

Rethinking Critical Thinking in Colombian High School Philosophy through Paul

Ricœur's Phronesis: A Hermeneutic Inquiry

by

Fredy Hernán Prieto Galindo

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Secondary Education

University of Alberta

© Fredy Hernán Prieto Galindo, 2023

Abstract

Current times underscore the imperative to look for educational possibilities in Colombian schools that support a greater openness to listening to diverse voices. In my experience, the dominant training of critical thinking in high school philosophy courses is grounded in philosophical logic and modern epistemology deemed to be neutral, universal, and objective. Any view outside this framework is commonly disregarded. In such a context, I re-examine educational curricula aimed at cultivating critical thinking in philosophy courses and interview four Colombian teachers to ascertain their approaches to teaching high school philosophy.

More specifically, my interest lies in exploring the ways in which Paul Ricœur's (1913-2005) theory of *phronesis* (practical wisdom) might inform philosophy instruction. While my theoretical framework is based on Hans-Georg Gadamer's (1900–2002) and Ricœur's hermeneutics, a deeper understanding of Ricœur's *phronesis* as critical thinking for high school philosophy is my primary focus. Accordingly, my research question is: In what ways do teachers experience and understand the possibilities and complexities in teaching critical thinking in Colombian high school-level philosophy? A subsidiary question is: What new ways of understanding the teaching of critical thinking emerge from the Ricoeurian theory of *phronesis*?

My methodology is hermeneutic inquiry, which seeks to better comprehend a phenomenon in its own ambience and acquire other interpretations that allow an enrichment of the knowledge and practice around the phenomenon. In searching for new a comprehension of teaching critical thinking, I weave a hermeneutic autobiographical approach with my learnings from the participants' interviews. Data collection includes my field journal, interviews, and participants' teaching tools (syllabi, lesson plans, class record books, rubrics, etc.).

The findings of this research study relate to three main themes: First, the difficulties of instilling critical thinking in high school students through Western philosophy and an exploration of possibilities for decolonizing Colombian high school curricula. Second, the teachers' pedagogical pathways to overcoming difficulties in cultivating critical thinking among their students. Finally, the study reveals that an epistemological understanding of critical thinking, is only one kind of criticality needed by students: two more forms of critical thinking emerged from the interviews.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by ©Fredy Hernán Prieto Galindo, 2023. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board: Rethinking Critical Thinking in Colombian High School Philosophy through Paul Ricœur's Phronesis: A Hermeneutic Inquiry. No. #Pro00116822, February 1, 2022.

Dedication

Not just philosophy, but also education in general and the university especially must be impertinent and the more impertinent the more critical and all the more open to utopia. (Hoyos Vásquez, 2009, p. 427).

I dedicate this work to all people who dare to be impertinent to the *statu quo*,¹ to the seemingly *unmodifiable* cultural system of knowledge, to the idea that there is only one right rule, especially in philosophy teaching. I dedicate it to all who have the courage to contemplate, create, and fight for new utopias in education.

For my family and friends, and all who unconditionally supported me with their love, patience, and encouragement through all this time of study and self-reflection.

To all philosophy teachers that put their students first.

To my home country, Colombia.

To *Pachamama* herself.

¹ In English, this expression is written with an *s* at the end of *statu*, probably because in the nominative declension the Latin word takes that *s*; then, it would be just a name acting mostly as the subject in a sentence. In this text, I opted for the original Latin expression (*statu quo*) which marks circumstances rather than a name of a sentence. A useful explanation of this expression and its form in English can be found at <https://www.grammarphobia.com/blog/2020/09/status-quo.html>

Acknowledgements

To Dr. Claudia Eppert, who first saw the potential of a good and valuable research in my rough ideas. Her guidance and patience with my difficulties and particularly my language skills and stubbornness were more than generous. Her suggestions about the authors and books I should read were not only pertinent but insightful and wonderful. Through words of encouragement, she accompanied me in this path of knowledge. To Dr. David Smith, always available to talk about hermeneutics and my study; his call to explore other philosophical views was critical. To Dr. Claudia Ruitenber, since her interesting questions and comments made me think deeper and deeper. To the external committee members, whose insightful observations and conversations helped me better my comprehension of critical thinking. Thanks for your guidance.

To my participants for their generous opening into their life experiences as teachers and philosophers. To Sung Kyung and Craig Daniel; it was marvelous to have two colleagues for reading and discussing Gadamer's texts and much more. To Jenny Osorio, the only fellow Colombian citizen I met in the Faculty of Education; it was extraordinarily joyful to meet a fellow citizen to talk about everything and nothing and, also about our studies. Your friendship was one of the jewels that I found in an ocean of wonderful solitude and silence in Edmonton and Montreal. Thanks for being always there.

To all my friends that took the time to read or talk about my research drafts. You always allowed me to see more and challenged my narrow perspectives. I especially acknowledge Manuel Alejandro Prada, always loyal to philosophy and our friendship in the middle of the critiques to my texts; his knowledge of Ricœur's and Gadamer's philosophy, as well as his pedagogic insights continue to encourage my own study. To Alexis Parada, Felix Rojas, Miguel

Bayona, and Elizabeth Pinilla with whom I conversed many times about their own teaching experiences, their research topics, and fragments of my dissertation they read. You all influenced my thought and writing and made me see new paths of thinking. I am also deeply grateful to old friends of mine who also supported me in different ways, particularly to Eduardo Salcedo, Pablo Vargas, Oscar Linares, Maximiliano Prada, Mercedes Abreo, Tatiana Pinzón. Likewise, to Yuri Buelvas and Miguel Bayona, former students of mine and now colleagues and friends, always intent to be there for and with me. All of you gave me the strength to continue in this path.

Finally, I could not have reached this goal without my family's support. Their love and trust in me form the sap that runs through my life and keep me flourishing. All I am is thanks to you, and it is for you. I always feel your company and energy.

To Colombian Institution ICETEX, for the scholarship that allowed me to fulfill one of my dreams and study my doctorate abroad. Thanks to that, now I can see my home country and myself with different eyes.

To all people who saw and wanted to see in me something more than what I, myself was able to. To all people that help me to understand and correct my mistakes. You always trusted and believed in me, with all my virtues and vices.

Life has been definitely generous to me.

Thank you all.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Abstract | ii |
| Preface | iv |
| Dedication | v |
| Acknowledgements | vi |
| Prelude | 1 |
| Note to the Reader | 1 |
| Chapter One: Among Different Worlds of Languages and Traditions | 8 |
| Like Oil and Water: Critical Pedagogy and The Critical Thinking Movement | 8 |
| Running Backwards in Time: My Immature Criticality..... | 12 |
| Growing up with my Parents..... | 13 |
| Loving Languages and a Variety of Critical Stances..... | 17 |
| Sapere Aude! Dare Yourself to Savour your Knowledge and Freedom!..... | 20 |
| A Study Journey: My Encounter with Phronesis | 28 |
| Hermes Approaches... The Command to Stay with High School | 31 |
| A Uni-Formed Strait-Jacketed People: My Research Problem..... | 34 |
| Questions for a Re-Search: How to Loosen the Straitjacket? | 37 |
| Hermes' Messages of a Particular Approach | 39 |
| Significance of my Study | 40 |
| Chapter Two: Hermeneutic Theory Between Gadamer and Ricœur | 42 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| From Gadamer to Ricœur: Personal Experience and Academic Inheritance | 42 |
| My Encounter with Ricœur’s Philosophy | 43 |
| The Domino Effect in Gadamer’s Thinking | 48 |
| A Treasure Hunt through Ricœur’s Hermeneutics..... | 55 |
| Ricoeuran Phronesis: A Scale to Balance and Measure | 61 |
| Venturing into a New Critical Thinking | 71 |
| A Final Note | 79 |
| Chapter Three: Looking Intently at the Literature on Critical Thinking..... | 81 |
| A Hermeneutic Conversation | 81 |
| My Encounter with Educational Discourses | 82 |
| The Critical Thinking Movement: The Theory that Fit my Teaching Practice..... | 85 |
| Critical Thinking within Colombian High School Philosophy | 92 |
| Studies of Critical Thinking: Laboratories of Improvement..... | 100 |
| Ricoeuran Philosophy into Curricula..... | 107 |
| Ricoeuran Phronesis | 111 |
| Chapter Four: Colombia in a Long Path Towards Liberation | 116 |
| “Hell” Arrived at the Coasts of <i>Cartagena</i> | 118 |
| An Infinite Little War: Colombia in the 20 th Century..... | 124 |
| Phronesis Towards Peace-Building..... | 128 |
| Colombian High School: Philosophy and Critical Thinking..... | 131 |
| History of Teaching Philosophy in Colombian Curricula..... | 134 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Latin American Philosophy: Toward Decolonization | 138 |
| Understanding our Euro-Latin American Traditions | 141 |
| Chapter Five: Hermeneutic Inquiry..... | 147 |
| Hermeneutic Inquiry in Qualitative Research: Translating the Gods' Wishes | 147 |
| Recruitment of Participants..... | 153 |
| Strategies of Inquiry | 157 |
| Interview-Conversations | 158 |
| Implementation Measures | 162 |
| My researcher's Journal | 164 |
| Note Taking..... | 165 |
| My Participants' Teaching Tools | 165 |
| <i>Hermeneutic Interpretation</i> | 165 |
| Addressing Ethical Concerns | 171 |
| My Role as a Researcher..... | 172 |
| Benefits for the Participants | 173 |
| Informed Consent..... | 174 |
| Limitations and Delimitations of the Study..... | 174 |
| Hermeneutic Trustworthiness..... | 175 |
| Harmony..... | 176 |
| Evocative Power..... | 176 |
| Responsibility..... | 178 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Chapter Six: Inviting the Phenomenon to Appear | 180 |
| Practice Makes Perfect! | 180 |
| Finding Threads to Weave | 183 |
| Translation: A Path of Hospitality | 185 |
| My Participants' <i>Visage</i> | 188 |
| Beatriz and her Joy of "Discovering the Natural Philosopher" | 189 |
| Catalina and her Long Experience | 193 |
| The Joy of Learning with Leonardo | 198 |
| Alfredo's Consciousness: "We Need More Licensed Teachers" | 201 |
| The <i>Sagesse</i> and Strength (<i>Visage</i>) of my Teacher-Participants..... | 204 |
| Chapter Seven: The Tension of Teaching Critical Thinking..... | 207 |
| All Might be Reduced to a Spark or a Name..... | 207 |
| A Spark of clarity | 208 |
| Heart Attacks..... | 211 |
| Philosophy Teachers: Towards Openness | 214 |
| Philosophy: A Distant and Incomprehensible World..... | 216 |
| Between Rigid and Flexible Teachers..... | 219 |
| The Teachers at Crossroads: A Life in Tension..... | 222 |
| First Balance of Findings..... | 223 |
| Chapter Eight: Possibilities for Teaching Critical Thinking..... | 225 |
| Connecting the Students' Lives to Philosophy..... | 226 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Stop Teaching Everything..... | 228 |
| Reaching Other Kinds of Resources | 229 |
| Interdisciplinary Curriculum..... | 232 |
| Universal Objectives Against Particular Persons..... | 235 |
| Motivation as a Major Element in Teaching..... | 237 |
| <i>A Phronetical Response In-Between the Teachers' Experiences</i> | 241 |
| Second Balance of Findings | 245 |
| Chapter Nine: Different Kinds of Critical Thinking in Philosophy | 247 |
| Clear-Cut Definitions of Critical Thinking | 247 |
| Centered on Rationality..... | 248 |
| Others' Perspectives..... | 250 |
| Affect in the Middle of Reasons..... | 253 |
| Imagination in Thinking Critically..... | 260 |
| Types of Critical Thinking | 263 |
| Critical Thinking: Ethics and Politics in the Forefront of Critical Thinking | 266 |
| Realizing the Personal Freedom with and for Others: Ethical Criticality..... | 268 |
| The Political Visage of Critical Thinking..... | 272 |
| Third Balance of Findings | 278 |
| Conclusions? General Balance | 281 |
| Letter to the Reader | 281 |

References 293

Appendix A: Sample Interview Questions..... 325

Appendix B: Invitation E-mail..... 327

Appendix C: Consent Form 329

Appendix D: Anonymity Waiver 330

Appendix F: Ethics Approval Notification Letter 331

List of Tables

| | |
|---------------------|------------|
| Table 1..... | 191 |
| Table 2..... | 195 |

Prelude

I commence this text with a quote and story reproduced by Ram Adhar Mall (2000) in the context of intercultural philosophy:

The Indian king Milinda and the Buddhist monk-philosopher Nagasena:

The king said, “Venerable sir, will you discuss with me again.”

“If your majesty will discuss as a scholar, yes; but if you will discuss as a king, no.”

“How is it then that scholars discuss?”

“When scholars discuss there is summing up, unravelling; one or other is shown to be in error and he admits his mistake and yet is not thereby angered.”

“And how is it that kings discuss?”

“When a king discusses a matter and he advances a point of view, if anyone differs from him on that point, he is apt to punish him.”

“Very well then, it is as a scholar that I will discuss. Let your reverence talk without fear.” (p. 7)

In that simple but profound story, I see the principal attitudes of a hermeneutic scholar: patient listening and dialogue searching for deep understandings. I strive to follow the way of the scholar in my conversations and readings about the topic of my research.

Note to the Reader

Dear reader, in this text, I am about to share with you a few details about my own life. That is something I never thought I would do in a document like this and as explicitly as I do here. I am a scholar unravelling his own life in order to understand his research topic and re-create a particular style of writing. On these few pages, I explain to you some of my choices and also reveal a few of my beliefs and convictions. Please linger patiently with me as I try to convey

an academic style always in a state of tension with the ways of Western philosophy and the hermeneutic paths selected to approach the phenomenon. As you enter the first chapter of this work, you will notice how imbricated my life is with the topic of critical thinking in high school philosophy, focus of my research. This is how I approach the consciousness of the history of effects so dear to Hans-Georg Gadamer. As I tell my personal history, I recount some of my mistakes and the effects they produced in time. Thus, you can understand how, why, and when I felt “addressed” (Gadamer, 1975/2004, p. 298), “summoned” (Moules, McCaffrey, Field, & Laing, 2015, p. 71) to teach critical thinking and to challenge the concepts in which I myself was trained. I know that I have not abandoned the concept of critical thinking infused in me by my teachers during my philosophical studies, but I am trying to overcome it. I am in a hermeneutical place, Gadamer would (1975/2004) say, for hermeneutics is in the place of “familiarity and strangeness.... *The true locus of hermeneutics is this in-between*” (p. 295). I live this tension *in-between* the old ways I inherited (that I probably will never achieve to abandon totally) and the new I am trying to reach.

I share my personal as well as my professional history but also the history of my country. I am checking past and present, assessing errors, prejudices, and my own doubts. In a word, this is a self-critique that all critical thinking might (and should?) incite as hermeneutics does. I think that I enter in the hermeneutic circle, in the midst of the life of the phenomenon, where “we suddenly arrive, as it were, in the middle of a conversation that has already begun and in which we try to guide ourselves in order to be able to contribute to it” (Ricoeur, 1986/1991, p. 33). I arrived at the conversation of critical thinking by studying Western philosophy, and I learnt a very logical understanding of it through which I re-configured my being, that I am now

attempting to change. As Walter Mignolo (2011) said, “I am breaking away from the Western code” (p. xvii).

After reading Gadamer and Ricœur, loyal companions in this journey of learning, I can see now that threading diverse kinds of strings in the text is just a way of realizing (in its double sense of achieving and gaining awareness) that “everything points to some other thing... nothing comes forth just in the one meaning that is offered to us” (Gadamer, 1964/2007, p. 131). Thus, some metaphors, etymologies, occurrences, relations, ideas come to my mind while I write, and I weave them into the text because they show something about what I am writing; they help me to deepen my interpretation. If you can see the kinship between apparently unrelated things, then you can understand the text, the connections I saw, and even different ones, because “in view of the finitude of our historical existence, it would seem that there is something absurd about the whole idea of a unique, correct interpretation” (Gadamer, 1975/2004, p. 118). Thus, the fecundity of this text rest in the numerous interpretations that it might provoke.

I would like to tell you that I alone created the texture and ways to write illustrated in this dissertation, but I did not. At the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary, I found a different perspective to understand, practice, and write guided by Gadamerian hermeneutics. In the tradition of inquiry constituted by Nancy Moules, Graham McCaffrey, David Jardine, David Smith, Alexandra Fidyk, Claudia Eppert, and other Canadian scholars, I found a rich and insightful style of hermeneutics. I felt at home. I found a lens to see reality and knowledge anew that has caused me to change my perspectives about doing philosophy and pedagogy in my writing. I am grateful to Professor Alexandra Fidyk for the first hint at that hermeneutic style and to Professor Claudia Eppert for her patient, kind, and strong guidance and support.

Such a hermeneutic style of writing reflects its philosophical grounds. Language, said Martin Heidegger (1949/1977), “is the house of Being. In its home man dwells” (p. 217), which I see in the Gadamer’s (1975/2004) statement that “language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs” (p. 390). Certainly, language is more than spoken and written words, or a set of tools. It is a *medium*, an environment in which we dwell. It is in that (green)house where we come to understand and be in certain ways. Therefore, striving to make ourselves understood, we search for metaphors, comparisons, stories, etymologies, theories, and much more. Imagine yourself learning a new language and trying to explain something for which you do not know the words. Despite the feeling of impotence, you try to communicate by comparisons, gestures, ‘wrong’ words, and so forth until you reach your goal.

“What is your point?” you might ask. This is it: an interpretation is achieved through all the resources of language; therefore, a hermeneutical text is also constituted by any linguistic creation through which the text widens and deepens the understanding of the phenomenon. Those resources, however, are not to embellish the text like an image on a book cover. Nietzsche (1896/1992) saw part of truth when he said that language is an army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms that we have forgotten. Therefore, to search for an etymology does not mean that we have found the absolute, true, real meaning of a word. In etymologies we can see, stated Gadamer (1975/2004), “the continuing influence of an ancient truth that has been able to assert itself” (p. 479). They assist us to analyze, to find new sides of the phenomenon, something covered, hidden by time but that can be re-dis-covered, or taken off the cover that was repeatedly put on.

In the process of learning several languages, I often found insightful etymologies and clear relations among them. Here, I see the influence of “ancient truths” and historical processes

that left their (foot)marks in language. By the way, did you know that the English verb “to converse” comes from Latin: *cum* and *versare* (Harper, 2000b)? *Cum* signals company (not instrument) whilst *versare*, a very polysemic word, might mean to turn, to agitate, to think, to live, etc. I had not noticed before that to converse can also mean agitate or disturb a topic, to make it move upside down so as to see other traits not seen before. That is why, I suppose, good conversations are so difficult to find and so insightful when they occur. They might disturb our fixed beliefs, just like a good text: they make us think and feel!

It is precisely that kind of movement that I would like to incite through my research, so as to offer a contribution to the “complicated conversation” (Pinar, 2020) in Colombian didactics² and curriculum studies about the teaching of critical thinking in high school philosophy and the possible role of Ricoeurian theory of *phronesis* (practical wisdom) on it. Why, you would probably ask me, do that through hermeneutic research, and more importantly, why follow the Gadamerian approach? I would tell you that there I see other worlds “which I could inhabit” (Ricoeur, 1975/1981, p. 142) and reconfigure my home.

² When I use the word didactics in this text, I mean the science or discipline that studies, reflects, and applies on the field of teaching and learning, as the Colombian scholar Andrés Runge Peña (2013) defines it. In this science or discipline there is a central role to the reflection, design, and application of theories and teaching instruments and technics (although the latter specific topics are just like the tip of the iceberg that hides other points such as the ends of education, the relations among teachers, students and knowledge, the moments, places, themes for teaching, and so forth), whilst in curriculum the main emphasis seems placed on the students’ and teachers’ experiences in school. I think that both views can complement each other and enrich the comprehension of the phenomenon here studied. Moreover, I have to admit that I use the word didactics due to my background on that science, but, as I understand it, I could have also used the word pedagogy which seems synonymous, at least for its use in Canada.

As it is evident, I am a deeply committed hermeneutician under the lineage of Gadamer and Ricœur, but I see now that the emphasis on history, language, and critique is a shared trait with critical pedagogy, decolonialism, and philosophy of liberation, and I wonder now if my participants already know and see that these perspectives have much to offer to a conception of critical thinking in Colombia. Although my dissertation does not aim to merge these theories, I have recently started to hear their call, and you will find later some of their whispers and signs as well as my initial timid responses.

However, principally for this dissertation, I have decided to understand hermeneutics more deeply through its *praxis*. Following that decision and admitting my inexperience in practical methodologies of research, I decided to follow *Conducting Hermeneutic Research: From Philosophy to Practice* by Nancy Moules et al. (2015). It offers solid guidelines to apply the hermeneutic approach to practical fields such as education and nursing. After reading that book, I could not read any hermeneutic scholar as I did before. That was the book that opened my mind about other possibilities of applying a philosophical theory to education. Such an application (Lat.: *ad*, to + *plicare*, to fold, to bend [Harper, 2000a]), following hermeneutics, brings the possibility of bending or folding the theory to the situation, similar to a temporary tattoo on your skin that moves as you do and grows as you grow. What is more, the ink integrates with the skin, but when it vanishes, it could be dyed with another one. Hence, the person is not limited to bear/see the same colors and forms their whole life. Thus, the application of philosophy to an educational situation means that both might be so deeply integrated that they could be better or differently understood, and after some time another philosophy can help to see other things.

In other words, the situation at hand is what gives the form and the meaning to which (*ad*) the text has to be bent (*plicare*). I learned that the with curriculum scholar Ted T. Aoki (2011) when he wrote that it “is not the applying to a concrete situation of a given general that we first understand by itself, but it is the actual understanding of the general itself that a given situation constitutes for us” (p. 156). In other words, it is the situation itself that enriches the comprehension of the universal; it takes us to understand the theory better. Notwithstanding, it is not about designing a standard instrument to be put in service of every situation in the same way. Gadamer (1975/2004) is quite strong when he affirms that “knowledge that cannot be applied to the concrete situation remains meaningless and even risks obscuring what the situation calls for” (p. 311). In that way, the meaning of knowledge resides in its application, the illumination it might produce.

I finish this introduction with a few words of David Jardine (1992), one of the Canadian curriculum theorists who has influenced me most:

I hope that the reader can read what follows knowing that this introduction is not a list of apologies for uncorrected mistakes but that it is somehow indicative of an urgent necessity to speak and write differently than so much of our inheritance has allowed. (p. 8)

Dear readers, I welcome you to my life and my research!

Amables lectores: les doy la bienvenida e invito a mi vida e investigación.

Chapter One: Among Different Worlds of Languages and Traditions

In my first chapter, I feel it necessary to unknit two different traditions of critical thinking threaded in my life, as well as introduce my encounter with the French philosopher Paul Ricœur's (1913–2005) philosophy and his theory of *phronesis*. These threads make up the fabric of my research problem: namely, what I see as the need to rethink critical thinking in Colombian high school philosophy curricula. I close this chapter with a first glance at my research questions and methodology, which are profoundly informed by Gadamer's (1900–2002) hermeneutics, curriculum studies, and applied hermeneutics.

Like Oil and Water: Critical Pedagogy and The Critical Thinking Movement

In the field of education, critical thinking (also named criticality or critique) has become ubiquitous, “proposed as the panacea” (Friesen & Jardine, 2010, p. 7) in the sea of school problems. However, there is notable disagreement about how to understand and teach it (Biesta, 2019; Lai, 2011; Pithers & Soden, 2000). Critical thinking curricula in Colombian education are no exception to this trend. Actually, I would say that there are two dominant conceptions of criticality in my home country's high school: *Critical pedagogy* and *the critical thinking movement*.

In the context of Colombian high school philosophy, those understandings of criticality seem to be like oil and water: They are rarely mixed into a single liquid, or a single philosopher. Certainly, when I asked Oscar Javier Linares, a friend, specialist in Latin American philosophy, about the participation of Colombian scholars in the constitution of philosophy he told me that Colombian scholars/philosophers developed a strong perspective against Latin-American philosophy (*criterio antilatinoamericanista*) [which explains that] the decolonial discourse also

has not been received into philosophy in Colombia.³ It has been developed in other fields of knowledge, but not in philosophy (Personal communication, April 11th, 2022). To be sure, in Colombia, perspectives such as Critical Pedagogy, post/decolonialism, and philosophy of liberation are fields of study not cultivated by philosophers that consider themselves to be related only to the “purity and objectivity” of the Western philosophy.

Taking the case of critical pedagogy and the work of scholars such as Paulo Freire (1921–1997), Michael Apple (1942–), and Peter McLaren (1948–), it is clear that they are primarily “concerned with the centrality of politics and power in our understanding of how school works” (McLaren, 2015, p. 121). That is, they seek to identify ideologies and hegemonies that may produce an “unjust status quo” (Burbules & Berk, 1999, p. 1). In bell hooks’ (2010c) words, these scholars “aim to redress biases that have informed ways of teaching and knowing in our society” (p. 23). To change those biases, Freire (1974/2005) proposed to instil *conscientization*, which represents a person’s critical thinking with regard to the awareness of their personal context and situation of oppression: “*Concientização* represents the *development* of the awakening of the critical awareness” (p. 15). In my view, critical pedagogy might be represented by a drop of oil composed of heavy and dense elements (ideology, hegemony, oppression, etc.) that thicken it. It could be said, in general terms, that many of critical pedagogues work from a (neo)Marxist perspective, which explains their interest in the political dimension of education and their commitment to change specific situations in schools. To my knowledge, in Colombia, critical pedagogy is cultivated mainly by social science teachers.

³ One historical reason that might explain such a preference is the fact that Latin American philosophy is close to Marxist philosophy that was the main ideology for Colombian *guerrillas*.

At some point in my schooling, I rejected critical pedagogy (perhaps, regrettably too quickly). Instead, I became interested in learning the concept of critical thinking represented by “the critical thinking movement” (Paul, 2012), that is, a group of philosophers and educators interested in writing and creating tools for teaching critical thinking in schools and universities, but working by themselves.⁴ This movement comprises several north American scholars, including Harvey Siegel (1945–), Sharon Bailin (1945–), Peter Facione (1944–), Stephen Norris (1949–2014), Linda Elder (1962), Richard Paul (1937–2015), John E. McPeck (unknown birth), and others. They address critical thinking as an “epistemic adequacy” (Burbules & Berk, 1999, p. 2), that is, the epistemic and logic examination of all components of a text or phenomenon. For them, critical thinking is the proper application of thinking abilities, dispositions and logical criteria to any phenomenon.

For Gert Biesta (2019), such a conception of critical thinking is “more prevalent than is often assumed” (p. 65), particularly, I would suggest, in Colombian philosophy courses. Many of the scholars related to this conception could be named as post-positivist; in other words, they search for an objective, neutral, and universal (although fallible) knowledge. I depict this

⁴ It is necessary to highlight that this group of scholars does not seem to work like a team under the same philosophy, or principles. However, they certainly share the interest in advancing several areas related to the teaching of critical thinking in North American (US and Canada mainly) education. Furthermore, some of them do not only write articles and books developing academic discourse about critical thinking, but write textbooks (Fisher, 2001; Paul & Elder, 2006), design psychometric assessment tools (Ennis & Weir, 1985; Watson & Glaser, 2002) and offer workshops and conferences about critical thinking (Paul & Elder, 2021). Despite their lack of teamwork and cohesion, the tag “the critical thinking movement” has been used by many scholars (e.g. Difabio, 2005; Paul, 2012; Weil, 1998; Mejía & Zamara, 2004).

conception of critical thinking as a drop of pure water, free from any influence that pollutes the supposed neutrality, universality and objectivity of rational thinking. Such a concept follows from an understanding of philosophy as an autonomous discipline, pure or not polluted (nor able to be polluted) with emotional, cultural, ideologic, historic, political, characterological viruses that make philosophy enjoys an exceptional purity (Rabossi, 2008, p. 92).

Considering the etymological tracing of the word “critical thinking,” I see some relations to the theories just mentioned. The word critical and its derivatives come from the Greek verb κρίνω (*krínō* [Harper, 2000f]). It bears principally two sets of connotations: First, it means to identify, separate, and judge. In short, critique might show an intellectual or cognitive side. The second set of meanings of κρίνω is to question, to bring to trial, to accuse (Liddell & Scott, 1940c); denotations related to the context of law and justice. Thus, the faculty of reason could be imagined as a tribunal where an idea or fact is examined according to certain laws (of society) after an accusation (such as false, ideological, discriminatory).

It is interesting to learn that from *krínō* seems to come the word crisis as well. Under the meaning of separation (part of the first set of connotations), a crisis might be, among other things, a “turning point in a disease, that change which indicates recovery or death” (Harper, 2000d). In other words, we could understand a crisis as a moment where something has been separated, divided, perhaps broken, originating an illness or problem that may have a good or bad end.

The first etymological meaning of *krínō* appears related to intellectual processes with a “neutral” aspect of cognitive skills (parallel to the critical thinking movement’s theory). Whilst I see the second meaning related to actions or words accused of being false or unjust (near to critical pedagogy). Both meanings, however, would reach a final judgement about the object of

critique: the first being a neutral and objective epistemological statement,⁵ while the second is clearly ethical and political.

As I contemplate critical thinking, and as I will develop in detail throughout this dissertation, I have learnt that critical thinking might involve both cognitive and ethico-political aspects, in order to make sound judgements. Additionally, after reading philosophers such as Ricœur (1913–2005), Hoyos (1935–2013), Zuleta (1935–1990), Jardine (1950c), Nussbaum (1947–), Spivak (1942–), Noddings (1929–), Mignolo (1941–), and Dussel (1934–) I believe criticality also draws on other aspects inherent to human life and thinking, such as the imaginative, affective, historical, linguistic, and ethical. In this dissertation, I take a hermeneutic stance about critical thinking, particularly through the scholarship of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricœur. In that way, I differentiate my proposal from the post-positivist and (neo)Marxist perspectives. Let me show how I came to this stance.

Running Backwards in Time: My Immature Criticality

Hermeneutic research has a focus on a particular topic in relation to how it is lived out in the world of practice, how it has evolved over time, how it relates to the surrounding culture, and what it means to the practitioners involved. (Moules et al., 2014, p. 117)

⁵ As Claudia Ruitenberg stated, “Some [people] would say that, today, the first, epistemically oriented, meaning of ‘critical’ is closely related to the second meaning (krisis) as well, as there is a ‘crisis of truth’ in the ‘post-truth society,’ in which ‘alternative facts’ and ‘fake news’ seem to rule” (personal communication, February 9th, 2023). As I see it, fake news, for instance, might represent a rupture with the phenomenon itself. Here emerges a separation or division that highlights one of the meanings of *krínō* as the origin of the word crisis.

Reading this quotation, it strikes me that a research topic is lived out or experienced and probably enlivened by personal history. I wonder how I have lived or enlivened the topic of critical thinking and how it has grown for me. Here, I expound on my experiences of this kind of thinking while living with my parents and pursuing my high school and professional studies. As the curriculum theorist William F. Pinar (2020) claims, “Through academic study we reconstruct ourselves and the world we inhabit” (p. 1). Indeed, in his method of *currere*, he underlines the importance of the autobiographical, which is “to thread one’s subjectivity through subject matter, converting private passion into public service attuned to the historical moment” (p. 5-6). The Latin word *currere* is the origin of the Spanish verb *correr* (to run). Now, like a river where many beings and things run together in the flux of the water, I run backwards in time to recall a few episodes of my past in order to see what has been flowing in the current of my history about my topic. Thus, I “reconstruct” my experience and understanding of critical thinking.

Growing up with my Parents

Born to two humble almost-illiterate peasants, in my infancy I learned some of the most important lessons of my life: to love *Pachamama*, Christian values, and studying. My parents taught me their Christian faith with its regard for life, the significance of a tranquil consciousness, and the worth of hard and honest work. I remember my mother inculcating in me the love for knowledge, study, and discipline because she conceived of studying as the best way to become a good person and to achieve a better quality of life. Her frequent words to my siblings and me were: “*Lo único que podemos dejarles, mis hijos, es el estudio*” (Lit.: All we can leave you, my children, is your studies). In this regard, she definitely would agree with Claudia Ruitenbergh (2017) when she states that by studying we “become someone different in the

process” (p. 3), a better and knowledgeable person, would say my mother. From my mother, among other things, I learned to care for personal growth through study and discipline.

Since I was about 10, I worked with my father in his construction business; there I learned to give second opportunities, to help others, and to be generous. He said, “*Todos merecen ganar, todos lo necesitamos*” (Lit.: All people deserve to earn some money; we all need it). He also stated: “*Hoy por mí, mañana por ti*” (My turn today and yours tomorrow). From him, I learned to think of others’ necessities and how to help them. He would concur with the educational philosopher Gert Biesta (2019) who said that one should aim at “liv[ing] one’s life well, with others” (p. 12). Both of my parents drove me into what Ricœur (1990/1992) stated as “*aiming at the ‘good life’ with and for others, in just institutions*” (p. 172). Thus, I learned to see life as striving for a good life accompanied by and shared with other people.

Curriculum theorist Ted Aoki (2011) reminded us that “being an educated person is more than possessing knowledge or acquiring intellectual or practical skills, and that basically, it is being concerned with dwelling aright in thoughtful living with others” (p. 365). Although my parents could not even finish their primary school, they learned to live aright through their Catholic faith. If they critiqued drinking too much alcohol, doing drugs, or being corrupt, it was not mainly due to the harm to oneself and others but to the sin against the will of God. As Biesta (2019) stated, “We can never step outside of the tradition that has made us” (p. 60). Through these words, I understand that everyone critiques according to their own frameworks, which for my parents were their Catholic faith and their own experiences in the countryside and the city of *Bogotá*, historically savage for peasants, Indigenous, and Afro-descendant people, as I will discuss more fully in Chapter four where I provide a brief historical account of Colombia.

Hermeneutics, Ricœur (1973/1981a) wrote, warns us to be “on guard against the illusion or pretension of neutrality” (p. 43). This claim helps me now to understand my own teenage single-minded *criticism*. This word too comes from the Greek word κρίνω (*krínō*). Therefore, criticism is closely related to critique and crisis. However, in common usage, the word criticism has acquired a negative meaning: “The act of expressing disapproval of something and opinions about their faults” (Phillips et al., 2011a). Similar to the meanings explained above, in general, criticism also conveys a judgement. However, it does not relate to specific rules or criteria, nor a judicious examination of the situation and the reasons for taking an action or decision. Likewise, this criticism does not search for hidden ideologies or hegemony. In its common meaning, criticism only expresses opinions usually charged with negative connotations. Indeed, adolescence, as I lived it, is a time of crisis where all judgments seem separated, I would say, from clear perspectives (be it epistemic, religious, ethical, or political). Criticism⁶, understood as a shallow and highly subjective judgement, still contains a part of critique: the exercise of judgment.

In my adolescence, out of that criticism, I harshly judged my father: “*Queriendo ayudar solo deja que los demás se aprovechen de él*” (He let other people take advantage of him when he only tries to help them). From my perspective, he was naïve trying to help other people that only cared for themselves. As is evident, my thinking was critical, in a certain way, although not maturely, since I rushed into judgments. Perhaps my parents did not (neither did I) identify,

⁶ Every time I use the term *criticism* in this text, it will refer to this kind of ill critique. My decision is just a convention aimed at offering clarity about the use of the different terms that might represent the same phenomena.

separate, and judge every element of a given situation in the “neutral” tribunal of reason. They did it mechanically and did criticize in the only way they learned. I now see the worth of their beliefs and actions, and I live the shame of my previous thoughts and behavior. Their critical thinking focused on personal growth (to love themselves; the self), as well as respecting and helping others (charity to the other: otherness), that is, a critical thinking modelled by Catholic ethics, that values otherness above all else.⁷

As an adult, today I recognize that my adolescent criticism stemmed largely from an understanding of “progress” that discarded the necessities of people. This perspective weakened my sympathy, empathy, and compassion, three forms of the human *pathos* (from Greek πάσχω: to be affected, to suffer. [Liddell & Scott, 1940e]), that is, affection. The possibilities of my being affected by others’ experiences was drastically diminished. Mine was a criticism instilled by “the logic of capitalism” (Biesta, 2017, p. 17). Such a logic, for Biesta (2019), is the logic of the ego, that is, an “‘ego-logical’ freedom or ... the neo-liberal ‘freedom of shopping’” (p. 1). Although I was raised in the Catholic faith, at that time, a capitalistic mindset overruled it.

Throughout this fragment of my life, I might show what bell hooks (2010b) thinks when she affirmed that “children are organically predisposed to be critical thinkers” (p. 7), but nobody “become[s] critical thinkers overnight” (p. 8). Yes, my criticality has changed (improved, I hope) according to the paths of study I have walked. The cornerstone of that change has been my study of philosophers, particularly Aristotle, Kant, Hoyos, and, most importantly, Gadamer, Ricœur,

⁷ Remember Jesus’s words: “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22, 39). This is the commandment of loving oneself and loving others, and, I would say, the cornerstone of Catholic ethics.

and Dussel. I am on the path of re-thinking critical thinking informed by Gadamer's and Ricoeur's hermeneutics while starting to understand Dussel's perspectives.

In this research study, I was particularly interested in seeing the ways in which my participants apply (or not) some features of Ricoeurian *phronesis* in their teaching and in learning from their responses in ways that might inform my own subjectivity and teaching. Ricoeur's theory of *phronesis* emphasizes a multiplicity of layers —affect, personal history, society, otherness, happiness, etc. (Prieto Galindo, 2017)—that take part in the re-configuration of personal identity (Ricoeur, 1990/1992) and might be valuable in a theory of critical thinking for high school. I believe *phronesis* might enliven other sides of critical thinking that, from my perspective, are lacking in the current understanding of critical thinking in the Colombian high school philosophy curriculum.

Loving Languages and a Variety of Critical Stances

As I re-examine my adolescent thinking and behaviour living with my parents, I cannot ignore my experiences as a student. At the age of 16, I travelled to *Medellín, la ciudad de la eterna primavera* (*Medellín*, the city of eternal spring). I enjoyed its relaxing warmth, its gorgeous flowers, surrounding mountains, and nice people, as much as I relished my time in Montreal, particularly during spring 2022. I went to *Medellín* in order to study my last year of high school (eleventh grade) at a Catholic seminary (I wanted to become a priest or a monk). I found a fountain of diverse cultures and languages: Brazilian, Italian, Latin, Catalan.... Once a month, Mass was celebrated in a different language. This particularity of the seminary and the time lived in *Medellín*, a city of different weather, geography, and culture, forged in me the passion for learning languages and knowing other cultures and places. I began to understand that there are different ways to live and be connected to the weather, land, and language. As Claudia

Eppert (2009) stated, informed by the writings of Buddhist monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, we “are thoroughly interconnected.... Interbeing is the awareness that we are not separate entities but rather that we are a composite of elements and conditions that we also share.... The reality of our existence, therefore, is not that we ‘are’ but we ‘inter-are’” (p. 202). We are not discrete entities, but deeply interconnected, interrelated to everything else, although I think I might have been teaching the opposite. Indeed, the speciality of Western philosophy is analysis or separation.

From my Brazilian co-seminarists, I learned some Portuguese, and I noticed how every culture and language values or highlights certain aspects of life. From those facets of life, I think, people might draw up criteria to assess actions and ideas and, therefore, a form of *critique* emerges. For my Brazilian co-seminarists, it seemed to me, life had to be examined according to the joy one brings to it, the joy of one’s own life (whilst for my fellow Colombian friends, it was about how one can avail oneself of any situation). Among other things, in this context, to “think critically” seemed to examine whether a situation enriched people’s joy or happiness. Naturally, such critique is not a form of academic thought, although I learnt that critique is part of our life, seated in language and culture.

By learning languages, I started to open my mind to new ways of understanding myself. I was in my thirties when I decided to learn English and had the chance to live for seven months in Oxford, UK. Living that experience, I started to understand that every language is and shows us a different landscape of the world. In Oxford, I found several words for snow according to its different types. I used to think that a snowman could be made with any kind of snow.

However, language is not a mere instrument to convey ideas or describe nature; it is the atmosphere or environment that nurtures a form of existence. According to Gadamer (1975/2004), “Every single individual ... finds in the language, customs, and institutions of his

people a pre-given body of material” (p. 13). We find the values, beliefs, and practices in the language that leads us out (*ex-ducere*: educate [(Harper, 2000h)]) of the rough nature to the spiritual milieu of self-formation. In Aoki’s (2011) words, “To lead is to lead others out, from where they now are to possibilities not yet” (p. 350). This is, I think, what Gadamer (1975/2004) called *Bildung*: “Every individual is always engaged in the process of *Bildung* and in getting beyond his naturalness, inasmuch as the world into which he is growing is one that is humanly constituted through language and culture” (p. 13).

By learning languages and their implicit cultures, we continue the process of *Bildung*: the formation of new images (*Bild*) of/for ourselves and the world. Thus, the process of education is the task of every person: I myself have to do it; there is no other way. As Gadamer (2001) wrote, “education (*Erziehung*) is to educate oneself; cultivation or formation, (*Bildung*) is self-cultivation” (p. 529)⁸, and the contribution of others is minimal. In the case of such a Gadamerian view, the accent of education, I think, is put on the self, rather than on the other, despite their contribution: in my view, education is self-education to a great extent, like learning a language: even though you live in the milieu of native speakers, if you do not work to learn the language, you won’t.

⁸ The title of Gadamer’s essay is *Erziehung ist Sich Erziehen* (1999); it was translated into English as *Education is Self-Education* (2001). As usually happens in translation, something of the meaning of the words is lost. The word *Erziehen* can be translated into English as education, teaching, and upbringing; whilst *Bildung* may be translated as education, formation, and development. Thus, they are concepts that overlap and might be difficult to define them clearly. In *Truth and Method I*, Gadamer developed a section worth reading around the concept of *Bildung* from the philological and philosophical perspective of several German authors.

As I see it, our cultural background and mother tongue also shape who we are, even our limitations and abilities to appreciate other views. So, for instance, whilst in English and Spanish the word study/*estudio* is referred to as the action of reading and writing as academic activities, in Latin, it (*stadium*, from Latin *studere*) refers mainly to the desire, eagerness, or zeal for any activity (Lewis & Short, 1879h). Thus, the zeal for reading, thinking, and writing became “to study” in the English and Spanish sense. Therefore, if language has such a prominent place in growing and acquiring culture, in *Bildung*, it seems just natural to count on language when thinking critically, not as an instrument or dispensable tool, but as a spring from where knowledge and understanding pour out. As it happens in hermeneutic writing, an etymology or any other resource could help to see lost senses or sides of a current word. An etymology is like a door to the history of the word and the culture itself. Gadamer (1977/2007b) rhetorically asked: “Does not everything have its place in our linguistically grasped orientation to the world?” (p. 65). For me, it means that only through and within language we can know the world and guide ourselves in it. When critical thinking is mostly conceived of as an adequate judgment based on a sense of decontextualized, abstract, and universal thinking skills and criteria, or when thought of as the political care for discovering ideologies, core elements might be missed: namely, the cultural, linguistic, geographic dimensions of thinking and even more.

Sapere Aude! Dare Yourself to Savour your Knowledge and Freedom!

After that year in *Medellín*, I returned to *Bogotá* in order to continue my education at the seminary and start my Bachelor’s degree of philosophy. I did not choose philosophy,⁹ but I loved

⁹ Indeed, to study philosophy is not optional for those who want to become priests in the Catholic church.

it from the very first lesson. Paraphrasing Parker J. Palmer (2007), I would say that philosophy shed light on my identity as well as on the world (p.47). It was wondrous and insightful to listen about those philosophers (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Saint Augustine, Kant.... Notice all were men, as were most of my teachers) that discussed and unravelled different, even contradictory, ways to understand the universe, knowledge, action, and so forth. I found a thousand worlds, one in every theory, several in every philosopher.

At that time, I very soon learned that (Western) philosophy was a discipline that tried to obtain knowledge only through the use of rigorous thinking, far from religion, myths, and imagination. As Gadamer (1977/2007b) described it, Western philosophy is “the will to know through concepts” (p. 55), to know only through the pure power of reason. Nevertheless, today I understand that philosophy has always been “by nature intercultural” (Mall, 2000, p. 14), since philosophers are from different continents, countries, and times; some of them highly influenced by other cultures. In words of Bai et al., (2014), “Philosophy inescapably emanates from, responds to, and experiments with culture” (p. 638).

The origin of Western philosophy is usually explained as the encounter of different “political periphery” cultures (Dussel, 1985), among the interaction of commerce along the Mediterranean Sea that made the first thinkers wonder about those differences and incited them to search rationally for the origin and essence of things (Reale & Antiseri, 1985/2001). As I see it now, it was thanks to being born in the periphery, where no central stories dominated, that philosophy could be born. In the end, regardless of the culture(s) and places, Chinese or Latin American, all “philosophies are fundamentally similar in their universal attempt to explain and understand the world of things and beings around us” (Mall, 2000, p. 17). It is such interest and effort to explain reality that makes all philosophies a common particular subject.

Most philosophers I studied during my education criticized their predecessors and created new philosophical perspectives. Everyone claimed to have found a mistake in their master's philosophy and raised their own philosophical building over a different touchstone. In Biesta's (2019), words, "Ever since philosophy has inaugurated Western thought, it has understood itself as a critical enterprise" (p. 51). In this academic atmosphere, to be critical for me was to be intent upon any possible failure or mistake in a text or discourse. In Colombia, we say that critical thinking is *no tragar entero* (do not swallow without chewing), that is, to chew or mill every statement and concept, instead of accepting it without serious consideration.

However, critical philosophy may be, the philosophers I studied at the time did not discuss Christian values, individualism, joys of life or linguistic and cultural positionality of thought; they focused on the epistemic side of thinking and rational human nature that highlighted neutral, objective, and universal thought. Perhaps, such a philosophy has contributed to the fact that "our secular age has emphasised reason too much and at the expense of all the dimensions that contribute to a full experience of our humanity" (Eppert, 2010, p. 226). They *swallowed* the concept of criticality inherited from their masters without chewing it. Had my Bachelor's degree centred on other philosophers (e.g., Nietzsche, Deleuze, Gadamer, Noddings, Arendt, Nussbaum), perhaps my philosophical understanding, practice, and teaching of critical thinking would have been otherwise. Nowadays, I consider that my undergraduate philosophical training was very traditional, maybe scholastic. As Gadamer (1977/2007a) put it,

Scholasticism follows philosophy like its shadow. That is why the true rank of a thinker or of thinking is almost determinable according to how far the thinker or the thinking is able to break through the fossilization represented by the usages in the inherited philosophical language. (p. 35)

By the end of my undergraduate studies, in 2004, I found my philosophical problem, or better, it found me. Despite my interest in Hegel's philosophy, my supervisor suggested that I worked on the essay *An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?* by Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). Its first paragraph caught my attention:

Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity.[2] Immaturity is the inability to use one's understanding without guidance from another. This immaturity is self-imposed when its cause lies not in lack of understanding, but in lack of resolve and courage to use it without guidance from another. Sapere Aude! "Have courage to use your own understanding!"—that is the motto of enlightenment. (Kant, 1784/1992, para. 1)

In these lines, Kant emphasized, I think, the freedom to let go of tutors (which for Kant might be related mainly to religious authority) and engage in thinking. Obviously, thinking itself is an action, perhaps the most highly esteemed by Kant, as it was for Plato and Aristotle (Hadot, 2003/2009). I see now that such an action starts, according to Kant, by having the courage (Lat.: *Audere*: "to venture, to venture to do, to dare; to be bold, courageous" [(Lewis & Short, 1879a)]) to (ad)venture to renounce our tutors, that is, to face the insecurities or fears to think by ourselves. Thus, to use our own understanding seems to require more than pure thinking: It could demand bravery to challenge the customs of thought. Indeed, Kant stated that the cause of being in a state of immaturity is not due to lack of understanding but to lack of resolution and courage. To be free, in the end, might be supported in the affective domain: determination and courage are required to challenge the personal stances and comfortable places. Freedom, then, would require bravery as much as thought.

After a single reading of Kant's essay, I was sure I wanted to write about the Kantian conception of freedom. Freedom became my topic of thinking: What is freedom? Are we really

free? Why? How? To what extent? Can we increase that freedom? I could never forget the Kantian motto: *Sapere aude!* Dare to know! Or better: Dare yourself to savour (*Sapere*: “to taste, savor.... to know understand a thing” [(Lewis & Short, 1879g)]) your knowledge and freedom! I see these words today as the relation between critical thinking and the possibility of freedom, which I understand as to act by ourselves without leaving other people to say what we should do, but without totally discarding their perspectives. It is not just about knowledge but also about tasting it, trying it out, enjoying it.

I believe my education in philosophy did train me in a way of critical thinking centred on critiquing theories, particularly from a Kantian perspective. For Kant (1781/1998), the practice of critical thinking involves “dismissing all its [the reason’s] groundless pretensions, and this not by mere decrees but according to its own eternal and unchangeable laws” (p. 101/A xii),¹⁰ the laws of logic. As I understood at that time, to think critically was to meet rational criteria, or to examine the coherence of any text, discourse or theory according to the rational laws of thinking. Kant (1788/2002a) himself asserted that “logic [contains] the universal and necessary laws of thinking Logic [is] a canon for the understanding or reason which is valid for all thinking” (p. 3). Logic represented for Kant, and still today for many philosophers, the discipline that studies universal, neutral, and objective laws of thought.

Kant grounded his thought in Aristotle’s logic and the modern belief in constructing all knowledge through rational, demonstrable procedures. His major works, namely, *The critique of pure reason* (1781/1998), *The critique of judgement* (Kant, 1790/2007), and *The critique of*

¹⁰ When a philosophical book has a canonical citation, I will first place the APA style and separated by a slash (/) the canonical one; in that way the quote may be found in any version of the text.

practical reason (Kant, 1788/2002a) “stand out as a major attempt to articulate what it could mean for philosophy to be critical” (Biesta 2019, p. 52). In other words, in these books, Kant explained and showed such criticality as a major rational endeavour. That is perhaps the most relevant philosophical pattern of critical thinking after modernity.

This concept of critical thinking, as a logical examination of ideas and concepts, was strengthened by Western enlightenment’s philosophy of a universal, neutral, and objective reason (Gallagher, 1992). Here and now, a Western conception of critical thinking was born. Regarding that perspective, Gadamer (1977/2007a) thought that

simple logical rigor is not everything. Not that logic does not have its own evident validity. But thematization in logic restrains the horizon of questioning in order to allow for verification, and in doing so blocks the kind of opening up of the world which takes place in our own experience of that world. (p. 37)

Indeed, logic offers some validation yet bounds the possibilities of opening the world of our experiences and what we could learn from it. When critical thinking is limited to verifying the validity of every assertion by a “central” form of reason, it excludes other facets of life that lie “in the periphery” (Dussel, 1985), as I first learned being a philosophy teacher in high school, a topic toward which I now turn.

A Novice Teacher. In 2006, after finishing my Bachelor of Philosophy,¹¹ I started to work as a philosophy teacher at a small private Catholic school in *Bogotá*. I loved teaching,

¹¹ Although the translation into English of my degree is Bachelor’s of Philosophy, it literally means Licensed of Philosophy (Lit. *Licenciado en filosofía*), which means to have a license to *teach* philosophy. In Colombia that title represents the study of pedagogy, didactics, and philosophy.

engaging people in thinking, helping them grow, as I still see it. I concur with Biesta (2017) on the main purpose of any teacher or educator: “To make the grown-up existence of another human being possible.... It is about arousing the desire in another human being for wanting to exist in the world in a grown-up way” (p. 4). Bringing about desire, motivating students, is the main and most difficult work of any teacher, I think. That is why for me school is not mostly about subjects like biology, or even philosophy. School is about grown-up existence, which includes, I think, critical postures with a constructive relation to otherness and integrity of the world (natural and social).

Starting my teaching career, I understood that critical thinking was a contribution that philosophy could offer to my students. Furthermore, I coincide with hooks (2010e), since “I saw [and I still do] humanization, the creation of a learning community in the classroom, as my purpose, and recognized that in order to fulfil this task I would need to teach critical thinking” (p. 35). Indeed, without critical thinking there could be no learning community because critical implies sincere examination of others’ views in order to recognize mistakes, and change. The way I have lived it, studying philosophy contributed to opening my mind to other possibilities; it helps to more deeply understand the world(s) in which one lives. The activity of studying, asserted Alan Block (2017), is “the effort to engage himself [*sic*] in the world for the enhancement of both” (p. 94). In other words, studying is not just reading and thinking about objects but about acting in the world, making new worlds, trying new possibilities for oneself and others. In the end, as Pinar (2017) acknowledged the “human subject can come to form through study” (p. 100). Every person takes on a certain form, identity, or personality, at least in part, by studying. That is, studying is understood here as desire (for doing something) and motivation to know a topic deeply.

However, the pedagogy I practiced at first was not adequate. During my first weeks of teaching philosophy in high school, I noticed that my students did not understand much and became easily bored, disinterested in philosophy. Hence, I started to wonder how I could engage them in philosophy, in thinking about its topics, in reading philosophically. Even more profoundly, I wondered: What could philosophy give my students for their lives? What could they learn by studying philosophy? To answer those questions, as a strategy, I asked myself about the role that philosophy had played in my own life: “What did I learn from philosophy in my Bachelor’s? How has it contributed to who I am?”

At some point, I recalled that when I started to study philosophy in my Bachelor program, the courses on logic drove me to learn how to read and write, how to think logically, and criticize the macro and micro elements of any text. Logic was an invaluable tool in order to read and write, and that was clear to me. Especially syllogism was very useful. Every argument has the same general structure: a thesis (conclusion) and arguments (premises) to defend the thesis. As I was considering what I could offer my students in my philosophy classes, the answer popped up in my mind. I remember sitting down on the pavement just outside the staffroom, reading a paper about Ausubel’s (1918-2008) theory of meaningful learning, when suddenly it struck me:

Critical thinking. That’s what I can teach my students: Not philosophy per se but the critical thinking that it offers! As Palmer (2007) affirmed, “We did not merely find a subject to teach—the subject also found us” (p. 47). Thereafter, I could not let go of my topic, or better, it “addressed” me (Gadamer, 1975/2004, p. 328); I felt caught, “summoned” (Moules et al., 2015, p. 75). At that point, just after finishing my Bachelor’s studies, my philosophical conception of critical thinking was limited to Aristotelian logic and Kantian epistemology. Without a doubt, I was spreading what I had learned: “one-dimensional ways of thinking, being, and living” (hooks &

Scapp, 2010, p. 37) and all that came with it. At that very point in time, my journey began: I started to “respond to an inner call” (Smith, 1999) to teach critical thinking. That journey continued then by doing a Master’s in philosophy, the signpost of the next section.

A Study Journey: My Encounter with Phronesis

Question: Why do you go out? Answer: In order to come in. Why would one leave home? Well, in order to come home, but in a new way, a better way. (Smith, 1999, p. 1)

After my first-year teaching philosophy in high school, out of my eagerness and zeal (*studium*) for finding new ways, better ways to help my students avail themselves of philosophy, I decided to start my Master’s in Philosophy. A step in a journey (of education) that I have not finished yet. I took seminars¹² on Walter Benjamin, Michel Foucault, Martin Heidegger, general hermeneutics, German Idealism, and Ricœur. It was only when I started to read Ricœur’s texts that I found a contemporary philosopher who addressed me strongly enough: I had to pay attention to his words. As Nancy Moules (2002) stated “We necessarily make choices in selecting whose voices speak the loudest to us and recognizing which philosophers fit best with our own beliefs, philosophies, and practices” (p. 12). I definitely identified with Ricœur’s theories. I was particularly keen on his philosophy about identity and recognition as it brought me to know myself. Ricœur’s philosophy made me question my philosophical and personal backgrounds, mainly through *The Course of Recognition* (Ricœur, 2004/2005), and *Oneself as Another* (Ricœur, 1990/1992). In these books, I travelled again with Plato, Aristotle, Kant,

¹² A seminar is a particular strategy of teaching philosophy. Every meeting is led by a different student with the responsibility of writing and defending a text, usually an essay. Another student has the responsibility of taking notes while the discussion is developed and, has to write a summary of the topics of discussion to be read at the beginning of the following session. The teacher moderates or solves doubts.

Hegel, but with a critical eye. In that travel, I also conversed for the first time with contemporary thinkers, namely Levinas, Habermas, Nussbaum, Arendt, and others.

Ricœur's philosophy sent me out on an expedition of criticizing my own country, its people, cultures, and more importantly, myself. It was then when I began to engage in hermeneutics that I started to acknowledge and lose certain of my past beliefs. In David Smith's (1999) words, "Hermeneutics is about finding ourselves, which also, curiously enough, is about losing ourselves, that is, giving up the precious 'fundamentalist' logocentric impulse" (p. 41). Thus, I started to detect some troubles in the conception of critical thinking that I was teaching. I began to understand that a critical thinking grounded exclusively in the power of epistemic examinations through logical criteria was too narrow. Following that model, I guided my students to avoid considering other human sides. At the time, I thought of the affective human side: body, emotions, feelings, intuition, personal history; today I would add gender, race, class, sociocultural and political history, language, among others.

Ricoeurian philosophy thus became my springboard of thought. Among all the Ricoeurian landscape, one concept emerged as an ancient jewel re-discovered: the Greek virtue of *phronesis* (practical wisdom).¹³ As I will discuss more fully in the next chapter, in *phronesis*, I

¹³ The recovery of this Greek virtue of *phronesis* is not an achievement of Paul Ricœur in the twentieth century. Within the list of philosophers who have written about it we find Plato, Aristotle (probably his theory is the most known), Saint Thomas, and recently, Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricœur. Regarding such a topic, the brief historical description made by the Congolese scholar Ephrem-Ndungu Khonde (2005) is worth reading. Yet, Ricœur has mainly based his own interpretation of *phronesis* on Aristotle's theory, but he is well aware of the other philosophers' perspectives, as he himself demonstrates in a short paper published under the title *À la Gloire de la Phronesis* (Ricœur, 1997) [To the glory of phronesis- not translated yet].

see a kind of thinking that goes beyond written texts and reaches the practices and actions in the pursuit of personal and social well-being in every decision. In Gadamer's (1975/2004) words, "Practical knowledge, *phronesis* ... is directed towards the concrete situation" (p. 19). Indeed, *phronesis* is deployed in the actual time and place where a decision is necessary.

By the end of my Master's degree, I was absolutely convinced that a Ricoeurian hermeneutic theory of *phronesis* could inform a new way of critical thinking in schooling. I asked myself how it could be. I was and continue to be in the middle of a hide-and-seek game, because "when a topic shows itself, it haunts us, because it also 'hides' itself" (Moules et al., 2015, p. 72). I, certainly, was haunted by the interest of melding both theories: critical thinking and *phronesis*. How could I do that? Holding that question, I decided to pursue a Master's in education. I studied at Los Andes University where I learned about the critical thinking movement. The movement proposed the theory of what I was intuitively addressing as a teacher in high school. Hence, in my thesis, I compared the Ricoeurian perspective of *phronesis* with the critical thinking movement theory. I concluded that the Ricoeurian conception of *phronesis* had all the potential to become the base to re-envision critical thinking in high school. What was particularly interesting for me was its emphasis on otherness as the aim of deliberation, which is included in the intentionality of a good life for others and the self. Nevertheless, my Master's thesis was a philosophical reflection with no grounding in pedagogy or curriculum. That is why I decided to pursue my Ph.D. in Education instead of philosophy.

Bearing in mind my interest for critical thinking in high school, I want to keep working on the concept of critical thinking nurtured by curriculum scholars. In this concept of *phronesis*, born first in the ancient Greek culture (derivated from the word φρονέω -*phroneo*- as old a word as used by Sophocles, Aeschylus, and Thucydides [Liddell & Scott, 1940f.]) and retaken by

contemporary philosophers, such as Ricœur, I see one possibility to rethink critical thinking from and for the Colombian context, that will be presented in Chapter four.

Hermes Approaches... The Command to Stay with High School

Up to this point, I have introduced the origins of my research problem. I narrated when and in what forms critical thinking came to me and my current views on it. Additionally, I showed my first philosophical understanding of critical thinking and its implementation as a high school teacher. Finally, I introduced my encounter with Ricoeurian philosophy, particularly Ricœur's theory of *phronesis*, and why I consider it to be a good framework to re-think critical thinking and its pedagogy and curricula.

In this section, I walk the hermeneutic paths with which I approach my problem. I state my research questions along with a quick view of the methods for collecting information, and I discuss the significance of this study. Certainly, my interest in critical thinking emerged while teaching philosophy in high school and it remains in that context. I could say that Ἑρμῆς (Hermes), the messenger of the gods, “known for eternal youthfulness” (Smith, 2020, p. 38), has delivered a clear command: Stay with youth! Even if Hermes is also known to be a trickster (Doty, 2004), how could he deceive me if I feel deeply in my heart that this is my path? As Gadamer (1975/2004) stated about history, “It would not deserve the interest we take in it if it did not have something to teach us that we could not learn all by ourselves” (p. xxxii). I paid attention to the call of Hermes, and I understood his words. Although my professional life moved in 2012 from high school to university courses, I have been training teachers-to-be, most of whom will teach philosophy in high school.

Therefore, this more recent context keeps inviting me to think of high school students and I do it gladly. I think that stage (15–17 years old) is where students benefit most from an

adequate education in critical thinking since it is the point when they are fully into adolescence; they are living through crises. Teenagers usually question everything, and their criticism requires guidance to become well-formed, a criticality that contemplates the rational-logical dimension but also the political, ethical, and other contextual relationalities, so it does not stagnate in criticism. Using Biesta's (2017) words, I am searching for a concept or theory of critical thinking that "acknowledge[s] the alterity and integrity of what and who is other" (p. 8), that is, otherness in a wide sense.

As the latter words express, otherness has a central role in my research. Certainly, part of my worry about my students' critical thinking formation was that the Western concept of criticality that I taught did not seem to care about difference and otherness. I first noticed such a lack when I read Ricœur, since his philosophy recovers otherness as an ontological component of identity and wisdom (Ricœur, 1990/1992). Other scholars (Aoki, 2011; Begué, 2002; Biesta, 2012; Jardine, 2012; Nussbaum, 1998; Smith, 1999), would totally agree with Ricœur. That we need to consider others' perspectives in a hermeneutic study is clearly stated by Gadamer (1994/2007c):

Everywhere in the world, clearly there are individualities and customs of irreconcilable otherness. I do venture to say, however, that if we do not acquire hermeneutic virtue—that is, if we do not realize that it is essential first of all to understand the other person ... then we will never be able to accomplish the essential tasks of humanity, whether on a small scale or large. (p. 119)

The essential task of humanity, for me, is to live well, for which we need hermeneutic virtue, that is, to be engaged in *Bildung* toward understanding other people. Other (Lat.: *alter. al*: beyond + *tero*: "the other of two" [Harper, 2000]) may relate to a counterpart wherein there is also

difference that might complement the other part. This counterpart is principally other people that is beyond (*al*), but at the same time, it is an-other part of two (*tero*), a complement. Under this perspective, I understand the terms alterity and otherness as synonyms that refer to any person, so that I myself am other to others. As I see it, alterity or otherness points out to the complementation among people, that is, the possibility of reaching deeper understandings, even a good life. Indeed, from a Ricoeurian perspective, in alterity/otherness is the possibility of being, of identity: everyone is ontologically constituted by alterity/otherness. Ricœur (1990/1992) thinks of an “otherness of a kind that can be constitutive of selfhood as such” (p. 4).

