

Learning Critical Thinking Skills Beyond the 21st Century For Multidisciplinary Courses

A Human Rights Perspective in Education

First Edition

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Chapter 5

On the Need for Cross-Cultural and Multidisciplinary Critical Thinking

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Pre-reading Questions

1. How should education enable the proper functioning of the democratic process?
2. How might a society reduce a stereotype?
3. What critical thinking questions might be addressed when examining the foundations of a civic community?
4. Should a debate follow a set of rules?
5. What do you think a meta-critical question about critical thinking is?

Introduction

While an education can be very diverse, only some components of a person's education are directly related to enhancing their ability to function in a democracy. A central question in the philosophy of education concerns what components of an education are central to democratic processes. *The education for democracy question*, (EDQ), asks: How should public education enable the ethical implementation and proper functioning of democratic processes, such as voting, on the basis of public and civic discourse? At least one plausible answer to EDQ is that a public education should provide citizens of a political body with basic skills in public discourse. The basic skills should be inclusive of critical thinking and civic debate; that is, an education for participation in a democracy should have elements that enable ethical public discourse on topics of shared concern. Call this general answer to EDQ: the critical thinking and civic debate response, (CTCD), it is grounded in two ideas. First, that democratic processes, such as voting, must take account of the will of the people through reflective deliberation and the exchange of ideas on matters of public concern, such as marriage, taxation, and gun control. Second, critical thinking

through civic engagement allows for the expression of individual autonomy on matters of public concern. The core idea of CTCD is that courses in critical thinking and civic debate educate the public for the purposes of implementing an ethical democratic process. Two important questions the CTCD response faces are the content question (What exactly is critical thinking, civic debate, and ethical public discourse?) and the normative question (What are the appropriate forms, norms, and intellectual virtues by which we should engage in critical thinking, civic debate, and ethical public discourse?¹).

One way to critically enter into the content and normative questions is through engagement with public philosophy. It is important to take note of two ways in which the term “public philosophy” can be used. On the one hand, “public philosophy” can be used to designate the fact that a philosopher is discussing something that is in the public arena, such as an issue of social justice, as opposed to one of meta-ethics. This kind of public philosophy I call the *philosophy-to-public direction of fit* because a philosopher enters into the public arena with a preconception of what and how things should be discussed with the intention of informing the public about something through a philosophical lens. By contrast, there is the *public-to-philosophy direction of fit* under which the public guides the philosopher to an important issue that then leads to an examination of it through various philosophical lenses. It is through the *public-to-philosophy direction of fit*, that I will critically examine the content and normative questions concerning the CTCD response. I will do this by considering some recent events involving critical thinking and civic debate that have been analyzed and reported on by the journalist Jessica Kraft in her (2014) piece article in *The Atlantic*, “Hacking Traditional College Debate’s White Privilege Problem.” In her piece she reported that,²

On March 24, 2014 at the Cross-Examination Debate Association (CEDA) Championships at Indiana University, two Towson University students, Ameena Ruffin and Korey Johnson, became the first African-American women to win a national college debate tournament, for which the resolution asked whether the U.S. president’s war powers should be restricted. Rather than address the resolution straight on, Ruffin and Johnson, along with other teams of African-Americans, attacked its premise. The more pressing issue, they argued, is how

1 It should be noted here that the distinction between the content question and the normative question is notional. One could argue that the content question either determines the answer to the normative question, or it restricts the acceptable answers to it. I am notionally separating these because I do *not* want to presuppose a specific answer to the question: How is the content of critical thinking related to the norms of civic debate and public discourse?

2 I take this work here to be an instance of the *public-to-philosophy direction of fit* through the aid of Kraft’s (2014) work on public debate in *The Atlantic*. Her work pushed me to examine the presuppositions of what is going on in critical thinking and logic education.

the U.S. government is at war with poor black communities. In the final round, Ruffin and Johnson squared off against Rashid Campbell and George Lee from the University of Oklahoma, two highly accomplished African-American debaters with distinctive dreadlocks and dashikis. Over four hours, the two teams engaged in a heated discussion of concepts like “nigga authenticity” and performed hip-hop and spoken-word poetry in the traditional timed format. At one point during Lee’s rebuttal, the clock ran out but he refused to yield the floor. “Fuck the time!” he yelled. His partner Campbell, who won the top speaker award at the National Debate Tournament two weeks later, had been unfairly targeted by the police at the debate venue just days before, and cited this experience as evidence for his case against the government’s treatment of poor African-Americans.

In the 2013 championship, two men from Emporia State University, Ryan Walsh and Elijah Smith, employed a similar style and became the first African-Americans to win two national debate tournaments. Many of their arguments, based on personal memoir and rap music, completely ignored the stated resolution, and instead asserted that the framework of collegiate debate has historically privileged straight, white, middle-class students.³

Although there are many important features that these cases bring to light, here I want to draw attention to three features that help us understand the importance of both the content question and the normative question. First, the kind of evidence that is appealed to *not* only consists of intersubjectively agreed upon facts, such as what the law states, and reasoning deductively or inductively from a set of premises, but also personal experience. Second, the mode of engagement used does not consist simply of rational argumentation using the standard format of ethical theory, followed by non-ethical factual premises and a conclusion, such as what one finds in Curtler’s (2004) *Ethical Argument*. Rather, it includes poetry and hip-hop that takes both a reasons-based approach and an emotional and musical element

3 It should be clear that in pointing to the actions of these students, I am in no way endorsing their behavior. Rather, I am using their actions as a moment for reflection on what constitutes critical thinking and what should be the norm for engaging in public discourse. Furthermore, it is important to note that there is more than one interpretation of what the students are trying to do by not engaging the standard rules of civic debate that they were informed of prior to the competition. For example, it is possible to interpret their actions not as engagement with an alternative model of critical thinking but rather as acts of civil disobedience. If their actions represent civil disobedience, then it is unlikely that we can claim that they are engaging in an alternative form of critical thinking. However, regardless of the multiple interpretations, it is possible to use an interpretation of their actions as a guide to the critical question, Could they be engaging in critical thinking and civic debate, albeit alternatives that may have their own merits?

into play. Third, the norm of engagement used does not see deference to rules as trumping either the importance of what is talked about or the length of time one talks about something. We might summarize a caricature reaction to these students by a hypothetical critic as follows: how rude of these students to not debate the issue, to disregard the rules, and to fail to take into consideration the kinds of evidence required for public debate and discourse on matters of social and political concern. In light of these cases and the caricature, the critical thinking and civic debate community faces an important and unexamined question: Does critical thinking and civic debate education rest on an uncritical examination of its very foundation, and is the foundation perhaps insensitive to race, class, gender, the science of cognitive bias, and non-Western traditions of critical thinking and debate? Call this question the meta-critical question about critical thinking, (MCTQ).

