

Bruno Ćurko

***Critical thinking in teaching
Philosophy, Logic, and Ethics
(Kritičko mišljenje u nastavi
filozofije, logike i etike)***

Hrvatsko filozofsko društvo,
Zagreb 2017, 237 pp.

The book consists of four substantial chapters (philosophy and critical thinking, logic and critical thinking, ethics and critical thinking, philosophy with children and critical thinking), plus an introduction and a conclusion. It is well structured, written in a clear manner and supported by sound argument, with the author both discussing critical thinking as well as demonstrating it in his writing.

The fundamental thesis of the book could be summarized as follows: critical thinking is closely related to philosophy, logic, and ethics and is as such also linked to the teaching of philosophy, logic, and ethics in schools. The rules of formal and informal logic are the rules of critical thinking and any moral reflection must indispensably be critical, therefore the teaching of ethics is also inextricably linked to critical thinking. However, a more thorough analysis shows that the book provides two levels of argument. On the one hand, it refers to the relation between philosophy and its disciplines and critical thinking, while on the other hand, the issues discussed in the three key chapters of the book coincide with the three high school subjects taught in Croatia: (the history of) philoso-

phy, logic and ethics. Thus, what is under consideration is not merely the relation between philosophy and its disciplines and critical thinking, but also the relation between the three philosophy-related school subjects and critical thinking.

Through his overview of the history of philosophy in the second chapter, Ćurko highlights the close interconnection between the development of critical thinking and philosophy. The history of philosophy is also a history of contributions towards critical thinking. Epistemological discussions always relate to critical thinking and are in part discussions of critical thinking itself. Especially the pages dealing with Socrates, Bacon, Descartes and Dewey are very informative and a nice read, indeed. In fact, when it comes to Bacon and Descartes, the two pioneers of critical thinking, their way of thinking appears to be completely modern. Passages from their writings could easily be transferred into modern critical thinking textbooks which aptly corroborates the thesis that historically speaking, philosophy has always also been concerned with what it means to think critically. Kant's essay *What is Enlightenment* even contains a direct call to critical thinking, as pointed out by Ćurko. For Kant, critical thinking is not merely a method, but rather a programme that imposes critical thinking on humankind as an ethical duty. Dewey, above all, is considered to be the founding father of modern critical thinking and is significant not only because of his considerations of "reflective thinking", to use the

term Dewey himself uses to refer to critical thinking, but also due to his emphasis on learning to think which he considers to be the primary goal of education. Dewey also points out that learning by heart and mere uncritical retention of information make no sense. On the contrary, the education system should encourage students to think and foster teaching methods that are based on the rational processing of information.

This chapter also contains an analysis of all three Croatian syllabi for philosophy as an upper-secondary school subject. They are not presented in black or white terms, since the author notes that even a historical approach can provide an opportunity for critical thinking. The analysis clearly shows that no syllabus or approach to teaching philosophy can in itself guarantee that philosophy lessons will actually teach students to think critically. All three approaches, i.e. the historical approach, the problem-based approach and the approach focussing on discussion, can lead to critical thinking, but the syllabus in itself cannot guarantee that they will actually occur. Much depends on the teacher and his or her teaching methods, since it is the teacher who determines what happens in the classroom. The conclusion to be drawn from this chapter is that throughout history, the development of critical thinking has been inextricably linked to philosophy. It could even be said that the result of Čurko's overview of the history of the relation between critical thinking and philosophy is also that

critical thinking acquires a historical dimension. Furthermore, the part of the book dealing with the history of philosophy can be seen as a demonstration that critical thinking belongs primarily to philosophy, and only then to psychology and pedagogy.

In a similar vein, the third chapter defines the contents of formal and informal logic and the difference between the two, using this as the basis to address the question of how much logic is required for critical thinking. As it turns out, there is no simple answer to this question. Teachers and moderators of critical thinking workshops must be equipped with a profound and systematic knowledge of formal and informal logic. Critical thinking is not possible without using logical rules. Logic is a tool that makes critical thinking possible in everyday life. However, there is a clear distinction to be made between the knowledge of logic that a teacher or moderator must possess and the knowledge that is relayed to students or workshop participants. When it comes to workshops, it is the age of participants that needs to be considered. Younger students need to be made aware that the rules of logic exist, but the workshop should not turn into a lesson in logic. When dealing with older students, however, more logic knowledge can gradually be transmitted. Given that the knowledge of logic is indispensable for critical thinking, the teacher must master the rules of logic, while students gradually acquire (a part of) this knowledge. Even though students use

the rules of logic the same way they use grammar, i.e. without necessarily having formally learnt them, awareness and reflection of the rules is instrumental for critical thinking. The author thus comes to the conclusion that the best solution would be to introduce a school subject on logic and critical thinking which would relay the knowledge of formal and informal logic and immediately relate this knowledge to critical thinking.