The terms alterity/otherness are always related to the concept of difference. To be sure, alterity includes difference, and difference implies alterity. Alterity refers to another person beyond the self that has certain characteristics and experiences that make them different. Therefore, difference is constitutive of and constitutes alterity. In this account, every person is an *alter*, another person, and is simultaneously different from anyone else. Here, I understand difference as evidenced in people’s gender, race, class, culture, abilities, and so forth, and I emphasize the perspectives originated on such differences. Thus, the term difference highlights the fact that every person has particular experiences due to their gender, race, class, etc., and sees things differently, so among people could be disagreement and dialogue due to or thanks to their differences. Everyone can experience the difficulty of hearing the other, or accepting their alterity, due to difference. Here disagreement can arise instead of mutual understanding.

However, since every person is/has a gender, race, class, and so forth, anyone could complement everyone else’s view on any issue; to be more precise, their differences are one of the strongest traits that make people’s alterity/otherness a complement to each other, particularly in terms of understanding. Still, it is necessary to point out that the complementarity is based on

alterity as such (not only reduced to difference) and the diverse perspectives a person might have due to their experiences and their learning. As Nicolas Davey (2006) recalled, “the vitality of understanding actually depends on difference” (p. xii), which I understand as the fact that since the variety of perspectives emerge, at least in part, out of people’s differences and their experiences of being different, the life or energy of understanding lies precisely in difference. Indeed, everyone’s difference implies a particular perspective that might contribute to a discussion and dialogue about a phenomenon or situation. Hermeneutics, I would say, has its core in alterity/otherness and difference around the possibility of profound (mis)understandings. Knowing that general context of my study, it is time to present the concrete elements of my research problem.

A Uni-Formed Strait-Jacketed People: My Research Problem

A certain disillusionment I feel with my culturally received, monotheistic valorization of the power of word-ing (understood as reasoning, dialoguing, discussing, conversing, etc.), and my sense that the problem is not discourse *per se*, but the way my understanding of it is, or has been, too stuck within its own cultural self-enclosure, within the compound of its own cultural grammar, one might say. (Smith, 1999, p. 73)

Having looked at some fragments of my life, I see myself reflected in Smith’s words. For this Canadian scholar, there is a problem with the language and culture one can inherit: The monotheistic, or better, one-dimensional way to understand the power of words and language which is due, at least partly, to the cultural traditions in which we are educated. For too long, I was stuck with the same uniform: A Western, modern rationalist conception and pedagogy of philosophy and its critical thinking, but I started to feel uncomfortable; something was awry. The problem was not only the words or discourse but how my understanding was “self-enclosed”;

that is, how I was accustomed to a technological *ethos* (Greek: ἔθος: *ethos*. A “habitual character and disposition; moral character; habit, custom; an accustomed place.” [Liddell & Davidson, 1889]), a reduced disposition of reason taken habitually just as an instrument. I habituated myself to an instrumental reason and tried to make that my students were like me (and wear the same kind of uniform). I just came to understand this *ethos* by conversing with scholars such as Aoki (2011), Pinar (2020), Smith (1999), and others. Aoki (2011) said that “in education we have come to be in the seductive hold of a technological *ethos*, an *ethos* that uncannily turns everything virtually into ‘how to do’s,’ into technics and skills” (p. 369). Yes, I found, or better, I replicated what I was taught at university: a technique to train my students in critical thinking, a uniform that all had to wear in the same way to be called critical and sensible.

With the “how to do’s” I gave my students, most of them obtained good results at the end of their academic year, but I worried that some of them seem only to improve their thinking about theories. Indeed, when I talked to them inside and outside the classroom about life concerns, I could see no change of view about their lives (I hope this was just my lack of discernment at the time). Thus, in my experience, it seemed as if they would rarely question or criticize themselves and/or the society in which they lived. They seemed not to criticize their egotism and lack of interest in the effects of their actions on other peoples’ lives. They presumably just followed the ego-logic of capitalism (Biesta, 2017), and my lessons of philosophy might have been useless in taking them to reflect about it. By teaching critical thinking informed by an instrumental reason, I fear that I may have helped to re-produce that egocentrism, ego-logic capitalism in my students’ lives. As Dussel (1980/1985) might say, I was part of those teachers that “taught their pupils the ego cogito in which they themselves remained constituted as an idea or thought, entities at the disposal of the “will to power,” impotent,

dominated wills, castrated teachers who castrated their pupils” (p. 12). Certainly, I felt my students needed more room, different ways of relating to otherness, people, and nature, as well as different ways to relate to themselves, but I ignored how to do it.

Following the path of curriculum-as-plan (Aoki, 2011), as a mere device, I could not do anything else but my job. As Jardine et al. (2003) maintained, “Once things are broken down into isolated, seemingly unrelated fragments, the only work of the classroom seems to be monitoring and management” (p. 6). I feel that I became a slave of my own understanding and pedagogy of critical thinking. I fell prey to the “efficiency movement” (Friesen & Jardine, 2010) that only values measurable outcomes of learning, in my case, thinking skills. The uniform was too rigid and uncomfortable; it was a straitjacket.

Indeed, as I will discuss more fully in my literature review chapter, in Colombia, critical thinking has often been understood as being made up of some thinking abilities. What seems questionable, as McLaren (2015) pointed out, is to reduce critical thinking to a mere set of skills. Under such a conception, consequently, “little attention is paid to the purpose to which these skills are to be put” (p.124). Diminished to just a set of skills, teachers risk overlooking other components of criticality. What are the concrete consequences of holding a narrowly prescribed understanding of critical thinking? Aoki (2011) gave us a few clues: “The danger lies in the possibility of indifference to the lives of teachers and students” (p. 370). In other words, the teacher trains the students to simply apply their thinking skills, regardless of the consequences to other people’s lives. Thus, “the place of other ways of being in the world” is diminished (p. 373).

Furthermore, in the context of assessment and evaluation, according to Friesen and Jardine (2010), under that instrumental perspective, “difference and diversity become a problem to be subsumed under standardization through the proliferation of new assembly lines [of uni-

formed straitjackets], aimed at ‘accommodating’ the differences it encounters” (p. 14).

Therefore, people who think, act or are different might be rejected and transformed to fit in the standard of *the* rational person, the only one accepted. I suppose this is the case of children and youth in school who are expelled because they do not follow the rules; they do not behave according to the idea of a rational person who thinks deeply before acting as anyone else would do. That might have been part of the thinking of those people that created institutions like the residential schools for Indigenous children in Canada or the *encomienda*, in Latin America. In the latter case, a conqueror or colonizer had the right to ‘educate’ Indigenous people in exchange for their work, but all people under such an institution, affirmed Luis Enrique Rodríguez (2015), were violently treated and even killed by the conquerors.

The consequence of an education based on a narrow conception of skills is the overlooking of other dimensions of people such as the *ethos* and *pathos*, that is other people’s cultural values and contexts (their *ethos*). Furthermore, personal necessities, feelings, and passions (their *pathos*) are diminished. If the Western modern tradition view of reason is deemed to be universal, and the only one that truly contains and develops people’s being, all other conceptions that do not coincide with it are rejected as faulty, false, or simply as not as important. Such a perspective has deep consequences in the life of every person, particularly in a nation with a convoluted history, like Colombia. What then am I looking for/in/through my study?

Questions for a Re-Search: How to Loosen the Straitjacket?

I search for ways of speaking and acting that may make possible for the West forms of encounter with others that are more friendly, less violent, more self-reflexive and not condescending. (Smith, 1999, p. 75)

Following Smith's words, the questions undergirding this research journey are about courses of philosophy in high school and the teaching of critical thinking in order to change the current relations to the other and their difference. Indeed, emulating Smith, I am searching for friendlier, more self-reflexive and less violent forms of criticality in philosophy based on an interpretive paradigm, specifically Gadamerian hermeneutics as proposed by Moules et al. (2014). While I take hermeneutics as my theoretical framework to develop a qualitative study, I am aware of the tension that exists between the reluctance that Gadamer and Ricoeur expressed toward fixed methodologies to find truth, and the qualitative guidelines to design the procedures to develop this research. Hermeneutics will guide me to give a certain form to the research methods selected, while I simultaneously observe the basic parameters of a qualitative design. In Chapter five, I explicitly present how the methods for generating data and doing analysis and interpretation are conceived and executed under this interpretative paradigm.

Now, bearing in mind that my research topic is critical thinking in high school philosophy courses, I want to listen to others' voices, particularly other teachers of philosophy in high school. If the emphasis of the text so far has been on my experience, prejudices, and questions, now I highlight the other's role and the way we both can find new ways into teaching philosophy and critical thinking in high school. That is why, at least in part, I chose hermeneutics as the approach to my study: because it places the emphasis on conversation between the self and the other. Following such a consideration, the questions that guide my journey are:

In what ways can philosophy teachers' experiences and understandings of the possibilities and complexities in teaching critical thinking in Colombian high school-level philosophy be understood? And a subsidiary question: What new ways of comprehension of critical thinking teaching appear from the Ricoeurian theory of phronesis?

As the questions show, my focus is the teachers' thoughts about and experiences of teaching critical thinking in philosophy courses. I will listen to their words through a Ricoeurian lens in order to examine if they already apply any element of the Ricoeurian *phronesis* in their teaching. I am aware, however, that I have to be careful not to make them say what they do not say, nor see what there is not in their words and experience. I am also mindful that there might be other philosophical elements in their teaching, such as the theorizations of the Frankfurt School (e.g., Habermas, Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, etc.), Critical Pedagogy (particularly the writings of Freire, Apple, McLaren, etc.), or other perspectives.

Hermes' Messages of a Particular Approach

As I will discuss more fully in my methodology chapter, by pursuing new ways of understanding critical thinking, I have felt the call for doing a hermeneutic study following Gadamer's lead. It was Hermes, the messenger of the Greek gods, who called my name. Although I came to Canada with somewhat of a fixed idea in my mind, I understood my path had to be a different one: I wanted to do philosophy of education, but I was asked to walk the path of applied hermeneutics.

In such passageways, as explained by Moules et al. (2014) the "method *serves the topic and it is informed by the topic*" (p. 72). That is, I consider the method as an approach to the object rather than a rule to know it. Such a stance encourages me to linger with my topic in order to listen to how I can get close to it. Hence, I entered the realm of four philosophy teachers through two semi-structured interviews of every participant and explored their understanding and pedagogy of critical thinking. This method of the interview seems to be adequate to a hermeneutic study that places the conversation with others in the centre, in the effort to

understand and find new possibilities. What might rise up before my eyes are other possibilities to teach philosophy and critical thinking in Colombia. Why am I looking for that?

Significance of my Study

Looking at the etymological meaning of relevance (Lat.: *levare*) as to lift up, raise, elevate (Lewis & Short, 1879d), I see how my research problem emerges directly from its own pertinence to my home country's context. As I discuss more fully in Chapter Four, in times where Colombian people are trying to build peace with *guerrillas*, the necessity of thinking critically elevates itself as a lighthouse in a turbulent sea, guiding sailors not to hit the rocks that may break the vessel. Similarly, when implementing a peace agreement, critical thinking is particularly relevant to listen to others' perspectives, to examine and try to understand their reasons for fighting and, more importantly, their reasons for making peace.

As I see it, philosophers usually do not pay much attention to standardized examinations, mainly due to the dubious interpretations that can be drawn from numbers and percentages. This time, I cannot help but attend to some figures that show me how bad we are in Colombia with respect to critical thinking. To be sure, some tests have shown a generalized poor level of critical thinking. For instance, the results of the 2018 PISA test demonstrated that only 50% of Colombian high school students reached level two (out of six) in the reading section (where critical thinking is evaluated). Furthermore, only 1% of students reached levels five or six (OECD, 2019). In other words, 49% of students do not know how to read and 99% cannot criticize a text. Even though this test only assesses thinking skills, these results suggest the necessity to propose a different understanding and pedagogy of critical thinking since only 1% of the population attain a real critical level of reading.

What seems to me even more scandalous is that to date there are no many studies at all regarding Colombian philosophy teachers' comprehension and pedagogy of critical thinking. In the Colombian case, this research could reveal if teachers' understanding of critical thinking and their pedagogies are coherent and pertinent to what Colombian peoples need. Once such points are clear, teachers, as well as institutions (schools, undergraduate and graduate programs of philosophy teachers, ICFES) could implement changes in order to potentially improve what they find problematic.

On the other hand, I would like to think it is possible to generate changes in Colombian students' stances about their thinking and daily actions towards themselves and others (close and afar people), especially towards discriminated groups. I would see this as the most important achievement or relevance of my study. I completely identify with Eppert (2011) when she said that "as an educator, I am vested in transformation and yearn not to dictate but to invite it" (p. 38). Thus, I see my research as a possible invitation to other teachers to transform, (Lat. *Trans*: across, over, beyond + *forma*: contour, figure, shape [Lewis & Short, 1879i]) to go across or beyond the current figures and shapes of teaching philosophy, especially its critical thinking, so as to find new understandings and *praxis*.

Chapter Two: Hermeneutic Theory Between Gadamer and Ricœur

In Chapter One, I portrayed how critical thinking appeared in my life and the way Ricœur's theory of *phronesis* showed itself as a perspective to improve it. I depicted the context of my research problem and offered the first sketch of the hermeneutic methodology or approach that I decided to pursue. In this chapter, I discuss my theoretical framework, namely Ricœur's embeddedness in the field of hermeneutics and his understanding of *phronesis*. To do so, first I introduce Ricœur's life events and Gadamerian hermeneutics since they grounded Ricœur's thought. I also introduce Ricœur's theory of *phronesis* and three conceivable contributions to critical thinking in Colombian high school philosophy that I imagine right now.

From Gadamer to Ricœur: Personal Experience and Academic Inheritance

Let us read, read and read. It is possible that we understand some things. (Grondin, 2006/2014)

Jean Grondin's invitation tells me that hermeneutics is not an easy and quick job. Indeed, "the task of understanding is not without its difficulty" (Risser, 2019, p. 2). Hermeneutics requires persistent reading in order to understand the threads that make up the weave of a text. It demands us to stay with the phenomenon to let it come to us and speak to us; we need to let it come and learn to hear its voice. One of those threads or words may come in memories, personal recollections that help us understand ourselves and the phenomenon itself. I commence this chapter with a recent memory of my Ph.D. courses.

In 2018, when Professor Emeritus Max van Manen lectured on practical phenomenology, he asked me why I liked Ricœur's philosophy. My spontaneous answer was: "Because Ricœur saved me from Foucault," and everybody laughed. However funny it may sound, Ricœur's philosophy rescued me from the almost depressive and paranoid state induced by my

interpretation of Foucault's theories on power and subjectivity. Ricœur taught me that even though we suffer, we also can be happy; we can have a good life with and for others.

To my understanding, Ricœur (1990/1992) philosophizes about evil, tragedy, and misfortune in life, perhaps intellectually enticed by his personal experiences. His insightful perspectives disclosed to me the possibility of a realized life for all thanks to *phronesis*. He develops a hermeneutical philosophy that signals the power to construct new worlds, including others' difference, necessary, I think, for a contemporary concept of critical thinking in education. As the African philosopher Ephrem-Ndungu Khonde (2005) affirmed, Ricœur's theory of *phronesis* is "appropriate for a pluralist society" (p. 12). Here, I see, following Dussel's (2012) signposts, a "philosophy of dialogue" (p. 11), similar to what Gadamer pursued as a central pillar of hermeneutics. This perspective might be enriched through the awareness of European colonization, the suffering it brought to my forebears, and its possible current legacies, as will be clear in chapter four. Now I will show you when and how I got acquainted with the scholarship of Ricœur.

My Encounter with Ricœur's Philosophy

It ran 2006, during my Master's of philosophy, when I first learned about the French philosopher Jean-Paul Gustave Ricœur. Born in 1913, Ricœur died in 2005 in his home country: France. As he and his sister Alice became orphans very young, they were raised by their grandparents and their aunt who "were very devout Protestants" (Reagan, 1996, p. 4). Ricœur, indeed, was a life-long Christian protestant, and this context motivated him to philosophize about evil (Simms, 2003), and I suppose his faith was part of his motivation to engage academically in theology. I soon discovered that avoiding harm to themselves and others was one of the goals of *phronesis* within his "little ethics" (Ricœur, 1990/1992 p. 290). Such a trait was very attractive to

me, not only due to my long-life Christian formation, but because the philosophical branch that has always called my name has been ethics, as is evident in my Bachelor's thesis.

After losing his grandparents, Ricœur married Simon Lejas in 1936. Soon afterward, his sister died of tuberculosis. Notwithstanding this loss, it was probably the suicide of his fourth son, Oliver (aged 39), that would deeply mark his philosophy. Following this event, Ricœur started to philosophize on tragedy and suffering in human life, writing since then about action and passion (Dosse, 2001/2013), “suffering as well as acting” (Ricœur, 1990/1992, p. 178). His son's death might also explain why Ricœur's ethics is closer to Aristotle's ethics of virtue and happiness than to Kant's ethics of duty (although he draws from both philosophers' theories and later traditions). Ricœur's search for happiness or the “good life” in the middle of tragedy and suffering is what I find most interesting in his writing since it tethers philosophical reflection to daily existence, which he might have cultivated in his conversations with Gabriel Marcel (his teacher at The *Sorbonne*) and also in his readings of Karl Jaspers in the middle of captivity.

In 1940, Ricœur was called to World War II active military service and soon after he became a prisoner of war for about five years. However, Khonde (2005) explains, that long time in captivity is paradoxically very fecund. He gets close (*se familiarise*) to German philosophy (p. 67), particularly the scholarship of Jaspers, Husserl, and Heidegger, whose existential and phenomenological perspectives seem to have influenced his philosophy from then on. Indeed, “Ricœur remains faithful to phenomenology in the sense of a particular personal depth” (p. 93), states Enrique Dussel (1993/1996), former student of Ricœur's at The *Sorbonne* and critical reader of all his work.

Ricœur's Ph.D. thesis, later published as *Philosophie de la Volonté. Le Volontaire et l'Involontaire* (1950. Transl.: *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, 1966),

follows Husserl's path of phenomenology, but soon Ricœur realized the limits of this method, so he started searching for other perspectives undertaking the study of and dialogue with psychoanalysis, structuralism, and linguistics. These sciences would have led Ricœur to postulate a "hermeneutics of suspicion" that can be found in his book *Le Conflit des Interpretations* (1969. Transl.: *The Conflict of Interpretations. Essays in Hermeneutics*, 1974). Here I found Ricœur's first stage of hermeneutics, usually called hermeneutics of symbolism. For me, this moment of Ricœur's life shows the hermeneutic virtue of openness to difference. Indeed, Ricœur entered into dialogue with other sciences, other non-philosophical resources where, I suppose, he saw possibilities of deepening his understanding about his topic of interest (evil, at the time).

Ricœur's philosophical engagement seem widened and strengthened during his explorations of Gadamer's hermeneutics in the 1970s. These explorations are brought up in several essays, which can be found in *Du text a l'action. Essais d'hermeneutique II* (1986. Transl.: *From text to action: Essays in hermeneutics II*, 1991)¹⁴. As I understand, there, Ricœur exposes his main hermeneutic perspectives and his critiques of Husserlian phenomenology and Gadamerian hermeneutics. With regard to the latter, I see how Ricœur offers his stances around concepts such as distance and belonging, the effects of history, the relation between understanding and explanation, and the relation between hermeneutics and the scientific method.

It seems clear to me, however, that despite subtle differences, Ricœur follows Gadamerian hermeneutics for the most part. It constitutes one of the principal sources of thought

¹⁴ In English, the first compilation of Ricœur's essays on hermeneutics was titled *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, published in 1981. This book includes two essays of the first period of Ricœur's hermeneutic (of symbols) and omits important essays written after 1981.

for some of his books. I would even say that books such as *Soi même comme un Autre* (1990, Transl. *Oneself as Another*, 1992) and *Parcours de la Reconnaissance* (2004. Transl. *The Course of Recognition*, 2005) are the application of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics to the phenomena of personal identity and recognition, respectively. In other words, in these texts, Ricœur interprets phenomena through a Gadamerian hermeneutic lens. The difference that I can see is placed mainly in the emphasis Ricœur put, the concepts he used, and the dialogue-debate he created with other philosophers and sciences (anthropology, linguistics, narratology, etc.).

For instance, the Gadamerian concepts of distance and belonging (to our own time, society, and culture), explained by Ricœur as a dialectic duo (something that Gadamer did not propose), helped me to understand that *phronesis* is much more than a virtue of finding the right decision in a concrete situation, as it was for Aristotle. As I understand it, *phronesis*, for Ricœur, is the aptitude of interpretation and decision-making that requires people to take a certain distance from the situation in order to assess it and decide. However, it seems that *phronesis* is also the capacity to acknowledge our belonging to a specific time, place and culture, a belonging that might influence our decisions and being. I think that Ricœur places the emphasis in the dialectic relation or the tension between distance and belonging where our being and ethics might be born and developed. I will come back to this topic later in this chapter.

In my case, when I started reading Ricœur's books and essays, I began changing my perspectives on Western philosophy and myself. Through Ricœur's philosophy, I came to understand how I inherited and acquired from my own culture and familiar context some of my personal stances and tendencies to act and think. As Gadamer (1975/2004) said, "We understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society, and state in which we live" (p. 278). An

example of that is my tendency to keep only a few close friends and avoid crowds and noise. I noticed a few years ago that my parents are just like that.

Additionally, I have been particularly appreciative of Ricœur's recollection and critique of classical philosophers (e.g., Plato, Aristotle, Agustin, Hegel) and his debate with contemporary ones (e.g., McIntyre, Rawls, Arendt, Nussbaum, Anscombe). I admire his dialogue with frequently antagonist philosophical traditions, particularly with analytical philosophy, phenomenology and other sciences or disciplines of knowing (Lat.: *Scientia*: "knowledge, a knowing; expertness" (Harper, 2000q), such as sociology, history, theology, cultural anthropology, and neurosciences.

In sum, I would say that Ricœur's experiences of losing his loved ones very soon in his life, being a prisoner of war, the suicide of his son, and other circumstances led him to diverse philosophical traditions and sciences that nurtured his theory of *phronesis* and his hermeneutics of existence (Grondin, 2006/2008). However, it surprises me that Ricœur (1996) seems not to have understood Dussel's interpellation to contemplate America(s) peoples' suffering in hands of European peoples five centuries back.¹⁵ I understand he could not stop thinking as European. That is why, I suppose, he said that Dussel's philosophy of liberation is focused on the economic oppression that Latin American people lived under USA decisions (Ricœur, 1996). It seems that Ricœur could not see that Dussel talks of the oppressed, the conquered, colonised, based on the historical, Indigenous experience of Spanish colonization in South and Central America that goes

¹⁵ In a short essay written as an answer to Dussel's thought, Ricœur (1996) clearly takes a middle point stand about the suffering of Indigenous peoples in Latin America and the suffering of European peoples due to different processes of violence. He stated: "The question now resides in knowing what it is that each can teach the other, and what one can learn from the other" (p. 205).

way beyond economics. Ricœur's opinion on this subject is, to my understanding, quite limited, almost blind. And Dussel's (1996) regard towards Ricœur's philosophy looks neither indulgent nor unjust:

The subject (the *soi même*) of a narrative never arrives at its clarification as a subject of a transforming political action, ethically liberating, but instead provides us with immense hermeneutical material for the description of the *identity of cultures*, still at the popular level, for intercultural dialogue, out of a daily narrativity and metaphorical and fictitious [*sic*] poetics. (p. 77)

Two pages later, he states that Ricœur's philosophy is "appropriate for the hermeneutics of a culture, but not enough for the asymmetrical confrontation between several cultures (one dominating, the others dominated)" (p. 79). These words still resonate in the back of my mind.

If Ricœur's meetings with Dussel was not life changing, I think that Ricœur's encounter with Gadamer's hermeneutics was like a gear with all the equipment to a re-elaboration of all his previous work, particularly through historical and cultural frameworks as necessary components of any interpretation. Precisely, these components are also part of Gadamer's hermeneutics, as I will explain in the next section.

The Domino Effect in Gadamer's Thinking

Considering what theories might constitute my theoretical framework, I opted to begin with Gadamer's hermeneutics in order to better comprehend Ricœur's thinking. After dabbling

in Gadamer's *Truth and Method I and II*,¹⁶ I understood more fully my critiques of critical thinking when I was teaching in high school. Certainly, by the time I was re-thinking my understanding of critical thinking, I started reading Ricœur's books, but in the backdrop was Gadamer's thought. Although Ricœur takes distance from Gadamer's theory, there are more commonalities than differences, as will be evident soon. Now, however, I focus on Gadamer's hermeneutics.

Perhaps, the most relevant contribution of Gadamer's hermeneutics centres on his theory of *Wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstsein* (Lit.: consciousness of history of effects). In Ricœur's (1986/1991) words, it is the "consciousness of being exposed to history and to its action, in such a way that this action upon us cannot be objectified" (p. 72). Indeed, people are historical beings, and we cannot place ourselves out of history or at an absolute distance from its effects. In terms of education, it is related to what "we choose to remember about our past and that which we choose to believe about the present" (Pinar et al. 2008, p. 28). In other words, history is implied in curricula. To a certain extent, we live under a domino effect; we live the effects of a historical tile that started moving all other tiles, and we usually are not aware of that consequential movement.

In 2007, I was starting to teach philosophy in high school and simultaneously reading Ricœur's theory on personal identity in my Master's of philosophy when I began to realize that history is part of us more than we are part of it, or in Gadamer's (1975/2004) own words "history

¹⁶ Since *Truth and Method II (Wahrheit un Methode. Ergänzungen-register, 1986)* is not in English, I refer here to the compilation done by Richard Palmer in *The Gadamer Reader. A Bouquet of the Later Writings (2007)* which includes some of Gadamer's essays published in the second volume of *Truth and method*.

does not belong to us; we belong to it” (p. 278). If we know our history (which includes the history of our community), we can understand ourselves better and choose who we want to be. From this point on, I asked myself whether self-knowledge (as drawn from social and personal history) should be part of critical thinking pedagogy and curricula in philosophy courses.

Today, I see how consciousness of the history of effects is central to Ricoeurian *phronesis* since this capacity implies a reflection on personal history and the history of our community. As Pinar et al. (2008) remarked, commenting on Gadamer’s theory, “Understanding this historicity is prior to understanding ourselves” (p. 420). Realizing the effects of history on us, we might know and understand ourselves better because “we are connected in a continuous thread with our past” (Moules, et al., 2015, p. 2). If we know our history, we can know and criticize ourselves in order to decide what (behaviour, belief, value, etc.) to keep and what to change.

Back in my time as a high school teacher, I wondered how and if my students could be critical about their own behaviour and their own personal history. As I see it, to observe our behaviour will lead us to understand our personal history, and therein we can imagine and create change. However, I did not achieve any change to my teaching so that my students reflected more about their actions. Pinar et al. (2008) clearly shows me now my error:

Traditional teaching, because it tends to focus primarily, sometimes exclusively, upon the curriculum as object, curriculum as textbooks, focuses on the symbolic, phallic order created by men, rather than the concrete, embodied world of children created by women.... Rarely is the student’s reading the subject of classroom discourse. Indeed, it is the lived experience of students –linked as it is to the text, mediated and expressed through language– that is missing from the traditional classroom. (pp. 378-379)

I see now that as I kept posing questions to my students about philosophical texts and theories and never their actions and thoughts, they had no chance to direct their thinking to their own lives, to the beliefs or prejudices that guided their actions. Indeed, prejudices are a common element for all people, and may hinder the development of a sound critical thinking. In the middle of the pandemic of Covid19, in 2020, I wrote an experience related to prejudices and critical thinking in my researcher journal.

Thinking about the pandemic and how people come to believe certain things about it, I noticed that many people seem to ignore the information about how to prevent getting infected. At first, I thought it was just lack of attention or misinformation, but then I noticed that many people believed in conspiracy theories. A dear friend of mine, who I regarded as a very critical and sensible person, believed that the inoculation was a strategy to insert in our bodies with chips that will change our DNA in order to control us. Even if s/he listened to the physicians who all the time in TV and radio talk about the virus and the vaccines, she would not believe them. As could be expected, she decided not to take the vaccination.

I found a similar case with my parents. When they were called to take the vaccine, my mother and father went to the hospital to get it, but when my mother listened that they were going to receive the AstraZeneca's, my mother decided not to allow my father and herself to be inoculated with that vaccine. By asking her why, she said that this vaccine killed people by producing heart attacks. Even though I explained them that was not the case, that the number of instances were very few so it was not likely to suffer the same, she added that many friends of theirs had taken that vaccine and had suffered a lot. In the end, she would not listen to reason. Her belief was all that counted for her. (June 1st, 2021)

It strikes me how a single idea, a belief or even an intuition can hinder people from acting and thinking from other perspectives. This is probably the most difficult step to think critically, to check personal beliefs, to examine them.

One of the elements that the knowledge of our social and personal history might reveal to us is what Gadamer (1975/2004) named as prejudices (*Vorurteile* [*vor*: previous + *Urteil*: judgment]). I notice that *teil* (*part*) is in the composition of the German word, as if a prejudice were only a single part in a bigger unity or process –for me, the process of knowing and understanding–. The remaining letters (*ur*) remind me of another German word: *Uhr*, that is, time, which is already included in the other part of the word: *vor*, meaning before or previous. Through this unexpected association or occurrence,¹⁷ I now understand how strong *Vorurteil* may be understood as a part of the process that occurs at or during some specific time of understanding something, as a yet unrealized state. Here clearly prejudice is not taken in the common sense of “an unfair and unreasonable opinion or feeling, especially when formed without enough thought or knowledge” (Cambridge University Press, n.d.). Prejudice is better understood as pre-judgments, judgments *before* any examination, or simply unexamined ideas. In Gadamer’s (1975/2004) words, “‘prejudice’ means a judgment that is rendered before all the

¹⁷ The reader might feel astonished when seeing that sometimes I nurture my interpretations through occurrences or simple memories that “randomly” come to my mind. I only have to say that I do believe Gadamer (1975/2004) about understanding “happen[ing] to us over and above our wanting and doing” (p. xxvi). That is, we cannot control nor completely understand how it happens. As I understand, the power of interpretation resides precisely in the fact that the elements that allow the phenomenon to be interpreted anew come from the resources available, whilst the coherence and affinity with the phenomenon is what sanctions the interpretation.

elements that determine a situation have been finally examined” (p. 273). Indeed, prejudices are in the process of understanding and they might change (or not, as my journal relate) if they are challenged (by personal or other peoples’ thoughts or experiences) and examined. They might be turned into examined judgments.

Considering it now, teaching philosophy in high school might support students in examining their prejudices or previously taken-for-granted ideas about justice, truth, good, etc. Indeed, for Pinar (2020), “While schools by themselves cannot redress injustice, they can become indispensable in educating the public to understand its history and present circumstances, enabling them to act accordingly” (p. 68). Back in the day, my own education took me to examine my conception and pedagogy of critical thinking. Ricœur, and Gadamer indirectly, enabled me to see that the Western conception of critical thinking was too reductive because it excluded a consideration of personal and social history.

I recently drew the same conclusion in my Ph.D. studies after reading about postcolonialism (Andreotti, 2011; Bhabha, 2017; Said, 1981; Spivak, 1988), decolonialism (Dussel, 1985; Mignolo, 2011) and posthumanism (Barad, 2014; Braidotti, 2006; Pedersen, 2010, 2011; Snaza, 2013; Snaza et al., 2014; Somerville, 2016). I can say with Aoki (2011) that “I am experiencing a struggle to attempt to break through my self-imposed walls” (p. 126). To be sure, I am challenging my strong and resistant prejudices and practices, like a sailor who guides the ship against the wind and the current of the water. I must hold strong in order not to end up following the current again.

I ask myself rhetorically how my theoretical framework could leave aside hermeneutics if this field shows me that understanding history enables us to understand ourselves better, and to change what we consider inappropriate. This was exactly, and still is, what I am searching in

new critical thinking conceptions in high school philosophy: the possibility of changing prejudices and actions about personal and socio-political life. However, that is not all. I understand that hermeneutics calls for attention to otherness and difference.

Gadamer (1994/2007c) himself said that understanding means that “one recognizes that the other person could be right” (p. 117). As I see it, hermeneutics has a critical dimension: self-critique. The critique of oneself occurs, for instance, when we let our prejudices be challenged by other texts or opinions. Following Smith (2003), “my self-understanding must change as my interpretations are shown by the Other to be wrong or in need of revision” (p. 109). Then, as Moules et al. (2015) stated, I could “think clearly and critically about where to go next” (p. 38). In other words, when we revise personal beliefs, examining and overcoming prejudices might be a moment of self-critique that marks our present and future.

Exactly that, I think, happened to me when I reflected upon my understanding of prejudices through Ricoeurian theories at the time of doing my Master’s of philosophy and teaching philosophy in high school. Actually, the relevance of history to hermeneutics and self-understanding led me to criticize philosophy itself. Why does not philosophy include a reflection about social and personal histories? Why did my professors or supervisors never ask me to read or write essays that included Colombian history?

The answer to these questions might rest in the same point that explains why for many Colombian scholars Dussel’s books or the topic of colonialism in general are not considered “philosophy” or not deemed as important as European topics: Because the social or personal circumstances add mud to the crystalline pure water of neutral, universal, and objective thought. Indeed, Dussel’s work is generous with the historical content of Spanish colonization and includes very few quotes of European philosophers, even though he mentions, criticizes them,

and acknowledges his debts to them. Actually, when reading his books in Spanish, I felt Dussel's rage and indignation for the injustice towards Indigenous peoples in times of Spanish conquest; such a passion would be inappropriate for conventional European philosophical reflection.

I understand now that Gadamer's hermeneutics had a definitive impact on my thought, even though I acquired it principally through Ricœur's texts. Now, I notice the impact of post and decolonialism in my view about philosophy. I cherish Pinar's et al. (2008) words: A theory "functions to provoke you to think" (p. 8), and they certainly made me think about my own life and my job as a teacher. Now it is time to see the influence of Ricœur's theories that did not originate in Gadamer's philosophy.

A Treasure Hunt through Ricœur's Hermeneutics

I found in Ricœur's philosophy what I had seen as a lack of all the philosophy I studied during my Bachelor's: personal and social history as explicit coordinates of philosophical reflection, this time related to the topic of personal identity and the quest for a "good life." From my perspective now, Ricœur received Gadamerian philosophical hermeneutics, particularly about the consciousness of the effects of history, and applied it to anthropology and ethics. Nevertheless, despite holding the line of thought established by Gadamer, I believe Ricœur distanced himself from Gadamer's focus on art, history, and language. He might have found on the text (in a wide sense), its structure and meanings an object to engage dialogue and debates with linguistics, post-structuralism, and analytic philosophers.

To my understanding, Ricœur is first interested in the paradigm of the written text, as will be clear shortly. I think that such an emphasis is convenient to re-think the teaching of critical thinking in philosophy courses. Indeed, it seems that the most frequent teaching of philosophy in Colombian high school and university revolves around written texts, specifically, philosophers'

texts. Thus, another way to focus on texts might be beneficial to change current practices of reading and critiquing.

In my high school teaching, I asked my students to find the author's ideas in the text, what the author wanted to say to their readers. Such a way of reading implied to know something of the social and philosophical context of the text. My job, I thought, was to present my students such a context before asking them to read the philosophers' texts. From that perspective, critical thinking was about picking holes in the philosopher's theories and, consequently, the students' own experience as readers was left aside. There, the emphasis is on the text, its sociohistorical and philosophical context, whilst the reader's thoughts and experiences are neglected or disavowed. This seems to be the paradigm of the text in philosophy teaching that might be challenged, and I believe that Ricœur's perspective is well suited for a criticality that involves otherness. Let us see.

For Ricœur (1991), following Gadamer, the text is autonomous, (from Ancient Greek αὐτός [autos]: "by oneself, alone", [Liddell & Scott, 1940b] and νόμος [nomos]: "anything assigned, a usage, custom, law, ordinance" [Liddell & Scott, 1889]), since its usage or law is given by the text itself. Then, the text alone gives the law by which it could be understood. In other words, for Ricœur, the writing process renders the text independent from its author (and their intentions and meanings), its socio-cultural conditions, and its intended auditory. This is the cornerstone of Ricœur's hermeneutics and on such autonomy, he places more emphasis than Gadamer. So, while Gadamer starts his work *Truth and Method I* with a discussion of the experience of art, Ricœur starts with the experience of reading.

Following Gadamer's and Ricœur's theory of the autonomy of the text, I recently started to ask my students what they find and create based on the text itself (in two online undergraduate

courses about research and didactics I had the opportunity to give during the pandemic), instead of asking them what the author wanted to say. As a result, I found that more students engaged deeper with the topic of the text and their logical reasoning was complemented with their imagination as they could see other possibilities and even include their own experiences, doubts, and feelings. How much I would like to find this very “out-come” in a course of philosophy in high school! It is the text, Grondin (2006/2014) would say, that has a capacity to reconfigure and make us discover the world anew (p. 116) through the reader’s relationship with the text or the reader’s lived experience with the text, as Pinar (2020) argues. Newness is probably the most relevant outcome of the autonomy of the text, and, therefore, of Gadamerian and Ricoeurian hermeneutics itself. I feel strongly attracted to Ricœur’s (1986/1991) saying that understanding a text or anything is not to find what someone else thought or wanted to say but something new the reader finds: a new world to be lived.

To my understanding, the Ricoeurian interpretation of *phronesis* is like a materialization of this hermeneutic newness since the goal of this capacity and virtue is to make decisions according to the specific context, a new pathway that fits the circumstance, especially “in difficult situations” (Ricœur, 2001/2007, p. 54) or conflicts. Again, here Ricœur places an emphasis that Gadamer did not make but is contained in his explication of the relation between interpretation, explication, and application. Taking a step beyond Gadamer, who talked about finding the thing (*Sache*) of the text, Ricœur (1975/1981) wrote, “What must be interpreted in a text is a proposed world which I could inhabit” (p.142). Thus, every text would contain a world and it is the job of the reader to find it. I prefer to understand this quote as saying that there are many worlds, possible ways to live, and every reader can find one or more.

For instance, when I read a fable or novel, I start imagining and judging every character and their actions. It is like a scene of another world that I can re-create in the theatre of my mind to see if I could be like one of those characters. That seems the Ricoeurian perspective on hermeneutics. As Moules et al. (2014) described it, hermeneutics asks us “to read for the possibilities that open in front of the text, the possibilities that the text opens up in our ‘fields of action’” (p. 66). *Phronesis* focuses exactly on the possibilities that might be opened in the situation at hand and lead us to live it differently.

How wonderful would be a critical thinking that instead of limiting itself to picking holes, also opened new worlds for us to experience (*er + fahren*: go, travel), to go and live them out! Worlds to travel to and see other things, other understandings; worlds where unknown treasures lie to be discovered. Could not that be among the very mission of education: To invite students to experience their own and other worlds? I consider this idea about finding new possibilities, new worlds, the most powerful insight of Ricœur’s hermeneutics, a powerful difference from Gadamer’s thing (*Sache*) of the text.

Moreover, Ricœur (1991) stated that any action is like a written text, so it also can be autonomous and interpreted as any other text. This seems an extension of the concept of text that Gadamer did not propose explicitly, although it might be implicit in his philosophical hermeneutics. In curriculum theory, too, “the concept of text implies both a specific piece of writing and, much more broadly, social reality itself” (Pinar et al. 2008, p. 48). To be sure, Ricœur (1971/1981b) thought that an action may develop “meanings which can be actualized or fulfilled in situations other than the one in which this action occurred” (p. 208). By action, Ricœur means any human realization in the social and natural world. For example, raising a hand in a meeting to talk, or doing it in the street to hailing a taxi. As this example shows, actions can

have different meanings depending on their context too, so they are also interpreted, like any text.

Even deeper, Ricœur (1975/1981) highlighted the fact that “reading introduces me into imaginative variations of the ego” (p. 144). When I am reading a novel or even the own (hi)story or my actions, I could identify with or differentiate from any of the characters of the story or the explanation presented, and I could see how a character’s actions, thoughts, decisions fit together and resemble who I think them to be or not. Then, I could decide to change something in myself, and I could decide to be more like the novel’s character, or different from them. I could understand that I have been mistaken.

In the end, “to understand is ... to expose oneself to it [the text]” (Ricœur, 1991, p. 301). I may expose (Latin *ex*: from inside + *ponere*: to place. [Harper, 2000i]) myself, place my interior outside. I open myself and let the text offer elements to me so I could experience an “*increase in being*” (Gadamer, 1975/2004, p. 135) with that otherness that the text shows me or that I grasp. As Grondin (2006/2014) stated, a single perspective cannot deplete the being that we want to be (p. 93). Thus, from a Ricoeurian view, self-understanding seems not only to better know the self but to change, to challenge prejudices, to grow from otherness thanks to the critique exerted on the text and the power of imagination to create other possible worlds to inhabit. What is more, “imagination is the very instrument of the critique of the real” (Ricœur, 1986/1991). To be sure, without imagination we would be unable to re-create other possibilities of the current situations we live or observe; we could not posit the questions of hidden ideologies, or utopias that guide our paths.

Now, after reading Dussel (1993/1996), I bear in mind the question he poses to Ricœur and hermeneutics in general: “Can the dominated ‘interpret’ the ‘text’ produced and interpreted

‘in-the-world’ of the dominator? Under what subjective, objective, hermeneutic, textual circumstances can such interpretation be ‘adequately’ undertaken?” (p. 86). My researcher journal reveals some of my feelings and thoughts after my first readings of Dussel’s writing:

It was after I read Dussel’s criticisms to Ricœur’s hermeneutics and the elusive answer given by Ricœur that my mind started to wander, to think about it in relation to my study. I would not know how to answer Dussel. I wonder, for instance, whether *phronesis* (born firstly in Greece and retaken up after by Gadamer and Ricœur, two European thinkers, from “the center of the world”) may be pertinent to rethink critical thinking to Latin America, “the periphery.” If Dussel’s philosophy is focused on the experience of the oppressed in the hands of the oppressor, how could such an experience be the point of reflection when thinking critically and phronetically? It might be the identification of mechanisms of domination, for example, through the written texts we read in class of philosophy. Perhaps those texts retain us dominated by a set of ideas (maybe a whole ideology) about reality, knowledge, or people. What could be the answer by *phronesis*? I do not think it is just to abandon those texts [that might be to deny part of our history and current ways of being] but read them carefully dis-covering their oppressive content, discovering the world they project to identify what denies our identity as Latin American people. (May 16th, 2022)

In this study, I hoped to find new ways to understand critical thinking through the clues that philosophy teachers showed me in the interviews. I also looked for possible relations to the Ricoeurian *phronesis* bearing in mind Dussel’s criticisms and his questions to hermeneutics. I value decolonialism as a perspective (not an absolute truth) that might assist me to see other possibilities of teaching critical thinking in high school philosophy. Then, how might this

phronesis be related to critical thinking in Latin America, more specifically yet, in Colombia? It is time now to deepen this Ricoeurian theory even though I still do not know how to respond to the challenge that decolonialism posits to it. I think that the hermeneutic approach helped me find some possibilities.

Ricoeurian Phronesis: A Scale to Balance and Measure

When checking my personal life, I found that I probably have not yet built a proper balance between my tendencies to solitude and my social life. The next memory in my researcher journal may depict such imbalance or lack of practical wisdom.

Something occurred to me going to study my Ph.D. abroad. It was always my dream to do so, among other things, to learn very well a second language. However, my tendency to be alone, did not help. And even if I invited people to have a beer or eat something, my classmates would not join me. Especially in winter, they were in a hurry to go home. I cannot blame them. Then, my lack of self-confidence with the language itself made me avoid contact, get into conversation especially in those courses where I felt not very comfortable. There, it was me who ran away home as soon as possible. Without friends or relatives in Edmonton, I had no anchor to start meeting people, and it seems I cannot do it by myself. I could not find the practical wisdom to do things better or maybe I do not have that *phronesis* yet. (June 2nd, 2022)

In my discovery of Ricoeur's philosophy, I found *phronesis*. For more than two millennia this gem still might shine and illuminates our lifepaths, particularly in moral, political philosophy, and applied ethics (Fiasse, 2008). Ricoeur has recovered *phronesis* and re-made it through the contributions of several philosophies, taking the best of everyone: Aristotelian, Kantian, and

Hegelian.¹⁸ However, after reading about decolonization, I feel that my responsibility as a researcher is to think what can be still valuable of this European view in the Colombian contexts. As Mignolo (2011) clearly stated: “decolonizing knowledge is not rejecting Western epistemic contributions to the world. On the contrary, it implies appropriating its contributions in order to then de-chain from their imperial designs” (p. 82). Such an appropriation could be, as Ricœur understands this term in his hermeneutics, in seeing how to apply to our context in a new way what those far texts or thoughts tried to express. It is therefore not simply an im-position in our context, but an adaptation to our reality that we ourselves make, taking care of our situation. That implies, as I understand it, certain “de-chaining from” the pretention that the Western knowledge is the only one valid and true, that Mignolo suggests. I do think the theory around Ricoeurian *phronesis* might be one of those European contributions to the world that I try to appropriate or adapt to my own context, as I show in the three final chapters of my dissertation. However, at the end of chapter four, the reader will find a deeper argument to explain why I kept Ricoeurian philosophy.

In the context of applied ethics, Ricœur (2001/2007) affirmed that *phronesis* “consists in a capacity, the aptitude, for discerning the right rule, the *orthos logos*, in difficult situations requiring action” (p. 54). That *orthos logos* is what I did not find in living this pandemic and in my time in Edmonton and Montreal: the *right way* or strategy to alleviate my solitude. However,

¹⁸ We can find the development of Ricœur’s theory of *phronesis* particularly in chapter 9 of *Soi-meme Comme un Autre* (1986. Trans.: *Oneself as Another*, 1992). Nevertheless, chapters seven and eight show the elements that he took from Aristotle’s concept of *phronesis* and Kantian ethics, respectively. This virtue is also depicted in two more books: *Le Juste 1* (1995, Transl.: *The Just*, 2000) and *Le Juste 2* (2001, Transl.: *Reflections on the Just*, 2007).

I cannot blame myself entirely since I never was taught this kind of practical wisdom to face difficult situations. Can I still develop that capacity? Can I teach it to my students? That is my commitment and I hope I will find ways to do it. My Ph.D. studies might offer me some guidelines.

The very first descriptor of Ricœur's definition of *phronesis* catches my eye: practical wisdom is a capacity (Lat.: *Capax: capio*: seize, grasp, contain or hold.[Lewis & Short, 1879b]) that refers to an ability for people to seize something other and different and integrate it into themselves. To be capable requires integrating otherness into the self. However, as James Risser (2019) observed, "Hermeneutic experience is the experience of the difficulty that we encounter in hearing what the other has to say, which includes the other in us" (p. 2). In other words, the difficulty of hearing the other might be in difference, which people also might have experienced in several respects but have not realized or thematized. I immediately think of the fact that being a white heterosexual male, I also have felt some subtle discrimination when living abroad due to my Latin American origin. This is an otherness (and difference) present in myself that I ignored for a long time.

This relation to otherness is one of the traits that I would appreciate most in a concept of critical thinking. To date, critical thinking scholarship seems leaned towards individuality and egocentrism (K. Walters, 1994). And do not forget, Biesta (2016) would say, that "education is precisely concerned with the overcoming of this 'original egocentrism' ... by establishing opportunities for dialogue with what or who is other" (p. 3). Thus, *phronesis* as a capacity of judgement and action implies a way of being, a way of building ourselves with and from others: we are capable people (Ricœur, 2004/2005). *Phronesis* is grounded on an anthropology where "the selfhood of oneself implies otherness to such an intimate degree that one cannot be thought

of without the other, that instead one passes into the other” (Ricœur, 1992, p. 3). Succinctly, every person is constituted by otherness.

In the middle of my reflection about critical thinking in my high school teaching, Ricœur’s anthropology grounded in otherness showed me that along with social and personal history, every person grows up, in mind and body, thanks to the otherness capable of integrating in themselves. Let us think, for instance, in our body. How is it possible that we generate more cells in bones and flesh if not by the nourishment that we consume? Nonetheless, integration of otherness does not end in obliteration of the other, as the metaphor of the digestion might suggest. I think that the metaphor expresses the Ricoeurian belief that we are constituted by otherness in an ontological way. In Ricœur’s (1990/1992) words, it is “the paradox of an otherness constitutive of the self” that “reveals for the first time the full force of the expression ‘oneself as another’” (p. 327). From Ricœur, I understood that language, thoughts, feelings have also germinated and grown through the integration of otherness that are in relatives, friends, the school, the mass media, etc.

Is it not precisely this ability to integrate otherness that gives the power to ideologies and hegemony? Is not that ability a ground that gives the power to colonization? Here is where an adequate critical thinking is needed so a person does not integrate something that they do not want or that could even harm them. I recall the question Ricœur (1973/1981a) posed to Heideggerian hermeneutics: “*How can a question of critique in general be accounted for within the framework of a fundamental hermeneutics?*” (p. 59). In the Ricoeurian philosophy critique is the job of *phronesis* since it is “the moment of decision, and application” (Domingo Moratalla, 2015, p. 103) where everyone might carefully examine and judge what they want to integrate in them. Indeed, *phronesis* is a hermeneutic aptitude (here Gadamer and Ricœur coincide),

probably the paradigm of hermeneutics itself, as it has to interpret the situation in all its complexity to make a decision.

Practical wisdom requires people to take into account all that must be considered in the specific situation in order to decide what is the best action. Thus, *phronesis* is like a scale with several plates that seizes (notice the closeness between seize and size) all the elements that the person tries to weigh or balance (deliberate: Lat.: *de*: entirely + *librare*: to balance. It is “to weigh well in one’s mind” [Lewis & Short, 1879e]). It balances all the constituents or participants of a situation in the most adequate way. The end of this deliberation is not just to respond to a specific situation; it is aimed at achieving happiness, a good life, as it was for Aristotle too. However, Ricœur (1990/1992) places an emphasis on otherness; his ethical motto advances “the vision or aim of the ‘good life’ with and for others in just institutions” (p. 240). The participation of others in deliberation is still an Aristotelian trait that Ricœur highlighted and nurtured by Kantian and Hegelian thought.

Confronting this theory with my memories of teaching philosophy in high school, I cannot stop thinking that I was doing the opposite: I asked my students to read the philosophers’ texts and analyse their structure to criticize it and create their own “theories.” Not very often did I propose them to think of all the elements in a situation, and listen to their classmates’ interpretations, doubts, comments about what a text stated. I gave them little room to balance arguments, questions, positions about a text or even about their own life. I think I also neglected their images of happiness or good life. That was a topic that never came out in class of philosophy. More worrying for me now is that, I think, I also hindered their consideration of the possibility of violence and violation in their own and others’ thoughts or actions.

Now, in the way that it is usually done in philosophy, I introduce an *excursus* (Lat.: *ex*: out o + *cursus*: path), a way out of the topic or digression (opened and closed by three stars) in order to develop a different but related topic that might assist the reader to understand better the previous and the following parts of the subject.

The previous presentation of the Ricoeurian *phronesis* is grounded on the Aristotelian conception, as it will be evident now. Since it has been a topic of discussion in philosophy, particularly in ethics in the twentieth century, why then did I decide to follow Ricœur's conception of *phronesis* instead of Aristotle's himself? This *excursus* will explain it.

I remember that in my Bachelor's I studied Aristotelian ethics twice and once more in my Master's in philosophy as a part of a seminar in philosophical ethics. Every student of philosophy knows Aristotle's ethics for his famous principle of the "golden mean," the middle point between two extremes, an excess and a deficiency, that defines every virtue. For instance, a courageous person is between the coward (excessive fear) and the rash person (little or no fear).

Such a criterion, I thought at the time, was quite clear and easy to follow, but the more I read Aristotle's writing, the more I saw the complexity of a such criterion: "the mean is to be determined in a way that takes into account the particular circumstances of the individual (1106a36–b7)" (Kraut, 2018, p.22). Thus, the risks implied in every situation might be more or less dangerous, more or less worthy, etc. To me, the golden mean, as the general image, is deceitful, since it sells an easy image that does not fit the complex reality of human life. Certainly, Aristotle knew that.

Also well-known is the Aristotelian division of virtues between character virtues (temperance, courage, and so on) and intellectual virtues. In the latter, we find *phronesis* (and

theoretical wisdom), although for Aristotle it is still related to all other virtues, since an “ethical virtue is fully developed only when it is combined with practical wisdom (1144b14–17)” (Kraut, 2018, p. 22). What is more, *phronesis* is based on certain agreement (*accord*) between *logos* and desire (Carlo, 2002). Regarding its relation to intellectual virtues, *phronesis* should find truth in its field of action, and as related to the other virtues, it might guide action.

However, the topic of virtues in Aristotle’s ethics is contained within the topic of happiness. Indeed, he believed that “rational agents necessarily choose and deliberate with a view to their ultimate good, which is happiness” (Irwin, 1999, p. xxvi) and these might be acquired only through virtues. In Aristotle’s words, “virtue will be able to achieve happiness” (p. 9/1099b). That is why his ethics is usually called ethics of happiness or ethics of virtue.

Aristotle stated that, with *phronesis*, people deliberate about the means to certain ends, so deliberation is about deciding what means allow to achieve happiness but not about happiness itself (there is an infinite debate about the possibility that the means include in themselves the ends [Carlo, 2002]). Along with deliberation and decision, Aristotle also thought necessary to consider the particular circumstances of the situation because the decision is at a specific moment: Always here and now. It is precisely in this situation where *phronesis* appears since its function is to find the “golden mean.”

Up to this point, we can see that Ricœur (1990/1992) did base his own conception of *phronesis* on Aristotle’s account, as he explained in the seventh chapter of *Oneself as Another*. In his own words, “we retain the fact that its horizon is the ‘good life,’ its mediation deliberation, its actor the *phronimos*, and its place of application singular situations” (p. 290). From this point onwards, I present the influence of Kant’s and Hegel’s philosophies (of ethics) in Ricœur’s “little ethics” and, therefore, in his conception of *phronesis*.

It will be evident that otherness plays a central role in Ricoeurian *phronesis*, which differentiates it from Aristotelian *phronesis*. Ricœur arrived at this emphasis through Hegelian *Sittlichkeit* (the concrete ethical life: the customs, values, and sedimented traditions in institutions such as family and the State) where the decision is made by a collective rather than the *phronimos* alone (Fiasse, 2008). In addition, he incorporated Kant's attention about avoiding evil in the maxims of action, which Aristotle did not envisage in his own philosophy about *phronesis* (Kemp, 2010b). These traits make Ricoeurian *phronesis* a complex virtue and the capacity of decision and action more appropriate, I think, for today's problems, as Ricœur himself showed about different topics in *Reflections on the Just II* (2001/2007): medicine, the law, and ecology. Let us see how these new elements might be integrated in *phronesis*.

In the search for a good life, people, especially in contexts of power and privilege, can easily suffer or inflict subtle and sheer violence. There, *phronesis* works as a "test" (Ricœur, 1990/1992, p. 204), similar to the Kantian imperative that forbids instrumentalization of others (Hoyos-Vásquez, 2012). Don't we get angry when another person only phones us in order to ask for a favour or when we see a town imposing their ways or power over other people in order to obtain a benefit? For Aoki (2011), instrumentalization strips a person out "of the humanness of his/her being, reducing him/her to a being-as-thing" (p. 115). Human beings can certainly start thinking that some people only use them but do not value them as persons. Because of this "always possible risk of violence" (Domingo Moratalla, 2015, p. 115), *phronesis* has to take the form of a test that identifies harm to others (and ourselves) in our decisions and actions.

Then we could say that *phronesis*, in Ricœur's understanding, is active at all times in our existence and probably more in the middle of conflicts (between desires and laws of religion,

culture, etc.), when we are lost. In Ricœur's (1990/1992) words, "There is no shorter path than this one [facing conflicts] to reach that point at which moral judgment in situation and the conviction that dwells in it are worthy of the name of *practical wisdom*" (p. 241). At these moments of conflict, *phronesis* might offer guidance by teaching people the importance of learning to listen to others' opinions. A judgement in situation and a conviction are the responses of *phronesis* to a conflict generated by the application of a rule in a concrete circumstance (Fiasse, 2008).

Certainly, as Ricœur (1990/1992) stated, "The *phronimos* is not necessarily one individual alone" (p. 273). In the space of weighing a prejudice, or a conviction, a principle of action is born: the judgment in situation in the middle of others, particularly in social institutions, like the family or the assemblies.¹⁹ Here we can find the influence of the Hegelian *Sittlichkeit* in Ricœur's thought. Societies' knowledge and traditions are not built by a single person nor in a single day. As Risser (2019) stated, "In speaking to and hearing others, we are never neutral, as if unshaped by our prior involvement in the world" (p. 2). Thus, we always speak from a cumulated knowledge, a lighthouse that sheds light well beyond its coast and thus illuminates the pathways that help ships avoid crashing into the rocks, that hinder us from crashing into the walls of tragedy.

¹⁹ At this point, it is necessary to note that for Ricœur the word institution is not limited to political or formal institutions, such as agencies and enterprises. In his words, "by 'institution,' we are to understand here the structure of living together as this belongs to a historical community –people, nation, region, and so forth –a structure irreducible to interpersonal relations and yet bound up with these in a remarkable sense which the notion of distribution will permit us later to clarify" (1992, p. 194). Thus, language and family are institutions, as well as a State like Canada.

An institution that might represent the Ricoeurian *phronesis* is a council, where wise men and women appear together deliberating. Naturally, there is a condition of public debate that tries to reach a decision: It must be done among people considered the most competent and wise. Thus, the figure of the council, maybe a parliament, is of utmost importance: It is the figure of the wise people who are open to debate and open to listening to different opinions in order to examine their own. It is in the proximity of “the shoulder-to-shoulder of colleagues in an assembly where the fate of a country is decided” (Dussel, 1985, p. 19). Colleagues, equals, need to listen to each other even though they do not agree, because “it is necessary to listen to the spokespersons of the opposing theses in order best to determine the point of insertion of practical wisdom” (Ricoeur, 1990/1992, p. 270). It is in a debate where different and even opposing arguments can illuminate the situation at hand to understand it more profoundly. Indeed, *phronesis* cannot be practical wisdom unless it ponders different stances and perspectives about the right place, moment, and conditions of acting, attaining the good for everyone.

Finally, we reach the point where critique appears to be at the heart of Ricoeurian *phronesis*. A debate about common matters is also a debate about our convictions. It is an opportunity to examine the maxims, in Kantian words, posited as universals that anyone would like to follow. To be sure, Ricoeur (1986/1991) highlighted that “the critique of ideology can be and must be assumed in a work of self-understanding, a work that organically implies a critique of the illusions of the subject” (p. 268) as well as “systematic distortions, at the level of the hidden relations between work, power, and knowledge” (pp. 206-207). Thus, like Kant’s deontology, the French philosopher outlines an ought: to criticize through a work of self-understanding all possible illusions in our ideas and quotidian actions.

Such a critical instance is required in society, as well as in the very personal and inner debates with oneself. The critical instance of *phronesis* is not an added dimension to it, but only a deployment in the political dimension of the social world where it is possible to introduce distorted ideals about the community. We can finish this section with Ricœur's (1986/1991) words: "The critique of false consciousness can thus become an integral part of hermeneutics, conferring upon the critique of ideology that meta-hermeneutical dimension that Habermas assigns to it" (p. 301).

We have just seen the main components of the Ricoeurian theory of *phronesis*. Ricœur melded three philosophical traditions: Kant's, Aristotle's, and Hegel's. In such an account, several core elements of *phronesis* appear: the aim of reaching happiness, while avoiding evil or suffering as much as possible; otherness as a participant and contributor to that happiness; the society and culture wisdom as embedded in the public debate; finally, self-critique. Throughout these components, the threads of Gadamer's and Ricœur's hermeneutic ideas structure the whole theory of *phronesis*. I will now discuss how this theory of *phronesis* may be related to the theory of critical thinking for Colombian high school philosophy. This theory of *phronesis*, I think, might contribute to ameliorate the faults of the traditional modern concept of critical thinking.

Venturing into a New Critical Thinking

As teachers, our role is to take our students on the adventure of critical thinking. (hooks, 2010a, p. 43)

Following hooks' thought, I think that critical thinking, as well as education, is like an adventure (Lat.: *ad*: towards + *venture*: to come, to arrive –expressed in the future tense of *venire*), something unknown that is to come in a near or far future, and it is stimulating to think how it will come. We, educators, can invite students to that future; we have that opportunity.

In this adventure, I reflect about Ricoeurian *phronesis* as a source to other ways to instill critical thinking in high school philosophy. Is this possible? If so, how? I can imagine three aspects of Ricoeurian *phronesis* that might offer elements to re-envision critical thinking in Colombian high school philosophy. I wondered whether my participants already saw the same possibilities for a broader understanding of critical thinking. I was excited by the prospect that they already include in their teaching some feature of the Ricoeurian *phronesis*. Simultaneously, I feared they do nothing to teach any form of critical thinking. I was in the middle of certain suffering but, as Pinar et al. (2008) affirmed about curriculum reconceptualization, “a paradigm shift does not occur painlessly” (p. 230), and I am in search for changing my paradigm of critical thinking, a model that I think is very much generalized among high school teachers of philosophy in Colombia. I ventured towards the unknown but confident that something new and insightful will emerge. I think I found it!

Let us see three possible ways in which I imagine that *phronesis* might inform critical thinking: 1) the conjunction between reason and other human dimensions in the teacher’s critical thinking; 2) the participation of otherness and difference in building a good life, and 3) the creation of new possibilities as a response to the situation at hand. My conviction is that hermeneutics in general is fully educational in its openness to the world because it can take us to new worlds to inhabit, to new ways of being. Ricoeur (1973/1981a) himself thought that “understanding must be described initially, not in terms of discourse, but in terms of the power-to-be. The first function of understanding is to orientate us in a situation.... Apprehending a

possibility of being” (p. 56).²⁰ Thus, understanding means to be capable of the creation of other worlds. Let me show the first way that I envision that critical thinking might be re-addressed.

