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## CRITICISM OF CRITICAL THINKING

### Abstract

The text deals with the term “critical thinking”, so popular in today’s educational theories and even amongst philosophers. If a critic should be radical, they should be consistent, in this case, meaning that one who insist on critical thinking should subject the critical thinking itself to criticism. The hypothesis is that this term is logically inconsistent but also problematic in a broader philosophical, metaphysical, and anthropological context. Namely, we will try to show that this currently fashionable term “critical thinking” is the result of an overarching “scientism” dominant in the interpretation of the world and especially in the interpretation of human and social phenomena. The notion of “critical thinking”, in our opinion, is a direct result of today’s predominant scientific culture derived from the capitalist, economic logic that reduces the world to statistics and thus a human being to an exclusively rational being. Human nature is far more complex than a rational calculus needed just to improve productivity in economic processes. This reductionist logic, unfortunately, also became omnipresent in today’s philosophical culture.

**Keywords:** critical thinking, critique, anthropology, philosophy

### **Introduction: What is critical thinking?**

In the past 50 years or more, critical thinking has simply become fashionable. It is the “number one” topic today in every textbook on pedagogy or philosophy of education. There is no single textbook on these subjects that does not treat “critical thinking” as a primary educational goal. Thinking critically is the demand of the day.

In this paper, we set ourselves the task of problematizing this dominant notion both in philosophy and in the contemporary understanding of education. Criticism will be grounded in four contexts. The first is *epistemological* – in which we will offer a set of arguments against the formalism of critical thinking and, thus, its insufficiency in good reasoning. The second is *philosophical* – in which we will try to show that today’s fashion for “critical thinking” is based on a specific understanding of philosophy. The third is *metaphysical* – namely, we will show that so-called “scientism” (or, to call it so – “scientification” of the whole reality) is the metaphysical assumption from which this enormous importance is given to the concept of critical thinking. Finally, the fourth is the *anthropological* context which is a consequence of the previous two – namely, the “laxity” of today’s philosophy on one side and scientism as a general metaphysical assumption of understanding the world on the other, has produced the notion of the human being as *L’Homme Machine* (J. O. de La Mettrie) and thus, brought critical thinking into fore. However, we should give a chance and see what critical thinking in the first place is and how it became so important today. Nevertheless, we live in the information age. No historical era before has offered such a massive volume of and such easy access to information. Information is more available today than ever. That drastically changed the very notion of “knowledge” and dramatically overturned every concept of education known to date. The ease with which we access information creates the illusion that we know something, which is just an illusion because the information is not knowledge.

Moreover, exactly from this kind of socio-historical circumstances, the need for what is called “critical thinking” emerges. It is practicing our ability to process that vast amount of information critically and thus helps us understand and interpret these endless facts and phenomena, so we can logically organize them and derive correct conclusions. There are numerous definitions of what is meant by critical thinking, from that it is “rational, skeptical and unbiased thinking” through the opinion that it is “careful thinking directed to the goal” to the fact that “critical thinking is reasonable, reflective thinking, cleaned of emotional

content and arbitrary principles.” One of the leading experts in this field, Bruno Čurko (2017: 13), in his truly comprehensive study of critical thinking, gives the following definition: “Critical thinking is a reflection on what is available to us, it is a critical processing in which self-evidence, prejudices and stereotypes are questioned, illogicalities and groundlessness are rejected, and by which we strive to reach quality assessment, consistency and validity.” From all of this, it is evident that it is about practicing thinking and following strict formal rules for better judgment of all that is subjected to thinking. The goal is better thinking, understanding, reasoning, and concluding about the things we judge. In doing so, one of the central goals of critical thinking is the rejection and overcoming of stereotypes and prejudices, especially “cleaning” the thinking from emotional “deposits”. On another occasion in the above-mentioned book, Čurko (2017:10) claims: “It is a way of thinking that should avoid emotional content and arbitrary principles.”