The fourth chapter on ethics and critical thinking defines the relation between ethics and critical thinking. Ćurko advocates that critical thinking plays a crucial role in moral education. If moral stances are adopted without reflection, such stances are unfounded. Traditions that are adopted without questioning are dogmas rather than morality. Critical thinking allows us to critically review our moral stances, thereby liberating us from the prejudice of previous generations. In childhood during the first phase of moral development, it is only natural that children adopt the moral stances of their parents without questioning. But for this morality to truly become their own it needs to be critically considered. Therefore, moral stances can only become one's own once they have been consciously adopted; only the moral stances that have passed one's critical scrutiny can truly be deemed one's own. Critical thinking plays a key role in this process. The reflection of the individual's moral development and the development of moral judgement thus points to a distinct moral dimension of critical thinking.

The fifth chapter is devoted to philosophy for children, a new philosophical discipline which aims to teach children how to think critically, as well as to its relation to philosophy and to critical thinking. The analysis focuses primarily on the relation between the three types of thinking that are characteristic of philosophy for children, namely critical, creative and caring thinking. What the author finds is that all three types of thinking are interrelated and complement one another. But perhaps there is another option to consider when it comes to the relation between critical, creative and caring thinking. Given that all three types of thinking are interrelated, the question that arises is whether this interrelation is so significant that one type of thinking is impossible without the other two or without certain elements of the other two types.

To conclude, Bruno Ćurko's book is an important contribution to the philosophy of education in general and to the didactics of philosophy in particular. His work supports the thesis that critical thinking is of absolute necessity in any educational system, if we aim to develop communication skills, power of argumentation, logical reasoning, and incentives to express one's own opinion in students. It shows the relevance of philosophy for today's society and educational system. It also provides orientation in the field of critical thinking and recommendations on how to do it.

If, as a reviewer, I am expected to voice criticism, my reproach would be that the book is a chapter too short.

What might be a valuable contribution to the topics covered in the book is a chapter that would apply critical thinking to critical thinking itself. This is implied in the book, partially developed here and there, but a special chapter on the limits of critical thinking would be an interesting read. To give an example of what I have in mind: The prevalent view of schools in Slovenia nowadays is that there are too many facts, too much rote learning and learning by heart. Everyone insists that pupils should not learn facts but rather learn how to think. However, it is no rarity for teachers to encounter pupils with very little knowledge of basic facts about our society, history, or particular area of knowledge. It seems that once a certain valuable competence in society becomes recognized as important, it also tends to become fashionable. As a result, it may be hailed as the solution to all problems and become the sole focus of implementation, while all other aspects fade in the background and other perspectives are deemed less important. At such times, it would be wise to remember that every position has its limits – and, in our case, it would be interesting to examine the limitations of critical thinking. On a more personal note: that is something I would be very much interested in writing about myself. However, Bruno Ćurko may well beat me to it.

Marjan Šimenc

Slobodan Sadžakov,
Miloš Šumonja
Filozofija obrazovanja

Pedagoški fakultet Sombor,
Sombor 2018., 127 str.

Filozofija odgoja filozofska je disciplina koja je svoje mjesto pronašla na gotovo svim studijima filozofije, kako u Hrvatskoj tako i u regiji, te na mnogim različito profiliranim studijima odgojnih znanosti. U fakultetskoj ponudi susreće se, osim pod nazivom Filozofija odgoja, i kao Filozofija obrazovanja te Filozofija odgoja i obrazovanja. Sadržaj nastave iz ovoga područja na visokoškolskoj razini uobičajeno obuhvaća razmatranja odgojnih, ali i s odgojem povezanih praksi koje se, poput puko tehničke i strogo usmjerene izobrazbe za buduće zanimanje, često pogrešno poistovjećuju s odgojem samim. Profesionalna izobrazba, stručno osposobljavanje i priprema za određeno zanimanje svakako predstavljaju dio odgojno-obrazovnih nastojanja, no nikako ne iscrpljuju sve ono što odgoj jest. Filozofijsko promišljanje odgoja nužno polazi od razumijevanja čovjeka kao složenoga bića koje se samo prividno može rastaviti na međusobno nepovezane dimenzije. Filozofirati o odgoju znači pristupiti čovjeku kao cjelovitome biću, kao pojedincu i članu zajednice, te razmatrati nastojanja koja su usmjerena razvoju autentične ličnosti. To je tema o kojoj u povijesti filozofije ne nedostaje materijala. Međutim, sustavni pregledi takvih