1) The critical-phronetical teacher. In terms of the current philosophy curricula in Colombian high schools, the traditional way seems to concentrate exclusively on engagement with the philosophers’ texts and theories or classical philosophical problems. Aurelio Díaz (1998), a highly regarded Colombian philosopher asked: What to teach? Why? Does it make any sense to teach those summaries of philosophical systems? If they are not taught, what then should be taught in high school? (p. 8) Other Colombian thinkers (Camelo Perdomo, 2020; Cárdenas, 2005; Montes & Montes, 2019) pose similar questions and implicit critiques.

Informed by Ricoeurian *phronesis*, I imagine that a philosophy teacher would question whether teaching always the same texts and/or philosophers’ theories to all students regardless of their context, desires, necessities is the most sensible. Unfortunately, this scenario is common in Colombia, as I myself have done in my teaching, and I have also found in my conversations with colleagues and students. This is an “oblivion” of human integrity in schools aiming at training discrete dimensions of people: thinking skills, dispositions, competences, and so forth. Nevertheless, Biesta (2012) pointed out that Aristotelian “practical wisdom is ... a quality or ‘excellence’ that permeates and characterises the whole person” (p. 45). Ricœur would agree not only about Aristotle’s but also his own theory of *phronesis*.

²⁰ Clearly, every new possibility, new world, can be good or bad, since it is imagined and actualized by people who have particular intentions. However, hermeneutics is not neutral about such a possibility. Ricœur himself asked for a critical dimension of hermeneutics that is included in *phronesis* in the test to every intentionality of a good life, a test against evil and instrumentalization of others, as shown above.

To me, it is clear that restricting critical thinking to an epistemic examination of texts and theories is insufficient because people are more than a faculty of reason: we are bodies, emotions, feelings, desires, etc. However, this does not mean that we should leave aside philosophical sources and the epistemic consideration. To be sure, as hooks (2010d) asserted, “The vital link between critical thinking and practical wisdom is the insistence on the interdependent nature of theory and fact coupled with the awareness that knowledge cannot be separated from experience” (p. 185). There is no gulf between thinking and practice because thinking is about practice and the latter is guided by thinking. Likewise, for Aoki (2011), “we need more now than ever to see it [theory] as a reflective moment in praxis.... praxis is action done reflectively, and reflection on what is being done” (p. 120). In the end, theory helps to understand practice, and practice helps to deepen the theory. Both complement each other and that happens “naturally” in our daily life. Likewise, there is no gulf between thinking, feeling, sensing, doing: We always are all that.

I remember that a few years ago I started to give a course on ancient Latin and the first day of class I saw a blind student in the room. How could I teach him if all my tools and activities required the students to see images, things, and people in the room? Similarly, when teaching philosophy, I use the board all the time to write words and draw images or I point to objects around. I would need to learn about how to teach to blind people and then try out the theory. I did that and I learnt from theory and my own experience how to teach him.

Critical thinking in the way of *phronesis* might be different according to the students’ realities, bodies, feelings. Do not forget, Grondin (2006/2014) would remind us, always to see things in their context. That is without a doubt the first teaching of hermeneutics (p. 34). For instance, if I am teaching philosophy in a school whose social context is of strong macho

violence, critical thinking might be related to uncovering the subtle dynamics of undervaluing femininity and overvaluing masculinity. Indeed, in con-sonance with Dussel's (1985) philosophy of liberation, what I strive to achieve is a critique that aims to challenge "the established, fixed, normalized, crystallized, dead" (p. 58-59). Thus, *phronesis* would be not just a model of critical thinking for our students, but also the kind of thinking that the teachers would embrace in order to teach critical thinking. As Biesta (2012) put it, "Teaching as praxis, [is] a process orientated towards the human good, for which we need a capacity for judgment called 'phronesis' or practical wisdom" (p. 45). Thus, the teacher could also be a *phronimos*, a person of *phronesis*.

2) A collective criticality. I enter now into the second possible contribution of *phronesis* to high school critical thinking. Ethical and political critical thinking seem necessary to make some decisions about personal and social life. In other words, otherness and difference are fuel for thought since "the vitality of understanding actually depends on difference" (Davey, 2006, p. xii). The growth of egotism is evident, I think, in the Colombian population as well as in other countries. I saw some examples of this in the context of the 2019 global pandemic. Some U.S. mayors proposed that elderly people have to be sacrificed for the benefit of the rest of the population because they had already lived long enough (Levin, 2020). In my home country, I noticed how some people made decisions only thinking of their economic benefit, whilst "sacrificing" the other's well-being (Anselma, 2020). These two examples show how usual it is to posit the 'I' first, to forget the others' basic needs, and their desire for a good life. As Aoki (2011) would say, "We see here the centered self ... the self that relegates others to be secondary to my 'I'" (p. 287).

Actually, a study done by the Colombian Ministry of Health and Social Protection (*Ministerio de Salud y Protección Social*, 2015) concluded that individualism in Colombian

society is growing stronger and stronger because actions in community disappear.²¹ Participation in group activities is reduced to 53.7% for children (12-17 years old.), 65.3% for youth (18-44 years old) and 60% approximately for adults older than 45. These numbers made me think about the fact that in the Bachelor of Philosophy program where I worked, most of the students' theses are written individually. Only few people opt to do group projects and those who do it do not work a philosophical topic but a didactic one. As Bai et al. (2014) stated, modern Western philosophy, informed by European Romanticism, has also revered autonomous individuality and creativity, which serves to “underplay the role of tradition and community in all creative and critical thought” (p. 640). In the University where I was working, only three out of 190 undergraduate dissertations (from 2004 to 2022) were done by groups of students. I wonder if the kind of philosophy taught in Colombia contributes to the growth of individualism and the egotism potentially related to it. We live in times of “hyper-individualism” (Eppert, 2010, p. 222).

Dialogue and debate are ways for students to help each other, becoming less egocentric; they have opportunities to challenge their prejudices and convictions. This openness to dialogue offers the space to find hidden and oppressive ideologies in prejudices and convictions that *phronesis* should examine every time they are at play in a decision. Such a scenario might be present for hooks (2010d) when she said that “to critically examine our world [and] our lives, practical wisdom shows us that all genuine learning requires of us a constant open approach, a

²¹ This study compares data collected in 2015 with a previous study done in 2003. The method of data collection was a survey posed to more than 15.000 families.

willingness to engage invention and reinvention” (p. 187). The clue that I found in hooks is the disposition of openness not just to others’ ideas, but to one’s unjust positions.

If a *phronimos* is not a person alone Ricœur (1990/1992), one possible way to teach *phronesis* as critical thinking might be by asking the students’ opinion and discuss with them the options available. I heed hooks (2010c) words: “As students become critical thinkers, they often of their own free will change perspectives; only they know whether that is for the better” (p. 27). As teacher, we cannot intend to know *a priori* what is better for our students because we do not live their lives. We need to listen to them.

This is the kind of listening that I also wanted to practice with the participants of my study. I was curious to hear from my participants how they taught criticality. Aoki (2011) stated that “We can increase our vision of whatever we are viewing through the employment of as many perspectives as we can find appropriate” (p. 96). To open spaces to listen to others’ thoughts (students, teachers, and other people) may help to see how everyone has something to offer and enrich the perspectives and comprehension of a situation. As Ricœur (1973/1981a) maintained, “To understand is to hear... this priority of hearing marks the fundamental relation of speech to the opening towards the world and towards others” (p. 59). It is through hearing that we open ourselves to others’ voices. In that way, we enrich our understanding; through hearing we see better.

How could we listen to others’ views, and how could we value a different perspective if we are closed to our own views? Openness is the attitude shown by Socrates in Ancient Greece, the Socratic ignorance; “as a knowing that one does not know, constitutes a motive for the pursuit of knowledge. It is an attitude of openness which is necessary for a genuine educational

experience” (Gallagher, 1992). Therefore, openness requires to think that we might be mistaken or at least that our ideas might be improved.

I welcome Mall’s (2000) vision as an appropriate proposal to philosophy in Colombian high school: “Intercultural philosophy rejects the idea of a hermeneutics of identity that is intolerant of difference. In our attempt to understand others, we meet to differ and differ to meet” (p. 18). In that philosophical perspective, difference seems the core of every encounter to do, teach, and learn philosophy.

3) Creating new worlds. Finally, the third way in which I see Ricoeurian *phronesis* potentially re-envisioning critical thinking curricula and pedagogy is in its emphasis on the creation of new worlds. Aoki (2011) himself already pointed that “what is equally important for teachers and students as they engage in interpretive acts is to be critically reflective not only of the transformed reality that is theirs to create but also of their selves” (p. 121). This thought attends directly to the central aspects of re-envisioning critical thinking: the creation of new possibilities and self-critique. It is self-critique that opens the path of possible changes in the personal life of the epistemic I.

How to change if we first do not know that something is wrong? How to know that something might be wrong if we do not allow otherness to address our most intimate ideas, convictions, beliefs? Indeed, hermeneutics “seeks a disciplined openness to the strange and foreign” (Davey, 2006, p. 4). As we saw in Gadamer’s hermeneutics, we have prejudices that require an examination to become examined judgments. Similarly, for Ricœur, we need to check our convictions to achieve examined convictions. This may happen if we engage in genuine dialogue with others since, as Aoki (2011) wrote, “Successful hermeneutic conversations lead conversationalists... toward questions concerning who they are” (p. 180-181). Indeed, in a

dialogue we can learn who we are, the mistakes we have committed, the false ideas we have held, and the change we can embed in ourselves. What is more, “good conversations have no end. Their insights open unexpected avenues” (Davey, 2006, p. 1). That is what hermeneutics looks for: other ways or avenues that take us to newness.

Once we have accepted the possibility of errors in our beliefs and convictions, we can re-create them, find new possibilities that guide our sailing in the sea of life. Such an examination is a reconsideration of our history and a change in our history. We not only discover that the effects of history are present and acting in our lives, but that we can change that and construct new possibilities just as I am in the search for new ways of understanding and teaching critical thinking. I hope to find several ways of teaching critical thinking because as “there is no one fixed pattern for a high school curriculum required for college success” (Pinar et al. 2008, p. 137), there is no unique fixed correct understanding and teaching of critical thinking.

A Final Note

In the search for an understanding of critical thinking in Colombian high school, I know that there is no a magical recipe to every context and time. Shaun Gallagher (1992) warns us that “educational practice should not be equated with a simple *techne*, but resembles more a practice guided by *phronesis*” (p. 187). However, according to Pinar (2015), some people, even teachers, seem to think that

education is like an automobile engine: if only we make the right adjustments— in teaching, in learning, in assessment— it will hum, transport us to our destination, the promised land of high-test scores, or, for many of us on the educational Left, a truly democratic society. (p. 12)

Yes, sometimes I want that everything in life were like an automobile engine, that is, a machine that moves automatically after turning it on and pulling the right strings. Eppert (2009) agrees with Pinar: “In schools, in this current era ... the emphasis is predominantly on the automatization of students, rather than on the exploration and learning (p. 205). However, the reality of human growth, the reality of education is the opposite: It requires to stay close, to stay true to the context, to the specific situation of the group and the particular student. And still many people (parents, politicians, and teachers alike) demand to stick to the curricula, to the tests, to the standards (Pinar, 2020). Here the danger in worrying only to meet the established curricula is to forget that we work for and with people.

In Aoki (2011) words, “The danger lies in the possibility of indifference to the lives of teachers and students in the situation” (p. 370). Indifference seems to be the fact of ignoring the differences that make everyone who they are, as if all people were identical. Thus, difference does not count. Is not this a possible path for de-humanization and instrumentalization of any human being? As I see it, the point of approaching thinking critically to otherness is not just taking into account the other’s reasons, but their whole difference, their life experiences, and the understanding that comes with them.

Chapter Three: Looking Intently at the Literature on Critical Thinking

In the previous chapter, I depicted Ricœur's life through his academic influences and life experiences. That was the first thread for entering into Gadamer's and Ricœur's hermeneutic stances, all together forming my theoretical framework. Now, I look intently (re-view) at what has been written about critical thinking in high school philosophy in Colombia in order to place my study in that general landscape. Likewise, I examine the literature regarding the influence of Ricœur's philosophy on high school curricula.

A Hermeneutic Conversation

If there can be no last word in philosophical hermeneutics, there can be no first. The question is how and where to join a continuing "conversation." (Davey, 2006, p. xi)

I might have joined the conversation about critical thinking as soon as I began studying or teaching philosophy. Nevertheless, I did not realize that at the time. Today, I know better. Now, from Pinar's (2020) discussion of *currere*, I understand that "reactivating the past reconstructs the present so we can find the future" (p. xii). Therefore, in order to find a better future, I enter into dialogue with the texts written about critical thinking in Colombian high school philosophy and my experience as a teacher in that context.

In this way, this search is not about letting go of the past, as if it were possible. Certainly, as Jardine (1995) observes, "understanding 'the whole' involves paying attention to *this* in its wholeness" (p. 263). Thus, to pay attention to the whole of the phenomenon is also to explore the bigger context, the whole world of teaching critical thinking in Colombian philosophy courses because "each curricular fragment is what it is only in relation to the whole" (Jardine, 1995, p. 268). In the end, there is nothing isolated in curriculum, as well as in everything else in human life. As Gadamer (1964/2007) said, "everything points to some other thing" (p. 131).

Moreover, since my curricular research takes a hermeneutic lens, I discuss my own experience because “within the hermeneutic agenda ... the purpose is not to translate my subjectivity out of the picture but to take it up with a new sense of responsibility” (Smith, 1999, p. 42). I cannot exclude myself from the teaching of critical thinking and philosophy because I still teach them. I am part of what I investigate. My responsibility is to stay close to my topic, to my country’s educational realities and needs in order to better understand them. I need to see the whole landscape and the significance of every tree and bush.

I start this hermeneutic view of the curriculum of philosophy with a fragment of my personal experience. Then, I advance to the most common ways to define critical thinking in philosophy. After that, I present what has been written about critical thinking in high school philosophy in Colombia.

My Encounter with Educational Discourses

When I finished my Bachelor’s studies and started to work as a teacher in 2005, I did not know how to do it. My training in the university focused on philosophical problems and authors in the traditional Western canon, while the courses about curriculum, pedagogy, or didactics were only a few and the topics were unknown by my teachers (mostly male philosophers without training in curriculum or pedagogy). I came to read papers about educational disciplines in my first year as a teacher. The school principal asked all teachers to attend a pedagogical day where I listened to and read for the very first time about topics such as constructivism, or pedagogic strategies, namely, mind maps or concept maps; I was astonished at their pertinence and deep perspectives on learning. At the same time, I wondered why I had not studied these topics (as my colleagues did) if I had also studied a *Licenciatura*. I was ashamed. I never told anyone that.

When a principal required that everybody taught according to the theory of meaningful learning, as proposed by David Ausubel, I got hooked by that theory, and I changed my teaching. Instead of focusing on philosophy *per se*, its history and problems, I centred my teaching on critical thinking. However, at that time, I did not find any paper or book about teaching critical thinking in philosophy courses. I began to design activities according to the understanding of critical thinking that I had gained in my Bachelor's. Then, for me critical thinking involved a logical examination of ideas and concepts in any text. More concretely, I asked my students to identify the main structural elements of a text, that is, its main idea, arguments, and core concepts. Then, I told them to find possible failures in the arguments or thesis: Do they mean the same throughout the text? Do they establish clear and coherent relations with other concepts? Do they adequately represent the phenomenon? What is your personal theory about it? All this was for me what critical thinking entailed.

Today, about 15 years later, my search for scholarship on critical thinking specifically relevant to my research has not produced much. When looking for documents in several databases (Scopus, Academic Search Complete, Dialnet, and Scielo, CINAHL Plus, JSTOR, and Google Scholar) I obtained thousands of results with the keywords "critical thinking" and "curriculum theory." Indeed, nowadays, it seems that critical thinking is pursued in every imaginable subject and level of education. By narrowing the search to critical thinking in "high school," I received 125 results regarding several school subjects (mathematics, biology, social sciences, etc.). When I changed the key terms into "critical thinking" and "high school" or "IB (International Baccalaureate)" and finally "TOK" (Theory of Knowledge), I obtained fewer results. In the end, I only obtained eleven sources about critical thinking in high school philosophy, none of them in the Colombian context.

Perhaps Lauren Bialystok (2017) is right when she affirms that “there is surprisingly little discussion in recent academic philosophy or curriculum theory about philosophy as a subject” (p. 819). Trevor T. Norris (2015) thinks the same: “Philosophers have even less frequently written about what it is that they do with most of their time: They teach philosophy” (p. 63).

I recently (January, 2023) came to know the journal *Teaching Philosophy* where I thought I would find many papers about my phenomenon, that is, critical thinking in high school philosophy. I introduced the key words “critical thinking,” “philosophy,” and “high school” in the searching bar and I narrowed the time span: from 2000 to 2022. This search resulted in 338 documents. I checked the first 100 entries, but only a handful of papers included the word high school. By reading a set of five papers whose abstracts seemed relevant to my research, I found that only one of them dealt with high school philosophy and named critical thinking, but the topic was not related at all to my phenomenon: integrating philosophy across school curricula (Davis, 2013). This “finding” continues to re-affirm my belief that there is a lack of literature about teaching critical thinking in high school philosophy.

It seems that philosophers do not write much about their teaching practices or what they appreciate or criticize in the teaching of philosophy in high school.²² Colombia is not an exception, as will be evident shortly. Furthermore, as Pinto & McDonough (2011) affirm, “very little empirical study has been conducted to describe pedagogies in philosophy courses” (p. 3). I

²² Were philosophy a compulsory school subject in high school in most of the countries of the Americas, there would be more interest in writing and researching about it, I suppose. In the case of North América, Philosophy is compulsory only in the Canadian high school of Toronto (province of Ontario). To my knowledge, in South America, Philosophy is compulsory in high school only in Colombia and Brazil.

still wonder whether that is true. According to Miguel Ángel Gómez Mendoza (2003), a Colombian philosopher and researcher about didactics of philosophy, philosophers seem not interested in teaching and maybe they even despise the pedagogical and curricular disciplines.

The Critical Thinking Movement: The Theory that Fit my Teaching Practice

The second time I encountered pedagogical theories was in my Master's in education, in 2012, where I was introduced to critical pedagogy (e.g. Freire, 1970/2005; McLaren, 2015) and also to curriculum studies (e.g. Schwab, 1969; Taubman, 1982). Although I learned about critical pedagogy, I did not find any particular relation to what I had learned in my Bachelor's of Philosophy about critical thinking. What is more, I very quickly concluded that critical pedagogy was politically biased and that hindered me from exploring it more deeply. To be sure, critical pedagogy thinkers presuppose unjust structures of power are already in place in all contexts, so their job is to uncover such structures and change them. From the Western epistemic perspective that I held at the time, this is a failure of thinking because it presupposes something that has not yet been demonstrated in the specific context implied.

It was in my Master's in Education where I found the critical thinking movement, which has had great influence in Latin America (Difabio, 2005; Suárez González et al., 2018). Through this theory, I did start to deepen my philosophical and pedagogical understanding of critical thinking (although it is not focused on courses of philosophy). Discovering the critical thinking movement was like finding a glade in the deep forest of my prejudices, beliefs, and practices inherited from my Bachelor's. I could see the principal constituents of critical thinking that I had learnt. So, before discussing the papers I found about critical thinking in high school, I advance the critical thinking movement's theory.

The foremost contribution of this movement for me was the distinction between thinking skills and dispositions (Bailin et al., 1999; Ennis, 2011; Fisher, 2001; Lai, 2011; Mcpeck, 1985; S. P. Norris, 1985; Paul & Elder, 2008; Siegel, 1988). Perhaps the main proponent of this theory, in terms of philosophy, is US analytic philosopher Harvey Siegel (1987, 1988, 1997). For him, the set of thinking skills could also be called a “reason assessment” component whilst the set of dispositions are a “critical spirit” component (1997, pp. 2–3). The assessment constituent expresses the main objective of critical thinking as the examination of every element in a phenomenon. The critical spirit refers to the general attitude towards the exercise of critique. It is the first component (the thinking skills) that is most related to what I was taught in my Bachelor’s: namely, to examine every component of a text or theory.

When I taught my high school students to do this kind of critical thinking, they quickly learnt to do it. I usually started by teaching them what a thesis and an argument are and how to identify them in a text. To identify and distinguish things were the first thinking skills to be learnt. Once they learnt these skills, I advanced to more complex exercises of identification and distinction: Now the point was to find the structure of an argument: In what order and hierarchy is the argument developed? Is it deductive or inductive? I was quite satisfied and proud to see that my students developed such skills and that they could use them later when writing their essays. Nonetheless, probably the most important result for me at the time was the noticeable improvement that my students demonstrated in standardized tests. That confirmed, I thought, that I was on the right track with my teaching.

The philosophers and other scholars of the critical thinking movement, probably influenced by the analytic philosophy style, usually give lists of thinking abilities and dispositions, although there are critiques to that tendency, for example, Harvey Siegel (1988),

within the analytic philosophy, as I will show later. Peter Facione (1990) suggests the following thinking skills: interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation. Finding lists of thinking skills encouraged me to keep doing my job without any change. There, I designed learning objectives following a pattern that highlighted the lists of skills described. For instance, in eleventh grade, one learning objective I created was for students “to propose arguments in written essays about ancient philosophy.”

Nevertheless, according to the movement’s theory, thinking skills could be implemented carelessly, superficially, or unreflectively; therefore, critical thinking is more than thinking skills. Thus, Bailin (2002) added that “the adherence to certain criteria ... is the defining characteristic of critical thinking” (pp. 363–364). Therefore, critical thinking is not centred on thinking skills but on the fulfilment of principles and normative criteria. Critical thinking, I learned, is more about following the rules given by logic (Siegel, 1997, p. 16), than developing thinking skills. Such an insight strengthened in me the idea to teach basic logic to my students.

However, thinking skills and criteria are not all of what is involved in critical thinking. Critical thinking also includes a cluster of habits of mind, and character traits, usually just named “dispositions” or “critical spirit.” It is an interesting coincidence that Siegel uses the word “spirit.” The English expression “That is the spirit!” would correspond in Spanish to “*¡Esa es la actitud!*” (Lit.: That is the attitude!). In Spanish, we use the word attitude instead of spirit but they refer to the same, I think. In general, spirit or attitude refers to the way something is done, the quality of the actions, the motivation, even joy. In the current school context, and in the theory of critical thinking, they refer to an action done entirely consciously, deliberately, and controlled.

Certainly, the critical spirit involves human dimensions like freedom, will, tendencies, and habits executed during an exercise of critical thinking that imply a certain way to do things. According to Siegel (2010), this component of critical thinking “extends the ideal beyond the bounds of the cognitive” (pp. 142–143). The Canadian scholar Robert Ennis (2011) provided an extensive list of critical thinking dispositions. Here I quote a small fragment: A critical thinker should have the disposition of

Car[ing] that their beliefs be true and that their decisions be justified; that is, care to “get it right” to the extent possible; including to

- a. Seek alternative hypotheses, explanations, conclusions, plans, sources, etc.; and be open to them
- b. Consider seriously other points of view than their own
- c. Try to be well informed
- d. Endorse a position to the extent that, but only to the extent that, it is justified by the information that is available (p. 2)

Ennis here explicated the concrete actions that make up a single disposition. These dispositions (Lat.: *disponere*: “put in order, arrange, distribute” [Harper, 2000g]) may refer to how an action is arranged, how it is put in order under a specific context. In this case, they have a strong link with the epistemic dimension included in the assessment component. In a word, a critical thinker has adequate arrangements in their whole behaviour to reason properly. To my understanding, dispositions or the critical spirit are in service of the thinking skills, since they move the will to fulfil the assessment in a certain way (Prieto Galindo, 2018) but they do not participate directly in the epistemic examination.

In my teaching of critical thinking, I already instilled in my students many of the actions included in the theory of the critical thinking movement. However, I used to place the emphasis on the assessment component, the thinking skills and logical criteria. This component was the single element able to be examined through essays, the assignment I asked my students. How could I examine dispositions? I did not know, even if at the time I insisted to my students to apply some dispositions such as care for the truth of every statement or the consideration of other reasons and points of view in the arguments.

At the time, I reflected, too, on the possibilities of other human dimensions being part of critical thinking. For instance, is it possible that our emotions or feelings count in the examinations of a text or phenomena? I supposed that certain feelings or emotions may assist us to identify wrong things or actions. hooks (2010d) stated that “it is practical wisdom that leads us to recognize the vital role played by intuition and other forms of emotional intelligence in creating a fertile context for the ongoing pursuit of knowledge” (p. 188).

These complicated topics were not addressed by the critical thinking movement thinkers. In fact, the relation of reason with emotions, intuitions, and feeling is what in philosophy usually is referred to as “practical reason,” a topic not addressed by the critical thinking movement (Cuypers, 2004; Prieto Galindo, 2015). Practical reason means the function of reason related to concrete action, whilst theoretical reason is related to the function of knowing. For the philosophers of the movement, their conception of rationality applies equally to theoretical and practical reason (Cuypers, 2004), as if actions responded only to rational justifications.

An entry of my researcher journal seems to reflect this discussion about “other” elements of critical thinking.

I know that my concept of critical thinking has been rooted in a very rationalistic or logic conception that probably still commands my mind. Under this conception of criticality, to create or imagine new possibilities would not be critical thinking but only imagination, since critical thinking is to examine, to find mistakes. I think that Robert Ennis (1993) accepts that imagination and creativity are part of the assessment component of critical thinking. Without imagination to play scenarios in the mind would be impossible to test possibilities, to examine courses of action.

Maybe imagination *per se* does not examine or test, but it seems necessary to do it. My point, however, is whether imagination or creativity *per se* are critical thinking beyond its participation in examinations of texts and scenarios. Something similar happens to feelings and emotions: they cannot assess information, but they might participate in some way in the process of examination. Ricœur (1990) says that we become sensitive first with injustice and adds that injustice starts up a person's thinking (p. 36-37). So, our feeling of injustice is what triggers our examination, maybe just by starting to attend to some event that happens to us or others. Perhaps the feeling of injustice contains within it an evaluation already. I suppose that thinking and feelings or emotions are so deeply intricately that they are fused into one another. Again, my mind is used to think that feelings are different and separated from reasons and I cannot see this topic clearly yet. (June 16th, 2021).

In my view, Siegel (1989) noticed something wrong in the theory of the movement, as he criticized the emphasis that his colleagues placed on the lists of thinking skills and dispositions. He saw that the person as a whole was left aside. It is the image of the wholeness of people that might be in the backdrop of my journal entry. Can critical thinking be a discrete ability of the

faculty of reason without any relation to feelings or emotions? For Siegel (1988), a critical thinker applies their reason habitually because they are a certain sort of person, one who acts in certain ways. For him, critical thinking is about “actually believing and acting; that is, of being, (appropriately) *moved* to belief or action by reasons” (p. 142). Could not critical thinking be appropriately moved by reason and/or feelings? For Siegel, to be a critical thinker is to be a person with a certain character, a rational person, rather than a person who has some abilities and some dispositions.

When I took a course on Phenomenology Research with professors Cathy Adams and Michael Van Manen in Winter 2020, I chose critical thinking as the topic of my written exercises. I had to grasp episodes of my critical thinking and describe them. One of those episodes (later published in Prieto Galindo [2020]) was this:

I am sitting in class, reading my classmates’ pieces of writing and listening to the teachers’ comments. My teacher asks to my friend: “I wonder, who are you thinking about, the nurse or the patient?” I check my text. Wow, the person is not explicit in my writing either! And last week I was asking for the person in a different text. Oh, shoot! How could I miss the very same thing I was demanding before? I feel frustrated. It was so obvious, yet I missed it! I feel my strength fades away... Did I miss other criteria? I check the first and second criteria: all right, no problem there. Perfect! Then, the third criterion says: “Is this question concrete? Does the wording of the question avoid theoretical, abstract, and technical concepts?” Um... I wonder if my topic is not as concrete as I think.
(p. 335)

For me, this description shows that critical thinking is connected to feelings and emotions.

Certainly, had I been carried away by my feelings, I would have stopped posing questions to

myself and examining the criteria of the assignment. Thus, if I had focused only on my feelings, I would probably have stopped thinking critically. If critical thinking is about the whole person, as Siegel states, I suppose it includes certain roles for feelings, emotions, intuition, etc. In this study, as I show in my analysis and findings chapters, I discuss whether my participants have thought about the role of feelings and emotions in critical thinking.

The critical thinking movement's account is a philosophical perspective that, I believe, represents the most extended conception of Colombian philosophers' understanding of critical thinking. This overview is on my dissertation because, as will be evident now, this is the common framework of critical thinking that grounds the few articles I found about critical thinking in Colombian high school philosophy.

Critical Thinking within Colombian High School Philosophy

Let us beckon these voices to speak to us, particularly the silent ones, so that we may awaken to the truer sense of teaching that likely stirs within each of us. (Aoki, 2011, p. 188)

Here, I present a plurality of voices about what seems to be the only way to understand critical thinking within the teaching of philosophy in Colombian high schools. Since I found just a few documents in the databases (in English and Spanish), I decided to explore on Google, where I obtained a set of documents about teaching philosophy in high school. In addition, during my research stay²³ at the Colombian National Pedagogical University, in 2020, professor

²³ In some Colombian postgraduate programs, it is a requirement that students spend some time studying under the guidance of a scholar of another university (in Colombia or abroad) to develop a part

Maximiliano Prada presented to me a text about critical thinking in Colombia and another one about teaching philosophy in Colombia; both were results of research projects recently realized in Colombian universities about teaching in high school. However, none of the papers I found on Google nor these books centre on the topic of critical thinking in high school philosophy. My impression is that all these writers assume a certain understanding of critical thinking, so they do not present it or discuss it. There, critical thinking is like a silent voice yelling for clarification. I start now describing what I found in the papers and afterwards I present the book about critical thinking.

Most scholars develop a critique against traditional teaching as *the* chief obstacle, like the great wall of China, or the walls in Cartagena, that hindered enemies to enter the city. In a similar way, the traditional teaching, the canon of philosophy, do not allow/guide teachers to train critical thinking in high school. Some teachers and thinkers (Cerquera Beltrán & Ríos López, 2017); (Paredes Oviedo & Villa Restrepo, 2013; Velásquez, 2012; Cubillos Bernal, 1999, 2006; Gómez Mendoza, 2008; Florian B., 2012) may presuppose a conception of critical thinking; they do not conceptualize or explain explicitly what they mean by critical thinking. Therefore, I had to infer what critical thinking for them is.

For instance, after criticizing the traditional methods of teaching, Victor Florián B. (2006) stated that, in order to entice a reflexive and critical attitude, it is necessary to turn philosophy

of their research. In Spanish it is called *pasantías*. The activities during this time vary according to the knowledge and availability of the scholar that receives the student. Sometimes, as in my case, it consisted of participating in a course with the professor, checking on a different bibliography for the literature review. Sometimes, it just includes just regular meetings to discuss a specific topic of the dissertation. This is what I call here a research stay.

courses into a space that guides the reflection itself under the condition of posing questions and the attitude of questioning to themselves (p. 115). The same idea seems to be defended by Gómez Mendoza (2010) when asserting that reflective citizens have a critical spirit (p. 4). Indeed, these teacher-philosophers, and others as I will show momentarily, ask for a transformation of the courses of philosophy: they should be spaces of reflection. It may well be that for these scholars critical thinking is mainly to reflect deeply about a topic by posing questions and trying to find valid answers. Such reflection is guided, I suppose, mainly through a “pure” rationality expressed *par excellence* in logics, since it is one of the strongest elements of thinking for traditional Western philosophy. For them, reflection appears as the main concept related to critical thinking.

Reflection, in English as well as in Spanish (*reflexión*), is an ambiguous term, meaning to think deeply or to mirror an image. Indeed, its etymology (Latin *re*: back + *flectere* “to bend back, turn back” [Harper, 2000p]) shows that a reflection is a bent or modified image of the original. In the mirror, what is on the right appears on the left and contrariwise. Thus, to reflect, in the sense of thinking deeply, might be to create a somewhat different image of the thing; it is a bent thought that in some way “turns back” to the original. From this perspective, critical thinking would be to give back a different or even bent image of the topic at hand. As we will see now, this “new image” might convey solutions to problems, offer subtle senses of the phenomena, help discover ideologies, etc.

Reflection is a topic mentioned also by other scholars (Camargo Camargo & Barreto Bernal, 2012; Cubillos Bernal, 1999; Gómez Mendoza, 2010; Morales Oyola, 2012). For instance, Julio Cubillos Bernal (1999) focuses on the topic of philosophical attitude (*actitud filosófica*). This philosophical trait is assumed by those who try to think by themselves before the

assumptions of disciplines, society, and individuals (p. 236). This attitude is highly similar to posing questions and asking themselves, as Florián stated, although Cubillos Bernal described it as a disposition putting the emphasis in autonomous thinking.

On the topic of critical disposition, Diego Morales Oyola (2012) defines it as looking for sound grounds to any topic, and also examining concepts, ideological positions, and prejudgements (p. 33). This scholar adds that critical thinking has values such as honesty, equality, tolerance, respect, and reciprocity (p. 34). The focus for him, I would say, is the exercise of carefully searching as the main disposition of a critical thinker that is accompanied by those values just mentioned. Certainly, looking for something as ideologies is no other thing than rational reflection that precisely tries to find bent images of reality, the truth behind appearances.

In the same vein, Camargo Camargo & Barreto Bernal (2012) think that education of thinking must be based necessarily on a reflexive and critical practice that achieves a permanent rational exercise by youth so that they learn to pose problems about their surroundings and have the capacity to solve them (p. 192). These scholars clearly propose a critical thinking related to rational reflection and argumentation, but they also add another trait to critical thinking: identifying and solving problems of social reality.

For Florián (2006), anyone who wants to form a critical sense needs to strive for thinking while posing problems, questioning, and discovering subtle senses in any text (p.114). Very near to Florián, I think, is Gabriel Benavides (2011), who took the same path when he affirmed that philosophy is not only its history but also a critical attitude, inquisitive, hermeneutic of human experience (p. 8). This critical attitude of inquisitiveness is more than just posing questions; an inquisitive person is “very interested in learning about many different things” (Phillips et al.,

2011b). The emphasis is placed in the person's interest or deep desire to know more, a thinking disposition, in this case, through questions.

I agree that philosophy and critical thinking are inquisitive instead of just exercises of posing questions; it is about “find[ing] out too many details” (Longman, n.d.) of the phenomenon. Nevertheless, I think these authors understand critical thinking in a limiting way and leave out the personal experience, among other things. In my view, critical thinking is based on interpretations of the personal experience with the phenomenon. This experience is precisely what I see in the way that curriculum has been re-conceptualized by Pinar (2017, 2020; Pinar et al. 2008) and other scholars such as Aoki (2011), Jardine (1995), and Snaza (2013).

Indeed, as I see it, critical thinking grows out of the experiences of life, but these are neglected by teaching philosophy to the text or the European history of philosophy and its classical problems that recurrently seem to end as a set of data, names, concepts, and slogans. That is why, I imagine, the previous scholars depicted or put emphasis in reflection as the main trait of critical thinking. The traditional, canonical, way of teaching is criticized even by the Colombian policies of education. The Ministry of Education (*Ministerio de Educación Nacional*, 2013) states that philosophical discourses must not be limited in their potential, as is often the case in secondary education, to a training space that has been characterized by focusing on teaching and mastering content, often in a memorization practice, decontextualized and reduced to lists of authors, works, dates, and famous phrases (p. 23–24). These practices hamper students from thinking by themselves (*pensar por sí mismos*), that is reflection, so it endangers the development of critical thinking.

One more thing seems to be neglected from the assumed understanding of critical thinking: otherness and difference. According to Biesta (2017), school is about grown-up

existence where “the grown-up way recognises the alterity and integrity of what and who is other” (p.8). The ideal grown-up existence includes, I think, critical postures that would embrace otherness and integrity of the world. For me, there is a rather clear egotistic strength in the expression “thinking by themselves” (*pensar por sí mismos*), so frequent in Colombian scholars’ references to criticality. This expression holds a half-truth: yes, I think in the first person, but that does not mean that I created all the thoughts and context that nurture my thinking. Moreover, that expression seems to imply that I could better understand any phenomenon independently of others’ perspectives, questions, and possible scenarios. It even may exclude the possibility that a collective exercise of critical thinking might be more powerful as to the depth and variety of perspective it could include in the reflection.

All the papers mentioned so far talk about critical thinking without an explicit definition or description. In my search, I only found one paper (Vargas Guillén et al., 2017) that provided a more concrete description of critical thinking for high school philosophy. It was written by three highly acknowledged Colombian philosophers who teach at universities: Germán Vargas Guillén, Wilson Herrera, and Raul Meléndez. They state how to critically read philosophical texts which, for them, involves two stages: First, analysis and interpretation of the text and, second, a critical examination. The reading process begins by finding the structural elements of the text: its thesis, arguments, concepts, purposes, and its relations. Then, the second stage is the critique: In the critical examination of the text, the teacher must guide the students to judge the extent to which the purposes of the text are fulfilled; evaluate the reliability of the premises used in the arguments and their validity to find objections to the central theses of the text or alternative theses; identify possible inconsistencies, ambiguities, or omissions in the text. The analysis and critical examination of the texts must give elements to the students so that they try

to *develop their own position* on the problem in question (p. 76). Vargas Guillén et al. (2017) described what they understand as critical reading, not critical thinking, since they were reacting to the recent change (2014) in the standardised test (*Prueba Saber 11*) at the end of high school where the section of philosophy and language left their place to critical reading. Their paper shows a perfect example of what I understood as critical thinking in my Bachelor's studies and I suppose that is the way these scholars teach their Bachelor's students what critical thinking is.

Now I focus on the expression “develop their own position.” It is the student's position since they assume a stance or idea, but not entirely theirs because they required the assistance of teachers, classmates, or writers, to learn to identify correct and incorrect aspects in the text. Thus, it is “theirs” only in part because the other part is a contribution of other people. This remark might seem obvious, but as I understand it, the expressions “their own position” and “thinking by themselves” bear the same excess on individual autonomy that some scholars denounce as a problem in current education (Bai et al., 2014; Biesta, 2016; Pinar, 2020). I certainly think that these expressions are charged with individualism, which do not leave much space to think of collective constructions of thoughts and critique where the final judgement might also be collective, not individual.

I remember that once, when I was teaching modern philosophy to high school students, I told them that modern philosophy might be compared to a big brain floating over the floor without a body nor any other organ. I was trying to represent how philosophers of rationalism and enlightenment emphasised the rational side of thinking as if nothing more would be part of it. As I see it today, the individual side of thinking might also be represented similarly, as brains that floating one beside the other cannot see or feel other brains next to them because they

concentrate only in themselves. Such images are certainly an exaggeration, but I think they help understand my point.

Thus, listening to those expressions (“their own position” and “thinking by themselves”), I believe that they generally do not place the emphasis on others’ contributions but in the “I” as a solipsist achievement reached only through individual effort. I think this is what Connie Missimer (1994) expressed as the individual view of critical thinking: “a reasoned judgment by an individual at any given moment” (p. 119). I know this is one of my prejudices that I bear in mind in my research. I strive to be open to find different understandings and check my own. At the same time, I see that my prejudice opens other possibility for understanding critical thinking (and most human activities) as a collective enterprise. I understand better Aristotle when he says that

man is by nature a political animal. And therefore, men, even when they do not require one another’s help, desire to live together all the same, and are in fact brought together by their common interests in proportion as they severally attain to any measure of well-being. (p. 78/1278b)

It seems then that contrary to what the Greek philosopher thought, today many people do like to think alone and do not desire to live together to obtain a good life. I am afraid that the philosophy that Aristotle himself contributed to develop has taken us to this egotism. Although it may be possible that what today we call philosophy has not much of what Aristotle thought philosophy was.

Before such an emphasis on the “I”, I cannot stop thinking of the ἀγορά (*agora*: the main square), a public space where people²⁴ could gather and converse. This Greek word means the place as such but also the “assembly of the people” where public discussions are developed (Liddell & Scott, 1940d). In that way, the few scholars named in this section ask to turn from the traditional way of teaching philosophy in schools back to the open space of the *agora* or the town square to converse with others and develop *our* critical thinking. I see this collective critical thinking is very close to Missimer’s (1994) conception of the social view of critical thinking, which “is conceived as the accretion of reasoned judgments on a myriad of issues by many people over time” (p. 121). However, I think more of discussions and collective thinking. To create this conception of societal/collective critical thinking in class would be to lead the students themselves to think and ask questions in a public space of discussion, counting on others’ ideas and questions. This kind of discussion may be one of the possibilities of philosophical reflection.

Studies of Critical Thinking: Laboratories of Improvement

In the previous section, I concluded that the authors demanded *agoras*, open discussions where students can develop their own positions or think by themselves with and from others. Here we will see a few scholars that conducted empirical studies of critical thinking in the courses of philosophy in Colombian high schools. These studies resemble laboratories where scientists make experiments to measure specific results following that “obsession with testing

²⁴ It is necessary to acknowledge that, in historical terms, not anyone had the right to participate and discuss social matters in the *agora* when the discussion was about making decisions; women, foreigners, slaves, and children were excluded.

and measurement” (Pinar et al. 2008, p. 90). As we will see, there is a common understanding of critical thinking: It is based principally on thinking skills and dispositions.

Through action research, José Lara & Elquis Rodríguez (2016) proposed fostering students’ critical thinking according to everyday situations related to philosophical topics (p. 343). The researchers applied a pre-test of thinking skills: interpretation, analysis, and explanation. Their study included a series of activities of one hour and a half each, where students watched videos, read news articles about current social problems, and studied philosophical texts followed by general discussions in class. At the end of the activities, through a post-test, the researchers found better levels of critical thinking in the specific abilities measured. They also determined that including diverse activities in class related to daily problems and philosophical topics is adequate to promote the development of critical thinking and keep students motivated. Furthermore, they claim to have demonstrated that well designed strategies under an appropriate method can guide the abilities of people to a desired outcome.

It is remarkable, I think, that these scholars dared to change the usual tools and activities to teach philosophy and critical thinking due to the strength that the canon has in Colombia. Probably their research was aimed precisely at seeing the effects of that change. They even found more of what they searched, since they highlight the increase of the student’s motivation, a factor that alone would have been the best result of all, since usually high school students do not like the class of philosophy. I wonder whether these teachers modified their philosophy classes structure as a result of their findings.

In their study, Lara & Rodríguez (2016) proposed a way of critical thinking by melding three similar theories (Facione’s, Campos’, and Chance’s) which emphasized cognitive skills. The general definition presented by the researchers is that critical thinking combines intellectual

abilities, carefully and logically analysing information to determine its validity and veracity. Moreover, their conception of critical thinking endeavours to find solutions of real-life problems. This last element is perhaps the contribution of these researchers' concept of critical thinking. It places an emphasis on daily situations and their critique of them using philosophical sources. Certainly, it is my understanding that usually philosophy courses do not include the social or political situations lived by the students; philosophy courses are typically focused on the philosophical theories.

Thinking back on my high school teaching, I see that Lara and Rodríguez' methodology of teaching, including videos, news, and philosophical texts, might have been a very adequate strategy to teach philosophy related to daily problems and instil critical thinking. When I taught in high school, I only included philosophers' texts and critical reading activities. The emphasis on daily issues is one of the characteristics emphasized by the critical thinking movement but, unfortunately, I learned that two years ago, in 2019, in Canada where I finally found a textbook for high school designed by Alec Fisher (2001), another scholar of the movement. Nevertheless, Fisher's book is not designed to the context of teaching philosophy but only critical thinking.

In a similar study, Henry Macías (2017) investigated (also through action research) how a pedagogical proposal (not described in the paper) favours the critical reading of philosophical texts (p. 178) on eleventh-grade philosophy students in a rural high school. All the participants, 18 students plus a teacher of language (note that the teacher was not a philosopher), were interviewed through semi-structured interviews and a focus group. The researcher also did workshops and took field notes. This research had as one of its objectives to inquire into the concept of critical reading of eleventh-grade students and the language teacher (p. 178). However, the article did not present findings of how the participants understood critical thinking.

Instead, the author enumerated a series of recommendations about the characteristics of the texts to be read in the courses of philosophy, namely, texts attractive to the students, related to their social context, not very difficult, and so forth.

The set of recommendations that the paper contains makes me think again that the canon of philosophy, so dear to philosophers, might not be the best tool for high school students not only due to the cultural distance that they contain, but even for the level of complexity they have which may be out of reach of the cognitive skills of a teenager. When I see those concrete pieces of advice to teachers as results of the study, I can only think that philosophers need to have a stronger pedagogic formation, above all when working as teachers in high school.

Macias' (2017) study was not based on the critical thinking movement's theory but rather on the theory of the French pedagogue Jacques Boisvert (1997), for whom critical thinking includes broad-mindedness, intellectual honesty along with reasoning, and logical inquiry skills. In the context of reading, critical thinking would be to recognize what the text says both explicitly and implicitly, so that it is possible to identify the different textual components (p. 183). As I see it, Boisvert also concluded that critical thinking was composed of thinking skills and dispositions, although it seems he does not use these terms.

I see Macias' (2017) theory of critical thinking close to that of the critical thinking movement. In the first study Lara and Rodríguez (2016) highlighted the cognitive dimension of critical thinking and the analysis of social situations. They showed that by including social problems and different sources and exercises in the course of philosophy, students may improve their critical thinking, from a cognitive perspective. In the second case, Macías' (2017) study focused on critical reading, and here critical thinking seems centred on the dispositions but does not dismiss the thinking skills. However, I think neither of the studies cast light on other issues

that I consider relevant in critical thinking, such as self-knowledge and self-critique, and integration of otherness and difference. These are the primary aspects that I will pursue in my research, as I showed in the previous chapters.

The only book, to my knowledge, about critical thinking in Colombian high school philosophy is *Pensamiento crítico y filosofía. Un diálogo con nuevas tonadas* (Lit.: Critical thinking and philosophy. A dialogue through new tones). It was the result of a four-year study in four schools of Barranquilla done by Javier Suárez González et al. (2018). The authors base their study and proposal of critical thinking on four conditions: 1) context and history, 2) a community of thinking that includes others; 3) corporeal subjectivity, and 4) thinking tools for (critical) inquiry (p. xiii). These researchers propose a framework based on the theories of the critical thinking movement, feminist pragmatism, and critical pedagogy.

Besides the general theories that frame the research, the authors included a set of categories that are not related to rationality: corporeal dimension, situated cognition, moral sensitivity, reflection, imagination and curiosity, otherness, and cosmopolitanism. For the authors, these categories are complementary elements that help to understand critical thinking as a way of being in the world, rather than a merely rational activity. This set of categories includes some of the aspects I myself have noticed as missing in the conception of critical thinking dominant in Colombian philosophy classes: imagination, affect, otherness, and self-knowledge. Although they describe all of them, they do not explain or justify why they included them. However, it is clear that the anthropology that grounds their proposal includes all these elements, as they do not reduce a person to a rational being.

The researchers interviewed public school teachers of different disciplines and school levels in order to explore their understanding and pedagogy of critical thinking. Through a focus

group, a workshop, and class observation, they found that most of the teachers they interviewed related critical thinking to skills like analysis, examination, and interpretation. Analysis of written texts and oral examinations are also frequent. However, these practices are complemented by other kind of skills, such as creativity and communication. Finally, the teachers in their study acknowledged the importance of self-reflexivity and self-critique, which is related to the disposition to self-transformation.

This study is very similar to my own, the principal difference being the fact that their participants were teachers of several school subjects and levels. Neither did they use hermeneutics as theoretical framework and methodology. Nevertheless, their conception of criticality highlights the person's situation, otherness, reflection, and self-knowledge, which are also proper to hermeneutics. What is more, they include a deep philosophical anthropology that helps to deploy a more complex theory of critical thinking. In my case, the philosophy of Paul Ricœur posits the ground for an anthropological view.

In the section of results, the researchers established that most teachers (of all school subjects) coincide in that the critical thinking is related to skills such as analysis, assessment and interpretation characterized for its depth (p. 58). In the teachers' practice, analysis is referred mainly to posing questions to written texts (p. 59). What emerged as something new and interesting is the fact that the participants included within their concept of critical thinking several elements that complement the instrumental dimension: creativity, dialogue, and relationality (p. 61).

In my opinion, this study reflects in its results the emphasis in the rational part of critical thinking, but makes clear that for these teachers, other dimensions also take part in that kind of thinking, an intuition that I myself had before beginning my Ph. D. Today I have reinforced it as

result of the curriculum courses taken in Canada. Nevertheless, the fact that the study included teachers of all subjects make me question if most teachers-philosophers in high school would agree. It is interesting to note that teachers of all subjects as different as physics, social sciences, Spanish literature, and philosophy coincide in thinking that the rational cognitive skill makes the core of critical thinking and that in their pedagogic practice analysis is mainly applied to written texts. They also simultaneously describe the importance of critical thinking in knowing their social and personal context, identify its problems, and try to solve them. It is as if their discourse were aligned to the current pedagogic literature or theory, but their pedagogic actions were imprisoned in certain traditional understandings and practices. I would call such a phenomenon a performative limitation, that is, a contradiction in performing their ideas, that is, the fact of not achieving or providing totally or completely the form foreseen. To be sure, from its own etymology, perform indicates “to do, carry out, finish, accomplish,” (from old French *parfornir*: *par*, “completely” + *fornir* “to provide” [Harper, 2000m]).

The three studies here described present common elements, such as the inclusion of thinking abilities and dispositions in the concept of critical thinking. Nonetheless, they also have added other elements and emphasis that may show how these scholars also noticed the necessity of changing the usual conception of critical thinking in philosophy courses. As I see it, we all are attuned to the necessities of Colombia in the current context, as will be discussed in Chapter 6, and the changes required to a conception of critical thinking in high school philosophy. Now, despite the coincidences, none of them mentioned Ricœur’s philosophy to illuminate another understanding of critical thinking, let alone explored the theory of *phronesis* as possible source to inform other understandings of critical thinking.

In the next section, I present what has been written about Ricoeurian *phronesis* and how the philosophy of Ricœur has influenced high school curricula. I wonder to what extent the theories of this French philosopher have been taken into account to reflect on education, to give a somewhat different image of what secondary education can be.

Ricoeurian Philosophy into Curricula

Trans-positions, like music, keep the melodic line of the text but take the meaning to another tone, that of compromise in the human task, too human, of educating. (Best, 2011, p. 4)

Certainly, one possibility for doing philosophy of education or changing a curriculum is *transposition* (Lat.: *trans*: across, through + *ponere*: to put, place [Lewis & Short, 1879f]), which means to think through an educative issue or curricular experience having as a lens a philosophical theory. Thus, philosophy is placed as a magnifying glass through which certain aspects of the phenomenon might be observed and studied. Or, as Francine Best (2011) musical metaphor expresses, in applying Ricoeurian philosophy to educational phenomena, the change occurs in the tone of the piece because the melody remains. In that way, we can hear Ricoeurian melodies better attuned to current questions and problems in school.

According to my search, scholarship on Ricœur's philosophy abounds. For example, scholars like Richard Kearney (2010), Peter Kemp (2011), Scott Davidson (2010), Tomás Domingo Moratalla & Agustín Domingo Moratalla (2013) have applied Ricoeurian philosophy to several subjects. However, their focus is not on education. While there is a great deal of research on Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and curriculum (Aoki, 2011; Friesen & Jardine, 2010; Jardine, 2012; Smith, 1999; Smits, 1997), there isn't much on Ricœur.

Ricœur wrote several papers about specific elements of French education. Nevertheless, he did not elaborate on a systematic philosophy of education (Domingo Moratalla, 2015, 2017; Kemp, 2010a), let alone a curricular or pedagogic proposal. Ricœur's texts about education are just episodic: the crisis in the French university, how to respect children in schools, the relation between religion and schooling, education before economic interests, educators' responsibilities about politics, teachers of philosophy and philosophical research. However, Domingo Moratalla (2015) thinks that Ricœur's philosophy offered several avenues to illuminate particular educational dimensions, and I agree with him.

To be sure, according to Peter Kemp (2010a), Ricœur has inspired several philosophers of education. I myself have found Ricœur's philosophy in several philosophers of education (Hoyos-Vásquez, 2012; Kemp, 2011; Padis, 2011; Prada Londoño, 2006, 2010). The only book, to my knowledge, dedicated to the possibilities of Ricoeurian philosophy into education is *Paul Ricœur et la question éducative* (Paul Ricœur and the educative question), a compilation of papers gathered by the Canadian scholars Alain Kerlan & Denis Simard (2011). According to their introduction, the aim of their book is to present the intersection of one of the greatest contemporary thinkers with current topics of education. In this book, a set of authors (Best, 2011; Côté & Simard, 2011; Eneau, 2011; Gohier, 2011; Jorro Anne, 2010; Kerlan, 2011; Padis, 2011; Sautereau, 2011) offer their experiences and visions about Ricoeurian philosophy in education, observing, for example, the relation between Ricœur's philosophy and the responsibility and actions of education, the relation between the teacher and the student, and the students' moral education, among others, but nothing related, I think, to critical thinking in high school, nor *phronesis*.

For instance, Francine Best (2011), offers a few examples of the philosophical reflections on education that some texts and theories developed by Paul Ricœur have enticed. First, the conceptual relation that Ricœur established among necessity, wish, and will to act which makes sense (*donne sens*) to the idea that it is through action ... that emerges the will to know (p. 4). In a more specific context, that of teaching history, according to Best, this subject could be seen differently after reading *Histoire et vérité* (Truth and History) due to the distinction Ricœur proposes between memory and history, and the role of narrativity in structuring human time. Indeed, for Ricœur the tendency to see the past as something unmodifiable and finished has to be fought against (*lutter*); the past has to be reopened, re-enlivened before the unaccomplished or hindered potentialities. This is an invitation, states Best, to all teachers of history (p. 5) and, I would add, to all teachers of philosophy that may see in philosophy only a tradition to be honoured and repeated regardless of the students' needs and desires. Being critical, I think, would imply to see history, personal and social, as something that can be reinterpreted or discovered with new eyes.

In terms of Ricœur and curriculum, I found the work of Alison Wrench & Robyne Garrett (2020), a research report on a case study into culturally responsive pedagogies in Australia. They have discussed Ricœur's narrative theory philosophy in order to help them propose a new way to explore other understandings of health and physical education curricula that "includes movement cultures and ways of knowing of Indigenous and ethnic-minority students" (p. 1). The study was developed in primary and secondary classrooms for three years (2017-2019) with twenty teachers, including significant participation of Indigenous students. Since the research was done mainly through narrative inquiry methodology, the researchers selected Ricœur's narrative

theory, which highlights that “the inherent reflexivity of narration allows us to configure separate events into coherent assemblages, construct explanations and engage in meaning-making” (p. 3).

Also, a high school teacher in Ontario, Justin Cook (2011), narrated how he based a Secondary School English curriculum on narrative through Ricœur’s hermeneutics. The teacher stated that “a curricular focus on relationality and narrative through Ricœur’s hermeneutics provides a helpful structure for the selecting and organizing of educational experiences in the study of literature in a Christian secondary school context” (p. 121). This teacher has organized his English literature course, as he relates in the text, following the students’ personal stories that are shared in the course, not only in their written assignments. The Ricoeurian theory was taken to ground the possibility of understanding those small stories and their relation to the literature pieces read in the course as an intersection of two worlds: the world of the text and that of the reader, as Ricœur (1986/1991) proposes in his hermeneutics.

In the same vein, Amarou Yoder (2016), a secondary language arts teacher in Canada, reflected on katabatic narratives (narratives of death and evil and a return from that), their relation to the stories of our own lives, and the responsibility on all this, the teachers’ (particularly her) responsibility of teaching about violence and acting violently. For doing so, the author took Ricœur’s theory of narrative identity, particularly the concept of *mimesis* (representation of action), and stated that a “curriculum, like the employment of a narrative, might be fruitfully seen as a mediation between a number of interests and interpretations” (p. Yoder, 2016, p. 274). To be sure, in Ricœur’s theory of narrative (identity), *mimesis* is the action of bringing together different elements to plot a story. So, the constraints, and tragedy of reality, as well as the free play of imagination, enter in the joyful, sometimes difficult configuration of a

story, and of the curricula itself, as Yoder proposed and developed by narrating specific episodes or encounters with her students.

It is not just a coincidence that these three studies take Ricœur's theory of narrativity as framework of their research, since this part of the Ricoeurian philosophy has been deeply explored in fields outside philosophy such as literature and social sciences. In these cases, it is taken in educational studies to offer a comprehension that assist the researchers to explain how different and sometimes contradictory elements can be part of a phenomenon, a relate or story, through the plot the person can make. In my own framework I contemplated the possibility of creating new worlds in reading as one of the elements of Ricœur's hermeneutics that may help me to see different and new facets of critical thinking. Undeniably, every story is but the emplotment of a new facet of human life where the writer proposes new worlds and the reader may find them and project different ones. Is not the aim of finding other understandings of critical thinking to write a different story or relate about critical thinking?

As can be seen, I only obtained a few documents about the application of Ricoeurian philosophy to high school curricula, and none of these scholars focused on Ricoeurian *phronesis*, nor on philosophy curricula in high school, let alone on critical thinking. Thus, my research study seeks to attend a field overlooked so far. For doing so, I consider the possibility that Ricoeurian theory of *phronesis* illuminates other ways to understand and teach critical thinking in high school philosophy courses. A reason that explains this fact is perhaps that the Ricoeurian theory of *phronesis* is not yet widely known, as the next section will show.

Ricoeurian Phronesis

In 2009, when I started my search about Ricoeurian *Phronesis* for my Master's of Philosophy, I did not find much scholarship. In that area were only a few scholars (Contreras

Tasso, 2012; Fiasse, 2008; Kaplan, 2003; Khonde, 2005; Wall, 2003). A few years later, for my Master's of Education in 2012, the situation was even worse, since very few people were working on the relations between Ricoeurian philosophy and education. Today, almost a decade after finishing my Master in Education, and at the end of my Ph. D degree, I am afraid the situation has changed very little.

Indeed, a small number of documents have treated the topic of Ricoeurian *phronesis*, most of them philosophical reflections about its nature (Contreras Tasso, 2012; Hohler, 2007; Kemp, 2010b; Khonde, 2005; Marcelo, 2020; Nussbaum, 2002; Prieto Galindo, 2012, 2017; Wall, 2003), and its application to different political situations (Deslandes, 2012; Ravelonantoandro, 2007; Sánchez Vazquez, 2008; Treanor, 2008). To my knowledge, the only texts that have addressed *phronesis* in Ricœur's work and its possible applications in education were written by the Spanish scholar Tomás Domingo Moratalla (2015, 2017) and for me (Prieto Galindo, 2011), although not totally focused on *phronesis*.

For Domingo Moratalla (2017), one of the possible contributions from Ricœur's book *Oneself as Another* (1990/1992) is to think about the goals of education, which could be to "allow other people to be themselves, to carry out their identities and to develop their capacities" (p. 101). Domingo Moratalla believed that the end of education is to help students to grow their autonomy, that is the capacity of responsibility. The ethical moment of *phronesis* is presented in practical fields, namely bioethics, and jurisprudence, as developed by Ricœur (2001/2007) in *Reflections on the Just*.

I certainly agree with Domingo Moratalla, although I probably would place more emphasis on acknowledging Ricœur's achievements and limitations on the inclusion of alterity in that process of developing the capacities, the identity and responsibility. I recently listened to

Alison Scott-Baumann (2022) in a conference²⁵ about evil possibilities (racism, misogyny, classism) of negation of the other in Ricœur's theory despite his aim of including alterity and difference in his philosophy. I see how the European tradition of knowledge that Ricœur cultivated may have hindered him in seeing and understanding other perspectives and some criticisms coming from other parts of the world, as it is the case of the Argentinian Enrique Dussel (more on this in Chapter 6).

From another perspective, in an article that I wrote over 10 years ago when I had just finished my Master's of philosophy, I envisioned *phronesis* as a possible way to think critically in high school education. That was my initial intuition or hint at the topic that has not stopped to summon me (Moules et al., 2015). There, I proposed *phronesis* as a horizon to current education (Prieto Galindo, 2011). At the time, I thought that Ricœur's philosophy of *phronesis* could be a horizon to re-think the teaching in high school that was, and still is, inclined to form rational and critical people but do not open spaces for self-reflection and examination of themselves. In that paper, I stated that current schools influenced by cognitivist pedagogic models of learning allow students to pursue the ends of capitalism. Such ends entice individualism and forgetting or even using other people in order to achieve personal and selfish goals.

Today, I would say that the situation is similar. Paying attention to philosophy in high school, I see that probably not only the way critical thinking is understood, but its teaching still focuses excessively on rationality through logic at the expense of other possibilities such as

²⁵ Unfortunately, the proceedings were not recorded to be published and it is no sure there will be memories of the conferences.

collective or public discussion, self-reflection, and affect as possibilities that maybe have already a role in thinking critically.

Before such a context, I proposed in that paper that Ricoeurian *phronesis* be framed in Ricoeurian hermeneutics and influenced by Gadamer (2001) essay that I had recently found: *Education is Self-education (Erziehung ist sich erziehen)*. Therefore, I invited teachers to open spaces for guiding students to know themselves better, to reflect on their past and present actions, beliefs, convictions and imagine different possibilities of being and making decisions through *phronesis*. This aptitude focuses on the particular situation, otherness, and also considers the possibilities of ideologies and other kinds of cultural negative influences. In the middle of complex situations, *phronesis* is a capacity for making sound decisions where the self and the other are equally relevant and both may contribute or hinder the others' project of a realized life.

These two articles call for an application of Ricoeurian *phronesis* in education from general perspectives: the ends of education themselves and the inclusion of otherness in the search for happiness, but they are not situated in any specific level of education nor a school subject. My current research study is focused on one specific school subject and level of education: high school philosophy courses. I can imagine many possibilities in which *phronesis* might enrich critical thinking in all school subjects, and I certainly saw several possible relations between what my teacher-participants shared with me in the interviews and the Ricoeurian theory of *phronesis*, as I will show in the final chapters.

Reaching the end of this chapter, I see several important implications of this literature review for my research study. It is clear to me that the teaching of critical thinking, as well as its conceptualization in high school philosophy, has not yet been deeply explored in Colombia. It seems the topic has been largely presupposed by Colombian scholars who philosophize or reflect

pedagogically about the teaching of high school philosophy in my home country. The prevalent presupposition, I would say, is that critical thinking is made up of a set of thinking skills and dispositions that produce certain results such as identifying assumptions or other faults in texts, discourses, and practices. Regarding *phronesis* and its possible relations to the teaching of critical thinking, I could not find any scholarship, which tells me that this topic is totally new and not explored yet.

