannot choose to trust, she notes that the act of promising offers us a way in which it does become possible to accept an invitation to trust.

Part of what makes promises the special thing they are, and the philosophically intriguing thing they are, is that we can at will accept this sort of invitation to trust... they seem to have the power, by verbal magic, to initiate real voluntary short-term trusting.

---

71 This might be contrasted to trust as a two-place relation in which we trust others simplicitor - that is, we have a trusting relationship with them. Holton and Baier point out that we cannot choose this kind of trust, just as we cannot choose to be close friends to a stranger - we can only extend friendship and hope to develop a trusting relationship over time. Ibid, p. 67.

72 Ibid, p. 69.
Trust and Sincerity: Playing the Devil’s Advocate

Finally, this characterization of trust goes some way towards explaining the difference of attitude toward playing the role of devil’s advocate in adversarial argumentation and in dialogical inquiry. Within the tradition of argumentation, playing the role of devil’s advocate - a situation in which we argue against the position of another speaker with little regard for whether the view we represent is something we are committed to - is quite acceptable. Adopting this same role within a community of inquiry, however, is regarded as deeply problematic. Ross Phillips describes an experience within a community of inquiry in which:

... Someone prefaced a remark with, “Let me play the devil’s advocate for a moment”, and there was a faintly embarrassed silence. Then a gentle reproof. Something there is about a community of inquiry that does not welcome a devil’s advocate, it seemed. Or was it the verb, ‘to play’, that jarred? I must add that something jarred in me too, and I realized my own ambivalence about the phrase and the title.

Why is the devil’s advocate not welcome? I think Phillips is right that the source of the disapproval lies in the notion of play, and that what jars is the idea of assuming a role that is separated from one’s own commitments. However it seems to me that this is not, as Phillips suggests, a jarring of interests between the seeming demands of community and demands of inquiry (or truth), but a jarring of the conditions of trust. What has to be given up when someone assumes the advocate’s role is both our reliance on them to speak from themselves and their participant’s stance toward us.

As Phillips notes, the tradition of devil’s advocate was to examine the worthiness of a person for canonization. In taking on the role of ‘the protector of the faith’ the advocate’s role was to submit evidence to strict epistemological examination. Phillips asks:

73 Annette Baier: Moral Prejudice, p. 111.
76 Ibid, pp. 16-17.
If a devil’s advocate is a good servant of the epistemic interests of the church, why should a devil’s advocate not be a good servant of the epistemic interests of a community of inquiry?\textsuperscript{77}

My answer is to do with the stance of the advocate. The advocate is a servant of the church whose task is to determine whether one of them might be considered as one of us. His stance during deliberation is not one that accepts the other as a member of his own community, rather, he is required by his role to approach the other with a hermeneutics of suspicion.\textsuperscript{78} While Phillips suggests that the devil’s advocate adopts an adversarial stance to ensure epistemological rigor, I think that he assumes this stance because the other has yet to prove his worthiness to be counted as a member of the fold. In contra-distinction to the principle of charity, the advocate’s role is to assume the other is not worthy of sainthood until presented with evidence that he is.

The problem the role of devil’s advocate poses for a community of inquiry is that it separates the pursuit of logos from communal participation for the sake of epistemic rigor. What Phillips does not consider is that epistemic rigor could be equally applied by members of the community as they think alongside one another as they explore an idea together.\textsuperscript{79} That the role of advocate is seen to have a place in dialectic argumentation but not in a dialogical conception of critical thinking once again points to the stronger condition of trust that underpins dialogical action.

\textbf{Contradiction and Contrariness}

In chapter 3 I suggested that inquiry might be distinguished from other forms of conversation in that it is propelled by the conversation’s logical requiredness.\textsuperscript{80} I further noted that inquiry gives rise to logical form. This is not because we, as ‘rational animals’ think according to these formal structures, but because they are

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid, p. 15.

\textsuperscript{78} This position surfaces in some feminist critiques of Western male models of critical thinking as models that embody a “hermeneutics of suspicion” engaging participants in a “doubting game”. See Re-Thinking Reason, ed. Walters. K.; in particular, see Blythe Clinchey’s “On Critical thinking and Connected Knowing”, pp. 38-39.

\textsuperscript{79} In reality this gets close to his own suggested use of devil’s advocate, where he suggests the group might nominate a person to play the advocate in a particular session. This does transfer the role to one already considered a member of the community. But that person is then required to treat the others with a hermeneutics of suspicion. I think we are better off to disband the role and focus instead on the issue of epistemic rigor as students think alongside one another within the inquiry.