The meta-critical question about critical thinking and civic debate education is extremely important to any education policy that embraces the CTCED response to EDQ. Furthermore, MCTQ is central to the project of coming to understand how public discourse is possible in a community that has diverse individuals with non-overlapping conceptions of the good life.

The Central Argument

At present, one could argue that there is a social blind spot that critical thinking and civic debate education suffers from in the United States, United Kingdom, and those countries that use their standard model. In short, the blind spot is that critical thinking and debate education is insensitive to variation over what could count as critical thinking and civic debate based on an examination of pre-colonial non-Western contributions to debate and dialectic. The main reason for the neglect of these traditions is that those who work on critical thinking, logic, and debate, such as in the informal logic community, are generally not historically informed about non-Western contributions to critical thinking through engagement with those who work on Asian, Arabic, African or comparative philosophy. Simply put, institutional separation has led to an impoverished educational package for critical thinking for at least the past 100 years in which the modern university has developed. This package could be substantially improved either by having everyone adopt the contemporary model exported out by Western scholars, or it could be interrogated by examining contributions from non-Western traditions in an attempt to make a more inclusive package. The central argument I will make to expose the problem is the following.

1. Critical thinking and practice in ethical civic debate are important to public discourse on social and political issues that citizens of a democratic body vote on when making policy decisions.

2. The current model for critical thinking and civic debate education is dominated by a Western account of informal logic, formal logic, debate rules, and intellectual virtues.
3. Western accounts of critical thinking can dominate critical thinking education only if educators designing critical thinking education have considered contributions from non-Western philosophers and then either excluded or included them depending on their merits.
4. Education policy in critical thinking has failed to consider the contributions of non-Western thinkers on critical thinking.
5. So, critical thinking education should be re-considered in light of contributions from non-Western thinkers.

Why should we accept the premises of this argument? In Vaidya (2013), I defended an answer to Premise 1 where I showed that critical thinking is epistemically responsible in the context of making decisions of public concern. So, will focus here on jointly defending premises 2, 3, and 4.

The key defense for premises 2, 3, and 4 that I offer has two parts. The first part relies on pointing to two of the most commonly used textbooks for critical thinking in the United States and United Kingdom, Patrick Hurley's (2014) *A Concise Introduction to Logic* and Lewis Vaughn's (2012) *The Power of Critical Thinking: Effective Reasoning about Ordinary and Extraordinary Claims*. The guiding idea of the first part of my defense of 2, 3, and 4 is that if our main textbooks for teaching critical thinking and logic at the introductory level do not engage non-Western philosophy, then we can reasonably infer that those that use the textbooks are not teaching critical thinking and logic by way of engaging non-Western sources. Granted, though, that for premise 2 to be true, another position must also hold. The position that must also hold is that there are ideas about critical thinking that derive from non-Western sources that can be included for good reason. For if there were no ideas from non-Western traditions that are relevant, then it wouldn't really matter that they were being ignored. Thus, the argument for premise 2 is both that the main texts ignore non-Western contributions and that there are non-Western contributions that could easily be included. Likewise, it is by being historically informed about debate and dialectic from non-Western sources that in noticing the absence of non-Western sources, for example in Hurley's work, that one can justify premise 4. If it is so clear that there are relevant examples from, for example classical Indian and Islamic philosophy, then the absence of these ideas in the main textbooks justifies the claim that critical thinking theorists and policy makers have failed to consider the contributions of non-Western thinkers.

A Core Example That Generalizes

To unlock the idea that non-Western traditions have something to offer critical thinking education, it will be important to look at a debate within Western philosophy about the nature of critical thinking. By using this debate, we can see how non-Western traditions can contribute to critical thinking education.

In his *Not By Skill Alone: The Centrality of Character to Critical Thinking*, Harvey Siegel (1993) contrasts two views of critical thinking: the skill view and the character view. He argues that these two views are part of a central debate over what a critical thinker is. He goes on to defend the character view.

The Skill View holds that critical thinking is exhausted by the acquisition and proper deployment of critical thinking skills.

The Character View holds that critical thinking involves the acquisition and proper deployment of specific skills as well as the acquisition of specific character traits, dispositions, attitudes, and habits of mind. These components are aspects of the “critical spirit.”

Given this distinction, is there anything that non-Western traditions have to offer? If there is nothing, then perhaps it would be easy to draw the conclusion that there are no real contributions to critical thinking from outside of the West because there were no debates about the nature of critical thinking. In defending the positive answer that there are contributions from non-Western traditions, I will focus on the Nyāya tradition and the Buddhist tradition. However, in doing this, I am merely pointing to examples from these traditions. My view is that examples like these can be found in many traditions because theorizing about critical thinking is not a cultural kind but a natural kind pertaining to the mind and social engagement.⁴

In his book *The Character of Logic in India*, B. K. Matilal (1998) presents an account of different types of discussions and debates that can be found in Indian philosophy. He offers

4 Robert Ennis (1998) takes on the question, “Is Critical Thinking Culturally Biased?” In his piece he considers both the Inuit and the Amish cultures, and argues that these two cultures might be insensitive to the kind of reason giving that is central to critical thinking. He goes on to answer the question negatively, showing that critical thinking is not culturally biased. Nevertheless, one might use the Inuit and the Amish cultures as examples where we can find groups of people not interested in developing critical thinking, which would falsify my claim that critical thinking is a natural kind pertaining to human minds, and not a cultural kind. While this is a good objection to my claim here, I find that there are far more cultures that are interested in and investigating critical thinking than not, such that we might wonder whether we have the correct lens on the Inuit and the Amish. Perhaps, because we have the wrong lens on, we cannot see that some of their communicative acts are in fact acts of critical thinking.

his account by turning directly to the founding father of the Nyāya school of classical Indian philosophy, Gautama Akṣapāda (second century CE). In the *Nyāya Sūtras*, Gautama drew a distinction between three kinds of discussion.