Other authors provide us with other definitions. Thus, “critical thinking is broadly seen as a type of logical thinking that helps us analyze and understand, or interpret, all forms of situations or information so that the conclusions we draw from our interpretations are sound” (Mason, 2008: 118). What is important for Siegel (1988: 9), on the other side, is that “someone who can be called a “critical thinker” does not have particular skills only, but is also a certain kind of person.” We can see critical thinking proponents ask us to possess certain features, or even more, to be “a certain kind of a person “- formal, logical, rational, and above all passionless person. “*I feel* and *I think* are sometimes used interchangeably, but that practice causes confusion. Feeling is a subjective response that reflects emotion, sentiment, or desire “, claims Ryan (2012: 18), and concludes: “In contrast to feeling, thinking is a conscious mental process performed to solve a problem, make a decision, or gain understanding “(Ryan, 2012: 19). We have no room here, nor do we intend to enlist and analyze all the numerous definitions of critical thinking. The idea is to point out only the basic or, at least, the most common features that are associated with different authors. We think that what is common to almost all the definitions are the following characteristics of critical thinking: 1. Rational, logical thinking; 2. Dispassionate; 3. Cleared of prejudices and biases; 4. Goal-directed. Moreover, exactly on these characteristics of critical thinking, we will aim our criticism in the four contexts mentioned above.

### **Epistemological context**

The first uncleared question about the term “critical thinking” is why the need for a new and separate term for the formal-logical aspect of thinking when there is a long ago established scientific discipline on that – Logic. Nevertheless, the first thing that comes to our mind (as we will see in the next chapter) is that this is probably the result of that uncomprehending submissiveness of today’s philosophy to be “modern”, to speak plainly, to speak with the language of science, especially with the language of the free market and capitalism.

Indeed, if the subject of critical thinking is thinking in its formal aspect, then what does critical thinking offer different from Logic as a previously established science? If we say critical thinking is the analysis of available facts, evidence, observations, and arguments to form a valid and solid judgment, then why not define that by the old term “informal logic”? Especially if we have in mind that the term “logic” is broader and incorporates formal and informal logic. Formal logic is an abstract study of propositions, statements, or assertively used sentences and of deductive arguments. It abstracts itself from the content of these elements using strictly symbolical systems to calculate and create logical forms. Informal logic is the attempt to develop a logic to assess, analyze and improve the ordinary language (or “everyday”) reasoning, i.e., informal logic, as a field, has to do with the uses of argumentation in a context of dialogue - an essentially pragmatic undertaking. As we can see, essentially, this is the exact same subject of critical thinking.

Even if we accept that there is a need for a new name for an old science, it is precisely in this novelty evident the epistemological “shallowness” in which the modern world is immersed. Namely, precisely by this kind of treatment of critical thinking as a self-sufficient activity, not rooted in any wider formal-logical, let alone philosophical context, it becomes obvious that it is nothing more than ordinary sophistry. We should not forget that logic was created as a philosophical discipline, and as such, it proceeds from philosophically based assumptions, metaphysical variety approaches, and epistemological dilemmas. For critical thinking, that is irrelevant because, for critical thinking, it is enough just “to win the discussion.” However, no thinking can be just formal, “floating” outside of any philosophical, metaphysical, or epistemological context. We have seen that proponents of critical thinking are misled by the abundance of information in the information age, and they consider that it is sufficient enough to organize this information in just a formal manner. That would do the job, they think.

Nevertheless, the fact that we live in an information age and have access to an infinite amount of information still does not mean that we know anything. After all, the above-mentioned inflation of information even sabotages knowledge itself. In his brilliant analysis of knowledge, Liessmann (2012: 34-35) quite correctly treats knowledge as more than information. Knowledge is information, but not all information is knowledge. Knowledge is information endowed with meaning. We only find out the information, it is communicated to us, and finally, we memorize it while we acquire the knowledge actively, with a creative effort of our intellectual capacities. Knowledge is cognition, and information is not! Knowledge is the result of cognition, of creative, and above all, active penetration into the world; information is only passive reception. Primarily, knowledge is that which is connected in a logical and consistent way to each other according to the immanent, internal logic of the science to which it belongs. Knowledge is a consistent, logical system, but especially important - *subjected to the inner meaning of the science of which that knowledge is a part*. One cannot truly know *outside the coordinate system of the science to which that knowledge belongs*. The author, for example, knows what proteins, carbohydrates, or fats are; also knows what a kidney, lungs, or heart is, which, by the way, should beat from 60-80 beats per minute and that below that is bradycardia, above that is tachycardia, but all this does not make the author a physician; basically, all this is not knowledge, but memorized information! No matter how much critical thinking tries to teach the author a correct formal way of thinking and concluding, no matter how much critical thinking tries to provide a correct “arrangement” or correct organization of this knowledge, no matter how formally and logically correct the conclusion is, no matter how accurately the deduction is derived from all of this possessed information ...still the author will not be able to make a diagnosis or to cure himself. Because as we said, knowledge, first and foremost, is not only a logically organized and structured system but is *highly contextualized in the immanent logic of the very science to which that information and that knowledge belong*. Additionally, the logic of one system differs from the logic of another system.

