A Virtue Epistemic Approach to Critical Thinking

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Abstract

In this thesis I develop a virtue-theoretic conception of critical thinking. I argue that many conceptions of critical thinking have conflated “critical thinking” with “good thinking”. In contrast to other intellectual pursuits, I identify critical thinking as its own activity which aims at the achievement and maintenance of intellectual autonomy. I identify the constitutive virtues of critical thinking as conscientiousness, self-awareness, and prudent wariness. I argue that virtues require internal success, and intellectual autonomy is the achievement of the external success of the critical thinking virtues. It is a mistake to consider other virtues or character traits involving moral or cooperative behaviour as constitutive of critical thinking, though these may be ancillary virtues and useful to foster alongside the virtues of critical thinking. The conception I offer in this thesis suggests a solution to concerns regarding transfer of learning and offers a pedagogically-clear way of framing a critical thinking curriculum.
Declaration

This thesis is submitted to Bond University in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. This thesis represents my own original work towards this research degree and contains no material that has previously been submitted for a degree or diploma at this University or any other institution, except where due acknowledgement is made.
Dedication

To my parents, Doug and Helen.
List of figures

Figure 1: The relationship between the critical thinking virtues .............................................111

Figure 2: The relationship between the aims of the critical thinking virtues and intellectual autonomy .........................................................................................................................113

Figure 3: Paul and Elder’s ‘opposites of the intellectual virtues’ .............................................137

Figure 4: McPeck’s depiction of the ‘standard approach’ to transfer .......................................164
List of tables

Table 1: Ennis’ 1991 ‘streamlined characterization’ of the ideal critical thinker.................11
Table 2: Ennis’ critical thinking dispositions from 1987 to 1996........................................15
Table 3: Tracking Ennis’ critical thinking dispositions from 1987 to 1996.........................16
Table 4: Zagzebski’s distinction between intellectual virtues and skills..............................36
Table 5: Baehr’s varieties of character-based virtue epistemology (VE)...............................46
Table 6: Distinctions in virtuous acts from the Town Hall example..................................67
Table 7: Summary of Ennis’ 1987 and 1996 critical thinking dispositions..........................144
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Contents

Abstract .......................................................................................................................... i

Declaration ................................................................................................................... ii

Dedication ...................................................................................................................... iii

List of figures .................................................................................................................. iv

List of tables .................................................................................................................... v

Acknowledgements ......................................................................................................... vi

Contents .......................................................................................................................... vii

Introduction ...................................................................................................................... 1

1. Attempts to define critical thinking ................................................................. 5

   1.1 Ennis’ ‘A Concept of Critical Thinking’ ................................................................. 5

       1.1.1 Ennis’ aspects and dimensions of critical thinking ........................................ 7

       1.1.2 Ennis’ dispositions ........................................................................................ 12

   1.2 Passmore’s ‘critical spirit’ .................................................................................. 18

       1.2.1 Teaching a student to be critical ................................................................... 18

   1.3 McPeck’s conception of critical thinking in Critical Thinking and Education ...... 21

       1.3.1 McPeck’s Thinking is Always Thinking About X Argument (TIATAXA) 22

       1.3.2 McPeck’s ‘reflective scepticism’ .................................................................. 24

   1.4 Siegel’s ‘appropriately moved by reasons’ ......................................................... 26

   1.5 The ‘Delphi’ report ............................................................................................. 28

   1.6 Stagnation .......................................................................................................... 31

   1.7 Hope and virtue .................................................................................................. 33

       1.7.1 Benefits of a virtue epistemic approach to critical thinking ....................... 34

   1.8 Conclusion ........................................................................................................... 37

2. Virtue Epistemology ................................................................................................. 39

   2.1 Traditional epistemology .................................................................................... 39

   2.2 Baehr’s four variants of responsibilism .............................................................. 45

   2.3 Non-traditional projects for virtue epistemology ................................................. 50

   2.4 Conceptions of intellectual virtue ....................................................................... 53
2.4.1 Hursthouse’s naturalistic account of virtue ..................................................53
2.4.2 Zagzebski’s motivational account of virtue .....................................................55
2.4.3 Baehr’s personal worth account of the virtues .................................................57
2.4.4 Internal vs. external successes of virtue ..........................................................59

2.5 The situationist attack against virtue epistemology .............................................69
2.6 Conclusion .............................................................................................................78

3. The Aim of Critical Thinking ...................................................................................80
3.1 Goals of critical thinking vs. scientific thinking ..................................................81
3.2 Goals of critical thinking vs. communities of inquiry .........................................84
3.3 Critical thinking virtues as the virtues of inquiry .................................................88
3.4 The goal of Critical Thinking is Intellectual Autonomy ......................................92
3.5 Conclusion .............................................................................................................98

4. The Virtues of Critical Thinking ............................................................................100
4.1 Self-awareness .....................................................................................................101
4.2 Prudent wariness ...............................................................................................104
4.3 Conscientiousness ..............................................................................................106
4.4 The relationship between the critical thinking virtues and other intellectual virtues 113
4.5 Conclusion .............................................................................................................129

5. Theoretical Implications of a Virtue Epistemic Approach to Critical Thinking .........................................................................................................................131
5.1 Benefits of a teleological approach .................................................................132
5.1.1 A teleological approach is preferable to aspirational idealism ................................132
5.1.2 A teleological approach is preferable to act-based conceptions ..................140
5.2 Can the critical thinking virtues be misused? .................................................146
5.3 Conclusion .............................................................................................................151

6. Teaching critical thinking .......................................................................................153
6.1 Teaching the critical thinking virtues ..................................................................155
6.2 A return to the critical thinking debate ...............................................................162
6.3 Conclusion .............................................................................................................171

7. Conclusion ...............................................................................................................172

8. Appendices ..............................................................................................................177