

Critical Thinking, Bias and Feminist Philosophy: Building a Better Framework through Collaboration

Adam Dalglish, Patrick Girard and Maree Davies

Volume 37, Number 4, 2017

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1042919ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22329/il.v37i4.4794>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Informal Logic

ISSN

0824-2577 (print)

2293-734X (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Dalglish, A., Girard, P. & Davies, M. (2017). Critical Thinking, Bias and Feminist Philosophy: Building a Better Framework through Collaboration. *Informal Logic*, 37(4), 351–369. <https://doi.org/10.22329/il.v37i4.4794>

Article abstract

In the late 20th century theorists within the radical feminist tradition such as Haraway (1988) highlighted the impossibility of separating knowledge from knowers, grounding firmly the idea that embodied bias can and does make its way into argument. Along a similar vein, Moulton (1983) exposed a gendered theme within critical thinking that casts the feminine as toxic 'unreason' and the ideal knower as distinctly masculine; framing critical thinking as a method of masculine knowers fighting off feminine 'unreason'. Theorists such as Burrow (2010) have picked up upon this tradition, exploring the ways in which this theme of overly masculine, or 'adversarial', argumentation is both unnecessary and serves as an ineffective base for obtaining truth. Rooney (2010) further highlighted how this unnecessarily gendered context results in argumentative double binds for women, undermining their authority and stifling much-needed diversity within philosophy as a discipline. These are damning charges that warrant a response within critical thinking frameworks. We suggest that the broader critical thinking literature, primarily that found within contexts of critical pedagogy and dispositional schools, can and should be harnessed within the critical thinking literature to bridge the gap between classical and feminist thinkers. We highlight several methods by which philosophy can retain the functionality of critical thinking while mitigating the obstacles presented by feminist critics and highlight how the adoption of such methods not only improves critical thinking, but is also beneficial to philosophy, philosophers and feminists alike.

Critical Thinking, Bias and Feminist Philosophy: Building a Better Framework through Collaboration

ADAM DALGLEISH *Faculty of Arts*

PATRICK GIRARD *Faculty of Arts*

MAREE J. DAVIES *Faculty of Education*

University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand

p.girard@auckland.ac.nz

Abstract: Philosophers often seek the truth through methods taught under the banner "Critical thinking". For most, some variation on this method is used to organize thoughts and filter away subjectivity and biases. Feminist philosophers have highlighted a critical set of shortcomings within such methods that are yet to be fully addressed. In this paper, we explore these critiques and how they can be mitigated by incorporating elements from critical pedagogy and dispositional thinkers. The result is a set of recommendations for improved critical thinking methods which better account for contextualized bias while also more accurately tracking the truth.

Résumé: Les philosophes cherchent souvent la vérité à travers les méthodes enseignées sous la bannière

de la «Pensée critique». Pour la plupart, une variation de cette méthode est utilisée pour organiser les pensées et éliminer la subjectivité et les préjugés. Les philosophes féministes ont mis en relief un ensemble critique de lacunes au sein de ces méthodes, mais ces lacunes n'ont toutefois pas encore été entièrement abordées. Dans cet article, nous examinons ces critiques et explorons comment elles peuvent être atténuées en intégrant des éléments tirés de la pédagogie critique et des réflexions sur les dispositions qui oriente l'application des habiletés de la pensée critique. Le résultat est un ensemble de recommandations pour améliorer les méthodes de la pensée critique qui tiennent mieux compte des biais contextualisés tout en poursuivant plus précisément la vérité.

Keywords: Critical thinking, bias, feminism, feminist philosophy, feminist epistemology, critical pedagogy, critical dispositions, standpoint theory, embattled reason

© Adam Dalgleish, Patrick Girard & Maree J. Davies. *Informal Logic*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (2017), pp. 351-369.