What is more, if we think about it, the idea behind critical thinking understood in this way can essentially turn out to be a limitation of thinking; simply because it kills creativity. It kills it with the demand to respect the existing situation and the current paradigm in a certain science. Critical thinking requires us to limit ourselves or at least comply with actual logic in making and deriving conclusions. So, for example, the question can be asked - in that thought process of critical thinking, which logic should we respect: classical or non-classical, bivalent, or polyvalent logic? Imagine, for example, in the age before the emergence of non-

classical logics, proponents of critical thinking would probably have required thinking exclusively within binary classical logics, thus, never would have made the breakthrough to polyvalent non-classical logics. Alternatively, imagine that Lobachevski's non-Euclidean geometry would be possible if we respected the logic immanent in Euclidean geometry. This says that for a breakthrough in a new thought context, in a new and creative way of thinking, the formalism of logic (formal or informal, whatever) is insufficient by itself, and that is precisely why Logic is and should be a philosophical discipline because thinking needs that broader metaphysical and epistemological context. Hence, critical thinking, by itself, as a formal exercise in the mind, ungrounded in wider philosophical, metaphysical contexts, is insufficient.

Finally, after we removed logic as a subject from secondary schools and colleges, there is now talk about introducing critical thinking. So, was not logic the "science of thinking"!? And the science of thinking in a systematic, scientifically based form, contextualized in wider philosophical frameworks? There is no better way to arrive at a valid conclusion through correct thinking than through some knowledge, not only of Logic as a discipline of forms of thinking but through a knowledge of the very science of thinking, i.e., by adopting the 'logic of logic'. We said knowledge is not isolated information. It is rooted in a system of meaningful and logically coherent networks. Only learning Logic makes it possible because we practice thinking by learning the science of thinking. Learning just critical thinking, isolated from these broader contexts, can make the pupil only a sophist, a manipulator of thought and language in order to win a political debate or to leave a good impression in the media.

### **Philosophical context**

We should outline the second context - the philosophical one. The first and basic task of philosophy has always been and will be to problematize what is obvious and what is thought as ostensible existing. To problematize and criticize! - that is the basic task of the philosopher and philosophy. In fact, perhaps the best definition of philosophy has been given by a non-philosopher; a Russian; and a Minister of Education of the Russian Empire, in the time of Nicholas I. Namely, minister P.A. Shirinsky-Shakhmatov, in 1850, abolished all institutes of philosophy in Russia at that time with the following argument: "The benefit of philosophy has not been proven, and the harm is guaranteed"! (Stojanov, 2019: 86).

Thus, in the case of this paper – one might not benefit from it, but the damage is certainly possible! We mention this view of philosophy not just for the sake of the *joke* itself but because it contains our personal understanding of philosophy and its place and role within itself. Especially in light of the concept we are discussing here - critical thinking. Namely, philosophy for us has always been something between science, religion, and art. It represents a separate area of human activity, a separate area of research and insight into the world. It is not an empirical, experimental science like the natural sciences, and it should not be. Especially, it is not applied and practical in the sense expected from science - from today's science especially. Therefore, it is true that the benefit of philosophy is not proven. In these kinds of modern circumstances, philosophy feels needles. At some point, philosophy (and philosophers in the first place) feels the urge to be useful, as is the case with the usefulness of natural sciences, especially the usefulness and benefit of the impressive progress of technique and technology; and that is why philosophy today is brought into a situation wishing to "turn itself into science." In the age of absolute dominance of science and the scientific method, especially in the age of rapid advancement of technique and technology, philosophy begins to "frustrate" itself and tries to be "science-alike" as much as possible - to be practical and to be useful. Endless and meaningless philosophical talks are no man's job today. Nobody is interested in the fundamental ideas of philosophy. It is a needless occupation.