317
deeply embedded in our tradition. We might say that the formal structures of logic are developed as a tradition struggles to propositionally communicate itself through language use. This is not to suggest that we have a natural proclivity toward logical thought; rather, it is to suggest that language users recognize that meaning is jeopardized by contradiction and by dissonance, and that logical form is one of our traditions' best defenses against such self-defeat.81

Here we also need to be careful to distinguish contradiction from contrariness. In chapter 3 I suggested that we needed to broaden our concern with non-contradiction in critical thinking to one that not only captures the formal logical relation of non-contradiction between propositions, but also captures the kind of non-contrary relations that lie at the heart of inter-personal (moral) and hermeneutic (interpretative) activity.

Contrariness, like contradiction, may threaten the possibility of establishing relationship between two, and thus threaten the dialogical relationship with self-defeat. Whereas contradiction involves the assertion and denial of a single proposition, we might say contrariness points to the lack of harmony or opposition between two people, states of affairs, values, or perspectives. Contrariness might be experienced in the relationship between oppositionaries (e.g.; between Socrates and Callicles), or in the juxtaposition of concepts that stand as contrastive opposites to one another (pleasure/pain, cowardice/courage, freedom/slavery).

Much of this thesis has been concerned with how to avoid contrariness within critical thinking, both the contrariness that results from bringing oppositionaries into relationship with one another, and the inter-personal framework that prevents the self-defeat of dialogical relationships. In regard to former, I turned to the relationship between friends and the structure of irony, in regard to the latter, to the constraints of

80 In keeping with Gadamer, Lipman and Dewey.
81 This is a position I am stating rather than arguing for and represents a Deweyan line. To argue for it would take me beyond the limits of this thesis. The arguments against seeing human thinking as logical by nature are well presented by Mary Henle in “On the Relation Between Logic and Thinking” in Psychological Review, vol.69, no.4, 1962, and by the more recent work in decision theory such as Robyn Dawes’s Rational Choice in an Uncertain World. The number of informal logic texts that focus on fallacy avoidance also suggest that these skills require learning.
respect, care and trust. Here I am concerned primarily with non-contradiction as a constraint on inquiry; in particular, how non-contradiction presupposes a common framework without which contradiction may not even arise.\textsuperscript{82}

**Contradiction and the Limits of Intelligibility**

The principle of non-contradiction points to the limits of language. Contradiction undermines intelligibility because it negates the capacity for language to be expressive - to communicate truth or meaning. Here language itself needs to be understood in terms of the conceptual scheme that it embodies, and which is developed and communicated through its use. In this regard I think Donald Davidson is right; contradiction can only occur from within a particular language (whether formal or natural) and limits to intelligibility are only discernible within the context of largely shared conceptual frameworks or schemes.\textsuperscript{83}

In giving up the dependence on the concept of an uninterpreted reality, something outside all scheme and science, we do not relinquish the notion of objective truth - quite the contrary.... Of course truth of sentences remains relative to a language, but that is as objective as can be. In giving up the dualism of scheme and world, we do not give up the world, but re-establish unmediated touch with the familiar objects whose antics make our sentences and opinions true or false.\textsuperscript{84}

What does this mean for critical thinking? Firstly, it will mean that the very possibility of contradiction will suppose that we count ourselves as members of the one community. Secondly, to see non-contradiction as a constraint on inquiry will be to view it as determined from the social - or inter-relational - point of view (and this is what makes it objective in a Davidsonian sense). That is, in a framework of overlapping domains of one of us, non-contradiction will be a supervenient constraint on the intelligibility of the whole (the singular I, the plural We). This is illustrated through Sellars' example of two people who both assert valid arguments which,

\textsuperscript{82} This goes some way to addressing my assumption of at least partially shared conceptual frameworks within a pluralistic conception of dialogical inquiry - an assumption I made in chapter 5 regarding the possibility of inquiry across distinct domains (disciplines, genders, etc.)

\textsuperscript{83} Where, interpretation between individual speakers of a language is possible because individual idiolects are idiolects of a largely shared language, and where translation between languages is possible because languages express largely the same conceptual scheme.

when taken together, are logically inconsistent and thus cannot both be sound. If Tom argues 'P, P implies Q, so Q', and Dick argues '~Q, P implies Q, so ~P', while both arguments may be valid, they cannot both be good (sound) because they contradict one another (Tom asserts P, Dick asserts ~P) Truth has an _inter-subjective_ status because we may speak of a _logical_ clash between the two valid arguments asserted by different people. However there is only a logical contradiction if Tom and Dick see each other as members of the same language community (members of the one complex whole). Similarly with ourselves; reflexively, for me to (simultaneously) assert P and ~P is contradictory and leads me to defeat as a whole.