Chapter Four: Colombia in a Long Path Towards Liberation

Up to this point, I have presented the grounds of my study starting with the very emergence of the topic in my own life and finishing with the literature review. Now, aiming at showing the big picture of my topic's context, I briefly discuss two episodes of Colombian history, and its sociopolitical struggles that motivate me to look for different ways to understand and teach critical thinking. I did not do it before because I had not understood the role that history played in my topic, my research, and myself. Now, I understand better.

To include a brief account of Colombian history is, I think, the most coherent decision in a study that commits to hermeneutics and starts to listen to decolonization theories. Here, I will show Spanish colonization and the violence in the 20th century keeping in mind Ricœur's (1986/1991) words: "Human experience in its profound temporal dimension never ceases to be shaped" (p. 7). To be sure, what I would like to obtain with my research is possible new shapes of critical thinking that help to build a different history to my home country, that help liberate Colombia from harmful ideologies and hegemonies. About it, Dussel (1980/1985) taught me that

[A] philosophy of liberation... must always begin by presenting the historical-ideological genesis of what it attempts to think through, giving priority to its spatial, worldly setting.... [Philosophy of liberation] brings about a "destruction" or "re-construction" of such a history. (p. 1)

This philosopher calls me, I think, to re-view, to see again from another perspective my country's history in order to liberate myself from narrow understandings of criticality in philosophy courses and my home country's history interpretations. For instance, in primary school, I learned the origin of my home country's name: the name Colombia was selected *in honor of* Christopher Columbus, who "discovered" America as of October 12th, 1492. I wonder

now what is *honorable* about having such a legacy for all Indigenous nations that still today bear the consequences of the *pachacuti*²⁶ initiated by Columbus? How could we, Latin American peoples, understand and learn to live well from such heritage?

I see how my home country is marked by its long history of violence, the inequality and social injustice to which it has been chained for centuries, despite (or perhaps due to) its immense richness. I believe that Colombian people needs other views or lenses (such as applied hermeneutics, decolonization, critical pedagogy, and others) to re-shape their own history and see possibilities through new stories of recognition of our past in order to advance towards forgiveness and new utopias.

The first steps towards that recognition, forgiveness, and new utopias might be represented by the recent presidential election (August 7th, 2022). For the first time in its republican existence, Colombian people elected a president of the left wing (a former member of one of the *guerrillas*: Gustavo Petro) and a vice-president that is an Afro-descendant woman (social leader and environmentalist, that not long ago worked as a housemaid: Francia Elena Márquez). They ascended to power with promises of achieving a better life for all: equality, justice, and total peace.

I suppose that Colombia's present time is but the result of many factors that include the very process of colonization initiated by Spanish *conquistadores*, the numerous wars after independence of Spain, the fights against *guerrillas*, the drugs cartels, and above all, the desire

²⁶ As explained by Mignolo (2011), this Indigenous term means “a turnaround, and a point of no return: the five-century cycle of Western civilization—its foundation, hegemony, and dominance—came to an end” (p. xiv). In this quote, the Argentinian philosopher refers to the “discovery of América” and the time it inaugurated.

for change, for a new history. As Ricœur (1990/1992) never stops repeating, practical wisdom is achieved in the “pass through conflicts” (p. 240) or “difficult situations” (2001/2007, p. 54).

My hermeneutic interpretation of the history of my country and culture is unavoidably informed by my own situatedness. I am the eldest son of two humble and hard-working peasants that travelled to the city looking for a better life and found true friends and opportunities to grow as well as mistrust, hatred, and exploitation. I thank them for the education they gave me, for their continued support that granted me a privileged position in being nowadays a scholar that had the opportunity to know other cultures, their languages, and other perspectives to see back at my home country and contribute to its change.

In the next pages, I only present two events that seem to me central to understand the relevance of my topic and its links to “old” Latin American history: 16th century colonization and 20th century *guerrillas*. I interpret the information of Colombian historians about our social reality and education system as being in the middle of a “complicated conversation” (Pinar, 2020, p. 6). Certainly, the presence of philosophy in Colombian curricula in high school is due to the long process of colonization, but its relation to history is still overlooked for the most part. At the same time, it is possible that this philosophy has the seeds for guerrillas, especially in Marxist philosophy. I suppose that everything began at the end of the 15th century.

“Hell” Arrived at the Coasts of *Cartagena*

I had never considered the contextual history of Latin America as a factor to nurture my thought, philosophy, and pedagogy. To be sure, it is not surprising, since philosophy, as I was taught, is an enterprise of thinking with universal, neutral, and objective reasons. Indeed, one of the most traditional definitions of philosophy states: philosophy “*is the science of all reality in its ultimate causes and first principles, studied using the light of natural reason*” (Gerard Horrigan,

2007, p. 13), as if all other means to get knowledge only shed obscurity over that supposed pure light. Thus, the history of a place and culture would have nothing to add to philosophy, but mud and impurities.

Slowly my perspective has changed. First, from Ricœur's and Gadamer's hermeneutics, I saw that history and place, personal experience, as well as the socio-historical context, influence everyone's understanding and being. Rather than being mud, it is the first source of nutrients and cradle. In the words of Moules's et al. (2015), "Good interpretation attends to the history of the topic. Not only that, but we are in the flux of history, under the multifarious influences of time and place" (p. 38). Now Dussel (1985, 1996, 2012) and Mignolo (2011), mainly, have helped me to deepen such understanding and taken me to understand that the historical and social situation of the oppressed, the marginalized, and the "underdeveloped" societies have a saying regarding epistemology, religion, axiology, and human life in general.

I feel committed to taking into account their perspectives, as much as it is possible for me, an enthusiast novice trained in a highly different perspective, which throws me in conflict more often than I would like. I think that among the common threads of both traditions it is possible to weave a fabric of dialogue, although never closed by absolute consensus but always in need of continuous discussion and interpretation. This is the place of hermeneutics, Gadamer (1975/2004) would say, the place of "in-between" (p. 295), of tension that might be inspiring if one takes the best of everyone. Davey (2006) explains us the richness of that space:

While the other invites me to become open to alternative possibilities that are not my own and to develop and enhance my own understanding, in so doing I become more other to the other. Yet it is precisely because of this transformation that I can offer to the other alternative possibilities that are not immediately her own. Philosophical hermeneutics

evidently assigns a dignity to difference and contends that the differential space of *the in-between* [emphasis added] has its genesis in the processes of hermeneutical encounter, which invites us to allow those who see things differently to enlarge our world. (p. 16)

We all, every one of us is an-other to other, a “you” to an “I” or better another “I” to an “I.” It is in the space of that “to a(n),” the space *in-between* the two or more people involved in a sincere dialogue that searches for understanding, the two poles (or more) of the conversation, that new understandings may sprout and, if we cultivate them, may flourish. Under that image of new flowers and new life, I try to set the beginning of a dialogue among other perspectives with philosophy in order to find possible sprouts or at least propitious earth to its birth, the birth of new ways to understand critical thinking in philosophy. I look at our Latin American history to see the origin and development of the way critical thinking is usually understood in high school philosophy in my home country.

In 1492 began a bloody history for many American (south and central, and north) Indigenous peoples who were savagely conquered and colonized even though most of them did not pose any resistance to the *conquistadores* (Ana Luz Rodríguez, 2015) and welcomed them when they arrived at our beaches.²⁷ In the words of Dussel (1980/1985), it was “hell on earth, the land that Europe founded when it sent the Amerindians to work in the gold and silver mines, when it enslaved Africans, when it colonized Asians” (p. 139). When I think about it, I suppose that if the Spanish people had asked kindly for those earthly rich products, maybe they would

²⁷ Enrique Dussel has described clearly that the Indigenous peoples started their long and strong resistance when they realized the ‘newcomers’ were not any gods. To deepen this historical fact read chapter 8th of *El Encubrimiento del Otro. Hacia el Origen del “Mito de la Modernidad”* (Dussel, 2012).

have received them generously, but *conquistadores* only saw a barbarian, savage, and ignorant other because they thought and lived differently. They also imposed (“French, *imposer*: to put, place, impute, accuse” [Harper, 2000j]) or placed their truths over everything that was before without leaving any trace, imposing therefore a unique tradition: language, economy, culture, religion, and so forth (Ocampo, 2017, p. 15).

Even though not all Indigenous populations were exterminated, their living conditions were less than acceptable, which can be seen in the quick decrease in population that, according to José Santos Herceg (2010), went from 80 million to 10 million people in only 15 years. Furthermore, the families were separated when all men had to go to work in mining gold or silver, transportation, and cattle raising whilst women went to work in agriculture and domestic labor. This situation favored the mixed (*mestizaje*) among Indigenous women with African slaves and Spanish men.

I feel angry, I have to admit, when thinking about the Spanish legacy in Colombia. After more than three decades of listening once and again to the same stories about the “discovery of America,” I see part of its consequences in me. Dussel (1980/1985), Mignolo (2011), and above all Santiago Castro Gómez (2005), the most known Colombian decolonialist, explained to me more about that part of my country’s history: I am grateful to my supervisor and committee members for their suggestions to reach out these South American scholars.

That historical event explains, in part, Colombia’s current population: a variegated mixture of peoples and traditions born in three continents. The *Colombian Administrative Department of Statistics* (DANE, 2007) declares: The Colombian nation is today the product of the most varied miscegenation, where the culture and traditions of the American, European, and Africans gave birth to four ethnic sectors: Indigenous peoples, Afro-Colombian populations,

including the *raizales* communities of *San Andrés* and *Providencia* and the community from *San Basilio de Palenque*, and the Roman or Gypsy.

Thus, the Colombian population is a set of very different populations which meet in big cities like *Bogotá*. Due to the inequality in resource distribution and frequent violence (as I will show later), many people leave the countryside looking for opportunities to achieve a better life in the cities, like my parents did. Unfortunately, they find savage cities, with many un-trustful citizens that discriminate against them and take advantage of them. In the day-to-day behavior, many people convey dislike (racism, would say Santiago Castro Gómez, 2005) for the Indigenous, Afro-descendant, peasant, and other Colombian communities which could be easily identified by reading those virtual spaces of interchange such as Facebook, Instagram, and others.

Such discrimination and dislike could be a long result of the fact that “since 1492, Indigenous people all around the world have been thought of as barbarians; and furthermore, in the eighteenth century they became primitives. Many people still think so today” (Mignolo, 2011, p.64). Looking back at my country while living in Canada, I know Mignolo is unfortunately right. We could say that many people still think what they have been taught to think after 1492. The practical results of that kind of teaching/learning-thinking are apparent.

Regarding Colombian Indigenous populations, the Colombian historians Javier Guerrero & Sandra Soler (2020) affirm that physical and cultural extermination continues to exist, as well as poverty, educational exclusion, negative representation of the media and everyday discourse, little interest of the academy in addressing ethnic issues, and the little or weak legislation to protect these communities (p. 73). It is clear they are not treated as equals, but as second-class citizens by many common people in the street and even in the political and legal system. To be

sure, there are many Indigenous (87 Indigenous towns, according to DANE, 2007; 102 according to Guerrero & Soler, 2020) and other populations in Colombia that are still in the worst conditions of all, not only in terms of poverty, education, and health care but also as to assistance to keeping cultivating their cultures.

These living conditions of Indigenous and other groups of Colombia might have originated in times of colonization and it possibly remained in people's unconsciousness. I think that our educational system, our schools, do not instill strongly enough the valorization for other cultures or at least the respect they deserve. I suppose that our schools are still permeated by that European view that disqualifies everything else that does not accept and take their stances. In the words of the Colombian philosopher Castro Gómez (2005), to the territorial and economic expropriation that Europe made in the colonies, corresponds an epistemic expropriation that condemned the knowledge produced to be just the "past" of modern science (p. 47). As an instance, the concept of critical thinking grounded on European philosophy instilled by philosophy courses might take students to a diminishment of alterity and difference under its instrumentalist perspective, as I depicted in the first chapter.

In what ways could we redress this situation? I found that Ricoeurian *phronesis* (practical wisdom) shows other possible paths by applying it to education, at least in philosophy courses. I think we, Colombian people, need a kind of critical thinking in philosophy that assists us to see and understand the legacy of our history, its current consequences and possibilities. As the aptitude of the "*orthos logos*" (Ricoeur, 2001/2007), the right rule, *phronesis* can create new ways in-between conflictive theories, such as European hermeneutics and South American perspectives. We need a mediation that helps us take the best of every side involved. What about the recent history of Colombia? Let us see other forms of violence.

An Infinite Little War: Colombia in the 20th Century

It is said that the process of colonization by Spanish people lasted for three centuries until 1819, stated Ana Luz Rodríguez (2015), when the rebels led by Simón Bolívar won the battle of *Boyacá* and expelled the Spanish army. Nevertheless, this process of liberation lasted about nine years since first *Cartagena* declared its independence in 1810 and Spain tried to reconquer the American Colonies (1815-1816) after Napoleon was vanquished by England. Actually, the later, also supported our independence with weapons, money and an army of about 5000 men (Borja Gómez, 2015). Such a length of time to gain freedom is like a forecast, I dare to think, of the kind of history that my country would live afterward due to the number of wars that came; even before the definitive independence (1819) the first civil war exploded among federalists and centralists in 1811.

In 1819, the territory was named the *Gran Colombia* (*Great Colombia*) and included, approximately, what today are Venezuela, Ecuador, Colombia, and Panamá (Ceballos Gómez, 2015). Several wars since 1831 led to the separation of all those territories from current Colombia. Then, starting in 1837 several civil wars (War of the Nuns, several conservative and liberal parties' wars, War of a Thousand Days, etc.) until 1902 ended in the separation of Panamá in 1903.

In 1886, the *República de Colombia* was born with a new Constitution, which corresponds, more or less to the current political limits of the country. Again in 1932, there was a new war with *Perú* and the last war with an external contender. From that moment on, the conflict began inside our borders, especially from the conservative and liberal parties' struggle for the hegemony of the power. In the second half of the 20th century, several *guerrilla* and

paramilitary movements were formed. We will focus now on this part of the recent Colombian history.

It is strangely right the word *guerrilla* for naming those groups of people that take arms and fight for their political ideals. Indeed, the word *guerrilla* comes from *guerra* which is Spanish for war. The suffix *illa* is diminutive, so guerrilla is a “little war.” Thus, a guerrilla is a group of people, most of them influenced by Marxist philosophy, in the Colombian case, that declared war against the government (usually under the leadership of members of the richest and most powerful families). In Colombia’s recent history, we have lived our “little” wars for more than sixty years. Is it possible to answer adequately from school to such a context? What actions can be proposed by *phronesis* or new understandings of critical thinking before such wars?

Having a look at the last century in Colombian history, we can see the old pattern of violence and discrimination towards Indigenous, Afro-descendant, peasant, and other communities. According to the National Center of Historical Memory (*Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica* [CNMH], 2013), the crimes perpetrated by *guerrillas* and paramilitaries have intentionally sought to undermine and attack the existence of these communities (p. 278). The social situation in which Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and peasants peoples live in Colombia is far from being just. They seem to be an objective of an old war that could be just a continuation of the processes of colonization initiated in the 16th century.

The decades between 1960 and 1970 witnessed the emergence of several guerrilla movements that decided to fight against governments that did not distribute land²⁸ and resources in a just and adequate way among all Colombian populations (CNMH, 2013). In time, their philosophy of combat was corrupted, and they started to commit crimes like highjacking, extortion, and illicit drug production and commerce.

The left-wing movements include ELN (*Ejército de Liberación Nacional*—National Liberation Army, born in 1962), FARC (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*—Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces, born in 1965), EPL (*Ejército Popular de Liberación*—People’s Army of Liberation, born in 1967), and finally, M19 (*Movimiento del 19 de Abril*- 19th of April Movement, born in 1974). In response to the left-wing insurgents, relates the International Qualifications Assessment Service [IQAS], 2016),

members of the upper classes, armed forces, and government elites supported the formation of illegal and equally violent right-wing paramilitary groups. Formed as late as 1997, the AUC (*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*—United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia) has been the largest right-wing paramilitary group and has served as an umbrella organization for similar regional organizations. (p. 3)

These right-wing movements have been fighting left-wing guerrillas, but they also attack the civil population, including Indigenous, Afro-descendants, and peasants. There have been peace negotiations over the three last decades, and several of those movements (EPL, M19, FARC, and

²⁸ To illustrate, in 1954, a census carried out by the United Nations showed that farms bigger than 100 hectares were in the hands of 10% of rural owners and occupied 76.5% of arable land (Murillo, 2015, p. 284). This situation has changed very little.

AUC) signed peace agreements and most of their members abandoned war. Nevertheless, Colombia is still living in violence, which is a product of the armed conflicts among the other guerrillas (mainly ELN) and dissident groups of FARC and AUC. Besides, smaller groups of delinquents emerged, and they also seed violence in some parts of the country, especially those areas that have little or no presence of the forces and institutions of the Colombian State. For the most part, this war has been developed in the countryside, mainly in the mountains of Colombia, where several of the most important cities are located, that somehow do not witness directly the war between guerrillas, paramilitaries, and the army, but only see some of its consequences.

In a way, I would dare to say that the Colombian population has been in the middle of an infinite war since the Spanish arrived in our lands: first, to get independence from the Spanish reign, and then a long civil war to get the political power to rule the new nation in the 19th century, to define the group in power. Lastly, the war is waged against guerrillas and small groups of violence. Colombian people seem to be a nation deeply divided that has not yet learned to reach agreements to live peacefully but has learned to notice differences and obliterate the other in one way or another, be it by means of arms or by depriving people of their voice and rights.

Colombian people appear to me like those innocent children that love to play with pigeons in the ancient squares of Colombian towns: running to scare them and see them fly off. Sometimes someone throws them a few kernels of maize to attract them, but another child comes and makes them fly again. Apparently, Colombian people have been playing with peace for more than 200 years: we attract it with a few kernels of weak promises and then we scare it away, although what most of us want is for it to stay. That might be the story of the peace negotiations with the guerrillas over the last three decades: one president starts dialogues for peace, and the

next comes to cut them off (as it happened in the last presidential term 2018-2022). So, after a short truce, a never declared civil war starts again.

Phronesis Towards Peace-Building

As I see it, this problem of violence in contemporary Colombia, in other words, the problem of annihilating alterity and diversity, is a situation that can be and even should be addressed by the educational system, according to its limited possibilities. I concur with Colombian scholars (Acevedo & Prada Dussán, 2017; Hoyos-Vásquez, 2012): philosophy can be a powerful space to instill forms of thinking and living where alterity of origins, ethnicities, and personal orientations get along with the diversity of ideas and perspectives; a source of enrichment, rather than one-sidedness, conflict, and war.

For doing so, I am convinced that such a philosophy must also be open to accept other forms of thought that do not agree with Western modern understandings of philosophy and all it conveys. How could we philosophers trained in the modern Western tradition accept other perspectives of reality and knowledge as equally valid if we do not decolonize our own Europeanized mindsets? I think that part of the answer could be found in *phronesis*, a concept-theory that was taken as a European creation. Nevertheless, *phronesis* might not be European, because “Western civilization did not start in Greece, but in the [European] Renaissance, with the emergence of stories that Western civilization had started in Greece; these stories became hegemonic through imperial dominance” (Dussel, 1985, p. 187; Cf. Mignolo, 2011; Park, 2013).

Phronesis, as the ability to mediate conflicts (Ricoeur, 1990/1992), could be the ability that goes back to history and re-evaluate the present and future based on its findings. That seems necessary in the case of Colombian philosophy and its teaching since it has been ideologized to

make believe that the philosophy we study was born in Greece and no other continent or culture contributed to it. However, I do agree with Mall (2000):

Philosophy is undoubtedly born in particular cultures and thus is local in character, but it is not exhausted in any one of its manifold local manifestations. The myriad adjectives— Chinese, European, Indian, African, Latin American— verify this fact. Philosophies are fundamentally similar in their universal attempt to explain and understand the world of things and beings around us, but they also illuminate differences among themselves. (p. 17)

Philosophy is just a common human creation. Thus, there are different philosophies and they share the common goal of trying to explain and understand the world, and if we want to understand our own Colombian history of philosophy, we should better begin by acknowledging our biases. What is more, if *phronesis* strives to understand in order to make decisions, the historical dimension of the phenomenon cannot be held back. Rather it could be in front of us to examine it, in the light of our current situation.

Probably, the difficulties we Colombians have to accept difference and alterity, that is to accept our racism, patriarchalism, and classism, are partially explained by our own history and the lack of reflection on it. Would it be wise to keep on in denial? I remember Ricœur's (1947/2021) words, "I don't know much about French oppression in the colonies, and I fear that my fault is mainly the failure to gather information" (p. 26). Likewise, I fear that my ignorance about colonialism in all the Americas is due to my failure to listen to other voices, or, in Kantian terms, my failure in "lack[ing] of resolve and courage to use it [reason] without guidance of another [the European perspective]" (Kant, 1784/1992, para. 1). However, my fear is

exacerbated when I see that probably most of my Colombian colleagues still remain tied to that image of philosophy created in second half of the 18th century.

In *phronesis*, as Ricœur (1990/1992), Gadamer (1975/2004), and Heidegger (1922/2002) interpreted, can be found a human possibility that responds to specific situations according to the personal circumstances that always are under the influence of the flux of history. Thus, in order to respond to the current Colombian context, that still is marked by violence, inequity, discrimination, we require a *phronesis*, a practical wisdom that takes into account those factors of the Colombian society's present and past and tries to generate forms of critical thinking that take into account all what is involved. Precisely part of those people are the Colombian scholars that have inquired into our history and philosophy. This possibility does not mean necessarily to abandon the European scholars that may help us to understand *phronesis* and other sides of their experience that might also be present in our context.

Precisely there, in the in-between spaces of alterity and difference of the European and Latin American thought is where I think Ricoeurian *phronesis* could contribute to building forms of critical thinking that enrich thinking through the participation of different voices and postures, through reasons but also feelings, because *phronesis* is between reason and desire (Ricœur, 1986/1991). I am trying to find the balance, as Plato (1997) would say in his dialogue *Phaedrus*, to keep straight the course of a carriage pulled by two horses:

one of his horses is beautiful and good and from stock of the same sort, while the other is the opposite and has the opposite sort of bloodline. This means that chariot-driving in our case is inevitably a painfully difficult business. (p. 524/246b).

The chariot could be our history, the noble horse could be the image created and its opposite -- the ugly and rebel true. Before such a conflict between the horses of our historical soul –

European and American– “the means-end model no longer suffices. Instead, it is a matter of making specific vague ideals about, what is considered to be, a ‘good life’ for the person [or the society] as a whole, while making use of that phronesis” (Ricœur, 1990/1992, p. 177). Thus, it is not enough to think of means to obtain certain ends, it is necessary first to understand what those “certain” ends or ideals are.

I think that this part of the mission of new understandings of critical thinking as oriented in courses of philosophy in high school is precisely to contribute to originating new regards and practices towards alterity and diversity. Part of those new understandings of critical thinking are related to the critical thinking that a philosophy/er teacher develops around teaching philosophy in high school. Another part is related with their very understanding of critical thinking that responds to the students’ context and the history of our country. Finally, a new perspective of critical thinker might be wider and deeper understanding that includes alterity and difference in its core, as well as the complexity of what means being and living in Colombia. Let me now turn to a fuller discussion regarding the teaching of philosophy in Colombian education.

Colombian High School: Philosophy and Critical Thinking

While schools by themselves cannot redress injustice, they can become indispensable in educating the public to understand its history and present circumstances, enabling them to act accordingly. (Pinar 2020, p. 68)

I think that Pinar is right when saying that school has an indispensable role in educating the public, and Aoki (2011) would remember us that “‘to educate’ itself means, in the original sense, to lead out (*ex-ducere*) ... from where they now are to possibilities not yet” (p. 350), the possibilities not only of knowing our own history, but of changing it: possibilities of new worlds, where justice could be a habit, “till dignity becomes a custom,” as the current Colombian vice-

president Francia Marquez recurrently repeats. In this section, I present the Colombian education system and the place of philosophy on it.

In Colombia, primary and secondary education is obligatory and free of charge for all people. Such universal coverage is, I think, a step towards redressing injustice, especially to those populations historically marginalized. Children start their primary schooling at age 6 when they enter primary education which takes 5 years. Then, secondary education lasts 6 years, of which the last two (upper secondary school) are called *Educación Media Vocacional* (Lit. Mid vocational education).

Those two final years of high school are called ‘*vocacional*’ that from the Latin *vocare* means to call (Harper, 2000r). In English, the translation could be vocation: “call, consecration; calling, profession,” that which someone is called to do. According to the Colombian General Law of Education (Law 115, 1994), mid-school aims at understanding universal ideas and values and preparing students for starting tertiary education and work (Article 27). These two years of high school are considered to be the stage where students discover their call to what they want to be as adults, their vocation, consecration or profession to pursue.

At this phase, schools may develop different programs, for instance, an emphasis on scientific subjects, humanities, finance, arts, and so forth. Some schools, offer courses in some technical ability or art like cooking, carpentry, etc. (Regrettably, the great majority of schools only offer an “academic title” with no particular emphasis, as was my case). In the same vein, at this stage, all students must take courses in economic sciences, political sciences, and philosophy (Ley 115 de febrero de 1994, Article 31). Thus, courses in philosophy are established as a compulsory subject for the last two years of high school, the time of finding the calling to build new worlds. Unfortunately, this calling is underplayed due to several factors, most of all, a class

with only one hour per week greatly limits the possibilities of developing a sound knowledge of philosophy and critical thinking.

My first encounter with philosophy was in tenth grade, when I was 15. I still remember my first philosophy teacher, a young woman very clear in her words and sensible in her thoughts. When she heard that I was going to study at a Catholic seminary, she did everything in her power to help my mother get the documents required for my new school in *Medellín*, which shows me her commitment to all her students, since I was never a brilliant nor disciplined student in her classes. I gratefully acknowledge her kindness and devotion to all her students. For her passionate words, class debates, and other exercises, it was evident that she loved philosophy and teaching it to instill critical thinking. She wanted us to develop our own opinion about any topic we studied. However, at the time, I was more interested in adolescent matters than in reading or acquiring a critical view. My worries were about the money I had to save in order to buy a bike or to pay for a present for the girl I liked. Plato's, Descartes's, Kant's philosophies would not speak to me about those issues.

The presence of philosophy in the curricula of secondary education as a compulsory subject is also downplayed by the fact that many teachers of philosophy do not have the proper training since this subject is taught by professionals of other subjects (Theology, Religious Sciences, Social Sciences, Literature, etc.) in order to complete the number of teaching hours (24 per week in the public schools and up to 40 in private schools) required by their contract. For instance, two recent studies concluded that in *Norte del Santander* (a region of Northeastern Colombia) only 14% of teachers of philosophy in high school had studied philosophy in their Bachelor's (Flórez-Pabón et al., 2022) whilst in *Quindío* (a Western central region of the country) the number rises only up to 28 % (Bernal Escobar et al., 2008). Such a particularity is

not *per se* a problem, since “being an educated person is more than possessing knowledge or acquiring intellectual or practical skills, and that basically, it is being concerned with dwelling aright in thoughtful living with others” (Aoki, 2011, p. 365). Thus, not teaching philosophy as a philosopher would do it, might perhaps open the space for a dialogue about “dwelling aright”, but it may also be reduced to a time of just repeating what a textbook contains... all possibilities are up to the teachers.

History of Teaching Philosophy in Colombian Curricula

From a historical perspective, although the General Law of Education (Ley 115 de febrero 8 de 1994) is from 1994, the presence of philosophy in Colombian education is not recent. Here we go back to Spanish colonization again. Indeed, philosophy has been part of the Colombian curricula since the beginning of the 17th century when the Catholic religious congregations (Jesuits, Dominicans, Franciscans) created the first schools (*Colegios Mayores*) and universities in Colombia (Castro & Noguera, 1999, p. 20). There, the initial subjects were the medieval *trivium* (grammar, logic, and rhetoric) and *quadrivium* (physics, arithmetic, metaphysics, and music). Little by little logic, metaphysics and ethics, called “class of philosophy,” was later known as the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters (Saldarriaga, 2008). Such organizations could have lasted with few changes until 1890, according to the historian and philosopher Oscar Saldarriaga (2008), when the Colombian government handed over the education all over the country to the Catholic church. The church established in Colombia what today is known as secondary education (*Bachillerato*), that in the case of philosophy followed to the letter the Wolffian canon: logic, general metaphysics or ontology, special metaphysics (cosmology, theodicy, and psychology) and ethics (Saldarriaga, 2008), taught in the last year of

high school. That organization prevailed until 1970 when liberals in power introduced new pedagogies to Colombian schools (Saldarriaga, 2006).

Of course, during all that time, philosophy was taught mainly by Spanish priests and monks or by people trained by them who taught the topics and authors of the European tradition which, as I understand, continues with very few changes. For Pinar (2020), “With its emphasis upon the past, one might quip it [philosophy curriculum, I add] is designated to help one get behind” (p. 4). In other words, that curriculum stays behind the current views and theories with the effect of leaving students out of the current discussions or perspectives of philosophy. From a different viewpoint, Mall (2000) affirmed that European colonization “aimed at the Europeanization of the whole world” (p. 21) which coincides with the fact that we still teach mainly their philosophy.

Such a European philosophy has been taught in Colombian high schools due to another powerful element. As happens in many countries nowadays, in Colombia, all students that finish their high school must take a standardized examination —*Prueba Saber 11*— elaborated by a Colombian Agency (ICFES, *Instituto Colombiano para el Fomento de la Educación Superior*). Then, as Pinar (2020) states, test preparation is the “only *raison d’être*” (p. 6) of education, and no other objective seems to be pursued. That exam —*Prueba Saber 11*—, before 2013, included a section to test philosophy, or better, students’ competencies, such as interpretation, identification of reasons, and presentation of proposals of Western philosophical texts (*argumentation, interpretación y proposición*). Nevertheless, since 2014 the test melded the areas of language and philosophy into one section called *Lectura Crítica* (critical reading [ICFES, 2015, 2016]). Thus, the section on philosophy was lost and now most likely the courses of philosophy are aimed, at least in part, to training students to that section of the exam.

I do suppose that now most courses of philosophy are directed, to a certain extent, at training students in reading critically, that is, to develop a more logical epistemic analysis of every text, regardless of the field and the context and the students' necessities. It is frequently thought that philosophy is closely related to criticality, but how critical are philosophers about their own understanding of critical thinking? Dussel (1980/1985) offers us a different outlook:

the philosopher ... as an organic intellectual, as militant, can express the criticism of a people with the maximum precision even if, by birth, culture, or work, the philosopher does not, from the beginning, belong to the oppressed classes. (p. 125)

Dussel seems to imply that the critique can be only achieved from a Marxist perspective, which is the philosophical underpinning for highlighting the oppressed classes. Sooner or later, to be critical, a philosopher needs to belong to the oppressed classes, he suggests. Notwithstanding, the power of the critique of philosophy, I dare to think, depends on the kind of philosophers, the topics, and foremost the point of view under which teachers learn and teach to look at reality. Marxism certainly offers a valid and strong lens to build a critique, but other perspectives could also enrich the critique itself.

As I see it, among the problems with the current philosophy taught in Colombian high school is that by studying (Plato's, Aristotle's metaphysics or Kant's ethics, or even the daily news, the novels of South American scholars) under an exclusive epistemic and logical examination, students will not think about their historical and political situation, much less about their stances, ways of thinking, and acting. This was exactly what happened to me receiving my high school and undergraduate education under a European philosophical perspective. Paul Ricœur (1973/1981c) himself stated that human sciences, as literature, linguistics, philosophy, and others, "are inclined by nature to struggle against the alienating distancing of the aesthetic,

historical and lingual consciousness” (p. 82). In other words, when teaching philosophy one of the possible dangers might be to hinder the reflection about aesthetic, historical, and linguistics values and beliefs, that is, the student’s social and personal reality. I hope this is not the common practice in Colombia, but I am afraid I am wrong.

Following Ricœur, it seems to me that when training students in a form of epistemic criticism toward Western philosophical theories, as I did for many years with/against my students, the teacher is alienating their students’ minds with topics that are not relevant to their lives. It is as if teachers were putting a curtain to their students, so they cannot see what deserves to be examined and criticized in their own personal and socio-historical context.

Another perspective of critical thinking might be the hermeneutic, especially for me, the Ricoeurian understanding of *phronesis*, but in dialogue with decolonial thought or philosophy of liberation, as Dussel prefers to call it. To imagine our own life, examine and judge it from an isolated epistemic perspective, an instrumental way of thinking is useless to motivate any change to the history of a country with such a convoluted history of inequality as Colombia’s.

As read on decolonization for the first time, I have come to realize that since philosophy has been part of the Colombian curricula for long time, it has worked as an instrument to maintain the colonization initiated by Spanish people. Such a reality can be seen by the fact that the authors and topics of the courses of philosophy are taken from the European tradition mainly and the Asian, African and Latin American philosophy are not even considered as philosophies. Why do I feel ethically compelled to complement my hermeneutic framework with decolonial thought? I offer an answer in the next pages.

Latin American Philosophy: Toward Decolonization

Moules et al. (2015) asserted that “The echoes of history are always inadvertently and deliberately inviting us into both past and new ways of being in the present and, thus, we live in a world that recedes into the past and extends into the future” (p. 2). Thus, hermeneutics is related to history not just to remember, but to invite us to create new worlds to live in, in my case, new forms of understanding and teaching critical thinking. Nevertheless, authors such as Enrique Dussel, Walter D. Mignolo, and Santiago Castro Gómez show me that the decolonial lens might enrich my study through a criticism to the very process of colonization that, I think, is one of the strongest facts that explains the current understanding of critical thinking in Colombian high school philosophy. Therefore, I feel constrained to briefly depict in this section my encounter with decolonization.

In their book *Understanding Curriculum*, Pinar et al. (2008) affirmed that the “hermeneutical task ... is born in the midst of human struggle” (p. 423), which for me right now is, in part, the awareness of Western colonialism in philosophy and in the history of my forebears that calls me to offer an interpretation regarding my search for new forms of critical thinking. My struggle, taking now the form of a productive tension, is about the dilemma of leaving aside Western philosophy or not while I continue studying other forms of philosophy, particularly South American ways of philosophy. From my recent readings of decolonialism, I understand that Western knowledge and its colonialism denied American peoples’ (as well as others) identities, epistemology, religion, axiology, etc. I wonder what might be valuable in Western philosophy (if there is anything) and whether it could be integrated it with other forms of thought. I especially want to give a step forward to what Mignolo (2011) calls decolonization:

Decolonizing Western epistemology means to strip it out of the pretense [*sic*] that it is the point of arrival and the guiding light of all kinds of knowledge. In other words, decolonizing knowledge is not rejecting Western epistemic contributions to the world. On the contrary, it implies appropriating its contributions in order to then de-chain from their imperial designs. (p. 82)

To my understanding, such a step consists of stopping thinking and acting as if European knowledge (or science) were the most perfect and only valid form of knowledge, which might be explained by the fact that “The European historiography of philosophy has wrongly, but successfully, neglected the proper introduction of non-European philosophies and cultures” (Mall, 2000, p. 18). Therefore, it was created an illusion or better delusion that the philosophy was a European product and the only one valid. It is interesting the nearness of these two words.

According to the *Online Etymology Dictionary*,

delusion is a belief that, though false, has been surrendered to and accepted by the whole mind as a truth; *illusion* is an impression that, though false, is entertained provisionally on the recommendation of the senses or the imagination, but awaits full acceptance and may not influence action. (Harper, 2000f)

Both, a delusion and an illusion, are false beliefs but the latter hold a tie to awareness of that falsehood. However, they have different Latin roots: one from *delusio* that means “a deceiving,” and the other from *illudere*, which means “to play with.” It is as if our illusions are just little games that we like to play with ourselves, maybe imagining nicer, sweeter, kinder worlds, that we know are not yet; it is a falsehood that may offer motivation to live, to make real the unreal. On the other hand, a delusion is the escape from reality, probably the inability to accept it and fight for a different world or the laziness to work for one. I wonder if philosophers, in their

delusion of a powerful philosophy and its critical thinking, are just leaving the real world to avoid fighting and building for a better one. Perhaps this situation is just a paradox of Latin American and other philosophers housed in Western traditional philosophy where they found a shelter to be tranquil in their distance to a reality they cannot see from the windows.

Acknowledging that fact, I can re-state that Ricœur's philosophy saved me, yes, and now Dussel (2012) and Mignolo (2011) show me other sides of Western traditional philosophy and other paths to redeem myself. I hold on to Ricœur's philosophy despite its limitations, because European thinking is already part of Colombia's history, its philosophy, and my personal history, my thoughts, and being. Could I really expel it? In the end, I think Gallagher (1992) is right when affirming that "Tradition is never something bygone and left behind" (p. 189), it always runs in our cultural veins.

Moreover, I still keep a European hermeneutic framework since every perspective could assist me to see parts of critical thinking not seen before, particularly through its place in conversation, history, and self-criticism. I do follow the path of curriculum studies in which "We can increase our vision of whatever we are viewing through the employment of as many perspectives as we can find appropriate" (Aoki, 2011, p. 96). Thus, my quest acquires a shade of decolonization in tension with hermeneutics in order to find different ways to understand and teach critical thinking. However, on the path I decided to walk there are many dangers, from which the most relevant to my study is explained by Dussel (1980/1985):

Critical thought that arises from the periphery –including the social periphery, the oppressed classes, the *lumpen* –always ends by directing itself toward the center [the European model of thinking]. It is its death as critical philosophy; it is its birth as an

ontology and ideology. Thought that takes refuge in the centre ends by thinking it to be the only reality. (p. 4)

The main danger, as I understand Dussel's quote, is that I might end up again in the centre, in the traditional European ways of thinking and doing which might be a form of ideology, "by nature an uncritical instance" (Ricœur, 1986/1991, p. 251). I have to juggle European philosophy and decolonial thinking to maintain an adequate equilibrium that led me to new facets of the phenomenon. Let us see an example in which I find the conflation of European and American views that help to better understand our history and philosophy.

Understanding our Euro-Latin American Traditions

I see an example of Gadamer's consciousness of the history of effects and its possible combination with decolonial thought in the explanation that Mignolo (2011) makes of the difference between the terms *nature* and *Pachamama*. The next quote *in extenso* is paradoxically a beautiful example of the Gadamerian consideration of history in order to understand and, simultaneously, the decolonial view and Indigenous knowledge-*praxis* that ends in a critique that I would value most in new facets of critical thinking. Mignolo (2011) writes that for the South American Indigenous *Aymaras* and *Quechuas* the Western concept of "nature" was difficult to understand.

Pachamama was how Quechuan and Aymaran ... understood the human relationship with life, with that energy that engenders and maintains life.... The phenomenon that Western Christians described as "nature" existed in contradistinction to "culture;" furthermore, it was conceived as something outside the human subject. For Aymaras and Quechuas, more-than-human phenomena (as well as human beings) were conceived as Pachamama;

and, in this conception, there was not, and there is not today, a distinction between “nature” and “culture.” (p. 11)

This example shows me that the change of language, as one tile, took history to move other tiles. So today most people in our cultures tend to see nature as a set of sources for survival (food, water, sun) or for industry and “development” (oil, charcoal, gas, etc.), and I believe that it includes the fact that some people see humanity as a source of labour, richness, commodities (the same that Spanish might have seen in our lands five centuries back). The first historical tile was a word, or better, a language and the worldview it conveyed. And through all the movements promoted (Lat.: *pro*: forward + *motus*: movement [(Harper, 2000n)]), that is the movement forward in history, very soon made human people (African) a merchandise, a commodity that offered prestige, luxury, and ostentation (A. L. Rodríguez, 2015).

After five centuries, slavery finished in terms of chains and whips, but it seems to continue under legal forms of “waged labour” (Mignolo, 2011). In this short reflection, I see a form of critical thinking that phronetically takes into account the consciousness of the history of effects, the decolonial perspective, and Indigenous knowledge. That might be called, I guess, *critical phronesis*, but not the one developed by Ricœur (1990/1992)²⁹ in his “little ethics” (p. 290) limited to European philosophies. I see a *phronesis* that takes the better contributions of different participants in a difficult maybe conflictive dialogue: European, Latin American (decolonial), Indigenous ways of knowing.

²⁹ Certainly, Ricœur proposed in chapter ten of *Oneself as Another* (1992) a “‘critical’ *phronesis*” (p. 290), alluding to the fact that he had complemented Aristotelian concept of *phronesis* with Kantian and Hegelian traditions of philosophy. Evidently, this critique was still limited to European philosophy.

Thinking about the extent to which the consciousness of the history of effects of Spanish colonization has been present in Colombian philosophers and teachers of philosophy, I suppose that my participants do not bear in mind such a context in order to plan their lessons of philosophy or the exercises of critical thinking. I guess that such a context rests in oblivion precisely because European philosophy colonized our territory and minds. Therefore, everything else, such as Dussel's or Freire's texts, are not considered philosophy. Even my first awareness of the history of effects, from a Gadamerian perspective, was about a different matter: it had a more personal nature, as I have shown in the first chapter.

In the middle of my reflection about what to do with traditional Western philosophy, I search for a journal dossier about Ricœur and colonialism published in *Études Ricœuriennes / Ricœur Studies* in 2021. There, I found an old paper written by Ricœur in 1947, a few weeks after the British left India: *La Question Coloniale* (Transl.: *The Question of the Colonies*, 2021). That paper is only six pages long, but I found a clear posture about French colonialism and within it some questions and some paths to explore. I retain Ricœur's conclusion about our responsibility to face colonialism:

the end of colonization is the freedom of the Indigenous people; the original fault of colonization precedes all unilateral aggressions by the Indigenous people; the demand for freedom, even if it is premature, has more moral weight than all the civilising work of the colonising countries; racism is the vice of the French in the colonies; it is minorities who represent the emerging consciousness of colonized peoples. (Ricœur, 1947/2021, p. 28)

It is clear to me that the French philosopher acknowledges part of the evil "hidden" in colonialism: lack of freedom, violence, and racism that still runs free everywhere. However, I also perceive the limits of Ricœur's thought: certain validation of the colonial enterprise under

the references to “premature” fight for freedom and the coloniser’s “civilising work”. I cannot help thinking that probably Ricœur, as any European person, could not/cannot comprehend that there is no neutral place to determine levels of civilization or development and the suffering implied in the imposition of new ways of understanding everything while simultaneously discarding the previous as “false or mistaken” views. Now, I feel reflected in Ernst Wolff & Damien Tissot’s (2021) questions:

What are Ricœur’s engagements and standpoints concerning colonization and independence movements? What role does this history play within the genealogy of his thought? How does Ricœur enable us to theorize concepts and notions such as domination, freedom, exploitation, nationalism, and civilization within the broader frame of colonial history? Moreover, what are the silences and limits of his work with regard to colonialism? (p. 7)

I do believe that after Ricœur published his reflection on French colonialism in 1947, he continued to be intent on not ignoring such a matter when writing or doing philosophy, even though not addressing it directly. Re-reading some of his books, particularly *Oneself as Another* (1990/1992), *The Just* (2000), *Reflections on The Just* (2001/2007), and *The Course of Recognition* (2004/2005), I found clear sentences about the colonial question. For instance, he stated that “The negative experience of disregard then takes on the specific forms of feelings of exclusion, alienation, oppression, and indignation that have given social struggles the form of a war, whether one of revolution, liberation, or decolonialization” (Ricœur, 2004/2005, p. 201). As I understand the quote, the processes of colonization are based on, or might include the experience of disregarding of the other, the negation of recognition, and they bring about specific feelings that take forms of struggles.

On a very different topic, that of translation, Ricœur (2004/2006) seems to acknowledge how colonialism has had a linguistic dimension. He wrote:

The pretensions to self-sufficiency, the refusal to allow the foreign mediate, have secretly nourished numerous linguistic ethnocentrisms, and more seriously, numerous pretensions to the same cultural hegemony that we have been able to observe in relation to Latin, from late antiquity to the end of the Middle Ages and even beyond the Renaissance, in relation to French in the classical era, and in relation to English today (p.4)

Whereas under the topic of recognition disregarding the other is the face of colonization, under translation the refusal of the others' mediation, the self-sufficiency of the colonizer, is what appears as the mouth and face of the hegemony proper to colonization. That is a phenomenon not new to the fifteenth century since it existed already in the Roman empire.

I suppose also that Ricœur's attention to colonization might have been embedded in his teaching practices, namely, the question with which he started his seminars at the university; in the words of Richard Kerney (as cited in Du Toit, 2019), "When I arrived in Paris in 1977 to study with the philosopher, Paul Ricœur, the first question he asked everyone in his seminar was: *d'où parlez-vous?* Where do you speak from?" (p. 227). Similarly, Mignolo (2011) asserts that "I am where I do and think" (p. 99). This *where*, as used by both scholars, is not just a question about a geographical position but an awareness of the conditions (historical, political, corporeal, ideological, etc.) from which we have lived and learned to think and feel. From where we speak or where we think and do seems to determine what we can think, understand, imagine, and feel. However, if we reach the awareness of that place, we can break that determination and we can build different worlds to inhabit. From now on, my understanding of critical thinking cannot be abstracted from *where* I live in mind and heart, nor the fact that Ricœur has kept his intention as

expressed in 1947: “I want to awaken in myself every day in facing the colonial question” (Ricœur, 1947/2021, p. 26).³⁰

I finish this chapter with an answer to Pinar’s (2000) initial quote: Yes, “schools by themselves cannot redress injustice” (p. 68) but they can re-address it, once and again. We can acknowledge our history and, particularly in philosophy, we can highlight patriarchalism, racism, misogyny, colonialism as present in the philosophers and philosophies we study in class. Paraphrasing Ricœur, we can awaken in ourselves every day the question of injustice in all its forms and take that to our texts and teachings.

³⁰ About it, see the biography written by François Dosse (2001/2013), particularly the chapter 26 (Against war).

Chapter Five: Hermeneutic Inquiry

In the previous chapter, I expounded on the context of my country from a historical view that explained some of Colombia's current characteristics. In addition, I presented the education system in which philosophy is considered a compulsory subject and has a long history that goes back to the Spanish colonization process. In this chapter, I discuss the hermeneutic approach and specific guidelines that I planned to apply in my study with my teacher-participants. I approached this section bearing in mind that hermeneutics "strives to articulate what method neglects, that is, the wider, more complex, dimensions of human encounter, experience, and learning" (Davey, 2006, p. 6). Thus, although I tried to convey clear lines of action to proceed, I was aware that hermeneutics wants to stay true to the complexity and dynamics of existence itself.

Hermeneutic Inquiry in Qualitative Research: Translating the Gods' Wishes

Before presenting the specific and practical decisions I made about how to proceed in my research, I present hermeneutics' approach from its stances about its historical paradigm, its methodology, and its particular focus on the phenomena. Concerning the specific actions to do my study, or to guide my steps in this journey of research, I followed closely Moules' et al. (2015) book *Conducting Hermeneutic Research: From Philosophy to Practice*, as it attends to hermeneutic research in practical fields, such as medicine and education.

In terms of its historical paradigm, hermeneutics is "*in-between*" (Gadamer, 1975/2004, p. 295) modern and postmodern perspectives, a plane of change, as it were. As Alexandra Fidyk (2013) stated, "Methods are embedded in commitments to particular versions of the world (ontology) and ways of knowing that world (epistemology). Method is, thus, inseparable from epistemology and ontology" (p. 387). Hence, the methodological guidelines are aligned with

specific understandings of what reality and knowledge are. For hermeneutics, the world is dynamic, in continuous change and it seems to be several things simultaneously, and the understanding of knowledge and values are in correspondence (lat.: *cum: together + respondere: answer* [Harper, 2000c]) with one another, that is, everyone answers to what the other says, as it happens in epistolary correspondence.

I remembered one conversation with Professor David Jardine through which I understood how our world changes continually. He explained to us (a group of three students that weekly gathered to talk about Gadamer's book *Truth and Method I*) that his son's wife was pregnant. So, Jardine stated, "I will become a grandfather; I won't stop being a father and husband, but then I will be something more." (Personal communication, May 15th, 2021) Such a statement made me think of all the changes my world has had. I have been a shy person all my life, but by choosing the ways of a Catholic seminary, I suddenly found myself in another world that pushed me to become a more confident person, a listener, and a leader. Indeed, if I wanted to be a priest or a monk, I would have to open myself, and should listen in order to help other people, which was my aim. Likewise, it was my choice to be a teacher what pushed me further and thus I was transformed into a leader: someone who takes the responsibility of guiding the ways for other people, young people. So, yes, the world changes, and a research approach that does not consider this dynamicity and changeability would be highly limited.

Since reality changes, the conception and practice of investigation also change in order to respond to its phenomenon. Furthermore, the values that guide the exercise of research cannot be the same for all realities and their changes because every reality is grounded in a specific axiology, like every culture and its values of beauty or happiness. In the following paragraphs, I present the main hermeneutic stances about the ways to know a phenomenon.

Contemporary hermeneutics offers different ways of understanding truth and its attainment. For instance, as Moules (2002) stated, “hermeneutics does not lend itself to objectivism, and to strip it [the phenomenon] of context and contingency and to claim an ultimate, knowable structure is the very opposite of what hermeneutics teaches us” (p. 3). Thus, hermeneutics focuses on the phenomenon itself in the middle of its context, in its natural atmosphere with all its relationships, dynamics, and changes. Certainly, our world changes frequently, unexpectedly, and uncontrollably, as Jardine’s becoming a grandfather can show. Correspondingly, truth is not definitive, static, and unchangeable. Truth is not a coincidence between an idea about an object and the traits of that object, because there are no objects in hermeneutics –at least not objects absolutely separated from the subject– but things (*Sache*, for Gadamer, 1975/2004), experiences, or worlds (*mondes*, for Ricœur, 1986/1991). As Smith (1999) explains,

the hermeneutic modus has more the character of conversation than, say, of analysis and the trumpeting of truth claims. When one is engaged in a good conversation, there is a certain quality of self-forgetfulness as one gives oneself over to the conversation itself, so that the truth that is realized in the conversation is never the possession of any one of the speakers or camps, but rather is something that all concerned realize they share in together. (p. 38)

Truth as revealed in conversation has more the character of an experience about some-thing, perhaps a whole world, that appears and reappears and sometimes also dis-appears, but that we definitely recognize when it happens to us. It travels in the great current of traditions that we share and recreate, but that usually remain unnoticeable, unconscious, and unseizable. And despite its slippery character, we know that we feel it when it shows itself, like when we realize

that something has changed in us from being a father to grandfather, or, in my case, from a student to a teacher.

Let us remember that regarding the scientific methodology, Gadamer (1975/2004) took a decisive posture when he affirmed in the preface to *Truth and Method I* that “even from its historical beginnings, the problem of hermeneutics goes beyond the limits of the concept of method as set by modern science” (p. xx). The latter means to me that, among other things, Gadamerian hermeneutics does not accept modern scientific limitations for the study of human phenomena; among other themes, hermeneutics tries to overcome the separation between subject and object, the understanding of truth as the correlation among the object and thinking and its verification, etc.

As I understand it, hermeneutics does not follow a set of procedures or pre-defined steps that ensure generalizable outcomes. Since its interest lies in individualities, hermeneutics is better understood as an approach, a way to get close, to stay or linger in every case with the phenomenon investigated. Its focus is on understanding the particular phenomenon and increasing its comprehension to enrich *praxis* in its midst and its environment. Instead of a method or set of fixed procedures, as Moules et al. (2015) put it, in hermeneutics “we need to practice a disciplined kind of vigilance, to develop a practice to being open to the world, so that new worlds can appear” (p. 65). Thus, by being awake, focus, and open to the phenomenon itself, it appears before our eyes with new facets.

Hermeneutics would not be a fixed method that is anticipated and imposed on the phenomenon so as to cause the phenomenon to adapt itself to the method and allow it to define what can be known. For Smith (2003),

hermeneutic inquiry shows that the question of inquiry method cannot be separated from what is being inquired into. It is impossible to establish a “correct method” for research in advance of an encounter with what is being investigated. This is because what is being investigated holds at least part of the answer to how it should be investigated. (p. 110)

Hermeneutics prefers not to state a set of predefined or fixed steps, times, and actions to be followed to the letter regardless of the phenomenon and its context. Rather, as philosophy and as a research approach, hermeneutics offers guidelines to understand the research steps and design them. For instance, whilst a hermeneutic study may propose to do interviews with the participants, this particular technique is not conceived as a unidirectional exercise of asking questions posed only by the researcher and responding to them by the participant. Better, in a hermeneutic study, the interview would be better understood as a conversation where both researcher and participant might share their experiences, thoughts, and doubts, but the researcher is aware that they direct the interview, and their goal is to understand the phenomenon more deeply. Following such an approach, I encouraged my four participants to make more of a conversation than a common unidirectional interview.

Thus, hermeneutics might be understood, at least in part, as a chess game where every player design and re-design their strategy according to the other player’s moves. In chess, every play-actor sets a strategy, a way to start and continue the game. Nevertheless, if the players do not adapt their strategy as the game evolves, they surely fail because it is necessary to understand the game’s evolution to set anew or adapt the initial strategy. In a way, the game itself indicates what kind of strategy or what moves can be done to advance, that is, to increase understanding of the phenomenon.

While doing the interviews, I felt such a side of hermeneutics when I decided to give a turn to the conversation to keep the phenomenon in the centre. I moved with my participants in the conversation, and I shared similar experiences or memories, but sometimes I proposed to go back to a topic or a different matter. In other words, I had to adapt my strategy according to the flow of the dialogue and my objective of getting closer to the phenomenon.

Indeed, to know the phenomenon, the researcher stands on the field and sets a plan according to the possible movements of the other player, the phenomenon. As Moules et al. (2015) stated, “One proceeds on the basis of attuned perception, concrete discovery, and the imagining and re-imagining of possible meanings and courses of action” (p. 62). What the researcher and chess player could do is to observe attentively in order to create and re-create possible strategies.

In the very same way as the chess player is involved in the game to the point of being intimately connected to it, to the point that “the player loses himself in play” (Gadamer, 1975/2004, p. 103), being a single being, the hermeneutician enters into a relationship with their phenomenon as much as possible to be connected to it, because “the topic asks for rigor from us, an attentiveness, and a discipline to stay with it and stay true to it” (Moules et al., 2015, p. 72). The researcher must be utterly intent on the phenomenon; they must observe it, talk to it, ask questions, and let it respond and move freely. This requires the rigor of a disciplined person that can stay and linger patiently with the phenomenon to understand it. As Smith (1999) asserted,

The mark of good interpretative research is... in the degree to which it can show an understanding of what it is that is being investigated. And “understanding” here is... a deep sense that something has been profoundly heard in our present circumstances. (p. 41)

During my interviewing process and the reading of the interview transcripts, I tried to stay focused on my participants' words, silences, and tones of voice. I took notes both during the interviews and whilst reading them too. Such a process of taking notes was interesting due to the identification of common themes among all the participants and a few specific contributions everyone made to the theme and my own interpretation. Like a chess player, I anticipated a possible approach to the game, to understand the phenomenon, and most of it turned out adjusted. Indeed, despite the hermeneutic reluctance to set procedures to understand any phenomenon, and as a necessary element of my dissertation, I planned, and now I present the ways that I saw most appropriate to my research. However, I bore in mind that I needed to introduce changes when my planned strategy did not fit the phenomena, such as when my first teacher-participant did not allow me to record the interview. So, I took as many notes as possible in my notebook and I encouraged her to modify the transcripts or complemented them. Let us see my strategy for finding my teacher-participants.

Recruitment of Participants

Since I was investigating philosophy teachers' understanding of critical thinking, I decided to invite Colombian philosophy teachers who were currently teaching in high school. I planned to gather only four teachers and no more since "an adequate sample size in qualitative work is one that ... results in... a new and richly textured understanding of experience (Sandelowski, as quoted by Moules, 2002, p. 90). Four people seemed enough to include women and men, but also some of the diversity of their origins (four different regions of Colombia) that could allow me to develop rich and insightful interpretations of the phenomenon. I believe that I achieved, most of all, a new perspective to see critical thinking, as the three final chapters demonstrate.

I certainly found four teachers; all studied philosophy and, actually, three of them held the title of *Licenciado en filosofía* (Bachelor of Philosophy-for teaching). I selected the participants according to their interest in this research and the diversity of the Colombian population. I recruited two men and two women; one of them comes from the northern part of the country in *Valledupar*, a coastal city; two of them come from a city called Armenia in the west of the country and a more rural population, and finally, one participant comes from *Boyacá*, a rural region near to *Bogotá*. Their cultural backgrounds are highly different, but three of them studied philosophy in *Bogotá* at private and public universities. Their length of teaching experience goes from four until thirty years (after graduation)³¹ which also shows their age difference.³²

My teacher-participants' schools vary greatly too, since one participant teaches at a public school where the population is rather poor, one of them teaches at a high-status school,

³¹ In Colombia, it is very common that students of *Licenciatura* start working as teachers in small private schools even before graduating. In the case of philosophy, students usually start looking for a teaching job when they have finished their fourth semester of their Bachelor's since at this point, they have taken all the courses about the history of philosophy and most of the courses about the branches of philosophy: anthropology, epistemology, ethics, etc. In that way, many undergraduate students of *Licenciatura* study and work simultaneously during half or more of the Bachelor, as one of my participants did.

³² The readers might ask themselves about the racial or ethnic identity of my participants. I have to say that the identification of this specific trait is not easily drawn. First of all, I did not ask about that topic in the interviews, nor they mention it. Second, since the population that recognize themselves as afro-descendant or any other particular ethnicity is so low in the country, most of them living far from the main urban centers where most universities are placed, is not very likely that many philosophy teachers are Indigenous or available to the institutions that helped me to gather my participants.

and the other two teachers work in schools of the Police³³ (in different cities), that might be characterized as middle-status schools. Thus, my four participants differ in terms of gender, class, cultural background, and context of teaching. My focus on this difference was due to the fact that the teaching of philosophy in Colombia has been done from dominant male white perspectives, a demographic that also dominates philosophers of the Western canon and most of my teachers and colleagues.

My participants' experience(s) was/were probably one of the traits that I most valued in meeting them, not only for the difference it/they made in their perspectives but also for the commonalities I found. Being so different in terms of culture, school context, and personalities, my participants showed me once again that experience is not just about accumulating time, but about knowledge and self-transformation. It was in my first reading of Gadamer (1975/2004), a few years back during my master's in philosophy, that I understood how experience is not just a matter of seeing the time passing; it is not about age. The German philosopher stated that "one's experience changes one's whole knowledge. Strictly speaking, we cannot have the same experience twice" (p. 348). An experience, as I see it, offers us a totally new perspective of understanding and, therefore, of living. Paraphrasing Heraclitus, we could say that we cannot step into the same river twice, so let us be attentive to when and where to put a step.

³³ The schools of the Police are a set of 22 schools distributed throughout the whole country where the sons and daughters of the policemen and policewomen can do their elementary and secondary education. Since police members move to live and do their job from city to city, many of them prefer to move with their families. The existence of the schools of the police facilitates the fact of finding a school and the process of acceptance of previous studies. These schools build a common set of school subjects and curricula so there is not much change when a student moves from one school to another.

All my participants were experienced teachers, confident and knowledgeable about what philosophy might offer to their students. They clearly knew what they could do in their daily lessons according to their students' traits and their school's characteristics. All my participant-teachers had clear objectives regarding the teaching of philosophy in their schools, one of which was to instil critical thinking. They knew their students' needs, which enticed them to plan particular projects in their classes and even particular curricula (as we will see later, all of them complemented the themes and authors of the Western canon with current common topics). Their experience, as I can understand, led them to certain knowledge and some internal conflicts, such as about whether to continue teaching philosophy following the traditional canon despite the poor response by their students to such a curriculum. I develop this topic in Chapter Seven.

In order to recruit my participants, I used the communication channels of the National Pedagogical University of Colombia, particularly of its Doctorate in Education and the *Licenciatura en Filosofía* (Bachelor's of philosophy). These two programs are in communication with philosophy teachers and several associations or groups of teachers of philosophy where I found the participants. The invitation emails were sent to the members of Redfilo (a Group of high school teachers of philosophy from all over Colombia), *La Red Profesores Filosofía - Quindío*, (another of high school teachers of philosophy, but only in *Quindío*) high school teachers associated with the Bachelor's of philosophy of the National Pedagogical University and some of their graduate students (those graduated before 2015, when I started to teach at that university).

Initially, an email with a general invitation (See Appendix C) was sent by the person that coordinates every group or by the secretary of the Bachelor's of philosophy at the National Pedagogical University. Those teachers who sent me an email (7 people in total) as response to

that invitation and showed interest in my research were invited to a short individual online meeting where I presented the research and answered their questions. These meetings were held in Google Meet through the services of Google that the University of Alberta provides and lasted about half an hour each. Then, for those that confirmed their desire to participate, the individual interviews were done online and lasted about one hour each. Due to the teachers' schedules, the interviews were held at the time every participant chose as convenient.

Strategies of Inquiry

A hermeneutic experience worthy of the name disrupts the expectancies one has of an artwork or text so that one is forced to think again. (Davey 2006, p. 13)

Reading Davey's sentence, to my mind comes a particular instance about a greeting that, at first, I thought was an expression of rage. I was working as a cleaner in a college in the UK and had to pick up some keys every morning from a small room where janitors usually gathered, took a rest, and had a cup of coffee. Every day, I would go and get the keys and there usually would be a janitor, the same person who always seemed to be angry (at me, I thought). When I said "morning," he uttered something that I did not understand, but I never asked him to repeat it (as it happens so often when someone is learning a new language, out of shame or fear of not understanding again, I guess).

One morning, after six months of going to that room every day, I went in to get the keys. I said "Hello," and he replayed: "Hi mate!" I was astonished. "I understood him." Furthermore, he greeted me quite nicely. The following mornings, I understood his greeting perfectly; always with the same words, the same intonation, and the same rhythm. It took me six months, every day listening to him to understand a simple greeting. Furthermore, it took me six months to know that he was not angry at me. I remember Smith's (1999) words: "From now on, I have to be more

open, more willing to listen” (p. 51). Yes, it is openness that can help us to see the world differently and to understand it better. It is as Moules et al. (2015) wrote: “One must learn from the phenomenon, both about what it is a case of, but also about what this one case requires to deepen understanding of both the instance and its context” (p. 62). The phenomenon in this example is the greeting itself that I understood after a repeated encounter with the janitor, until the truth emerged.