1. Context and definitional clarity

Philosophy as a discipline preoccupies itself chiefly with the search for truth. As such, philosophers have spent a great deal of time attempting to craft models and frameworks for reliably finding the truth. Philosophers are not the only players in this game however, and educational theorists, feminists and others all seek to contribute on what makes a given pattern or method of thinking “critical”. Each of these different schools aims at something different, such as social change or challenging gendered assumptions within language. This paper seeks to explore that classic philosophical question of searching for the truth. As such, for the purposes of this paper, critical thinking (CT) refers to a method or intellectual behaviours designed to maximise truth-seeking potential. We realize that defining CT can be quite controversial, and we certainly don’t plan on addressing that debate within this paper, but we hope that by taking this familiar conception we can highlight for those within philosophy the importance of thinking carefully about what competing conceptions have to offer within the search for truth.

Most philosophers to this day defend the idea that their work is to some extent objective and not tainted too heavily by subjective experiences or bias. Methods are employed, often taught under the banner of CT, to filter out bias and subjectivity and track truth. These methods predominantly contain some combination of formal and informal logic as well as training on common psychological biases and domain knowledge¹. The claim that such methods are objective, however, came under harsh scrutiny in the 1900s, first by postmodern thinkers and later by feminist scholars (Haraway, 1988; Moulton, 1983). While de-

¹ Such methods also vary considerably depending on who teaches them, but a common thread is the use of formal and informal logic as well as other properties said to be truth tracking (Johnson & Blair, 2009).

fenders of CT engaged vehemently with post-modern critiques, the arguments made by feminist scholars have yet to be properly engaged with, despite the spawning of an entire school of feminist philosophy dedicated to highlighting and suggesting remedies to these ills (Rooney & Hundleby, 2010). Here's our modest attempt to address this situation, by exploring how current CT methods can mitigate the challenge posed by feminist philosophers and, in the process, improve current CT practice to more accurately track the truth.

2. Feminist critiques

At the heart of feminist critiques of CT lies feminist epistemology, more specifically standpoint theory (Anderson, 2015). Standpoint theory refers to the idea that what a knower perceives is influenced by their context, often their social and political background (Harding, 1986). One proponent of standpoint theory is Haraway (1988), who argues that "feminist objectivity means quite simply situated knowledges" (p. 581). In essence, Haraway argues that knowledge cannot be separated from the knower and as a result the context surrounding a knower shapes their knowledge intrinsically. In the case of gender, this might mean that people are socially, perhaps even biologically, inclined toward particular favorings. For example, men in New Zealand might be socialized toward stoic behaviours and shun charity as a sign of weakness. This might lead masculine knowers² to assess an argument regarding, say, individualist policies more favourably than one which argues along collectivist or community-based grounds. In this case, the knowledge generat-

² We use "masculine" and "feminine" as opposed to "male" and "female" notions of reasons to isolate gender performance, which we do not equate with biological sex. We choose this more appropriate terminology in response to contemporary feminist, gender and queer theory, which came later than some of the research we address in this paper.

ed through the use of any framework, including CT, will be shaped by the knower themselves; meaning that their prior knowledge will shape their acceptance of new knowledge.

This line of argument can lead to the promoting of a position of absolute subjectivity or relativism. But Haraway is not convinced relativism is any better than objectivism: “relativism is a way of being nowhere while claiming to be everywhere equally” (p. 584). This is in reference to her claim that proponents of CT’s objectivity commit to an impossible “gaze from nowhere” (p. 581); with knowers separated from knowledge, nowhere, and impartially “gazing” at truth without being embodied and present³. In response to this problem Haraway argues for what she calls “situated knowledges”. Her view is that we ought to accept that knowledge is limited by people’s “situatedness” and as such we should seek a diverse set of knowers to get a clearer picture of the truth. It is not that there is no objective truth, as one might be tempted to claim, but merely that the truth cannot be completely and singularly objective. Haraway describes this as the “slippery pole” with relativists at one end and objectivists on the other and argues we are best served by remaining in the middle; acknowledging our knowledge as imperfect and situated and working together to promote a more situated semi-objective understanding.