**Recognizing limits to one of us**

The interesting thing about the complex whole of _inquirers_ is that the overlapping domains captured by _one of us inquirers_ may span from near homogeneity to one of near radical differences (including inquiry across disciplines, genders, ontologies, metaphysics, cultures, etc.). However, whatever our differences, to see the other as _one of us_ means that our domains of language at least partially overlap, and this itself provides us with the resources necessary to appreciate where the borders of overlapping domains within _us_ lie. Yet as much as sharing in a common language will lead us to appreciate the viable range of possibilities amongst _us_ (lead me to see your reasons as _reasons_, while not being reasons for me), it will also lead us to recognize when inquiry between _us_ is no longer possible. That is, it will lead us to appreciate both the plurality and _limits_ of our capacity to inquire together. We become aware of such limits when what at first appears to be contradiction amongst _us_ (_intra_-communally relative to our language), in the end illustrates the limit of translatability between languages. At this point our views are no longer seen as contradictory, but rather, as incommensurate.

---

85 Wilfrid Sellars: _Science and Metaphysics_, p. 216.
86 In chapter 2 I explored how temporality allows us to assert P and ~P _over_ time without self-defeat.
87 Examples of theorists who see these differences as posing a threat to the possibility of a single inquiry include: McPeck's position in the generalizability debate; Phelan and Garrison's view of differences between male and female thinking; Winch's anthropological comments concerning the intelligibility of Azandi Witch substance; and theorists who suggest that a pluralist society cannot incorporate fundamentalism. In these cases we may continue to have a translator's interest in one another (and inquire _inter_-communally), but cannot inquire _with_ one another (_intra_-communally).
Indeed the fact that we seem to interpret those around us reasonably successfully most of the time can itself be deceptive. In approaching others as people we can talk with, we assume a common conceptual scheme and hold ourselves ready to make adjustments as the need arises (for instance, when we become aware of dissonance). Sometimes this will leave us able to interpret others at a superficial level while remaining oblivious to important differences because no dissonance is felt. We remain unaware of differences of ontology, value, or belief because our interpretation (based on our own scheme) seems to make sense of the other's claims, or because the differences between us never arise within the context of our interaction. It is only when dissonance is felt that we realize that what presents at first as intelligible is different from what is required for intelligibility in the end. Indeed there may come a time in the inquiry when it no longer makes sense to look for an inter-relational truth that holds for us both.

Take the case in which we are living together as neighbors peacefully enough, exchanging pleasantries, sharing the odd meal and good conversation together in neighborly fashion. One day, however, I find you assaulting your wife whom you have tied to a bed. After stopping the assault I ask “why are you doing this?” On one hand, I am finding the whole situation incomprehensible, on the other hand I want to understand what is going on - I assume that you could only be doing this if you believed you had reason to do so. You reply “But there is nothing strange about what I am doing, I am an exorcist”. What I see as an assault, you see as an exorcism performed for your wife’s own good, an exorcism that will rid her of the demons with which she is possessed88.

Now, on one level, we are communicating, a communication made possible because we share much of the world in common at a superficial level (we both see a bed, a

---

88 This case arose in Hamilton, Victoria in the 1980’s. The State of Victoria prosecuted the husband for murder, his defense was that his wife died of natural causes during an exorcism he was performing. I take it that this example introduces the same issues of anthropological interpretation across cultures or languages as Winch introduces with his discussion of Azandi witch substance. See Peter Winch: “Understanding a primitive Society” in American Philosophical Quarterly, vol.1, no.4, 1964, pp. 307-324. I think my example offers a more powerful illustration of the limits of inquiry because prior to the event the two people considered one another members of the same community (in a socio-political sense).
woman, a room, acknowledge each other exist, etc.); this makes communication possible despite a deep difference in our ontologies (your world contains spirits and demons, mine does not). In such a case we may still be able to develop a translator’s understanding of one another (i.e.; be able to appreciate what the other means by the words ‘devil’ and ‘possessed’); we may even be able to understand the internal coherency of each other’s conclusions. Yet in such a situation, I may find myself facing you in silence because I am left feeling there is literally nothing further we can say to one another. In such situations disagreement may be replaced by a feeling of overwhelming difference. Faced with such overwhelming difference I begin to wonder with whom I have been talking. What first presented as a contradiction (my affirmation and your denial of assault) ends up pointing to something quite different. If we were to name our disagreement now it would be in terms of an ontological or metaphysical disagreement about the nature of the world - that is, we would need to reframe our disagreement if we were to seek to continue the inquiry together. We may continue to be able to stand alongside one another as spectators, but we no longer consider one another’s reasons as reasons for us both. At this point, inquiry as an intra-relational activity within a single community becomes an inter-relational activity between two communities.