Similarly, to do hermeneutic research is to go and encounter the phenomenon, know it, and follow its leads. In hermeneutics, following Moules’ et al. (2005), the “*method serves the topic and it is informed by the topic*” (p. 72). Since my study has strived to see in what ways Colombian philosophy teachers understand critical thinking, my encounter with such a phenomenon has demanded from me to converse (Lat.: *cum*: with other + *versari*: literally “to turn round with” [Harper, 2000b]), to turn and look at another region with my teacher-participants, instead of just turning away as I did for six months with that janitor. Precisely, I thought that the method for gathering information best suited to my phenomenon was the semi-structured interviews I did. I also kept doing a field journal and took notes during the interviews and the reading and re-reading of the transcripts to turn my look to other places, other words, or silences that I dis-regarded during the interviews themselves. All this information was part of my research data. Let me explain every one of them.

Interview-Conversations

The very success of an interview turns on its ability to generate a new vision of the subject *in the space of its discourse*. This subject thus ‘appears’ in this new light and new place ... in the ‘lateral’ space in-between interviewee and interviewer. (Aoki, 2011, p. 444)

I understand Aoki as saying that the phenomenon emerges in the middle of the conversation; there it shows something new about itself and such a newness tells if our interview or conversation was successful as a research strategy. However, the interviews were conducted by me, and I tried to “flatten the inherent hierarchy of the interviewer and interviewee positions” (Moules & Taylor, 2021) by sharing my part, that is, my questions or surprises as a high school teacher. In the interviews, I did endeavour to “engage in a reciprocity of perspectives” (Aoki, 2011, p. 228), characterized by an enjoyable conversation.

Looking intently into the composition of the word interview, I found some French influence in English that I ignored: *inter* and *view* may come “from French *entrevue*, verbal noun from *s’entrevoir* ‘to see each other, visit each other briefly, have a glimpse of’” (Harper, 2000k). Hence, an interview points to what might appear in the middle of the conversation that itself comes out of what the other has seen (*vu*), or better what we can see inside of what the other person has seen. Furthermore, interviews are usually about the interviewee’s experiences, that is, what the person has seen and experienced. Even if the interviewer’s question demand just opinions, those opinions are grounded, I suppose, on their experience.

Charlene Vanleeuwen et al. (2017) said that “when conducting hermeneutic conversations, researchers can share their experiences related to the research topic or bring perspectives contradictory to participants’ expressions to achieve the fusion of horizons” (p. 13). It is about sharing and living experiences where all participants and researchers can get the benefits of it, the assurances as well as the incertitude and doubts. Actually, in a good and rich conversation “what I learn changes my initial impression” (Smith, 2003, p. 107).

I know that these conversations challenged or at least made the teacher-participants think about some of their stances on teaching philosophy and critical thinking. They themselves

realized some things during the interviews and afterward, as I could notice during the interviews or in posterior emails.

In my study, I first did a one-hour semi-structured interview-conversation with every participant. I followed the set of guiding questions that I had prepared (Appendix B), although in the process of probing I spent too much time, so I had to leave some questions to the second interview. In the this interview, including the questions I did not ask in the first encounter, I added some questions that came to me after listening to the first interviews several times and catching some telling topics or even just simple expressions. During the interviews, I bore in mind that the research was about the topic, not about my participants' life. Some of this was reflected in one of my researcher's Journal entries:

For some time, I have been wondering if thematizing the teaching of philosophy in the interviews was correct. To a certain extent, I am concerned by the fact that perhaps by asking questions about the contents, moments of the class, and other matters of concrete teaching, I was not focusing on the phenomenon of critical thinking. Nonetheless, I recently understood, by reading again Moules et al. (2015), that this is precisely the geographical location of my phenomenon, of the understanding and teaching of critical thinking that philosophy teachers have. I suppose then that this place inevitably conditions the understanding and teaching of critical thinking. (August 19th, 2022)

This reflection is about the topic of teaching philosophy in high school, not my participant's life, but it shows how I was trying to be focused or maybe worried about keeping on the topic of my research. I certainly posed some questions about my participants' life, such as what they had studied in their postgraduate studies and why, or why they decided to study philosophy. Sometimes they took a lot of time to speak to that, which made me fear I was letting the

conversation stray from the topic. I certainly knew that the participants' life is not the objective of a hermeneutic study. In Moules et al.'s (2015) words,

This work is not an autobiography of the researcher; it has a topic other than the researcher's life, and for this reason, it is also not a biography of the participants' lives. Frequently, for this reason, individual participant quotes will not be named, as it matters less who it came from than what it has to say about the topic. (p. 124)

Indeed, the research is not about analysing the participants' lives but about what they can say about the topic or phenomenon. Although their talk about the phenomenon is mixed with the context itself and so their life and experiences (as philosophy teachers, in my case) are in the middle of the interview-conversations, the researcher is only interested in understanding better the phenomenon through the participants' words.

Thus, the guiding questions do "not formulate a research guide or protocol; they [are] simply a means to focus the inquiry on possible explorations that might be (or might not be) pursued" (Moules & Taylor, 2021, p. 3) about the phenomenon or how the participant has lived the phenomenon and understands it. However, as Gadamer (1975/2004) stated, "We say that we 'conduct' a conversation, but the more genuine a conversation is, the less its conduct lies within the will of either partner" (p. 385). Therefore, during the interviews, I tried to keep the conversation on the topic, respecting its flow and simultaneously listening to my participants and posing questions that held the phenomenon at the center of the conversation. It was not easy for me and I think that several times I strayed the road. For example, I remember asking a participant about a postgraduate study he mentioned, and then he talked about a problem he had at the university for about 3 or 4 minutes.

After carefully listening to the first interviews and identifying some topics and questions for the second encounter, I invited every participant to a follow-up interview. In this interview, I sought clarification or more depth in views expressed in the first encounter. Once I had the verbatim transcription of every interview, I sent it to the participants and asked them to let me know if they preferred to have erased or amended any part of the conversation. In that email, I also reminded them of the time when they could make these kinds of requests.

Implementation Measures

Writing this dissertation while living with the restrictions caused by the pandemic made me consider the possibility that Colombian schools and universities might be closed by the time I would be ready to meet the participants. That did not happen, although the COVID-19 measures remained in schools and the possibility of a new stronger wave of contagion was always high in Colombia. Taking that context into account, I decided to stay in Canada to do the interviews. In addition, I could not delay the development of my research due to the deadlines set by my sponsor. Upon the agreement with the participants, every session was audio-recorded (except for the first participant who did not allow me to do it). I tried to record the interviews through this tool, but at the time Google eliminated such a possibility and even after downloading the tool to do it, it did not work, which resulted in my losing about five minutes of the second interview (fortunately, following a friend's advice, I had decided to make a back-up recording with my tablet that I initiated five minutes after starting the interview). Thus, I had to do the recordings of the interviews with my tablet since the Google tool did not work.

This is probably a good example of how reality is dynamic and changes all the time, requiring methods of knowledge to adapt themselves to the new reality. I was forced to change some of the concrete actions planned to do my research. First, it was a pandemic that nobody

expected and even though I proposed some changes to my candidacy paper to contemplate the new context, other issues arose and demanded me to play by ear, as it is said. In investigating living matters, it seems that “Life can only be understood from the inside, in witnessing its performance, or how it unfolds in action” (Moules et al., 2015, p. 68), and when we understand that, we can/should move with it and do the turns it demands from us.

In the initial meeting with the participants and again in the first interview, they were asked whether they wanted to take part or keep participating in the research. They were informed that they were free to leave the research at any point and that their identities and their schools would be protected by using codes or pseudonyms unless they allow the use of their names (Appendix E). Two of my participants opted for pseudonyms; these were suggested by me but endorsed by them. The other two participants allowed me to use their real names. Before starting the interviews, I also reminded them that they could ask me to omit from the recording some opinion or content expressed during the meetings. Previous to opening the first interview, the participants received an email with the consent form (Appendix D) and a thorough description of the study, and they were asked to read it out loud the day of the first interview so this consent was recorded too. Any question they had was answered by me, and that was also recorded.

The interviews were transcribed verbatim, through the online software *Trint* (which was also approved by the research ethics approval of the university).³⁴ Once the software delivered every transcription, I read and simultaneously listened to the recording several times in order to

³⁴ This software is a paid online service that supports several languages for transcription. This is its web page: <https://trint.com/resources/dy80gpkw/why-trint-is-the-perfect-audio-tool-for-verbatim-transcription?tid=17c125aa89171-0f64fe3cfeccd8-a7d173c-100200-17c125aa8923bf#>

correct or complete anything the software did wrong or did not grasp. This procedure was done until I had the transcription completely revised. In general, it took me three or four days to do this process with every transcript.

My researcher's Journal

As part of the process of collecting information, I kept a journal to hold my thoughts, emotions, tensions, and questions during the process of conducting my research. As hermeneutic scholars argue, the researcher is not detached from the phenomenon because they themselves are part of what they are investigating (Smith, 2003). I am still a philosophy teacher who instills a conception of critical thinking in my courses at university and I keep asking myself what it is and how to teach and assess it. Furthermore, as I would like to go back to high school as a teacher, I cannot help thinking about it. However, looking for answers about why I should keep a journal of my research, I found Katja Murck & Franz Breuer's (2003) thought:

Why is it necessary to talk about ourselves and our presuppositions, choices, experiences, and actions during the research process in a sufficiently precise way so that it allows others to follow what we mean and did? It is necessary because without such reflection the outcomes of the research process are regarded as characteristics of objects, as "existing realities," despite their constructed nature that originates in the various choices and decisions researchers undertake during the process of researching. (p. 3)

Indeed, if I do not expose myself and leave in the open my presuppositions, experiences, expectations, and so forth, I only would appear as giving fixed realities unaltered by me. That is why, all along this thesis, I have already included a few journal entries that might enlighten the reader about my engagement in and about critical thinking in several matters. The readers would

probably not understand my research decisions and the deep relation that this research bears to my own life as a teacher, as a student, and as a regular person without these journal entries.

Note Taking

Finally, as another source of information, I took notes during the interview-conversations with my participants and the general time of my research. According to Margaret Muswazi & Edmore Nhamo (2013), notes “should also be reflective enough to include reflections of methods of data collection, analysis, reflection of ethical dilemmas and conflict as well as reflection of the observer’s frame of mind and emerging interpretations” (p. 13). As can be seen, notes are not only about the data collection, but also about the general process of making sense of the data and the experience of the researcher while doing their job. In the words of Nicholas Wolfinger (2002), field notes “serve the crucial role of connecting researchers and their subjects” (p. 92).

My Participants’ Teaching Tools

Following my supervisor’s advice, I asked my participants if they would share with me some of their tools for teaching, and they were more than generous. They openhandedly sent me their program outlines, copies of their exams or assignments, photos of their notes in class, and even a short textbook that a teacher made. Contrasting these elements with the contents of the interviews was helpful not only because I could see materialized some of their statements, but also because I could correct wrong interpretations I made in the interviews. I even obtained information that was not disclosed in our conversations which gave me a better image of their work.

Hermeneutic Interpretation

As I have described all sources chosen to do my study, I now address the task of making sense of the gathered information. Analysis, or better, interpretation in hermeneutics is unlike

other qualitative research approaches or methodologies. The very word *analysis* from the Greek word ἀνάλυσις (analysis) means losing, releasing, dissolving (Liddell & Scott, 1940a); in the end, it may represent the division of a unity into several parts. To analyse is to take apart a thing, to divide it into its constitutive elements. In that way, an analysis in traditional research conveys the separation of the information into different parts. Such separation in traditional qualitative data analysis is usually done according to the frequent repetition of discrete units.

However, hermeneutics is not interested in taking apart units or fragments which are selected due to their iteration in the interviews. Rather, a hermeneutic process of interpretation attends to the instances that the interpreter finds insightful about the phenomenon, even if the insight is caused by a single statement of the participant. Nonetheless, the whole narration of the participant is not copied in the dissertation nor taken to be interpreted but only the instance that called the attention of the researcher. The entire story, memory, or narrative is certainly taken into account as context but the focus of interpretation will be the particular instance that addressed the researcher.

For instance, during the interviews, one of my participants said that when the teacher mentioned in class names of the classical philosophers, such as Plato, Kant, and Saint Augustine, their students had a “heart attack,” which immediately took me to the topic of motivation and the canon of philosophy. Another teacher-participant related an experience and uttered the expression “spark in the brain” and made me imagine a classroom full of bright eyes and energy. None of the other participants used those or similar metaphors to express their students’ perceptions and reactions, but those two instances took me to stare at the topic of the Western canon of philosophy in high school, developed in Chapter Seven. As Ricœur (1986/1991) said, “The novel –the not-yet-said, the unheard-of– suddenly arises in language: here [lies a] living

metaphor, that is to say, a new relevance in predication” (p. 8). That is why metaphors are necessary for interpretations: because they convey novelty, new facets of the phenomenon.

Thus, in hermeneutics there is no analysis or decomposition of the whole into its parts but a release or liberation that allows the spectator to go through a landscape that can appreciate meaningful single points as well as an entire scenery from varied standpoints, points where one stands to see the whole land. Moules et al. (2015) explain: “Interpretive analysis can be thought of as a movement through the landscape of the topic, such that perspectives change with the varied points of view of interview participants” (p. 118). In the example above, I find two different, even opposing views, that seem to complement each other.

In the end, in hermeneutics “analysis is interpretation” (Moules et al., 2015, p. 118). Indeed, the interpretation brings new perspectives, and it changes the view that we had before. The objective of a hermeneutic exercise is not to find repetition, to verify what has already been found in other places and with other means. Hermes certainly took the messages of the gods to the mortals and he did it in his own words and by his own means: as a dream or a spirit or even a person; the words in form of a piece of advice or an order. Hermes was “a god of arrival, of youth, of fecundity, and fertility and agency” (Jardine, 2003a, p. 143). Hermeneutics’ fecundity and fertility are not going to be found in re-covering what was already un-covered but in discovering newness.

As I understand now, discovering is not only uncovering a side; it is taking out all that covers it: from its Latin meaning, the prefix *dis* points out movement “in different directions” (Lewis & Short, 1879c), perspectives, or points of resistance. The objective of a hermeneutic interpretation is “to deepen understanding of a topic in such a way that it can be seen differently and, ultimately, can be practiced differently” (Moules et al., 2015, p. 119) in every direction and

not only in a single and easy way. Hermeneutics interpretation is about dis-covering new possibilities and displacement of old and traditional stuck ways of seeing and being.

How did I do the interpretation? I was focused on “carefully opening up associations” (Moules et al., 2015, p. 117). In other words, I was attentive to the possible kinships with other facets of the phenomenon, particularly those that have not been dis-covered yet or those that had a stuck interpretation. In my case, this process started in the middle of the interviews, but it was developed when I started to reread the interview transcripts and take notes. However, it was in the writing process of my final chapters that my interpretations evolved deeper in time. Here, I could see the interrelatedness in which every phenomenon lives and the interpretation revealed a few relations that called me or hit me, and I tried to cultivate them patiently. Jardine (2003b) explained:

Interpretation does not begin with me. It only begins when something happens to me in my reading of a text, when something strikes me, tears me open, “wounds” me and leaves me vulnerable and open to the world, like the sensitivities of open flesh. (p. 59)

Then, as a researcher, I concentrated to let the phenomenon guide the search and let those relationships invite me. I tried to be carefully attentive to the phenomenon itself, to its kinships, to its manifestations “via literature and research interviews... developing interpretive conjectures and writing about them” (Moules et al., 2015, p. 118).

In general, in hermeneutics, we act from other abilities: feelings, imagination, intrigue, and doubts, which are among the different ways or roads that help us establish associations. However, these associations are organized or plotted, to use a term Ricœur (1986/1991) took from Aristotle to explain the structure of narrative, and not just put together regardless of any criteria. To be sure, “The plots we invent help us to shape our confused, formless, and in the last

resort mute temporal experience.... The plot's referential function lies in the capacity of fiction to shape this mute temporal experience" (p. 6). The plot I put forward in this dissertation was the organization I found of several episodes that my teacher-participants shared with me, but I do believe this plot might be the occasion to express and shape some of my participants' "tacit experience" of teaching critical thinking in philosophy that let us see some new facets of the phenomenon.

I was particularly interested in catching/creating possible associations to construct the plot that could emerge by taking together my participants' words and Ricoeurian *phronesis*, even though they did not know his philosophy. In more concrete terms, I was attentive to those instances where Ricoeurian theory might have been implicit in the discussions of their lived experiences of teaching critical thinking in Colombian high school philosophy. Even though they do not know Ricœur's theory of *phronesis*, they included in their teaching or their words some aspects that coincide with or at least took me to think of Ricœur's theory of *phronesis*. Therefore, I tried to catch and invite those pieces into my reflection and construction of the possible applications of Ricoeurian *phronesis* in critical thinking in high school.

In that way, I remained committed to Ricoeurian *phronesis*. From the interviews, I considered the possibilities for deepening my understanding of the implications of *phronesis* for critical thinking in high school. In this regard, even though I was the researcher, I also recognized myself (and my history) as a participant, and I shared with my participants some of my own experiences teaching philosophy in high school, although I tried to be brief so they would have more time to speak. Thus, in the interviews, I turned the lens back upon myself. In a hermeneutic bridge, I moved from the teacher-participants' words toward myself, and I bore in mind that I had to be careful not to force the Ricoeurian theory into the participants' words. I

lingered in-between, and I knew that I had to develop the skill of the tight-rope walker while balancing in a delicate equilibrium.

As a requirement to catch the relations of the phenomenon, I strived to patiently linger as much as possible with the interview transcripts, the teaching tools, and the related literature. It was through careful reading, and re-reading of the information collected, of words in the notes and journals, and the pertinent literature that I was gradually able to catch or see rays of light that illuminated the phenomenon showing new features or perspectives. These new rays were the raw material for interpretive conjectures, new ideas that revealed new facets of critical thinking. Nevertheless, this was not just to make up whatever came to my mind spontaneously. It tried to remain true to the phenomenon. The principal criterion to accept an interpretation is that “good interpretive work should disclose something about the meaningful existence of the interpreter and the world” (Moules et al., 2015, p. 119). The mark of a good and valid interpretation is that it reveals something meaningful about the phenomenon itself that lights up our understanding of our life. An appropriate hermeneutic summary of this chapter could be Jardine’s (2003b) words:

The interpretive truth of this tale lies in whether it can be read in a way that might help us more openly and generously understand the lives we are already living, that is whether it can be read in a way that provides us with the re-invigoration of new blood ... whether it provokes those who hear it to speak (i.e., whether it provokes generative, creative participation). (p. 60)

Certainly, that objective of hermeneutics is not just to better understand the phenomenon but also to better understand ourselves and to change the way we live. That is precisely my study’s purpose: to reinvigorate with the new blood of different interpretations the Colombian teaching

of critical thinking, beyond and deeper than the rationalistic critical reading so far predominantly exercised in the philosophy courses of high school.

Addressing Ethical Concerns

I consider ethics as the quality of decisions to take care of the participants' well-being. In this regard, ethics can go well beyond simply avoiding harm: Ethics (Greek: ἦθος: *ethos*. An “habitual character and disposition; moral character; habit, custom; an accustomed place.” [Liddell & Davidson, 1889]) is the character of the research itself, that is, the way it considers and takes care of the well-being of the participants. In this research, I strive to honor Ricœur's (1990/1992) ethical intention of “*aiming at the good life with and for others in just institutions*” (p. 180).

In terms of the institutional dimension of my research, I received approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board on February 1st, 2022 (ID: Pro00116802. Appendix F). Before generating data, as previously mentioned, I encountered each of my four participants. After that meeting, I provided them with a short document with all the relevant information about the research and my personal information in case they wanted to talk to me later. That document included basic information (research title and question, main purpose, data collection timeline), a copy of the consent form, explanations about their freedom to leave the research at any point, the use of pseudonyms to cover their identity, the possibilities of recording, and the number of meetings required with the description of the activities involved, including possible questions for the interview-conversations.

Since I knew that having been a teacher at the National Pedagogical University could bring certain prestige and my participants could be biased or think their knowledge is less

worthy, I did not emphasise my experience at that university; rather, when I mentioned my experience as a teacher, I talked about my teaching experience in high school.

My Role as a Researcher

In the process of conducting international hermeneutic research, the researcher's positionality can be viewed as a cultural insider (i.e., collecting data within one's cultural community), cultural outsider (i.e., collecting data outside of one's cultural community), or a combination of both. (VanLeeuwen, Guo-Brennan & Weeks, 2017, p. 4)

Doing my research about my cultural community, my home country, I think that I was regarded as someone who had a legitimate "respect and genuine curiosity" (Moules & Taylor, 2021, p. 3) about Colombian education. I was a cultural insider, and I was faced with the challenge of letting the participants get to know me from my first contact with them. My attitude was of opening and listening to understand better. More concretely, I tried to position myself as a colleague and researcher interested in their thoughts and experiences as high school teachers. I think that openly talking to them about my experiences in high school, helped me to position myself as a teacher who only wanted to improve his teaching practices and contribute to Colombian education and society.

I also knew that there were some disadvantages due to my personal history as a Ph.D. student in Canada; I felt that sometimes my participants gave me certain credit or prestige. The latter could have led the participants to see me as a figure of authority, which perhaps inhibited their freedom to respond to the questions in the conversations. Before such a possibility, when I sensed that they were giving me a certain authority, I explained to them that their views had the same value as my voice and that we were both working for the same goal of understanding better based on our experiences.

Benefits for the Participants

Bearing in mind the Ricoeurian ethical motto, it is undeniable that for me the main objective of the research was to contribute to the realization of others' good life, in this case, the participants. Of course, the latter does not mean that I was responsible for the realization of such a good life. Nevertheless, a very important part of the image of a good life is the professional dimension, which in the participants' case is their teaching and their relationships with their students and colleagues.

Since my research was about the teachers' understanding of critical thinking, I know that my investigation contributed to the teachers' reflection and examination of their understanding of the aims of teaching/learning philosophy and critical thinking in high school and the feasible ways to do it. A couple of times, they expressed how the questions I posed made them think about something new in their practice and when this happened, I allowed them the time to reflect on it, or even if I felt I had to say something to re-ensure them, I did. I think that one of the most important gains for all teachers involved in this investigation could have been their learning about their own teacher's personality, prejudices, and practices since in hermeneutics self-understanding is an indirect result. As Smith (1999) noted, the

“effective historical consciousness” denotes the way that self-understanding (personal and collective) always takes place within a horizon of past, present, and future, a horizon in which I understand myself “now” through recognizing myself as having a past, a being oriented towards a future which itself will somehow contain the “now.” What is presupposed is an understanding of historical processes as open and dynamic, always changing. (p. 49)

Indeed, some of the questions I posed to my participants caused certain surprises, as some of them told me, and made them reflect on their understandings and practices in class.

Informed Consent

In my study, an email invitation (Appendix E) was sent to prospective participants and I included one consent form (Appendix D) to participate in the study. Moreover, they read the consent form out loud before starting the interview and I encouraged them to pose any questions they had. Both documents asked teachers if they wanted to remain anonymous in the study or be openly acknowledged and I asked them that again when they finished reading the consent form.

Furthermore, during the realization of the study, usually before starting the interview, but also in the email in which I sent them the transcripts of the interviews, I reminded the participants that they could withdraw from the study at any time and the proper time to do it. According to Haram Klykken (2021), asking participants again for their consent during the research implies that the participants are “more informed, or knowledgeable... than during recruitment” (p. 7) since they know better the study. Therefore, they could make decisions better informed and conscious of their role and responsibilities which might have improved their commitment to the activities.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

According to the study approach, it is clear the focus of the research was the teachers’ understanding and pedagogy of critical thinking, which means that no students, parents, or administrative personnel were included in this study since the focus was not on how critical teachers were but rather on what was their understanding of critical thinking according to their own experiences teaching it. Therefore, no testing of teacher participants’ knowledge took place.

Another clear limitation of my study was the fact that I was not planning to observe the participants' classes in their schools. Indeed, this study was focused on comprehending participants' experiences and understandings of critical thinking and not confronting their thoughts with their practice in the classroom nor examining the specific methods of teaching critical thinking. However, as I am considering now, such an observation of teachers' lessons could follow after my study, either as part of a post-doc or as part of research studies conducted in the university or high school where I work after finishing my Ph.D.

Hermeneutic Trustworthiness

Rigor in hermeneutics is the careful attention to the treatment of the topic. (Moules, et al., 2015, p. 172)

Here, the acceptability of this research is better understood as rigor to the adherence to the phenomenon instead of the strict observance of a method. The strictness comes to be the adaptability of the ways adopted to approach the phenomenon and know its dynamicity and varied relationalities, activities, states, and movements. It is precisely such malleability of the hermeneutic approach itself that allows us to know better the phenomenon since the approach changes as the phenomenon demands it. Smith (1999) stated that "the mark of good interpretative research is not in the degree to which it follows a specified methodological agenda, but in the degree to which it can show understanding of what it is that is being investigated" (p. 41). These words by Smith are probably the central point of hermeneutic trustworthiness and its very aim: to show understanding of the phenomenon investigated, to show that the phenomenon was deeply heard. To sum up, Moules (2002) affirmed that hermeneutics is evaluated by particular criteria of judgment, validity, and credibility. Thus, it does not follow the common

scientific inquiry criteria. The criteria by which I thought of the trustworthiness of my study were harmony, evocative power, and responsibility. Allow me to present everyone of them.

Harmony

Harmony is about the cohesion and coherence among all the sections of the text, particularly the methodological account, the phenomenon, and its interpretation. Any research project must account for the coherent integration of all its parts and the final results. For Moules et al., (2015), “Hermeneutics is not about explanation but understanding, and understanding can only be shared when it is put forward in a convincing, understandable, and telling way” (p. 172). Indeed, hermeneutics does not try to convince as the ancient sophists did the citizens of the Greek cities. It is not about strict arguments and logic against what the common experience tells, but precisely the harmonious relation of arguments with the lived experience, so dear to phenomenology, that the hermeneutic account shows its strength and trustworthiness through the interpretations. I could say with Ricœur (1986/1991) that the interpretation I reach “combines narrative coherence with conformity to the documents” (p. 7) as in any historical interpretation. That is why I included quotations from my participants as much as possible, (frequently followed by the original Spanish) so the reader may check for themselves if my interpretations are harmonious with what everyone expressed in the interviews and the documents that they shared with me. As in any other activity played by ear, hermeneutics asks the researcher to be attentive to the proper tempo to catch the rhythm of the phenomenon.

Evocative Power

To judge a text or research through the harmony of its parts is related to how the text, in this case, the interpretation, might evoke or call again the phenomenon to the reader. The evocative power is what the text achieves or causes in us when reading it: In the same way that

the melody of a beautiful song takes us to other places, times, and feelings, the reading of a good hermeneutic study can take us to see and live the phenomenon when we find it in our past or future (in our imagination).

I certainly experienced such a power when listening and reading my participants' interviews. A few times, I could not believe that something had escaped my attention, namely the power of practice and motivation in the training of critical thinking that a teacher made me realize. This is an evocative power of the text or the study itself that calls me to see the phenomenon and live it again. This aspect of a hermeneutic study is very similar to the evocative power in a phenomenological study; in this aspect phenomenology and hermeneutics are very close (D. Jardine, personal communication, May 15th, 2021). However, if the reader has no experience teaching philosophy in high school, the evocative power can be seen by understanding something differently, challenging their prejudices or convictions, or at least as the coherent interpretation that I just mentioned in the criterion of harmony. In Davey's, (2006), words, "a hermeneutic experience worthy of the name disrupts the expectancies one has of an artwork or text so that one is forced to think again" (p. 13).

The evocative power of the hermeneutic application is not only about our appreciation of the phenomenon. "Hermeneutics demands that we proceed delicately and yet wholeheartedly, and as a result of what we study, we carry ourselves differently, and we live differently". (Moules et al., 2015, p. 120). By understanding something differently, we necessarily act differently with it, even though perhaps our exterior movements seem the same as before. What might have changed after the new understanding is the tact we apply, that is, that "special sensitivity and sensitiveness to situations and how to behave in them" (Gadamer, 1975/2004, pp.

14-15). We could say that by reading a sound hermeneutic study, we can see how different our relation with the phenomenon could be.

Responsibility

The best qualitative research might be more like outstanding literature: on reading it, you feel joined to the broader world in new and refreshing ways. (Smith, 2018, p. 3)

To do hermeneutic research is not to talk about the researcher or the participants but the phenomenon, in my case, the teachers' understanding of critical thinking and the new insights that the conversations with them bring to the fore. So, the main responsibility is with the phenomenon that shows itself in the participants' words.

However, the purpose [of hermeneutics] is not to translate my subjectivity out of the picture but to take it up with a new sense of responsibility –to make proposals about the world we share with the aim of deepening our collective understanding of it. (Smith, 1999, p. 42)

I lived this responsibility when trying not to stray in conversations and lose the phenomenon; it was not for me to take the role of the teacher in the interviews-conversations and hinder the participants' voices and model their understanding. Naturally, as a researcher I had to take initiative, to lead these activities, so I was responsible for the success of those activities. This is the difficult place between the letting-be of the phenomenon and the sense of control in traditional qualitative research. Hermeneutics places itself in the middle: It does not want to control, but it requires a sense of responsibility to keep the research on the right path (Smits, personal communication, March 7th, 2020).

In this chapter, I have presented the specific actions and decisions that I applied during my research: the recruitment of my participants, the specific methods for gathering information,

the way I developed the interpretation on the information gathered. I also accounted for the ethical concerns, the measures taken about them, the limitations and delimitation of this study, and finally, the hermeneutic trustworthiness. From now on, I present my participants and my findings.

Chapter Six: Inviting the Phenomenon to Appear

In this chapter, I depict my first steps in empirical research. Specifically, I introduce the process of knowing my teacher-participants, the analysis and interpretation of the information collected, and its translation into English. Before that, however, I speak about my own experience doing empirical research. I suppose that I talk to the other one that lives in me and is closer to traditional Western philosophy research than to social sciences evidenced-based studies. To a certain extent, this chapter is a complement to Chapter Five which presented my hermeneutic approach to the phenomenon with the specific strategies I proposed and applied.

Practice Makes Perfect!

I was living in Montreal and studying French when I did my candidacy exam, and the Research Ethics Board approved my study (February 1st, 2022). I immediately commenced writing emails to the Colombian institutions that had accepted to help me find my participants: the Bachelor's of Philosophy and the Ph.D. program of the National Pedagogical University, the collective of philosophy teachers called *RedFilo* (Lit.: Net of philosophers), and *Socolfil* (Colombian society of philosophers). However, I did not ask them at the same time to send the invitations. First, I only requested the head of *RedFilo*, then the heads of the programs at the National Pedagogical University, and finally *Socolfil*.

I patiently had to wait for those organizations to send the emails, but patience was the least of my difficulties. To gather my participants was not an easy task, at least for my impatient being, not only considering that I was not living in Colombia during the recruitment process, but also because I did not receive many emails from teachers interested in participating in the study. Regarding the first point, being abroad added the difficulty of contacting online the institutions that accepted to help me. Sometimes the person in charge of sending/answering the emails took

too long to send me an answer; and sometimes they did not even replay, so I had to send another email which meant to extend the waiting time and my anxiety. The second point, about the number of potential participants, is the fact that I was expecting many people to volunteer, but only seven people did it, and in the end only four decided to get involved in the study.

Soon after the first invitation from *RedFilo*, I received emails from two teachers. My first meeting was with Beatriz (pseudonym) in mid-February and the interview was on March 9th. Then, I decided to look for other collectives of teachers to ask them to send invitations. In hindsight, I think that I quickly found my participants: in about six months. The last interview was with Alfredo on August 3rd, 2022. By the end of August, I had all interview transcriptions and had sent them to my participants so they could check them and let me know if they wanted to make any amendments.

By that time (August 2022), my ICETEX scholarship finished, so I was free to come back to my home country, and there I commenced to read and re-read the interviews and take notes. I also started to see some of my mistakes in posing questions and guiding the interviews that I had not noticed before. I certainly observed some of my errors and tried to correct them “during” interviews, but it seems it was not that easy because I repeated them. Sometimes, I also was able to foresee what I was going to do, so I also avoided them many times. In the end, as I have often witnessed, practice makes perfect, or as we say in Spanish *la práctica hace al maestro* (practice makes the *maestro*). As Moules et al. (2015) say, “Conducting interviews in hermeneutic research is a skillful and practiced art” (p. 87). I would have liked to have had more practice before doing the actual interviews for my study to develop that skillful art. This is but the first step, I hope, in the path of becoming a researcher. A note in my research journal speaks to the

struggles, realizations, reliefs, and learnings of this process of research that is new to me, at least in the actual practice:³⁵

This exercise of reading and rereading the interviews shows me two different and almost contradictory experiences. On the one hand, a certain pain in recognizing that I was wrong many times when posing the questions, either because they were closed, and thus I biased the participant, or because I failed to see in their words the theme that could perhaps better reveal the phenomenon and I probed about unimportant matters. On the other hand, the gratifying experience of beginning to see hidden elements of the phenomenon in the participants' words. Little by little, some elements of critical thinking appeared to me as worth observing since they revealed unknown or denied elements of it. But this experience has also been somewhat painful for me, because sometimes as soon as something new is shown, it immediately hides. I felt the helplessness of not being able to grasp it clearly, so I doubted if I really saw it or if there was something new in the words of the teacher with whom I was speaking. (August 17th, 2022)

As I see it, this note reflects some parts of my first experience of doing empirical research, that probably any novice researchers have observed in themselves. I do not feel any shame in revealing that because it also shows me that I am understanding things that before were obscure to me. I better comprehend Pinar's et al. (2008) words: "human understanding, then, occurs in actual, lived situations" (p. 424) instead of in the accumulation of theories in our memory.

³⁵ It is not totally new to me since I had already met some of its practice being a student of a Master's in Education, and being a teacher of educational research. Moreover, as an undergraduate teacher and preservice teachers' tutor, I guided several students to develop their research exercises.

This painful and paradoxically enjoyable process of learning to do empirical research began with the very search for the participants. What came later? Let me show a few more experiences of learning, now in terms of analysis and interpretation.

Finding Threads to Weave

At last! I thought. When I finally found my participants, finished the interviews, checked them, and corrected the transcriptions, I started to wonder how to commence to analyze and interpret the conversations we had. It was the time to put into practice all the theories that I had learned about hermeneutics, and I was confident that my knowledge would allow me to do it without delay. Nevertheless, it was not that easy.

I was surprised when I started to read and re-read those notes and the interview transcripts. Slowly but surely, I started to find words, sentences, and metaphors that called me and pointed to several “nodes” of thinking. To be sure, “Once translated, Ricœur (1981) suggested the data never stand alone; their meanings are always dependent on the researcher and the reader” (Moules, 2002, p. 14). It was in the middle of that relationship between the transcripts and my own experiences/prejudices of teaching philosophy and critical thinking that meanings started to emerge.

However, what I probably found most fascinating, thinking in retrospect, is that this process was similar for every interview. I was always asking myself if the questions that I posed were correct or important, if the phenomenon was at the center, or if I let related topics direct my interview. During the interviews, I often thought that the teachers’ answers did not offer much about critical thinking, even though they were directly talking about it. I certainly was focused on trying to “capture” the appearances of the phenomenon, but this very focus probably made me grow worried about not finding it. I suppose that in those moments emerged my lack of

confidence and my fears, but they were gone when I started to listen again to the recordings and re-read the transcriptions. For instance, when I read the interviews, I felt that the teachers spoke among themselves: one said something and the other complemented it or responded to it. All this seems congruent with Pinar's et al. (2008) perspective on curriculum:

to understand curriculum, then, requires “reading –i. e. interpreting– those discourses produced by the field. “Practice” itself is a text... Understanding is also political, implying transformation of those “discursive fields” which are curriculum and teaching as they are reinterpreted, that is to say, understood”. (p. 50)

Then, understanding my participants' views and experiences implied a reading that might have gradually and slowly transformed my understanding of the phenomenon. In this process, the phenomenon seemed to appear and dis-appear at the same time; it was difficult to grab it, see it, or even imagine it. In my notebook, I wrote several possible lines of topics or at least some possible themes that seem to invite me to think. During this process, I tried to bear in mind that “the topic asks for rigor from us, an attentiveness, and a discipline to stay with it and stay true to it” (Moules, et al., 2015, p. 72). Then, my commitment was to read and re-read patiently, to take notes in my notebook, and keep saving my memories in my research journal, because “an address might not always be sudden; instead, it may have lingered for years and nagged in maybe not quite noticeable ways” (Moules, et al., 2015, p. 72).

It is wonderful what one can find when reading a transcript several times. I only lived something similar when I watched a movie or read a paper several times: a small detail, a single word, suddenly appeared and strengthen the whole thing, the world that I first saw, or a completely new one. Such kind of experiences might take the reader to understand that the word repetition (*re*: again + *petere*: “to go to; attack; strive after; ask for, beseech” [Harper, 2000q])

does not mean only to do the same once and again, but to go again with a stronger (*re*) attitude or purpose and then other worlds can emerge. As McCaffrey, Raffin-Bouchal, and Moules (2012) clearly stated, “For understanding to take place, in the sense of a new appreciation of a topic rather than merely the acquisition of information, there has to be openness, a freedom and a surrender of the self” (p. 223). Such an opening and surrender happens, I dare to think, when we look at each other in the eye, because we are open, sincere, and truthful with our partner of conversation. Probably, surrender and openness are also required in translation, where hospitality might be the highest value as, I will explain now inspired in Ricœur’s philosophy.

Translation: A Path of Hospitality

I will speak about the difficulties linked to translation as a wager, easier said than done and occasionally impossible to take up. These difficulties are accurately summarized in the term ‘test’ [*épreuve*], in the double sense of ‘ordeal’ [*peine endurée*] and ‘probation’: testing period, as we say, of a plan, of a desire or perhaps even of an urge, the urge to translate. (Ricœur, 2004/2006, p. 3)

Ricœur’s words about translation signalled to me the first and most superficial aspects of the challenge of translating my participants’ words and even my own. I thought that I would not face any difficulty translating my words in the letter of invitation, the email, and the interview questions that I directly wrote down in English. It was easier thought than done. It was and is still a problematic task and a test of my language level, and I have to admit that I did not enjoy it. Since all my participants were Spanish speakers, and none of them was a fluent anglophone, I made the interviews in Spanish. Hence, I also translated into Spanish all the documents (consent form, brief presentation of the project, anonymity waive.) they had to read, as well as the interview questions.

Regarding the documents, my first attempt was to translate them myself, but I struggled too much. I did not feel comfortable, but I had to do it, I had the urge. My vocabulary range was not enough to do it, probably due to my short experience living the language in English-speaking contexts (about two years in total in my whole life). Certainly, sometimes I had to stop because I did not find equivalent expressions between the two languages (English and Spanish).

As Ricœur (2004/2006) states, the “work is advanced with some salvaging and some acceptance of loss” (p. 3). The loss that I would like to highlight now is related to the cultural differences between Canada and Colombia which sometimes led me to introduce footnotes to make aware the reader about specific differences in both educational system, history, or just specific words/phenomena. Nonetheless, these difficulties cannot cover some insightful facets of the translation process. As Claudia Ruitenberg et al., (2016) put it: “translation can be used not only to repair cultural and linguistic gaps but also to call attention to them” (p. 613). I would even go further: translation *demand*s to highlight cultural differences, which might include the experience that a concept tries to convey, but also historical facts, and sheer phenomena.

My mind throws me immediately to the experience of *encomienda* in South America (briefly explained in page 52) or the word *muchacho* (explained in footnote # 43). Cases as these made me aware of the deep differences between both worlds (of Canada and Colombia) that I had not noticed during my stay in Edmonton or Montreal. Thus, translation difficulties work as a highlighter that helps culture and history shine above the common and habitual appearances and beliefs that shade cultural identity. This experience helped me better understand how a language is nurtured, enriched by the cultural phenomena intrinsically tied to the history of the people who speaks it. As an example, the word in Quebec’s French for stingy comes to my mind: *seraphin* (not *radin*, as in France), since an ancient TV program had a character with that name who was

extremely stingy. It also surprised me to notice that some of the bad words in Quebec come from the religious (catholic) language, but I think now I understand that one possible reason to that is the role of the catholic church in Quebec's history.

By being aware of particular words that come from specific historical events, make me wonder if Canadian process of colonization by French or English people had also a similar phenomenon as *encomienda* or what the strategies/institutions were, if any, used by colonizers to take advantage of Indigenous peoples. Here translation, or better, its difficulty in finding exact equivalents seems to entice processes of questioning about the other culture into which a word is looked for. As Ricœur (2004/2006) said, translation implies a work of hospitality of the other as a guest to our own language. In his own words, "Linguistic hospitality, then, where the pleasure of dwelling in the other's language is balanced by the pleasure of receiving the foreign word at home, in one's own welcoming house" (p. 10).

In the end, as a result of a loss of meaning, as pointed by Ricœur in the quote above, and the invitation to the others' language to be our guest, I also appreciate the questions or wondering about Canadian culture and history that such loss/invitation dynamics enticed. I am curious, and I know some day that curiosity will be satisfied, to a certain extent. In the meantime, I am grateful to *Pachamama* for the troubles rendered by living in the real Tower of Babel of qualitative intercultural research (Ruitenberget al., 2016).

Concrete procedures. In general, I did the translations through the Google translation tool. When I contrasted the first translation, I noticed that it was almost perfect when translating from Spanish into English –I cannot say the same for other languages like Latin or German into Spanish, as I have tried several times; the software just cannot do it–. That quick text was enough to decide to use Google Translator for the task at hand.

Checking the translations of my participants' interviews, the software only made a few mistakes, according to my opinion. I certainly had to check every translation by comparing it to the original. I learned a few English words. One more benefit of using this software was the time-saved. Whilst it could take me fifteen minutes to translate a page, the software could translate the whole interview in a minute, and it would take me only half an hour to check it out.

However, I did not translate the whole interview with every participant. I decided just to translate only the fragments selected to include in the dissertation. I thought that it was better to keep reading the interviews in the original language, so as to understand better what the teachers wanted to say. I think some of the richness of their words would have been lost, had I translated the whole interviews into English to interpret that source. In addition, I think that my English is still too literal, and I cannot see or understand the richness of their words and expressions. My belief was/is that I would know better my participants themselves if I keep reading and listening to them in their/our own language. By the way, I have not introduced my participants or conversation partners. I pass now to my teacher-participants' lives teaching philosophy in high school and their understanding of critical thinking.

My Participants' *Visage*

Hermeneutic understanding is always tied to a concrete situation, it is always applied, consciously or otherwise, to a particular case – *this* student, *this* event, in *this* context.

(Moules, et al., 2015, p. 63)

Following that initial quote, I strived to understand some important characteristics of *this* teacher-participant and *this* other participant, in order to catch the concrete situation of their teaching, their school, and their students. While talking to my participants in the online meetings, I looked at their faces (when they turned on their computer cameras) and listened to their words

through which I was able to reconstruct part of their teaching *visage* that now I present. I describe my participants' professional formation and the context of teaching philosophy along with their "philosophy teaching," that is, their beliefs and commitments about their teaching practice and their understanding of critical thinking. To a certain extent, I depict their teaching face.

I like the French word for face: *visage*. It seems to contain the French word for a wise person (*sage*) and the Latin word for strength (*vi*) as if a person's power were in the wisdom reflected in their words, thoughts, and actions, that is, in their face. In English we say that we look someone in the eye when we stand strong to say something to someone; as I understand it, it is another way to say that we *face* someone or some situation to hold our view. My participants looked me in the eye and showed me what they do every day in their philosophy classes. I now understand why in Colombia many scholars dedicated to topics of education defend the idea that pedagogy (or curriculum theory in Anglo-American words) is a science, that is, a form of knowledge valid and worthy of respect and cultivation. Buried in every philosophy teacher's experience is a "scientific" treasure that few people dare to search and cultivate.

Beatriz and her Joy of "Discovering the Natural Philosopher"

This young female teacher has had about four years of experience teaching philosophy in high school. Beatriz (a pseudonym) studied *Licenciatura en Filosofía e Historia*³⁶ in Bogotá.

³⁶ Some universities in Colombia offer philosophy programs combined with other school subjects, such as history, literature, or others. To my knowledge, there are about eight possible combinations with philosophy. Twenty years ago, only people with titles of *Licenciatura* or *normalista* could teach in public schools. Now, that is not necessary and even professionals in other fields (engineers, physicians,

Although she first applied to study foreign languages (English and French) at the National Pedagogical University in *Bogotá*, she was not admitted. Then, she applied to a private university to study at night (from 6:00 pm to 10:00 pm) to be able to work during the day. Due to different personal and familial problems, it took her ten years to finish her Bachelor's, mainly because she had to work part or full-time to be able to pay tuition fees and living expenses.³⁷ Indeed, she comes from a middle-class family from *Boyacá*, a rural region three-hour by bus from *Bogotá*.

Her family has a tradition of teachers, especially from her mother's side. This factor made her study in a public high school with an emphasis on education. When she finished high school, she studied first at an *Escuela Normal* (Normal school) that is, a college that prepares young people to work as teachers. After a year and a half, she abandoned it and, later on, started to study at a university. In the end, she has been studying and practicing pedagogy since ninth grade in high school. She acknowledges a debt to the *Normal* school in terms of her current ways of teaching.

Beatriz's curricula of philosophy. Such a background motivated her to study a *Licenciatura* rather than just a *professional* (Bachelor) of philosophy. She clearly states that she

chemists, etc.) may teach in public schools. In the case of philosophy, professionals of Theology, Religious studies, and Social sciences. In private schools, anyone could teach any subject since no law regulates this matter. I have listened that even teachers of physics have been responsible for teaching philosophy to complete their number of weekly hours of teaching.

³⁷ In Colombian public universities, students do not pay tuition fees, or pay very little according to their parents' income, and might benefit from free lunch. I knew some students that paid about ten Canadian dollars, while others pay two hundred. Only those people that already had a bachelor's degree have to pay full tuition fees (about a thousand dollars in 2018) per semester.

likes teaching philosophy; she enjoys finding “the child philosopher that we all have inside.” She has worked in several schools and, currently, she is working in a high-status school in northern *Bogotá* where she teaches philosophy from fifth to eleventh grade. Regarding her philosophy lessons in tenth and eleventh grade, she does not follow any textbook or fix guidelines. Instead, she freely selects the topics to study every year and prepares her lessons trying to gain the students’ attention. However, she follows the classical topics and authors of the traditional Western philosophy combined with other “non-philosophical,” especially through debates in class.

When examining her program grade by grade, which she kindly allowed me to observe, it is evident that the traditional Western canon of philosophy marks her program. Here is the list of main objectives for each grade, as I translated them:

Table 1.

Beatriz’s Philosophy Program Main Objective from 5th to 11th Grade

| Grade | Objective |
|-------|---|
| 5 | Relate the concept of philosophy and its application in its specific reality. |
| 6 | Identify the philosophical thought of the Ancient Age, its representatives, and methods. |
| 7 | Identify the historical context of the Middle Ages with its main philosophical postulates and the connection of these with its recent personal, social and intellectual Being. |
| 8 | Identify the historical context of the Modern Age, its main philosophical postulates, and articulates them with its own perspectives for the treatment of philosophical problems. |
| 9 | Identify the main historical facts that mark the Contemporary Age (20th century) and some philosophical problems developed in its context. |
| 10 | Deepen the philosophical foundation through the history of Western philosophy, its branches, schools, currents, and the dialogue of these with problems of the personal, school, family, and social sphere. |
| 11 | Identify the main philosophical schools by carrying out a theoretical analysis of them, managing to compare them with each other. In addition to knowing Latin American philosophy and its main postulates. |

She teaches according to historical order. For each time period, she selects the most renowned Western philosophers. I only offer the example of Grade 8. The authors are Descartes, Locke, Hume, and Kant. However, in every grade, she also works on a few uncommon topics. Some of them are: women's role in modernity, antecedents of Christian thought, industrial revolution, imperialism, World War I and II, feminism, cold war, philosophy in Latin America, training in critical reading, and bioethics.

As she told me during the interviews, she includes philosophers' sources, but also other kinds of materials such as videos, movies, journal articles, etc., to promote her students to think or, as she says, "to philosophize." She thinks that she is not an orthodox philosopher, meaning that she does open spaces in her class to other subjects that might not appear philosophical according to Western tradition. She maintains that she is more interested in her students' thinking and reflecting on their personal and social reality than in them repeating by heart the philosophers' theories and concepts. As I understood from the two interviews, she thinks that one of the things that philosophy might offer to adolescents is the opportunity to incite their moral and political reflection, and she opens spaces in their lessons to such topics.

Beatriz's understanding of critical thinking. In terms of her understanding of critical thinking, she clearly stated that it "is a 21st-century ability" related to discriminating information and deciding what to believe. In her words:

to develop critical thinking with the aim that my students are capable of existing, of being in this complex world and learning to decide what to believe and what not. And well, how those decisions must be investigated, sought, questioned. To be, well, certain about your own beliefs. In addition, they are facing an avalanche of information and they are one finger, one click away from knowing anything.

As I see it, she relates critical thinking first to the wealth of information accessible to anyone, but she also links it to existence, that is, to day-to-day circumstances in which everyone should be able to examine and question not only the information and world outside us, but the world inside as well since our “decisions must be investigated, sought, questioned.” Although she took a particular path to describe and justify her understanding of critical thinking, it seems that critical thinking is precisely the ability to examine any text or theory, any phenomenon, in order to make sound decisions.

Catalina and her Long Experience

Catalina (a pseudonym) is a teacher who already has more than twenty years of teaching experience. She worked for about a decade at a University in Armenia, in a warm city of Colombia. When she won the “contest”³⁸ and got selected to work in a public school in *Armenia*, she stopped teaching at the university and started to teach in high school. Nowadays, she is in her tenth year of teaching philosophy in high school one hour per week with every class; she teaches philosophy to five groups of tenth grade, but she also teaches social sciences to other grades.

She told me that she started to study other careers before philosophy: physics, computer systems, and painting, but when the university opened the Bachelor’s of Philosophy, she immediately decided to follow that path. After her Bachelor’s, she studied an *Especialización en*

³⁸ In Colombia, we do not name “selection process” but “contest (*concurso*)” when a university opens tenure track positions. Indeed, it is so difficult, infrequent, and scant the places offered that it seems to be a contest. It includes eliminatory tests, stages, and points, besides the high profile required to participate. Thus, certain notion of luck seems to be included in the process.

Ética y Pedagogía (Lit.: Specialization of Ethics and Pedagogy),³⁹ and finally, she pursued a Master in Education and Research. Her interest, I see, is focused on didactics of philosophy; actually, it was that interest that motivated her to participate in my study.

Catalina is a very active teacher in the school. She started a school journal by herself and, after a few years, other teachers joined her and formed a team. She also gathers students who want to study philosophy in their free time. Once a year, she prepares a small conference on philosophy and invites other schools to philosophize about a specific topic. In the same vein, she and her volunteer students participate in similar events in other schools. At the end of 2021, they participated in the National Philosophy Olympiad (*Olimpiadas Nacionales de Filosofía*) organized by the National Pedagogical University in *Bogotá*.

She expresses her apparent disillusion about the lack of interest and results of the majority of her students, despite her efforts to prepare activities and materials. She thinks that her students do not have the cognitive abilities to learn philosophy, as she says that “they do not have what it takes” (“*ellos no tienen con qué*”)⁴⁰ and besides that, they are not interested in it. She is undoubtedly a passionate teacher that strives strongly to engage their colleagues and students in

³⁹ In Colombia, we have a study of one year that is done after the bachelor’s and, usually, before the Master’s. It is considered a postgraduate study.

⁴⁰ According to APA (7th edition), translations should not be put between inverted commas since they are not direct words from the original. However, in order for the reader to clearly distinguish my participants’ words (as translated by me), I decided to use inverted commas and follow the translation with the original Spanish when necessary, that is, when the translation is difficult.

school activities. She believes, I dare to say, that education is one possible way to improve in life, grow, and build a better society.

Catalina’s curriculum. In our first meeting, she said that she would participate gladly because she wanted to “know once and for all what we [teachers] should do, how should we teach so the students really learn.” She was very much interested in talking about a small textbook (*Módulo*, as she calls it) that she is building to teach philosophy to her students. That resource includes some philosophical texts, a few exercises, and additional material (texts, YouTube videos, movies) accessible through a “Scan Code.” Such a tool reflects her thoughts about philosophy in high school and her students’ necessities. She stated that most of the students in her school have many difficulties reading even in the literal sense, so her textbook is designed to help students in improving their reading level. Such a textbook included only indirect sources and some fragments with exercises to be developed in the book itself (in Colombia there is no compulsory set of topics or methodology to teach in the class of philosophy). Her textbook includes the following authors and topics:

Table 2.

Topics and Resources of Catalina’s Textbook

| Unit | Topic | Text/ re-source |
|--|---|--|
| Introduction (2 pages) | | Russel’s 10 Commandments |
| 1 What is Philosophy? (13 pages) | Astonishment (<i>Asombro</i>) What is knowledge? | Gaarder (2003) <i>Sophie’s World: A Novel About the History of Philosophy</i> Penguin Random House (n.d.) <i>What is Knowledge?</i> Savater (2015) <i>The Questions of Life.</i> |
| 2 Logics (20 pages) | Logics, arguments, and Fallacies Critical thinking | Calandra (1994) <i>What is Critical Thinking?</i> Youtube video: <i>What is Logics?</i> |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| 3 Political Systems (9 pages) | Totalitarianism Authoritarianism Democracy | Movie <i>Die Welle</i> (Gansel, 2008) Youtube video: <i>History of Democracy</i> |
| 4 Moral Philosophy (7 pages) | Ethics and moral Moral, rights, and religion Civic ethics, applied ethics, and international ethics Political philosophy | None: only the summary of the different contents. |

The textbook is organized according to three of the traditional philosophical problems or branches (logic, politics, and ethics), although she does not include any text by the classical philosophers. The canonical Western authors are certainly included in other resources such as her lesson planner (*Programador de clase*). There she includes ideas or Spanish translations of Plato, Aristotle, Kant, along with Ortega y Gasset, J. Teichaman and K. C. Evans, and Bertrand Russell.

In terms of her philosophy classes, she is clear that her students have many difficulties with philosophy, starting with the fact, she says, that “they cannot read” (“*no saben leer*”) let alone concentrate upon philosophical texts that are highly abstract and difficult.⁴¹ Precisely here is where her textbook or *Módulo* comes in, since she selected a set of readings from philosophy

⁴¹ In some regions of Colombia, students do not reach the minimum level of reading. This is a common problem in the rural areas of the country (probably one of the consequences of the long lasted influence of *guerrillas* in schools and in the population perspectives about life) where education is not the best and the students do not like studying nor seeing it as a possibility for improving their life. I think it is true that Catalina’s students do not know how to read properly, that is they cannot even literally interpret some basic texts. Let us remember that the PISA test also showed in 2018 that only 50% percent of the students reach level 2 in reading which, as I understand, corresponds to basic comprehension of the text (OECD, 2019)

commentators or second sources and topics that might assist her students to improve their reading skills: after the introduction unit, she included a unit of philosophical logic (propositional logic and natural deduction) and informal logic (common fallacies), and a section on critical thinking. Indeed, she thinks that “everybody should be given a course of logic because that helps to obtain a structured mind” (“*le da a uno mucha estructura*”).

Due to the difficulties that she observes in her students, and the political situation of Colombia (peace agreement with *Las Farc* (2016) and presidential elections in 2022), she decided to include a unit on politics, to deal with the main forms of government (democracy, oligarchy, totalitarianism, etc.). She also included a section on ethics and moral philosophy, “since it is where everything ends,” which I understand as meaning that studying philosophy and critical thinking should contribute to reach appropriate ethic decisions. She thinks that students must reflect on their own life and stop following social trends just because they do not think clearly about what they do. Here, she says, is where philosophy can contribute to high school.

Catalina’s definition of critical thinking. Regarding her understanding of critical thinking, after some questions in the second interview, she pronounced a sentence as if she had it learned by heart: critical thinking is “the capacity to assess the consistency of arguments” and then she added that it has three very specific abilities: interpretation, argumentation, and proposing solutions or possibilities (*interpretar, argumentar y proponer*). These are the thinking skills evaluated by the Colombian standardized test *Prueba Saber 11* in the section of Critical Reading.

About this specific test, she offered to me the most critical perspective of all my interviewees. She said that today one problem for teachers of philosophy in high school is “the model that ties you up (*te amarra*) It [philosophy] is taught according to the test *Saber 11*

about critical reading. It all came down to that, training the boys (sic) to that.” As I understand her, it is not that reading critically is not important but that philosophy cannot be reduced to just preparing the students to take a test that measures some specific and narrow abilities. Moreover, since her students have specific difficulties for example with reading properly, that is, literacy, the exam is totally out of context but teachers might still be/feel obligated to teach critical reading anyway. So, in the end, it is not only about tying (*amarrar*) the students to a very specific topic or ability, but it is also related to the way teachers are tied by policies of education that indirectly coerce the teaching of things that might not contribute to the students’ needs.

The Joy of Learning with Leonardo

As soon as Leonardo, who allows me to use his real name, received the invitation to participate in my study, he wrote me a warm and open email expressing his willingness to share his experiences. The words of excitement of his message reflected the very personality of this former seminarist of the Catholic church. Like many young men that abandon the process in the Catholic seminaries, as was my case, Leonardo graduated from *Licenciatura en Filosofía* (Lit.: Licensed in philosophy), but he also studied theology.

After finishing his Bachelor’s, he studied an *Especialización* in technology in education, although he has not gotten his title yet. He also started a Master’s in the same topic, but only studied the first semester and abandoned it due to a personal problem. In the end, he completed a Doctorate in Theology in the USA, but this title is not acknowledged by the Colombian Ministry of Education; he studied it because he likes learning. He is still thinking of undertaking a Master’s, but in philosophy or Social Science.

Leonardo is a committed and strict teacher demonstrated not only in the way he prepares his lessons and his clarity about why he does everything but also in his determination to

overcome his impairment: He hurt his right leg. By the time of our first interview, he was training to participate in the Paralympics in Colombia (he does discuss throw). Although he was tired, and a little sore after training every day for a week, as he said, he did insist to do the first interview that very day, always with the best attitude.

Leonardo's curricula. As to his professional experience, he has been teaching for about ten years. He is highly proud of his students' results about how they understand philosophical concepts and engage in the activities in class. He is happy and motivated working in his current school where he teaches philosophy, social sciences, religious formation, and peace class (*cátedra de la paz*).⁴² In that school the course of philosophy has two hours per week, and its curriculum is designed by a collective of teachers of philosophy (of a group of schools that work together) in an annual meeting where they decide what topics to include or omit. They gather once a year and discuss the curriculum they have. In the last meeting, according to Leonardo, they decided to include some topics of 21st-century philosophers and eliminated some related to Colombian, Indigenous, and Latin American thought. To be sure, he does not agree that Latin American scholars, Indigenous, and Colombian thinkers do philosophy as such. For instance, he stated that "Talking about Indigenous philosophical thought, that is a very delicate assertion, because ... the Indigenous people are more mystical, more religious, more mythical, right? And it [their thought] is not at all philosophical, as one would think."

Having a look at the program of philosophy (*Plan de Formación*) for 10th and 11th grades that he kindly shared with me, I see the relevance of critical thinking and philosophy from the

⁴² *Cátedra para la paz* is a course or pedagogic space that was implemented as part of the peace agreement with *Las Farc*. It is aim at introducing students in strategies to peacefully solve their conflicts.

general objective of the courses: “I [the student] reflect on social problems that put at risk peace and community stability, for which I rely on critical thinking skills and philosophical foundations.” In this case, critical thinking aims at the political formation and not the usual epistemic one.

Regarding themes and authors, the *Plan de Formación* (program of philosophy) follows the Western tradition: Pre-Socratics, Socrates, Plato, Epicureanism, Stoicism, Cynicism, etc., until 21st-century philosophers such as Foucault, Chomsky, and Lyotard. Leonardo is committed to following the agreements reached with his colleagues about the curricula of philosophy, although he is clear that the particular exercises and strategies in class are his to decide. He is deeply convinced that the success of a class is related to the way he positively motivates his students; therefore, he designed his method to do so and it seems to work perfectly. What he does, simply put, is to offer extra points for correct answers to his questions in class. He tries to build a climate of tranquility among all where everyone feels important, listened to, and respected. He says: “The fact is that students can be captivated with a class that is pleasant, humorous, a smiling class and I tell them: boys, smile while learning, smile while learning, let’s have fun while learning.”

When we first talked, he told me his teaching of philosophy was focused on presenting philosophy as a way of life, and I immediately thought of Pierre Hadot’s (2003/2009) perspective, but soon afterward, I learned he was not talking about it. Leonardo talks about applying philosophical theories in the present, to everyday problems, otherwise, philosophy is useless. An important point here seems to be the way the class begins by dealing with a real-life issue, which might be brought on a newspaper page, a personal experience, something that he

read or any of the students bring into class, etc., in other words, “since the idea is that philosophy is so practical, of daily routine, therefore the idea is to begin with practical topics.”

Leonardo’s understanding of critical thinking. In terms of his comprehension of critical thinking, he also follows the common view of focusing on giving sound reasons and examining sources carefully: “If I am going to give a critical point, I must have one argument at least. It minimally forces me to have an argument.” He also says to his students that it is important to have a critical stance about their own decisions, actions, and life in general. Thus, critical thinking is not just an academic exercise but a personal trait that every person should have.

I tell them, well, you have to be critical about how you’re really acting in your life. You must be critical about why you are not doing well in school. You must be critical: why I can suddenly be a motive for arguments at home.... So, it always takes the boy (*muchacho*) to be focused and that criticality starts in him.

In the end, as I understood him, his understanding of critical thinking is based on the common Western epistemological perspective of critical thinking, which he strives to apply also to daily life similar to my other participants. However, Leonardo’s view on critical thinking seems reduced to the argumentative dimension which is the identification and assessment of reasons and the main idea of the text or discourse. However, as will be evident in Chapter Eight, he also acknowledges the role of other elements that revolve around the examination of reasons.

Alfredo’s Consciousness: “We Need More Licensed Teachers”

Alfredo, my last participant, who also decided to waive anonymity, is a very experienced, patient, and lovely teacher who now counts about 37 years of experience working in schools. He seems very committed to his teaching and his students. He was born in Valledupar (in the

department of Cesar), a small town in northern Colombia. This is a very famous city to Colombians because is the cradle of vallenato, a genre of Colombian music.

One of the first things that Alfredo told me in the first interview is that while he was doing his high school studies there was only one teacher that had studied a *Licenciatura* in his school and it was the only teacher he understood in class. So, realizing such a fact, he concluded: “*Hacen falta más licenciados*” (Lit.: more *Licenciados* are needed/ we need more licensed teachers). Then, this circumstance motivated him to study a *Licenciatura* instead of just a regular Bachelor. Furthermore, his mother also worked as a teacher in primary school, a fact that also motivated him to study a *Licenciatura*.