Within her argument for situated knowledges Haraway (1988) takes aim at the classical claim of the sciences and philosophy as bastions of objectivity. She argues, having established that knowledge cannot be sufficiently separated from knowers, that scientists and philosophers commit a “God trick” (p. 582). This amounts to claiming a perfect separation of the body and mind, knowledge and knower and contributes to an

³ This view shares much ground with Nagel’s (1986) book *The View from Nowhere*.

“ideology of direct, devouring, generative and unrestricted vision” (p. 582); something that is clearly impossible if we accept her previous arguments. This charge certainly seems apt for parts of philosophy. With the clear goal of CT methods being the separation of arguers from their embodied limitations, such as confusion, bias or emotion, and committing fully to the task of obtaining truth. This presents a problem for many schools of philosophy, as CT methods form the bedrock of how philosophers generate and test new knowledge and, much like psychological bias, the introduction of distorting experiences can significantly impact on the truth tracking potential of any model.

Not all feminist scholars take the middle line position that Haraway (1988) does, however, and more postmodern leaning feminists take arguments such as hers as proof of the subjectivity of knowledge and the impossibility of an objective CT framework. They argue for the dethroning of CT methods as the best method for knowledge generation or decision making over intuition or emotion (Mouffe, 2000; Thayer-Bacon, 1998). This view is rooted in the charge that our culture has been built up on the privileging of distinctly masculine styles of thought at the expense of more traditionally feminine styles such as intuition or emotion (Thayer-Bacon, 1998). Such scholars draw upon the growing literature which suggests we use unconscious intuition and emotional responses far more than we realize, contrasting starkly with the calm, well thought out picture we have of ourselves as critical thinkers (Kahneman, 2011). As a result, postmodern feminists often argue that we ought to pay more attention to intuitional and emotional styles of thinking and remove our focus from, and perhaps even be cautious of, the more philosophical CT style of thinking.

Another important critique of CT is that it perpetuates a sexist narrative and privileges masculine styles of reason over others. The original account of this argument is credited to Moulton but its contemporary form is highlighted well by Rooney (2010). Rooney argues that philosophy perpetuates a narrative

of “embattled reason” (Moulton, 1983)⁴. The first part of the picture Rooney highlights is philosophy’s adversarial nature, namely that philosophy, as it is practiced within the literature, very often takes up a metaphor of “arguments as war”: thinkers pit ideas to the death and the best ideas remain. Further, she argues that the goal of argumentation under this narrative shifts to the utter destruction of opposing argument, to “win” an argument, rather than arriving at truth. That this style of argumentation is prevalent can be seen with the frequent use of terminology such as ‘opponents’, ‘defending’ or ‘challenging arguments’ being common within philosophy (Duffin, 2006).

A second part of this picture Rooney highlights is that within western culture men have historically been viewed as stoic, reasoned and strong and women emotional, fickle and distracting. Rooney argues this sexist attitude permeates this narrative; promoting the myth of the “man of reason” who fights off feminine unreason. Together, these two trends construct “embattled reason” as a deeply flawed tool rooted in historical sexism and, other feminists would argue, privileges strict, classical reason over more feminine tools of reason; such as intuition, creativity or emotion.

Rooney’s (2010) argument gains significant strength when combined with Haraway’s (1988). If CT methods are not a neutral and objective tool for generating knowledge, then the flawed narrative of embattled reason seems even more problematic; as its masculine centric narrative can be considered a part of the reason philosophy attracts and maintains such a drastically low number of female philosophers. If knowledge cannot be sufficiently separated from knowers, and our emotions, socialization and history taint our CT, then the stifling of diversity is

⁴ Lloyd (1984) also goes into much depth on this topic in his book *The Man of Reason*.