Thus, modern philosophers came up with an idea. We must find a use for our job! We must get back in fashion! That is how "philosophy for children", "philosophy with children", "critical thinking," and many other new philosophical "disciplines" were born; In a search for its usability and practicality, philosophy turned into a children's toy! Or, as Lipman (2003: 58) states in one of the 31 definitions of critical thinking collected in his book: "light version of philosophy". Today, everything must be light – from Coca-Cola to philosophy. No heavy thoughts are welcomed. This is the age of lightness. That is what they reduced philosophy to, to philosophy for children! However, neither philosophy nor logic is light or fun. Philosophy and logic are not practical in this shallow sense. The superficiality of today's treatment of every scientific research and its reduction to practicality resulted in the superficiality of the treatment of philosophy as well. Pragmatism, and utilitarianism, mixed with capitalist, and neoliberal logic, produced philosophy just for the need of the markets. Today's most important market is media and politics, and in media and politics, argumentation is of utmost meaning. In media and political debates, truth does not matter; it matters

just who won the argument. And for that, all we need is the argumentation skills that critical thinking will provide us with.

Finally, philosophy is what teaches us. It is still not clear how and what any (logical) formalism (and thus, the formalism of critical thinking) can teach us. Is it possible to think without content? The content of thinking is more important than its form. The exercise in thinking occurs primarily through the contents of thinking. The very practice of philosophy is an exercise in thinking. Learning how to think, in that sense, is just a mere formalism that will not lead us to knowledge because there is no learning about thinking itself and because thinking and hence - learning and knowledge- always implies content! The desire to learn how to think without content is like learning to swim without entering the water! The very thinking about philosophical contents is critical thinking by itself. The content can only be the object of contemplation. Critical thinking separated from its essence - philosophy - is just empty sophistry. Once again, we should not forget that logic was born as a philosophical discipline; hence, pure form is nothing without the content.

### **Metaphysical context**

When we deliver critiques of critical thinking in a broader metaphysical context, we think of two key things mainly: pragmatism and utilitarianism, on the one hand, as the dominant philosophical paradigm, and scientism, i.e., general “scientification of reality”, on the other. Namely, both are, so to speak, the metaphysical assumptions of reality underlying the idea of critical thinking.

Yet, in the postmodern age, when the death of metaphysics was proclaimed, metaphysics lives on. Although, from positivism onwards, through pragmatism and utilitarianism, and especially with the birth of analytical philosophy, metaphysics was declared dead, yet occurs this is fundamentally, logically impossible. If we think it through, the very assumption of the “death of metaphysics” is metaphysical itself. Any attempt to postulate some underlying principle of reality, no matter how non-metaphysical, is fundamentally a metaphysical attempt. “Killing” metaphysics itself is a metaphysical act, just because there is no empirical, non-metaphysical “proof” for “dead metaphysics”. The very assumption that facticity or empiricism is sufficient and that there is nothing behind them – is a metaphysical assumption.

Hence, critical thinking is the result of pragmatism (utilitarianism) and scientism, both as metaphysical assumptions. At the very core of today’s favoring



of critical thinking lies the metaphysical assumption about the utilitarianism of human actions and science as the only tool for those actions. Especially blind faith that human reason is not just sufficient but also the only way of breaking into reality.

Of course, it is redundant to argue the great importance and achievements of science. That is unquestionable and beyond any reasonable argumentation. Our task throughout this paper is not to dispute that but to point to the reductionism of scientific exclusivity. Exclusivity, especially the inadmissibility of transposing the scientific worldview and scientific methods to the overall reality and the personal experience of that reality. According to our conviction, that represents an inadmissible scientization and, thus, a reduction of reality and life. Scientism, as a metaphysical approach to reality, is necessarily reductionist. Hence, all the features of critical thinking, and all the demands it sets before the subject, are the result of this metaphysical basis of the utilitarian and scientific type of thinking.

The general and overarching rationalization of the world and life is the basis of critical thinking. The prevailing view today is the centrality of rational thought, and *rational inquiry* is based on principles that are closely tied to purposes – utilitarian and pragmatic ideas for which thinking is just computing of the goals. *The ratio* is just a pure calculus of the goals.

“The notion that for the development of knowledge we need to become critical cataloguers, calculators, and spectators of the phenomena that comprise the world has been an accepted western view for centuries. The urge has been to gain understanding through the disinterested study of objects, others and ourselves; the argument goes that these substances and their inter-relationships stand independently of and are prior to our individual experience of them” (Mason, 2008:122).