What I want to exclude from possibility in this discussion is that contradiction and unintelligibility alerts us to the presence of two completely distinct and incommensurate schemes. For this would suggest no translation between schemes is possible, no way of communicating with the other as one of us; indeed there will be no way of my knowing that your position is unintelligible to me. As Davidson states, this neither denies the possibility of incommensurable frameworks, nor confirms them; what it points to is the fact that if totally separate schemes exist they do so outside the realm of our discourse.

---

89 This relates to Davidson’s point concerning the difference between the theory of science and a theory of persons - when dealing with persons every new bit of evidence requires us to revise the whole theory, to retrospectively reinterpret what has gone on before. It is not that before you agreed and now you disagree, but you realize you never agreed in the first place.

90 Indeed McPeck, Phelan and Garrison, and Winch all suggest that inquiry across the deep differences (of discipline, gender, and culture respectively) is possible if we view inquiry as translation between frameworks.
It would be wrong to... [say] we have shown how communication is possible between people who have different schemes, a way that works without the need of what there cannot be, namely a neutral ground, or common co-ordinate system. For we have found no intelligible basis on which it can be said that schemes are different. It would be equally wrong to announce the glorious news that all mankind - all speakers of language, at least - share a common scheme and ontology. For if we cannot say that schemes are different, neither can we intelligibly say that they are one.\footnote{Donald Davidson: "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme" in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*, p. 198. This relates to my critique of Rorty's in light of Arendt's idea of solidarity.}

**Testing the Limits**

This gives a particular character to inquiry within pluralistic communities; a character that is felt in (i) the way such inquiry as a search for truth and meaning becomes focused around establishing clearer and more nuanced picture of the overlapping domains of us, a richer understanding of what separates as well what links us (rather than a concern for unilateral applicable judgments, universal truths); and (ii) the way such inquiry incorporates a dynamic tension between the possibility of principled dissent concerning judgments of truth within the community on one hand, and the objective status of truth relative to the community on the other. This is the character of juxtaposing plurality with limits, contingency with commitment. Within this process, the presence of contradiction alerts us to where new distinctions need to be sought if intelligibility of the inquiry as a whole is to be maintained.

Indeed inquiry will offer many occasions in which we are unsure whether we constitute one community or two - whether our intendings to seek truth are really in the strong sense the same. Ambiguity and uncertainty may arise because it is possible for communities to overlap in such a way that we can share a form of life together on one level (e.g., seeking the truth), while having very different forms of life at another level (e.g., in regard to religious beliefs or metaphysics). Such cases create tensions to the limits of tolerance for disagreement within a community and may result in one group within the community saying to another, "you are not one of us".\footnote{It seems to me that splits in ideological movements (political/religious) provide a good example of this. Here we find that increasing tension arising from internal disagreement on what counts as an acceptable interpretation (of fact/situation/belief) may result, at some pivotal point, in a sheering of}
ask whether it is indeed possible for an objective realist to share an intending to establish the truth with a relativist or pluralist, or we may question the extent to which a religious fundamentalist can engage in inquiry with a religious pluralist or secularist. These are questions that arise in the public sphere of inquiry that have no reflexive parallel. As such they pose a question concerning the viable limits for community, but do not pose a question uniquely concerning the structural form of dialogical inquiry per se. Indeed this is where Arendt's notion of solidarity allows broader scope for inquiry across differences than those notions of solidarity based on commonality alone.