Discussion is the adoption of one of two opposing sides. What is adopted is analyzed in the form of the five members and defended by the aid of any of the means of right knowledge, while its opposite is assailed by confutation, without deviation from the established tenets. (Sinha, 1990, 19)

Wrangling, which aims at gaining victory, is the defense or attack of a proposition in the manner aforesaid, by quibbles, futilities, and other processes which deserve rebuke. (Sinha, 1990, 20)

Cavil is a kind of wrangling, which consists in mere attacks on the opposite side. (Sinha, 1990, 20)

Matilal maintains, on the basis of Akṣapāda's *Nyāya Sūtras*, that there are three distinct kinds of discussions. *Vāda* is an honest debate where both sides, proponent and opponent, are seeking the truth—that is, wanting to establish the right view. *Jalpa*, in contrast, is a discussion/debate in which one tries to win by any means, fair or unfair. *Vitaṇḍā* is a discussion in which one aims to destroy or demolish the opponent no matter how. Stephen Phillips (2016) succinctly notes the difference as follows: (1) *vāda* is an honest debate for the purposes of finding the truth, (2) *jalpa* is a debate aimed at victory in which one propounds a thesis, and (3) *vitaṇḍā* is a debate aimed at victory in which no thesis is defended, one simply aims to demolish the view propounded by the proponent. The distinction between these three kinds of discussions grounds the claim that classical Indian philosophers were aware of different kinds of discussions based on the purpose of the discussion and that critical thinking, for the purposes of finding the truth on an issue, was not at all a foreign idea.

It is important to note that even prior to the *Nyāya Sūtras*, there was discussion and differentiation of various kinds of public discourse and how they are to be engaged in. In Section 3.8 of the classical Indian handbook of *Ayurveda*, the author, *Acharya Caraka* (around the fourth century BCE to the second century CE), says the following:

One who has acquired the knowledge (given by the authoritative text) based on various reasons and refuting the opponent's view in debates, does not get fastened by the pressure of the opponent's arguments nor does he get subdued by their arguments.

And pertaining to the value of discussion with specialists, he says the following:

Promotes pursuit and advancement of knowledge, provides dexterity, improves power of speaking, illumines fame, removes doubt in scriptures, if any, by repeating the topics, and it creates confidence in case there is any doubt, and brings forth new ideas. The ideas memorized in study from the teacher, will become firm when applied in (competitive) discussion.

He then offers an important distinction between two different kinds of discussion and how they should be carried out.

Discussion with specialists is of two types—friendly discussion and hostile discussion. The friendly discussion is held with one who is endowed with learning, understanding and the power of expression and contradiction, devoid of irritability, having uncensored knowledge, without jealousy, able to be convinced and convince others, enduring and adept in the art of sweet conversation. While in discussion with such a person one should speak confidently, put questions unhesitatingly, reply to the sincere questioner with elaborateness, not be agitated with fear of defect, not be exhilarated on defeating the partner, nor boast before others, not hold fast to his solitary view due to attachment, not explain what is unknown to him, and convince the other party with politeness and be cautious in that. This is the method of friendly discussion.

The passages from the Caraka substantiate the idea that the character view is in play in one of the oldest recorded presentations of critical reasoning and how it is to be executed.

Furthermore, in his article “Indian Logic,” Jonardon Ganeri (2004) presents a picture of argumentation and critical thinking in ancient India by turning to the classic dialogue of the Buddhist tradition: *Milinda-pañha* (Questions for King Milinda). Ganeri presents an important passage on discussion and critical thinking.⁵

Milinda: Reverend Sir, will you discuss with me again?

5 In this section and the next, I borrow heavily from the work of Ganeri (1996, 2001, 2004). While there are many controversies surrounding what happens in classical Indian logic, for the purpose of this chapter, I have decided to present a picture that shows that there are important contributions from Indian logic that can be used to teach critical thinking and logic at the introductory level. I take it that just as one can teach first-order logic while recognizing that there are controversies concerning it, one can also teach portions of classical Indian logic while recognizing that there are controversies concerning how to interpret it.

Nāgasena: If your Majesty will discuss (*vāda*) as a scholar, well, but if you will discuss as a king, no.

Milinda: How is it that scholars discuss?

Nāgasena: When scholars talk a matter over one with another, then there is a winding up, an unraveling, one or other is convicted of error, and he then acknowledges his mistake; distinctions are drawn, and contra-distinctions; and yet thereby they are not angered. Thus, do scholars, O King, discuss.

Milinda: And how do kings discuss?

Nāgasena: When a king, your Majesty, discusses a matter, and he advances a point, if any one differ from him on that point, he is apt to fine him, saying “Inflict such and such a punishment upon that fellow!” Thus, your Majesty, do kings discuss.

Milinda: Very well. It is as a scholar, not as a king, that I will discuss. (MP 2.1.3)

From this passage, we get a further elaboration on the kind of discussion known as *vāda* that Akṣapāda distinguished from *jalpa* and *viṭāṇḍā*. Importantly, though, Nāgasena says,

When scholars talk a matter over one with another, then is there a winding up, an unraveling, one or other is convicted of error, and he then acknowledges his mistake; distinctions are drawn, and contra-distinctions; and yet thereby they are not angered.

One reading of this claim is that Nāgasena is pointing out that a good discussion requires not only that certain moves are made during “a winding up” and an “unraveling” but also that the persons involved in making those moves have a certain *epistemic temper*. Participants in a good debate, moreover, have the capacity, and exercise the capacity, to (1) *acknowledge* mistakes and (2) not become *angered* by the consequences of where the inquiry leads. Nāgasena’s answer to King Milinda suggests that the Buddhist accounts of critical thinking also adopts the *character view* as opposed to the skill view. We can gather from the exchange that it is not enough to simply know how to “make moves,” “destroy,” or “demolish” an opponent by various techniques. Rather, what is central to an honest debate is that a participant must also have a certain *attitude and character* that exemplifies a specific *epistemic temper*.