For Bonnett (1994: 71), the notion of challenging and calculative thinking can be set distinctly against the notion of poetic or meditative thinking. Bonnett's book *Children's Thinking: Promoting understanding in the primary school* is a call for the curriculum to redress the imbalance that has resulted from the dominance of the rationalist perspective in education. His summary of the contrasting features of poetic and calculative thinking is perhaps the best way to highlight this.

He first sets out a table to illustrate the two different stances:

<b>Calculative</b>	<b>Poetic</b>
<i>Self-purposeful</i>	<i>Celebratory</i>
<i>Goal-oriented</i>	<i>Open, curious, wondering</i>
<i>Analyses things into problems solved</i>	<i>Intuits the wholeness of things</i>
<i>Turns things into defined objects—manageable, familiar</i>	<i>Stays with a thing in their inherent strangeness</i>

He then distinguishes the feelings and aspirations of each way of thinking:

<b>Calculative</b>	<b>Poetic</b>
<i>Satisfaction as a result of a sense of sorting things out, getting things ordered, made clear, transparent</i>	<i>Sense of mystery, awe, wonder, fascination evokes a feeling of attunement</i>
<i>Effects things</i>	<i>Affected by things</i>
<i>Seek control</i>	<i>Allows itself to be vulnerable</i>
<i>Makes statements</i>	<i>Sings, “says “ what is</i>
<i>Seek truth as correctness</i>	<i>Seeks truth as revealing</i>

Distinctions made in this way serve to illustrate the limitations of critical thinking. This kind of polarization offered by Bonnett, although maybe too simplistic, yet is helpful, for it allows these overlooked dimensions of thinking and attitude towards life and the world.

This impeccable faith in reason is just a mere relapse from the naivety of the Enlightenment, reinforced by neoliberal and capitalist market logic. Reducing the entire human cognitive relation toward the world exclusively to reason and goals is nothing but economics. And even worse - the market economy. After all, calculating has always been the job of economists. This reaches its peak with the development and dominance of capitalism. “The closeness of natural science procedures to industrial production has long been known and described...” (Lisman, 2012: 49). The supremacy of economism as the dominant determinant of social relations leads to the dissolution of life in economics. Capitalism and, in general, the supremacy of economism, as a principle, treats the whole society as a field of economic relations. Because that is the only way to have full control of life: what one can count and calculate, one can control. Liberalism and

economics, i.e., capitalist logic, as the dominant determinant of today's social relations, do not tolerate irrationality and indeterminacy. For capital to work flawlessly, it must not only rationalize all relations in society, but even more so – it must throw out the irrational, i.e., the suprarational, the emotional, and the volitional, that is, to subdue it exactly by rationalizing it.

The success of the natural sciences completely scientized the entire reality, and quantification entered the sphere of the social and the political, even the religious, thus creating - Foucault would say - appropriate discursive practices that suppressed everything that could not be rationalized, suppressed everything that could not be brought under calculation. Only under these metaphysical assumptions can it be governed. Finally, all of this today, instead of governance in the classical sense, leads to governmentality<sup>1</sup>, as Foucault would say (Foucault: 2009), which refers more to the skills, and techniques of governance, i.e., of control rather than the rule of democracy as an idea. Foucault's concept of governmentality refers to all aspects of governance in society through knowledge; he analyzes management and new techniques of governance, such as statistics, medical examinations, police, social institutions, and so on, which are regulated through numbers. That is why we need the Reason and only the Reason: to calculate, make lists, and sense tendencies in society through statistical operations... That is why we need critical thinking – to calculate everything. Reason itself has no subordinate idea; it has no idea, and it can prove anything and justify anything. For a reason itself, everything is possible; everything is justified.

### **Anthropological context**

With all the above-mentioned, critical thinking today is just the last and pure logical result of the overall rationalization and scientization of every aspect of our life. Critical thinking requires us to have a rational, skeptical, and unbiased opinion, or, in other words, our thinking has to be reasonable, reflective, strictly logical, and clear of emotional content and arbitrary principles, as we stated in some of the definitions above.