While the question of whether we constitute one community or two may have no reflexive parallel for the individual self (for I do not think we can merely take a translator's interest in our own goings-on), the particular character of inquiry within pluralistic communities - the juxtapositioning of plurality with limits, contingency with commitment - is reflexively experienced on an individual level. We experience it within the process of concept formation. Acquiring concepts and developing sophistication in their use involves us in: (i) establishing clearer and more nuanced understanding of the parameters of the concept in question through; identifying paradigm cases (e.g.; chairs have a back and four legs), arbitrating between borderline cases (considering chairs with one leg, chairs that seat two people), and distinguishing between one concept and another (chair and stool); along with (ii) identifying exceptions and challenges to the application of concepts we are learning without giving up our understanding of the concept in question. 93

Contrariness: Being Out of Harmony with Oneself

Our understanding of ourselves as ends puts a different slant on the notion of what it is to be out of harmony with oneself. In chapter 4 I suggested that Socrates' comment

---

93 Here the very idea of an exceptional case might be seen as one in which we are speaking of overlapping domains - a particular instance is seen to be excluded from a domain on one criteria, but not counted as falling under that domain on another. This view of concept formation is well
to Callicles concerning being out of tune with oneself could be understood as ceasing to treat oneself as a friend. At the time we were concerned with the way in which both (i) our recognition and elimination of self contradiction becomes a necessary step toward establishing inner unity, and (ii) how ceasing to be a friend to oneself transforms solitude into loneliness. Our present discussion of contradiction enables us to see how this lack of inner harmony relates to both our sense of personal integrity and our capacity to think critically for ourselves.

We might say that self-contradiction is related to our sense of integrity in that it is related to our integratedness.\(^{94}\) For a pluralist, such integration will not be a matter of living a totally consistent life (even if that were a possibility), but of being aware of, and attentive to, the relationship between the range of different values and commitments they give expression to as a whole. As Pritchard points out, people can fall short of integrity in a variety of ways:

There is conscious hypocrisy, the knowing maintenance of double standards... self-deception, a refusal to acknowledge to ourselves that we have certain concerns in basic conflict...\(^{95}\)

What these examples illustrate is the way in which lack of integrity involves our ceasing to attend to inner relationship - ceasing to attend to ourselves as one complex whole. It is not having conflicting values that results in lack of integrity, but our refusal to acknowledge them as dual aspects of who we, as individuals, are. This is true for both maintaining our sense of integrity over time, and integrity at a time. We might say that the contrastive opposite of integrity - shame - arises when, in relating one aspect of self to another we do not live up to our self-estimations (our desires do not correspond to our actions, our sense of who we could be stands in contrast to the evidence of who we have become).\(^{96}\)

\(^{94}\) Michael Pritchard suggest this and explores integratedness as a moral consideration in more depth in *Becoming Responsible*, pp. 78-102.

\(^{95}\) Ibid, p. 90.

\(^{96}\) Ibid, p. 91. Again, this returns us to plato’s conception of elenctic shame.
To have integrity as a critical thinker, then, is to attend to the relationship between our thoughts (our commitments, our values, beliefs, world view). To recognize when we are torn between two values, rather than arguing for one as if it was the only position we could defend. This suggest that being out of harmony with myself - for my Lyre to be out of tune - is not only a matter of self-contradiction, but also a matter of losing my capacity for self-integration. It would be to speak to myself and not to answer, or not to hear the answer, or if it is heard, not to respond to it; that is, to cease being attentive to my own intelligibility. Here one ceases to be a friend to oneself by ceasing to think for oneself. This is to contradict our own condition as ends - as critical thinkers engaged in the construction of self and knowledge.97

Avoiding the Dark Side of Community

In introducing the idea that communities might be characterized as a “communal subject” with an emergent “collective self” I noted that we may have good reason to be wary of thinking about communities in this way. The accusation held against communities so conceived is that they have a natural leaning toward totalitarianism or fascism. In seeking wholeness there is the danger of totalization.

Moreover, in arguing that the structure of individual selves is an analog of communal selves, we might expect to see this potential for a “dark side” also to be present for individuals. Indeed, whereas on a communal level this dark side surfaces as the totalizing force of community, within individuals I think it emerges from the totalizing force (the teleological force) of seeking to characterize ones’ life in terms of single narrative - the urge to see every dimension of our lives giving voice to a single “who”.98

Clearly, this dark side may not be present in all communities, but it seems (potentially at least) a real aspect of intentional communities - including dialogical communities of inquiry. Here we might say that the better I contribute toward the

97 This interpretation of the Lyre is Arendtian, and can be seen to create a link between her view of thinking as critical judgment and her analysis of totalitarianism. For Arendt, totalitarianism was only possible amongst people who have ceased to treat themselves as ends - ceased to engage in critical judgment for themselves.