If one agrees with the character view, then this simple passage from *Milinda-pañha* could be compared with other passages, such as from the Meno, to teach critical thinking students what critical thinking is about in a cross-traditional way.

Locating Further Spaces for the Cross-Cultural Critical Thinking Movement

But one response to the argument so far is that we need more than just evidence that there are discussions of critical thinking in non-Western traditions. What we need is to see the many places where non-Western ideas can be beneficial to critical thinking. To show that there are many places where cross-cultural critical thinking is beneficial, not just in the debate between the skill view and the critical spirit view, without presenting the many contributions one can find in non-Western sources on debate and dialectic, I want to locate three places where non-Western contributions are relevant to critical thinking education. The three locations are: (1) the education for intellectual virtues movement, (2) the humanities for democracy movement, and (3) the rationality for democracy movement.

First, some epistemologists moving out of the virtue epistemology tradition, which dates to Plato and Aristotle, such as Duncan Pritchard (2013) and Jason Baehr (2013), have argued for the view that we ought to be educating for intellectual virtues, as opposed to memorization and skill. If that view is correct, we should be asking the following questions: What intellectual virtues should be taught? How should those intellectual virtues be taught?

Consider Jason Baehr's opening comments in his book titled *Educating for Intellectual Virtues*.

An intellectually virtuous person is one who *desires and is committed to the pursuit of goods like knowledge, truth, and understanding*. It is this inherent epistemic orientation that permits a distinction between intellectual virtues and what are typically thought of as moral virtues. (248, *emphasis added*)

He went on to elaborate an account of intellectual virtues.

[W]e can think of intellectual virtues as the personal qualities or characteristics of a lifelong learner. *To be a lifelong learner, one must possess a reasonably broad base of practical and theoretical knowledge. But possessing even a great deal of knowledge is not sufficient. Being a lifelong learner also requires being curious and inquisitive. It requires a firm and powerful commitment to learning.* It demands attentiveness and reflectiveness. And given the various ways in which a commitment to lifelong learning might get derailed, it also requires intellectual

determination, perseverance, and courage. In other words, being a lifelong learner is largely constituted by the possession of various intellectual virtues. (249, *emphasis added*)

It is worth noting that Baehr’s presentation of the issues does not discuss, and perhaps even tacitly assumes the absence of, cross-cultural variation over (1) what intellectual virtues are, and (2) what character traits count as being intellectual virtues. Moreover, his work does not engage significantly with either of the following questions: (a) What do non-Western traditions have to offer theoretical inquiry about intellectual virtues? And: (b) What specific virtues should we be aiming for in education?

Second, in her book titled *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*, Martha Nussbaum (2010) maintains that a nation that wants to promote the human development model of democracy, as opposed to the gross national product model, will need to produce citizens with at least the following abilities (25–6):

- The ability to think well about political issues affecting the nation, to examine, reflect, argue, and debate, deferring to neither tradition nor authority.
- The ability to recognize fellow citizens as people with equal rights, even though they may be different in race, religion, gender, and sexuality: to look at them with respect, as ends, not just as tools to be manipulated for one’s on profit.
- The ability to have concern for the lives of others, to grasp what policies of many types mean for the opportunities and experiences of one’s fellow citizens, of many types, and for people outside one’s own nation.
- The ability to imagine well a variety of complex issues affecting the story of a human life as it unfolds: to think about childhood, adolescence, family relationships, illness, death, and much more in a way informed by an understanding of a wide range of human stories, not just by aggregate data.
- The ability to judge political leaders critically, but with an informed and realistic sense of the possibilities available to them.
- The ability to think about the good of the nation as a whole, not just that of one’s own local group.
- The ability to see one’s own nation, in turn, as a part of a complicated world order in which issues of many kinds require intelligent transnational deliberation for *their* resolution.

In her defense of the humanities as the place we should look to for the cultivation of those abilities one should take note of the special attention she gives to the goal of learning how to argue and evaluate evidence properly. In her chapter on Socratic pedagogy, Nussbaum defends and highlights the importance of teaching the Socratic method of questioning and critical inquiry. And she correctly notes the importance of seeing the pedagogy from a non-Western perspective as well.

I have spoken so far of a Socratic method that had a wide influence in Europe and North America. It would be wrong, however, to think that *a Socratic approach to early education was found only there* (Nussbaum, 2010, 67, *emphasis added*).

She emphasizes the importance of a model of education advanced by Rabindranath Tagore, who on her account defended the view that “humanity can make progress only by cultivating its capacity for a more inclusive sympathy, and this capacity can only be cultivated by an education that emphasizes global learning, the arts, and Socratic self-criticism” (2010, 68).

I am in strong agreement with Nussbaum’s defense of the value of the humanities for democracy, as well as her emphasis on Socratic pedagogy, which she correctly locates both in the West and outside the West. However, I am skeptical as to whether her account distinguishes between two views of Socratic pedagogy for democracy.⁶ Minimally, we can all agree that, following Siegel’s (1993) distinction, critical thinking involves the use of critical thinking skills, no matter what else it entails or is constituted by. We can think of two ways of looking at critical thinking education in relation to democracy by using a distinction between the tools we have and the context of application in which we use them. The contrast comes from thinking about where the tools come from versus where the tools are being applied, and for what purpose.

Democracy with Western tools in a multicultural context is an account of critical thinking for democracy that is largely about taking tools found in the Western tradition, such as identification of fallacies from a specific list generated by Aristotle or formalization of a natural language argument in propositional logic and presenting them to students for application in the global multi-cultural context in which we now live. This means, for example, that we might use the tools of Aristotelian logic to understand a non-Western Buddhist text. On this

⁶ It is important to point out that in her advocacy of critical thinking, Nussbaum also took note of the importance of comparative religion. I think the real issue for her position is whether she holds that alternative conceptions of reasoning and modes of presenting reasoning belong in a comparative religions course as opposed to a logic and critical thinking course.

approach we show how Socratic Pedagogy can be applied to texts and speeches that come from outside of the West.