actively limiting and hurting the pursuit of knowledge within the discipline as well as maintaining a narrative harmful to women more generally. Given this argument, one could easily further argue that philosophy would benefit from a move away from the traditional school of logic; or at least drastically reform our attitudes toward its position as the prime method of reason. Rooney does not go this far and identifies two key problems with this line of argument. First, such an argument comes dangerously close to committing to a narrative of gender difference, advocating a position of masculine and feminine reason many feminists would find distasteful—or worse in terms of male and female reason. Second, this argument fails to account for the rise of women within similarly masculine themed fields such as Law; where women now comprise roughly 50% of admissions. Surely if the masculine theme of philosophy was the main deterrent then the cutthroat and aggressive world of law would be equally off-putting. Rooney does, however, argue that the combative theme of philosophy is entirely unnecessary and argues its prominence is informed by a strong narrative of historic male preference and misogyny. Finally, she argues that philosophy should work hard to take on board feminist critique of its canon and actively work toward un-entangling itself from the “embattled reason” narrative.

A third critique, as examined by Burrow (2010), focuses on arguers and how gender roles place women in argumentative double binds, where women are expected to be adversarial, but their authority is undermined for doing so. Burrow argues that the adversarial context of modern philosophy attempts to force women into argumentative contexts which are aggressive. Aggressive, combative and direct communication has historically been considered masculine in western culture and, as such, for women to behave this way is to undermine their femininity and thus their authority. Feminists have been highlighting for decades the negative perceptions that accompany stepping outside one’s prescribed gender role and it is a claim that seems to be

seldom contested within the literature. This argument adds further heat to Rooney's critique of adversarial argumentation but also highlights a slight problem: rationality has been historically considered masculine. While not as strongly coded as aggression or direct action, rationality has been considered for most of history the realm of men. This is not to be confused with essentialist claims that rationality is masculine; but merely that it has been socially tied to that particular identity. If the other masculine traits of argumentation undermine women's authority then surely rationality must too. But, rationality has not been considered the singular domain of men for decades now and as such it seems unlikely that rationality would be a trait which would undermine femininity. This is raised as a defender of the adversarial context, someone who sees it as productive, might argue that it is the gender roles that need abolishing, not the context. But Burrow's argument is not the only one levelled against the adversarial context of philosophy and, as Rooney highlights, there does not seem to be a reason for philosophy to be so adversarial and more than a few concerns over it being so (Rooney, 2010).

While the identification of gender-based problems within adversarial argumentation could be disregarded as dealing with a symptom of gender roles rather than the cause, these critiques do seem to raise important points. First, if philosophy as a discipline could introduce more diversity within its ranks by adopting a less adversarial tone, then surely this is worth pursuing. Second, as was pointed out by Rooney, adversarial argumentation has negative effects on the quality and conduct of argument. shifting, or sometimes conflating, "winning" an argument with "seeking truth" (Rooney, 2010). Historically philosophy has been very resistant toward these kinds of arguments, despite their quite reasonable critiques of the discipline and the irony of critiquing the core CT method used by philosophers for not being receptive to critiques—a trait many would argue is core to good CT. If philosophy is to claim to be the home of the search

for truth, then philosophers need to be receptive to critiques that their methods are being distorted by situated biases.

3. Broader critical thinking literature: What can we learn?

As mentioned earlier, philosophy is not the only discipline that has grappled with the topic of CT. Educational theorists in particular have put great effort into attempting to distil the essence of CT so that it can be taught as a public good. One of the first theorists to spark this trend was Dewey, who conceptualized CT as the “active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends...” (Dewey, 1910, p .6). At this stage, educational CT methods shared many traits with philosophical CT and was focused primarily on argumentative methods upon which a user could progress toward reliable and true beliefs. But, as time progressed, educational theorists began highlighting a second important trait they called “critical dispositions”. As Facione (2015) highlights, being a good critical thinker means more than the use of a particular method and can be seen to be as much a set of traits as it is a set of skills. He argues that good CT requires thinkers who are open to new ideas, constantly challenging their beliefs, diligent in seeking out new knowledge and honest when confronting opposing argument. Critical thinkers might be operating within a philosophical CT framework and yet be unwilling to apply it consistently. Such thinkers could critique arguments they don’t like while defending ones they do and as such produce biased results far from the truth philosophy strives for. While not a perfect mix, this critique can be seen to share much with the argument proposed by Rooney, arguing that adversarial argumentation can undermine the quest for truth in favour of a more combative joust of ideas. Overall, dispositional CT highlights the traits required to be a good critical thinker and emphasises that they should be considered a key part of the CT picture.