98 It is this force that I see present in Taylor, though it is particularly clear in fundamentalist narratives.
achievement of our goals, the more complete I - the sort of I who is counted as one of us - become. Once the attainment of selfhood is equated with full immersion in the community and realist notions of truth are replaced with constructivist ones, self-creation will rely heavily on what is counted as true within the community and on how the community elects to tell its narrative. Self-creation (through participation in community) will be most complete when community members maximally replicate community values and customs. The better I exemplify the sort of person this community recognizes as a critical thinker, the more completely I express myself as a critical thinker. As Noddings points out, in “total community” we:

All speak with one mouth, feel with one heart, think with one brain. Individuals become the individuals they should be by participating in the community.... The total community of fascism is, of course, an extreme. However, in all strong communities, there is a significant measure of normocentricity. Strong communities stand for something; they share values as well as resources and customs.... communities at all levels can exert peer pressure for good or evil ends... Communities seek unity, self-sacrifice and conformity to established norms.99

Communities of inquiry aim for full participation in community - yet one would hope that the aim of critical inquiry is as far from instigating conformity as possible. This is where pluralism becomes an important mitigating force. However here we need to distinguish between two forms of normocentrism: (i) a normocentrism of views (beliefs, interpretations, values), and (ii) normocentrism of the activity in which the community is engaged (by virtue of which it is a community). Whereas perspectival pluralism will be enough to mitigate against conformity of opinion, we need a stronger sense of pluralism if we are to maintain plurality of viable possibilities regarding the activity of critical thinking itself. We referred to this at the beginning of chapter 5 regarding the need for a theory of critical thinking to allow for a plurality of thinking styles and modes of philosophizing. Whereas differences of thinking style might be seen to have their source in a kind of psychological pluralism - a combination of traits, patterns, preferences, strengths and temperament - differences in philosophical style might be seen to be linked to different intellectual traditions.100


327
If we are to avoid normocentricity and conformity in both these areas, we need to be able to respond to the following question: If limits to ranges of possibility are determined by what members of the community consider viable, what stops voices of dissent, or differences in styles of thinking, becoming marginalized? Indeed it is only a pluralist model of critical thinking at both levels that can adequately respond to this question. If conditions of viability are conditions that preserve the dialogical character of complex wholes (guard them against self-defeat), then these same conditions will guard against the totalizing force of community - a force that seeks to turn community into a monological subject. Here it will not be enough to recognize plural traditions of critical thinking (each carried on by its own members), but requires that we recognize the plurality internal to traditions themselves.\(^{101}\)

Noddings also characterizes a second aspect of a community's dark side as the tendency of communities to strengthen their own identity through the rejection of others.\(^{102}\) However if we see pluralistic communities as multiple overlapping domains defined not in virtue of another, but by their internal relations (and intentionality), this force too is mitigated against. This was also the basis of my objection to Rorty's claim that the force of \textit{us} was to be determined contrastively against a \textit{them}. In recognizing communities themselves to be contingent (for domains of inter-relationship come and go) we in fact move in the direction to which Noddings turns for her own solution - a direction in which members of community remain "...aware of the contingency of community and the primacy of relation."\(^{103}\)

We might say that pluralism mitigates against the dark side precisely because judgments of viability themselves rest on maintaining the conditions necessary for dialogical action between two who are attentive to the way in which \textit{their differences}, as well as sameness, contributes to who "\textit{we}" are. As Arendt suggests, the tension of pluralism is a tension between autonomy and community that we have an obligation


\(^{101}\) This parallels the argument for a dialogical conception of self as well as of community.


\(^{103}\) Ibid, p. 264. Also: "The newborn, as a member of a social species, will grow into a recognizable person only as a member of some culture or community, but it might be a member of any community.... The \textit{capacity} for relation is thus recognized as primary..." p. 263.
to confront as thinkers together; a tension that respects the intractable differences between us as differences amongst us as we address a common problem together.

As critical thinkers committed to inquiry as a form of dialogical action the epistemological and moral constraints of respect, trust, care and non-contradiction enable us to confront the tensions implicit to pluralism as positive tensions. Such constraints are expressed toward others and with them as we engage in joint inquiry. they may be characterized as:

(i) Respect extended toward the other’s autonomous will to engage in the construction of knowledge, together with a respect experienced with them toward ourselves as people who have chosen to engage in the construction of knowledge;

(ii) Trust extended in inquiry that expresses not only our reliance on them to make sense and to be motivated to do so, but our participation with them as they think for themselves as one of us inquirers;

(iii) Care extended toward them as a friend who seeks knowledge with us - a care expressed in our attentiveness toward our dialogical partners, to the communicative constraints of community, and to the limits of what we know or understand.