Democracy with Global tools for a multicultural context is an account of critical thinking for democracy that aims to locate tools from a variety of traditions for the purposes of democracy in a multicultural context. On this approach, where possible, we show how Socratic Pedagogy or Aristotelian logic sits alongside, for example Buddhist theories of good inference, the Nyāya account of good debate (*vāda*), the Jaina theory of perspectives, Arabic conceptions of critical discourse, and we open up the set of tools so as to be inclusive not only about who participates, but also about what tools are acceptable.

Third, in his book *In Praise of Rationality: Why Rationality Matters for Democracy*, Michael Lynch (2012) presents a series of arguments in favor of scientific argumentation in public discourse.

Of course, the value of appealing to reasons also depends on whether they are good reasons. Good reasons are based on good principles. So, the aim of this book is to defend both the value of giving reasons in public discourse and the value of certain principles over others—in particular, the principles that constitute a scientific approach to the world. Appealing to these principles in public discourse matters, I argue, despite the fact that there appear to be—perverse enough—very good reasons to think that we can’t defend them with non-circular reasons. It sometimes seems as if every “first principle” ends up being founded on something else that is arbitrary: emotion, faith, or plain prejudice. If that’s so, then a magic serum is the best we could hope for after all. Nonetheless, I’ll try to convince you that we can hope for more. (Lynch, 2012, X)

Again, while I agree with the value and importance of scientific discourse in matters of public discourse, I am skeptical as to whether Lynch’s account of reasoned discourse pays any attention to narratives about reason and debate from outside of the Western canon. Like Martha Nussbaum, he takes John Dewey to be one important influence on his thinking, in addition to C. S. Peirce and William James. However, unlike Nussbaum, he fails to consider twentieth-century philosophers, such as Tagore, Daya Krishna, S. Radhakrishnan, B. K. Matilal, or any other figure from a non-Western tradition that has thought about reasoned discourse in a pluralistic society. For example, Matilal’s (1998) *The Character of Logic in India* discusses various systems of logical reasoning in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. The discussions

found in these works challenges some of the core assumptions of Western logic and critical thinking on, for example, the role of contradiction in reasoning, the relation between epistemology and logic, as well as the rules for engaging in an honest debate and tracking fallacies. If Matilal is not sufficient, then one can look at the writings of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. His 1968 book *Religion, Science, and Culture* contains critical discussions of how science and religion can be in harmony within a culture when the role of each is properly understood in a complementary way. My contention is that discussions of the value of scientific discourse in public discourse should engage narratives about reasoned discourse from outside the Western canon while taking into *consideration* the consequences of colonialism on reasoned discourse. The deep question here is: What would a true engagement with reasoned discourse look like were we to look at the consequences of decolonizing the rhetoric of rationality?

Summing up: if education policy is to move away from a singular science, technology, engineering, and mathematics focus to a more open educational package that includes education for intellectual virtues, praises scientific rationality for public discourse within democratic decision making, and engages what the humanities have to offer in critical thinking (broadly construed), then *we* ought to be looking for cross-culturally sensitive ways to promote and teach intellectual virtues, critical thinking, and narratives about rationality. Cross-cultural sensitivity at least requires locating and presenting tools for critical thinking that derive from different traditions. Cross-cultural sensitivity is important because everyone who comes from a tradition that engages and discusses critical thinking needs to feel *welcome* at the roundtable of discourse without being forced to jettison their own traditions' conception of critical thinking and engagement prior to debating *what critical thinking should be from a meta-critical framework*.⁷

Where Should Non-Western Contributions to Logic and Critical Thinking Be Taught?

In the context of critical thinking pedagogy, one important question we can ask is: Where should non-Western ideas about critical thinking and logic be taught? One response is that they should be taught in an area studies course, such as Asian philosophy, Arabic thought, or African culture. They do not belong in an introductory level course on logic and critical

7 Some will be inclined to respond to this view by claiming that I am inviting anarchy since some forms of critical engagement do not respect people. My account requires a defense of what can be properly said to fall under humankind *critical thinking*. And my account faces the classical problem of how openness in inquiry must rest on being closed to intolerance. However, I am at a loss to give an a priori account of how to combat either of these problems. Rather, I would think that an account of humankind *critical thinking* and how to respond to the problem of openness resting on being closed to intolerance would proceed by some a priori thoughts improved upon by the empirical investigation of cultures, traditions, and nature of the human mind.

thinking, especially one that aims to help us understand how to critically think in the context of public policy and decision making through civic debate and public discourse.

One way to see the force of this argument is to return to Siegel's (1993) distinction between two conceptions of critical thinking—the skill view and the character view—and take note of the fact that the distinction does not take account of the history of logic and critical thinking from a critical perspective involving discussions of colonialism on critical thinking. For example, as I have defended elsewhere, one could introduce an additional conception of critical thinking called the comprehensive view:

The Comprehensive View holds that critical thinking involves (i) the development of the appropriate skills that are constitutive of critical thinking, (ii) along with the appropriate character traits, dispositions, attitudes, and habits of mind, which are constitutive of the “critical spirit.” However, it also requires (iii) that the skills/tools and the nature of the “critical spirit” be derived from all traditions that have contributed to critical discourse. Finally, the view requires that at some point a critical thinker engage the meta-critical question about critical thinking. That is that a critical thinker acquires a proper understanding and appreciation of the sources of critical discourse for the purposes of bringing harmony to all that participate in the activity.

One question that the comprehensive view brings out is the implementation question: How can the comprehensive view be implemented? One response to this question is to take a stage-based approach. On this approach there are three stages for implementing the comprehensive view. Stage one is the information acquisition stage. In this stage, the goal of cross-cultural and multidisciplinary philosophy is to acquire plausible sets of cross-cultural and multi-disciplinary materials that could be used in teaching critical thinking in a more inclusive and effective way. Stage two is the ratification or evaluation stage. In this stage, the goal is to delimit the initial set of materials into the most plausible materials that would be taught relative to a set of goals. Stage three is the refinement stage. In this stage, educators and researchers work together to refine the materials to have the best critical thinking educational package viable for an eight-year period. Stage four is the reconsideration and update stage in which educators and researchers get together to test whether the educational package is still serving the public in the best possible way given the changing ways in which society must deal with critical thinking. For example, the prevalence of fake news current requires critical thinking educators to think about how to include skills that pertain to the identification of fake news. Most textbooks to date fail to include information on this.