Another vein within educational pursuits of CT literature is critical pedagogy, which argues that being critical is to be aware of societal structures and bias, and how these impact the way we think about and view the world. The critical pedagogy school's ideology is tied up intrinsically with critical theory and anti-conservative politics, with theorists such as Freire (1970) and hooks (1994) viewing the educational system as a dogmatic engine of conservative worldviews. To these theorists, the CT method should be viewed as a way of thinking that encourages students to challenge dominant narratives and enables them to explore their place within societal power structures. "Powerful knowledge", to use Young's (2009) term, is knowledge with epistemic and specialised properties whose purpose is to assist students to think about the world in abstract or context-independent ways. This type of knowledge provides students with the ability to develop a critical awareness of the forces structuring their lives and to imagine alternatives beyond their everyday experiences (Young, 2009). Pedagogy that addresses these wider social issues is argued by some as critical pedagogy (McLaren, Macrine, & Hill, 2010). These researchers argue that, if schools are serious about allowing students to understand issues about power in society, the micropolitical everyday lives of teachers and students should address the wider and larger economic, cultural, social and institutional structures through such avenues as discourse in classrooms. Critical pedagogy sought to change the way schools taught, decentralizing power and democratising thought as a method for overcoming the stranglehold conservative forces gain through controlling education. In this way they share roots with dispositional thinkers such as Dewey (1910), but also marry his ideas with critical theorists such as Foucault and Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1974; Foucault, 1982). As such, good critical thinkers within the critical pedagogy are aware of and equipped to tackle biases and power imbalances within the system as a means to mitigate their broader effect on society. In short, thinkers rooted in the critical peda-

gogy school are made highly aware of how their context shapes their perception and this allows them to challenge assumptions more readily than is possible by focusing merely on premises, argument structure and willingness to engage honestly in argument. This way of thinking clearly shares roots with Haraway's (1988) argument for situated knowledges and provides a broader literature base from which potential critical thinkers could draw from to be more critical in this vein. Similarly, critical thinkers from this school would also be far better equipped to address some of the concerns surrounding Burrow's argumentative double bind argument, by being aware of social roles and societal power and actively keeping that in mind as they deliberate. In essence, critical pedagogy's take on CT encompasses an awareness of power contexts and the biases they produce; using this knowledge as a method for fighting bias and oppression.

These two positions, dispositional and critical pedagogy, expose for us the kinds of traits that could be incorporated into an improved CT method within philosophy. Put simply, current philosophical CT methods lack context. In its base form, it remains blind to arguers and the context those arguers reside within. As our theorists have shown, arguers and contexts are critical to the practice of good CT; a fact dispositional and critical pedagogy theorists have already internalized. But it does not stop there, even within CT courses taught on the modern university campus, dispositional traits and bias make their way into the curriculum in small ways. The principle of charity, a core part of many introductory texts, is a clear example of positive dispositional CT. Psychological biases are also often used to help show how flawed our CT skills can be on their face and how we need to be careful to avoid these common pitfalls. But if being aware of psychological biases is considered acceptable, even important, for the CT method used within philosophy then why are societal or social biases not treated the same way? Given the mountain of evidence coming from throughout the social and cognitive sciences, that we are quite bad at filtering out personal

biases, these broader contexts are more important than ever (Kahneman, 2011). An important answer could be that such a story is contradicting a deeply held desire within philosophy: that we can separate ourselves from context and deeply ponder to generate objective knowledge. But as we have seen from feminist critics, and acknowledge already by attempting to mitigate psychological biases within our practice, our method is seldom completely objective. While philosophers may like to think we are objective, adopting an active process of exploring and checking our biases may well be the most reliable and effective path to maximizing objectivity and truth-tracking potential.