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<sup>1</sup> The term *governmentality* (fr. *Gouvernementalité*), is Foucault's neologism derived from the French *gouvernemental*, with which he describes the specific way of governing, i.e., administering the population in modern European history, but the term also covers the techniques and procedures designed to regulate the behavior of individuals or the population of every possible level, not just administrative or political.

However, as we can see, what critical thinking demands of us is in collision with modern findings from psychology and anthropology. Namely, we are required to think cleansed of any affective, emotional, and volitional component. Nevertheless, if we open any psychology textbook, we will see that every statement has an emotional and volitional component in addition to the cognitive one. The demand to purge our judgment of our personality's affective and connotative side is nothing but a demand to turn ourselves into rational, calculating machines. The dominance of uncritical rationalism in society leads to forgetting the multidimensionality of our personality and the scientization of every aspect of our existence, forgetting that our life, and therefore our cognition and attitudes, are not only cognitive but also affective and conative. There is no attitude, no conclusion, and no statement that does not contain our personality with all aspects of it (not just the rational one).

It is the same case with the socio-cultural dimensions of thinking. No opinion is outside of the socio-cultural context in which it emerged. Finally, social epistemology, as a philosophical study of the relevance of communities to knowledge, shows us how knowledge is socially constructed.

We are not constructing our thinking solely as mere autonomous agents of thought, but to the same extent, we must be aware that thinking is constructed: and yet, thought by itself, inside its own coordinate system, cannot comprehend that. No matter how critically we think, we will not be able to get out of that socially constructed context without being aware of it. We cannot get the awareness of the context just by thinking formally, hence critically. In order to do so, we have to be exposed to a different stance, to a different worldview, not just by thinking critically. And finally, why should the socio-cultural dimension of thought be ignored and treated as bad?

Just as the emotional, affective side of our personality, and therefore our thought too, should not be considered bad. Why our thought should be cleansed from our affective, emotional side, even if that would be possible? We saw, according to findings of psychology, that it is impossible. Every single statement of ours is emotionally colored. There is no such a stance or a statement result of a perfect Reason, not impinged by any bit of irrationality in it. And critical thinking requires exactly that. A book about critical thinking is even titled *Beyond Feelings: A Guide to critical thinking* (Ryan: 2012). For this dominant culture of Reason, for this present-day cult of calculations, not only is reason sufficient, but it is also necessary to go beyond emotions. Emotions are unnecessary, even more so - they are a burden. Because that is the only way we will achieve "objectivity".

Oh, what a trap that objectivity is! A trap derived precisely from our Reason that believes in the strict division of the subject and the object, and especially it believes in the absolute independency of the subject. However, the strict division of the cognitive subject and the object of knowledge is just a trick of the Reason, in order not just to better know reality but also for better tolerance of reality. Our relationship to objects, to the world in general, is not only “separated” and from a “distance.” We are immersed in the world, with our reason, but also with our feelings and emotions, especially with our bodies. Our emotional, our corporeal way of relating to the world is prior, and objectifying and rationalizing about the world is secondary and dependent upon this more fundamental way of encountering the world. The mind is not just an inner function of the body, and especially of our personality. Instead, we should acknowledge that we are first and foremost embodied so that the mind pervades our corporeal existence and is not somehow added. The mind, and hence reason and reasoning and thinking, is not an outside feature of our soul and body, of our comprehensive experience of the world in which we live. “Our spontaneous experience of the world, charged with subjective, emotional, and intuitive content, remains the vital and dark ground of all our objectivity” (Abrams, 1996: 34). No matter how much Reason tries to think critically, it thinks from the depths of this spontaneous experience of the world, which always will be “charged with subjective, emotional, and intuitive content.” Or like even more beautifully Meleau-Ponty (1962, viii) puts it:

“All my knowledge of the world, even my scientific knowledge, is gained from my own particular point of view, or from some experience of the world without which the symbols of science would be meaningless. The whole universe of science is built upon the world as directly experienced, and if we want to subject science itself to rigorous scrutiny and arrive at a precise assessment of its meaning and scope, we must begin by reawakening the basic experience of the world, of which science is the second-order expression. ... To return to things themselves is to return to that world which precedes knowledge [and] of which knowledge always *speaks*.”