One consequence of the stage-based view of implementation is that critical thinking education must be fluid over time. It cannot be the case that we have a fixed set of tools for critical thinking that are ranked to be equally important at any stage of society. Rather, what we have is a database of ideas about critical thinking where our role as critical thinking educators requires us to think critically about what tools are most useful in a given time period. It would be highly uncritical to think that critical thinking education can be static over long periods of time when methods of gathering and distributing information are changing constantly.

Given the three views of critical thinking and the question of what is the most important thing to teach at the introductory level, the following argument can be made. At the introductory level, the primary goal of a course on critical thinking and logic is to teach students critical thinking skills, since the skills are essential for college success, lifelong learning, civic engagement, and public discourse. As a consequence, the historical source from which the skills derive is not as important. Rather, the skills themselves are important. As a consequence, the comprehensive view is not relevant to introductory courses on critical thinking. One way to amplify the argument's force is to concede that it was a mistake to include references to Western thinkers in the presentation of logic and critical thinking in the first place, which one finds in Hurley (2014). The simple idea is that just as there is a difference between math and the history of math, there is also a difference between logic and critical thinking and the history of both. The important goal is not the history, but the skills, regardless of where they come from.

This argument is presents a powerful obstacle for the comprehensive view of critical thinking to be adopted at the introductory level, since there is so much need for students to learn critical thinking skills as opposed to the mere history of the discipline. But as soon as this point is made, the key presumption is revealed: there are no skills that can be acquired by studying logic and critical thinking from a historically informed global perspective. Yet as powerful as this argument is, there is an interesting and substantial response that can be given to it. I will present the argument via analogy.

1. Inclusion of women in critical thinking and logic textbooks, along with women role models for critical thinking and logic education, reduces *stereotype threat*.
2. The problem that women face in critical thinking and logic education is sufficiently similar to the case of minorities.
3. So, inclusion of minorities in critical thinking and logic textbooks with minority role models for critical thinking and logic education would reduce stereotype threat for minorities.

Lehan (2015), through engagement with work done by numerous scholars, offers the following account of stereotype threat.

Stereotype threat occurs when a person believes they will be judged on the basis of some group-based stereotype. They do not need to believe the stereotype, and the stereotype need not even be prevalent in their environment. All that is necessary to activate this particular social identity threat is that a person believes that others will treat them negatively or evaluate them unfairly on the basis of one of their social identities. For example, a woman who thinks either that “women are not logical” is true or that many other people believe this to be true may find that such a belief impacts her performance on logical tasks or enjoyment of these tasks. (2015: 3–4)

Saul (2013) takes the point further in her discussion of stereotype threat and the trajectory of women in philosophy.

A female philosophy student will probably be in the minority as a woman in her department, and she’ll almost certainly be in the minority as a woman if she takes classes in the more stereotypically male areas like (for example) logic, language and metaphysics. *As she continues on to higher levels of study, the number of women will be steadily diminishing. In any class she takes other than feminist philosophy, she’s likely to encounter a syllabus that consists overwhelmingly (often exclusively) of male authors. The people teaching most of the classes are also very likely to be male. All of these factors calling attention to low numbers of women are known to provoke stereotype threat.* Since stereotype threat has its strongest effect on the most committed students, this means that the most committed women are likely to underperform. (2013: 2.1, *emphasis added*)

Saul’s point, in the emphasized area, is equally true of minority students and their upward trajectory in philosophy. The syllabi and the people teaching the courses will largely be white males.

However, there is a cure for stereotype threat. Lehan discusses methods for reducing it in introductory logic and critical thinking courses. She mentions two important strategies for stereotype reduction based on the notion of a counter-stereotype role model.

[A] successful method for reducing stereotype threat is the introduction of counter-stereotype role models. One way to do this is to introduce students

to members of the stereotyped group who have done well in the area. For example, “when female students are exposed to women that have performed successfully in mathematics and science related fields, they perform better than female students who do not have examples of women with such performance”. ... One study showed that reading essays about women who are successful in math can reduce the negative effects of stereotype threat. ... “Thus, direct and indirect exposure to women that have successfully navigated the field can be enough to reduce the negative impacts of stereotype threat for female students”. ... This suggests the importance of highlighting women in logic. “[T]he direction of [the] impact [of role model introduction] depends on the believed attainability of their success: Models of attainable success can be inspiring and self-enhancing, whereas models of unattainable success can be threatening and deflating.” In the interest of attainability, it is also extremely important to mention women currently working in logic such as Audrey Yap, Penelope Maddy, Dorothy Edgington, Susan Haack, and many others conveniently listed on the Women in Logic list. (Lehan, 2015, 10–11)

Thus, given that the technique of including women in critical thinking textbooks and as role models in the classroom has successfully led to stereotype reduction for women, we can legitimately ask: Would the same technique work for minorities? It seems that the relevant question to explore is: Are the two cases similar enough? Are the stereotypes that women face the same as the stereotypes that minorities face? And, interestingly, what about the intersectional case of minority women? Here are some important considerations.

Unlike the case of the category “woman”, the category “minority” is quite diverse with various stereotype variations within the category. For example, do Asians face the same stereotype threat in a critical thinking and logic course that African Americans or Latino Americans face? Arguably they do not, given the model minority status that is often attributed to Asian Americans (Indian, Pakistani, Chinese, Korean, or Japanese) in contrast to African Americans and Latino Americans. The difference is that teachers in the United States don’t typically look at Asian Americans and think that they are going to do poorly in a critical thinking or logic course as much as they think that an African American or Latino American might. But this opens up the intersectionality question: Given that everyone that has a race has a gender, in so far as we can talk realistically about those classifications, could it be that the stereotype threat that women face applies without any thought to racial differences? More specifically, do teachers operate with different implicit biases toward Asian women than African American women or Latin American women? And do these gender-race interactions alter the stereotype threat?