Now, as to his decision to study social sciences and philosophy, he explains that, at the time, he saw such subjects as richer in content than mathematics or physics. By studying philosophy or social sciences he would have to be “*creando, pensando, construyendo, argumentando, clasificando, aportando*” (Lit.: creating, thinking, building, giving reasons, classifying, contributing). He found the *Licenciatura en Ciencias Sociales y Filosofía* (Lit.: License of Social Sciences and Philosophy) in a private university in *Bogotá* and he studied it. He also studied a *Especialización* in technology applied to education. It seems this postgraduate study gave him many tools and ideas to teach because he mentions how he uses several online tools and the kind of exercises he proposes to his students, who seem to respond adequately to his methodology.

Alfredo's curricula. Currently, he works in high school and teaches social sciences and philosophy to 9th, 10th, and 11th-grade students. As he told me, he basis his teaching on a book by a commentator called Manuel García Morente, a Spanish philosopher who gave a series of presentations in Argentina that were gathered and published in a book. Since this book is based

on presentations given to students of a Bachelor of philosophy, its language and style are common but precise; easy to understand. It covers most traditional Western philosophy, from a general point of view, focusing only on the “Great Philosophers” and topics.

Alfredo acknowledges that YouTube videos might be more attractive to his students, so he usually select some and after he has watched the video a few times (he particularly follows a YouTuber called *El Profesor*), he prepares some questions for the students to respond to. In his classes, he is inclined to organize debates about current topics such as abortion or the death penalty. He seems to think that it is important to show the students how every theme studied might be applied to day-to-day life, so he opens room in class to talk about life issues according to the students’ interests. Thus, even if he primarily teaches the Western traditional philosophy, he proposes other authors, including those who are not philosophers, in order to gain the attention of the students, because they are not interested in typical topics of philosophy. For instance, Latin American philosophers such as Jose Ingenieros and Estanislao Zuleta, other discipline’s authors such as the psychologist Erich Fromm, etc.

Alfredo’s understanding of critical thinking. Regarding his understanding of critical thinking, he follows the Western trend, close to the critical thinking movement’s theory that focuses on one dimension of critical thinking: on logic and the exercise of giving reasons and examining the text or phenomenon. He said: “syllogism help us to, to critical thinking, right? Syllogisms, especially deductive syllogisms” (Lit.: *Los silogismos nos ayudan a la, al pensamiento crítico mucho ¿no? Los silogismos, especialmente los deductivos*) later in the interview he added:

always making the warning, the warning of not simply giving opinions, but that there should be arguments that are validated with the logic that there are conclusions that are

the product of very clear and precise premises that allow us to obtain some critical results of reality.

I cannot help thinking that this statement reflects most of my old understanding of critical thinking, when I was teaching philosophy in high school, since I also demanded my students to offer several arguments for their opinions, particularly in their essays. I remember explaining to them how the syllogistic structure could be the model to build an argument in a philosophical essay and how the arguments or premises should be clearly related to the thesis or main idea and support it. Now, I do not feel identified with that image of critical thinking. I suppose that my walking in the path of my master's and university teaching has allowed me to listen to and read different perspectives about philosophy and critical thinking.

The *Sagesse* and Strength (*Visage*) of my Teacher-Participants

After doing both interviews with every participant, I clearly identified a few common topics but also different and particular contributions to teaching philosophy and critical thinking in high school. As to their common traits, all of them tried first to study other subjects rather than philosophy, so philosophy was not their first option. I myself “fell” into philosophy on the path of becoming a priest. I wonder if such a pattern responds to the common perspective in Colombia that philosophy, along with other studies such as literature, and philology, is not worthy because they do not get high salaries or different and frequent job opportunities. It is as if sometimes philosophy needs to be found around the corner and not in the right way we would have liked. I wonder what we find in it to stay despite its difficulty and its few connections to our (Latin American) reality.

Secondly, all of my participants seem highly committed to their teaching, that is, to assist their students to learn and appreciate traditional Western philosophy, because they all see it as a

powerful school subject that could contribute to the life of every person, particularly through the critical thinking it instills. It was probably such a commitment that motivated three of them to share with me some of their teaching tools: program outlines, worksheets, examinations, “unedited textbooks,” etc., as well as their view about philosophy and critical thinking in high school.

Despite their differences, all of them associate the term philosophy with the names of classical philosophers. They do acknowledge that there might be other philosophies (Eastern, African), but none of them have studied anything about them. However, they think it is important to include in class some topics and authors that might not go within the traditional philosophical canon in order to train their students in the art of speaking and analyzing reasons or simply studying deeply a topic. Furthermore, all of them work hard in order to show how philosophy could be of assistance in day-to-day problems, particularly ethical and political issues, as will be presented in chapter nine. Nevertheless, none of them try to apply a different model of Western philosophy and its usual exercises.

Not surprisingly for me, all defended the study of the classical philosophers, and nobody even mentioned authors such as Freire, McLaren, Said, Bhabha, Spivak, Dussel, Mignolo, and Nussbaum, although they did mention other philosophers and scholars I was not expecting: Noam Chomsky, Sigmund Freud, Fernando Savater, Manuel García Morente, Estanislao Zuleta⁴³, etc. It is as if all of my participants were anchored to Western classical philosophy, like

⁴³ Fernando Savater and Manuel García Morente were two Spanish philosophers highly known in South America. The first is mostly known, at least to me, for some of his books where he tries to offer a

a ship near the coasts of the Americas: near, yes, but not on it because some waves draw them to other horizons within the big sea of philosophy.

The way that philosophy is taught varies from teacher to teacher and according to the image they have of their students and their interests, necessities, and opportunities. All of them are committed to instilling critical thinking that very quickly is identified with proper reasoning, logic, the thinking abilities involved, and the “right” living. I did find other dimensions to enrich critical thinking in high school philosophy. Certainly, these first remarks take me to consider a few points that emerged during the examination of the interviews. As I will discuss in the next chapters, I found some facets of teaching critical thinking that may usually be hidden or silenced, or that I had not considered before: the teachers’ possibilities and requirements to teach critical thinking in high school and their critical thinking through their pedagogy. In other words, teachers themselves are called to be critical about what and how they are teaching, their prejudices about teaching and learning, and about what philosophy is. Here I see a fruit-full (like a basket full of fruits) tension between European hermeneutics and South American decolonialism that leads me to ask where my participants speak from or where they do and think.

different perspective of philosophical problems and history, a perspective closer to young students’ reality. The second is highly known for a set of presentations he gave in Argentina that were published as a book and constitutes one of the most read books about the history of philosophy and also for his books on Kantian Philosophy. The last scholar, Estanislao Zuleta, is a Colombian philosopher, acknowledged for his philosophy of education, highly critical of the Colombian system of education, and his essays on philosophers and other scholars, namely Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Plato, etc.

Chapter Seven: The Tension of Teaching Critical Thinking

The main question of this study asks about the different ways in which philosophy teachers experience and understand the possibilities and complexities of teaching critical thinking in Colombian high schools. This chapter begins to show my findings by narrating part of my participants' experiences and revealing some complexities and conflicts of teaching critical thinking. When it comes to teaching critical thinking, philosophy teachers may have to omit overt references to philosophy in order to engage students. Such a decision causes tension between the excitement of seeing their students' enthusiasm and their own disillusionment in abandoning a subject they love.

Therefore, this chapter is focused on teachers' dispositions, better described as their *ethos* or way of being, rather than on critical thinking directly. I certainly coincide with Palmer (2007), "if ever, do we ask the 'who' question—who is the self that teaches? How does the quality of my selfhood form—or deform—the way I relate to my students, my subject, my colleagues, my world?" (p. 28). This chapter is about the "who" of the teachers. In effect, this dimension of the teaching of critical thinking appeared as a relevant consideration in the interviews with the participants before advancing the theme of the participants' understanding of critical thinking. To be sure, the teacher's *ethos* may hinder or favor critical thinking development. In this chapter, critical thinking in the form of *phronesis* appears as the possibility to find the "*orthos logos*"—that is, the right rule appropriate to the situation itself that a teacher has to discern before any conflict.

All Might be Reduced to a Spark or a Name

Most research about critical thinking in high school, regardless of the school subject, is focused on measuring students' cognitive abilities (e. g. Erceg et al., 2013; Lim, 2014) or

teachers' methods and resources to teach critical thinking (Bećirović et al., 2019; Bray et al., 2020; Kinslow et al., 2019; Pisheh et al., 2019). As Biesta (2017) acknowledges, there is a “global education measurement industry ... eager to indicate which systems perform best in producing the desired outcomes” (p. 2), which might explain the amount of that type of research.

As discussed in the literature review, it seems that in Colombia little attention has been paid to philosophy teachers' understanding of critical thinking. Similarly, little or no consideration has been given to topics related to philosophy teachers' *ethos* to teach critical thinking. This topic is not about the reasons or motivations behind their decision to teach criticality, but about their personal and professional ways of being. As Pinar et al. (2008) would say, my dissertation commits itself to exploring curriculum “about understanding the problem of being a teacher ... from the variety of perspectives which make it” (p. 8). To illustrate this topic, I will commence by describing two of my participants' experiences teaching philosophy. What sort of *ethos* do they show and what results seem to emerge from the reactions of their students?

A Spark of clarity

Beatriz told me that not long ago when she entered the classroom to give a lesson on philosophy, she received a spark of illumination. She had prepared a follow-up lesson on relativism and dogmatism but found difficult to get the students seated and quiet. They were distracted, excitedly talking about tattoos, as she finally found out. Listening to that piece of news was illuminating for her: “that was one of those sparks that happens between what is planned and what happens in the classroom ... a spark like those that illuminate one's brain” – she said. I cannot help but remember Aoki's (2011) expressions “curriculum-as-plan” and “curriculum-as-lived,” because this story is precisely about the *and*, the in-between —that is, the

conjunction between what the teacher prepares before entering the classroom and what happens within it.

Aoki (2011) reminds us that “pedagogy is located in the vibrant space in the fold between curriculum-as-plan(ned) and live(d) curricula, at times a site of both difficulty and ambiguity and also a site of generative possibilities and hope” (p. 322). Thus, it is in that inter-space/moment where the theory *and* practice meet one another; the teacher’s wisdom serves to join them in such a way that the students learn and grow. It is in that space, or better, at the moment of implementing their plan that the teacher finds difficulties that might create new possibilities or worlds for their students to live in. In a word, the relevant dimension of teaching is probably not the planning nor even its implementation *per se*, but how the teacher joins together curriculum *and* pedagogy. In that space/moment the teacher brings their own *ethos* to the kind of decisions they make to guide their students in the process of learning. The story I am relating is about the generative possibilities in the in-between space of the planned and lived curriculum, specifically that between in philosophy *and* critical thinking.

For Beatriz, the spark was, I suppose, to understand that the topic of tattoos could provide a subject for debate and incorporate the philosophical topic of the day. That memory reminded me about one of Biesta’s (2016) metaphors about the goal of education: “education is not about filling a bucket but about lighting a fire” (p. 1). As I read Beatriz’s narration, I saw that the match that could light the fire comes from the students themselves in the classroom situation *and* the teacher’s *ethos*: the match, in the end, is the teacher’s decision about how to proceed, how to lead the class. The teacher could stick to their planning, ignoring their students’ topics or worries; they could partially or totally abandon their planning and simply talk about any topic the

students want; or they could try to join or meld their planning with the students' topic of conversation.

Noticing how the students received the news about the debate, Beatriz also decided to give them one more day to work on the topic, so everyone could have time to do some research. The result was extraordinary, since the students "organized themselves, they looked for information about [the topic]; the link they made with the topic of dogmatism and relativism was really cool... it was not only given opinions without reasons (*alegatos*) but a serious exercise." Beatriz was very excited, happy, and pleased about the outcome of that activity: "the result for me was very satisfying and I feel very proud of that class in particular. I replicated it. Last year, I had three courses of eleven grade ... and it also went very well."

The content of her experience is a less interesting topic for interpretation than her mood while relating it, or better, her experience itself as I understand it. This is, in part, what I understand as curriculum theory, "a form of autobiographically and academically informed truth telling that articulates the educational experience of teachers and students as lived" (Pinar, 2020, p. 17). Curriculum is also about the teachers' lived experience that sometimes is not expressed through words, but through silences, looks, or verbal intonations. In Beatriz's excitement talking about that experience, I found a personal/professional disposition that helped to make connections between the students' topic of conversation and the philosophical topic of the day; she was flexible enough to change her planning and alter the usual role of philosophy in class. It is precisely in the space of the conjunction between curriculum and pedagogy that the *ethos* of the teacher is forged. With every decision a teacher makes at that moment and the results obtained in terms of student motivation and learning, every teacher re-creates their own teaching personality, their *ethos*.

Beatriz's way of speaking about that activity indicates to me that the spark might also be the motivation that she gained before the idea of a debate about tattoos. The spark that illuminated her mind and the ambiance of the classroom was not the technical, uninteresting, and probably "boring" topic of relativism and dogmatism. The match that lit the spark was a current, highly controversial topic in Colombia's conservative culture, but the fire was in the teacher's heart too, in seeing the possibility of applying a philosophical topic to her students' lives. The engagement of that class was, I think, the excitement the teacher saw in her students' reactions and in their own commitment to the activity. However, every teacher knows that this kind of spark is rare. In the classroom, teachers may have other less illuminating experiences that can also contribute to forging their teaching *ethos*, as the next experience illustrates.

Heart Attacks

A certain echo (in the opposite direction) of Beatriz's words resonated in Catalina's experiences. She said that for her students, "as soon as those names [Socrates, Plato, Kant...] appear in class, they suffer a heart attack." That was a spontaneous answer to my question about whether she asked her students to read classical philosophers' texts (rather than only commentators). Those texts certainly do not produce sparks but might induce heart attacks that kill the motivation and learning of the students along with the teacher's enthusiasm to keep trying to teach philosophy in the traditional way. Certainly, the task of any teacher is to avoid their students suffering an attack to the heart of their learning.

Students may panic imagining that they are going to be forced to discuss difficult, strange, and incomprehensible topics. The names of Western philosophers signal no more laughs, no emotion, no life, no motivation. They may also indicate a shift from their own culture, topics of reflection, and conversations. Thus, as I see it, it seems that the heart of a teenagers'

learning is placed in their motivation, their topics of discussion, worries, and dreams, and it might well be that they do not think the classical philosophers may help them to deal with any of that.

The heart attack might also be induced by the lack of the conjunction between curriculum *and* pedagogy, because it means that the teacher has decided to stick to their plans despite the students' desires, the necessity to change that curriculum, or the search for a connection between the traditional philosophy and their teenage expectations. As a consequence, the *ethos* of the teacher seems one of rigidity, because they has refused to change their traditional teaching or planning; their teaching *ethos* hinders them from creating connections between the students and the topic of the day.

Catalina's way of speaking while uttering that sentence was a mix of feelings: fear, rage, sadness, and disillusionment in the face of asking her students to read "the classics" of philosophy. Here, again, what catches my attention is the way that she talks about a simple possibility that, probably grounded in previous experiences, is charged with a mood, as if there were no possible solution, as if everything were already lost. Although she has not renounced teaching philosophy, she opted to leave out the classics Her textbook is the mirror reflection of such a choice. The only section that covers classical philosophy is logics, where she includes Aristotelian syllogisms (see Table 2). It seems that this part captures the students' attention, as Catalina explained to me. Her teaching *ethos* encouraged her to modify the traditional philosophy readings, although she still retains some philosophical topics, such as politics, ethics, logic, etc. She strives to join curriculum *and* pedagogy.

That metaphor of the heart attack could also resonate in terms of bodily experience. Similarly, the physical signs from students in a classroom may tell the teacher whether a lesson

is going well or not. Philosophers' names, and philosophical jargon — such as metaphysical dualism, tripartite division of the human soul, certainty vs. truth, etc. — might trigger a number of physical effects from the students: long faces, sluggishness, slouching, eyes looking in multiple directions, or simply distraction by other things.

Noticing such reactions, the teacher might begin to feel uncomfortably aware of such disinterest. The teacher has probably planned the lesson selecting some readings and exercises thinking to make the topic interesting to their students, but the students' behavior subverts the teacher's motivation. Soon afterward, probably, the teacher and students' alike feel their motivation wane. Thus, in addition to the disconnection between the topic of the day and the students' life, there is now an abyss between the students and the teacher. Any generative possibility of that in-between space/time might be lost if teachers do not learn to make sound decisions. Indeed, "The connections made by good teachers are held not in their methods but in their hearts—meaning heart in its ancient sense, as the place where intellect and emotion and spirit and will converge in the human self" (Palmer, 2007, p. 33).

Beatriz's and Catalina's experiences and feelings while teaching philosophy in high school are but the tip of the iceberg related to the complexities of teaching critical thinking in philosophy courses. Consequently, before discussing the understandings of critical thinking itself, it is necessary to more deeply explore the complexities of the context where the teaching of critical thinking is developed. In the next section, teachers relate their students' opinions about philosophy, which I see as the place to start finding the possible origin of the teacher's feelings and the complexities of teaching critical thinking in philosophy courses in high school.

Philosophy Teachers: Towards Openness

Regarding student learning, the two experiences from the last section show that a common opinion of these two teachers (I think my other two participants would also agree) is that traditional topics and philosophers are, at first glance, not exciting enough for their students and therefore extinguish the possibilities for philosophy to illuminate their lives and motivate any lesson. That might be why Catalina proposed in her textbook to make a project to investigate any topic: “from the beginning of the course, you must choose a topic or problem that catches your attention, trying as far as possible, to ‘solve it’ or at least understand it” (p. 9). In the interview, Catalina remarked that the topic could be philosophical or not, because she was interested in the student investigating something by reading and thinking. The same reason may have induced Beatriz to propose an activity about tattoos, a topic that had all her students so distracted, instead of sticking to her lesson plan. For these two teachers, sometimes the initiative about the topics to study or to reflect on philosophy classes comes from the students themselves.

The scenes depicted above show how flexible and open we as teachers might be when facing our students, and how openness could help us to make the right decisions to get the students interested in learning philosophy. In Eppert’s words (2011), it “seems vital for teachers to deconstruct their own at-homeness in schools, curriculum, and their positions, and mindfully exercise a decentering humility rather than seek domination or control” (p. 37). It certainly might be that sometimes we teachers have acquired an *ethos* of control, and we want to dominate the atmosphere in the classroom and even our students, perhaps because we think that is the right way to teach. This belief, in hermeneutical terms, seems to be a prejudice that might be challenged by our experiences in class, so it needs to be examined.

This topic made me think about the fact that our critical thinking as teachers is at stake in every lesson. As it is frequently invoked in pedagogical scholarship, a teacher should speak to students' interests. In Pinar's (2015) words:

If curriculum were conjoined with study, the question is no longer, McClintock suggests, the "impossible" one of objectives. If curriculum did not coincide with instruction, the question would no longer be what strategies— or "best practices"— I should employ to ensure students learn of the curriculum and of the "standards" the curriculum institutionalizes. If curriculum were not conjunctive with pedagogy (even the "critical" kind), "transformation" would not be the teacher's responsibility. Rather, teachers might ask themselves the more "restrained" question of what opportunities for study are appropriate for particular students. (p. 17)

Hence, probably the most important question for a teacher in planning their lessons is not about objectives, strategies, critical thinking, and creativity, but rather about study, the zeal for something, and the students' opportunity to grow. This should not mean merely growing in knowledge, but growth as persons. I like Biesta's (2017) statement: the "grown-up way is characterized by the "ability" but —perhaps we should call it a willingness or a desire itself— to make and ponder the distinction between one's desires and their possible desirability" (p. 18). Joining this statement with that by Pinar, the curricular question might be directed towards the opportunities the students have to ponder or examine their desires and actions, in a word, their own lives. Thus, another trait of the teachers' *ethos* emerges — that of the final objective of teaching philosophy in high school. Why should teenagers study philosophy? What are the teachers' and students' perspectives about it? Regarding the teachers' views, Colombian literature is unanimous: to foster critical thinking in students. Indeed, Germán Vargas et al.

(2107) said that there seems to be a generalized agreement about the worth and utility of teaching philosophy to exercise and develop autonomous and critical thinking (p. 75), an opinion also upheld by UNESCO (2015) in the book *Philosophy a School of Freedom*.

However, I see a deeper answer to the question about the ends or objectives of philosophy in high school: as I learned from my participants, it seems that at least some teachers strive for the students' well-being, to encourage them to grow up checking their own desires, as Biesta (2017) suggests, but also to examine their beliefs, actions, habits of thinking, dispositions, and images of happiness. This is part of the teachers' *ethos*, coherent with Ricœur's understanding of *phronesis* as virtue. The teachers want their students not only to be critical about the world and themselves, but also to be good people who achieve their own well-being. In words of Alfredo: "what I want is to open those minds so they do not continue trapped in strange beliefs." Precisely here, in the core of what happiness and well-being might be, it is crucial to "mak[e] specific vague ideals about what is considered to be a 'good life' for the person as a whole, while making use of this *phronesis*" (Ricœur, 1990/1992, p. 177). Hence, teachers are called to use the virtue of *phronesis* in order to discern how to contribute to their student's way of being. By now, however, let us navigate what the student's think of philosophy and its contribution to their lives.

Philosophy: A Distant and Incomprehensible World

I remember being asked by my high school students, "Why should we study philosophy?" (I wonder if they also posed similar questions about other school subjects such as maths or biology?) My quick, almost automatic response was that philosophy helps us to understand the world differently and profoundly. I certainly believe(d) that, and I lived it while studying philosophy at university. That was precisely my mistake: I did not realize at the time that I had acquired that perspective about philosophy during my undergraduate studies, not

during my high school years. Therefore, I now realize I did not offer a comprehensible answer to my students; it was too abstract. To be sure, that question is totally meaningful to a high school student and perhaps utterly meaningless to a Bachelor of Philosophy student who probably already has an answer to it. How could I miss such a reality?

On the other hand, my answer was not directed at critical thinking as the main reason to study philosophy in high school, as the reader might have expected. That “dimension” of philosophy came to me afterward, on a pedagogical day, as narrated in the first chapter. I see now that my answer probably did not mean much to my students. I suppose they asked themselves why it was worthwhile to understand the world in better and deeper ways. Maybe their real question was, “Why should we read such boring and entangled texts and theories of philosophy that we cannot understand?”

Similar experiences to my own about explaining the worth of learning philosophy were also recounted by all my participants. For instance, Leonardo said: “They think that philosophy is boring: ‘what a jug those philosophers! They speak empty things over there, they speak over there for themselves, nobody understands them.’” These few words show a common critique: philosophers and their reflections are “over there,” distant, maybe untouchable, confuse and that makes them difficult, almost impossible to understand for a teenager. If any teacher dared to immerse their students in those waters, the result might well be drowned young students, drowned motivation and learning in profound, dark, dense, and heavy waters. The distance between Europe and the Americas is more than just a geographical accident that can be easily circumvented. What is this in-between that Gadamer (1975/2004) named the “locus of hermeneutics” (p. 295)? Hermeneutics’ task, said Ricœur (1986/1991), is to discern a message according to its contexts in order to find the meaning in-between several possibilities. How can

we interpret anew that distance at the core of traditional Western philosophy when it is taught in our context?

Curiously enough, I found a clue in Alfredo's words (who lives near the coast of Colombia, near the Caribbean Sea): "they [the students] say, 'teacher, but look, that is written for that culture and not in our culture.'" Again, there is a distance that the students perceive about philosophical topics, as being far away. Nevertheless, Alfredo's students pointed to something more specific: it is about the culture in which that philosophy originated. Here, the concept of culture illuminates what is happening. From its Latin origin (from *colere*: "to tend, guard; to till, cultivate" [Harper, 2000a]) the word "culture" turns my thinking towards a cultivation. The philosophy (or a particular comprehension of it) that is taught in my home country was supposedly born and first cultivated in "central Europe" (Dussel, 1985), and from there it was transplanted/translated to the Americas (Santos Herceg, 2010) and other continents.

Thus, that philosophy speaks to their (European) reality, their necessities, their problems, and their ways of being in the world. And the South American way of being was/is different, maybe so different that it may explain why that philosophy seems so distant, so difficult to understand for Colombian teenagers in high school. However, as Beatriz's experience teaches us, the problem might be in the way the teacher achieves a connection of the topic with the students. What can we put in that place in-between European philosophy and American teenagers? I think the answer is partially in the teacher's *ethos*, in their way of approaching philosophy with their students, that probably implies the way in which the teacher themselves approaches their students' lives and philosophy.

Finally, I recollect what Beatriz's students told her: studying philosophy is "meeting people who have already died." It might well be that something died a long time ago; it could be

their worries or themes of reflection, the fruits of those places that might also seem inert, lifeless, useless to a population that cannot grasp something as different coming out of an unknown world. If something died, could it be enlivened, or might only new things be born?

However, contrary to my own perspective, my teacher-participants still think that traditional Western philosophy has something to offer in terms of critical thinking to the new Colombian generations; it can be alive again. Their commitment made me think and listen to their words attentively. Remembering the contrast between Beatriz's and Catalina's stories and adding the students' considerations about philosophy, I think it must be precisely this locus of thinking that makes teachers feel uncomfortable when considering whether to continue teaching Western philosophy or leave it behind in order to better engage their students. However, that initial discomfort might evolve into a permanent tension which becomes deeply rooted in some teachers when they intend to instill critical thinking through philosophy. My first significant finding in this study is that high school philosophy teachers might be living in tension. This will be further explained in the following section.

Between Rigid and Flexible Teachers

In the middle of the first interview with Beatriz, something struck me. I had asked her about her experience as a student of philosophy in her Bachelor's degree and she established a clear division between being a teacher focused on teaching philosophical theories to the letter, and a teacher concentrating on teaching critical thinking. Beatriz said:

Ten years ago, well, I had much more rigid teachers, much more inclined simply to [teach] philosophical foundations, not critical thinking. Yes? But in the following years, yes, I had more balanced teachers between the philosophical foundation and critical thinking.

As I understand her words, when a teacher focuses exclusively on teaching philosophical theories so that students learn the “correct” theory at hand, critical thinking might surprisingly be excluded. Those teachers, Florián (2006) would state, have the rigid attitude of people who believe themselves to be in possession of wisdom (p. 155). This type of philosophy teacher believes that it is by way of the careful scrutiny of the philosophical theories in their texts that anyone may become critical in a course of philosophy.

An additional element in her answer was significant: the adjective “rigid” along with “teacher,” and “simply” with “teaching.” The result of being a rigid high school teacher, a teacher that does not deviate their path from the philosophical theories (perhaps by refusing to address social problems, the politics of context, or their students worries and topics of conversation), is that critical thinking will not be instilled because the teaching is “simply” focused on philosophy. Thus, teaching philosophical theories in isolation from the reality at hand, with more concrete situations closed to the students, might produce only student demotivation and, consequently, little learning.

When re-reading Alfredo’s interviews, I found another example, even stronger than Beatriz’s, about those teachers focused on philosophy itself. He said:

I had a very good teacher, Professor ... was an encyclopedia that told us the history of philosophy without looking at a document ... With names, dates, and surnames, but, wow, exceptional! But that’s kind of technical, right? He was a technical teacher ... And critical thinking did not exist. What’s more, I remember, it was practically forbidden, forbidden. There was no possibility of thinking differently.

This quotation reinforces my interpretation of the existence of several types of teachers of philosophy in Colombian universities, and very likely in high school: first, the rigid-orthodox

teacher; second, the flexible-heterodox teacher; and third, the teacher that tries to find a middle ground. It is astonishing to hear that some time ago it was forbidden to think differently, but I think it is possible since Colombian culture is highly conservative, even today. My memories of professors in my Bachelor's studies coincide with both Beatriz's and Alfredo's views. I had some exceptional teachers that knew a lot by heart, but they concentrated only on the philosophical texts and their interpretations. Nevertheless, a few teachers were more flexible and brought social issues to class to illustrate a philosophical point.

If a rigid teacher does not or cannot help their students arrive at critical thinking, maybe a more flexible teacher would succeed. While writing this line, an experience shared by Alfredo comes to my mind. It was about his difficulty in understanding the current critiques of heteronormative models of sexuality: "someone argued to me: I am not like you, that you are a trunk, that the wind comes and breaks; I am a flexible one, the wind..." I would prefer to paraphrase it like this: "I am flexible like some trees, so when a strong wind passes, I bend, but I do not break." This sentence makes me think that flexibility allows the teacher to respond to their students' realities. Those teachers who only do in class what the canon dictates, regardless of what the context demands, just follow normative models of teaching. As I see it, in this case the teacher is heteronomous, not autonomous, to use Kantian words, as would seem more appropriate. However, flexibility is not everything, since the tree's roots must be strong as well, otherwise it might get uprooted due to the strength of the wind or the weight of its fruits. I wonder what philosophy teachers' roots consist of, and how they can make themselves stronger to resist the winds of petrified traditions in time or the weight of their jobs.

The Teachers at Crossroads: A Life in Tension

After reading the interview transcripts a few times, I started to see something strange and incongruent. I noted a tension in my teacher-participants' pedagogy: they tend to value the philosophy they learned (traditional Western philosophy) and they ground their courses programs on it. Yet, contrary to their initial expectations, they soon learned that their students did not like that philosophy and did not learn much in class, especially critical thinking, without other non-philosophical (re)sources. Thus, the tension might be seen as retaining and/or abandoning philosophy (to a lesser or a greater extent) when teaching critical thinking. I found a reference to this tension in Florián (2006), who states that the specificity of philosophy today and its teaching places teachers at "dilemmatic crossroads" (*encrucijada*): either they communicate some concepts of an already constituted knowledge (the history of philosophy or its problems), or they intend to form in its different senses of learning a know-how, develop a habit, a new capacity to judge and criticize, to transform or change the way of living and seeing the world (p. 118). It seems pertinent to say that philosophy teachers are at a crossroads, at a point where several possible paths meet, so that at least three possibilities emerge, and a decision is necessary: teaching philosophy as a set of theories, teaching to develop certain skills (such as critical thinking), or teaching both philosophy and critical thinking alike. Then a tension emerges because teachers usually want to take the third possibility, but it becomes difficult and then they seem to lean towards the first or the second.

Before discovering such a tension, I admit that I expected my teacher-participants to focus exclusively on the philosophical content and usual strategies as applied in most Bachelors' of Philosophy degrees. To a certain extent, my expectation was correct, since all my teachers develop their syllabi outlines around the classical topics and authors of Western philosophy.

Nevertheless, it was a surprise to find all of them open to other kinds of material, authors, resources, and activities beyond philosophy.

The teachers' tension may also be understood as the incoherence between their discourse and their actions. My participants' discourse and even their program outlines are developed around traditional Western philosophy. They all seem a copy of the same original, with few variations. When I asked about the convenience of continuing to teach classical Western authors and topics, all of them affirmed that it should continue. However, when they described their classes and habitual exercises around critical thinking it was evident that they reached out for other kinds of topics, resources, and authors to propose activities for their students, either leaving traditional philosophy behind or, in some cases, accompanying it. Florián (2006) agrees with my participants that there might be new subjects of philosophical reflection, such as the mind, power, the environment, sexuality, hospitality, and unemployment (p. 117). Catalina's textbook is probably the most concrete example (see Table 2) since traditional Western philosophy has disappeared almost completely from it (the exception is the chapter on logic that follows Aristotelian theory, which, by the way, is the longest in the book).

First Balance of Findings

Up to this point, I have developed several topics: I began by showing two interesting experiences about teaching philosophy that made clear, I think, that teaching is not just an exercise of knowledge dissemination but also of disposition or ways of being (*ethos*). The teachers' *ethos* appeared as the way they approach certain decisions, namely leaving out Western philosophy, staying open and flexible to make the right decision, and focusing on their students' well-being. This topic led me to the third point and probably my first finding: philosophy teachers live in tension when teaching critical thinking through traditional Western philosophy

because their students have led them, to a certain degree, to incrementally abandon that philosophy.

In such a context, *phronesis* appeared as a central element of teachers' *ethos*. Teachers want their students not only to be critical about the world and themselves, but also to be good people who achieve their own good life. Precisely here, in the core of what happiness and well-being might be, it is crucial to "use this *phronesis*" (Ricœur, 1990/1992, p. 177). All teachers, I think, are called to use the virtue of *phronesis* in order to discern how to contribute to their student's ways of being. For now, *phronesis* might arise as the capacity to find the possibilities of teaching critical thinking and philosophy in-between the teachers' tension. How is this tension resolved by my participants? Let us see.

Chapter Eight: Possibilities for Teaching Critical Thinking

In the previous chapter, I expounded on the *complexities* that my teacher-participants have lived when facing the objective of teaching critical thinking through philosophical themes. Now, recalling that my research question looks also for the *possibilities* of teaching critical thinking in philosophy courses, I move to that point. Therefore, I focus on the *teaching* of philosophy itself, or didactics of philosophy as I would say in Colombia. Didactics coincides with curriculum theory in avoiding an emphasis on the instrumental or technical view of teaching. As Pinar (2020) himself claimed,

Curriculum theory may come as something of a shock, if only due to its emphasis on “what” one teaches, rather on “how.” Of course, how one teaches remains a major preoccupation of curriculum theorists, but not in terms of devising a “technology” of “what works, nor as a form of social engineering.” (p. 14)

Thus, in what follows, I will not devise a strategy or method to teach critical thinking. Rather, I present some possibilities or conditions that make possible to instill critical thinking in philosophy courses that my teacher-participants allowed me to see. First, a change of direction is highlighted: instead of exclusively following the traditional Western philosophy, my teacher-participants decided to follow the themes of the times, as suggested by Freire (1974/2005), whom I follow to a certain extent. Second, in respect to philosophical topics, some changes seem pertinent for the students to learn *from* that traditional philosophy (and not necessarily to learn *that* philosophy), but close to an interdisciplinary curriculum that finds in the plurality of sciences the depth to engage critical thinking.

Connecting the Students' Lives to Philosophy

When I taught philosophy in high school, I would start any topic with a short contextualization. I included historical, social, and cultural references so the students could grasp the connection of the philosophical topic with human reality. I thought in that way they could better understand the philosophical theme of the day. However, that was a failure! I think that Palmer (2007) helps me to understand why: I was “unable to weave the fabric of connectedness that teaching and learning require” (p. 50); I had some threads, but I did not weave them because I ignored my students’ realities; I only thought in general human contexts. Indeed, “what we teach will never ‘take’ unless it connects with the inward, living core of our students’ lives, with our students’ inward teachers” (Palmer, 2007, p. 52). Beatriz is clear about the necessity of that connection:

there is more critical thinking when the kids or myself manage to connect something with what I am, as a teacher, with what the student is at the time, or with what happens in their municipality or their school, in their social circle, in their country. I do think that there are more possibilities for critical thinking than if there were no connection with its current context.

For this teacher, connection is an essential condition to grow in critical thinking, but it also seems necessary due to the image of philosophy that students have. Vargas et al. (2017) state that teaching philosophy requires that the teacher acknowledges, connects and organizes students’ problems with philosophical problems (p. 70). Indeed, if students think philosophy is something distant and difficult to understand, it seems necessary to find a way to help them approach it, to find a connection between philosophy and their own life.

A possible clue for achieving that connection is presented by Freire (1970/2005a) in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*: In his words, the teacher could begin by “investigat[ing] people’s thinking about reality and people’s action upon reality Actually, themes exist in people in their relations with the world, with reference to concrete facts” (p. 106). If I am not mistaken, it is about beginning the teaching planning with a certain type of investigation in our classes. Simply put, we can ask or pay attention to what our students think about their reality, and what calls their attention: their worries, doubts, illusions, and dreams. On this point, I think that Vargas et al. (2017) are right when they affirm that sometimes teaching philosophy seems more directed to “minds,” “understanding,” “intelligence” or “reason” than to people in “flesh and bones” there, in the classroom that live and experience the world (p. 70).

However, such an investigation about the themes or the students’ experiences is not just letting them speak and speak, as a boat that is left to the current or the waves to be dragged to infinity. Freire (1970/2005a) insists that “the investigation will be most educational when it is most critical, and most critical when it avoids the narrow outlines of partial or ‘focalized’ views of reality, and sticks to the comprehension of total reality” (p. 108). In other words, teachers might need to do an investigation of all possible elements that comprehend a phenomenon in the whole of its context so as to be critical. The investigation to which the South American pedagogue and philosopher refers is about the “generative themes” of the epoch. Although I do not discard the context of oppression in the background of the Brazilian thinker’s concept, I focus on everything that stays in the students’ reflection or experiences (usually overlooked in philosophy courses in favor of re-producing traditional Western philosophy).

These themes, says Freire (1970/2005a), are more educational and critical by avoiding sticking to single and reduced perspectives and striving for reaching the totality of the

phenomenon and its context, as philosophy usually does. I would say that staying close to only one philosophical tradition (analytic, Neo-Thomism, hermeneutics, etc.) and ignoring the student's topics of reflection, would mean to be partial and even maybe ideological. We, teachers of philosophy, can free ourselves from the constraints of narrow traditions and ways of teaching that reject other perspectives; we might embrace the freedom that requires educating others to be critical. Would not it be a contradiction to try to free others by a narrow and closed perspective that rejects difference? In the end, the open spaces for generative themes in courses of philosophy would mean, I think, to examine the topics of Traditional Western philosophy from different perspectives. Let us delve into this point.

Stop Teaching Everything

Since all my participants reaffirmed the idea that Traditional Western philosophy should be taught, by attentively listening to their words, I saw that even though they continue teaching the traditional philosophy they also do it in different ways. How a teacher responds to the signaled tension above shows that the problem is not traditional philosophy *per se*, but the way it is taught, that is, *how* we philosophy teachers frequently teach philosophy which is probably related to the teacher's *ethos*. For example, Alfredo told me that one possible path to take is not to teach everything, every topic, as it is usually done.

[Regarding] the classic texts of philosophy, we can maybe take some core themes. With Socrates, we can update (*tramitar*) good and evil to the present, right? In all relativistic thinking that exists today. In Aristotle and Plato, politics is the art of governing for the welfare of all. Perhaps, we can isolate one or another detail and not stick ourselves to other issues that maybe do not apply to the present. It is true that there are few points that we can isolate from those philosophers, but we have the part of politics, democracy, the

ideas of good and evil, freedom, among other contexts, that of God, which allow us to develop perhaps a critical position when applying them to the present.

Alfredo is quite clear: not everything is appropriate to our time and culture, let alone to teenagers' lives, so it seems appropriate to select carefully philosophical topics "that do not make it [philosophy] exhausting and boring but [we can focus] on things that are more applicable today". The problem might be, as I understand, that sometimes philosophy teachers do not exclude "issues that maybe do not apply to the present," that is, to teach always the same topics with the same authors and texts and do not select the topic according to people in a class, maybe due to a lack of consideration about the themes that emerge from the students' reality itself, as Freire proposed.

For instance, one of those philosophical topics that would be unthinkable to omit is Aristotle's ontologic monism which states no division between form and matter. Now, Alfredo makes me ask what vital benefit or learning a high school student would grasp from such a topic. Then, I acknowledge Aoki's (2011) invitation "to seek out new orientations that allow us to free ourselves of the tunnel vision effect of monodimensionality" (p. 94) which could consist in considering that the traditional topics, authors, and exercises are the only pathway to critical thinking. Aristotle's discussion about the virtue of justice and prudence could be more illuminating to a teenager, for example, than his ontology. What else could help a teacher to connect philosophy to the students' lives?

Reaching Other Kinds of Resources

I remember when I worked at a high-status school. My students were part of some of the most prestigious and rich families in *Bogotá*. They had been very well trained in reading and writing. This context, I think, is similar to Beatriz's school, as she works at a high-status school

too. This kind of students really can/could write essays ten-page long with a good structure and ideas. Perhaps, in similar contexts, it could work the exercise of reading philosophical texts carefully and teaching “the whole” of the theory of the philosopher, closer to a Bachelor’s formation. As Vargas et al. (2017) contend, philosophical texts, when taken seriously, can arouse in students a critical attitude towards themselves (p. 70). In other words, I think that Aoki (2011) signals another way: teachers might need to let go of our prejudices, traditional objectives, and expectations of teaching, the “purity” of philosophy that may account for certain “monodimensionality” (p. 94) that limits the teacher. Such abandonment is what I think my participants already do in class while still holding the traditional Western philosophy. They live in a tension between holding and losing that philosophy and its teaching. A possible way to live this tension might be outside philosophy. Beatriz let me see that sometimes it seems necessary to accompany philosophy with other (re)sources and perspectives.

The topics in class that my teacher-participants mentioned during the interviews show a certain predilection for “human-centered” issues for organizing debates or conversations with their students, even if they do not belong to traditional Western philosophy. Leonardo mentioned immigration, xenophobia, and discrimination. Alfredo, the death penalty, and personal relationships. Beatriz went for the meaning of life, happiness, and tattoos. Nevertheless, this kind of predilection of topics was clear to me when I had the chance to look at Beatriz’s notebook where she takes notes for planning her lessons. One of those pages had a list of topics under the title “Ideas for philosophy 11A.”

| | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Black Mirror [Netflix] | Going out |
| <i>Satanás</i> [Colombian novel] | Dictatorships |
| Philosophy II World War | Butterfly Effect [Netflix] |
| I am Mother [Netflix] | Taking Decisions |
| Samurai Philosophia | Machiavelli |
| The Art of War [Netflix] | The Price of Tomorrow [Netflix] |
| Gender Theories | Themes too long |
| Suits [Netflix] | |

In that list, there is only one philosopher, one that might not be included in the traditional high school philosophy. The rest is a list of movies or series titles and other themes, but certainly outside the traditional Western philosophy. As Florián (2006) affirms, a painting, a theater play, or a good movie are tools that could contribute to enticing philosophical reflection about a philosophical problem, concept, doctrine, or movement (p. 114), or following Freire (1970/2005a), these tools could entice philosophical reflection about the themes of the epoch, the students' realities. In addition, the books or fragments of books that my participants offer to their students also seem to be directed to human-centered branches of philosophy too: by Fernando Savater, *Las Preguntas de la Vida* (the questions of life), *Ética para Amador* (Ethics for Amador), *Política para Amador* (Politics for Amador); Erick From, *The Art of Loving*; José Ingenieros; *The Mediocre Man*; Estanislao Zuleta, *El Elogio de la Dificultad* (the praise of difficulty); Zygmund Bauman, *Liquid Society*; Jostein Gaarder, *Sophia's World*.

Precisely, following a similar strategy, the Colombian researchers Lara and Rodríguez (2016) found in their study that including other type of resources (videos, newspapers, and other tools) along with philosophical texts took their students to improve their critical thinking.

Furthermore, students were more intent and joyful when the teacher-researchers used those kinds of non-philosophical tools than when the classes were strict explanation of the philosophical issues, said the scholars. It seems that those sessions allowed a better understanding and sense of the characteristics of the critical thinker (p. 353). It would seem that my participants reached the same conclusion in their classes. However, the use of other resources might lead to another complement to philosophy itself: other disciplines' theories.

Interdisciplinary Curriculum

As the previous sections depict, part of the success of the teacher's work is to balance adequately the way of teaching philosophy: the traditional contents and the objectives in class for every student. Nevertheless, the final decision about what and how to teach may be better oriented if the teacher is guided by the students' characteristics and needs. As Biesta (2019) reminded us, "there are no pure, uncontaminated, original criteria on which we can simply and straightforwardly base our judgments" (p. 63), so the student's traits are just one more guideline. We can make better judgments and pertinent decisions by keeping close to the situation of the students themselves and other perspectives about what traditional Western philosophy can offer to them.

I think that Catalina talks precisely about those possibilities: "One can be critical ... but first I must know my context because if not, everything remains in *doxa* [opinion or belief] despite leaning towards critical thinking." To leave aside context, that is, to ignore other perspectives that allow deepening in the understanding of the context itself would lead, as I understand Catalina, to re-enforce the students' non-examined beliefs (*doxa*), or other kinds of prejudices, as Gadamer (1975/2004) put it. Thus, it seems that different perspectives, apart from

philosophical ones, are needed to help the students know their reality and connect with philosophy. Leonardo talks precisely about widening the philosophical perspective:

[After contextualizing], we make harmony, right? We put them to harmonize with present authors who provide much more information because they talk to us about today with much more data, more precise, with the anthropological situation, with the sociological situation, with all that series of factors involved in a society.... It is possible to bring that author and we expand it with authors who are addressing that topic now in the 21st century. To say something already in our time.

This teacher speaks, as I understand him, about introducing other scholars' texts or theories in a class if they are in harmony with the philosophical topic, that is, if they talk about the same phenomenon or reality studied in class. He only mentions anthropology and sociology, but I think of history, psychology, literature, etc. This integration of other disciplines in philosophy class seems related to an interdisciplinary curriculum, that is "curriculum that combines and somehow integrates two or more typically separate disciplines" (Ellis & Stuen, 1998, p. 8). Arthur Ellis and Jeffrey Fouts (2001) expressed the usual question about it: "Does this arrangement produce superior results? Do students learn as much or more when the traditional subjects are presented in combination?" (par. 3) It seems so.

For Leonardo, a similar strategy to an interdisciplinary curriculum might help to connect philosophy to the students because other sciences might offer relevant information about the students' reality or context. After all, most texts studied in traditional philosophy are quite abstract and distant from the students' contexts, so concrete and pertinent perspectives would certainly contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon and through this path, to the philosophical point as well. Such integration among philosophy and other disciplines might be

highly beneficial to take the students understand the phenomenon or topic of the day and learn *from* philosophy. Actually, the most recent philosophy textbooks published in Colombia already include chapters on sociology and psychology (Salcedo Ortiz & Prieto Galindo, 2021), a first approach, I would state, to an interdisciplinary curriculum.

I dare to think that maybe the lesson of the day may even start by talking about a sociological or anthropological theory and then presenting the philosophical topic to see their links, differences, and complementarity. What is more, Ricœur (1986/1991) said, “a philosophy that breaks the dialogue with sciences is no longer addressed to anything but to itself” (p. 69), and thus philosophy would be irrelevant to anyone who wants to be present in their own time to understand it and transform it. However, if Ricœur demanded dialogue or conversation between philosophy and other disciplines, then not only the congruent or harmonic theories might be included, as Leonardo proposes. It would also be illuminating for students to see contradictory theories about the same topic to compare them and discover how all may offer different facets and parts of the same phenomenon, as Ricœur himself did.⁴⁴

An interdisciplinary curriculum, an intercultural curriculum and philosophy seems to be a key to connect students to philosophical topics, and through this path, to help them develop their critical thinking for their life as adults. I agree with Ellis and Stuen (1998) when they affirmed that

⁴⁴ When checking Ricœur’s *Oeuvre*, it is clear that he was committed to such a conversation with other sciences or disciplines. The book *Ricœur Across the Disciplines* (2010), edited by Scott Davidson, is a good place to see the great variety of dialogues and encounters that the French philosopher held all along his academic life.

The purpose of the middle school is more about the citizenship, participation, and a desire to learn than it is about the so-called mastery of separate subjects.... It is an attempt to say cooperative activities, group projects, ... are far more likely to ignite the spark of learning. (p. 10)

I certainly think that the aim of philosophy in high school is not that every student becomes a professional philosopher, but that every student learns some tools from this subject to better understand their world and act upon it to transform what should be changed, in general, to build a better society, a better life for all people. However, it might be that with the emphasis on separate subjects, at least in the case of philosophy, students do not learn much so they do not understand why they have to study philosophy. They need to be connected to philosophy and for achieving that link, as I understand my participants and the literature, there is one element that might need some revision: teaching objectives. Allow me to explain.

Universal Objectives Against Particular Persons

The previous two sections might aim at a more profound aspect of teaching. Perhaps it is necessary to let go of the pretense that the student learns all philosophy as it is aimed at a Bachelor's of philosophy, that is, with all the details and depth of a professional or close to it. It is a prejudice that maybe is pushing teachers to teach more than is relevant to a teenager and their context. Perhaps the teacher could also withdraw from the aim that all students learn the same, and reach the same comprehension and objectives in class. Alfredo states:

I do not know if I am mediocre, but I am going to thematic axes that I consider essential and the student can delve into one. "Look, teacher, [said a student] the only thing I really got from the French Revolution was the rights of man and citizen, if you want, I'll

expand on that.” Another student tells me: “teacher, I learned about the General Estates, since I’m there linking citizenship with philosophy”.... Things like that.

As I understand, Alfredo stopped aiming that their students learn every theme and topic of the program. He allows that every student chooses a topic to deeply work on, and not necessarily all of them. In the end, maybe Alfredo might have concluded by his own long experience that the important thing is not that all students learn the same content, at the same time, and in the same way, but that they learn what they are interested in according to their particular desires, capacities, and contexts. It seems that his motto was to learn *from* philosophy, but not necessarily to learn (*that*) philosophy. This objective would certainly mean a big change in philosophy teaching in Colombian high schools. From this perspective, the clash between orthodoxy and heterodoxy in interpreting philosophical texts would be meaningless, I think, since the student is the one who is called to take out something from those texts, as long as it is meaningful to their life.

I could say that Alfredo applies Pinar’s (2020) advice: “I encourage individual teachers to answer the classic curriculum question – what knowledge is of most worth? – animated by the historical moment, their own intellectual passions, and the particular, irreplaceable individuals they teach” (p. 114). Probably Alfredo considers that the worthiest knowledge is the one that attracts their students, that simultaneously seems related to the historical moment, their passions, and their own identity. This way of stimulating students’ participation may be very close to Freire’s (1970/2005a) suggestion of investigating the themes that worry the population to problematize them. Let us listen to him again:

One of the group members may say, for example: “I’d like to talk about nationalism.”

“Very well,” says the educator, noting down the suggestion, and adds: “What does

nationalism mean? Why is a discussion about nationalism of any interest to us?" My experience shows that when a suggestion is posed as a problem to the group, new themes appear. (p. 124)

Thus, letting the students choose only one part of the topic or only one topic to speak about is an opportunity for them to deepen their understanding of it and for the teacher to highlight possible problems, so all the listeners can reflect on their own relation to the issue presented and at the same time other possible themes may emerge from them. In other words, "To investigate the generative theme is to investigate people's thinking about reality and people's action upon reality, which is their praxis" (Freire, 1970/2005a, p. 106). As I see it, for any form of critical thinking, the objective is precisely to act upon reality, to transform those aspects that seem wrong. To achieve that goal, all people must think about their reality, including their own being; here is where the teacher would have their hardest work to make the students think about their themes of interest and thinking about themselves.

Several Colombian scholars seem to agree with this recommendation. For Vargas et al. (2017), philosophy may offer the students some elements to solve their problems (p. 71). Similarly, Oscar Espinel and Oscar Pulido Cortés (2017) think that philosophy may be taken as a tool to think about the world, think about themselves, and introduce changes in existence and subjectivation forms (p. 141). From this perspective, it would seem that these Colombian scholars support Alfredo's motto about learning from philosophy, rather than learning philosophy for its own sake.

Motivation as a Major Element in Teaching

In every class I teach, my ability to connect with my students, and to connect them with the subject, depends less on the methods I use than on the degree to which I know and

trust my selfhood—and am willing to make it available and vulnerable in the service of learning (Palmer, 2007, p. 33)

The last element that I found in my teachers' interviews about the possibility of connecting the students to philosophy and critical thinking is the teacher's *ethos*, closely related to the student's motivation, not the methods they apply, as Palmer announces in the epigraph to this section.

Leonardo bears in mind this dimension of teaching and draws frequent connections to the topics we explored during the two interviews. In our first interview, he stated that

when the teacher arrives like this grumpy, bad-faced, and all the *Shrek*, ... the boy (*muchacho*) is going to put the barrier at once. The boy (*muchacho*) is going to put the barrier immediately, from the outset. You know that the boy (*muchacho*), if one does not reach him and does not touch his soul, what do they (*ellos*) need, that they touch their soul, the boy closes the door on you and throws it in your face and more today these boys (*muchachos*) have so many difficulties that it is not the case to mention it, but these boys (*muchachos*) have internal battles. So, let's start with the emotional part which is the entrance.⁴⁵

The mention of the movie character *Shrek* (close enough to the German noun *Schreck*: fright) seems appropriate to represent a teacher who does not take into account the students' reality and

⁴⁵ As it is evident in this quote, Leonardo consistently uses the word *muchacho* (a masculine substantive flexible enough to be used for teenagers and young adults, but not for elderly nor children, unless metaphorically) when he talks about his students even though there are also girls in his courses. He only uses the feminine substantive (although *muchacha* exists, he usually said *niña*: girl) when he talks only about women, but not if he talks about the whole group of students. This is the common usage in Spanish, that is only now beginning to change.

does not try to generate connections between their reality and philosophy. The teacher could appear as a monster to which the instinctive answer is to bar the door and not let them in, just to be safe. This kind of teacher does not motivate a student to participate in class but causes fear. Any student would be afraid of saying anything in class that might be wrong. As Palmer (2007) states, “Fear shuts down those ‘experiments with truth’ that allow us to weave a wider web of connectedness” (p. 55), what is more, “fear that leads many children, born with a love of learning, to hate the idea of school” (p. 56).⁴⁶ Being like Shrek, probably a teacher too serious or grumpy all the time in school, might only fill a student with fear, so they would not take the risk of opening their mouth. This topic reminds me of a scene that Beatriz told me, which is related to a rigid teacher she had in her undergraduate studies of philosophy:

So there I had both of them [kinds of teachers], the rigid one, for example, my teacher of Kant. He made us read the first part of *The Critique of Pure Reason*. And he gave us quizzes and he took the quizzes and began to read them out loud in front of the class and he plucked his hair (*se despelucaba*) and told us that we were inept for not understanding, and you know that Kant is very hard.

How could anyone be motivated or even listen to a teacher that makes such kind of spectacle and treats their students as inept due to their difficulties? What could probably be a lack in those rigid-orthodox teachers that focus on teaching philosophical theories but do not achieve that their

⁴⁶ It is important to acknowledge that not all fear is bad. Palmer (2007) himself asserts a positive dimension of fear in education: “The fear that makes people ‘porous’ to real learning is a healthy fear that enhances education, and we must find ways to encourage it. But first we must deal with the fear that makes us not porous but impervious, that shuts down our capacity for connectedness and destroys our ability to teach and learn.” (p. 59)

students participate in class? A possible response to these questions may lie in the teacher's *ethos* specifically related to the way they motivate their students in every lesson. The Colombian scholar Elías Rey (2013) insists that people only learn what interests them, what makes them feel involved (*implicar*), and makes them feel directly and dynamically participating (p. 18). In other words, "Learning does not happen when students are unable to express their ideas, emotions, confusions, ignorance, and prejudices. In fact, only when people can speak their minds does education have a chance to happen" (Palmer, 2007, p. 89).

I think Leonardo talks about this kind of motivation: "the emotional part plays an important role in class. That is the magic key to opening the possibilities that the boy (*muchacho*) in philosophy be in a disposition to learn." For this teacher, it is clear that motivation is indispensable to the students' learning, or to be exact, to the students' proper disposition to learn in class. Certainly, the Colombian researchers Lara and Rodríguez (2016) concluded in their study that the improvement of critical thinking will be more fluid and experienced with enjoyable and significant classes, a product of the teacher's effort and dedication (p. 353). Furthermore, this kind of motivation appears related to the beliefs that the students have about philosophy. Therefore, if they consider philosophy as something boring, afar, dead, and the teacher like Shrek, their motivation would be opposition or disinterest in learning anything. I coincide with Palmer (2007) when he states that "good teaching cannot be reduced to technique: good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher (p. 152). How to build an

identity and integrity, or as I stated above, an *ethos*,⁴⁷ appropriate to being a teacher? Now, I propose Ricoeurian *phronesis* as a capacity that might help us to find our personal answer to that question.

A *Phronetical* Response In-Between the Teachers' Experiences

Discovering the tension that teachers of philosophy might be living in and the different possibilities, maybe strategies, they have developed to connect their students to philosophy, makes me wonder how to understand this phenomenon in the light of Ricoeurian *phronesis* and I wonder if my participants already incorporated some *phronetical* thought in their teaching. I am thinking, indeed, in the second or subsidiary question of my study: In what ways could Ricoeurian *phronesis* open new understandings of teaching critical thinking? However, before delving into possible applications of *phronesis* in philosophy teaching, I listen first to Aoki (2011), when talking about interculturalism (as implied in traditional Western philosophy, mostly European, and South American students), to understand that tension is not necessarily something harmful in the case of teaching:

It [interculturalism; and I would add education] is a place with tension. In dwelling here, the quest is not so much to rid ourselves of tension, for to be tensionless is to be dead like a limp violin string, but more so to seek appropriately attuned tension, such that the sound of the string resounds well. (p. 382)

⁴⁷ I have to say that I prefer to use the concept of *ethos* rather than identity, since the first directs my thought to peoples' behavior, to their customs and habits, whilst the word identity takes me to think first of the identification of the sameness of a person or thing in time.

As Aoki teaches us, tension may be the place of attunement appropriately, a place where pedagogy resides, the place of the challenge every teacher faces as they find or build the good tension. The attuned string that has to be tensed again every time an instrument is about to be played might be for a teacher every time of entering in a classroom. A recent entry in my research journal shows a possible relation between tension and Ricoeurian *phronesis*:

I was doing my usual stretches a while ago when suddenly a thought came to me about what I have been finding in the interviews What I thought is that perhaps this tension reflects the dialectic that Ricœur (1986/1991) sees between distance and belonging within existence itself. However, that is seen particularly in traditions which might end in novelty or the renewal of traditions with new elements or practices. Even further, thinking about the relationship of this issue with *phronesis* as the ability to make decisions in the face of conflict (1990/1992). I think that *phronesis* will be precisely the ability in charge of mediating in such a dialectic to find a certain “fair mean,” as Aristotle would say. I also remembered that one of the definitions that Ricœur proposed of *phronesis* is that it sometimes chooses to bend the rule in favor of the person. The respect for the other, taking them as ends in themselves, in the Kantian sense, sometimes requires accommodating the rule to do good to the other. (September 7th, 2022)

The fact that I was doing my stretches (that help me to prevent or reduce the pain caused by spasms in my shoulders) could be meaningful. To stretch a lesson plan or the course outline could result in a certain widening of its contents, authors, readings, etc., without taking anything of the traditional philosophy out of the course; or, in a more flexible teaching strategy, changing a few or more topics, authors and texts, for new ones. In any case, it might also prevent the pain caused by traditional Western philosophy in a space where it is not easily welcomed.

Nevertheless, like any guitar string, it is crucial to stop pulling, stop stretching it at some point or it will break. In other words, if a teacher starts changing the elements of their class of philosophy and does not stop, at some point that class could become something else instead of a philosophy course. The measure of the stretching could only be found by the teachers in their situation, that is, according to their objectives in class, their students, the ethical and political considerations of the moment, etc. I imagine that it is possible in some cases to leave out philosophy *tout court* if the objectives of the class aim at something more important than just learning philosophical content or even learning from it. I think this might be the case with Catalina as she focuses their lessons on their students' reading skills and critical thinking.

In these situations, teachers might trigger a *phronetical* thought by “discerning the right rule, the *orthos logos*, in difficult situations requiring action” (Ricœur, 2001/2007 p. 54). I see that the “right rule,” the logos (Greek λόγος [logos]: word, language, discourse, thought [(Liddell & Scott, 1940)]) is not evident in our lesson plan or our intentions for every class, even though we include terms such as objectives, competences, thinking skills, learning outcomes, or others, that never will be adequate to all students in a class. Certainly, finding the right or suitable option for every class requires attention and understanding of the students' needs and opportunities since “solutions to problems do not just require knee-jerk, commonsensical responses, but careful, thoughtful, disciplined understanding” (Pinar et al. 2008, p. 8). Thus, the *orthos logos* or the suitable decision is drawn from the context itself, and not only from an old established tradition far from the situation at hand. That is part of the richness of *phronesis*: circumstances themselves might tell what is the right rule, that, as the previous sections showed, might also be our *ethos* as teachers, the right *ethos* for teaching. Following these ideas, I think that my

participants already are *phronimos* that decide according to the context, their students' needs, and the opportunities that suddenly appear in a class.

Phronesis is always looking for the right decision, especially in times of conflict or incertitude, repeated Ricœur (2001/2007). To be sure, between the obligatory, that in our case is the Western philosophical tradition and the specific situation of the classroom and every student's life arises a conflict in the search for the right action. This is precisely one of the places and moments of deliberation when a teacher balances all possible elements of a specific situation. They have to make a decision and act on the spot, when they are in the classroom and find their students' needs.

What are teachers' convictions and what judgments in situations have helped them find an "*orthos logos*" or better, their *orthos ethos* in their specific situations? The answer might be proposed by Ricœur (1990/1992) in one of his explanations of *phronesis*: "Practical wisdom consists in inventing conduct that will best satisfy the exception required by solicitude" (p. 269). The latter word of the quote, I think, is the core of the work of a *phronetical* critical thinking or critical *phronesis*. As defined by the Oxford dictionary, solicitude is "anxious care for somebody's comfort, health or happiness" (Phillips, 2022c). When would we, teachers of philosophy, betray philosophy and when would we betray our students and ourselves? Certainly, "Sometimes the teacher betrays his/her own subject. For example, the philosophy teacher can feel that his/her explanation about Plato in a secondary level classroom is a betrayal to Plato, to philosophy and to his/her commitment to the truth" (Domingo Moratalla, 2015, p. 108). What betrayal would be more dangerous for the participants in a class and for philosophy itself? What is the limit of that stretching of our lesson plans or course outlines?

There is no easy answer to those questions, but a guide and a warning: Solicitude, that is, the care for someone (that sometimes might even be anxious or worrisome), for their well-being and happiness helps us to see that sometimes to help our students to learn, and to grow, we need to betray the rule, that is, stop teaching as we have been doing it. Nevertheless, Ricœur (1990/1992) quickly would add, “Never can practical wisdom consent to transforming into a rule the exception to the rule” (p. 269). Yes, we can bend or maybe break a rule, but our actions cannot become the new rule. It is the context and solicitude our principal guide to know when we can bend the rule, the same that a tree does not bend as soon as any blow of wind touches its leaves, but only before the strongest ones. What were then the strongest winds that blew in this chapter?

Second Balance of Findings

In this chapter, I presented some considerations about teaching philosophy and critical thinking. I advanced expounding on a few recommendations to teach critical thinking in philosophy courses as mentioned by my participants. First, Alfredo talked about selecting better the themes to study according to the nearness that a topic may bear to a student’s life or experiences. The second recommendation was to open room for the students themselves to choose what to study from the themes proposed in class. Then, it seemed appropriate to complement philosophy with other disciplines or sciences texts or topics in the course, so that the student may observe different perspectives about reality, their context, and the philosophical theme of the day.