4. Feminist-friendly critical thinking

Following the critiques of feminist scholars and the clear insights we can gain from the dispositional school and critical pedagogy, CT would gain from responding to the clear debunking of the idea that CT is objective in practice. The most direct and productive response is to combine and consider the literature on CT from other discipline—in the case of feminist critiques, critical pedagogy inspired by critical theory scholars. As highlighted earlier, critical pedagogy, rather than focusing on the practice of classical philosophical argument, seeks to highlight social concepts such as privilege, social construction and situated awareness. As critical pedagogy was designed with a similar philosophy of situated awareness in mind, its inclusion within a combined CT framework by definition mitigates Haraway's concerns regarding the narrow application of knowledge and promotes a more diverse set of knowers. This also ties in nicely to addressing our later critiques as a more group-based collaborative style of argumentation, that constructs rather than attacks arguments, would be ideal within a critical pedagogy framework. By adopting a more collaborative style, we could address both the potential issues arising from “embattled reason” as well as concerns over gender-based double binds for women, limiting adversariality within a more feminist-friendly

context and reducing the requirement for women to be adversarial to contribute their experiences and knowledge to discussions. Overall, the introduction of a context of critical pedagogy into a framework of CT, we suggest, could successfully mitigate the critiques presented by feminist scholars.

To illustrate, consider if when we attempted to assess an argument we included within our CT method simply asking ourselves, or co-operative others, how might our experiences be impacting our assessment of this argument? What might other, relevant groups disagree with and where do they sit within power structures? This may seem trivial, but reaching outside our context even in this small way could have big impacts on our arguments. For example, if we were to assess an argument about the ethical content of a refugee policy without considering the experiences of refugees within that policy, we are likely to miss critical information relevant to our argument. A similar case could be made for more dispositional styles of CT. Simply adding a step to our model that includes searching other disciplines for relevant critiques could add much value. The value of stepping outside one's current literature into an adjacent one often brings much depth into discussions. By doing the first, we in part acknowledge the intuitional and emotional connection arguers often have based on their experiences and by doing the first and the second we expose ourselves to alternate interpretations which serve both a bias checking role and soften the tone of discussions to be more open to ideas and less hostile. Overall, small additions like these to the practice and teaching of CT within philosophy would certainly result in more accurate truth tracking as well as go some way toward addressing the concerns of standpoint, critical pedagogy and dispositional theorists.

To really drive home the point, consider this: it is entirely possible for a thinker to be "critical" in the sense that they are using the current standard methods employed within philosophy frameworks, and also be completely unaware of how their experiences are shaping their intuitions toward an argument. It's also

completely possible that such a thinker might be employing that framework, considering their experiences but still applying that knowledge in an uneven way. A combination of, at least, solid philosophical logic training, a grounding in and tendency toward considering the experiences of others and an honest and consistent drive to apply such skills evenly is needed for robust critical thinking⁵. Missing any one of these branches would mean a thinker would less accurately track the truth in their arguments and, under our definition, be less critical.

While some might think that CT and critical pedagogy are in conflict, there seems little reason for them to be in reality. One major concern that could be raised is how to treat well-reasoned conservative arguments within this new CT method. In this case, proponents of critical pedagogy have to acknowledge that conservative arguments may be acceptable, upon scrutiny. Furthermore, the raising of conservative arguments allows such theorists ample opportunity to highlight the flaws in these positions, undermining their status as universal, societal truths and bringing them down to the level of one view in a sea of knowledge.