That is why insisting on critical thinking per se, without taking into account whole-life experience, is of very little use, especially in education, where it is proclaimed as educational goal number one. We could agree, Reason is a perfect calculation machine and deducing conclusions, but we are immersed in the world with our complete life experience. To a very real degree, the world is necessarily and primarily a human world “whose structure, articulation and very existence

are functions of human agency“(Cooper, 1990: 58). That is why we should instead allow ourselves to be immersed in life, open to the nature of objects and others that surround us. Our experience of being in the world is far more comprehensive than just thinking about the world. Our bodies, experiences, and personality are how we may enter into perspectival and meaningful relationship with all things. The Reason, i.e. thinking, does not provide us with meaningfulness, and something else provides our Reason with meaningful cause to think.

### **Conclusion: critical thinking in education is not enough**

From so much “criticality”, critical thinking does not even see that the term “critical thinking “ itself is redundant, an unnecessary tautology, because thinking, by its definition, is critical and reflective. Does not the term itself - “thinking”- already presuppose criticality? Indeed, has not thinking always been exactly just that – rational and critical!? In fact, is it possible to think that thinking is not critical in its essence? In the essence of thinking is criticality, critical reflection toward the object of thinking. When we say thinking, we mean critical thinking, or it is not thinking at all. When we say that somebody has adopted a non-critical stance or expressed a non-critical supposition, it means that he has not thought it through and that he was not thinking. If we had read Plato, for example, we would have seen that thinking was never anything else but critical! What is not critical is not thinking at all, but *opinion*, or what Plato called *Doxa*, as opposed to *episteme*, as a lower level of knowledge of the world. Namely, Plato, through the “allegory of the cave”, defined thinking as *justified true belief* while distinguishing between degrees or levels of knowledge: *imagination, belief, knowledge, and wisdom*. Without going into a more detailed analysis of what is meant today by critical thinking, vis a vis Plato’s ideas, we will only note that today’s understanding of knowledge does not go further than the third degree in Plato, from the level of *doxa*. Today, wisdom – true and most desired knowledge – is a luxury we cannot afford. We do not need wisdom; knowledge to calculate is enough.

This way, critical thinking finally postulated the ideal of neoliberalism and capitalist logic as an educational ideal: to transform us into a calculating machine for the multiplication of capital. With critical thinking as an educational paradigm, the need for upbringing is completely and irrevocably lost. Reason cannot be brought up, nurtured, or cultivated; it can only be trained, taught, and educated. Thus, schools become just educational institutions, not upbringing institutions. Nobody cares anymore for upbringing, just for education, because the ideal is

impeccable knowledge purged of passions, emotions, and humanity. “Alongside the undeniably useful approach to life and the world that is embraced by critical thinking, there are equally valuable, or even prior, elements of personhood and a distinctly human relationship to the world that need conceptualizing if we are to fully understand what it is to respect and therefore to educate persons “. (Mason, 2008:120). No one is interested in education anymore; everyone is only interested in knowledge - not even the truth, but just knowledge, the one that can be calculated, counted, the one that can be traded, and most important the one that can be used for control and governing.

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## KRITIKA KRITIČKOG MIŠLJENJA

### Sažetak

Tekst se bavi terminom "kritičko mišljenje", tako popularnim u današnjim teorijama obrazovanja, pa čak i među filozofima. Ako bi kritičar trebao biti radikalniji, trebao bi biti dosljedan, u ovom slučaju, to znači da onaj tko inzistira na kritičkom mišljenju treba i samo kritičko mišljenje podvrgnuti kritici. Hipoteza je da je ovaj termin logički nedosljedan, ali i problematičan u širem filozofskom, metafizičkom i antropološkom kontekstu. Pokušat ćemo, naime, pokazati da je ovaj trenutno moderan termin "kritičko mišljenje" rezultat sveobuhvatnog "scijentizma" koji dominira u tumačenju svijeta, a posebno u tumačenju ljudskih i društvenih pojava. Pojam "kritičkog mišljenja", po našem mišljenju, izravna je posljedica današnje prevladavajuće znanstvene kulture proizašle iz kapitalističke, ekonomske logike koja svijet svodi na statistiku, a time i čovjeka na isključivo racionalno biće. Ljudska priroda daleko je složenija od racionalne računice potrebne samo za poboljšanje produktivnosti u ekonomskim procesima. Ta je redukcionistička logika, nažalost, postala sveprisutna i u današnjoj filozofskoj kulturi.

**Ključne riječi** : kritičko mišljenje, kritika, antropologija, filozofija