There, the teacher, as a *phronimos*, may bend the rule according to solicitude for the other. Up to this point, I could say that it was the conversation with my participants that illuminated my comprehension of Ricoeurian *phronesis* in the context of teaching, since all of

them already seem to do what a *phronimos*, as a philosophy teacher, would do in their own contexts and possibilities. Now, it is time to delve into my teacher-participants' understanding of critical thinking itself and the new possibilities that may emerge. Such is the topic of the next chapter.

Chapter Nine: Different Kinds of Critical Thinking in Philosophy

The main research question of my study wonders about teachers' experiences and understandings of possibilities and complexities in teaching critical thinking in Colombian high school-level philosophy. Whilst in the previous chapters I focused on philosophy teachers themselves and their teaching, that is their *ethos* and pedagogy, in this chapter, I concentrate on their actual understanding of critical thinking. I begin with the common understanding of critical thinking which is based on a logical examination of reasons. Then, I present my "new" understanding of other elements and facets of critical thinking that were revealed to me by listening to my participants.

Clear-Cut Definitions of Critical Thinking

Ricœur (1986/1991) likes repeating that "*explicar más es comprender mejor*" (p. 25) the more I explain, the better I understand. Or, from the perspective of narrativity, "in explaining more, one recounts better" (1986/1991, p. 5). Thus, a good story or theory seems to better unfold and be understood as the teller explains more, gives more details about the structural elements of the relates or texts themselves and enriches the context. The more one explains the text, the more one and the other person(s) may understand. I asked in the interviews what elements or aspects were essential to critical thinking, and my participants started to go around it until, at some point, they uttered a clear and concise definition. I would even say that philosophers like this discursive strategy: they usually take their time to explain (or un-ravel) the context or elements of their question or opinion, and finally they pose it. Similarly, this section makes clear the nearness between my participants' thoughts and the critical thinking movement's (CTM) theory, before presenting the actual findings.

Centered on Rationality

Catalina stated: critical thinking is “the ability to assess the consistency of reasons [argumentos] it is the ability to discern reasoning because he [the student] knows the theory”. Thus, assessing and discerning arguments or reasons are enounced as the core elements of critical thinking, and I think that most philosophers would agree with her. The essence of criticality is, I would say, to examine and discern arguments. Such a definition is placed in the context of reading or hearing a discourse, for instance.

Nevertheless, if we take the context of producing that discourse or text, that is, in speaking and writing, the definition changes a little while keeping the same core: Leonardo spoke to that: “If I am going to give a critical perspective, I must have one argument at least. It minimally forces me to have one reason”. The Colombian scholar Morales (2012) seems to coincide; he says that learning to philosophize requires making the difference in adopting a critical attitude before practical theoretical problems demanding that one always be well grounded, under a rational examination, analyzing previous concepts, prejudices, and ideological positions (p. 33). Hence, the point would be to offer reasons or arguments that have been previously examined by the speakers themselves, but that the reader or listener would have to identify and assess as well. Guided by philosophical logic, Alfredo coincides with Catalina and Leonardo. He said that he was frequently

warning [his students] of not simply giving opinions, but that there should be arguments logically validated, that there are conclusions that are the product of very clear and precise premises that allow us to obtain some critical perspectives (*results*) of reality.

His words seem to emphasize logic and its validation of the premises and conclusion, as happens in syllogisms. However, the main point is precisely to give reasons as support to any opinion. In

this aspect, Alfredo coincides with the CTM theory. For instance, Sharon Bailin (2002) said that “It is, then, the adherence to certain criteria which is the defining characteristic of critical thinking” (pp. 363-364); those criteria (needed to the examination of reasons) come from formal and informal logic, said Harvey Siegel (1997, p. 16).

This set of comprehensions of critical thinking strongly linked with the exercise of offering and assessing reasons contrast with the characterization found by Colombian scholars Suárez et al. (2018) in their study about teachers’ understanding of critical thinking. These researchers found that most teachers (of different school subjects) agree that critical thinking is linked to skills such as analysis, evaluation, or interpretation of complex thoughts and inquiries (p. 58). It is not that philosophers do not include this set of characteristics, but their comprehension is focused on argumentation and its logical examination, as my participants show. Nevertheless, Beatriz had a different perspective in mind when a definition came to her:

I think it’s, well, I understand critical thinking, actually, as a 21st-century skill. Right? Because we’re in a time where we have unlimited access to knowledge and information. And we require critical thinking to decide, right? which of this information is true, which is not, and how I decide to take as true all that I see of that information, whether from the media or the networks.

Her definition is clearly tied to the current context of the internet and mass media that has made explode information and it is more and more difficult to know what to believe. “We live in a world in which propaganda and self-deception are rife,” state Richard Paul and Linda Elder (2005a, p. 3), which for them as well as for Beatriz, shows the necessity of critical thinking formation. For my participant, critical thinking first seems reduced to a 21st-century *skill* (not a form of thinking as a whole) that would be focused on assessing information in order to make

decisions about what to believe. Beatriz's words make me recall Ennis's (1993) definition: "Critical thinking is reasonable and reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do" (p. 180). Notwithstanding, the nucleus of that reflective thinking is an assessment that is done based on examining the information found, examining the arguments which, in terms of the CTM, is "to evaluate the evidential or probative force of reasons. That is ... whether a putative reason is a genuine one; whether it strongly or weakly supports some claim or action for which it is offered as a reason" (Siegel, 1997, p. 14). To a certain extent such examination, is like a fight, as Leonardo put it:

I tell them [to the students] colloquially: fight with the author. But for you to fight with the author, you cannot simply fall into empty comments, you also have to go with arguments looking for other sources that force you to make a counterargument to what the author says.

To be sure, from traditional Western philosophy, a critical position is not based on simple statements, but on clear and explicit reasons that can be evaluated and hence accepted or rejected according to logical criteria. It is a fight of reasons, where the strongest one should be the winner. However, Leonardo points to one more element necessary for a critical thinker: the search for other perspectives or sources to examine better the topic and offer more and better arguments, so the best argument prevails. That is the topic of the next section.

Others' Perspectives

Conversation with other authors is not a banal element of critical thinking, since it is through gathering as much information as possible that the perspective about the phenomenon can be widened and deepened. Catalina applies that recommendation in a major assignment called "Project of Philosophy" that she included in her *Modulo* or textbook. For her, its aim is

“looking for different perspectives. So, if, for example, they choose something from art, they choose an artwork, the art piece is the pretext for them to look for various perspectives” (p. 9). Then, to look for more information, or different sources, is about finding diverse perspectives about the phenomenon or topic at hand. Their difference, probably opposite views, in a sort of dialectical strategy contributes to the examination of reasons and thesis. This search for the opposite views is near to “seek[ing] alternative hypotheses, explanations, conclusions, plans, sources, etc.; and be open to them” (Ennis, 2011, p. 2), or “Openness to a range of insights from multiple points of view and a willingness to questions one’s own are crucial to ‘objectivity’” (Paul & Elder, 2005a, p. 25), as some advocates of the CTM would say.

Opposite views have a central role because they prompt the reflection and examination of all information that may be contradictory or doubtful. Further than contradictions what contributes to thinking critically is a different perspective that triggers the process of reflection or examination. As Ricœur (1990/1992) stated, “It is necessary to listen to the spokespersons of the opposing theses in order best to determine the point of insertion of practical wisdom” (p. 270). Thus, only in the middle of difference, or as a result of accounting different perspectives, practical wisdom can emerge, something that my participants acknowledge as if they followed Ricoeurian *phronesis* or practical wisdom. What is more, from Ricœur’s philosophy one could say that one of the central tasks of education is to form people to reasonable discussions, to offer reasons about well pondered convictions, and introducing students in the problems of pluralist modern societies (Prada Londoño, n.d., p. 10).

Such a rational, reason-centered comprehension of critical thinking makes me think that my participants’ understanding of critical thinking is very close to the CTM theory, but one dimension seems overlooked by my participants: dispositions. In Harvey Siegel’s (1997) words,

it “is not enough that a person be able to assess reasons properly; to be critical thinker she must *engage* in competent reason assessment, and be generally disposed to do so” (p. 3). The list of dispositions is long, and that topic was already covered in the theoretical framework. So, here I just point to one disposition that may reveal one of its limitations:

Care about every person. (This one is an auxiliary, not constitutive, disposition. Although this concern for people is not constitutive, critical thinking can be dangerous without it.)

Caring critical thinkers

- a. Avoid intimidating or confusing others with their critical thinking prowess, taking into account others’ feelings and level of understanding
- b. Are concerned about others’ welfare (Ennis, 2011, p. 2).

This caring disposition marks a strong difference between the CTM theory and Ricoeurian *phronesis* and an understanding of critical thinking based on it. To be sure, since *phronesis* is embedded in an ethic proposal that looks for a good life for all, caring for others is and should be constitutive to any understanding of critical thinking grounded on that virtue. My participants did not relate such caring for other people to their understanding of critical thinking (which also makes them close to the CTM theory), but they did it when talking about their own students’ necessities. As I see it, and as I understand the dangerous possibilities of a type of critical thinking (such as “sophistry” as Richard Paul [1981] stated⁴⁸) without any consideration for the other, any reflection on critical thinking might need to consider an *affective* dimension of it.

⁴⁸ In his own words, one of the dangers of teaching critical thinking is “the student unwittingly learns to use critical concepts and techniques to maintain his most deep-seated prejudices and irrational

I think that this consideration was already contemplated by the Colombian philosopher Guillermo Hoyos-Vásquez (2012). When talking about education for human rights, he said that philosophers and scholars of social and human sciences had to drop the paradigm and stop describing the human being as a rational animal highlighted by their reason. Rather, philosophers should acknowledge their humanity, their feelings, their capacities for feeling-with (compassion), their sympathy, (p. 60) in other words, affect.

It is possible that caring for others pushes us to think critically and to act consequently. I listen again to Ricœur (1990/1992) saying that “it is injustice that first sets thought in motion” (p. 198). To what extent, then, is possible that critical thinking is based on affection and not only on rationality? Or, as Lisa Felski (2015) asked from literature and cultural studies: “What happens if we think of critique as an affective stance that orients us in certain ways?” (p. 18). I turn now to this topic by the hand of Freire.

Affect in the Middle of Reasons

Nascent hope coincides with an increasingly critical perception of the concrete conditions of reality. (Freire, 1974/2005, p. 10)

Freire’s words take me to my long-time question of the relation between thinking and affect, or hope for the Brazilian philosopher. It was during my Master’s in philosophy while reading Ricœur’s philosophy about *phronesis* that I began to see blurred images that pointed to affect, roughly understood, as the set of tendencies, emotions, feelings, and sensations that have a strong

habits of thought by masking them in more ‘rational’ form and by developing some facility in putting his opponent on the defensive.” (p. 2-3)

bodily and psychological component. It happened to me as Ricœur (2004/2005) said: “this word runs insistently through my readings, appearing sometimes like a gremlin who pops up at the wrong place, at other times as welcomed, even as looked for and anticipated” (p. 1). I prefer the term affect because it highlights the passive side of this set of experiences the person lives, as Ricœur said.⁴⁹ This is a topic that seems relatively new, however, concerning the understanding of critical thinking.⁵⁰ I certainly was looking forward to finding it again and trying to grasp one

⁴⁹ In *Oneself as Another*, Ricœur deals indirectly with this human dimension when explaining action and how any person is able to justify them: “It is the very grammar of the notions of drive, disposition, and emotion—in short, the grammar of the concept of affect—which requires that we articulate the intentional character of action onto a type of causal explanation that conforms to it. This can only be teleological explanation” (1992, p. 78). This teleological explanation would include certain passivity in the core of action itself included in “natural” ways of behaving that are imposed on the person in the search for accomplishing certain ends of actions. This topic of passivity could be explored better in the very first book published by Ricœur: *Freedom and Nature* (1960).

⁵⁰ Although some CTM scholars have used the term ‘affect,’ they seem to reduce it to a set of rational elements. For instance, Paul and Elder (2005a) include “Ethical affective dimensions” as part of their *Miniature Guide to Ethical Reasoning*. Here is their list:

- Exercising independent ethical thought and judgment
- Developing insight into ethical egocentrism and sociocentrism
- Exercising ethical reciprocity
- Exploring thought underlying ethical reactions
- Suspending ethical judgment (p. 31)

Nevertheless, these authors do include some affects and name them as “Essential Ethical Traits” (Paul & Elder, 2005a). These include ethical humility, ethical courage, ethical empathy, ethical integrity, ethical perseverance, fairmindedness. However, they do not explain their role in the ethical critical thinking or ethical reasoning. In these ethical traits, I still see a preponderant rational side of thinking. Here the characterization of ethical courage: “The willingness to face and assess fairly ethical ideas, beliefs, or

more detail, one more clue that helped me to understand whether critical thinking is based on our affect too or if it has any substantive role in thinking critically. I think that Leonardo gave me a hint in the next fragment:

When they [the students] do some writing, so, I'm starting to see the use of some [philosophical] words. They are already beginning to speak in those terms and for me, it is a wonderful satisfaction. And see them intervene, no longer with that, with that fear, but rather that they already feel more confident, more secure.

Here, the teacher is talking about the use of philosophical jargon and how he sees that his students started to correctly understand and use those terms. However, it is the last line that strikes me: when a student is free to express themselves, they might be afraid or confident, hesitant, nervous... As Heidegger (1927/2001) taught us, we are always in some affective state, since "we are never free of moods" (p. 175/§29). This "discovery" might be obvious: we are always in an affective state, but as far as I know no philosopher has related it to critical thinking. Yet, such kinds of states like fear, rage, indignation, shame, etc., empower us and make us think critically in one way or another; they may hinder our intervention or they may push it. For instance, Ricœur (2001/2008) wrote that indignation is the first stage where the sense of justice emerges and its simpler expression is the outcry: "Esto es injusto [it is not fair]" (p. 204). In Leonardo's quote, the focus of the affect was put on certain actions themselves, such as talking

viewpoints to which we have not given serious hearing, regardless of our strong negative reaction to them. This courage arises from the recognition that ideas considered dangerous and absurd are sometimes rationally justified (in whole or in part), and that ethical conclusions or beliefs espoused by those around us or inculcated in us are sometimes false or misleading" (p. 32).

in public or taking certain “risks” related to critical thinking. However, following Michalinos Zembylas (2022) is possible to see a near relationship between affect and thinking itself:

[some] scholars in education (e. g. Holma, 2015) have recently turned academic attention to the affective dimensions of critical thinking and the idea that critical thinking is embedded in social, embodied, and relational contexts, rather than being a decontextualized and individualized set of skills and competences. (p. 2)

Such an exploration of affect, continues the scholar, seems to be a reaction to “overly ‘rationalized’ understandings” of critical thinking in the past, as I also showed about the CTM’s theory in the second chapter.⁵¹ Affect theory describes affect as “a force that works not only through cognition, reasonable argument or material incentives but also operates at a bodily and subliminal level, where people’s embodied, affective responses are entangled with rational, cognitive apprehension of interests and preferences” (p. 2). Such an entanglement between the rational and affective is probably what makes it difficult to grasp the function of affect in critical thinking. However, it shows that affect has also a relation with thinking itself, with the topic at hand, and not only to certain actions related to it as public speaking or even writing itself.

⁵¹ It is necessary to clear up that the CTM thinkers do not deny any role to affect in thinking critically. Harvey Siegel (1988), for instance, states that “the idea that reasons and emotions are unconnected, and the related idea that the exercise of reason requires complete independence from the emotions, must both be rejected.” (p. 40). Notwithstanding, as I understand it, the CTM gives to affect excessive rational objectives: Richard Paul (1993) names some of those affects as passions: “a passion for clarity, accuracy, fairmindedness, a fervor for getting to the bottom of things or deepest root issues, for listening sympathetically to opposing perspectives, a compelling drive to seek out evidence, an intense aversion to contradiction and sloppy thinking” (p. 24).

Freirean hope might serve as an example. Hope would certainly be part of these feelings where there might be an entanglement of rationality, interests, desires, directed to the topic at hand. If I correctly understand Freire's words, the more a person realizes their true state of oppression, the ideological and hegemonical relations that involve them, the more they would warm the desire for changing and creating new images of a new and better life. Thus, hope, as well as reason, would be like the sap of a maple tree that runs until the last leaf; it allows a tree to stay alive and moves the growing itself. What is more, this example might shed some light on the fact that people feel or might attach some feelings and other affects to certain ideas or themes, in this case, freedom, justice, and a good life.

In Colombia, we have been experiencing this facet of thinking about the right or left political discourses. A person affiliated (from the Greek word *filo*: to love) with one side cannot but feel certain uncomfortable (to put it mildly) feelings and emotions towards the ideas of the opposite side. I have to confess that I myself experience strong difficulties listening to the reasons of one of those parties in my home country and my thinking has become suspicious of their real intentions and words. As Paul and Elder (2005a) stated, "depending on the society and culture in which we are raised, we ourselves are strongly pre-disposed to see some persons and nations on the side of good and other ... on the side of evil" (p. 3). Thus, my examination of reasons is always strongly biased towards not believing them, and I pose some reasons to ground my suspicious perspective.

Probably this stagnation of our thinking explains why some philosophers have warned us against allowing those affective states to override our reason, so they propose better to control them and eliminate them from our thinking and acting. Our best example, I think, is Kant himself, in his intention to find a "pure reason" as the ground for ethics. Ricœur (1990/1992)

reminded us that “Kant directed his strategy of purification against inclination, the search for pleasure or happiness (lumping all affective modalities together)” (p. 286). Indeed, for Kant, reason has to be purified of all possible feelings in order to be universal and objective as basis of a unique principle of ethics for all rational beings.

That philosophy is perhaps what undergirds the science fiction characters of *Star Trek* (Wise, 1979) named Vulcans: humanoids able to control or even suppress (better, repress) every feeling or emotion to the point of only thinking and making decisions out of reason and its logic. As Lisa Felski (2015) stated, “Critique is often drawn to atone of cool and dispassionate reflection” (p. 48). Thinking of critical thinking without the participation of affect, certain “vulcanization of students” (Walters, 1990, p. 451), is not only impossible for human people but rather undesirable, since emotions, for instance, are surely what sometimes push us to think critically and act correctly.⁵² Zembylas (2022) agreed when saying that “the motivation to think critically or act morally... derives, at least partly, from emotions” (p. 5). In terms of high school critical thinking, students’ emotions can give them the courage to raise their hand and take the word. Moreover, such affect may help to practice public speaking or writing, and the feelings of success encourage people to continue doing it, so anyone becomes confident and proud of

⁵² Ricœur has shown in *Oneself as Another* (1992) how Kant himself includes an estrange element in his theory of the categorical imperative, in the heart of reason: “the place of respect, as a feeling among the ‘motives of pure practical reason’ (‘Analytic,’ chap. 3). Respect is a motive in that it inclines us, in the manner of an affect passively received, “to make this law itself a maxim” (p. 214). Here, Ricœur is quoting Kant to highlight how he puts a feeling at the base of the rational maxim of morality. In other words, Ricœur demonstrates that even Kant identified and had to include affect in the core of his rational explanation of the categorical imperative.

themselves. I would say that in time these feelings hide in the backdrop of our character on the stage, but they never cease to empower our doing, our thinking, in this case.

Did not we experience those passions when we see an unjust or indignant situation of someone, for example, a man beating a woman? In other words, may not our nervousness, insecurity, eagerness, and courage hinder or move us to speak, to intervene in such situation? Furthermore, I think that these feelings are tightly linked to certain ideas. In the previous example, the idea is that there is no reason for a man beating a woman (and this reason grounded on other beliefs). Do not these feelings run “materially” in our bodies, and do not they seem to “disappear” eventually? It might well be that everything we do (including just thinking and imagining) is not just accompanied by a certain affective state, but enticed or hindered by our emotions, feelings, sensations, etc. Zembylas (2022) again has found that “critical thinking is not a disembodied practice of individualized bodies but rather a set of affective and embodied practices” (p. 6) although, as he admits, this topic needs still to be developed. Nonetheless, since the emphasis has been mainly put on the rational dimension of thinking, all other dimensions have become invisible.

Thus, it seems sensible to think that the affective dimension of being secure or confident is a substantive condition that supports critical thinking because we are bodily and psychological beings not floating minds or spirits. The fact that affects have so a prominent place in thinking critically helps to understand why it is so important the teacher’s disposition (as presented in the previous chapters) for students to be motivated to develop their critical thinking. However important affect might be to think critically, it is not the only “new” dimension of critical thinking or new perspective about it. Now, I present how imagination also takes part in critical thinking according to my teacher-participants.

Imagination in Thinking Critically

After one of my readings of Beatriz's interviews, I found another face of critical thinking, a *visage* full of wisdom in words and silences, that had also timidly appeared in the voice of all my participants: it was a call to a critical thinking that creates new possibilities. I coincide with Bruno Latour (2004) when he worried that critical thinking "might not be aiming at the right target" (p. 225), that is, "remaining too faithful to the unfortunate solution inherited from the philosophy of Immanuel Kant" (p. 232): looking for pure reasons. Now, I think critical thinking might include a call for imagination (in both, its theoretical and practical sides), for better reasoning, and for building new worlds that guide us to healthier futures and lives where the *statu quo* be that all people have their dignity based on the warrant that they have all their rights. It is about the ongoing re-creation of history and culture. Beatriz stated:

In general, we also have to open ourselves up to research in order to be able to reconcile not only theory and practice but also to formulate things of critical thought that are not only inspired by the foundations [of philosophy] but also stimulate the creation of new things.

Unfortunately, I did not probe into that idea. However, I think Beatriz could have been thinking of the usual exercise in philosophy courses of trying to create or imagine a personal theory about the philosophical problem or text studied. This is a rational dimension of imagination. This kind of 'creation of new things' is the one admitted by the CTM in their understanding of critical thinking. Ennis (1993) names some of those "creative aspects of critical thinking such as conceiving of alternatives, formulating hypothesis and definitions, and developing plans for experiments" (p. 180). Thus, the creative dimension of thinking is certainly a work of imagination, as a rational skill, included in critical thinking. However, this dimension of

creativity admitted by the CTM seems limited to a logical or rational exercise.⁵³ I prefer Ricœur's characterization of imagination where I can see a (rational) theoretical and a practical dimension involved in a single task: Creating new worlds to live in. Ricœur (1986/1991) stated,

Imagination... [is] the free play of possibilities in a state of involvement with respect to the world of perception or of action. It is in this state of noninvolvement that we try out new ideas, new values, new ways of being in the world (p. 174)

Maybe Catalina includes another way of understanding creation when she talked about offering different proposals that certainly could be understood as a new understanding of a text or new ways of acting in the world. When I read my notes about her interview, I felt compelled to write the following lines in my notebook:

a presupposition or requirement of critical thinking is knowledge of the theory or context of what is examined because if you don't have [it], "everything remains in *doxa*" and then when finding something that "doesn't seem right to me, you could have a different proposal." For Catalina, critical thinking does not stop at a mere examination or denunciation of what is wrong, but advances in proposing something different, I think that utopia appears on the horizon (Hoyos-Vásquez, 2012). (August 13th, 2022)

It is the last sentence that makes me think that in philosophy and critical thinking there might be a space for utopia, that is, for imagining different futures for my culture and myself that

⁵³ Paul and Elder (2005b) affirm that "the most important sense of creativity in thinking [is] the sense of thinking as a making, as a process of creating thought, as a process that brings thought into being to organize, shape, interpret, and make sense of the world –thinking that, once developed, enables is to achieve goals, accomplish purposes, solve problems, and settle important issues we face as humans." (p. 7)

complements the process of rational critical thinking. It is as if imagination were the bridge that unites the rational theoretical examination of a text and the practical new possibilities in the world that the text might imply. Evidently, imagination is not a de-contextualized exercise, as might be usually thought; the space for creativity or imagination in critical thinking needs a good comprehension of the context, and the *statu quo*, so that the new image responds appropriately to it. As Catalina said, without a proper knowledge of the context, everything we do is limited to mere *doxa*, just ungrounded opinion, the opposite side of criticality, I would say.

Furthermore, imagination has also an ethical side, since “the thought experiments we conduct in the great laboratory of the imaginary are also explorations in the realm of good and evil” (Ricoeur, 1990/1992, p. 164). Imagination is, indeed, the way we have to see that reality could be different and that it is possible to build a different world for myself and everyone else (an ethical and a political side). If my image of a good life includes others not just to discuss my ideals but to avoid harm to them, I have to be careful about those very ideals of happiness that might allow evil ideologies. The French philosopher helps us to see better some of the possible functions of imagination in the task of constructing a nebulous of happiness:

It is imagination that provides the milieu, the luminous clearing, in which we can compare and evaluate motives, as diverse as desires and ethical obligations, themselves as disparate as professional rules, social customs, or intensely personal values. (Ricoeur, 1986/1991, p. 177)

Thus, imagination is the faculty, we might say, that offers us a space for evaluating the realm of possibilities of reality. It is not just a faculty of creating fantasies and dreamed worlds to escape reality. Imagination, as CTM thinkers admit, helps to create alternative hypotheses, to examine the arguments, and see possible faults, but here it is applied to the social reality where

imagination may be embedded in utopias. It is the source of our projections of better futures, and better societies where equal opportunities and justice for all people are not just a dream but a utopia possible to reach. As Prada Londoño (2010) explains it, imagination plays a decisive role in anticipating and projecting the future and in the rise of the capacity of making something, of intervening in the world with the most personal powers (*poderes más propios*) (p. 77).

Imagination, when applied to creating new worlds, requires the just measure of application which again pulls us to the knowledge we have of our time and space, our culture and society, in order to create different and realizable possibilities. Indeed, utopia may become a lie when it is not articulated appropriately with the possibilities that every time offers (Ricœur, 1965, p. 91).

To finish this section, let us remember that Ricœur (1990/1992) saw in *phronesis*, in practical wisdom, the task of specifying our vague ideals of happiness or realized life (p. 177). To be sure, I think, to be wise in practical sense is to imagine possible ways out of conflicts which sometimes might take us to new utopias as horizons to pursue. In the following section, I present other possible ways to understand critical thinking in high school philosophy which certainly would imply new forms of teaching it.

Types of Critical Thinking

It is the task of philosophical reflection to eliminate the deceptive antinomies which would oppose the interest in the reinterpretation of cultural heritage received from the past and the interest in the futuristic projections of a liberated humanity. (Ricœur, 1981c, p. 100)

By the hand of my participants, I could see that there is not only one form of critical thinking in philosophy (opposed to thinking that is not critical) but several. This possible antinomic separation avoids, as the epigraph announces, not only a re-interpretation of our heritage but the

projection to a different future since there is no dialogue and all other possibilities are excluded. Sometimes, philosophers frame thinking as rational-irrational, be it directly or by way of decent omission of the other, stating just that the rational option is to... Before that kind of situation, Aoki (2011) showed me, once more, one of the possible problems:

all these binaries [I-other; leader-follower; right-wrong...] are frameable in an either/or opposition, often structured as a hierarchy privilege bestowed to the first named. In Western culture, this either/or framework has become dominant, so prevalent that we have tended to adopt it as reality, forgetting that it has been constituted historically and culturally. (p. 294)

Certainly, philosophy as any other discipline or science has been constituted historically and culturally, and their types of critique and their philosophies are no exception. Hence, even though two perspectives of philosophy of education might have been born more or less at the same time, they respond to different interests and contexts. So, for instance, the critical thinking movement (CTM) is focused more on an education-teaching context in Anglo-North America. The CTM answered to a specific historical context: the publication of the surprisingly low results of USA high school students' measurement of certain cognitive skills (Difabio, 2005). Nearly in the same period of time, but in Brazil, Freire developed his critical theory that also includes a concern of critical thinking. However, his theory was born out of the oppression and injustice he himself experienced in his childhood (Shaul, 2005).

One aspect that seems central to their proposal, however, is that their exercise might be characterized as primarily rational, which is not strange, Eppert (2010) would explain, since "our secular age has emphasized reason too much and at the expense of all the dimensions that contribute to a full experience of our humanity" (p. 226). And this rational emphasis is

understandable for reason is the ability that may realize examinations, according to traditional Western philosophy. What is doubtful is that this ability or faculty is separated or separable from all other human dimensions as affect, imagination, history, culture, interests, etc. Perhaps there are different forms of critical thinking depending on what human dimensions are more cultivated by the thinker. Thus, when reason is strongly accompanied by historical and social aspects, it may become more political (like Freire's philosophy) and when focused more on the affective and cultural dimensions, it turns to be more ethical (like Ricœur's philosophy), and sometimes both ethico-political.

One of the "findings" that I had by interpreting my participants' interviews was that there is not only a single form or type of critical thinking. As a high school teacher, friend and colleague of mine, said to me talking about this topic, "one usually thinks of critical thinking as examining the reasons and content of a text" (Felix Andrés Rojas, Personal communication, December 5th, 2022). His opinion was the same that another colleague, but this time from the USA, told me after a presentation I made at a conference.

I myself had never thought of several forms of critical thinking in philosophy, but they have been always there in front of my eyes, in the texts of the philosophers and the reflections of teachers and students. As Moules et al. (2015) often reminded, "We often continue in our practices in unquestioning ways, assuming take-for-granted discourses and ways of being" (p. 74). This taken-for-granted-ness is probably why there is not much literature about critical thinking in high school philosophy and why I usually thought of an epistemic examination of reasons when I heard the expression critical thinking. My participants showed me other facets or ontologic characteristics of critical thinking, one of them being the affective that I presented

above. In the next sections, I will present two more forms of critical thinking that were revealed to me in reading my participants' interview transcripts: ethical and political.

Critical Thinking: Ethics and Politics in the Forefront of Critical Thinking

I was almost halfway through my second interview with Beatriz when I unexpectedly understood that there seem to be at least three forms of critical thinking that sometimes appeared related to one another and sometimes separated. I said to Beatriz:

Would you believe, it just occurred to me listening to you, that this critical thought that one works in schools, that you have worked in school, because of the age of the children for, let's say, for various reasons, would it suddenly tend to lean more towards an ethical formation, a political formation or a human formation in general? Do you, you, you think that perhaps at school what the kids reach the most in their inferences has to do with any of these three fields, or is it all?

When this occurrence came to me, the teacher was describing an exercise based on the movie *Soul* (Docter, 2020). At that point in the interview, Beatriz had already mentioned several topics of her students' interventions (admiration, beauty, daily life, happiness as the goal of life, the meaning of life, etc.) and I noticed that all of them were related to their personal experiences and distant from the traditional epistemic understanding of critical thinking that I used to have and that my teacher-participants themselves related.

Thus, it came to me that their critical thinking "episodes" were mainly related to ethics, politics, and anthropology leaving behind the epistemic one, which seems the one on which

teachers insist most, as shown in the previous section.⁵⁴ Perhaps, I think, the teacher designs more activities that give the students opportunities to reflect on their own life, their country or society problems in general than those activities to analyze carefully philosophical or other types of documents, as in the case of the movies like *Soul* (Docter, 2020), for Beatriz, or *Die Welle* (Gansel, 2008), for Catalina. Or perhaps, even though they do both types of exercises alike, their most significant memories of critical thinking are related to ethics and politics.

When I asked Beatriz why she thought that those were the dimensions of critical thinking and not others, she immediately answered without a doubt:

Because it's the closest thing to their reality and maybe mine In this school many students are high-performance athletes or who have maybe found other extracurricular options that [were] also included in the topic of the class because that gives meaning to their lives, they obviously brought that up in class. Ok, so I insist because I insist that then this happens, that is, it turns a bit to the ethical, social and political level because it is

⁵⁴ Before developing the segmentation of critical thinking into two of the usual treatises of philosophy, a short clarification might be needed for readers not familiar with traditional Western philosophy. In general, philosophical branches named ontology, anthropology, ethics, politics, and so forth could be conceived as practical segmentations in order to understand and teach better the whole of philosophy, but do not constitute any actual separation of the phenomena. Apparently, they were proposed by the German thinker Christian Wolff at the end of the 18th century (Saldarriaga, 2008) probably as a didactic strategy to better teach the contents of philosophy.

Following such a strategy, it could be said that the exposition made in the previous chapter was the ontologic comprehension of critical thinking, as it presented some of what appears as its essential components (offering reasons, examining them, listening and speaking carefully, affect, imagination, etc.). The considerations regarding its teaching/learning would correspond to the epistemological dimension of critical thinking, and now we will consider the ethical and political sides or forms of it.

what is closest to them, with which perhaps they can integrate what is being worked on in the class.

That nearness to the students' lives is no other thing than the clear relation or connection that a topic may bear to people's experiences, worries, and dreams. Indeed, since students do not come to school as blank slates, any mention that connects to anything that they lived is immediately a motive to raise their heads and tune their ears to pay attention for a while and see what might be there (pay heed to the verbs, since to think requires certain body disposition too [Prieto Galindo, 2020]).

Realizing the Personal Freedom with and for Others: Ethical Criticality

Grosso modo, it could be said that ethics is related to human behavior and more specifically to freedom and how human action is valued as good or bad, be it in terms of virtue-vice or permitted-prohibited. Moreover, following Ricœur's (1990/1992) understanding that the term ethics could be referred to as "the aim of an accomplished life and the term 'morality' for the articulation of this aim in norms" (p. 198), I decided to use the word ethics instead of moral philosophy, since the emphasis I found in one type or form critical thinking is not on norms or laws for acting, but on deliberation to achieving a better life, a good life⁵⁵.

⁵⁵ Paul and Elder (2005a) do not talk about an ethical critique, but about an ethical reasoning. They define "ethics as a domain unto itself, a set of concepts and principles that guide us in determining what behavior helps or harms sentient creatures" (para. 2). In their theory, they seem to place the emphasis on the distinction of purely ethical terms and the "skilled ethical reasoning [which] presupposes the same range of intellectual skills and traits required in other domains [of reasoning]" (para. 4).

I realized that critical thinking had not just an epistemic, but also an ethical form, in the interview with Leonardo. He was explaining to me what he understood by “touching” the students’ life (*tocar la vida de los estudiantes*), and again, something struck me, so I said:

That is an interesting point because it is an ethical dimension of critical thinking, right? which usually comes out, right? I think that in general, when we think about critical thinking, we philosophers imagine above all a very epistemic thing, right? Where do we start, where do we start? Concepts, arguments, clarity, sources selection.

The immediate response of my interviewee was to agree with me and justify this kind of ethical critical thinking:

So that ethic within critical thinking is key and we need it today, teacher, because we are in a weak generation, that is a generation that comes to life and wants to live alone, generations that are permeated by so much, so many things that they find, that they find in social networks. They are boys who have no identity, they are boys who are easy, they are malleable. So, we need that, that they feel so valuable and that they do not have to be at the mercy of others, much less in the shadow of another, but that they can also see with their own light.

Leonardo’s description resonated in the back of my mind. That sort of anthropological characterization of his current students seemed too severe, but I recognize that nowadays the influences of social networking in youth are immense and maybe has caused harmful effects on their personalities that probably no other generation knew. Biesta (2019) seems also to agree with this teacher:

to resist the temptations of the globally networked society –or at least to make engagement with aspects of the globally networked society the outcome of a deliberate

decision rather than just an automatic reflex— requires indeed what we might refer to as a certain ‘strengthening’ of the subject. (p. 17)

The point, as I understand Biesta and Leonardo, is not to fight against the velocity and direction of this network influence, since they do not depend on us. What we can do is strengthen our students’ thinking and being, so they can continue living in the way they themselves decide despite of what that network society imposes on them. Before such a context, critical thinking might present its ethical form that is, a strengthening of the students’ *ethos*, character, or personality.

In the end, an ethical critical thinking is a critique that is focused on the image or projection of a good life that every person creates and re-creates in every action, including their reflections about it. It is about the daily conquest of freedom to act according to the examined convictions or beliefs. Indeed, freedom is part of the core of the philosophical reflection called ethics. Sometimes called by other terms, such as autonomy by Kant (1788/2002a), the power to decide freely according to personal considerations is the core of this treatise. The French philosopher Jacques Rancière (1987) highlights this individual touch in the philosophical consideration of freedom and ethics: “*La liberté ne se garantit par aucune harmonie préétablie. Elle se prend, elle se gagne, elle se perd par le seul effort de chacun*” (p. 40). In my translation: ‘Freedom cannot be warranted by any pre-established harmony. It is seized, it is won and lost by the individual effort of everyone.’ It is indeed an individual stake, the part that nobody else can do for us, the one that has to do with consciousness, attention, intention, careful reflection, and courage. Even though our relatives and friends help us think and deliberate the decision and its responsibility is individual.

What could be the form of an ethical critical thinking that helps youth to overcome the influence of social networking and cultural influences that aim at depriving them of their rightful freedom? Every teacher has to be able to respond to it according to what they see their students need. For Biesta and Leonardo, it is the influence of networking, whilst for Alfredo, it is the desire to have an easy life full of money. Nevertheless, I see that hooks (2010d) has also seen such necessity and offers a clue:

One of the most nurturing and generous benefits that come when we engage in critical thinking is an intensification of mindful awareness which heightens our capacity to live fully and well.... As critical thinkers, we are to think for ourselves and be able to take action on behalf of ourselves. This insistence on self-responsibility is vital practical wisdom. (p. 185)

For me, two words stronger shine in those lines: “mindful awareness,” or to be utterly conscious to the extent possible of where, when, what, how, and with whom we are acting and living. It is about being focused on what one is doing instead of, for example, dreaming of a future that maybe never come or a passed that we cannot change (although we can learn from it and interpret it anew). Mindful awareness, I would say, is mainly about being conscious and reflexive about what one wants for a good life and how to work for it with responsibility, that is, with practical wisdom.

Part of this awareness I see in Biesta’s (2017) concept of grown-up-ness. In terms of the philosopher, it is not about eliminating our desires “but a process through which our desires receive a reality check, so to speak, by asking the question of whether what we desire is desirable for our own lives and the lives we live with others”. (p. 16) That question seems central to putting a stop to the necessity of immediate satisfaction of our desires, a stop to think, to reflect

about what we want for us and those around us, because ethics, said Ricœur (1990/1992) is not complete until it reaches the other.

Allow me to finish with a reality check that I draw from the following words of Ricœur (1990/1992): “The certainty of being the author of one’s own discourse and of one’s own acts becomes the conviction of judging well and acting well in a momentary and provisional approximation of living well” (p. 180). The decision and action committed under the guidance of *phronesis* or practical wisdom are but a momentary approximation to the image of a good life. It is not a definitive conquest, if I may use this word, but a step in a long journey that only finishes when we pass away. We are to actualize the image of our good life as frequently as we discover it necessary.

Thus, as I see it, an ethical critical thinking is focused on the person itself, on their *ethos* or character, so the person regards critically the options they have to look for a good life, for instance, in the middle of the technology that might consume their lives when used without reflection. Certainly, the point is not to avoid or fear technology and social networks, but to learn how to manage them through practical wisdom. That is a difficult task, since being social beings the influence other people have on us is strong and difficult to control but that is also our responsibility. Now, regarding life on a bigger scale, social life, another facet of critical thinking shines strongly. What is it like?

The Political Visage of Critical Thinking

When I was doing my undergraduate studies of Philosophy, my teachers often repeated that the political branch of philosophy is, at least from the ancient tradition, an extension of ethics from the perspective of the *polis*, the city. It is about the collective issues in society such as the forms of government, its internal organization, the relation between the governors and

citizens; the institutional side, we might say. The next fragment of my interview with Leonardo talks about issues related to the city and not just about internal individual considerations:

Because the boy (*muchacho*), when he develops a critical thought, I remember that we approach the issue of segregation, discrimination and the reason for generating these segregation, discriminations, marginalization, and exclusions are the famous ideologies. Many ideologies simply marginalize a group of people because they do not conform to the standards that have been outlined. So, of course, when the boy (*muchacho*) understands that they cannot fall into that segregation as a result of ideologies that are going to... that there on the road, then the boy (*muchacho*) has the power and has the commitment that he cannot absorb that ideology because it is a harmful ideology, it is an ideology that makes massacres. I told them, for example, and they suggested, for example, the issue of white supremacy that prevails in the USA ultra-nationalism.

Here appeared a word that has generated lots of reflections for philosophers and other thinkers: ideology, that Leonardo ties with several social problems of discrimination. In terms of critical thinking, from the perspective of critical pedagogy, the aim is to uncover those ideologies that maintain people in their state of submission to others, under the slavery of certain ideas or discourses that hold them and keep the *statu quo*. This Latin expression has passed to our languages, to English (*status quo*) as well as Spanish (*statu quo*), as the means to represent the current state of society, usually with a negative meaning about the difficulties to change society, due precisely to ideologies. It is at least curious that the expression was used by the Latins in the absolute ablative, the case and grammatical construction that named circumstances, while being supposedly totally independent of all other sentences, as if the state (*statu*) in which (*quo*) people live, that is, their circumstances were independent or disconnected from their will and power.

In the same way, people's life or *status* is not disconnected from their own power to change it (or un-change it); it is not disconnected from their daily actions. The core of any ideology, I suppose, is to make people believe that they have no power to change their situation, so they "accept" their suffering and difficult situations of oppression. That is why I agree with Eppert (2010) when she affirms that "the world today is in need of healing from governing ideologies that have proven damaging and destructive in diverse ways to all of us, with many especially suffering from cruelty and indifference" (p. 225). It is precisely her call to leave behind our indifference to all forms of cruelty and suffering to others, triggered maybe by false beliefs or readings of reality, that compels me to make explicit this dimension of critical thinking.

In a country with a long history of violence in the middle of big wars and *guerrillas*, we Colombians have probably become desensitized or have maybe re-enforced the veins of all forms of discrimination that grew up during colonization and extended its consequences up to our current forms of education. To be sure, "Colombian education has traditionally been based on racial segregation and cultural dependency" (Montoya, 2014, p. 135) that started in the first schools in the 17th century beginning with the exclusion of these institutions to all those who had no pure Spanish blood (Castro Gómez, 2005). This racism was inherited from Spain itself since the condition *sine qua non* to obtain a title of nobility in Spain was to be an "old Christian" and not mixed with "bad races", that is, with the blood of Moorish, Guinean, Jewish or Gypsy (Castro Gómez, 2005, p. 71). To acknowledge that part of our history is just a step to imagining and beginning to build a Colombia where everyone might have a good life. As Eppert (2010) stated, "the first possibility for change comes with a deep looking into and awareness of the roots of what is happening around and within us" (p. 222). That is why the historical chapter was a

must of this dissertation and of all those teachers of philosophy that want to contribute to a change in our society. Such history and its current consequences in my home country, make the following words of Pinar (2020) echo in my mind:

What can the curriculum say to youth alienation and violence, including bullying and hazing? Can curriculum address economic inequality, racism, sexism, and the political propaganda that permit these? How can the school curriculum help us understand terrorism, the ecological crisis, globalization? (p. 20)

My first answer is that the curriculum can show and help students to acknowledge those situations so that “sooner or later an action corresponds” (Freire, 1970/2005a, p. 39). Action, understood under the lens of a Freirean philosophy, as I understand, is an act of change, or creativity, the creation of new worlds. If I am not mistaken, for Freire and critical pedagogy in general, the political dimension of thinking ends or takes to creativity, to utopia. He stated:

Men can intervene in reality in order to change it. Inheriting acquired experience, creating and re-creating, integrating themselves into their context, responding to its challenges, objectifying themselves, discerning, transcending, men enter into the domain which is theirs exclusively— that of History and Culture. (Freire, 1970/2005a, p. 4)

As I understand it, the Brazilian thinker places creativity as a requirement for changing history and culture. This is a dimension of thinking and criticality that I also found when talking to my teacher-participants. Now, I think critical thinking might include a call for imagination, for utopias that guide us to better futures and better lives.

Allow me to finish with a reference to the Colombian philosopher of education Hoyos Vásquez (2009), who has greatly influenced my thinking about education. One of his calls was to be impertinent to society and culture that follows the trends that hinder the achievement of a

better life. In his words: Not just philosophy, education in general and the university [and schools] especially must be impertinent, and the more impertinent the more critical and all the more open to utopia. Theology, psychology, social sciences, and the law must be impertinent if they want to be responsible for a society that expects precisely from education critical analysis, proposals for change, and commitment to what we lack in a horizon of utopia (p. 427). Thus, the creation (a task of imagination, reason, and affect) appears to the Colombian thinker as a horizon of comprehension, would say Gadamer (1975/2004), where our dreams of and our reasons for a good life might be melded into possibilities of better understanding. Yes, “our” reasons, because we also can collectively reason, imagine, and feel, or cannot we? It is time to the only contribution of Ricoeurian *phronesis* that I did not find in my participants words or actions: Collective thinking.

Collective decision. This kind of decision is one of the forms of Ricoeurian *phronesis*. To a certain extent, I see a mirror reflex of this type of decisions in the way my teacher-participants make their pedagogic decisions having into account their students’ opinions and contexts. Collective decision (*décision collective*⁵⁶) (Ricoeur, 1965, p. 87) might be a new face of critical thinking and new to philosophy teaching. What could be more political than striving to make decisions in a community where all implicated or possibly affected have the opportunity to voice their worries and perspectives? Here I find the central place of otherness in Ricoeurian *phronesis* mainly through the Hegelian *Sittlichkeit* (the concrete ethical life: the customs, values,

⁵⁶ This concept was first projected by Ricoeur in 1965 in an interesting paper titled “*Taches de l’Éducateur Politique*” (the tasks of political educator) and extended or applied, I believe, to his Hegelian dimension of *phronesis*.

and sedimented traditions in institutions such as family and the State) where the decision is made by a collective rather than the *phronimos* alone (Fiasse, 2008). When “‘good counsel’ does prevail, Hegelian *Sittlichkeit*—which itself is also rooted in *Sitten*, in “‘mores”’—proves to be the equivalent of Aristotle’s *phronesis*: a plural, or rather public, *phronesis* resembling the debate itself” (Ricoeur, 1990/1992, p. 261).

An institution that might represent the Ricoeurian *phronesis* is a council, where wise men and women deliberate together, in our case, a group of students and a teacher. It is the figure of people who are open to debate and open to listening to different opinions in order to examine their own and reach a decision suitable for all, above all for growing as persons. People, equals, capable to listen to each other even though they do not agree, because “the spokespersons of the opposing theses” (Ricoeur, 1990/1992, p. 270) might help to see a different side of the phenomenon. *Phronesis* cannot be practical wisdom unless it ponders different stances and perspectives about the right place, moment, and conditions of acting, attaining the good for everyone. Indeed, one characteristic of *phronesis* is that its

moral judgment in situation is all the less arbitrary as the decision maker—whether or not in the position of legislator—has taken the counsel of men and women reputed to be the most competent and the wisest. The conviction that seals decision then benefits from the plural character of the debate. The *phronimos* is not necessarily one individual alone.
(Ricoeur, 1990/1992, p. 273)

If a *phronimos* is not necessarily a person alone but the opposite, one possible way to teach *phronesis* as critical thinking might be by asking the students’ opinion and discussing with them the options available to make a final decision among all, a collective decision, about some dimensions of the course. The opportunity for these kinds of decisions is precisely those in which

the teacher might be in conflict between including and excluding the traditional philosophy and its pedagogy. I listen to Palmer (2007) as we seem to coincide:

Of course, there are forms of conflict more creative than the win-lose form called competition, forms that are vital if the self is to grow. But academic culture knows little of these alternative forms—such as consensual decision making—in which all can win and none need lose, in which “winning” means emerging from the encounter with a larger sense of self than one brought into it, in which we learn that the self is not a scrap of turf to be defended but a capacity to be enlarged. (p. 57)

Certainly, a consensual or collective decision is an alternative form of making decisions for philosophy teachers that were trained to make all the pedagogic decisions. As Palmer states, with other forms of decision in class, we could counter the expanding trend of competition, nowadays represented mainly by the marks on students’ assignments.

Third Balance of Findings

In Chapter Nine, I concentrated on the teachers’ understanding of critical thinking. I recollected my participants rational centered understanding of critical thinking and advanced two different facets of critical thinking: first the influence of affect in thinking critically, and, second, imagination as the ability that allows one to do the examinations and new proposals required by the criticality in reading a text and in acting on the world. In the second part of the chapter, I focused on two types of critical thinking: ethical and political. The ethical critical thinking seems guided mainly towards the search for a good life (for me but also for close and afar others), whilst the political one seems focused on achieving a just life in community, particularly through collective decisions.

In this chapter, *phronesis* emerged at several points, mainly as a way of thinking and acting of my participants, but not as a new contribution to understanding critical thinking, except for the collective decision. I did encounter some of the possibilities foreseen in Chapter Two. There, I presented three possibilities for new understandings of critical thinking guided by Ricoeurian *phronesis*: 1) the conjunction between reason and other human dimensions in critique, that here were specified in affect and imagination; 2) the participation of otherness and difference in building a good life, a common trait between CTM theory and Ricoeurian philosophy, that I found in the collective decision; 3) the creation of new possibilities before the situation at hand, that is, particularly the work of imagination.

Concerning the first point, my participants talked about creativity, for me imagination, and also about affective dispositions, particularly the teacher's, but from Freire I extended it to critical thinking in general. Imagination and affect are also present or intervene in our critical thinking. The second point about the intervention of otherness in criticality is implicitly contained in the fact that critical thinking may take a political form in the search for justice but also in ethical criticality as the examination of the personal ideal of a good life include the possibility of harming other, that should be avoided. Finally, the creation of new possibilities as a *phronetical* characteristic of critical thinking is already included in imagination as an essential element of criticality.

In the end, I could say that *phronesis*, at far as I can see now, does not add much to the ways my participants already understand and teach critical thinking. Even the fact that *phronesis* is a virtue, and not just a skill, is included in my teachers' thoughts when they worry and make decisions looking for strengthening their students' character and self-examination. Such a finding is not a failure or motive for discouragement. On the contrary, it makes me realize the practical

wisdom that many teachers bear in their actions, even though they do not make it conscious nor write papers about it. I gladly see that many high school philosophy teachers nowadays are more connected to their students' needs and contexts and that they live wisely the tension between sticking to traditional Western philosophy and leaving it out. I am glad I was wrong!

Conclusions? General Balance

In the last three chapters, I presented what I think marks a different point of comprehension of critical thinking in high school philosophy: ethical and political critical thinking. The fact that I did not find any reference to these possible kinds of critical thinking in the Colombian literature about it in high school philosophy, showed me that I found a new facet of critical thinking worthy of a deeper exploration. This discovery has mainly come as a result of my interpretation of the information collected from the interviews with the participants and the teaching tools that they shared with me. However, these forms of critical thinking bear a close relation to the Ricoeurian *phronesis* and current curricular theory, as every chapter has shown. In this final reflection, I do not develop a conclusion as interpretation could and even should be open. I intend to recall my findings through this study and above all the way my participants spoke or not about Ricoeurian *phronesis* in their views about critical thinking. However, I chose to change the usual conclusion chapter style, even for a hermeneutic paper. I will show the reason for this change momentarily.

Letter to the Reader

Dear Reader:

I hope this letter finds you well and does not strike you, but engages you in reading and thinking further about high school philosophy and its critical thinking teaching. I warmly greet you and thank you for having read my text, and identifying some of its lacks (many, I fear) and its virtues (several, I hope). I know it is a long text, sometimes boring and sometimes engaging, and probably difficult where my Spanish mindset and mother tongue got in the way. I thank you for your patience and comments that without a doubt will help me to improve my work as a writer, a scholar, and a teacher.

I admit that I am living a moment of crisis as a scholar, a teacher, and a Colombian citizen aware of his history and the necessity for change in what and how we teach philosophy. The recent ambiance of racial, class, and gender discrimination, or in general, the hatred that Colombia has witnessed, produced, and lived due to the recent presidential elections (June, 2022) cannot be more discomfoting for a teacher of philosophy committed to thinking the understanding and pedagogy of critical thinking in high school. Notwithstanding, simultaneously, it encourages me to continue this path of research due to its necessity.

Thus, I could not write a typical conclusion chapter and leave out my pain, my home country's current context, and my findings, even though the hermeneutic writing style opens spaces for the first person, the researcher's experiences, memories, and any re-source of the "house of language." I had to look for another way to talk that was closer to my "new" self, my Colombia's history (past and present), and the possibilities that critical thinking might offer when understood as a virtue rather than simply a thinking skill. To a certain extent, I rejected finishing my dissertation in a way that was not mine, not Colombian, not born in the "discovered," colonized, pacified lands of originary nations of the South, especially *Muisca*, the main Indigenous people of the land where my family and myself come from. Unfortunately, I do not know much about them yet...

Thus, I have to tell you that I decided to write a letter in this final section of my dissertation as an act of revolution, that is, an intentional act of change, which probably is the most consequent choice for a work on critical thinking (that has listened to decolonialism) and so far, has followed the guidelines of the hermeneutic approach and scientific research. I looked for a literary genre close to but able to accommodate and lo(o)se simultaneously the hermeneutic style and the constraints of "scientific" procedures.

I thought of confessions, but I do not have more sins to acknowledge to you; meditations, but its main representative would be a Eurocentric philosopher who disconnected mind from body and inaugurated the solipsistic or at least individualistic philosophy and its critical thinking we continue to worship; dialogues, but again that genre would recall of another non-American philosopher; autobiography, but this section is not about telling my whole life. Then, the epistolary genre seemed to be the best option. You certainly would judge my choice. You won't find quotes, etymologies (as I do not know yet any original language of my land), elaborated metaphors or comparisons, but simple and plain language, at times "codified" among us (due to the dissertation contents) producing a small complicity. My models this time were Andy Hargreaves and Paulo Freire, but I certainly am not to their stature.

Notwithstanding, and not to lose the tension, the conflict, inherent to a paper that transits from one model to another, the epistolary genre agrees to the hermeneutic and curriculum theory's central pillars: history, politics, and autobiography. What could be more political than a revolution against established truths and ways of doing? What could be more historical than stopping doing the same in the same ways with the same people and for the same objectives? Is it not autobiographical to review the history, the personal and the social, to re(dis)cover what I myself have been doing as a teacher, a scholar, and a philosopher? All these questions are good, I think, but not the central point of my worry and wonder. This is it: how does my study answer to the "new" reality in my heart, in my home country, and the old ways of teaching philosophy in high school? In the next pages, I (again) will let you know a bit more about myself, particularly what I have learned through my research that may signal a few hints to this complex question. Please, linger with me for a few more pages.

I traveled to Canada in 2018 with a very fixed topic in my mind, a framework, and, to a certain extent, a method to follow: all given by traditional Western philosophy. Before that, I had to work on my English for several years taking courses, traveling to an English-speaking country (although only for seven months), and taking an international exam (IELTS). It's been a long hard way from which now I can say I have learned a lot. In the last four years, not only my English has improved in vocabulary, fluency, and reading skills, but I have also started to understand why every language is, or better, offers a different world: every language is born in a world and both re-create one another.

However, my English skills difficulties and progress were not the most relevant insight lately. The most important might be to realize that, for the most part, I still think that everywhere people think as we Colombians do, as I do; that everywhere people do things alike and therefore they know the same general things: how to do an academic text, participate in a discussion, prepare a breakfast or a soup. This “finitude” taught me that (critical) thinking is always limited to our own experiences, our contexts, and horizons of understanding. In other words, there would be always fields of naivety, and this awareness is not a problem *per se* because it is in that space of ignorance that we can once and again be surprised and astonished and ready to think differently or, at least, to begin to wonder according to the openness we can harbor. Philosophy or critical thinking might not come without wonder. Is it not this experience of wonder and admiration of the universe around us and inside us that has taken women and men to think differently, that is, to re-search the “essence” of the uni-verses in which we move all the time?

In my case, the more I study, the more I became Socratic: I only can know that I know nothing! And that entices my search for knowledge. What of those people that do think they know? Is not this point one of the problems of any form of discrimination, the fact that people

are convinced they know what the Other *is*? How could we assist those people if these topics never come out in a classroom to discuss them? I do think that racism, feminism, elitism, etc., could and even must be addressed in a class of philosophy but not from all the classical texts of philosophy, because they seem not to set up fires or even small sparks in the hearts and minds of Colombian high school students. I learned that from my participants. Am I generalizing too much? I need and want to test these conclusions in a high school classroom because there is no research on it yet in Colombian high school philosophy. That could be my next research.

It was post-, and above all, de-colonialism that appeared to wake me up from my dogmatic slumber, and offered me an insightful perspective of which I just grasped or scratched the surface. Then, I could get acquainted with Argentinians Walter Mignolo, Enrique Dussel, and the Brazilian Paulo Freire, and the desire to learn about Latin American philosophy was born and first germinated in my reading of the Chilean José Santos Herceg in direct conflict with the Colombian Guillermo Hoyos-Vasquez, the Colombian philosopher I have read most. How traditional, Western, and ideologized has been Colombian philosophy! How can I look the other way and ignore the history of my home country, its past, and present? How can I hold my sight on Europe whilst overlooking my own continent and its peoples' wisdom?

I think now that I cannot understand the recently emerged racism, misogyny, and elitism in the social network about our current Colombians vice-president and president if I do not look for information about our past, about the “dis-covering of America,” the colonization and “pacification” process by Spanish hands and discourses. And as strange as it may sound, I could not understand those characteristics either in traditional Western philosophy if I had not met those texts and decolonial authors. How intricately, entangled, and obscure is human history! Now I cannot help wondering if I have been complicit in racism, misogyny, elitism, and other

forms of discrimination. Do you see why I am in crisis? I remember reading from a Buddhist book that when a person really knows themselves, they might get terrified of their findings.

Evidently, these discoveries and conversations with such scholars and with myself generated a crisis and all my fixed stars vanished and I could not differentiate good from evil, as Ricœur beautifully describes. I keep wondering whether those traditional philosophies that I studied for long years have something to tell my people. I wonder if I do have to quit reading them or if I actually can find an Aristotelian middle point between them and us. I have to acknowledge and thank a friend and colleague, Oscar Javier Linares, for helping me understand otherwise, but it seems I do not have the strength to be as radical as he was in abandoning Western philosophy (analytical philosophy in his case), not yet. Would not that be to ignore what we already are?

Coincidentally, my generous participants have not done it yet, but they probably have not read any author on decolonialism since they did not even mention Paulo Freire or Enrique Dussel, the most popular philosophers in Latin America, nor are they included in their syllabi or non-canonical readings. They still strongly believe in traditional Western philosophy. This was probably my first finding, but it was not a surprise for me. Notwithstanding, they did teach me a few things about teaching philosophy and critical thinking. I do not think, however, that I have found totally original new knowledge. (There is, perhaps, an excessive pride in thinking that anyone can find something new today) In hermeneutics, I find a more sensible approach to knowledge: we can re(dis)cover a facet of the phenomenon that time re-covered under certain dust and light focus to the point of making it dis-appear. Gadamer's hermeneutics is certainly a part of what I cherish about Western philosophy; like Ted Aoki's and Gert Biesta's joy and acknowledgment of tension, Gadamer prefers being "in-between" concerning knowledge,

wisdom, truth.... That space is, I guess, the place of dis-covery. Standing there we could see the extremes and find their common points, but it is not easy to hold the equilibrium, and the balance is always at risk, so it is necessary to look for a kind of wisdom that admits conflicts, tragedy, and difficult circumstances. That, seems to me, is precisely the place where I am now, so I call for prudence, the *phronesis* of the Ancient Greeks, to guide my steps in a path that I have just started to walk.

My participants, I think, would agree in seeing critical thinking as *phronesis*, not only regarding its explicit ethical and political intentionality, but also its inclusion of all that we as people are: mind, body, affect, thinking, imagination, culture, history, and so forth. Their teaching experience has given them the pedagogic wisdom of an experienced scholar, although some of their knowledge is not conscious. They do what they think is the best according to their students, their socio-cultural context, and their abilities. They are already *phronimos* who create the rule according to the case, capable of bending the cultural or institutional rule in favor of their students growing-up, in response to solicitude. That was probably my second finding. It seems that my participants already know most things that Ricoeurian *phronesis* might teach them: new forms of critical thinking. Certainly, they have learned to work with the traditional Western canon to meet the rule, but they can leave it when it is time to teach/learn critical thinking, when it is time to question injustice or “in-happiness” in any form. They look for the most sensible readings that are able to touch their students’ lives, texts that make them feel and think. They know that the objective of schooling children and youth is not to “learn” that philosophy but to learn *from* it; that they learn to give meaning to their life, to have a meaningful life. What could be more political and ethical than this commitment? Indeed, I myself learned that critical thinking is way more than a rational examination under universal, neutral, and

objective criteria, which probably are not really like that, as we were taught, but as partial, particular, and subjective as any other wisdom.

“Do you really believe that we can dialogue and take decisions *with* [instead of *for*] high school students?” –asked me a university teacher at a conference that I gave in September 2022. Could you believe it? Now I wonder whether that teacher thinks that high school students are people... Perhaps they never taught in high school. One of my findings is that collective decision could be always a good strategy to engage critical thinking, be it as a way to motivate students before a topic such as tattoos or racial discrimination or be it to decide what and how to study in a course. In high school, I never contemplated this possibility: I was like that professor at the conference. We are all, so close and afar, so different and similar at the same time...

I was trained to make those kinds of decisions because that was “my responsibility” as a teacher. The real thing seems to be that I was a victim of a subtle but powerful ideology, one that makes you think that you are free, critical, and intelligent. I remember my teacher of metaphysics (a former Spanish Catholic priest) when he said: “you will not make presentations in my class, because you know nothing about the topic of this course. So, I am the one who is going to explain it to you.” Now, I imagine that teacher saying:

you are a philosopher: you have the power to decide what to teach; but teach only Plato, Aristotle, Saint Augustine... because you know their philosophy and your students do not. Oh, but you are from Latin America, oh, no, no, you do not have philosophers; you have brilliant scholars, though. They might help you and your students understand *The* philosophers. Besides, do not forget that there is only one approved way to understand philosophy and any philosophical theory, so make sure your students get it right, sooner or later, at any cost.

Thus, any other way of understanding a philosopher would be heterodoxy, a heresy punished by the expulsion of the community of philosophers. “Real philosophers are orthodox. They do not deviate from the true path of wisdom,” I also imagine my metaphysics teacher saying. Do you think I am going too far with my imagination? The results of such a view are patent, I would dare to say. We, silently, unaware, and efficiently, keep venerating Kant, Hegel... and the way they conceived philosophy. Besides, I wonder if there is someplace/space in Colombian high school where neo-Thomism is not the main perspective to teach philosophy. I do not know, there are no studies about it, as far as I know. I ignore whether this story is a part of Latin American or Colombian history only.

I wonder now, for instance, whether Plato’s theories have had only one dominant interpretation in high school. Have you thought about it before? I never did until I read decolonial authors... and I fell in crisis, and now I find myself defending a dissertation based on that philosophy, or am I? Is the Ricoeurian theory of *phronesis* part of that philosophy? Are Gadamerian and Ricoeurian hermeneutics heirs of modern Eurocentric philosophical theory? I still have no answer to that. I understand that there might not be an answer, a truth about it.