More research needs to be done on these questions. For the purpose of what I am arguing here, I cannot answer these questions completely. What is relevant to my argument is that we look closely at the fact that there are two distinct questions in this area: one concerning performance and the other concerning retention. *Suppose* that Asian Americans, either male or female, generally perform well on critical thinking and logic so that they do not face a stereotype threat the way an African American male or a Latina female might. We might say something like the following. Because of the stereotype threats that African Americans and Latino Americans face, they perform poorly (supposedly), and their poor performance is one factor that accounts for why they do not stay in the field of philosophy. However, this cannot be the explanation in the case of Asian Americans since there is no relevantly similar stereotype threat. Many Asian women perform extremely well on first-year courses in logic and critical thinking.

So, is there another stereotype threat that Asian Americans might face that speaks to the question: Why aren't there many Asian Americans in philosophy? My view is that there is another stereotype in the area. And it operates on an axis that helps explain why most Asian Americans, as opposed to African Americans or Latino Americans, focus on Western philosophy as opposed to issues pertaining to their own origins. The stereotype concerns what the content of Asian philosophy is advertised to be about. We might make the point simply by saying that Asian Americans face the *mysticism stereotype*.

Consider H. H. Price (1938).

[Western philosophy] looks outward and is concerned with Logic and with the presuppositions of scientific knowledge; [Indian philosophy] looks inward, into the 'deep yet dazzling darkness' of the mystical consciousness. (Ganeri, 2001, 1)

And other attitudes, such as F. Ueberweg (1857):

Philosophy as a science could [not] originate among the Orientals, who, though susceptible of the elements of high culture, were content simply to retain them in a spirit of passive resignation. (Ganeri, 2001, 13)

The core idea is that showing interest in Asian philosophy is showing interest in something that is mystical, nonrational, and not really philosophy. Studying Asian thought is studying Asian religions. It is not studying philosophy. Given that Anglophone philosophy focuses on logic and reason, and the stereotype of, for example, Chinese or Indian thought is that it does not, but is instead mystical, Asian students typically adopt the dominant interests of Western philosophers. The idea is that to be a real philosopher one must adopt an interest

in Western philosophy since that is where one finds the true origins of rationality. In fact, one often finds that it is easier for non-Asians to show a genuine interest in Asian philosophy than it is for Asians to show an interest, since Europeans do not face a stereotype threat when engaging Asian philosophy. Rather, they are seen as having an open-minded interest in other traditions beyond the one that they can claim as their heritage.

As a consequence, the inclusion of non-Western thinkers in critical thinking and logic education isn't just about informing others that non-Western thinkers have contributed to critical thinking and logic in important ways. If it were about that, it could be solved in an area studies course. Rather, it is about altering perceptions held by Westerners and non-Westerners about the content of Asian philosophy in relation to what counts as *good thinking*. The skill one acquires by learning about the history of logic and critical thinking in an introduction logic and critical thinking course is a perspectival skill that pertains to being open minded through the process of being historically informed. By introducing non-Western ideas about logic and critical thinking in the context of an introduction to critical thinking and logic course we do away with the idea that there is something called Buddhist logic or Chinese logic. Rather, we should teach students about what critical thinking and logic *is* through contributions from everyone who, in fact, did contribute to it. We, thus, make clear all of the following:

- Critical thinking doesn't just come from the Greco-Roman-European tradition. It is part of the human condition, as it pertains to how human minds should engage one another.
- Many cultures contributed in interesting, compatible, and controversial ways to the semantic range of what falls under the English word "critical thinking."
- By introducing critical thinking through a cross-cultural lens, we can reduce stereotype threat revolving around the idea that non-Western cultures did not contribute to critical thinking, which is often touted as a major benefit one gets from studying the humanities.
- We can, in addition to helping minority students stay in philosophy, also help the dominant group come to a better understanding of the roots of critical thinking so as to see philosophy and logic as arising from outside the West as an interesting place to explore ideas.
- How one person debates and discusses an issue of importance to his or her life doesn't always follow the way in which another person does this. Yet both might be reasonable.

Returning to the beginning of this essay, I would like to say the following.

We *cannot* really answer EDQ:

How should public education enable the ethical implementation and proper functioning of democratic processes, such as voting, on the basis of public and civic discourse?

With CTCD:

Public education should provide citizens of a political body with basic skills in critical thinking, civic debate, and ethical public discourse.

Unless we first acknowledge the fact that:

We live in a multicultural world where it is no longer possible to say that the demographics of, for example, the United States and United Kingdom, are not sufficiently diverse across Indian, Chinese, Arabic, and African persons of origin so as to warrant leaving out ideas about critical discourse and discussion emanating from non-Western traditions.

To present critical thinking as originating from the human condition, as opposed to the Western condition, is to give a proper place to every individual, in a diverse body of individuals, who participates in an ethical public exchange of ideas leading to an outcome that pertains to the well-being of all.

Future Interventions

One possible direction for the future of the *cross-cultural and multidisciplinary critical thinking movement* is a departure from a familiar way of looking at logic in the West. We are often told in our studies of logic that what defines logic is the fact that it is not informative since it is (1) topic neutral, it is not about anything; (2) general, it is not specific to any single domain of discourse, such as cooking or rock climbing; (3) it is universal, and applies to everything; and (4) it is a neutral arbiter in debates. These ideas about logic can find their way into discussions of critical thinking as well. We can find ourselves in a moment caught up in the idea that critical thinking skills and the spirit are general and universal and help us reason properly no matter what we are thinking about. The future direction of cross-cultural and multidisciplinary critical thinking sees this conception of both logic and critical thinking as partially correct, but tragically flawed and mistaken. In *Logic and Neutrality*, Timothy Williamson (2012) offers a critique of a conception of logic similar to what we find under (1)–(4). He writes,

The idea that logic is uninformative strikes me as deeply mistaken.

The conception of logic as neutral umpire of debate also fails to withstand scrutiny. ... Principles of logic can themselves be debated, and often are, just like principles of any other science.