The meshing of a classic CT framework within a critical pedagogy context could also address prominent concerns for both disciplines. For philosophical CT, it helps mitigate our concerns over CT and for proponents of critical pedagogy it would provide a much-needed vehicle for the promotion of critical pedagogy ideas within schools, harnessing the groundswell of enthusiasm for promoting CT as a force for social change. Overall, not only could these two positions come together to provide a more robust and well framed critical discourse, they both benefit from collaboration.

⁵ Knowledge and avoidance of psychological biases might be another branch, but as these are sometimes acknowledged within the philosophical CT method as is.

In practice, philosophy as a discipline has been quite inconsistent in addressing broader takes on CT. Practicing philosophers often do not make or have trouble making use of the broader modern CT literature. Blair highlights this well in his article, where he argues that CT and logic should be considered, and in reality are, separate entities which have often been conflated. This trend is also clear when we examine the perspective of critical pedagogy, but can also be seen within the more closely related dispositional school which promotes good conduct amongst arguers (Blair, 2012)⁶. A core component of good CT from within a dispositional framework is the willingness to challenge your own views and reform them in the face of evidence. But even prominent and esteemed philosophers have trouble adhering to this quality at times (Thayer-Bacon, 1998). In fact, the inclusion of critical pedagogy within philosophy would go a long way toward addressing the lack of dispositional CT found within the literature, since being forced to repeatedly encounter alternative views will help open up the dialogue about existing dominant narratives. There will be situations where feminist or progressive ideas would be challenged within such a CT framework, but the onus should fall on the pedagogy side to explain why these arguments are incorrect rather than de facto labelling them as uncritical, as some might be tempted to do.

A familiar issue that raises concern for this proposed revision of the method is “the paradox of bias”. The paradox of bias is a phenomenon described by feminist scholars where their critiques of privileged, biased systems is met with quite legitimate criticism that their recommendations introduce feminist-based bias (Anderson, 2015). Defenders of the classical system of CT could object that the introduction of feminist charged philoso-

⁶ Johnson & Blair’s (2009) helpful article was brought to our attention by a reviewer and is an excellent overview of the kind of diversity that can be found within CT methods.

phy, such as that found within critical pedagogy, introduces political bias into the framework; disproportionately representing a progressive, feminist set of values. But, the claim that feminist revision introduces politically charged bias into the current framework of CT assumes that the current framework is not already biased in practice, which is a premise that has been thoroughly debunked by feminist scholars. Further, the framework even in theory could be seen as politically biased in some ways; promoting an individualistic, conservative position that resists change. In this context, the introduction of feminist bias is not making this new framework any more biased; but rather introducing an ideological “check” which can help balance existing bias within the current framework. It could also be argued that feminist bias is preferable to our established bias as it promotes a context of knowledge generation; prompting its users to think deeper about their context. We must be careful however to balance the perspectives of this new feminist take and that of CT; lest we merely replace an individualistic and conservative dominated CT with a progressive, feminist dominated one instead. Overall, examination of the paradox helps illuminate and reinforce previous arguments surrounding why the introduction of broader ideas into CT frameworks is necessary.

Lastly, the CT literature is large and we do not claim to have contained within this article all the potential angles within which CT practice could be improved. Similarly, we don’t claim to have provided any sort of robust framework to guide the construction of a new, more well-rounded CT framework. We have instead merely indicated an area within which current philosophical CT models lack and attempted to highlight the possible fruits of collaboration between competing definitions across disciplines. We think that the potential benefits of incorporating critical pedagogy ideas within philosophical CT highlights the importance of taking a step back and asking ourselves what it means to think critically and may well provide a bridge between feminist and philosophical thinkers. We hope that a union of

ideas between these, and perhaps other, schools of thought can foster more contextualized and robust styles of critical thought.