One question remains to be answered and I am afraid I do not have much to say about it: What have I learned from my participants about *phronesis*? I think that even though my participants did not know that theory, which is just a supposition I drew from the fact that they never mentioned Ricoeur nor *phronesis*, they all seem to apply its principal teachings: bear into and account the context, the participants of the situation, the rules involved, and decide to balance all those components in mind regarding a good life and justice. They all seem to privilege their students’ needs and opportunities; they respond to solicitude. What could improve or change if they knew that theory? This is worth another study.

Regarding my learning, I have to say that my participants showed me that it is practice itself (paying attention to the students, talking and listening to/with them intently) which sets a teacher on the path of *phronesis*. I understand that I could not know *phronesis* in high school philosophy any better unless I go back and work there, in the middle of the phenomenon to let it speak to me. I would like to go back to high school. I wonder if life will give me that opportunity and if I will take advantage of it.

My participants showed me, or I understood, that critical thinking has an ethical and political dimension that seems to be hidden behind the emphasis on the usual epistemic understanding and exercise of assessing philosophical texts. That was certainly one of my findings. The ethical dimension relates to the *ethos* of the person, that is their character traits, convictions, beliefs, and usual behavior (not just the normative thinking about what to do) that follow or resist the social and cultural trends that seem to dominate every time. My participants say that it is necessary to give students tools so they strengthen their reflection about their lifestyle. Here the affective side of criticality seems an element to bear in mind when thinking of teaching critical thinking in philosophy, not only the fact that the students' affective disposition will favor or hinder their engagement in thinking critically, but because people seem to care for certain beliefs, that is that ideas may stick affectively to the person and not just rationally, as philosophers usually defend. Here the contribution of affect theory, that is psychology, literature and cultural studies, if I did not misunderstand, is crucial to widening the comprehension of critical thinking. At the same time, these contributions from other knowledge fields demonstrate the necessity that contemporary philosophy does not stay hermetically closed to the philosophical traditions (that usually do not talk among them) but opens itself to other disciplines.

In the case of the political dimension of critical thinking, mainly related to the behavior of specific groups of people such as Afro-descendant, Indigenous, LGTBQ+, peasants, and so forth, philosophy and curriculum theory has already advanced through theories such as Marxism that focus principally on the dynamics of ideology and hegemony that establish and naturalize oppression and inequality. From didactics (as a science of education), curriculum theory, and philosophy of education theories of critical pedagogy represent their main perspectives.

What, are the implications of “my findings” when applying them in high school philosophy? This a question not easy to respond to. I think that probably a debate would start among high school teachers about the canon of traditional Western philosophy and the pertinence of teaching it or not in high school. Of course, that would be if they read my dissertation, for which I first would have to translate into Spanish and I do not know yet if it is worth doing it. In the philosophical circles where I have presented my findings, what I have started to find is mostly rejection due to the “small” displacement of the canon operated by my participants. I suppose the community of high school teachers will have a similar reaction, but perhaps more openness to trying out. So, probably, some teachers would make their revolution and change their syllabi, their, objectives, readings, and methods in a class philosophy. Others, most teachers, I think, would stick to tradition. That reaction might be “normal” if someone just put into question the canon of your field of knowledge, would not you?

I do think it is worth doing another study but observing philosophy teachers’ classes and not doing interviews with them. What would this observation reveal about their understanding and pedagogy of critical thinking? What new interpretations could emerge? Another study worth doing is to apply what I found to a course of philosophy, maybe with a control group and a qualitative traditional study so to see if there is a noticeable change in the learning of students

not only about critical thinking but also about philosophy itself. And what if a study is done about the faculties of philosophy in universities? In what ways do university philosophy teachers understand critical thinking and its pedagogy? Would we find questions to the traditional Western canon of philosophy? Would we find that teachers frequently leave the canon to include other authors and resources to plan debates or conversations and improve their students' abilities to think critically? I sincerely doubt it, but a study such as that might surprise more than one person. Now, after decolonialism, I wonder what would be like a decolonial didactic of philosophy.... I could go to Brazil, which would give me the opportunity to improve my Portuguese and work on critical Freirean didactics of philosophy for high school.

I would like to say many more things, but I am afraid I have nothing more by now, except that I hope I have been able to show clearly in my dissertation part of my country's reality, my participants' understanding of critical thinking and the teaching of philosophy in high school, and most of all, new ways to understand critical thinking. Apart from that, I wish you have gotten one or more questions that later you could explore. Most of all, I hope to have caused a spark about something related to my topic of study, to Latin American philosophy, or to philosophy itself. I look forward to listening to your thoughts and questions about my study.

Sincerely yours,

Fredy Hernán Prieto Galindo.

Bogotá, Colombia.

References

- Acevedo, D. M., & Prada Dussán, M. (2017). "Pensar la vida: crisis de las humanidades y praxis filosófica." [Thinking life: humanities crisis and philosophical praxis] *Revista Colombiana de Educación*, 72(1), 15–37. <https://doi.org/10.17227/01203916.72rce15.37>
- Andreotti, V. (2011). *Actionable postcolonial theory in education*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Anselma, A. (2020). Colombia suspends governor, investigates 6 more on coronavirus corruption claims. *Colombia Reports*. <https://colombiareports.com/colombia-suspends-governor-investigates-6-more-on-coronavirus-corruption-claims/>
- Aoki, T. (2011). *Curriculum in a new key. The collected works of Ted T. Aoki*. (W. F. Pinar & R. Irwin, Eds.). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Aristotle. (1885). *The politics of Aristotle* (B. Jowett, Ed.). Clarendon Press.
- Bai, H., Eppert, C., Scott, C., Tait, S., & Nguyen, T. (2014). Towards intercultural philosophy of education. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 34, 635–649. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-014-9444-1>
- Bailin, S. (2002). Critical thinking and science education. *Science & Education*, 11, 361–375.
- Bailin, S., Case, R., Coombs, J. R., & Daniels, L. B. (1999). Conceptualizing critical thinking. *Curriculum Studies*, 31(3), 285–302.
- Barad, K. (2014). Diffracting diffraction: Cutting together-apart. *Parallax*, 20(3), 168–187.
- Bećirović, S., A, F. H., & Brdarević-Čeljo, A. (2019). Critical Thinking Development in the Milieu of High School Education. *European Journal of Contemporary Education*, 8(3), 469–482. <https://doi.org/10.13187/ejced.2019.3.469>
- Begué, M. F. (2002). *Paul Ricœur: La poética del sí-mismo* [Paul Ricœur: Poetics of the self]. Editorial Biblos.

- Benavides, G. (2011). Por el laberinto de la didáctica en filosofía [Through the labyrinth of didactics of philosophy]. *Cuestiones de Filosofía, 11*, 1–15.
- Bernal Escobar, I., Ceballos Ruiz, P. A., Ospina Vinasco, A. M., & López, C. A. (2008). La enseñanza de la filosofía en el Quindío [Teaching of philosophy in Quindío]. *Revista de Investigaciones Universidad Del Quindío, 18*, 180–190.
- Best, F. (2011). Quand la «pensée Ricoeur» devient philosophie de l'éducation [When Ricoeur's thought turns into philosophy of education]. In A. Kerlan & D. Simard (Eds.), *Paul Ricoeur et la question éducative* (pp. 3–7). Presses de l'Université Laval.
- Bhabha, H. K. (2017). The location of culture. In *The location of culture*. Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781912281701>
- Bialystok, L. (2017). Philosophy across the curriculum and the question of teacher capacity; or, what is philosophy and who can teach it? *Journal of Philosophy of Education, 51*(4), 817–836.
- Biesta, G. (2012). Giving teaching back to education: Responding to the disappearance of the teacher. *Phenomenology & Practice, 6*(2), 35–49.
- Biesta, G. (2016). *The beautiful risk of education*. Routledge.
- Biesta, G. (2017). *Rediscovery of teaching*. Routledge.
- Biesta, G. (2019). *Obstinate Education. Reconnecting school and society*. Brill Sense.
- Block, A. (2017). Study as sacred. In C. Ruitenberg (Ed.), *Reconceptualizing study in educational discourse and practice* (pp. 84–96). Routledge.
- Boisvert, J. (1997). Une stratégie d'enseignement de la pensée critique [A strategy for teaching critical thinking]. *Pédagogie Collégiale, 11*(2), 6–10.

- Borja Gómez, J. H. (2015). Un territorio imaginado. Del virreinato de la Nueva Granada a la Gran Colombia [An imagined territory. From the Viceroyalty of New Granada to Gran Colombia]. In *Historia de Colombia. Todo lo que hay que saber*. Editora Géminis.
- Braidotti, R. (2006). Posthuman, all too human. Towards a new process ontology. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 23(7–8), 197–208.
- Bray, A., Byrne, P., & O’Kelly, M. (2020). A Short Instrument for Measuring Students’ Confidence with ‘Key Skills’ (SICKS): Development, Validation and Initial Results.’ *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 37, 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2020.100700>
- Burbules, N. C., & Berk, R. (1999). Critical thinking and critical pedagogy: Relations, differences, and limits. In T. Popkevits & L. Fendler (Eds.), *Critical theories in education. Changing terrains of knowledge and politics* (pp. 45–66). Routledge.
- Camargo Camargo, E., & Barreto Bernal, L. J. (2012). Tras las huellas de alternativas didácticas para la enseñanza de la filosofía [After the footprints of alternative didactics for teaching philosophy]. *Cuestiones de Filosofía*, 9, 192–201.
- Cambridge University Press. (n.d.). Prejudice. In *Cambridge dictionary*. Retrieved September 24, 2021. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/fr/dictionnaire/anglais/prejudice>
- Camelo Perdomo, D. F. (2020). Hacia una crítica de las prácticas de enseñanza de la filosofía en Colombia: aproximaciones desde Michel Foucault [Towards a critique of philosophy teaching practices in Colombia: Approaches from Michel Foucault]. *Revista Filosofía UIS*, 19(2), 263–283.
- Cárdenas, L. G. (2005). Notas sobre la enseñanza de la filosofía [Notes on the teaching of philosophy]. *Folios*, 22, 39–50.

- Carlo, N. (2002). La phronèsis d'Aristote dans la dernière décennie du XX siècle [The phronesis of Aristotle in the last decade of the 20th century]. In G. Romeyer & G. Aubri (Eds.), *L'excellence de la vie. Sur "L'éthique à Nicomaque" et "L'éthique à Eudème" d'Aristote* (pp. 179–194). Librairie Philosophique J. VRIN.
- Castro Gómez, S. (2005). *La hybris del punto cero: ciencia, raza e ilustración en la Nueva Granada (1750-1816)* [The hybris of the zero point: Science, race and enlightenment in New Granada]. E. P. U. Javeriana, Ed.
- Castro, J. O., & Noguera, C. E. (1999). La educación en la Santa Fe colonial [Education in colonial Santa Fe]. In O. L. Zuluaga (Ed.), *Historia de la educación en Bogotá, Tomo I.* (pp. 19–32). Instituto para la Investigación Educativa y el Desarrollo Pedagógico –IDEP–.
- Ceballos Gómez, D. L. (2015). Desde la formación de la república hasta el radicalismo liberal [From the formation of the republic to liberal radicalism]. In *Historia de Colombia. Todo lo que hay que saber* (pp. 165–216). Editora Géminis.
- Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica (CNMH). (2013). *¡Basta ya! Colombia: memorias de guerra y dignidad. Informe General Grupo de Memoria Histórica* [Enough already! Colombia: Memories of war and dignity. General Report Historical Memory Group]. Imprenta Nacional.
- Cerquera Beltrán, E. R., & Ríos López, J. (2017). La enseñanza de la filosofía a partir del uso de la historia oral [The teaching of philosophy from the use of oral history]. *Revista Cambios y Permanencias*, 8(2), 980–998.
- Contreras Tasso, B. (2012). *La Sabiduría práctica en la ética de Paul Ricoeur* [Practical Wisdom in the Ethics of Paul Ricoeur]. Plaza y Valdez Editores.
- Cook, J. (2011). "Awake. Love. Think. Speak.": A narrative foundation for secondary school English curriculum. *Journal of Education and Christian Belief*, 15(2), 109–123.

- Coté, H., & Simard, D. (2011). Penser l'éducation avec Ricoeur. l'herméneutique ou la voie longue de l'éducation [Thinking about education with Ricoeur. Hermeneutics or the long way of education]. In A. Kerlan & D. Simard (Eds.), *Paul Ricoeur et la question éducative* (pp. 79–95). Presses de l'Université Laval.
- Cubillos Bernal, J. (1999). Reflexiones sobre la enseñanza de la filosofía: Formar la “actitud filosófica” y enseñar a pensar [Reflections on the teaching of philosophy: Forming the “philosophical attitude” and teaching to think]. *Revista Educación y Pedagogía*, 11(23), 231–243.
- Cubillos Bernal, J. (2006). La actitud filosófica en la enseñanza de la filosofía [The philosophical attitude in the teaching of philosophy]. Nuevas reflexiones. *Childhood & Philosophy*, 2(4), 271–291.
- Cuypers, S. (2004). Critical thinking, autonomy and practical reason. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 38(1), 75–90.
- Davey, N. (2006). *Unquiet understanding. Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics*. State University of New York Press.
- Davidson, S. (2010). Introduction: Translation as a model of interdisciplinarity. In *Ricoeur across the disciplines* (pp. 1–11). Continuum.
- Davis, T. (2013). Socrates in Homeroom: A Case Study for Integrating Philosophy across a High School Curriculum. *Teaching Philosophy*, 36(3), 217–238.
- Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (DANE). (2007). Colombia una nación multicultural. Su diversidad étnica [National Administrative Department of Statistics. Colombia a multicultural nation. Its ethnic diversity.]. DANE

- Deslandes, G. (2012). Power, profits, and practical wisdom: Ricœur's perspectives on the possibility of ethics in institutions. *Business & Professional Ethics Journal*, 31(1), 1–24.
- Díaz, A. (1998). ¿Para qué enseñar filosofía? [Why to teach philosophy?]. *Cuestiones de Filosofía*, 2, 3–12.
- Difabio, H. (2005). El critical thinking movement y la educación intelectual [The critical thinking movement and intellectual education]. *Estudios Sobre Educación*, 9, 167–187.
- Docter, P. and P. K. (Directors). (2020). *Soul [Film]*. Walt Disney Pictures and Pixar Animation Studios.
- Domingo Moratalla, T. (2015). Application: Between hermeneutics and education. Paul Ricœur's perspective. *Studia Paedagogica Ignatiana*, 18, 97–114.
- Domingo Moratalla, T. (2017). Paul Ricœur: Una filosofía para la educación. La ética hermenéutica aplicada a la educación [Paul Ricœur: A philosophy for education. Hermeneutic ethics applied to education]. In I. E. Ramírez Hernández (Ed.), *Voces de la filosofía de la educación* (pp. 145–172). CLACSO. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvtxw3q0.10>
- Domingo Moratalla, T., & Domingo Moratalla, A. (2013). *La ética hermenéutica de Paul Ricoeur. Caminos de la sabiduría* [The hermeneutic ethics of Paul Ricoeur. Paths of wisdom]. Hermes.
- Dosse, F. (2013). *Paul Ricoeur. Los sentidos de una vida (1913-2005)* [Paul Ricoeur. The meanings of a life] (P. Corona, Trans.). Fondo de Cultura Económica. (Original work published 2001)
- Doty, W. (2004). The spaces and places of Hestia and Hermes. In *Hermes and Aphrodite encounters* (pp. 53–72). Summa Publications.
- Du Toit, L. (2019). Introduction: Paul Ricœur's question. *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, 52(3), 227–231.
- Dussel, E. (1985). *Philosophy of liberation* (A. Martinez & C. Morkovsky, Trans.). Orbis Books. (Original work published 1980)

- Dussel, E. (1996). *The underside of modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Taylor, and the philosophy of liberation* (E. Mendieta, Trans.). Humanities Press. (Original work published 1993)
- Dussel, E. (2012). *1492 El encubrimiento del otro. Hacia el origen del “mito de la modernidad* [1492 The concealment of the other. Towards the origin of the “myth of modernity”]. Editorial Docencia.
- Ellis, A. K., & Fouts, J. T. (2001). Interdisciplinary Curriculum: The Research Base. *Music Educators Journal*, 87(5). <https://doi.org/10.2307/3399704>
- Ellis, A. K., & Stuen Carol J. (1998). *The interdisciplinary curriculum*. Eye on Education.
- Eneau, J. (2011). De l'apprenant à la personne: Contributions de Ricoeur aux travaux sur la formation des adultes [From learner to person: Ricoeur's contributions to work on adult education]. In A. Kerlan & D. Simard (Eds.), *Paul Ricoeur et la question éducative* (pp. 135–153). Presses de l'Université Laval.
- Ennis, R. H. (1993). Critical thinking assessment. *Theory into Practice*, 32(3), 179–186.
- Ennis, R. H. (2011). The nature of critical thinking: An outline of critical thinking dispositions. *Sixth International Conference on Thinking*, 1–8.
- Ennis, R. H., & Weir, E. (1985). *The Ennis-Weir critical thinking essay test*. Midwest Publications.
- Eppert, C. (2009). Remembering our (re)source: Eastern meditations on witnessing the integrity of water. In H. Bai, P. Hart, & B. Jickling (Eds.), *Fields of green: Re-storing culture, environment, and education* (pp. 191–210). Hampton Press.
- Eppert, C. (2010). The ‘war within’: Ethical and spiritual responsibilities to children in an age of terror and consumerism. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 15(3), 219–232. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1364436X.2010.524637>
- Eppert, C. (2011). Empty chair, empty boat. *Philosophy of Education*, 37–39.

- Erceg, N., Aviani, I., & Mesic, V. (2013). Probing students' critical thinking processes by presenting ill-defined physics problems. *Revista Mexicana de Física*, 59, 65–76.
- Espinel, Ó., & Pulido Cortés, O. (2017). Enseñanza de la filosofía. Entre experiencia filosófica y ensayo [Teaching of philosophy. Between philosophical experience and essay]. *Universitas Philosophica*, 34(69), 121–142. <https://doi.org/10.11144/javeriana.uph34-69.efee>
- Facione, P. A. (1990). *Critical Thinking: A Statement of Expert Consensus for Purposes of Educational Assessment and Instruction. Executive Summary. The Delphi Report.* https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242279575_Critical_Thinking_A_Statement_of_Expert_Consensus_for_Purposes_of_Educational_Assessment_and_Instruction
- Felski, R. (2015). *The limits of critique.* The University of Chicago Press.
- Fiasse, G. (2008). La phronesis dans l'éthique de Paul Ricoeur [Phronesis in the ethics of Paul Ricoeur]. In D. Lorries & L. Rizzerio (Eds.), *Le jugement pratique. Autour de la notion de phronesis* (pp. 349–360). J. Vrin.
- Fidyk, A. (2013). Conducting research in an animated world: A case for suffering. *International Journal of Multiple Research Approaches*, 7(3), 384–400.
- Fisher, A. (2001). *Critical thinking. An introduction.* Cambridge University Press.
- Flórez-Pabón, C. E., Gelves Ordóñez, J. J., Cabeza Herrera, Ó. J., & Plazas Lara, C. A. (2022). Enseñanza de la filosofía en Norte de Santander, Colombia: caso provincia de Pamplona [Teaching philosophy in Norte de Santander, Colombia: The case of the province of Pamplona]. *Cuadernos de Filosofía Latinoamericana*, 43(126). <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.15332/25005375.7605>

Florián B., V. (2006). La posibilidad de la filosofía [The possibility of philosophy]. *Cuestiones de Filosofía*, 8, 111–121.

https://revistas.uptc.edu.co/index.php/cuestiones_filosofia/article/view/618

Freire, P. (2005). *Education for critical consciousness* (M. Bergman, Trans.). Continuum. (Original work published 1974)

Freire, P. (2005a). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (M. Bergman, Trans.). Continuum. (Original work published 1970).

Friesen, S., & Jardine, D. W. (2010). *21st Century learning and learners. Galileo Educational Network and University of Calgary. [Prepared for Western and Northern Canadian curriculum protocol]*.

Gadamer, H.-G. (2001). Education is self-education (J. Cleary & P. Hogan, Ed. and Trans.). *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 35(4), 529–538. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9752.00243>

Gadamer, H.-G. (2004). *Truth and method*. (J. Weinsheimer & D. G. Marshall, Trans.). Continuum. (Original work published 1975).

Gadamer, H.-G. (2007). Aesthetics and Hermeneutics. In R.E. Palmer (Ed.), *The Gadamer reader. A bouquet of the later writings* (pp. 123-131). Northwestern University Press. (Original work published 1964).

Gadamer, H.-G. (2007a). Autobiographical Reflections. In R.E. Palmer (Ed.), *The Gadamer reader. A bouquet of the later writings* (pp. 5-38). Northwestern University Press. (Original work published 1977).

Gadamer, H.-G. (2007b). Classical and Philosophical Hermeneutics. In R.E. Palmer (Ed.), *The Gadamer reader. A bouquet of the later writings* (pp. 41-71). Northwestern University Press. (Original work published 1977).

- Gadamer, H.-G. (2007c). From Word to Concept: The Task of Hermeneutics as Philosophy. In R.E. Palmer (Ed.), *The Gadamer reader. A bouquet of the later writings* (pp. 108-120). Northwestern University Press. (Original work published 1994).
- Gallagher, S. (1992). *Hermeneutics and education*. State University of New York Press.
- Gansel, D. (Director). (2008). *Die Welle [Film]*. Rat Pack Filmproduktion.
- Gerard Horrigan, P. (2007). What is philosophy? In *God's existence and other philosophical essays* (pp. 1–29). Universe Inc.
- Gohier, C. (2011). Les trois temps ricoeurien du développement du souci de l'autre en formation des maîtres: attestation, sollicitude, reconnaissance [The three Ricoeurian stages of the development of concern for the other in teacher training: attestation, solicitude, recognition]. In A. Kerlan & D. Simard (Eds.), *Paul Ricoeur et la question éducative* (pp. 99–116). Presses de l'Université Laval.
- Gómez Mendoza, M. Á. (2003). *Introducción a la didáctica de la filosofía* [Introduction to didactics of philosophy]. Papiro.
- Gómez Mendoza, M. Á. (2008). La discusión en el campo de la educación y la enseñanza de la filosofía: una perspectiva para la resolución de conflictos [The discussion in the field of education and the teaching of philosophy: A perspective for conflict resolution]. *Revista Colombiana de Educación*, 55, 166–187.
- Gómez Mendoza, M. Á. (2010). Enseñanza de la filosofía y nuevas prácticas filosóficas [Teaching philosophy and new philosophical practices]. *Cuestiones De Filosofía*, 12, 1–22.
<http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=413635249009>
- Grondin, J. (2008). *¿Qué es la hermenéutica?* [What is hermeneutics?] (A. Martinez, Trans.). Herder. (Original work published 2006).

- Grondin, J. (2014). *A la escucha del sentido. Conversaciones con Marc-Antoine Vallée*. [To the listening of the sens. Conversations with *Marc-Antoine Vallée*.] (M. Pons, Trans.). Herder. (Original work published 2006).
- Guerrero, J., & Soler, S. (2020). Representación de los indígenas en las leyes generales de educación de Colombia [Representation of indigenous people in the general education laws of Colombia]. *Folios*, 52, 71–86. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.17227/folios.52-9559>
- Hadot, P. (2009). *Ejercicios espirituales y filosofía Antigua* [Spiritual exercises and ancient philosophy] (J. Palacio, Trans.). Ciruela. (Original work published 2003).
- Haram Klykken, F. (2021). Implementing continuous consent in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 1–16.
- Harper, D. (2000a). *Apply*. *Online etymology dictionary*.
<https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=apply>
- Harper, D. (2000b). *Converse*. *Online etymology dictionary*.
<https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=converse>
- Harper, D. (2000c). *Correspondence*. *Online etymology dictionary*.
<https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=correspondance>
- Harper, D. (2000d). *Crisis*. *Online etymology dictionary*.
<https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=crisis>
- Harper, D. (2000e). *Critique*. *Online etymology dictionary*.
<https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=critique>
- Harper, D. (2000f). *Delusion*. *Online etymology dictionary*.
<https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=delusion>

Harper, D. (2000g). *Disposition*. *Etymology online dictionary*.

<https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=disposition>

Harper, D. (2000h). *Educate*. *Online etymology dictionary*.

<https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=educate>

Harper, D. (2000i). *Expose*. *Online etymology dictionary*.

<https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=expose>

Harper, D. (2000j). *Impose*. *Online etymology dictionary*. <https://www.etymonline.com/word/impose>

Harper, D. (2000k). *Interview*. *Online etymology dictionary*.

<https://www.etymonline.com/word/interview>

Harper, D. (2000l). *Other*. *Online etymology dictionary*. <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=other>

Harper, D. (2000m). *Perform*. *Online etymology dictionary*.

<https://www.etymonline.com/word/perform>

Harper, D. (2000n). *Promote*. *Online etymology dictionary*.

<https://www.etymonline.com/word/promote>

Harper, D. (2000o). *Reflect*. *Online etymology dictionary*. <https://www.etymonline.com/word/reflect>

Harper, D. (2000p). *Repeat*. *Online etymology dictionary*.

https://www.etymonline.com/word/repeat?ref=etymonline_crossreference#etymonline_v_12823

Harper, D. (2000q). *Science*. *Online etymology dictionary*.

<https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=science>

Harper, D. (2000r). *Vocare*. *Online etymology dictionary*.

<https://www.etymonline.com/word/vocation>

Heidegger, M. (2002). *Interpretaciones fenomenológicas sobre Aristóteles* [Phenomenological

interpretations about Aristotle] (J. A. Escudero, Trans.). Trotta. (Original work published 1922).

- Heidegger, Martin. (1977). Letter on humanism (Harper Collins Publishers, Trans.). In D. Farrell (Ed.), *Basic writings: From Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)* (pp. 213–266). Harper San Francisco. (Original work published 1949).
- Heidegger, Martin. (2001). *Being and time* (J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson, Trans.). Blackwell Publishers Ltd. (Original work published 1927).
- Hohler, T. P. (2007). Phronēsis transformed: From Aristotle to Heidegger to Ricoeur. *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, 81(3), 347–372.
- hooks, b. (2010a). Conversation. In bell hooks (Ed.), *Teaching critical thinking. Practical wisdom* (pp. 43–47). Routledge.
- hooks, b. (2010b). Critical thinking. In bell hooks (Ed.), *Teaching critical thinking. Practical wisdom* (pp. 7–11). Routledge.
- hooks, b. (2010c). Decolonization. In bell hooks (Ed.), *Teaching critical thinking. Practical wisdom* (pp. 23–28). Routledge.
- hooks, b. (2010d). Practical wisdom. In bell hooks (Ed.), *Teaching critical thinking. Practical wisdom* (pp. 185–187). Routledge.
- hooks, b. (2010e). Purpose. In bell hooks (Ed.), *Teaching critical thinking. Practical wisdom* (pp. 33–35). Routledge.
- hooks, b. & Scapp, R. (2010). Colaboration. In bell hooks (Ed.), *Teaching critical thinking. Practical wisdom* (pp. 37–41). Routledge.
- Hoyos-Vásquez, G. (2009). Educación para un nuevo humanism [Education for a new humanism]. *Magis. Revista Internacional de Investigación En Educación*, 2, 425–433.
- Hoyos-Vásquez, G. (2012). *Ensayos para una teoría discursiva de la educación* [Essays for a discursive theory of education]. Magisterio.

- ICFES. (2015). *Marco de referencia para la evaluación, ICFES. Módulo de lectura crítica, Saber 11 / Saber Pro* [Reference framework for evaluation, ICFES. Critical reading module, Saber 11 / Saber Pro.]. ICFES
- ICFES. (2016). *Módulo de lectura crítica Saber Pro 2016* [Saber Pro 2016 critical reading module.]. ICFES
- International Qualifications Assessment Service (IQAS). (2016). *International Education Guide for the Assessment of Education from the Republic of Colombia*.
- Irwin, T. (1999). Introduction. In *Nicomachean Ethics* (pp. xiii–xxviii). Hackett.
- Jardine, D. W. (1992). *Speaking with a boneless tongue*. Makyo Press.
- Jardine, D. W. (1995). The stubborn particulars of grace. In B. Horwood (Ed.), *Experience and the curriculum: Principles and programs* (pp. 261–275). Kendall and Hunt.
- Jardine, D. W. (2003a). “Because it shows us the way at night”: On animism, writing, and the re-animation of Piagetian theory. In *Back to the basics of teaching and learning. Thinking the world together* (pp. 143–155). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Jardine, D. W. (2003b). The profession needs new blood. In *Back to the basics of teaching and learning. Thinking the world together* (pp. 55–70). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- Jardine, D. W. (2012). *A pedagogy left in peace. Cultivating free spaces in teaching and learning*. Continuum.
- Jardine, D. W., Friesen, S., & Clifford, P. (2003). Introduction: An interpretive reading of back to the basics. In *Back to the basics of teaching and learning. Thinking the world together* (pp. 1–10). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Jorro Anne. (2010). Comprendre l’agir professionnel en éducation en formation avec Ricoeur [Understand professional action in education in training with Ricoeur]. In A. Kerlan & D.

Simard (Eds.), *Paul Ricoeur et la question éducative* (pp. 155–166). Presses de l'Université Laval.

Kant, I. (1992). *An answer to the question: What is Enlightenment?* (T. Humphrey, Trans.). Hackett Publishing. (Original work published 1784).

https://www.nypl.org/sites/default/files/kant_whatisenlightenment.pdf

Kant, I. (1998). *Critique of pure reason* (P. Guyer & A. W. Wood., Trans.). Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1781).

Kant, I. (2002a). *The critique of practical reason* (W. S. Pluhar, Trans.). Hackett publishing Company Inc. (Original work published 1788).

Kant, I. (2007). *The critique of judgement* (J. C. Meredith., Trans.). Oxford University Press. (Original work published 1790).

Kaplan, David. M. (2003). Practical wisdom. In *Ricoeur's critical theory*. State University of New York Press.

Kearney, R. (2010). Ricoeur and biblical hermeneutics: On post-religious faith. In S. Davidson (Ed.), *Ricoeur across the disciplines* (pp. 30–43). Continuum International.

Kemp, P. (2010a). Ricoeur and education: Ricoeur's implied philosophy of education. In S. Davidson (Ed.), *Ricoeur across the disciplines* (pp. 181–194). The continuum International Publishing Group Ltd.

Kemp, P. (2010b). *Sagesse pratique de Paul Ricoeur. Huit études* [Practical wisdom of Paul Ricoeur. Eight studies]. Éditions du Sandre.

Kemp, P. (2011). La Universidad desde una perspectiva cosmopolita [The University from a cosmopolitan perspective]. *Études Ricoeuriennes / Ricoeur Studies*, 2(2), 118–128.

<https://doi.org/10.5195/errs.2011.105>

- Kerlan, A. (2011). Paul Ricoeur en Kanakie. Un compagnonnage philosophique en education [Paul Ricoeur in Kanaki. A philosophical companionship in education]. In A. Kerlan & D. Simard (Eds.), *Paul Ricoeur et la question éducative* (pp. 17–38). Presses de l'Université Laval.
- Kerlan, A., & Simard, D. (2011). *Paul Ricoeur et la question éducative* [Paul Ricoeur and the educational question]. Presses de l'Université Laval.
- Khonde, E.-N. (2005). *La sagesse pratique* [Practical wisdom]. Peter Lang.
- Kinslow, A. T., Sadler, T. D., & Nguyen, H. T. (2019). Socio-scientific reasoning and environmental literacy in a field-based ecology class. *Environmental Education Research*, 25(3), 388–410.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2018.1442418>
- Kraut, R. (2018). *Aristotle's Ethics*. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.
<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/aristotle-ethics/>
- Lai, E. (2011). *Critical thinking: A literature review. Research report*.
- Lara, J. M., & Rodríguez, E. (2016). Fomento del desarrollo del pensamiento crítico en estudiantes de grado décimo desde situaciones cotidianas en la asignatura de Filosofía [Promotion of the development of critical thinking in tenth grade students from everyday situations in the subject of Philosophy]. *Educación y Humanismo*, 18(31), 343–357.
<https://doi.org/10.17081/eduhum.18.31.1383>
- Latour, B. (2004). Why has critique run out of steam? From matters of fact to matters of concern. *Critical Inquiry*, 30, 225–248.
- Levin, B. (2020). Texas Lt. governor: Old people should volunteer to die to save the economy. *Vanity Fair*.

Lewis, C. T., & Short, C. (1879h). *Studere. A Latin dictionary.*

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0059%3Aentry%3A>

[Dstudeo](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0059%3Aentry%3A)

Lewis, C. T., & Short, C. (1879i). *Trans. A Latin dictionary.*

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0059%3Aentry%3A>

[Dtrans](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0059%3Aentry%3A)

Ley 115 de febrero 8 de 1994. Ley general de educación [Law 115 of february, 1994. General law of education]

Liddell, H., & Davidson, S. (1889). *ἔθος. An intermediate Greek-English lexicon.*

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0058%3Aentry%3A>

[De\)%2Fqos](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0058%3Aentry%3A)

Liddell, H., & Scott, R. (1889). *νόμος. An intermediate Greek-English lexicon.*

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0058%3Aentry%3A>

[Dno\)%2Fmos](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0058%3Aentry%3A)

Liddell, H., & Scott, R. (1940). *A Greek-English lexicon.*

Liddell, H., & Scott, R. (1940a). *ἀνάλυσις. A Greek-English lexicon.*

[http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=a%29na%2Fflusis&la=greek&can=a%29na%2Flusis0&prior=a\)na/lqhtos#lexicon](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=a%29na%2Fflusis&la=greek&can=a%29na%2Flusis0&prior=a)na/lqhtos#lexicon)

[is0&prior=a\)na/lqhtos#lexicon](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=a%29na%2Fflusis&la=greek&can=a%29na%2Flusis0&prior=a)na/lqhtos#lexicon)

Liddell, H., & Scott, R. (1940b). *ἀυτός. A Greek-English lexicon.*

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0057%3Aentry%3A>

[Dau\)to\)%2Fs](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0057%3Aentry%3A)

Liddell, H., & Scott, R. (1940c). κρίνω. *A Greek-English lexicon*.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0057%3Aentry%3Dkri%2Fnw>

Liddell, H., & Scott, R. (1940e). πάσχω. *A Greek-English lexicon*.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0057%3Aentry%3Dpa%2Fsw>

Liddell, H., & Scott, R. (1940f). φρονέω. *A Greek-English lexicon*.

<https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0058%3Aentry%3Dfrone%2Fw>

Lim, L. (2014). Critical thinking and the anti-liberal state: the politics of pedagogic recontextualization in Singapore. *Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 35(5), 692–704.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2014.927173>

Longman. (n.d.). Inquisitive. In *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*.

Macías, H. A. (2017). Una propuesta pedagógica frente a la lectura crítica de textos filosóficos en una institución educativa del departamento de Santander [A pedagogical proposal before critical reading of philosophical texts in an educational institution in Santander]. *Cuadernos de Filosofía Latinoamericana*, 39(118), 177–193.

Mall, R. A. (2000). *Intercultural philosophy*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Marcelo, G. (2020). Aristotle and Ricoeur on practical reason. *Humanitas*, 76, 151–167.

McLaren, P. (2015). *Life in schools: An introduction to critical pedagogy in the foundations of education*. Routledge.

Mcpeck, J. (1985). Paul's critique of critical thinking and education. *Informal Logic*, 1, 45–54.

- Mejía, A., & Zamara, R. (2004). La promoción del pensamiento crítico en ingeniería [Promoting critical thinking in engineering]. *Revista de Ingeniería*, 20, 90–104.
- Mignolo, W. (2011). *The darker side of western modernity. Global futures, decolonial options*. Duke University Press.
- Ministerio de Educación Nacional (MEN). (2013). *Evaluación de competencias para el ascenso o reubicación de nivel salarial en el escalafón docente de los docentes y directivos regidos por el decreto ley 1278 de 2002* [Evaluation of competencies for promotion or relocation of salary level in the teaching ladder of teachers and managers governed by Decree Law 1278 of 2002.]. https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/proyectos/1737/articulos-328355_archivo_pdf_18_Filosofia.pdf
- Ministerio de Salud y Protección Social. (2015). *Colombia, una sociedad cada vez más individualista* [Colombia, an increasingly individualistic society]. <https://www.minsalud.gov.co/Paginas/Colombia,-una-sociedad-cada-vez-más-individualista.aspx>
- Missimer, C. (1994). Why two heads are better than one: Philosophical and pedagogical implications of a social view of critical thinking. In K. Walters (Ed.), *Re-thinking reason. New perspectives in critical thinking* (pp. 119–133).
- Montes, V., & Montes, J. (2019). *La filosofía como disciplina escolar en Colombia 1946-1994* [Philosophy as a school discipline in Colombia 1946-1994]. Editorial Aula de Humanidades.
- Montoya, J. (2014). Curriculum studies in Colombia. In W. F. Pinar (Ed.), *International Handbook of Curriculum Research* (pp. 134–150). Routledge.
- Morales Oyola, D. E. (2012). Didáctica y filosofía en la educación [Didactics and philosophy in education]. *Revista Zona*, 12, 30–35.

- Moules, N. (2002). Hermeneutic inquiry: paying heed to history and Hermes an ancestral, substantive, and methodological tale. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 1(3), 1–4.
- Moules, N., Field, J. C., McCaffrey, G., & Laing, C. M. (2014). Conducting hermeneutic research: The address of the topic. *Journal of Applied Hermeneutics*.
<https://doi.org/10.11575/jah.v0i0.53242>
- Moules, N., McCaffrey, G., Field, J., & Laing, C. (2015). *Conducting hermeneutic research: From philosophy to practice*. Peter Lang.
- Moules, N., & Taylor, L. M. (2021). Conducting interviews in hermeneutic research: An example. *Journal of Applied Hermeneutics*, 1–8.
- Murck, K., & Breuer, F. (2003). Subjectivity and reflexivity in qualitative research-the FQS issues. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung*, 4(3), 1–12. <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/696/1505>
- Murillo, A. (2015). La modernización y las violencias [Modernization and violences]. In *Historia de Colombia. Todo lo que hay que saber* (pp. 265–310). Penguin Random House.
- Muswazi, M. T., & Nhamo, E. (2013). Note taking: A lesson for novice qualitative researchers. *Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 2(3), 13–17.
- Nietzsche, F. (1992). Truth and falsity in an extra-moral sense (M. A. Mügge). *ETC: A Review of General Semantics*, 49(1), 58–72. (Original work published 1896).
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/42577334>
- Norris, S. P. (1985). Synthesis of research on critical thinking. *Educational Leadership*, 40–45.
- Norris, T. (2015). Philosophical questions about teaching philosophy: What’s at stake in high School philosophy education? *Philosophical Inquiry in Education*, 23(1), 62–72.

- Nussbaum, M. (2002). Ricoeur on tragedy: Teleology, deontology and phronesis. In J. Wall, W. Schweiker, & D. Hall (Eds.), *Paul Ricoeur and contemporary moral thought* (pp. 264–276). Routledge.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (1998). *Cultivating humanity: A classical defense of reform in liberal education*. Harvard University Press.
- Ocampo, J. F. (2017). *La educación de la colonia al siglo XX. Confrontaciones ideológicas y políticas* [Education from the colony to the 20th century. Ideological and political confrontations]. Ediciones Aurora.
- OECD. (2019). *Program for international student assessment (PISA). Results from PISA 2018*. http://www.oecd.org/pisa/publications/PISA2018_CN_SAU.pdf
- Padis, M. O. (2011). Les tâches de l'éducateur [The tasks of the educator]. In A. Kerlan & D. Simard (Eds.), *Paul Ricoeur et la question éducative* (pp. 11–16). Presses de l'Université Laval.
- Palmer, P. J. (2007). *The courage to teach. Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life*. Jossey-Bass.
- Paredes Oviedo, D. M., & Villa Restrepo, V. (2013). Enseñanza de la filosofía en Colombia: hacia un enfoque multisensorial en el campo didáctico [Philosophy teaching in Colombia: Towards a multisensory approach in the didactic field]. *Rollos Nacionales*, 4(34), 37–48. <https://doi.org/10.17227/01224328.2282>
- Park, P. (2013). *Africa, Asia, and the history of philosophy. Racism in the formation of the philosophical canon 1780-1830*. Suny Press.
- Paul, R. (1981). Teaching Critical Thinking in the strong sense: A focus on self-deception, world views, and a dialectical mode of analysis. *Informal Logic*, 4(2), 2–7. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.22329/il.v4i2.2766>

- Paul, R. (1993). *Critical thinking. How to prepare students for a rapidly changing world*. Foundation for Critical Thinking.
- Paul, R. (2012). The critical-thinking movement. A historical perspective. *Phi Kappa Phi*, 1.
<https://www.criticalthinking.org/data/pages/48/4961767a3a4709bf9d4ec478c406391851352ae218fec.pdf>
- Paul, R., & Elder, L. (2005a). *The miniature guide to understanding the foundations of ethical reasoning*. Foundation for Critical Thinking.
- Paul, R., & Elder, L. (2005b). *The thinker's guide to the nature and functions of critical and creative thinking*. Foundation for Critical Thinking.
- Paul, R., & Elder, L. (2006). *The miniature guide to critical thinking. Concepts and tools*. The foundation for critical thinking. https://www.criticalthinking.org/files/Concepts_Tools.pdf
- Paul, R., & Elder, L. (2008). *Mini-guide de la pensée critique* [The miniature guide to critical thinking]. *Concepts et instruments*.
- Paul, R., & Elder, L. (2021). *Calendar of Events in Critical Thinking*. The foundation for critical thinking. <https://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/43rd-critical-thinking-conference-main/1571>
- Pedersen, H. (2010). Is 'the posthuman' educable? On the convergence of educational philosophy, animal studies, and posthumanist theory. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 31(2), 237–250.
- Pedersen, H. (2011). Release the moths: Critical animal studies and the posthumanist impulse. *Culture, Theory and Critique*, 52(1), 65–81.
- Phillips, P., Francis, B., Webb, S., & Bull, V. (2011a). Criticism. In *Oxford advanced learner's dictionary* (8th ed.). Oxford University Press.

- Phillips, P., Francis, B., Webb, S., & Bull, V. (2011b). Inquisitive. In *Oxford advanced learner's dictionary* (8th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Phillips, P., Francis, B., Webb, S., & Bull, V. (2011c). Solicitude. In *Oxford advanced learner's dictionary* (8th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Pinar, W. F. (2015). Study. In *Educational experience as lived: knowledge, history, alterity: The selected works of William F. Pinar* (pp. 11–24). Routledge.
- Pinar, W. F. (2017). Study. Concerning relationship in educational experience. In C. Ruitenberg (Ed.), *Reconceptualizing study in educational discourse and practice* (pp. 97–109). Routledge.
- Pinar, W. F. (2020). *What is curriculum theory?* Routledge.
- Pinar, W. F., Reynolds, W. M., Slattery, P., & Taubman, P. M. (2008). *Understanding curriculum. An introduction to the study of historical and contemporary curriculum discourses*. Peter Lang.
- Pinto, L. E., & McDonough, G. (2011). High school philosophy teachers' use of textbooks: Critical thinking or teaching to the text? *9th International Conference of the Ontario Society for the Study of Argumentation*, 1–12.
- Pisheh, E. A. G., NejatyJahromy, Y., Gargari, R. B., Hashemi, T., & Fathi-Azar, E. (2019). Effectiveness of clicker-assisted teaching in improving the critical thinking of adolescent learners. *Journal of Computed Asssited Learning*, 35, 82–88. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcal.12313>
- Pithers, R. T., & Soden, R. (2000). Critical thinking in education: A review. *Educational Research*, 42(3), 237–249. <https://doi.org/10.1080/001318800440579>
- Plato. (1997). *Plato. Complete works* (J. Cooper, Ed.). Hackett Publishing Company.
- Prada Londoño, M. A. (n.d.). *Paul Ricœur: una filosofía para la educación* [Paul Ricœur: a philosophy for education].

- Prada Londoño, M. A. (2006). Sujeto, narración y formación desde Paul Ricoeur [Subject, narration and formation from Paul Ricoeur]. In P. Mena (Ed.), *Fenomenología por decir. Homenaje a Paul Ricoeur* (pp. 341–362). Universidad Alberto Hurtado.
- Prada Londoño, M. A. (2010). *Lectura y subjetividad. Una mirada desde la hermenéutica de Paul Ricoeur* [Reading and subjectivity. A look from Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics]. Uniediciones-Grupo editorial Ibañez.
- Prieto Galindo, F. H. (2011). De un pensar racional a un pensar phronético: una idea de educación desde Paul Ricoeur [From rational thinking to phronetical thinking: An idea of education from Paul Ricoeur]. *Papeles*, 3(6), 65–76.
- Prieto Galindo, F. H. (2012). Sabiduría práctica: en la intención de una vida buena con y para los otros [Practical wisdom: In the intention of a good life with and for others]. *Franciscanum*, 54(158), 269–295.
- Prieto Galindo, F. H. (2015). *Critical phronesis from Paul Ricoeur's and the CTM's philosophies*. [Master's thesis, Universidad de los Andes].
<https://repositorio.uniandes.edu.co/bitstream/handle/1992/13776/u729312.pdf?sequence=1>
- Prieto Galindo, F. H. (2017). *Senderos de la phronesis. Antropología y ética en Paul Ricoeur* [Paths of the phronesis. Anthropology and ethics in Paul Ricoeur]. Aula de Humanidades.
- Prieto Galindo, F. H. (2018). El pensamiento crítico y el autoconocimiento [Critical thinking and self-awareness]. *Revista de Filosofía*, 74, 173–191.
- Prieto Galindo, F. H. (2020). Critical thinking experienced by students: A phenomenological approach. *Análisis*, 97, 327–345. <https://doi.org/10.15332/21459169/5659>
- Rabossi, E. (2008). *En el comienzo dios creó el canon. Biblia berolinensis* [In the beginning God created the canon. Berolinensis bible]. Gedisa.

Rancière, J. (1987). *Le maître ignorant* [The ignorant master]. Arthème Fayard.

<https://www.fayard.fr/sciences-humaines/le-maitre-ignorant-9782213019253>

Ravelonantoandro, M. (2007). La sagesse pratique selon Paul Ricoeur et son importance dans les débats démocratiques actuels [Practical wisdom according to Paul Ricoeur and its importance in current democratic debates]. *Rivista Di Filosofia Neo-Scolastica*, 99(3), 489–508.

Reagan, C. E. (1996). *Paul Ricoeur. His life and his work*. The University of Chicago Press.

Reale, G., & Antiseri, D. (2001). *Historia del pensamiento filosófico y científico* [History of philosophical and scientific thought] (J. A. Iglesias, Trans.). Herder. (Original work published 1985).

Rey, E. M. (2013). Filosofía y filosofar en la educación. El reto de la enseñanza de la filosofía: filosofar [Philosophy and philosophizing in education. The challenge of teaching philosophy: philosophizing]. *Polisemia*, 11, 10–19.

<https://doi.org/10.26620/uniminuto.polisemia.7.11.2011.10-19>

Ricoeur, P. (1965). Tâches de l'éducateur politique [Tasks of the political educator]. *Esprit*, 340(7/8), 78–93.

Ricoeur, P. (1981). The hermeneutical function of distanciation. In J. B. Thompson (ed.), *Paul Ricoeur. Hermeneutics and the human sciences* (pp.131-144). Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1975).

Ricoeur, P. (1981a). The task of hermeneutics. In J. B. Thompson (ed.), *Paul Ricoeur. Hermeneutics and the human sciences* (pp. 43-62). Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1973).

- Ricœur, P. (1981b). The model of the text: Meaningful action considered as a text. In J. B. Thompson (ed.), *Paul Ricoeur. Hermeneutics and the human sciences* (pp. 197-221). Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1971).
- Ricœur, P. (1981c). Hermeneutics and the critique of ideology. In J. B. Thompson (ed.), *Paul Ricoeur. Hermeneutics and the human sciences* (pp. 63-100). Cambridge University Press. (Original work published 1973).
- Ricœur, P. (1990). *Amor y justicia* [Love and justice]. Caparrós Editores.
- Ricœur, P. (1991). *From text to action. Essays in hermeneutics, II* (K. Blamey & J. B. Thompson, Trans.). Northwestern University Press. (Original work published 1986).
- Ricœur, P. (1992). *Oneself as another* (A. Neira, Trans.). University of Chicago Press. (Original work published 1990).
- Ricœur, P. (1996). Response by Paul Ricoeur: Philosophy and liberation. In *The underside of modernity: Apel, Ricoeur, Rorty, Taylor and the philosophy of liberation* (pp. 205–212). Humanities Press.
- Ricœur, P. (1997). À la gloire de la phronesis [To the glory of phronesis]. In J.-Y. Château (Ed.), *La vérité pratique: Aristote, Ethique à Nicomaque, Livre VI*. (pp. 13–22). Librairie Philosophique Joseph Vrin.
- Ricœur, P. (2005). *The Course of recognition* (D. Pellauer, Trans.). Harvard University Press. (Original work published 2004).
- Ricœur, P. (2006). *On translation* (E. Brennan, Trans.). Routledge. (Original work published 2004).
- Ricœur, P. (2007). *Reflections on the Just* (D. Pellauer, Trans.). University of Chicago Press. (Original work published 2001).

- Ricœur, P. (2008). Justicia y venganza [Justice and vengeance] (T. Domingo M & A. Domingo M., Trans.). In *Lo justo 2. Estudios, lecturas y ejercicios de ética aplicada* (pp. 204–211). Editorial Trotta. (Original work published 2001).
- Ricœur, P. (2021). The question of the colonies (E. Wolff, Trans.). *Études Ricoeuriennes / Ricoeur Studies*, 12(1), 26–30. (Original work published 1947). <https://doi.org/10.5195/errs.2021.551>
- Risser, J. (2019). The Difficulty of understanding: An introduction. *Journal of Applied Hermeneutics*, 1–3.
- Rodríguez, A. L. (2015). Conquista y Colonia en el Nuevo Reino de Granada (1492-1740) [Conquest and Colony in the New Kingdom of Granada (1492-1740)]. In *Historia de Colombia. Todo lo que hay que saber* (pp. 59–122). Punto de Lectura.
- Rodríguez, L. E. (2015). Mil años hace... De la prehistoria al descubrimiento [A thousand years ago... From prehistory to discovery]. In *Historia de Colombia. Todo lo que hay que saber* (pp. 25–58). Punto de Lectura.
- Ruitenbergh, C. (2017). Introduction. Retrieving and recognizing study. In C. Ruitenbergh (Ed.), *Reconceptualizing study in educational discourse and practice* (pp. 1–7). Routledge.
- Ruitenbergh, C. W., Knowlton, A., & Li, G. (2016). The productive difficulty of untranslatables in qualitative research. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 16(4).
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2016.1189559>
- Runge Peña, A. K. (2013). Didáctica: una introducción panorámica y comparada [Didactics: a panoramic and comparative introduction]. *Itinerario Educativo*, 27(62), 201–240.
- Said, E. W. (1981). *Orientalism*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Salcedo Ortiz, E., & Prieto Galindo, F. H. (2021). *Didáctica de la filosofía en los libros de texto colombianos (2004-2013)* [Didactics of philosophy in Colombian textbooks (2004-2013)].

- Saldarriaga, O. (2006). Pedagogía, conocimiento notas arqueológicas sobre y experiencia: una subalternización [Pedagogy, knowledge, archaeological notes on and experience: A subalternization]. *Nómadas*, 25, 98–108.
- Saldarriaga, O. (2008). De universidades a colegios: La filosofía escolar y la conformación del bachillerato moderno en Colombia [From universities to schools: The school philosophy and the conformation of the modern baccalaureate in Colombia]. In *Genealogías de la colombianidad. Formaciones discursivas y tecnologías de gobierno en los siglos XIX y XX* (pp. 308–332). Instituto Pensar.
- Sánchez Vazquez, M. J. (2008). Ética y profesión: la responsabilidad en términos de prudencia responsable. El caso de la psicología [Ethics and profession: Responsibility in terms of responsible prudence. The case of psychology]. *Fundamentos En Humanidades*, 9(17), 145–161.
- Santos Herceg, J. (2010). Conflicto de representaciones. América latina como lugar para la filosofía [Conflict of representations. Latin America as a place for philosophy.]. In *Conflicto de representaciones. América Latina como lugar para la filosofía*. Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Sautereau, C. (2011). L'éducation à l'aune de l'herméneutique du soi [Education in the light of the hermeneutics of the self]. In A. Kerlan & D. Simard (Eds.), *Paul Ricoeur et la question éducative* (pp. 119–131). Presses de l'Université Laval.
- Schwab, J. (1969). The practical: A language for curriculum. *The School Review*, 78(1), 1–23.
- Scott-Baumann, A. (2022). Ricoeur the classicist of not being a black woman. *VII Congresso Ibero-Americano Sobre o Pensamento de Paul Ricoeur*.
- Shaull, R. (2005). Foreword. In *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (pp. 29–34). The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc.

- Siegel, H. (1987). *Refuted Relativism. A critique of contemporary epistemological relativism*. Springer-Science+Business Media, B.Y.
- Siegel, H. (1988). *Educating reason. Rationality, critical thinking, and education*. Routledge.
- Siegel, H. (1997). *Rationality redeemed. Further dialogues on an educational ideal*. Routledge.
- Siegel, H. (2010). Critical thinking. In P. Peterson, E. Baker, & B. McGaw (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Education* (pp. 141–145). Elsevier.
- Simms, K. (2003). *Paul Ricoeur*. Routledge.
- Smith, D. G. (1999). *Pedagon. Interdisciplinary essays in the human sciences, pedagogy and culture*. Peter Lang.
- Smith, D. G. (2003). The mission of the hermeneutic scholar. In M. P. Wolfe & C. R. Pryor (Eds.), *The mission of the scholar - research and practice: A tribute to Nelson Haggerson* (pp. 105–115). Sense Publishers.
- Smith, D. G. (2018). Experience and interpretation in global times: The case of special education. *Journal of Applied Hermeneutics*, 0(0), 1–9.
- Smith, D. G. (2020). *Confluences. Intercultural journeying in research and teaching*. Information Age Publishing, Incorporated.
- Smits, H. (1997). Living within the space of practice: Action research inspired by hermeneutics. *Counterpoints*, 67, 281–297.
- Snaza, N. (2013). Bewildering education. *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*, 10(1), 38–54.
- Snaza, N., Appelbaum, P., Bayne, S., Carlson, D., Morris, M., Rotas, N., Sandlin, J., Wallin, J., Weaver, J. A., & This. (2014). Toward a posthuman education. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 30(2), 39–55.

- Somerville, M. (2016). The post-human I: encountering 'data' in new materialism. *Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 29(9), 1161–1172.
- Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the subaltern speak? In P. Williams & L. Chrisman (Eds.), *Colonial discourse and post-colonial reader. A reader.* (pp. 66–111). Columbia University Press.
- Suárez González, J. R., Pabón Llinás, D., Villaveces Franco, L., & Martín Gallego, J. A. (2018). *Pensamiento crítico y filosofía. Un diálogo con nuevas tonadas* [Critical thinking and philosophy. A dialogue with new tunes]. Universidad del Norte - Fundación Promigas.
- Taubman, P. M. (1982). Gender and curriculum: Discourse and the politics of sexuality. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 4(1), 12–87.
- Treanor, B. (2008). Narrative environmental virtue ethics: phronesis without a phronimos. *Environmental Ethics*, 30(4), 361–379.
- UNESCO. (2015). *Philosophy a School of Freedom* (Vol. 3, Issue 2).
<http://repositorio.unan.edu.ni/2986/1/5624.pdf>
- Vanleeuwen, C. A., Guo-brennan, L., & Weeks, L. E. (2017). Conducting hermeneutic research in international settings: Philosophical, practical, and ethical considerations. *Journal of Applied Hermeneutics*, 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.11575/jah.v0i0.53309.g40654>
- Vargas Guillén, G., Meléndez Acuña, R. E., & Herrera, W. R. (2017). Experiencia y problemas. Educación ciudadana y enseñanza de la filosofía [Experience and problems. Citizen education and philosophy teaching]. *Pedagogía y Saberes*, 47, 65–77.
<https://doi.org/10.17227/01212494.47pys65.77>
- Velásquez, R. A. (2012). Dificultades para enseñar filosofía en una realidad escolar [Difficulties to teach philosophy in a school reality]. *Cuestiones de Filosofía*, 3–4, 51–57.

- Wall, J. (2003). Phronesis, poetics, and moral creativity. *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, 6, 317–341.
- Walters, K. (Ed). (1994). *Rethinking reason: New perspectives in critical thinking*. New York University Press.
- Walters, K. S. (1990). Critical thinking, rationality, and the vulcanization of students. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 61(4), 448–467.
- Watson, G., & Glaser, E. (2002). *Watson – Glaser critical thinking appraisal – UK Edition*. Pearson.
- Weil, D. K. (1998). Chapter 3: The Critical-Thinking Movement. *Counterpoints*, 50, 47–92.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/42977552>
- Wise, R. (Director). (1979). *Star Trek [Film]*. Paramount Pictures, CBS Studios.
- Wolff, E., & Tissot, D. (2021). Introduction – Postcolonial Ricoeur. *Études Ricoeuriennes / Ricoeur Studies*, 12(1), 6–10. <https://doi.org/10.5195/errs.2021.546>
- Wolfinger, N. H. (2002). On writing fieldnotes: Collection strategies and background expectancies. *Qualitative Research*, 2(1), 85–95. https://entwicklungspolitik.uni-hohenheim.de/uploads/media/Day_2_-_Reading_text_4_02.pdf
- Wrench, A., & Garrett, R. (2020). Navigating culturally responsive pedagogy through an Indigenous games unit. *Sport, Education, and Society*, 1–12.
- Yoder, A. (2016). ‘In quest of narrative’: A teacher’s furore and textual returns. *Changing English*, 23(3), 269–279. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1358684X.2016.1203245>
- Zembylas, M. (2022). Revisiting the notion of critical thinking in higher education: theorizing the thinking-feeling entanglement using affect theory. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 1–16.

Appendix A: Sample Interview Questions

Sample Interview Questions (first interview)

1. Why did you study philosophy?
2. In your experience, what has been the most difficult of teaching philosophy?
3. Could you describe an experience or anecdote that you cherish of teaching philosophy?
4. Why do you value that memory (story, anecdote)?
5. Could you describe a typical class of philosophy you give?
6. In what ways do you think that in that class critical thinking is involved at some point or not?
7. From your own experiences, how could critical thinking be understood in high school philosophy?
8. What, then, would include critical thinking? What would be its aim?
9. What philosophical and/or pedagogical proposals do you think should be included as grounds to a pertinent conception of critical thinking for the Colombian contexts?
10. In what ways do you consider that you teach critical thinking in your courses of philosophy?
11. Could you remember a particular class or experience teaching critical thinking that you think as exemplary?
 - a. Why did you like that experience?
 - b. Have you tried to repeat that experience on purpose? Did you get it?
12. What are your thoughts on the role of critical thinking in your students' daily life?
13. To what extent do you think that a course of high school philosophy should or could be engaged with the social, historical, and political context of the students?

14. In what ways social, historical, and political contexts might play a significant role, if they do, to the development of a philosophical reflection?

Appendix B: Invitation E-mail

January 05, 2022

Dear Instructor,

I am currently working on my doctoral study at the University of Alberta, and I am conducting an interpretive research study about critical thinking in high school courses of philosophy. You are receiving this e-mail for two reasons: firstly, to inform you about my doctoral research project due to commence in the next few months and, secondly, to invite you to participate in the project.

The title of this University of Alberta research project is *Rethinking Critical Thinking in Colombian High School Philosophy through Paul Ricœur's Phronesis: A Hermeneutic Inquiry*. The research seeks to engage in conversation with high school philosophy teachers about meaningful and new ways to understand and teach critical thinking. The results of this study will be used in support of my thesis and also to inform a future curriculum review in our Colombian context.

In consideration of your valuable time as teachers, your only role as a participant will be to engage in a maximum of two conversations (individual interviews) with me. Each interview will last approximately one hour and, if you allow it, it will be recorded.

If you choose to participate in the study, your contributions will be acknowledged and recognized. You will also be accessing a valuable professional development opportunity that will directly impact your teaching practice. Should you choose to participate anonymously, I assure you that whatever you say during the interviews will not be shared with your employer, supervisor, colleagues, or anyone.

All digital recordings of the interview will be destroyed according to the University of Alberta ethics guidelines.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me in the following ways:

Phone: 3046019239, (1) 2766149

E-mail: prietoga@ualberta.ca, freher05@gmail.com

If you would prefer to communicate directly with my doctoral supervisor, Dr. Claudia Eppert, about the research project, you can contact her via:

E-mail: eppert@ualberta.ca

University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB.

Thank you.

Fredy Hernán Prieto Galindo

Appendix C: Consent Form

Consent Form

Rethinking Critical Thinking in Colombian High School Philosophy through Paul Ricœur's Phronesis. A Hermeneutic Inquiry

I, (please print) _____ have read the information on the research project *Rethinking Critical Thinking in Colombian High School Philosophy through Paul Ricœur's Phronesis: A Hermeneutic Inquiry* that is to be conducted by Fredy Hernán Prieto Galindo from the University of Alberta and all queries have been answered to my satisfaction. If I have additional questions, I have been told whom to contact.

I agree to participate in the research study described above and will receive a copy of this consent form after I sign it.

I understand that I can withdraw from this project at any time without reason or penalty. My responses will remain confidential (except I waive anonymity) and any documentation, including audio/visual tapes will be destroyed once the project is completed. My identity will not be revealed without my consent to anyone other than the investigator conducting the project.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Appendix D: Anonymity Waiver

Anonymity Waiver

I, (please print) _____ consent to the use of my actual names in the study.

Signature:

Date:

Appendix F: Ethics Approval Notification Letter

18/10/22, 06:23

University of Alberta Mail - ARISE: Ethics Application has been Approved Pro00116802

Fredy Prieto Galindo <prietoga@ualberta.ca>

ARISE: Ethics Application has been Approved Pro00116802

1 message

arise@ualberta.ca <arise@ualberta.ca>
Reply-To: arise@ualberta.ca
To: prietoga@ualberta.ca

Tue, Feb 1, 2022 at 3:32 PM

Ethics Application has been Approved

ID: [Pro00116802](#)
Title: Critical Thinking in Colombian High School Philosophy
Study Investigator: [Fredy Prieto Galindo](#)

Description: This is to inform you that the above study has been approved.
Click on the link(s) above to navigate to the workspace.
Please do not reply to this message. This is a system-generated email that cannot receive replies.

University of Alberta
Edmonton Alberta
Canada T6G 2E1

© 2008 University of Alberta
[Contact Us](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [City of Edmonton](#)