The future direction for critical thinking needs to jump into discussing and debating what critical thinking really is from the perspectives of non-Western thinkers and the mind sciences, such as cognitive science. At least two promising ideas that need to be explored are the following. On the one hand, we need to take seriously that for some traditions, critical thinking essentially involves thinking about one's external environment in relation to oneself and all creatures. Being a good critical thinker requires that one effectively reason about what is best for one's environment. On the other hand, we need to take seriously that for some traditions, critical thinking essentially involves thinking about one's internal environment in relation to others. For example, many non-Western traditions are deeply involved in making sense of meditation as way for one to better understand themselves and to regulate their emotions and cognitions in relation to each other more effectively. Moreover, being a good critical thinker requires that one effectively reason about what is best for oneself in relation to others.

Critical thinking from a global perspective that takes other disciplines seriously will not lead to the conclusion that critical thinking is neutral and without substantive content. It will not hold that the sole domain of critical thinking is to provide, like some think of logic, rules for guiding pure reason. Rather, an inclusive account of critical thinking will take seriously the self and world as domains within critical thinking. The ability to think about one's own conscious states as potentially biased or unbiased or subject to past trauma and triggering from a psychological perspective will be a core trait of a critical thinker. No longer will one expect only that a critical thinker, *qua* critical thinking, can correctly identify that a speaker's argument contains a fallacy and not what individual states of mind and bias one is also subject to in hearing the argument. No longer will we think that someone can be a good critical thinker if they don't think about how best to treat nature and other creatures. The reach of critical thinking goes beyond the human.

For example, the philosopher Arne Naess serves as a great model for future thinking about cross-cultural and multi-disciplinary critical thinking. In *Communication and Argument*, Naess (1966) offered some rules for objective public debate:

Avoid Tendentious Irrelevance

- Personal attacks, claims of opponents' motivation, ...

Avoid Tendentious Quoting

- Quotes should not be edited regarding the subject of the debate.

Avoid Tendentious Ambiguity

- Ambiguity can be exploited to support criticism

Avoid Tendentious Use of Strawman

- Assigning views to the opponent that she does not hold.

Avoid Tendentious Statements of Fact

- Information put forward should never be untrue or incomplete, and one should not withhold relevant information.

Avoid Tendentious Tone of Presentation

- Irony, sarcasm, pejoratives, exaggeration, subtle threats

These rules are clearly debatable and plausible in the context of considering how other cultures might think about how best to have a global public debate. However, Naess's own thinking went far beyond the rules of debate. In his many works on deep ecology and in his advocacy of *ecosophy*, he shows people how to think about their environment in a critical way that is not shallow. His work is a model for future thinking about cross-cultural and multi-disciplinary critical thinking. His work in deep ecology shows us how to think critically about a substantive component of our lives that affects us in a relational way. We are all dependent on each other and our environment. Thinking about the self, the world, and our relation to it is essential to critical thinking.

Post-reading Questions

1. Education for democracy:
How do you think education should serve democracy? What role does critical thinking play in democracy? Is critical thinking important for the voting members of a democracy? What role does being adequately informed play in democratic voting?
2. The Meta-critical Question about Critical Thinking:
What is the meta-critical question? Why is it important to engage the meta-critical question? How often should we revisit the question? What do we gain from revisiting the question?

3. The Central Argument:

- I. Critical thinking and practice in ethical civic debate are important to public discourse on social and political issues that citizens of a democratic body vote on when making policy decisions.
- II. The current model for critical thinking and civic debate education is dominated by a Western account of informal logic, formal logic, debate rules, and intellectual virtues.
- III. Western accounts of critical thinking can dominate critical thinking education only if educators designing critical thinking education have considered contributions from non-Western philosophers and then either excluded or included them depending on their merits.
- IV. Education policy in critical thinking has failed to consider the contributions of non-Western thinkers on critical thinking.
- V. So, critical thinking education should be re-considered in light of contributions from non-Western thinkers.

What do you think of the central argument? Do you think it is good or bad, if so why?

4. Types of conversation:

Vāda: *Vāda* is an honest debate in which both sides, proponent and opponent, are seeking the truth—that is, wanting to establish the right view.

Jalpa: *Jalpa* is a discussion/debate in which one tries to win by any means, fair or unfair.

Vitaṇḍā: *Vitaṇḍā* is a discussion in which one aims to destroy or demolish the opponent no matter how.

Can you think of a context where each of these styles of debate would be useful? Should we allow for all of these styles of debate, or should we only allow for some? And if so, which ones?

5. Critical Thinking Views:

The skill view holds that critical thinking is exhausted by the acquisition and proper deployment of critical thinking skills.

The character view holds that critical thinking involves the acquisition and proper deployment of specific skills, as well as the acquisition of specific character traits, dispositions, attitudes, and habits of mind. These components are aspects of the “critical spirit.”

The comprehensive view holds that critical thinking involves (1) the development of the appropriate skills that are constitutive of critical thinking; (2) the appropriate character traits, dispositions, attitudes, and habits of mind, which are constitutive of the “critical spirit”; (3) requires that the skills/tools and the nature of the “critical spirit” be derived from all traditions that have contributed to critical discourse; and

(4) the view requires that at some point a critical thinker engage the meta-critical question about critical thinking; that is, a critical thinker acquires a proper understanding and appreciation of the sources of critical discourse for the purposes of bringing harmony to all that participate in the activity.

Which of the three views of critical thinking do you think is best and why?

6. Stereotype Threat:

Explain what a stereotype threat is. Explain why stereotype threat is bad. Explain how counter-stereotype role models can be used to reduce stereotype threat.

7. Classical Indian Syllogism:

Using the fire syllogism of classical Indian philosophy as a guide, provide both a good and bad example of an argument. Be sure to fill in each step in the sequence in a manner similar to the original fire example.

Original Fire Syllogism Example

Thesis: There is fire on the mountain over there.

Reason: There is smoke over there on the mountain.

Rule/Example: Where there is smoke, there is fire, as in a kitchen when one starts a fire.

Application: The case of the mountain is like the case of the kitchen.

Conclusion: There is fire on the mountain.

Create Your Own

Thesis:

Reason:

Rule/Example:

Application:

Conclusion:

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