5. Summary and conclusion

As we have examined, Feminist theorists such as Haraway, Rooney and Burrow have successfully exposed unquestioned assumptions and highlighted practical limitations within the philosophical practice of CT which cast serious doubt on its ability to remain objective in the search for truth. We think the critiques highlighted by these feminist theorists can and should be addressed within philosophical critical thinking methods. As a result, we have argued that incorporating elements from within the discourse of critical pedagogy and dispositional veins of critical thinking would create a more robust and effective CT method. If philosophers are employing such methods as a means to more accurately track the truth in their work, then we would argue they have significant reason to consider reforming how we think about, teach and practice “critical thinking” in philosophy. For philosophers, this would mean a step away from their roots and toward addressing more seriously and equally the perspectives of dispositional and critical pedagogy thinkers. For feminist and critical pedagogy thinkers, incorporating their ideas into the philosophical CT method could also provide useful outlets to elicit social change by harnessing enthusiasm for the promotion of critical thinking toward progressive social aims. Overall, the adoption of such methods can benefit both sides of this debate; mitigating the bias present within the philosophical practice of CT and providing feminist proponents with a legitimate outlet with which to push toward social change. We think this illustrates quite clearly the potential benefits of co-operation between competing definitions of critical thinking and argue that bridging the gap between these definitions is a topic worthy of further consideration and analysis.

References

- Anderson, E. (2015). Feminist Epistemology and Philosophy of Science. *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. Retr'd from: <http://plato.stanford.edu/cgi-bin/encyclopedia/archinfo.cgi?entry=feminism-epistemology>
- Blair, J. A. (2012). *Groundwork in the Theory of Argumentation: Selected Pages of J. Anthony Blair*. Dordrecht; NY: Springer Science+Business.
- Burrow, S. (2010). Verbal Sparring and Apologetic Points: Politeness in Gendered Argumentation Contexts. *Informal Logic*, 30(3), 235-262.
- Dewey, J. (1910). *How We Think*. Buffalo; NY: Prometheus Books.
- Duffin, S. (2006). *Reason in the Real World*. Wellington: Dunmore Publishing.
- Facione, P. (2015). *Critical Thinking: What it is and why it Counts*. Millbrae, CA: Insight Assessment/California Academic Press LLC. Retrieved from www.insightassessment.com/pdf_files/what&why2015.pdf
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Herder and Herder.
- Haraway, D. (1988). Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14(3), 575-599.
- Harding, S. (1986). *The Science Question in Feminism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Johnson, R.H.& Blair, J. A. (2009) Teaching the Dog's Breakfast: Some Dangers and How to Deal with Them. *APA Newsletter on Teaching Philosophy*, 9(1), 2.
- Kahneman, D. (2011). *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. New York, Farrar: Straus and Giroux.
- Kraut, R. (2015). Plato. In Zalta, E. (Eds) *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. Retrieved from

- <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/plato/>
- Lang, J. (2010). Feminist Epistemologies of Situated Knowledges: Implications for Rhetorical Argumentation. *Informal Logic*, 30(3), 309-334.
- Lloyd, G. (1984). *The Man of Reason: "Male" and "Female" in Western Philosophy*. London: Routledge.
- McLaren, P., Macrine, S., & Hill, D. (2010). *Revolutionizing pedagogy: Educating for social justice within and beyond global neo-liberalism*. London, England: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mouffe, C. (2000). *The Democratic Paradox*. London: Verso.
- Moulton, J. (1983). A Paradigm of Philosophy: The Adversary Method, in S. Harding & M.B. Hintikka (Eds.) *Discovering Reality*. Boston: D. Reidel.
- Nagel, T. (1986). *The View from Nowhere*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rooney, P. (2010). Philosophy, Adversarial Argumentation and Embattled Reason. *Informal Logic*, 30(3), 203-234.
- Rooney, P. & Hundleby, C. (2010). Introduction: Reasoning for Change. *Informal Logic*, 30(3), 194-202.
- Thayer-Bacon, B. (1998). Transforming and Redescribing Critical Thinking: Constructive Thinking. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 17, 123-148.
- Young, M. (2009). What are schools for? In Daniels, H., Lauder, H., & Porter, J. (Eds). *Knowledge, values and educational policy*. London, UK: Routledge.