(iv) Attentiveness shown toward the avoidance of contradiction and an attentiveness toward conditions of intelligibility (attending to the integrity of relationship amongst us).

Rather than establishing a pressure or leaning toward normocentricity and conformity, such constraints establish a leaning toward a supervening reasonableness. A reasonableness that expresses our commitment to diversity and unity, contingency and community. Such reasonableness reflects our choice to exercise our autonomy in light of our membership.

While the dialogical character of such inquiry mitigates against the dark side of normocentricity, it nevertheless rests on one value that is held unilaterally across the community - the value of survival over self-defeat. Whether we see this value grounded in a biological instinct for survival or as foundational to culture, it underlies all forms of dialogical action. As such, I am suggesting that critical
thinking is itself only possible when we place greater value on friendship than on loneliness - on inter-relationship between two who are neither the same nor different from one another, rather than on sameness or consensus.\textsuperscript{104} That is, when we place value on \textit{seeking logos together}.

\textsuperscript{104} Where "... plurality, the irreducible particularity of individuals' positions is valued more highly than consensus." Hannah Arendt: \textit{The Human Condition}, p. 89.
So much for our outline sketch... For it looks as if we have to draw an outline first, and fill it in later. It would seem to be open to anyone to take things further and to articulate the good parts of the sketch. And time is a good discoverer or ally in such things... it is open to anyone to supply what is lacking.

Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics I, 1098a20-26
Bibliography

Alderman, Harold (1973): “Dialectic as Philosophical Care” in *Man and World*, vol. 6, no. 2, May, pp. 206-219


Belenky, Mary; Clinchy, Blythe; Goldberger, Nancy; and Tarule, Jill. (1986): *Women’s Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice and Mind* (New York, Basic Books)


332


Boudouris, K.J. (forthcoming): *The Philosophy of Logos* (Athens, Kardamitsa Publishing)


Buber, Martin (1947): *Between Man and Man* (Glasgow, Collins, 1979 edition)


Davidson, Donald (1990): Plato’s Philebus (New York, Garland Publishing)


335

Gilligan, Carol (1982): In a Different Voice (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press)


Heidegger (1975): Early Greek Thinking (New York, Harper and Row)


336


Lipman, Matthew (ed.) (1993): Thinking, Children, and Education (Iowa, Kendall/Hunt)


Moult


Passmore, John (1980): The Philosophy of Teaching (London, Duckworth)


_______ (ed.) (1976): The Identities of Persons (Berkeley, University of California Press)


_______ (1966): The Con
DISPOSITIONS AND ABILITIES OF IDEAL CRITICAL THINKERS
July, 1994
Robert H. Ennis, University of Illinois, Urbana

Dispositions
Ideal critical thinkers are disposed to:

1. Care that their beliefs be true, and that their decisions be justified; that is, care to "get it right" to the extent possible. This includes the interrelated dispositions to:
   A. Seek alternatives (hypotheses, explanations, conclusions, plans, sources), and be open to them;
   B. Endorse a position to the extent that, but only to the extent that, it is justified by the information that is available; and
   C. Be well informed.

2. Represent a position honestly, theirs as well as others. This includes the dispositions to
   A. Be clear about the intended meaning of what is said, written, or otherwise communicated;
   B. Determine, and maintain focus on, the conclusion or question;
   C. Seek and offer reasons;
   D. Take into account the total situation;
   E. Seek as much precision as the situation requires;
   F. Be reflectively aware of their own basic beliefs; and
   G. Consider seriously other points of view than their own.

3. Care about the dignity and worth of every person. This includes the dispositions to
   A. Discover and listen to others' views and reasons;
   B. Avoid intimidating or confusing others with their critical prowess, taking into account others' feelings and level of understanding; and
   C. Be concerned about other's welfare.

A few interpretative comments:
1) Several of the dispositions (2,F,G; 3, A) contribute to being well informed (1,C), but are separate dispositions in their own right.
2) In my expressed concern with true belief, I accept the view that our concepts and vocabulary are constructed by us, but also (to oversimplify somewhat) the relationships among the referents of our concepts and terms are not constructed by us. We can have true or false beliefs about these.
3) The disposition (#3) to care about the dignity and worth of every person is not required of critical thinking by definition, but in order that it be humane. I call it a "correlative disposition", by which I mean one that, although not part of the definition of 'critical thinking', it is desirable for all critical thinkers to have it, and the lack of it makes the critical thinking less valuable, or perhaps of no value at all.

