



ОСВІТНІ ПРОГРАМИ ТА ІНСТРУМЕНТИ З РОЗВИТКУ КРИТИЧНОГО МИСЛЕННЯ

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PARRHESIA AND THE LOGIC OF EXPRESSION: PHILOSOPHICAL ROOTS OF CRITICAL THINKING IN CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION

Modern education operates amid a profound crisis of trust and meaning. The proliferation of digital media, algorithmic control, and informational manipulation has transformed the very conditions under which truth can be spoken and heard. In this environment, critical thinking risks being reduced to a technical or instrumental skill, detached from ethical responsibility. Against such tendencies, the ancient notion of parrhesia – literally «free speech» or «frankness» (παρρησία) – offers a powerful framework for reimagining education as an ethical and logical practice of truth-telling [2, 4]. To engage in parrhesia means not simply to speak freely but to have the courage to speak truthfully in situations of risk. It is an act that unites logic, ethics, and responsibility, suggesting that to think critically is also to act courageously and to speak with integrity. As Biesta [1] notes, education inherently involves a «beautiful risk»: it is not a safe transmission of knowledge but a relational space of uncertainty and encounter.

The origins of this idea reach back to classical philosophy. For Socrates, truth was not something possessed but something generated through dialogue; his *maieutic* method sought to elicit awareness through questioning. Speech was thus not rhetorical performance but an ethical mode of inquiry, binding thought and responsibility together. Through this dialogical process, Socrates established the idea that reasoning is inseparable from moral integrity, that to speak truthfully is also to live truthfully. Diogenes of Sinope extended this tradition through what might be called radical parrhesia: a fearless, public form of truth-telling that disrupted hypocrisy and social convention. His provocations were not acts of rebellion for their own sake but manifestations of ethical authenticity. In both figures, parrhesia emerges as a synthesis of intellectual rigor and moral courage – a logic of boldness that refuses complacency and calls the subject to account for the truth of their own speech.

Michel Foucault later revitalized the concept, interpreting parrhesia as a mode of ethical subjectivation. In his late lectures at the Collège de France (The Courage of Truth), Foucault [2] describes truth-telling as a practice through which the subject constitutes itself by taking responsibility for its discourse. Truth, for him, is not an objective constant but an ethical relation to oneself and to others. Within this frame, education can be understood as a site of ethical formation: a dialogical encounter where both teacher and student share the risk of truth. Peters [4] interprets this as an «educational practice of the self», emphasizing that speaking the truth in pedagogy is not a matter of authority but of mutual vulnerability. Similarly, Biesta [1] insists that genuine learning requires openness to uncertainty and the courage to let something unpredictable emerge in the relation between educator and

learner. Zembylas [7] complements these ideas by showing that critical pedagogy cannot be purely cognitive – it must also address the emotional and affective dimensions of truth. Working through «troubled knowledge», as he calls it, means confronting discomfort as part of the educational process rather than avoiding it. Thus, parrhesia becomes not only an epistemic act but also an affective and ethical practice.

In this light, parrhesia redefines the meaning of critical thinking. To think critically is not merely to apply analytical procedures but to engage in reasoning as a form of moral courage. It implies the willingness to question one's assumptions, to expose one's arguments to counterexample, and to align speech with truth rather than persuasion. As Lather [3] argues, critical inquiry must acknowledge the positionality and risk of the speaking subject; it is not neutral but situated, vulnerable, and accountable. Logical reasoning, therefore, is not a detached instrument but a lived discipline of honesty. This understanding revives the Socratic ideal within modern education: logic as an ethical practice, argumentation as care for truth, and debate as a means of cultivating integrity. In dialogic learning, in the culture of questioning and self-correction, the ancient ethic of parrhesia continues to shape the intellectual and moral fabric of education.

In the context of the digital age, parrhesia acquires new significance. Today's information environments are saturated with performative speech, algorithmic amplification, and emotional manipulation. The practice of truth-telling now requires what might be called digital courage – the capacity to speak with authenticity and critical awareness within networked systems of communication. Educational practices such as Socratic questioning, structured debate, and ethical reflection embody this ethos, helping students to cultivate autonomy of thought and a sense of responsibility for their words. Integrating parrhesiastic thinking into courses on logic, philosophy, and media literacy can serve as a countermeasure against rhetorical manipulation and epistemic superficiality. It can re-establish trust in reasoned discourse and reposition critical thinking as an ethical relation rather than a performative skill.

Ultimately, parrhesia unites logic and ethics as the twin foundations of critical thinking. It presents truth-telling as a form of moral existence: the courage to think, to speak, and to live in accordance with what one holds to be true. In this way, it challenges the technocratic reduction of education to performance metrics and reasserts the educational encounter as a space of freedom, risk, and transformation. To educate through parrhesia is to invite students into the shared labor of truth – a practice that shapes not only their reasoning but their character. Such an approach restores the human dimension of critical thinking: the inseparability of cognition, emotion, and ethical responsibility. It envisions education as an act of care for truth and, through that care, a reawakening of trust in the possibilities of speech, dialogue, and reason itself.

References

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