A criticism of critical thinking for a definitional omission of caring for the worth and dignity of every person could well be based on the unreasonable assumption that the concept, critical thinking, should represent everything that is good, an overwhelming requirement indeed. On the other hand, any educational program that includes critical thinking, but not the correlative disposition to care about every person's worth and dignity would be deficient and perhaps dangerous. The power of critical thinking unaccompanied by this correlative disposition could lead to serious trouble.

This set of somewhat overlapping dispositions is the result of years of attending to – in many contexts – the kinds of ways people seem to go wrong. The thirteen sub-dispositions, though interdependent in a number of ways, each respond to a significant degree and common failing that I have found. Jointly, they seem to cover the waterfront fairly well. The set has been refined as a result of comments and criticisms (by many, to whom I am indebted) of my earlier attempts to conceptualize critical thinking. So the set represents a culminating attempt to specify an important, comprehensive, and fairly manageable group of dispositions of the critical thinker.

---

1 From my Critical thinking (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice hall, Forthcoming.)

From handout:
Abilities.

Ideal critical thinkers have the ability to:

(the first five items involve clarification)
1. Identify the focus: the issue, question, conclusion
2. Analyze arguments
3. Ask and answer questions of clarification and/or challenge
4. Define terms, Judge definitions, and deal with equivocation
5. Identify unstated assumptions

(the next two involve the basis for a decision)
6. Judge the credibility of a source
7. Observe, and judge observation reports

(The next three involve inference.)
8. Deduce, and judge deductions
9. Induce and judge inductions
   a. to generalizations, and
   b. to explanatory conclusions including hypotheses
10. Make and judge value judgments
(The next two are metacognitive abilities - involving supposition and integration.)
11. Consider and reason from premises, reasons from premises, reasons, assumptions, positions, and other propositions with which one disagrees or about which one is in doubt - without letting the disagreement or doubt interfere with one's thinking ("suppositional thinking");
12. Integrate the other abilities and dispositions in making and defending a decision.

(The next three are auxiliary critical thinking abilities - having them is not constitutive of being a critical thinker)
13. Proceed in an orderly manner appropriate to the situation, for example:
   a. to follow problem solving steps
   b. to monitor one's own thinking
   c. to employ a reasonable critical thinking checklist
14. Be sensitive to the feelings, level of knowledge, and degree of sophistication of others; and
15. Employ appropriate rhetorical strategies in discussion and presentation (orally and in writing), including employing and reacting to "fallacy" labels in an appropriate manner.

A few interpretive comments:
1) This is only a critical thinking content outline. It does not specify level, curriculum sequence, emphasis, teaching approach, or type of content involved (standard subject matter content, general knowledge specific knowledge, etc.).
2) If this outline is used as a sequence for a separate critical thinking course, the definitional and assumptioanal-identification abilities would probably come later than indicated, because of their difficulty. In any course, whether a separate critical thinking course or not, all of the dispositions, the suppositional and integrational abilities (#11 and #12), and auxiliary abilities #13 through #15 would permeate the course.
3) The fallacy-labels part of #15 is partly rhetorical, and partly constitutive of critical thinking. The constitutive parts are covered in #1-#12, leaving the rhetorical part under #15.

---

2 From my "Critical Thinking: A Streamlined Conception, Teaching Philosophy, 14 (1991), 5 - 25, with a minor adjustment.
Minerva Access is the Institutional Repository of The University of Melbourne

Author/s:
Glaser, Jennifer

Title:
Reasoning, critical thinking and the critical person: towards a dialogical theory of critical thinking

Date:
1998-05

Citation:

Publication Status:
Unpublished

Persistent Link:
http://hdl.handle.net/11343/38818

File Description:
Reasoning, critical thinking and the critical person: towards a dialogical theory of critical thinking

Terms and Conditions:
Terms and Conditions: Copyright in works deposited in Minerva Access is retained by the copyright owner. The work may not be altered without permission from the copyright owner. Readers may only download, print and save electronic copies of whole works for their own personal non-commercial use. Any use that exceeds these limits requires permission from the copyright owner. Attribution is essential when quoting or paraphrasing from these works.